NETWORKS AND HIERARCHIES: TWO WAYS OF THINKING*

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Abstract: The main motive of the 20th century continental philosophy was criticism of metaphysics. Previous philosophical systems were considered too rigid; there was a search for a way out from metaphysical hierarchical way of thinking. Using the synthesis of the history of religions and philosophy, this paper claims that many surprising similarities can be found between animism and the lines of thought of the 20th century philosophy. The paper analyses the differences between network thinking and hierarchical thinking. Network thinking is analysed through two motives: multidimensionality and the network of shared souls. Animism is used as a major example to describe the impact of motives to thinking and practices. The rise and spread of hierarchical thinking is also described.

Keywords: 20th century philosophy, history of religions, hierarchical thinking, network thinking, animism

Introduction

The world we live in usually seems immensely intricate to us. It is therefore natural that one needs some orientation within this complexity, some assurance that one actually knows what happens around, how and why it happens, and what is one's part in it.

In our attempts to make sense of the world, we can distinguish two different methods of understanding. In the first, complexity is brought to a minimum through simplification; this is an attempt to fit reality into hierarchical-linear -patterns of thought. In the second, description is given up altogether (in as much as possible); this is a quest for an immediate mythical experience, an attempt to come face to face with the world as humans, which admittedly remains an extremely rare human experience.

We could place the patterns of reasoning of different disciplines between two extremes along an imaginary scale. The thought patterns of history, theology, classical philosophy and Newtonian physics are probably situated somewhere near the hierarchical thought. However, we find those of biology and sociology situated in a position that could be called network thinking.

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The purpose of this paper is to unfold the concepts of *hierarchical* and *network thinking* and to compare them. What is the difference between these two kinds of thinking? What kinds of factors were conjoined to form the hierarchical thinking characteristic of Western culture? Why is there currently a shift towards network thinking? Could postmodernist thinking be regarded as a return to the animistic worldview? The present paper considers these questions in an interdisciplinary manner, in cooperation between philosophy and history of religions. The paper presumes that the worldview of a contemporary European is a peculiar fusion of different religious "logics"[1] (originating from different eras) – animatism/animism, monotheism (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and materialism. The concept of "religious logics" comprises traits from religions (the worldview approach), on the one hand, and different religious eras (the historical perspective), on the other (Tokarev 1964). It is not merely a philosophical-scientific issue; these models of thought have enormous power to determine practices. Questions of 'what exists' and 'how must I operate' are always interconnected.

Animism is one of the most complex 'logics' for describing the world (Yamada 1999). We shall examine the extent to, and the form in, which the more important properties of animistic "logic" can be found in other "logics", and whether these properties have carried on into the present day or been (re)discovered in the contemporary worldview (in other words, what do animistic, twentieth-century philosophical

and post-Einsteinian physical worldviews have in common?). In this paper, we focus our attention on animistic thinking, as we think that there are substantial similarities between contemporary network thinking and the animistic worldview.

Discourse on the development of human understanding usually divides thinking into the irrational and the rational (Levy-Bruhl 1923). Rational thought primarily incorporates materialism as a contemporary, scientific picture of the world, and the ways of thinking that spring and derive from it. The irrational worldview incorporates animatism, animism and monotheism.[2] In our opinion, such discourse is ideologically biased, deeming one "logic" more correct than others. It would be more reasonable to assume that there are just different "logics", different forms of rationality. To justify this stance, we propose the following two claims.

For the Amazon rainforest Indians the fact that a jungle-ranging "white man" neither believes in spirits nor seeks reconciliation with them would be extremely odd and irrational behaviour. Probably sometime in the future, the early 21st century scientific worldview will be classified as yet another mythical approach to the world based on outdated "logic". We know from primary school mathematics classes that every argument is based on a premise; as such, every description of the world is also based on premises or assumptions of a certain kind, i.e., beliefs. *Hence, faith and*

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[1] By religious "logics" we mean the internal ordering of thinking in a broad sense, and not formal logic; in order to avoid confusion, we use quotation marks.

[2] As we know, many contemporary philosophers of science (Kuhn, Feyerabend, etc.) have critisised such divisions and they have demonstrated that science also consists of many hidden "myths". This fact has not reduced the dominance of scientific thought in western societies.

reason cannot be considered separately, and an example of a truly living faith and/or "logic" nowadays is materialism (Wuthnow 1995) – we do not acknowledge it as faith but nevertheless take it for granted.

