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On Non-Rationalities in the Foundations of the Humanities: A Hexagonal Analysis of the Counterrationality Principle

The power of love, as the basis of a State, has never been tried.

R. W. Emerson

The process of total control is itself uncontrollable.

Leszek Nowak

Porro impassibilis est Deus, sed non incompassibilis,
cui proprium est misereri semper et parcere.

Bernard of Clairvaux¹

ABSTRACT. By the term *foundations of the humanities* we mean research on basic questions posed within the study of human activities, two accounts of which are briefly noted: motivational (psychological) and humanistic (cultural). Two non-rationalities – i.e. irrationality and counterrationality – are characterized by relevant assumptions. At the same time we are inclined to accept the project for a general theory of love in the sense used by José Ortega y Gasset. Hence, a so-called *love-hate hexagon* based on the supposed *counterrationality* of love for the other (or love for another) is constructed. The problem of self-love is discussed briefly in the context of Simone Weil's remark on

¹ *Sancti Bernardi Abbatiss Claræ-Vallensis Sermones in Cantica Canticoꝝ, Sermo XXVI.* Cf. http://www.binetti.ru/bernardus/86_2.shtml

impossibility of egoism. A few comments on the model of a compassionate man are formulated and finally a subsequent hexagon of compassion is developed.

KEY WORDS: logical hexagon, questions, humanities, love-hate opposition, antiirrationality, counterrationality

1. Introductory remarks

The main purpose of our paper is to sketch out a theoretical framework for the humanities in relation to the procedures of so-called “analogizing” in the sense indicated by Edith Stein in the following passage from her *On the Problem of Empathy*:

The interpretation of foreign living bodies as of my type helps make sense out of the discussion of “analogizing” in comprehending another. Of course, this analogizing has very little to do with “inferences by analogy” [Stein, 1989, p. 59].²

In the paper, three situations are briefly described by means of idealizational assumptions.³ By the term *foundations of humanities* we mean research on basic questions posed within studies on human activities; two means of accounting for such activities are thus briefly noted namely motivational (psychological) and humanistic (cultural).⁴ Following the methodological (idealizational) approach elaborated by Leszek Nowak [Nowak, 1991; Nowak, 2000] two concepts of non-rationality (i.e. two antirationalities) are introduced, namely, irrationalism and counterrationalism. A so-called *love-hate hexagon* is constructed based on the supposal that love is non-rational (*counterrational* to be precise). In consequence, rationality turns out to be indifference. The relevant assumption of counter-

² The original German text reads as follows: *In der Auffassung der fremden Leiber als demselben Typ wie der meine angehörig ergibt sich uns ein guter Sinn der Rede vom „Analogisieren“, das im Erfassen eines andern vorliegt. Mit „Analogieschlüssen“ hat dies Analogisieren freilich wenig zu tun.* [Stein, 1917, p. 66].

³ For a systematic approach to idealizational assumptions see [Nowak, 1980, pp. 23–38].

⁴ For general approach to why-questions see for example [Harrah, 2002], [Bromberger, 1992].

rationality is introduced here. The problem of self-love is discussed concisely in the context of Simone Weil's remark on the impossibility of egoism (*l'impossibilité de l'égoïsme*). A few comments on the model of compassionate man, i.e. *Homo compassibilis*, are formulated and a subsequent hexagon of compassion is finally developed.

2. Idealizational assumptions: three situations

We begin with some relevant idealizational assumptions.

Suppose that for each agent (an individual, a social group and/or even a social movement) there is a system of values (also referred to as an *axiological system* or, shortly, the *axiology* of the agent). For the sake of simplicity, it is presupposed that such a system consists of an at least two-element collection of objects (called a *set of values*). The first element is called the *positive* value, the second – the *negative* value. The set is ordered by a binary relation. Positive values are traditionally referred to as *preferences*; negative values – as *counterpreferences*.⁵ Let agent *A* have all the information about the axiological system of agent *B*, and *vice versa*. Each agent is also able to realize intentionally not only its values but the values of others, too.⁶

The following characteristics of a *kindness* relationship (i.e. a relation “*A* is kind to *B*”), and a *hostility* relation (i.e. a relation “*A* is hostile to *B*”) between (two different) agents *A* and *B* are assumed:

(KIND) *A* is kind to *B* iff *A* intentionally realizes a preference of *B*.

(HOST) *A* is hostile to *B* iff *A* intentionally realizes a counter-preference of *B*.

⁵ For systematic approach to preferences modeling see for example [Kaci, 2011, pp. 11–17].

⁶ For intentional actions see for example [Pörm, 1977, pp. 28–42].

