

Ethics of Resilience

Vulnerability and Survival
in Times of Pandemics and Global Uncertainty

edited by

Robert Petkovšek and Bojan Žalec

LIT

Cover image: Anka Iskra

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at
<http://dnb.dnb.de>.

ISBN 978-3-643-91211-4 (pb)
ISBN 978-3-643-96211-9 (PDF)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

© LIT VERLAG Dr. W. Hopf Berlin 2022

Contact:

Fresnostr. 2 D-48159 Münster

Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-62 03 20 Fax +49 (0) 2 51-23 19 72

e-Mail: lit@lit-verlag.de <https://www.lit-verlag.de>

Distribution:

In the UK: Global Book Marketing, e-mail: mo@centralbooks.com

In North America: Independent Publishers Group, e-mail: orders@ipgbook.com

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	11
Hans Otto Seitschek	
PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF ANTHROPOLOGY REGARDING ETHICS OF RESILIENCE	15
Bojan Žalec	
RESILIENCE: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS WITH SPECIAL REGARD TO THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES	25
Branko Klun	
RESILIENCE AND RESONANCE. ROSA'S CONCEPTION OF THE GOOD LIFE IN CHALLENGING TIMES	33
Robert Petkovšek	
CHRIST - THE "RIGHT DISTANCE" TO THE HUMAN BEING: HÖLDERLIN IN THE LIGHT OF MIMETIC THEORY	43
Gábor Kovács	
THE RESILIENCE AND FRAGILITY OF TECHNOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION – DILEMMAS IN TROUBLED TIMES	61
Mateja Centa, Jonas Miklavčič, Vojko Strahovnik	
ETHICAL ISSUES RELATED TO THE USE OF AI-BASED ALGORITHMS IN PANDEMICS AND OTHER PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES	69
Arto Mutanen	
RESILIENCE AND ACTION COMPETENCE	79
Martina Vuk	
A THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE TO THE NOTION OF VULNERABILITY – A HYPOTHESIS	87
Anton Jamnik	
THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN WITNESSING AND THE COURAGE OF RESILIENCE	95
Mateja Pevec Rozman	
ETHICS OF RESILIENCE; HUMAN VULNERABILITY AND DEPENDENCE IN TIMES OF PANDEMICS, GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY AND TENSE PRESENT	115
Roman Globokar	
CHALLENGES OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC AND ASCENT OF NATIONALISM: RESPONSE OF POPE FRANCIS	125

Tomaz Erzar	BUILDING RESILIENCE AND PROMOTING GROWTH THROUGH SURRENDER COPING	133
Lidija Ušurel	THRIVING IN THE SEASON OF DROUGHT: THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY IN ANCHORING HUMAN EXISTENCE	141
Grzegorz Szamocki	RESILIENCE AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN THE MESSAGE OF JUDGES 6:11-24	149
Fosztó M. Arpad	A THEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE RESILIENCE OF UNBELIEF, WITH A CONTRIBUTION TO THE TAXONOMY OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES	157
Simon Malmenvall	JOVAN VLADIMIR OF DIOCLEA AND MARTYRDOM ON THE PERIPHERY OF EUROPE: SACRIFICE AND PERSEVERANT LOVE TOWARDS ONE'S NEIGHBOR	165
Béla Mester	VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE AS CHARACTERISTICS OF FINITE BEINGS	173
Ivan Platovnjak, Tone Svetelj	SPIRITUAL RESILIENCY: CHALLENGE FOR SPIRITUALITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY	181
Marcin Godawa	IDEA OF LOVING RESILIENCE IN PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL EXPERIENCE	189
Mari Jože Osredkar	FRAGILITY IS BENEFICIAL TO MAN	197
Ivica Raguž	WHEN I SAY I, WHOSE I IS IT? ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN SELF	205
Tadej Stegu	RESILIENCE AND THE PROCLAMATION OF THE KERYGMA	225

Tadej Strehovec

THE RELIGIOUS RESILIENCE AT THE TIME OF THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC: SELF-LIMITATION OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION
AND PROMOTION OF VACCINATION

233

ABSTRACTS

241

AUTHORS

253

REVIEWS

255

VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE AS CHARACTERISTICS OF FINITE BEINGS