It is to be hoped that the presumption of the unity of faith and reason sufficiently justifies the approach of this paper, namely, the synthesis of the history of religions and philosophy. In the context of modern philosophy, the proposition that western metaphysical-scientific culture is founded on hierarchical thinking sounds trivial. After Nietzsche and Heidegger, this statement is as common in continental philosophy as is critique of hierarchical thought. We find numerous attempts to redesign thinking in twentieth-century philosophy (e.g. phenomenology, deconstructionism, poststructuralism, postmodernism)[3]; the analysis of Foucault and Deleuze has also led secondary literature to the concept of the ontology of networks (Erikson 2005). However, it would be erroneous to assume that hierarchical thinking has been exclusively prevalent in the world to date and that modern philosophers therefore face a brand new challenge in redesigning thinking. In this paper, we attempt to show that the network and multidimensional thinking sought by modern philosophers is already evident in the animistic religions. With this parallel, we do not intend to declare that there is a need for reviving the ancient religions in their full glory; we hope to help somewhat the reasoning afflicted with one-dimensionality by reopening passages into the past.

Regardless of the constant critique of metaphysics, the unity of faith and reason has not been sufficiently acknowledged in philosophy – criticism, too, is often founded on the dubious presumption of the autonomy of reason. Yet, nearly all streams of modern philosophy (e.g., phenomenology and post-Popperian philosophy of science) operate with the concept of *pre-reasoning*, agreeing that no theory starts from zero. Acknowledging the link between faith and reason puts us methodologically in a somewhat complicated situation. A scientific paper with its chain of premises and conclusions is a typical hierarchical text. It is impossible to abandon hierarchy while remaining within the old framework. Thinkers who attempt to step beyond metaphysics (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Deleuze) often abandon the form of a scientific treatise. Nietzsche's texts are a network of aphorisms, Heidegger has been accused of writing poetry in the guise of philosophy and Deleuze seeks to get rid of the root-book and write a 'rhizome'. If we are to learn something from them, it is crucial to give up the rhetoric of strict science.

Attempts to present the ultimate truth must also be surrendered. Reaching the ultimate truth is part of the hierarchical, one-dimensional thought pattern; our study is based on the contingency of vocabularies (see Rorty 1989). Observations based on network thinking do not lead to a clear recipe for overcoming hierarchical thinking – as the hermeneutist Gianni Vattimo emphasises, overcoming is a typically modern, i.e. metaphysical category (Vattimo 1994: 166). Post-metaphysical thought is "weakened" thought; there is a shift from the overcoming (*Überwindung*)

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[3] We do not claim that all continental philosophy tries to think in fuzzy networks; there are also many new structural trends in it, such as speculative realism (Harman 2010).

of hierarchies to their resignation (*Ver-windung*) (see Vattimo 1994: 164–181). Yet, such analysis cannot convince a foundationalist who holds on to absolutist values. Giving preference to network thinking that is weakened and distancing from hierarchy is a pre-theoretic sympathy and there is no meta-level available to back up this preference – for trying to account for this preference would be falling back into hierarchical thinking.

The present paper will first describe the two basic principles of animistic ontology: Multidimensionality and the Plurality of souls (Arbman 1927, Wundt 1920). Then we will analyse the reasons for the rise of hierarchical thinking. Finally, we will provide an outline of certain tendencies and practices in contemporary western culture that are based on network thinking.

Multidimensionality

Multidimensionality or the principle of dualistic existence primarily means the belief in the existence of two or more worlds. On the one hand, there is the world of material, perceptible physical beings and objects of nature; on the other, the world of invisible, spiritual beings. In shamanistic worldviews, the world is often depicted as being triple-layered. The middle world is where physical beings dwell. The invisible or the world of the spirits is divided into two – the overworld and the underworld, which is inhabited by various gods, spirits and the souls of the dead. Both the overworld and the underworld are often further divided into several layers (Jankovics 1984). For example, use even today of the idiom "I'm in seventh heaven" to express the feeling of euphoria is quite common.

It is believed that both the visible and invisible worlds have mutual influence on each other, though the influence of the world of the spirits on the material world seems to be somewhat more dominant – the events taking place in the physical world are 'prepared' there. Yet the influence of the physical world on the spiritual world is also significant; it is believed, for instance, that unless sacrifices are brought to some god or spirit, the god or the spirit has no power to help humans (Valk 1986: 71–74). Likewise, one of the significant rites, common among many peoples, is providing food to the dead ancestors.

One important aspect of mutual influence is reflected in the belief that everything in the spiritual world desires (has an inclination) to materialise and that in the physical world has a desire (an inclination) to spiritualise. For example, the spirit of the Great Bear may materialise as a bear, or as a human in appearance or behaviour. Such inadequate materialisation (materialisation through the body of another being) is thought to be the source of various skills and powers, but also of disorders and illnesses. For instance, there is a common understanding in many shaman cultures that one must find their spirit-helper (power animal) who is then believed to protect him and share some of its attributes with him. With a wolf as a power animal, one is believed to be an excellent hunter; with an otter or a fish eagle, a fisherman; etc. Yet many illnesses are also named after animals: rabbit disorder (harelip), wolf disorder (cleft palate, in Estonian 'wolfthroat', *hundikurk*), toad disorder (corns), mouse disorder (a hairy patch on the face or body), grouse speckles (freckles), and stork boots (cracked skin on the feet due to the ef-

fects of the sun, wind and water) are but a few examples common among Estonians. However, these names are not given merely for external resemblance; the resemblance primarily expresses causality – freckles do not merely resemble grouse's eggs but are also caused by a grouse. The same animal can cause different effects – a bear as a power animal may be a strong and wise helper but can also cause bear disorder (one walks sideways).