Consider three dialogical situations:

- (1) normal situation,
- (2) situation of enslavement, and
- (3) situation of exasperation.

In the first situation, *A* responds favorably to the kindness shown by *B*. In other words, in this situation, when *B* intentionally realizes the preference of *A*, then also *A* intentionally realizes the preference of *B*. Consequently, *A* responds with hostility to the hostility displayed by *B*. Briefly speaking, *A* behaves *normally* towards *B*.

In the situation of *enslavement*, *A* reacts favorably to the hostility displayed by *B*. In other words, when *B* intentionally realizes the counterpreferences of *A*, then *A* intentionally realizes the preferences of *B*. Consequently, when *B* intentionally realizes the maximum counterpreference of *A*, then *A* intentionally realizes the maximum preference of *B*. In this case, *A* is *enslaved* by *B*.

In the situation of *exasperation*, *A* reacts unfavorably to the kindness displayed by *B*. In other words, when *B* intentionally realizes the preferences of *A*, then *A* intentionally realizes the counterpreferences of *B*. Consequently, when *B* intentionally realizes the maximum preference of *A*, then *A* intentionally realizes the maximum counterpreference of *B*. In this case, *A* is *exasperated* by *B*.

3. Questions on human activities

If it is presupposed that such questions as:

(Q_1) Why did agent *A* perform action a_i ?, or

(Q_2) What was the goal of action a_i performed by agent *A*?,

are acceptable and justified within the framework of the humanities, the standard relevant assumption of rationality, i.e. the following principle of maximizing expected utility, should be recalled:

(R) If agent A at time t is to undertake one of the complementary and mutually exclusive – to its knowledge – actions a_1, \dots, a_n , unambiguously associated – to its knowledge – with results r_1, \dots, r_n ordered in turn by an appropriate relation of preference, then A at time t will undertake action a_i (where $i = 1, \dots, n$) or a_i is the objective equivalent of the logical disjunction of members of a proper subset of the set a_1, \dots, a_n , when all elements of this subset correspond to the same result) associated with *the result of maximum preference*.

The correct answer to question Q_1 forms an explanation of action a_i performed by a given agent, i.e. the explanandum. The explanans consists of (1) the assumption of rationality, (2) a description of some actions relevant in a given concrete instance, (3) a description of the association of given actions with corresponding results, and (4) a description of the preference relation.⁷

On the margin of questions on human activities, the problem of their answerability should be noted. It seems worthwhile to introduce a distinction between two kinds of such questions. Znaniecki wrote:

(...) in cultural science, instead of asking (as psychology does) why X tends to perform a certain activity, we must ask why X , though tending to perform a certain activity, does not perform it but merely feels or wishes. And this question is answerable in every particular case, provided only we have sufficient data and use a proper technique in analyzing them. It all depends on how the agent defines the situation. [Znaniecki, 1934, p. 64]

Hence one can take at least two accounts of human activities into consideration. Motivational explanations lead from axiological experience to activity. In the case of cultural explanations we proceed in the opposite direction (Fig. 1).

⁷ Cf. for example [Kmita, 1988, p. 97, Topolski, 1990, p. 75]. See also [Tuomela, 1977, pp. 206–234, Cross, 1991, Faye, 2011 and Grobler, 2011]. For the so-called *explanation by specification* see for example [Kuipers, Wiśniewski 1994, Kuipers, 2001, Grobler, Wiśniewski, 2005].

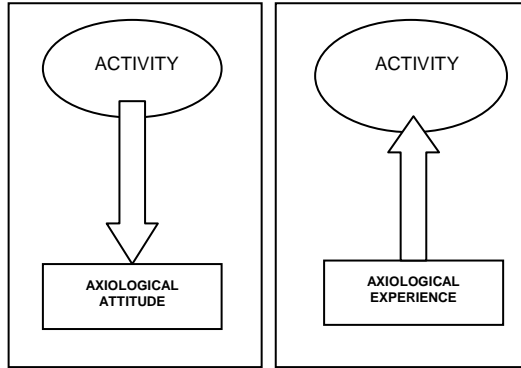


Fig. 1.

In order to emphasize the idealizational nature of the above-mentioned assumptions one should not forget that:

People very rarely, if ever, performed the required calculations. [Grobler, Wiśniewski, 2005, p. 309]

4. The love-hate hexagon: rationality as indifference

We assume that to *love* someone is to desire that person's good and to take effective steps to secure it.⁸ Formally speaking, love is thus a binary (dyadic), anti-reflexive relation. Therefore love is *countrational*, since the one who loves intentionally realizes the preferences of the *other* agent (i.e. the loved one). In other words, love *enslaves* (in this sense).⁹

⁸ See, for example, Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate* [Charity in Truth], Introduction, 7. Cf. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html. Gender issues are avoided in our paper. For gender oppositions, see for example [Morreti, 2012, p. 148].