Béla Mester, Budapest

1. Introduction

It is well-known that Immanuel Kant's definition of the humans as *finite beings* has fundamental role in his epistemology and aesthetics; the relationship of this concept with Kant's social and political philosophy is not emphasised so characteristically in modern interpretations. *Vulnerability* of human beings as an important part of *human condition* is a relatively recent idea of social philosophy, and it is not usual to make a parallelism between it and Kant's classic term, in the contemporary discourse. In the followings it will be offered a demonstration of the similarity of terms of *humans as finite beings* and *human vulnerability*, in the descriptions of *human condition* in different epochs, with a reference to several terms of late works of Judith Butler as a representative of ideas of our time. It will be touched several Kantian ideas about humans as *finite beings*. After that it will be shown that the root of these concepts is hidden in the religious concept of *humans as created beings* with all its consequences. However, this religious concept cannot be restricted to Christianity, but a highly common idea of every monotheistic system of religious thinking; this paper will be focussed on the classical Protestant interpretations of this concept what represent Immanuel Kant's intellectual background, mainly with their social and political aspects. Core of the problem is that how can *finite, vulnerable and created* beings, as the humans are, in the *state of cognitive and moral corruption* after the Fall, create a *working society*. By other words, how can civic virtues exist in a community consisted by humans with corrupted nature. By a possible answer, an ability for *sociability* remained for the humankind what is connected with ability for a conception of *common sense*. It is a requirement that a society consisted by *imperfect, sinful, finite beings* can achieve the *resilience* as a *community*. In the concluding words it will be shown that the solution of the human vulnerability is hidden in the social faculties of humans both as individuals and as communities.

2. Human Vulnerability as a Possible Anthropological Basis

In the present pandemic situation when everyone has personal experiences about *human vulnerability*, under conditions of *global uncertainty*; reading the *call for papers* of the present conference, one cannot avoid several terms and ideas

of recent works of Judith Butler. It is known that the basic point of Butler's late philosophy is the *vulnerability of the human body* (see especially Butler 2014). However, Butler's thought is closely linked with other parts of the discourse about *bio-politics and body-politics*, her original peculiarity is an extension of this initial idea for creating a basis of a description of a complete concept of *human condition*. However, her system of ideas is embedded in feminist philosophy, and her special term of *precariat* derived from the adjective of *precarity* is mainly used in a leftist social and economic criticism, her central aim is to create a general theory of philosophical anthropology, based on the intrinsic weakness, or, vulnerability of individual human beings and humanity as a whole. In her ideas, human communities and societies appear as remedies for this vulnerability, of course, just the well-functioning communities and societies with worthy values, only. *What are the suitable values*; it is the matter of further discussions of ethics; my aim in here was just emphasise her theoretical frame and basis, what is the vulnerability of humans as the fundament of *sociability of the humanity*, by other words, the human faculty for creating and maintaining communities and societies. It is interesting that this new philosophical anthropology of human vulnerability was rarely linked with other academic fields of the research of collective traumatic experiences and the cultural remembrance of the collective traumas, or, with other traditions of the human vulnerability in the history of philosophy. In the last years, a Hungarian scholar of the *studies on religions*, András Máté-Tóth applied Butler's theory for the *rival collective victim-identities* of the East-Central European national cultures, and called my attention for a possible new theoretical frame of the analysis of problems of our region; (see especially Máté-Tóth 2018a; 2018b, with direct references to the genocide in Slovenia after the WWII; his other publications in the previous volumes of the same book series can be familiar for the regular readers.) I will offer several parallelisms of these new theories of the human vulnerability in the history of philosophy, in the next section.

3. The Question of Relationship toward Us in the Antiquity as an Antecedent of Kant

However, it was mentioned previously Immanuel Kant's conception of humans as *finite beings*, his moral philosophy is just an important, but late example of a long tradition of an issue what can called the question of our relationship *toward us, ourselves*. In the history of philosophy it appears as the questions of the *self-love* and the *obligations toward the self*. Both of them as the questions of the moral philosophy are in the edge of individual and social regards of human being and in this regard they are highly sensitive indicators of the anthropological

