THINKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE NEIGHBOUR

From Jaspers to Derrida

MATS ANDRÉN

AT PRESENT, we see a lot of ambition to develop cultural distinctiveness, nationality and cultural borders. This ambition is not without risk, as cultural borders can be charged with feelings of exclusion and nationalism. It is certainly no coincidence that national sovereignty is once again an issue for politicians within the member states of the European Union (EU).

It is therefore timely to highlight concepts that offer alternatives to the rampant nationalism in Europe. Where do we find concepts that give space and relevance to alternative ideas? In the present urgency, we need to define alternative concepts, narratives and images. Appropriately, the editors of this volume ask: "What shapes our perceptions and imaginations of our neighbors in a time of globalization, increased social and geographic mobility, and—in the wake of new conflicts—the alarming re-establishment of borders and military alliances (not just in Europe)? What is the social and political role of neighbors and neighborly love, and how can we envision new ways of living together peacefully?"

A possible angle to frame images and imaginings of neighbours in a globalized era is to turn to the concept of a responsibility that transcends cultural and political borders. The concept of responsibility is embedded in modern European history. Discussions of representative government advanced it as a political idea in the latter part of the 18th century, it was a philosophical idea in the 19th and 20th centuries, and now it is integral to existentialism, phenomenology and neo-Kantianism. Largely as a response to the consequences of mod-

ern technology, the post-war era gave rise to new efforts to define a relevant concept of responsibility. It is a concept that aims to reach out to neighbours across boundaries.

In the subsequent section, I will demonstrate five philosophers' contributions to the concept of responsibility and the connecting lines to the question of the neighbour. They were writing against the backdrops of the assaults of the world wars, of galloping technological development, of environmental and nuclear threats, of the post-war era, and the emerging globalization from the 1970s and 1980s onwards. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) applied responsibility to the burning issues he examined as a public intellectual. After the Prague Spring in 1968, the dissident Jan Patočka (1907–1977) used the concept of responsibility in considerations about European heritage. Hans Jonas (1903–1993) and Karl-Otto Apel (1922–2017) were two very different philosophers who in the 1970s and 1980s both argued that ethics must expand to embrace the entire planet, and they prescribed a collective sense of responsibility that included the future as well. Finally, we make a stop by the fall of communism in Europe in 1989–1991, when Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) examined responsibility. The argument that will come out of this elaboration is that responsibility can be developed into an abstraction that risks losing relevance. Thus, it should be engaged with concepts that underline the lives of individual people, such as equity, solidarity or—neighbour.

All of these examples indicate that responsibility is not obviously related to the idea of neighbour, as none of the texts engage with it. However, it is not far-fetched to relate responsibility with neighbour and the transcending of borders. The idea of neighbour has apparently much to do with boundaries and a sense of responsibility that reaches beyond one's own community. I will not explore the relation between the two concepts of neighbour and responsibility throughout the history of ideas. Instead, this contribution engages with the idea of responsibility in order to contribute to the framing of the image and concept of neighbour.

Responsibility as European exceptionalism: Karl Jaspers (1883–1969)

In the immediate wake of the Second World War, Karl Jaspers broadcast a speech on the responsibility of the Germans for the war, the systematic extermination of Jews and the murdering of people who opposed the Nazi regime. He enlarged it into a book—*Die Schuldfrage* (1946; English edition: *The Question of German Guilt*, 1947)—which was published shortly after the end of the war. Central to his argument was the collective responsibility for what had happened. Of course, those who undertook criminal acts were guilty, but also those who did not act to prevent them. There was an ethical, moral and political guilt that the people of Germany had to face. Thus, they could not shirk their shared responsibility for the crimes.

It is a remarkable argument developed by Jaspers. When much focus was on survival and the initial rebuilding of Germany, when the people had to cope with the large-scale destruction of the cities, and when war criminals were hunted down and Nazi leaders were prosecuted at the Nuremberg Trials for crimes against humanity, Jaspers wanted the Germans to share responsibility for the twelve years of Nazi rule. For the sake of the Germany that was in the making, to establish democracy, to re-establish humanitarian ideals, he called on everyone to recognize their own guilt. One could not solely blame the regime and it was not an excuse enough to have followed the laws and orders of the leaders. Only when facing one's own responsibility for what had happened would it be possible to set Germany on a new course, and to prevent both a repetition of the crimes and the sentiments that facilitated the Nazi crimes taking seed again in future ground.[1]

To argue for a national responsibility was not unknown in Germany. At least since the early 20th century, conservatives and the radical political right had called for the country to take on a "world responsibility", a call that associated with claims to make Germany into a world power. However, Jaspers radically changed the meaning of German responsibility to include all Germans' acts, not just those of the state, and to relate it to a future of democracy, humanitarian

ideals and peaceful cooperation with its neighbours. That is, responsibility was needed in order for Germany to foster new relations with its neighbours, to take responsibility for both the previous occupations of and atrocities on its neighbours, and for the idea of Germans as a superior people that should rule over its neighbours. To emerge from the disasters as a "better people", they had to face their own guilt and responsibility. Only then would it be possible for Germany to regain trust from its neighbours. Consequently, Jaspers' concept of responsibility concerned the larger community as well as the individual.