⁹ In the context of the non-rationality of love it is worth to emphasize that fifteen principles of charity are introduced in [Thagard, Nisbett, 1983, pp. 251–252].

Assuming that all these idealized conditions are fulfilled, then the following issues could be considered in a very natural way: (*) *Who benefits from the love relation that holds between agent A and agent B?*, or – equally – (**) *Who is a beneficiary of a counterrational action performed (taken) by agent A?*

If these conditions are suspended, then some other problems could be investigated – for example: (#) *Who else – besides agent B – benefits from the love relationship [that holds between agent A and agent B]?*, or (##) *Is there any beneficiary of a counterrational action performed (taken) by agent A other than agent B?*

Consequently, we say that to *hate* someone is to desire that person's detriment and to take effective steps to achieve it. Hence, the one who hates intentionally realizes the counterpreferences of the *other* agent (i.e. the hated one), so hate is irrational. In other words, hatred *exasperates*.

Finally, to be *indifferent* (to someone) means neither to love (that agent) nor to hate (that agent).

It is assumed that these three concepts are mutually exclusive. So they form the so-called *triangle of oppositions* (Fig. 2).

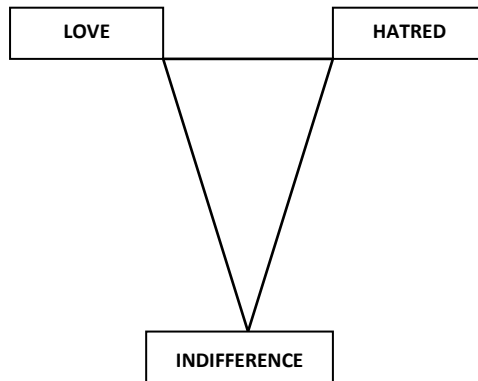


Fig. 2.

The same holds for the following triangle (Fig. 3):

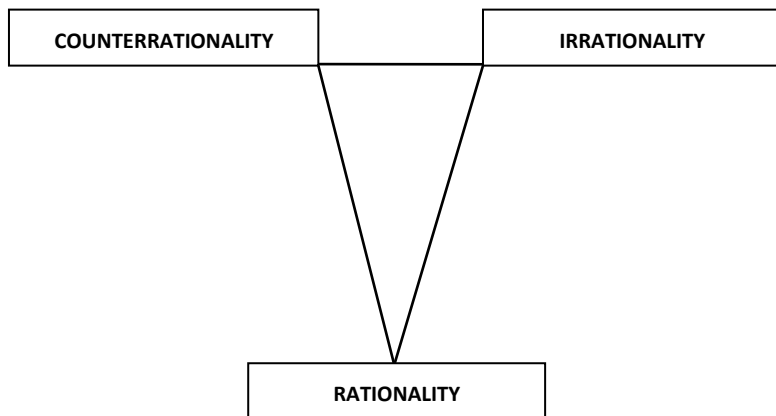


Fig. 3.

By means of four standard relations (Tab. 1), a standard hexagon of oppositions is introduced (Fig. 4).

Table 1.

Relation	Traditional name	Graphic representation
contradiction	contradictio	— — — — —
contrary	contrarietas	—————
subcontrary	subcontrarietas	- - - - -
subalternation	subalternatio

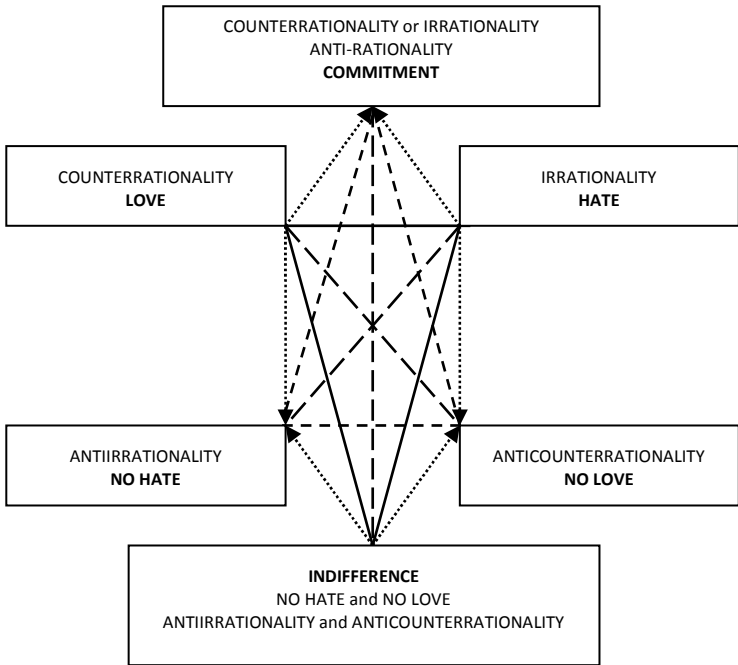


Fig. 4.