The principle of multidimensionality also means that there are at least two (or possibly more) of everything in the world: there are two conceptions, two births, two lives, two deaths, two burials. The first conception is through a man, the other is the so-called spirit conception associated with the pregnant woman's startling or the first move of the foetus, which are then interpreted as pregnancy caused by a spirit. For instance, the belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary essentially follows that motif. Likewise, there is the birth of the physical child and the birth of the soul – the child is attributed a soul – usually when giving the child a name (Mead 1947: 6–14). There is the physical life of a human being and the life of his double (the dream reality); there is the death of the physical body and its burial as well as the death of the soul, which is essentially the rite of passage into another world. Dualistic existence also means that one does not simply have a lung, a liver, a kidney, etc., but that there is a lung and the lung's spirit (soul), a liver and the liver's spirit (soul), a kidney and the kidney's spirit (soul) (Arbman 1927: 96). They relate to each other in a similar way to the seen and unseen world. Therefore, existence is multidimensional and duplicated.

Multidimensionality is maximal in the case of duplicated existence – everything is simultaneously natural and supernatural[4]. In animism, the supernatural already starts to converge – the supernatural aspects of singular objects of nature, of animals, birds, plants, etc., converge under the overseers, and the elves of particular geographic places or realms (forests, fields, seas, etc.). Usually, the duplicated existence and the so-called branching supra-normal beings occur in parallel in animistic religions. Animistic cultures do not strive for detailed and logical description of the world. Things and phenomena are accepted regardless of whether they are 'fully' understood or not (unlike the common contemporary Western mind for which only that which has a logical explanation "exists"). Therefore, the single elements of animistic "logic" do not have to fit together accurately.

With the shift from animism to monotheism, the principle of multidimensionality survives, although in a significantly shortened and abstract form[5]. Language, too, can be simultaneously observed as a network system without a centre, if we use only concrete words; the use of abstract terms, however, adds a hierarchical dimension. In Christianity, the "diluting" of the hierarchical principle is essentially primal. On the one hand, there was a single God – God the Father. On the other, people started worshipping Jesus Christ. As

[4] This division makes sense from a scientific-materialistic viewpoint; animist thought has no such division.

[5] It would be a metaphysical illusion to speak about pure types of thinking or the change of all thinking in some epoch. We believe that there are some hidden traces of all previous "logics" in our thinking and practices, but to describe them in a sufficient manner would be a task for a separate study.

a compromise, the teaching of the Trinity was devised together with cults of the Virgin Mary, the saints, etc., in Christianity.

In a broader picture, monotheism could be taken as a transitional phase from power-centred animatistic-animistic ways of interpretation to those based on material, physical objects. The power-centred interpretation has faded from everyday life but is still present in the abstract understanding of God as an entity that is located in another dimension and yet connected with human beings. Of course, it is possible to state that the transcendent God, too, is a dimension constantly affecting all beings, areas of life and phenomena as with the principle of duplicated existence, but the difference should nevertheless be perceptible.

Multiplicity in Western Thought

How much multidimensionality is there in western philosophy? Although the prevailing way of thinking in Western philosophy is without doubt hierarchical thinking, the principle of multidimensionality is far from being unknown in philosophy. For example, Anaximander proposed the idea of the multiverse and he considered boundless nature (*apeiron*) as the beginning (*arche*) of all that exists. The philosophy of Heraclitus (the doctrine of fire) is also founded on the idea that all existence is in continuous flux and change. However, we can also observe a strong tendency of denying (Parmenides) or losing (Plato) multidimensionality. For example, formally speaking, there are also two dimensions in Platonist metaphysics – essences (ideas) and phenomena – but this system is indeed hierarchic. First, the ideas themselves are organised hierarchically in Plato's system;

second, the influence between dimensions is only one-sided: from ideas towards phenomena. Therefore, multidimensionality does not automatically guarantee the network character of thought; indeterminacy, ambiguity and uncertainty in thinking are also required. A more general term to describe this kind of thought would be *multiplicity* (Deleuze 2001). Nevertheless, the Kantian tradition that denies experiential access to the thing-in-itself reintroduces those qualities into philosophy.