In September 1946, Jaspers participated in a congress organized by Julien Benda (1867–1956) in Geneva, where intellectuals discussed what remained of the European spirit and what hopes that still could be extracted from it. His presentation was published as a German booklet called *Europa der Gegenwart* (1947). Soon translated to other languages (English edition: *Europe of the Present*, 1948), it also signified his new role as an important thinker about Europe's future. Jaspers identifies a specific European development taking place since the 16th century with "the universal science and technics", which directed Europe on a different path from those of the high cultures of China and India.[2] Thus, he found European thinking all the way back to the Bible and Homer. In European history, from Athens and onwards, he saw opposition to dictators from emancipatory movements, which from the 16th century associated with strivings for universal knowledge, in science as in history. Hence, he associated freedom with historical awareness and the will for knowledge.[3] Challenged by America and Russia, exhausted after the wars, Europe could no longer consider itself as exceptional in the world; it was becoming smaller and needed to come together in a federation.[4] Jaspers moved easily between philosophy and contemporary politics, and turned to his conceptual framework developed over four decades to address the extremely troubling issues of the day.

He implored Europeans to transcend themselves, to change their way of thinking and to realize Europe's own responsibility to transcend: Europe had created a spirit that Europe itself must overcome.[5] Jaspers characterized Europe with a Janus face, an entity which has

created a world community but also world wars and nuclear weapons.[6] Europe had been the driving force behind science and technics, and its spirit must bring to the world essential measures to reshape order. Economically, this includes fairness and politically it holds a peaceful order that stands against violence and terror. The measures should be directed by "the responsibility for the future of Europe".[7]

Obviously, Jaspers' notion of European responsibility associated with the idea of European exceptionalism and the claim that Europe should be taken as a role model for the world. Jaspers stressed that by enlarging the European idea to an idea of humanity it was possible to find the basis for a new world order.[8] One may reasonably ask if this is Eurocentric. The answer is definitely yes, if Eurocentrism solely implies exceptionalism. However, after the Second World War and in opposition to the ideology of the Nazi regime and previous German nationalism and imperial ambitions, Jaspers extended his interest in non-European cultures, especially Chinese and Indian philosophy, and proposed the equality of cultures and their right not to be dominated. In *Europa der Gegenwart*, Jaspers' conception of the European idea was based on an idea of equality between cultures and states, in the sense that no culture rules the others. Just as no nation in Europe should rule over its neighbours, Europe should not rule the world, nor should America or Russia:[9]

> The liberation of the world lies in this idea. As Europeans, we can only want a world in which Europe has a place, but in which neither Europe nor any other country rules over all, a world in which people set each other free and attend with one another in mutual concern.[10]

Thus, the idea of a European responsibility transcends Europe and reaches out to the world, but not with the aim of ruling the world. In his definition, European responsibility redefines the European exceptionalism in setting it apart from the idea of dominance over European neighbours as well as over Europe's neighbours.

Origins of European responsibilities: Jan Patočka (1907–1977)

In *Kacířské eseje o filosofii dějin* (1980; English edition: *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, 1996) on the decline of Western civilization, Jan Patočka makes responsibility a defining feature of Europe and connects it to the identification of a European heritage that is counter to ethnic divisions and national frontiers, and promises a new human community.[11] This makes Patočka's idea of responsibility interesting to consider in relation to the notion of neighbour.

According to Patočka, Europeans are concerned with their own responsibility of doing the right thing. Responsibility is about winning freedom by subjection of what Plato called "the orgiastic", and thereby it concerns the individual struggle with oneself.[12] However, there is also a societal dimension of responsibility put forward by Patočka, that concerns the relation between the individual and society, and how a social responsibility can be formed by the individual's relation to "the transcendent Good".[13] Patočka relates to Christianity's idea of a responsible life, of taking responsibility for the guilt that the individual always must live with and to the making of a human soul in the form of an individual person. With Christianity comes no escape from the endless individual responsibility. However, even if responsibility is strongly associated with the individual and the choices that concern what (s)he wants to be, it also represents the hope of a salvation from the decline of the European society. Responsibility, for Patočka, is the basis for the spiritual and moral stature needed to answer the decline that characterizes modern Europe. This is because it is an individual experience that only makes sense if communicated and connected with others. Thus, responsibility is only meaningful if resting on an inner-worldly solidarity.[14]

Still, Patočka's conception of European responsibility begins with the individual and the relation to a transcendent good as manifested by Christianity. He suggests, like Jaspers, that Europe is strongly related to Christianity and the pros and cons of science, technology and modern progress. For both, Christianity is the basis for European responsibility, which is defined as the capacity of individuals to transcend themselves.