By the *counterrationality* principle we thus mean the following assumption:

(C-P) If agent *A* (at moment *t*) is to undertake one of the complementary and mutually exclusive – to its knowledge about the value hierarchy of agent *B* – actions a_1, \dots, a_n , unambiguously associated – to its knowledge – with results r_1, \dots, r_n ordered in turn – according to its norms – by an appropriate relation of preference, then *A* (at *t*) will un-

undertake the action a_i ($i = 1, \dots, n$) which results in the greatest positive value (the *maximum preference*) of the value hierarchy of agent B .

Consequently, the *irrationality* principle takes the form:

(I-P) If agent A (at moment t) is to undertake one of the complementary and mutually exclusive – to its knowledge about the value hierarchy of agent B – actions a_1, \dots, a_n , unambiguously associated – to its knowledge – with results r_1, \dots, r_n ordered in turn – according to its norms – by an appropriate relation of preference, then A (at t) will undertake the action a_i ($i = 1, \dots, n$) which results in the greatest negative value (the *maximum counterpreference*) of the value hierarchy of agent B .

5. *L'impossibilité de l'égoïsme* and Simone Weil

Here is the *locus classicus* of Simone Weil:

Par les yeux, la vue, Platon entend l'amour. Cette image rend évidente **l'impossibilité de l'égoïsme**, car les yeux ne se voient pas eux-mêmes. L'irréalité des choses que Platon peint si fortement dans la métaphore de la caverne n'a pas rapport aux choses comme telles; les choses comme telles ont la plénitude de la réalité, puisqu'elles existent. Il s'agit des choses comme objet d'amour. En cette qualité elles sont des ombres de marionnettes.[emphasis added] [Weil, 1951a, p. 74].¹⁰

Let us presuppose for a moment that Weil was not right, and self-concern (or self-centeredness, egocentrism) is possible. In this case love (i.e. self-love) is rational, since a given agent intentionally realizes its own preferences and hatred (i.e. intentional realization by an agent its own counterpreferences, in other words – self-hatred) is irrational. Consequently, indifference is counterrational (Fig. 5).

¹⁰ Cf. [Scheler, 2008, p. 152].

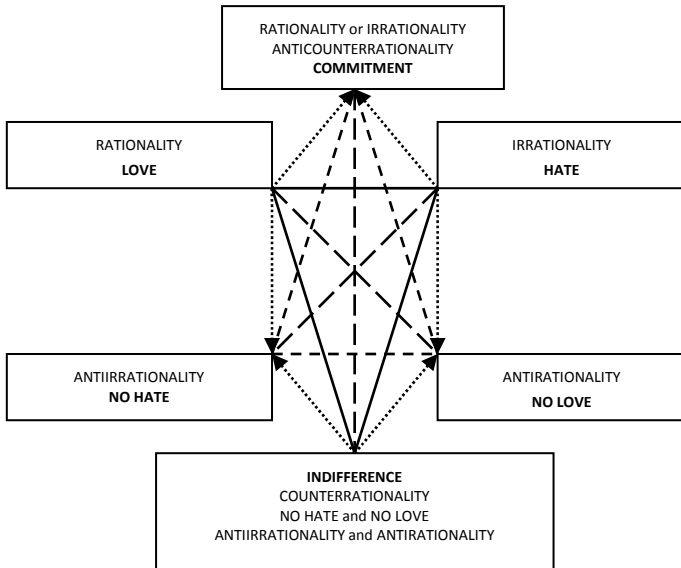


Fig. 5.

6. Towards the model of a compassionate man: *Homo compassibilis*

In his commentaries to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Guido da Pisa wrote the following:

Quia homo est naturaliter compassibilis, ideo compati debet miseris iniuste et iniique inflictis. Et si ipsius non compatitur, non habet animum bene ordinatum.¹¹

When working on adequate models of human activities the following oppositions should thus be investigated (Fig. 6-7).

¹¹ [Guido da Pisa's *Commentary on Dante's Inferno* 1974, p. 707].