Network elements have been more substantially established since Bergson and Nietzsche – the latter in particular has had a strong influence on the entirety of twentieth-century continental philosophy[6]; Nietzsche's ontology of the will to power has even been thought of as the forerunner of quantum physics (Plank 1998). It is worth mentioning that Gilles Deleuze, one of the 20th century's most extreme philosophers of Becoming, drew his inspiration from Leibniz's monadology; hence, multiplicity can be found in classical metaphysics too. Deleuze's transcendental empiricism is one of the boldest and most remarkable attempts to describe reality in the multiple way – the world as ceaseless becoming of the virtual field comprised of singular possibilities, which is perceived as actualised reality (Deleuze 1990). Strictly speaking, there is only one dimension in Deleuze's thought – the chaotic field of immanence: "The process of immanence is also a multiplicity, i.e., to design a field of immanence

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[6] We do not claim that all modern continental philosophy constitutes an "ontology of networks"; even the critique of metaphysics and hierarhical thinking does not guarantee it. But we still believe that family resemblances are evident between post-Nietzschean philosophy and animism.

populated by a multiplicity" (Deleuze 2001: 99).

As of today, attempts to think of (social) reality as comprised of networks, as well as the critique of hierarchical thinking, have also reached cultural theories (e.g., Latour 1993, Fuchs 2001).

Materialism as a world-view may be divided into 'the old' and 'the new' or the post-Einsteinian. The effect of the old, so-called *billiard ball* physics is the receding of the multidimensionality principle. The new materialism in essence removes the differences between the power-centred explanations and those based on physical objects. Modern quantum physics could be characterised by the uncertainty and existence of multiple interpretations, which has already been compared to religious thinking in academic research.

For instance, Stanley A. Klein claims that we are closely bound to each other and nature, deriving from nonlocality in quantum physics – according to this theory, there is an important resemblance with animistic soul beliefs (the network of shared souls), which is analysed in the next chapter (Klein 2006: 571).

Many contemporary physicists and philosophers have speculated on the possibility of different space-times (Carr 2007, Klein 2006). Entirely different physical laws may be in effect in these space-times and their interconnectedness via the so-called appendices is considered possible. An animist would not talk straightforwardly about the relativity of time but of *Toonela* and *Manala* or of various levels of overworlds and underworlds; or of a man lost in the forest and visiting the elves for three days while thirty years had passed in his home village. Anthropologists have already mentioned this similarity and they have used the concept of multiverse to describe animist ontology (Halbmayer 2012).

The Multiplicity of Souls and the Network (Maze) of Shared Souls

Animism is a down-to-earth and practical worldview – it consists primarily of instructions for everyday practices. What makes the principle of multidimensionality and duplicated existence practical is the following principle that could be called *the plurality of souls and the network of shared souls*: the idea that all beings are interconnected through their souls. For instance, the so-called soul-phenomenology certainly varies to a vast degree from one animistic religion to another (Hultkrantz 1984), but it seems that Wundt's theory of the division of souls into two groups – body-souls and free-souls – is universally valid (Wundt 1920: 79). Our primary reason for this is that different elements of soul must be perceivable as practices; they should not be abstract. It is not possible to identify the general unitary concept of soul in animist thought and to classify the types of souls according to that general concept. Peter Rivière claims that an understanding of souls in animist cultures is more likely to be achieved through specific examples rather than abstract generalisations (Rivière 2001: 76). As Rivière shows in his article, using many empirical examples, the number of different types of souls is not same in different ethnic groups that have an animist worldview. In some languages, the same stem is used to describe them, but in other languages different stems are used (Rivière 2001: 76–80). According to Rivière, soul beliefs may even differ and be contradictory within one

ethnic group. Certainly, it is not correct to interpret animism from the standpoint of body-soul dichotomy, as we can already see the concept of body-soul in animism as mainly representing the physical ability of the body, as well as thinking and feeling. The relations between different types of souls are not strictly determined in animism; here exists much uncertainty and creativity. Rivière (2001: 77) uses the analogy of kaleidoscope in this case.

An early stage of the concept of soul is probably the body-soul (Loorits 1949: 23). The body-soul includes the breath-soul, the organ-souls (bearers of the life-force of different organs and body parts), the pulsating soul or the soul-animal (a localised quiver or trembling in some area of the body through which the life-force signals its presence), the shadow, the self and the name. An inherent characteristic of the body-soul is its inseparability from the body – were it to leave, the person would die. Ivar Paulson adds a significant aspect: in certain extreme circumstances the shadow, the self and the name may also act as free spirits (Paulson 1958: 267–277). Free spirit has an inherent ability to leave the body for a while without any effect on the person. Free spirits are the transition soul (the soul that departs from the body during sleep) and the separable soul (the departing spirit gives life to the body of another being).