Jaspers' text on Europe connects responsibility to the larger community, and Patočka stresses that responsibility is only meaningful when related to solidarity with others, that is, a form of neighbourly relationship. He conceived of solidarity in contrast to the particularism dangerously growing from the Enlightenment and "the idea of the state as an earthly divinity which brooks no limitation of its sovereignty".[15]

Patočka's idea of responsibility is integrated with his examinations of European civilization, crisis and heritage. In discussing the modern civilization of Europe, Patočka resembles Jaspers in arguing that mechanical ways of thinking vulgarize life and that we should know better than to reduce our lives to fit a technological civilization. Both Jaspers and Patočka echo the inter-war period's discourse on European crisis that often circled around the consequences of the scientific and technological revolutions. While Jaspers discusses these issues in relation to Max Weber (1864–1920), Patočka relates to Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). Like Husserl, he expands on the European crisis as a moral one, retrieving the leading theme of the discourse on Europe from the 1920s to the 1940s, also explored by other philosophers, such as Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955). Like Jaspers, Patočka conceives the possibilities of the very same civilization when he pinpoints that it can create a life without violence, with equality of possibilities and opportunity to defeat poverty.[16]

According to Patočka, modern history and its continuing moral crisis of nihilism has impaired the most fundamental European heritage, as represented by classical philosophy's value of truth. Inspiring his disciples among the dissidents, such as Vaclav Havel (1936–2011), he stresses the importance of living in truth and the need to live in truthful communities where its members can "care for the soul". In his historical account, he states that these values gained a stronger influence in Western Christianity, and so concludes in referring to Greek philosophy "that it is the care for the soul that made Europe".[17]

What, though, makes humans just and truthful is their *care for their soul*. Care for the soul is the legacy of ancient Greek philosophy. Care for the soul means that truth is something not given once and for all, nor merely a matter of observing and acknowledging the observed,

but rather a lifelong inquiry, a self-controlling, self-unifying intellectual and vital practice.[18]

He regards the Enlightenment as the adjustment by Europeans to their growing strength and dominance of the world, when they explored a universality built on technical might.[19] However, the Enlightenment had also undermined the European's obliviousness of the soul. In other writings from the early 1970s, he stresses the importance of the soul. In Simona Forti's words, "for Patočka, the soul is that which enables one to overcome the simple dualism of the mythical world, the dualism between the everyday and the divine, the ordinary and the extraordinary".[20]

While Jaspers is forward-looking and considers European responsibility as something to strive for in accomplishing a redefinition of European heritage, Patočka's aim is to understand the history that defines Europe, which leads him to Christianity. Like Jaspers, his concept of European responsibility contributes to a definition of European exceptionalism. His hope for the "care for the soul" to overcome the dominance of technological civilization also stresses a European legacy. If applied to the rest of the world it risks being a new Eurocentrism.[21] However, in the 1970s he distances himself from the idea of European superiority and the very European traditional way of conceiving world history. According to Karel Novotný, Patočka's idea of caring for the soul includes "critical self-examination and self-renunciation".[22] In reflecting on the technical reason and how it during 300 years has alienated the Europeans from living truly human lives and formed a spirit keen to conquer the world—which has become a defining feature of Europe—he is utterly clear: "We can thus indicate the specificity of Europe but, on this ground, we cannot prove its supremacy."[23] Thus, not only Jaspers, but Patočka too distances himself from Eurocentrism when reflecting on European responsibility. Just like Jaspers, his responsibility relates to a Europe of nation states that overcomes narrow notions of sovereignty and rests in a shared European culture. Thus, Patočka demonstrates how responsibility fits well together with imaginings of neighbourly friendliness and contrasts nation states' frontiers and imperial ambitions.

Responsibility as an origin: Hans Jonas (1903–1993)

When from the 1970s responsibility becomes a central concept for ethical considerations, with the ambition to embrace humanity across the globe and to include both present and future generations, the work of Hans Jonas was much discussed. At first look, it associates well with images of the neighbours having a shared common ground. However, Jonas' theory has also been critiqued.