backgrounds of ethical theories. Let us discuss at first the term of the *love of self* in the history of philosophy, from the point of view of the *human vulnerability*, and the relationship of individual and social regard of the human being. In the form inherited by Kant's epoch, it is a combination of two terms of two different antique traditions that are the Peripatetic *philautia* and the Stoic *oikeiōsis*. Aristotle's term has not a fundamental role in the Peripatetic system; it just refers to a natural human attitude and the rules of its right regulation. From the point of view of human sociability we can consider the triple perspective of humans, as it appears in the Peripatetic theory, and in other schools of the Greek philosophy, as well; as *elements of the universe*, as *citizens of their political community*, and as *wholes*, by other words, *universes* in themselves. It is a characteristic of Aristotle's argumentation that he often switches from one regard of the human being to another, in his moral philosophy. In this conceptual frame, *philautia* is a natural feature of every being as a *functional part of an ordered universe*, a harmony of a whole in itself, a *microcosm*, and a *self-estimation* of a part of a political community, a *citizen*, in the same time. From our point of view, it is highly important in this tradition that Aristotle and his followers can directly link the natural, social and psychical features of the humans, within the same moral theory. However, the *virtues* of the humans are different as natural, psychic and social beings, these aspects of the human life are reflected to each other in every moment of the moral thinking. It is assumed in the Peripatetic concept of *happiness*, what is not separable from the biological and political conditions of the individuals; an individual who deprived from the sufficient amount of material goods, including health, and lives in a wrongly established political community, cannot be happy, disregarding her or his moral values and virtues. This sound and realistic frame of the Aristotelian thought tacitly presumes an *exposure* of the human life to the biological, environmental and social-political circumstances, and contains hidden roots of the contemporary concept of *vulnerability of human life*. Another important antique antecedent of the concept of *self-love* is the Stoic *oikeiōsis*, what has much more importance in this tradition than the concept of *philautia* in the Peripatetic thought; it is the central motive of behaviour of every living being, instead of the Epicurean twin concepts of *pain* and *pleasure*. By its etymology, this term is based on *oikos* (*household*), consequently it has a connotation that beings live in the world and find their *home* in it. In the case of human beings, to *find home in the world* means *sociability*, a special human faculty for creating and maintaining political communities, on the one hand, and these communities are needed for the human life both from a material and a moral point of view. We can see that this Stoic term contains a hidden concept of the *imperfectability* and *vulnerability* of human beings, as well. In opposite of other living beings, humans can survive physically by the support of their societies, only, and they can find

their right place – their *home* – in the world if they fulfil the requirements of the figure of a good member of the human society what means under optimal conditions to be a *good citizen* of a *good political community*. By other words, humans who are deprived from their social life became *dehumanised* beings. In the main strength of the human condition called *sociability* is hidden the *weakness* and *vulnerability* of individual humans. These antique terms was combined as early as the Latin translation of the Greek terminology in Cicero's works and especially in such a popular work as Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* was, where the term *amor nostri* as an equivalent of the *oikeiōsis* appeared and disseminated in the modern European vernaculars with its ambiguous connotations, (Gellius Noct. Att. 12,5; he mentions here "amorem nostri et caritatem ita prorsus", by the standard English translation "a love and affection for ourselves", see Gellius 1927).

4. *Autophilia* and Sociability in Kant's Ethics

The scholar community of the philosophers in Kant's time was an inheritor of a Latinised form of a combination of the abovementioned two Greek terms; what is inevitable in the moral discourse, but associated with the pejorative connotation of *selfishness*. Kant met the problem of *our relationship with us, ourselves* in his *Metaphysics of Morals*, in a work close to his educational practice, in which he could not avoid any terms and questions of the discourse of moral philosophy of his epoch, including very concrete ones like the question of duels. Consequently, in here he could not use so coherent vocabulary of his own moral philosophy like in his *Critique of Practical Reason*; he always met the current terms and problems of the discourse of moral philosophy of his age. This intertextual connection offers an opportunity to observe how he reflected to the concepts and terms what are in the focus of our interest, especially the ones, which have a pejorative connotation like the moral term of *self-love* connected with the everyday expression of *selfishness*. From this aspect we should focus on the connected and separate discussion of the terms of *self-love* and the *obligations toward us, ourselves*, in the same time, in Kant's abovementioned work. As it is known, Kant tried hard to avoid offering any function of the term of *self-love* in the whole of his moral philosophy; but our everyday experiences are witnesses of the existence of emotions concerning ourselves, with moral connotations. In these cases the rigorous Kantian deontology tries to separate these emotions from the moral considerations, and regard them as *automatic attendant* of the right moral decision, which cannot have any independent role in the right moral thinking and acting of human beings. However, it is a natural feature of the humans, its existence is seemingly uncomfortable for Kant, who do not want recognise it as a legitimate motive of the moral acting on the one hand, but he do not think it a