However, these classical categories of animistic soul phenomenology probably need further additions. Namely, there are also separate souls – souls that belong to individuals, but are located somewhere else and are somehow connected to the body. For example, Estonians have a common motif that for every individual there had to be an object of nature (often a tree) that

was believed to contain one of his souls. The tree and the person were connected in life and in death through this link: should that person die, the tree would wither, and should the tree wither, the person would die; and likewise – if the tree flourished, the person lived well (Moor 1998: 17–21).

In many animistic cultures, the existence of human beings seems to be doubled. One life is going on when you are awake while another exists in dreams. The latter one is often interpreted by using the concept of dream-soul (Rivière 2001: 83–86) or twin. Loorits (1949) classifies the twin, too, as body-soul. However, it should instead be considered a separate soul – it is a part of a human being that expresses itself through the unhuman world (bear, stone, hare, etc.) and can become aware of so-called conscious dreams (dreams during which the sleeper clearly knows that he is dreaming). However, classifying the power animal (a part of the unhuman world that expresses itself through humans) is less simple. On the one hand, it is connected to the human person and could therefore be seen as a free-soul. On the other hand, it is totally separate from the human person: a rather alien energy. In this, we acknowledge that it is only an issue for those creating the categories and not for the individuals practicing the particular religion.

In the context of animism, there is reason to speak about common souls – Mother Earth and Father Heaven. Just as a human being and a tree can[7] be interconnected, all beings are connected to two more large spheres. Every living thing is given birth

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[7] We say *can be*, not *must be*, because the relations between the souls in animism are probabilistic, not determined.

by the Earth; this is the motif of Mother Earth (*Terra Mater*) – we are earthlings. Likewise, we all breathe, and we inhale the Living Heaven. The so-called Mother Earth and Father Heaven hierogamy is an religious motif known internationally. However, in the context of animism, we must emphasise that it is not an abstract belief but the common name for different practices. For instance, 'to earth the tensions' is an Estonian idiom, which in practice means rolling around, tossing and turning on the ground in a state of depression, agitation or excitement. Those who doubt should try it!

Lastly, some souls should be listed in yet another category – additional souls. These are souls that temporarily join an individual for various reasons as to bring either various fortunes and abilities or disorders and illnesses. Naturally, souls causing disorders and illnesses were to be avoided, while those bringing fortunes and abilities were sought. Were we to ask whether the power animal is also an additional soul, the answer would be both yes and no. The power animal seems to be more permanent. But this is not true among all peoples – for some, it is temporary and transitory; when one is confused – or has lost his head – it is interpreted as the intermediate period when one power animal has departed and the new one not yet arrived. Generally, we can speak about more permanent and less permanent soul connections.

At this point, it is important to state that the additional soul originating from the same being can cause diverse consequences: its effects are not limited to one. The principal functional associations are reflected in the old common bird, plant and animal names. It was natural that one creature always had numerous names. However, looking at the consequences subjectively, creatures can almost never be classified as negative or positive. For instance, a bird that is most associated with beliefs in Estonian folklore, the cuckoo, can cause cuckoo disorder (someone deceived by the cuckoo grows thin and fades away), death and accidents. Someone deceived by a cuckoo must not be made a shepherd, for the animals will be dwarfed. However, the one deceived by a cuckoo is believed to possess exceptional luck with pigs. There are always dysfunctional associations among the functional ones. In addition, the enquiring of birds (e.g., how many years of herding do I have left?) and situational advantage-taking of deception, which is also called 'deceiving the deceiver', are common in folklore. For instance, upon hearing a cuckoo for the first time, one used to jingle the coins in one's pockets because then "all the money of this cuckoo's year jingled in the pocket". We believe that original situational practices are behind the concrete, so-called dogmatised folk-religious motifs. Such practices could also be called nature rites, and accordingly they express the sensation that the surrounding world is endless, "living in the unknown will never end", but also coming to terms with this feeling. Nature rites are a way to be in contact and hold dialogue with this endless unknown.

Just as humans are believed to have many souls, it is probable that this is believed of all other creatures and objects of nature too. What do these various souls stand for on the abstract level? Body-souls represent various bodily functions while free souls, common souls and additional souls stand for *different types of intercon-*

nectedness. Hence, a picture of nature as a network of shared souls is formed. In fact, there is no pure matter in animist ontology; all reality is spiritual (Coeckelbergh 2010: 966). Our hypothesis is that the causes of all events in animism are explained as a movement and counteraction of souls in the network of shared souls. However, there are many different types of souls, as we saw, and we can't reduce animist ontology to some kind of mechanistic system.

The Evolution of Hierarchical Thinking

The transition from animism to monotheism is also a transition from network thinking to hierarchical, linear thinking. The pinnacle of the hierarchy is naturally occupied by God, but man too has become superior to other beings such as animals, birds, etc. God has set man as their master.

What caused the transition from networks to hierarchies? We could also ask under what conditions network thinking works well. A network requires many different network elements – beings – i.e., a diverse ecosystem, relatively sparse population and secondarity of social power. Hierarchical thinking, however, requires a larger ability of abstraction and subjectivity – "I"-centredness. To some extent, this transition may be associated with merely historical events and the context in which these events took place.