Just like Jaspers, Jonas contrasts the concept of responsibility with nihilism. He proceeds from a fairly general definition: "The disruption between man and total reality is at the bottom of nihilism."[24] He regarded nihilism as an old phenomenon. In the early 1950s, Jonas completed the work on ancient Gnosticism that he had begun back in the late 1920s. He was originally struck by the similarities between Gnosticism and modern thinking. He subsequently concluded that Gnosticism was an old form of nihilism, which enabled him to more clearly understand the modern version as channelled by existentialism, primarily Heidegger (1889–1976). Like existentialism, the Gnostic doctrine of a God divorced from the world left human beings without a moral compass. But Gnosticism was not simply nihilistic; it also found a purpose in eternal life. In contrast, Jonas regarded modern nihilism as radical in that it offered no guidelines or objectives for human action: "That only man cares, in his finitude facing nothing but death, alone with his contingency and the objective meaninglessness of his projecting meanings, is a truly unprecedented situation."[25]

Jonas maintained that philosophy must find alternatives to nihilism, and he tried to make existentialism fit the bill. In *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* (1979; English edition: *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 1984), his magnum opus, he argued that earlier philosophers had treated the concept in an overly restrictive manner. He obtained some guidance and assistance from religion, which extended the concept of responsibility beyond human life to include nature as well. The new dimensions of responsibility that Jonas presented included the need to go beyond the anthropocentric framework of previous philoso-

phy.[26] However, he said that contemporary religion lacked the ability to fend off the nihilism—which is both powerful and vacuous, mixing extensive knowledge with ignorance about the direction of human existence—of technological civilization. Only a new ethics could remedy the situation.[27]

Jonas presented a doctrine of human action in the face of modern technology. The enormous forces spawned by technological civilization require a new ethics that must observe the cumulative impact in order to permit responsible, forward-looking action. A new ethics must incorporate the realization that human life is rooted in global conditions and that any action can threaten its very existence. A suggestive but somewhat opaque sentence pointed to the essence of the dilemma: "The gap between the strength of foresight and the power of action creates a new ethical problem."[28] For Jonas, human beings have great power to act but lack sufficient knowledge of the consequences. Thus, action must be based on an ethics that is equal to the challenges and threats of modern technology.

Given that scientific and technological progress was now threatening the future of the human race, he argued that a new imperative of responsibility is needed. Imperatives must be formulated that affirm the right of the whole planet, including rights of future generations to the planet. Jonas believes that the contemporary world demands an entirely new ethic. Traditional ethics looked no more than one generation ahead and focused on circumscribed societies—be it the city-state of antiquity or the modern nation-state.[29] But now humanity was faced with "a growing sphere of collective action [...] the enormity of whose challenges requires an unprecedented dimension of responsibility"[30] for the entire biosphere, "the global conditions of human life and its distant future, existence itself".[31] The question of time horizons represents the most radical ethical transformation to which Jonas calls attention. The Baconian rationality that has led to unparalleled technological progress is incapable of assuming responsibility for generations to come. On the contrary, the fruits of technology are endangering the very existence of humanity. Jonas says that technology has unintentionally been allowed to take over, is

racing ahead at a pace that is harder and harder to control, and offers a mirage of never-ending progress that can only result in universal disaster.[32]

According to Jonas, responsibility differs from ordinary rights and obligations. No reciprocity is demanded. The concept does not hold people accountable to others and is thereby neither legal nor political. His primary description refers to the spontaneous sense of responsibility that people feel towards small children.[33] Thus, its archetype is bestowed by nature.[34] The idea touches on the core of Jonas' thinking, which sees biological life as the basis for all philosophy and ethics. He wants to make a detour around the dualism between body and soul, instinct and will, that is so common in Western thought by finding a purpose in nature. Central to his philosophy is that life affirms and propagates itself.[35] However, he argues that there is a special, incontrovertible requirement to preserve the human race because of its ability to transcend nature.[36]

In Jonas' view, the sense of responsibility provides the basis for the optimum ethical position. Responsibility tries to predetermine human action with respect to specific values and objects. The ethics of responsibility for the world and the future protects the integrity of humanity and of nature.[37] Clearly, this includes neighbourly relations. The ethic of responsibility is inescapable and global, the foundation of social life. He regards it as a transhistorical reality, a reflection of humanity's biological origins and sense of entitlement. It is in our bones like a primal phenomenon.[38]

This is where a serious objection can be levelled against Jonas. He regards nature not only as a foundation, but as an inexorable, seething ferment that brews a sense of responsibility. From such a point of view, it is difficult to make out where historical, changing responsibility takes over. For instance, the very use of the word responsibility is linked to modern legal, political and economic individualism. Key aspects of the responsibility of which Jonas speaks are also associated with a globalized world and the time horizons that have emerged from the intersection of technology, its consequences and opportunities for collective action. By proceeding from transhistorical

conditions, he makes it difficult to discern changeable and culturally distinct phenomena.[39]

A more alarming objection is that the duty to preserve humanity can be facilitated by its contraction, whatever the means may be. This is the critique raised by Karl-Otto Apel (more of this below), which has consequences for neighbourly images. With fewer of the "others" there would be a better chance for humanity to survive, with less pressure on resources and less environmental damage to the planet. Certainly, that is not a viable starting point for creating positive images of neighbourly love.