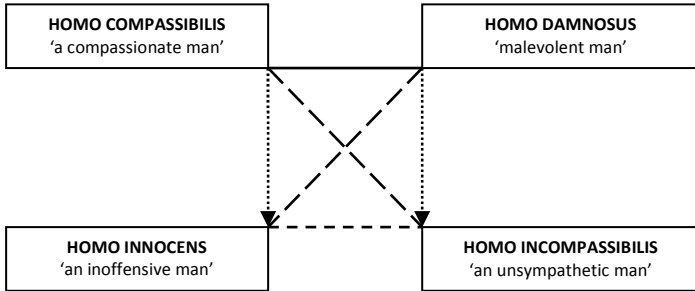


Fig. 6.

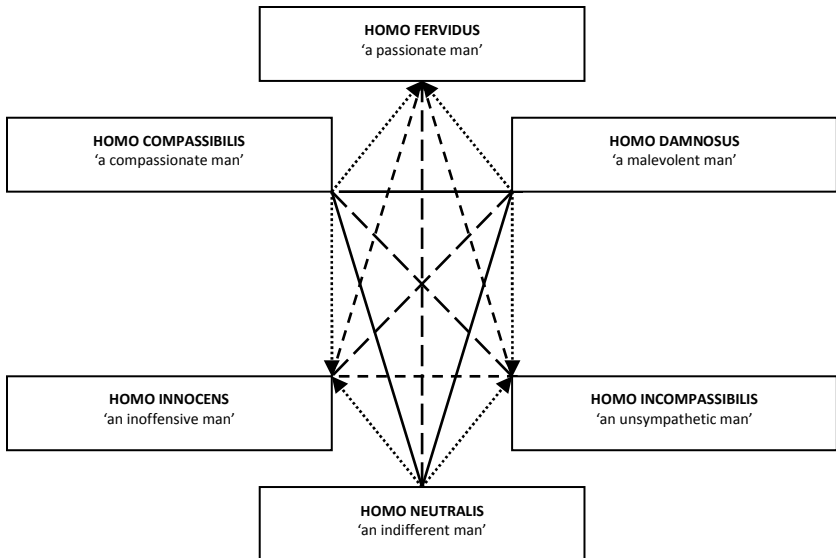


Fig. 7.

Three main opposites are introduced here:

- (1) a passionate [or intense, ardent, avid] person, (Lat. *Homo fervidus*) vs. a heedless [apathetic, inattentive] one (Lat. *Homo neutralis*);
- (2) a compassionate [benevolent, charitable, friendly] person (Lat. *Homo compassibilis*) vs. an incompassionate [uncaring, unfeeling, malevolent] one (Lat. *Homo incompassibilis*);
- (3) an inoffensive [innocuous, unobtrusive] person (Lat. *Homo innocens*) vs. a wrongful [sinister, malicious] one (Lat. *Homo damnosus*).

Let us assume that passions themselves are neither good nor evil. But at the same time it seems worth to distinguish between *thoughtful* passions and *misguided* ones.¹² Respectively, *Homo compassibilis* is ‘a man of careful passions’ only, whereas *Homo damnosus* is ruled – or compelled – by wrongful ones exclusively.

7. Final remark: on “analogizing”

*Pero el otro habermasiano es demasiado unívoco
y el otro levinasiano es demasiado equívoco.
Por eso ha hecho falta la analogía en el diálogo intercultural.*

M. Beuchot

We know, at least from Hans-Georg Gadamer (and Robin George Collingwood), that the logic of the humanities is the logic of the question. At the same time, Józef Tischner, a Polish philosopher and the first chaplain of the Solidarity trade union said that the truth about social life is revealed before every thinking citizen. Consequently, an adequate theory of social structures and their dynamics should be developed. Therefore, the issue of appropriate models of other persons – in other words, “the propensity to make analogies that link us with other people” [Hofstadter & Sander, 2013,

¹² Instead of misguided passions one could speak about *unfortunate* ones. The phrase *an unfortunate passion* has been used for example by [E. C. Brown in Brown, 1832, pp. 161–162 and 195]. For the life and political activities of Elizabeth Cullen Brown see [Richardson, 2013, pp. 124–126].

p. 153] – seems to be of the very greatest importance both from a theoretical and practical standpoint. And the reason for this is put straightforwardly by Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala in the following quote:

After all, no weak individual, group or nation has ever believed that the world is in order the way it is or that there is a form of objective rationality that must be cherished, followed, and applied. While metaphysics or, which is the same, the politics of descriptions is the philosophy of the winners who wish to conserve the world as it is, the weak thought of hermeneutics becomes the thought of the weak in search of alternatives. [Vattimo, Zabala, 2011, p. 2]

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