The God of the Jews – YHWH, Elohim or Sebaoth – is originally a god of war, or more precisely, a local god of Mount Horeb turned into a war god. Besides military power, magical power and fertility are usually equally present in different religions. It is probable that the areas seized by the Jews had problems with overpopulation: fertility was not a value. The religious reforms of Ezra and Joshua turned the god of war into the one and only god who usurped the creator-god as well as all other spheres and functions.

Besides monotheism, metaphysical philosophy also helps form hierarchical thought. Later, these two poles blend into a unanimous whole in Western civilisation, although the process of blending is neither harmonious nor problem-free (von Wright 1993). According to Heidegger, metaphysics creates an onto-theological whole where God is placed in the system as the first cause (Heidegger 1990: 63).

Whether monistic, dualistic or pluralistic, metaphysics is essentially founded on the absolute. Moreover, an appreciative hierarchical relation is always started. Let us consider Parmenides, for example, as one of the originators of metaphysics. According to his teaching, there exists only One Being besides which there is no space for coming into being, change or motion (Parmenides 1991: 25–35, fragment B8). Therefore, this system of thought should be harmonious and free of contradictions. Yet, in his philosophical poems, we find a dichotomy between truth and opinion (*doxa*); fools who cannot opt for the unique existence of Being are ridiculed (Parmenides 1991: 22–23, fragment B6). The work of Parmenides already displays the beginnings of the methodicalness intrinsic to hierarchical thinking, as well as an essentially metaphysical separation of reason from perception (this is especially clear in his student Zeno's famous aporias). The distinction between reason and perception is significant in a broader context – it is the beginning of a *distinction between theory and practice*. Whereas in Eastern thought

these two are seen clearly together, practical advice in Western metaphysics is reached indirectly, as an *application* of philosophical principles (e.g., Plato's social theory). Although Plato understands the absolute as the realm of ideas, unlike Parmenides, for whom the absolute is the unique substance, that realm is nevertheless definite and hierarchical, comprehensible only through abstract thought. It is only when we have come to understand the ideas that we can determine how to arrange practices. In medieval theology, too, the wording for proofs of God is borrowed from philosophy – e.g., Thomas Aquinas regards God as the first cause.

The next important phase in hierarchical thought is the so-called Cartesian revolution. Through Descartes, the centre of structure is placed in subjective reasoning, i.e., a human being himself. Although the idea of God remains in the systems of the philosophers of modern times for a long time, the ground has been prepared for his disappearance – the first, evident truth is *cogito ergo sum*. The subject, having asserted itself through reasoning, tends to objectivise everything surrounding him, which soon leads to the natural scientific disposition. The original naïve natural science was extremely metaphysical in its claims; only the method of moving towards the absolute had changed – philosophical speculation had been replaced by the inductive-experimental method that encompassed nature as a whole.

Nevertheless, the natural scientifically expressed absolute is lacking something; as Nietzsche puts it – the moral dimension. With secularisation starts the crisis of hierarchical thought, for the absolute-oriented reason is not content with the

scientific omniscience when perfection and benevolence disappear from the system. Nietzsche warns that extreme viewpoints cannot be traded for less intense ones, only for reversed ones (Nietzsche 1988, 12: 212). Dostoyevsky: if there is no God, everything is permissible. With the death of God (the absolute), nihilism, the most homeless of all guests, is standing at the door of the Western world (Nietzsche 1988, 12: 125). Despite the attempts to reword the fallen absolute, to find new universal values (e.g., humanism, democracy) to help one bear the suddenly arrived cosmic loneliness, Nietzsche believes these 'substitute absolutes' will fail to replace God successfully and the hierarchical world will inevitably crumble around the Western "man". In a fragment about the death of God (Nietzsche 1988, 3: 480-482), Nietzsche exposes a characteristic trait of the modern human: they do not yet realise that the centre of structure is gone; they take it as a trivial episode.

The Practical Conclusions of Hierarchical Thinking

What are the practical conclusions of hierarchical thinking?

1. Apart from anything else, hierarchical thinking has turned out to be a *very effective means of conquering the world*. Christianity, a Jewish sect by birth, and Christianity-originated Islam have sown this way of thinking in all corners of the world. Through the idea of the absolute, power converges into one point, thereby giving birth to essentially monotheistic expansionism – the world is imperfect as long as there exist worshippers of false gods. Ac-

cording to a number of thinkers, e.g., Feyerabend, classical natural science bears the same pathos. In comparison to other cultures, hierarchical culture emphasises power relations, the apparatus of state, the apparatus of bureaucracy, linear chains of command (the king – seignior – vassal). Heidegger maintains that there is a tight connection between metaphysics and power; Nietzsche's *will to power* (*Wille zur Macht*) is thinking metaphysics into the extreme (Heidegger 1961). Max Weber sees the contemporary society as an iron cage around human being (Weber 2001: 123). Absolutist viewpoints are convenient for establishing ideologies; ideology makes it convenient to position oneself and to create simple ally/foe schemes. What such schemes lead to in practice is seen in twentieth-century history.