Responsibility as a goal: Karl-Otto Apel (1922–2017)

An alternative would be to look at the question the opposite way and regard the new type of responsibility as a goal rather than a starting point. What would be decisive in that case is the ability to address contemporary threats while overcoming borders by including both the global community and future generations. Karl-Otto Apel, who wrote in the post-Kantian tradition and collaborated on discursive ethics with Habermas (b. 1929), offered another way of understanding responsibility in relation to such issues.

In *Diskurs und Verantwortung: Das Problem des Übergangs zur postkonventionellen Moral* (1988; Discourse and Responsibility: The Problem of the Transformation to Postconventional Ethics), Apel, like Jonas, identified the need for an ethics of responsibility as a response to modern science and technology. The environmental crisis and nuclear armament are the clearest manifestations of the predicament. Natural resources are scarce and nuclear weapons can destroy the world.[40] Thus, he spoke of the "responsibility of our times" and the need for a "macroethics" or "global ethics" that can guide humanity.[41] Like Jonas, he argued that a new historical situation had arisen and forced the human race to assume collective moral responsibility.

Although Apel praised Jonas for bringing the need of a new universal ethics to the fore, he was deeply critical of the way that Jonas' principle of responsibility focused on preserving humanity and the

conditions for its survival without leaving room for a concept of progress and improved living standards.[42] Apel carried his objection to its logical conclusion by linking Jonas' principle to the Social Darwinist view that humanity can more readily survive if "parts of Third World populations starved to death". He made it clear that Jonas was not thinking that way, but asserted that his principle of responsibility failed to erect obstacles to such a solution.[43]

Apel's critique concerned the natural basis of Jonas' philosophy.[44] Whereas Jonas grounded his ethics on biology and nature, Apel proceeded from reason: people see the necessity of a new type of responsibility in their capacity as rational creatures. Thus, he placed himself in the Kantian tradition. As rational creatures, people can also demand equity on the same terms wherever they live, and even for future generations. For Apel, this concept of equity pointed forward and toward social progress. He extended the principle of responsibility to include preservation of human life *and* dignity.[45] With this point made, Apel's concept of responsibility is a safer haven for protecting the neighbour.

Apel saw what he called "communication communities" as a means of implementing such a principle of responsibility. Discourse and human beings as discursive creatures are the pillars of his responsibility. He repeatedly emphasized that the way in which discussions are conducted reveals a kind of ethics. People enter into a discussion under particular historical circumstances on the basis of specific human inclinations and interests. Meanwhile, people stake a claim to an ideal community by participating in a discussion. They assume the existence of a communication community based on the norm that everyone is accepted as an equal partner who shares responsibility for addressing the problem. One basic ethical norm is that consensus can be reached by means of argumentation. That is the prerequisite for entering into a discussion in the first place. Thus, there is a meta-norm that transcends situational norms and resides in human reason.[46] Apel never defended his thesis by looking at the past, but took his examples from modern society and clearly reflected the basic norms that are associated with a democratic, constitutional state. An example of this

is his assertion that the norms underlying policymaking, legislation and administration must be subject to public discussion in order to achieve legitimacy.[47]

The difference between Jonas and Apel is illustrated by their approaches to the responsibility of elected officials. Jonas proceeded from ancient Greek philosophy and the discussions by Solon, Pericles and other lawgivers,[48] whereas Apel considered the role of modern office holders. He rejected Weber's notion that elected officials were responsible to their constituents only and that ethics should be relegated to the private sphere. Apel sought to erase that distinction by basing ethics and responsibility on the elements of reason that are inherent to communication. He asserted that elected officials have an ethical responsibility. The tension between a specific political system, with all its conflicts and private interests, and an ideal communication community is particularly challenging. He wrote that responsible officials should promote the long-term ascendancy of "the basic norm of conflict resolution through argumentative consensus building".[49]

Apel based his concept of responsibility on an ethical rationality that he carefully separated from the institutional approach to creating legitimacy. While an institutional approach involves strategic action that proceeds from calculated-self interest, as manifested in economism and politics, ethical rationality stems ideally from discussions that are made possible by shared rules and norms.[50] In Apel's view, the sense of responsibility ultimately comes from an awareness of the gap between the current and ideal communication community as well as the insight that improvement is necessary and possible.[51]

Apel's concept of responsibility includes equity between the people of the present generations. Thus, he provides an important alternative to Jonas. Furthermore, humanity is not regarded as an eternally abstract category. Responsibility implies an ideal of equity and the possibility of moral progress. This means that with Apel, responsibility connects with the concrete neighbours across all kinds of borders. A moral progression in regard of considering and treating neighbours as equals is a real possibility. Thus, responsibility will include an aim to preserve the integrity and dignity of the neighbour.