simple moral error, on the other. The solution is the introduction of another issue, connected and disconnected with the *self-love*, in the same time; it is the question of the *obligations toward us, ourselves*. In the context of Kantian philosophy, this concept is directly linked with the issue of moral relationship of the individual human being and the whole of the humankind. The core of the Kantian theory in this field is the idea of the prohibition of self-humiliation, in several points with such formulations what are irreconcilables with a traditional concept and attitude of an old-fashioned Christian submissiveness, but they are in harmony of both the Christian and Enlightened concept of *dignity of the human beings*. By the Kantian doctrine, dignity of human beings is true for every individual, as the fundamental idea of our moral acting and considerations, including the case when the person of the *moral actor* and its personal target is the same. If it is not right to regard anyone as an instrument of the long-term ends of my acting, it is worst to offer myself as a *mere instrument* of a political, historical, or other end above me. It is not a surprise that in the Kantian works, the extreme of the self-humiliation is the case of suicide. But the equivalence of me and other individuals concerning human dignity is just the weaker argument against self-humiliation; the stronger one is more interesting from our point of view; it is the special connection between the *whole* of humanity and *every* individual human as its members. By this argument I should consider my human dignity in my moral decisions and acts, because I represent the whole of humanity in me, similarly to all the other human individuals. In this point, a special connection is described between the individuality and sociability of human beings. By a little bit extreme interpretation, dignity of the individuals is just a *dignity borrowed* from the *whole* of humanity. Humans empirically appear as individuals but they as *mere individuals*, deprived from their relations with the whole of humanity are valueless beings, without dignity, (see Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals*, Part II *Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Virtue I. On Duties to Oneself as Such*; Kant 2017. 185–236; especially § 20). On the other hand, humanity can exist just as a structured community of separate individuals, and not as a homogeneous mass. Kant's concepts and dilemmas show for us that there are two more different, but connected elements, hidden in the background. First of them is the *anthropological* and *religious roots* of this concept of *human dignity*, second one is the *human sociability* as a remedy.

5. Religious Roots of the Kantian Concept of Sociability

In the abovementioned topics of the Kantian moral philosophy the presence of secularised versions of several elements of a religious concept of the dignity of human beings is clear. The most explicit is the idea that individuals are *rep-*

representatives of the whole of humanity as a fundament of their dignity; it can be easily interpreted as the transformation of the religious idea of humans as *images of God*. The same phenomenon is observable in his social philosophy, as well. A central issue of Kant's essays on this topic is the problem that how to create a working society, including political communities and a peaceful global system of the coexistence of different groups of humanity, from individuals whose fundamental characteristic is their *infinite* and *imperfect* nature. The most extreme form of this concept in Kant's thought is the idea of functioning *republic of rational devils*, by the formulation of his *To Perpetual Peace*, in *First Supplement of the Guarantee for Perpetual Peace*. In the most widespread English translation it is "a race of devils, if only they are intelligent" (Kant 1983), what is in German: "Volk von Teufeln (wenn sie nur Verstand haben)". I think it is better here to call political actors with *Verstand* as *rational* rather than *intelligent* beings. This Kantian slogan is a witness of the religious origin of Kant's chain of ideas; the members of his enlightened republic are not simple *infinite* and *imperfect*, but radically *sinful* beings; by other words, their infinite and imperfect nature appears practically as their sinfulness. This imperfect nature manifested in sinfulness is not just an *obstacle* of building societies, political communities, but the main *reason why* of their existence; living in society is a need of humans *because of* their imperfect, sinful nature. Thinking about the religious root of Kant's social philosophy, it is obvious to refer here the argumentation for the origin and legitimacy of the earthly power and civic obedience in the *Epistle to the Romans* (13:1), and its interpretation in the early modernity, dominantly in the Protestant discourse of the political philosophy. After the Fall, human moral faculties has been corrupted, and in this imperfect condition of human beings we can live in political communities, only, under rules of earthly powers. Obligatory civic obedience is *a penalty* of our sinfulness, on the one hand, and *a remedy* of our sinful condition, on the other. However, it seems that all the classic theories of *social covenant* preserved this system of ideas in a more or less secularised form, what is clear in the comparisons of state of nature and the social state of the humanity in these works; human sociability cannot be described based on the *morally* corrupted human nature, only, because of two reasons.