2. With the emergence of the hierarchical worldview, *the micro-level is forgotten*; thinking is always done in big systems where the end justifies the means. The origins of hierarchical thought can be found among indigenous peoples, just as elements of network thinking are observable in monotheistic worldviews. On the one hand, primitive people know numerous different gods, elves, spirits, mothers and fathers, etc. On the other, as Schmidt (1933) states, the idea of the creator-god or the supreme god is not uncommon among them. The creator-god is only approached in extreme crisis situations.

3. The transition from networks to hierarchies seems to be a part of a broader process that could be called the *trends of convergence*. In thinking, the convergence trends can be traced back in time ca. 2,500 years through the history of religions. While the God of monotheism may be taken as a central figure that deals with every imaginable realm (forests, fields, the sea, lakes, etc.), the trends of convergence can already be traced back to animism. For instance, the functions of the forest elves included caring for the birds, animals, growth of plants, but also punishing those violating forest rules. In more ancient forms, each animal species had their own 'herder'. The 'herder' was usually an anomalous animal of the same species (say, white elk). The idea of spiritual beings 'herding' different animals evolved subsequently. Later, various realms converge under the authority of, say, the forest elf. Therefore, there was double existence originally – each being was simultaneously natural and supernatural. The supernatural part, however, gradually converges into the 'superior spirit' of a certain animal or plant species, then to the spirit of animals or plants of a certain place, later to the forest elf and finally to the monistic God. We can thus observe increasing abstractness in folk-religion.

We can also speak of convergence trends in settlement (people increasingly moving to towns), industry (transfer from small-scale production to large-scale production), agriculture, even in national poli-

tics and, no doubt, in many other areas as well.

Back to Networks?

In recent decades, we can observe a change similar to the change in thinking where convergence is replaced by divergence. It would probably be more precise to speak about the continuation of convergence trends, but within these trends grow new processes, crumbling of hierarchies and divergence of the strength of big centres. Urbanisation continues, and cities "empty" rural areas and smaller towns. Yet, there is simultaneous suburbanisation – both inhabitants and industry move to the rural-urban fringe of towns and cities. The influence and power of the town centre has become symbolic (Steiner 1981).

In industry, large corporations with an unchanging hierarchical leadership structure, which employ thousands of people, own considerable amount of fixed assets and whose profit belongs solely to the owners of the enterprises, have become an exception in the 1980s and 1990s (Reich 1993). Companies with the highest profit return have become entrepreneurial networks whose assets are leased, employees are temporary and often working part-time, and whose specialists partake in profit sharing. Relatively autonomous branches of such companies are located all over the world and the executives have but limited authority over them. And of course, such entrepreneurial networks have expanded far beyond their original field of activity (Reich 1993). Similar processes are taking place in agriculture.

In national politics, racism justified by social Darwinism and widely practiced by the Soviet Union, USA, Canada, Australia, and many smaller countries against their native peoples has been replaced since the 1980s by the growing valuation of native identity. The big nation is no longer the core of convergence[8].

Therefore, it seems that we live in an era of crumbling hierarchies, of yet another restructuring of the world. However, there is no reason to think that the triumph of network existence has already arrived. Pluralism is propagated on the abstract, philosophical plane, but on actual planes there is a ruthless battle of hierarchical systems. Every bigger change causes a reaction. It is therefore relevant to ask how to get from hierarchies to networks. The answer has to be neither a linear algorithm nor a precise causal chain. It is not a theoretical question (as is evident in our analysis, theory has lost quite a bit of its shine): as far back as ancient Greece, upbringing (*paideia*) was discussed along with theory. It is a matter of *practices*. On the journey towards networks, the following practices could turn out to be significant:

1. Martial arts that through physicality teach respect (post-religious systems of ethics have failed to do so sufficiently as a theoretical category). Practices originating from the ancient folk culture may perform the same function when successfully actualised.

2. Propagation of modern scientific theories: randomness, chaoticity (Prigogine 1989). Sadly, the system of general education of many countries generally teaches the Newtonian worldview, merely cause and effect relations. Today, there is great

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[8] We do not treat the most explicit network tendency in our world here: so-called informational explosion due to computer networks; undoubtedly, this process widely influences our worldview and self-awareness.

pedagogical challenge for philosophy to criticise the old fashion hierarchical-deterministic worldview at secondary school level.

3. Economising and ecology – to undermine the value system based on progress, economic growth and success. In contemporary environment thought, there are popular ideas about non-human agents, which sound quite animistic (Hornborg 2008).