Responsibility as a promise: Jacques Derrida (1930–2004)

When discussing Patočka's texts on European responsibility, Jacques Derrida remarked that they demonstrated a "genealogy of European responsibility or of responsibility as Europe", which both are tied to Christianity.[52] However, he also defined Patočka in a nondogmatic philosophical tradition with, among others, Kant and Kierkegaard together with Levinas and Ricœur, that revealed a thinking about "the possibility of religion without religion".[53] Thus, Derrida set out to rupture the ties between responsibility and Christianity, looking for "the condition that the Good no longer be a transcendental objective [...] but the relation to the other, a response to the other; an experience of personal goodness and a movement of intention".[54] Certainly, seeing and relating to the other can only take place on the condition of a self. Derrida writes that "responsibility demands irreplaceable singularity", that "it comes from someone and is addressed to someone", and that "the experience of responsibility" unavoidably transmutes into guilt—"I am guilty as much as I am responsible" because "one is never responsible enough".[55] Clearly, for Derrida responsibility is a capacity of the individual to act beyond itself, unselfishly on behalf of others.[56]

This is neither the place for a detailed demonstration of Derrida's concept of responsibility through the four essays in *Donner la mort* (1992; English edition: *The Gift of Death*, 1995) that was developed from 1990 to 1992, nor for an examination of his exposition of a range of complexities of the concept. For example, he alleged that the responsible action can never be fully explained: even if it requires understanding of its implications, the action involves something that exceeds understanding, something mysterious.[57] Recurrently and linking to Patočka, Derrida stated that by responsibility something always remained mysterious. In an example of importance for our examination, Derrida rejected the possibility to define responsibility as an act of delegation and as an administrative concept. While a conceptual history of responsibility would partly demonstrate responsibility as a given authority that the receiver responds to, Derrida was interested

in responsibility as heresy and dissidence: "there is no responsibility without a dissident and inventive rupture with respect to tradition, authority, orthodoxy, rule, or doctrine".[58] Correspondingly, he distinguished between substitution and uniqueness. Responsibility can be an accounting for one's acts "before the generality", for having done what someone else could have done, but also for "singularity", "nonsubstitution", "nonrepetition".[59] For Derrida, responsibility regards ethics rather than administration, and in a thought-provoking twist he concedes to the notion of responsibility being an "ethics of 'irresponsibilization'". To be responsible, we might have to act irresponsibly. Responsibility can imply the following of legal and ethical rules but also to act against them: "The ethical can therefore end up making us irresponsible."[60] Thus, he asserts an understanding of responsibility that associates the concept with different meanings, complexities, and to some extent with opacity.

In addition, he also recalled an everyday experience of an intertwining of responsibility with irresponsibility. As having a preference to act as a citizen and fulfilling his duties as professor and philosopher, Derrida acted responsibly. However, at the same time he sacrified obligations towards many others, not only to his family but to those he responded to or addressed improperly, to those unknowns who are sick and starving. He contended that "I can respond only to the one [...], to the other, by sacrificing that one to the other."[61] Thus, Derrida's conception of responsibility is about individuals in the community of others: "Duty or responsibility binds me to the other, to the other as other, and ties me in my absolute singularity to the other as other."[62] In making these claims, he addressed an extensive community that in the last instance concerns humanity. At the same time, it means that the individual action can never include all others, or all neighbours in need of help. Practising responsibility would at the same time mean that imaginaries of neighbours in need are related to guilt.

However, from the same period dates another essay where Derrida reflects on the contemporary's Europe: *L'autre cap* (1991; English edition: *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, 1992). Original-

ly a talk from 1990 at a conference with distinguished intellectuals about the future of Europe after the fall of communism in Central Europe, it was published the following year. The essay commented on the hopes and fears that came with the redefining of Europe's cultural identity. Typical for the discourse on Europe in this period, he declared himself to be a European intellectual but not all through, as his cultural identity also included other parts ("I feel European *among other things*"),[63] contending that this signified conceptions of identity and culture. Therefore, it was necessary "to take the old name of Europe at once very seriously and cautiously".[64] He explicitly discussed the idea of Europe, of the modern tradition of this idea from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) to Paul Valéry (1871–1945), of Europe as different from other cultures, and importantly of Europe as redefining itself "in not closing itself off in its own identity and in advancing itself in an exemplary way toward what it is not".[65] This is at the core of his pleading in *The Other Heading*, Europe must remember what it is and keep to certain values but also move beyond the very same values.

So, what does responsibility mean when associated with the redefinition of Europe? In Derrida, the answer to that question was based on the observation that cultural identities always are making double claims of both self-affirmation and of representing the universal. Cultural identification comes with singularity that can be "individual, social, national, state, federal, confederal", but also with claims of responding to the universal. Derrida argued that identity associates with "the responsibility of testifying for universality".[66] Against this backdrop, he related Europe to a set of duties, which we can understand as forming a conception of European responsibility.