At first, the measurement of the corruption of the human faculties in the early modern discourse of political philosophy is fundamental. If we calculate with *totally corrupted* faculties, our political behaviour must be restricted to a passive civic obedience, without a power to make a judgment on good or wrong rules. If we consider humans as they have less or more abilities for political thinking and acting, we can attribute them to thinking about public affairs, form and transform their political communities what can be *resilient* by the activity of their citizens. For the first, humanist generation of the Reformers, this question appeared as

the problem of usage of antique tradition of political philosophy in public affairs of their age; we can hear the *breath of relief* when Calvin concludes in his *Institutions* that humans have ability for *iustitia civilis*, consequently, usage of his favourite antique authors in the public thinking is allowed, and what is more, recommended. (See in the final version of his masterpiece, II.2.13–14; Calvinus 1559/1863–1892, columns 197. ff.)

At second, corrupted human faculties are connected directly with the *vulnerability* of humans as *finite beings*. It is symptomatic that in the rise of the idea of social covenant, Hobbes used directly the topic of human vulnerability, when he established his social theory of the *fear* as the fundamental feeling of the humans in the state of nature, defining the goal of political community as an elimination of this elementary human fear.

* * *

In the end of our journey in the history of ideas of the fundamentals of human societies and political communities, we can assume our experiences in several points. *Vulnerability and imperfection* of the individual humans as *finite beings*, and society as its *remedy* is a basic initial element of the history of political ideas; formation and maintenance of functioning political communities from humans with restricted faculties is the main question in here; and society itself appears as a remedy, a *self-healing* of humanity. In the present pandemic we can see in an extreme form the ambiguity of the *solitude* and *social needs* of individual humans; but it is the fundamental dilemma of human condition.

References

- Butler, J.** 2014. Bodily Vulnerability, Coalitions and Street Politics. *Critical Studies* 37, no.1: 99–119.
- Calvinus, I.** 1559/1863–1892b. *Institutio Religionis Christianae*. In: *Ioannis Calvinii Opera quae Supersunt Omnia*, Vol. 2. (*Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. 30). Eds. Baum, G. – Cunitz, E. – Reuss, E.. Brunswig: Schwetschke.
- Gellius, A. C.** 1927. *Attic Nights, Volume II: Books 6–13*. Translated by John Carew Rolfe. (*Loeb Classical Library*; 200). Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kant, I.** 1983. To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch. In: *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*, 107–144. Kant, I. Transl. by Ted Humphrey. Indianapolis–Cambridge: Hackett.
- Kant, I.** 2017. *The Metaphysics of Morals*. 2nd edition. Edited by Lara Denis; translated by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Máté-Tóth, A.** 2018a. Verletzte Körper: Judith Butler und die Problematik des globalen Zusammenlebens. In: *Und ihr habt mich (nicht) aufgenommen: Die Flüchtlinge und die Kirchen*, 9-23. Ed. Mieczyslaw, Polak. Wien: Post-Netzwerk.
- Máté-Tóth, A.** 2018b. Temetetlen testek. Az idegen diskurzusa Judith Butler nyomán. In: *Az idegen*, vol. 16, 80-94. Ed. Sándor Laczkó.. Szeged: Pro Philosophia Szegediensi Alapítvány – Magyar Filozófiai Társaság – Státus Kiadó.

Béla Mester

Vulnerability and Resilience as Characteristics of Finite Beings

It is well-known that Immanuel Kant's definition of the humans as *finite beings* has a fundamental role in the epistemology and aesthetics of the German philosopher. The relationship of this concept with Kant's social and political philosophy is not emphasised so characteristically in the modern interpretations. *Vulnerability* of human beings as an important part of the *human condition* is a relatively recent idea of the social philosophy, and it is not usual to make a parallelism between it and Kant's classic term, in the contemporary discourse. In the present writing, at first, it will be offered a demonstration of the similarity of the terms of *humans as finite beings* and *human vulnerability*, in the descriptions of the *human condition* in different epochs. After that it will be shown that the root of these concepts is hidden in the religious concept of the *humans as created beings* with all its consequences. However, this religious concept cannot be restricted to the Christianity, but it is a highly common idea of every monotheistic system of religious thinking; I will focus here on the classical Protestant interpretations of this concept what represent the intellectual background of Immanuel Kant, mainly with their social and political aspects. The core of the problem is how *finite, vulnerable and created beings*, as the humans are, in the *state of cognitive and moral corruption* after the Fall, can create a *working society*. In other words, how the civic virtues can exist in a community which consists of humans with corrupted nature. It is the requirement how a society which consists of *imperfect, sinful, finite beings* can achieve the *resilience* as a *community*.

Key words: *created being, finite being, Immanuel Kant, resilience, sociability, vulnerability*

**Béla Mester, PhD, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Philosophy of the
Research Centre for the Humanities, Budapest, Hungary**