4. Diversified role-plays – to avoid identity from channelling into just one ideology. Gianni Vattimo (2004) believes that if we abandon dreaming that there should only be one true way to describe the world, then we also abandon our strong identity – that will lead us to the weaker value-judgements and to the future with less violence.

5. Spare time activities and hobbies such as hunting, fishing, gathering mushrooms, photography; but also other activities that primarily require attention and thereby shift thinking from the abstract to the concrete.

Emphasising these practices does not mean that theories should be given up; thinking plays an important role in orientation within a network. What should indeed be given up is a strict distinction between theory and practice, a model of thought according to which reasonable practice must necessarily be preceded by true theory and precise instruction. In his conversation with Michel Foucault in 1972, Gilles Deleuze emphasises that, "practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. <...> Representation no longer exists; there's only action – theoretical action and practical action, which serve as relays and form networks" (Foucault and Deleuze 1977: 206–207). Participating in practical action does not necessarily require theoretical knowledge (*episteme*): skills (*techne*) may suffice. From the metaphysical-scientific perspective, there is a deficiency since practice cannot be reduced to strict principles; a hierarchical chain of reference will not form. To offer an example, miracle healing is not excluded from medical discourse due to being completely ineffective; it is difficult to classify every occasion on which an individual claims to have been healed as bogus or autosuggestion. The problem is that these practices fail to create the preceding theoretical chains, due to which they must be excluded from the playground of hierarchical culture.

Thinking in networks, we can say, it is the natural fact that some practices are theoretically indescribable.

Conclusion

Although we can observe the rediscovery of principles that are essential to network thinking in contemporary physics and philosophy, it is difficult to predict whether these agents will also have a significant impact on common thinking. In any case, the hierarchical worldview seems to have one big advantage over networks: it is simple. However, smooth arrival at a well-functioning network worldview (such as animism) is not at all certain when the comfortable simplicity of the hierarchical worldview crumbles around Western people. The possibility that the culture where the full weight of God's death is finally understood will plunge into a self-destructive cataclysm, as Nietzsche warned, is still a

pressing question (Kuhn 1992)[9]. Nevertheless, it is impossible to bury one's head in the sand: the only option in the globalising world is to help people get used to the idea that the way of thinking with which they have grown up is not the sole possibility and might not last forever.

The above analysis shows that the emergence of the postmodernist network thinking is not an open return of animism. The considerable internal similarity of these two ways of thinking is nevertheless remarkable. The peculiarities of postmodernist thinking can be found in the historical past of Western culture.

The worldview of a contemporary person is generally the hierarchical-linear way of thinking inherited from monothe-ism. God (and thus multidimensionality, too) has been removed from the pinnacle of the hierarchy and there can be nothing except the "I" to take God's place. As our worldview undergoes secularisation, the meaning of subjectivism increases: subjectivism is attributed permanence (while techniques of weakening the common orientation are rejected). Democracy and humanism are placed in service of this subjectivism. Nevertheless, the slow crumbling of hierarchical thinking has a significant disruptive impact on people. The problem of post-subjectivism is central to contemporary philosophy. The question arises as to whether animistic thinking could provide solutions to the problem of the subject that would have contemporary relevance. We think that it does, but due to the breadth of the topic, we will consider it in a separate paper. In addition, this follow-up paper will open up certain aspects of animistic and network thinking that are beyond the scope of the present paper.

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[9] We do not take the position of apocalyptic prophets here. We regard destructive cataclysm as a danger, a possibility and not unavoidable destiny. The great challenge for present humanity is how can we survive and live meaningful lives in a more and more complex world?

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TINKLAI IR HIERARCHIJOS: DU MĄSTYMO BŪDAI

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Santrauka. Pagrindinis XX a. kontinentinės filosofijos motyvas buvo metafizikos kritika. Ankstesnės filosofinės sistemos buvo imtos laikyti pernelyg stingios, imta ieškoti būdų išvengti metafizinio hierarchinio mąstymo. Pasitelkiant religijų ir filosofijos istorijos sintezę, šiame straipsnyje teigiama, jog įmanoma aptikti gausybę stulbinančių panašumų tarp animizmo ir XX a. filosofinio mąstymo. Straipsnyje aptariami skirtumai tarp tinklinio mąstymo ir hierarchinio mąstymo. Tinklinis mąstymas analizuojamas pasitelkiant du motyvus: daugiadimensiškumą ir bendrųjų sielų tinklą. Animizmas naudojamas kaip pagrindinis pavyzdys nusakant motyvų reikšmę mąstymui ir praktikai. Taip pat aprašomas hierarchinio mąstymo atsiradimas ir sklaida.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: XX a. filosofija, religijų istorija, hierarchinis mąstymas, tinklinis mąstymas, animizmas