These duties or responsibilities all correspond to values that are correlated to Europe, but they also contain an incitement to exceed the very same values. They include the duty to the European promises to condemn "totalitarian dogmatism that [...] destroyed democracy" and preserve the idea of a democracy that makes promises for tomorrow, to respect differences and "the universality of formal law", to persist in faithfulness to Enlightenment ideals and recognize its

boundaries. In addition, the duty prescribes to nurture the idea of criticism and the critical tradition but also to go beyond it "without yet compromising it".[67]

However, the first duty is to remember the European promises, in order to re-identify what Europe is. This implies an openness to what Europe is but also "opening it onto that which is not, never was, and never will be Europe".[68] In line with this argument and in a critique of the ideal of culturally homogeneous societies, Derrida prescribes integration of foreigners together with an acceptance of their otherness: "The same *duty* also dictates welcoming foreigners in order not only to integrate them but to recognize and accept their alterity."[69] Thus, to include neighbours across cultural divides and encourage taking responsibility for the neighbours different from us and to see what we have in common beyond differences.

Conclusion

The present context for reflecting on the responsibility/neighbour theme cannot avoid the nationalistic revolutions in Europe that can very well lead to new borders within Europe and the radical change of the European Union. Already, with the United Kingdom now disengaged and struggling to establish the pros and cons of the divorce, we are witnessing the imposing of a new borderline. Moreover, we are witnessing how nationalistic movements in power are shifting democracies towards authoritarian rule. This does not necessarily associate with anti-Europeanness. In the Brexit case it certainly did, but the nationalistic leaders of Hungary and Poland profess European values, only that they differ from the European values of the EU. What Brexiteers and nationalists on the Continent have in common is the emphasis on national sovereignty as the right to make decisions on their own, even if violating European law. Their argument is in direct opposition to the basic idea behind the post-war integration of Europe that the states need to give up some of their sovereignty to gain the advantages of being a member of the Union. Thus, pleas for taking back control are a challenge to the idea of neighbourly responsibility across borders.

Having said this, there is no need to further argue for the present relevance of the concept of responsibility. Certainly, when relating responsibility to images of the neighbour one should consider whether the concept of responsibility is Eurocentric. It certainly is of European origin and can well be associated with European interests as by the EU, and even with conceptions of a European thinking as the first truly global spirit in history. However, we also see the efforts to overcome Eurocentrism in defining responsibility in relation to a humbler idea of Europe's place in the world order and of a more self-reflexive and self-critical idea of Europe and of European integration. Thus, we can apply tolerance and hospitality to the responsibility/neighbour theme.

Importantly, when relating responsibility to the neighbour we cannot limit ourselves to a concept of responsibility that remains an abstract category. This is in accordance with Apel's discussion of Jonas, when he embraces human dignity and equity for present generations as fundamental elements of responsibility. I believe that this is reflected when Derrida relates responsibility to individual guilt towards other people and in his proposition that the "responsibility binds me to the other, to the other as other, and ties me in my absolute singularity to the other as other". The Danish philosopher Peter Kemp (1937–2018) critiqued Jonas' imperative of responsibility for precisely being abstracted from real living individuals; the future integrity of humanity becomes an abstraction if left without consideration of the people of today. The responsibility for the future must not forget the responsibility for the now living. Alluding to Derrida's *The Other Heading*,[70] considerations of responsibility for the actually existing neighbours would do well to (1) activate notions of hospitality and tolerance, (2) nurture ideas of critique, democracy and international rights, (3) resist racism, nationalism and xenophobia, and (4) avoid pigeonholing itself in an identity that excludes other identities and avoid strict definitions of what is identity.

NOTES

1 Jaspers 1946, pp. 52–58.
2 Jaspers 1947, pp. 11–12.
3 Jaspers 1947, pp. 15–28.
4 Jaspers 1947, pp. 30–31.
5 Jaspers 1947, p. 34.
6 Jaspers 1947, p. 35.
7 Jaspers 1947, p. 36; my translation.
8 Jaspers 1947, p. 37.
9 Jaspers 1947, p. 39.
10 Jaspers 1947, p. 38; my translation. The original: "Die Befreiung der Welt liegt in diesem Gedanken. Wir können als Europäer nur eine Welt wollen, in der Europa seinen Platz hat, aber in der weder Europa noch eine andere Kultur über alle herrscht, eine Welt, in der die Menschen sich gegenseitig frei lassen und in gegenseitiger Betroffenheit aneinander teilnehmen."
11 Patočka 1996, pp. 82–83.
12 Patočka 1996, p. 98.
13 Patočka 1996, p. 106.
14 Patočka 1996, pp. 106–115. See also Forti 2016, p. 62.
15 Patočka 1996, p. 88.
16 Patočka 1996, p. 118.
17 Patočka 1996, p. 82.
18 Patočka 1996, p. 82.
19 Patočka 1996, pp. 81–86.
20 Forti 2016, p. 60.
21 Novotný 2016, p. 308.
22 Novotný 2016, pp. 308, 313–314, n. 21.
23 Patočka quotation is from Stancu 2016, p. 324.
24 Jonas 2001, p. 234.
25 Jonas 2001, p. 233.
26 On this, see Werner Jeanrond's article in this volume.
27 Jonas 1984, pp. 26–29, 57–58, 99–100.
28 Jonas 1984, pp. 22–30, citation on p. 28: "Die Kluft zwischen Kraft des Vorherwissens und Macht des Tuns erzeugt ein neues ethisches Problem."
29 Jonas 1984, pp. 28–31.
30 Jonas 1984, p. 31.
31 Jonas 1984, pp. 3–4.
32 Jonas 1984, pp. 201–202.
33 On this, see Irina Hron's article in this volume.
34 Jonas 1984, pp. 85–86.
35 Jonas 1984, ch. 3, esp. pp. 128–129.
36 Jonas 1984, pp. 157, 245–248.
37 Jonas 1984, pp. 171–176.
38 Jonas 1984, pp. 178–183.
39 Kemp 1992.
40 Apel 1988, pp. 17, 23, 180–181, 247–250.
41 Apel 1988, pp. 42, 176.
42 Apel 1988, pp. 42–43, 183–186.
43 Apel 1988, p. 196. "Verhungern von Teilen der Dritten Welt".
44 Apel 1988, p. 45.
45 Apel 1988, pp. 184–185.
46 Apel 1988, pp. 46–49, 67, 202.
47 Apel 1988, p. 206.
48 Jonas 1984, pp. 42–43.
49 Apel 1988, pp. 256–261, citation on p. 260: "die ideale Grundnorm der Konfliktlösung durch argumentative konsensusbildung entbunden".
50 Apel 1988, pp. 55–63.
51 Apel 1988, e.g. p. 141.
52 Derrida 1995.
53 Derrida 1995, p. 49.
54 Derrida 1995, p. 50.
55 Derrida 1995, p. 51.
56 Derrida 1995, pp. 24–25.
57 Derrida 1995, pp. 25–26.
58 Derrida 1995, pp. 26–27.
59 Derrida 1995, p. 61.
60 Derrida 1992, p. 72; 1995, p. 61.
61 Derrida 1995, p. 70.
62 Derrida 1995, p. 68.
63 Derrida 1995, p. 83.
64 Derrida 1995, p. 82.
65 Derrida 1992, p. 29.
66 Derrida 1992, p. 73.
67 Derrida 1992, pp. 76–80.
68 Derrida 1992, p. 77.
69 Derrida 1992, p. 77.
70 Derrida 1992, pp. 76–80; Kemp 1992, pp. 106–111.

REFERENCES

Apel, Karl-Otto 1988. *Diskurs und Verantwortung: Das Problem des Übergangs zur Postkonventionellen Moral*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Derrida, Jacques 1992 [1991]. *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Derrida, Jacques 1995 [1992]. *The Gift of Death*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Forti, Simona 2016. 'The soul as site of dissidence', in Francesco Tava & Draian Meacham eds, *Thinking After Europe: Jan Patočka and Politics*, London: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 57–74.

Jaspers, Karl 1946. *Die Schuldfrage: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Frage*, Zürich: Artemis.

Jaspers, Karl 1947. *Europa der Gegenwart*, Vienna: Amandus.

Jonas, Hans 1979. *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Jonas, Hans 1984. *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, Chicago: Chicago University Press. Translation of Jonas 1979.

Jonas, Hans 2001 [1966]. 'Gnosticism, existentialism and nihilism', in Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Towards a Philosophical Biology*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, pp. 211–234.

Kemp, Peter 1992. *Das Unersetzliche: Eine Technologie-Ethik*, Berlin: Wichern Verlag.

Novotný, Karel 2016. 'Europe, post-Europe, and Eurocentrism', in Francesco Tava & Draian Meacham eds, *Thinking After Europe: Jan Patočka and Politics*, London: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 301–314.

Patočka, Jan 1980. *Kacířské eseje o filosofii dějin*, München: Karel Jadrný Verlag.

Patočka, Jan 1996. *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, Chicago: Open Court.

Stancu, Ovidiu 2016. 'Europe and the oblivion of the world: From Husserl to Patočka', in Francesco Tava & Draian Meacham eds, *Thinking After Europe: Jan Patočka and Politics*, London: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 315–329.