

IN SEARCH OF LOST VOLUNTEERING

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“The limits of my language mean the limits of my world,” said Ludwig Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in order to explain that we can only think about that which we can put into words. All else lies beyond the grasp of our reason and, consequently, beyond the limits of our world. It does not exist and is void of sense.

How the limits of language and of the social world shift becomes evident when we think and speak about volunteering. John Wilson defines volunteering as “any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organization” (2000: 215). Louis A. Penner defines it as an activity that “benefit[s] strangers and occur[s] within an organizational setting” (2002: 448), while John C. Mowen and Harish Sujjan explain that it is “an ongoing activity aimed at improving the well-being of others” (2005: 170). Literature and other sources provide numerous other scientific and lay definitions. These differ greatly from one another, depending not only on the author, but on the social context as well, since volunteering occurs all over the world and takes various forms. The activity is defined in many languages, but it is not expressed in the same manner in all environments. English, for example, has many derivatives of the notion. *Volunteer* denotes an individual who dedicates his or her time, means, and efforts to others. *Voluntariness* is the characteristic of the activity performed by that individual, and *volunteering* is what volunteers do. What about Slovene? There are words such as *prostovoljec* (*volunteer*) and *prostovoljnost* (*voluntariness*). The Dictionary of Standard Slovene, however, does not contain a verb that would refer to volunteering.

Slovene Philanthropy, an association for the promotion of voluntary work, attempted to solve this issue with the help of the younger generations and the wider public in 2012 by holding a competition aimed at finding a verb that would tell us what volunteers do, and a committee chose the word *prostovoljiti*. It would seem that the expression had already come into existence in the “linguistic meta-network” and had been merely waiting for an opportune time to introduce itself.

How come *prostovoljiti* has not existed in Slovene until recently, yet the verb has existed in English for quite some time now? Its absence in Slovene had to do with the socio-political

background and the attitude of the public towards volunteerism in the past decades. Being a volunteer carried an almost pejorative connotation in the “young” capitalist society that, to an extent, existed in Slovenia. Once the new social order was established, many asked the following: why would I be doing something good for others, and for free at that, when I should be taking care of myself and of “my own” now that I have the means and the opportunity to do so? Some members of older generations in particular also felt that they had experienced enough “volunteering under duress” during the previous regime, because they had taken part in work brigades and in other “volunteer” activities and built the socialist society.

Following the economic crisis, which was in full swing by 2008 and which hit many so hard that they were unable to recover on their own, greater linguistic and social value was given to volunteerism in Slovenia and elsewhere in the world. People began to turn to volunteer organisations for assistance more often than before and, in turn, many individuals were prepared to help. This thematic section of *Traditiones* is dedicated also to other notions that became important during these “lean years”: altruism, mutuality, solidarity, mutual assistance, etc.

Mutuality was also the main theme of the biennial conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA), which took place in Ljubljana just before the global crisis started. This scientific event, attended by 1,500 people, included a workshop on volunteerism and altruism. The discussion was opened with a few lines from a poem by the English metaphysical poet John Donne, made famous by Ernest Hemingway: “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.”

The workshop, the findings of which are published in this issue, approached volunteering as an essential human activity which connects people from different social and cultural backgrounds, and which takes on various forms. Workshop participants didn't discuss volunteering only in the context of charity and altruism, however – they also discussed how much egoism, selfishness, and care for oneself and one's own people there is in volunteer acts. The findings of a great deal of research done into volunteer work – not only ethnological and anthropological research, but also sociological, psychological, economic, and even biological research – emphasize that these activities are not based exclusively in selfless concern for the welfare of others. Often, they have to do with improving the volunteer's reputation and with accumulating social capital, both of which enable that individual to climb the social ladder more easily and quickly. From ethnological and anthropological perspectives, volunteering can be viewed and treated as “social glue” which binds individuals together and which establishes and strengthens a community – similarly to how individuals are bound together through ritual gift exchanges, which were discussed by Bronislaw Malinowski and Marcel Mauss.

Tomoko Hayakawa (2014) continues in line with their theories with an article addressing volunteering as a gift exchange system, in the context of community care in London. She finds that excessive emphasis on altruism is often received badly in this context, because it

establishes a patronizing relationship between “receivers” and “givers”. Marcel Mauss describes this relationship very well in *The Gift*: “To give is to show one’s superiority, to be more, to be higher in rank, *magister*. To accept without giving in return, or without giving more back, is to become client and servant, to become small, to fall lower (*minister*).” (2002: 95)

Jo Puckering (2014) addresses volunteering in the modern British society as well, but focuses on the system of higher education, which helps shape the attitudes towards volunteer activities through various initiatives and actions, and by carrying out research into this phenomenon. The author arrives at the conclusion that volunteer organisations, research institutions, and the writers of volunteer policies are (too) often influenced by findings about the economic effects of volunteer work. This work is multi-layered, however, and its effects – especially long-term effects – cannot be measured and evaluated with economic indicators.

Upbringing is extremely important in forming perceptions of volunteerism and altruism. Societies that want their members to voluntarily take care of each other (or of animals, plants, the environment, common goods, etc.) employ numerous systems and strategies for instilling volunteerism and altruism their members, and simultaneously attempting to impart empathy and a sense of morality. The institutions of particular importance for upbringing in this field are primary schools. Simona Bezjak and Eva Klemenčič (2014) looked at how volunteering is taught to the youth in Slovenia, considered how such efforts are intertwined with civic education, and analysed international research on civic education and upbringing. An interesting finding that the authors report is that even though volunteering is not systematically included in compulsory education in Slovenia, and even though Slovene schools do not require students to take part in any volunteer activities in their local communities, Slovene students are nevertheless more involved in volunteer work than their peers in other countries are, which is a bit of a paradox.

Bénédicte Halba (2014) addresses the situation in France. Her article does not discuss volunteerism merely in connection with altruism, but also with the concept of *otherness*. Volunteering often involves helping people who have different lifestyles and who come from different socio-economic environments (e.g. migrants). Halba emphasizes that transcending boundaries between social groups, along with building “bridges” between them, is an important part of establishing a European community, which is not limited to the European Union, since it can take on a much broader meaning.

Dan Podjed’s article (2014) focuses on another aspect of volunteering as giving or gifting, namely on observing. He builds on the idea introduced by the philosopher Jacques Derrida (see Godelier 2006: 255), who said that a “pure gift” cannot exist, for such a gift would have to be given by someone without a reason to give and without any awareness of his or her act of giving, and the gift would have to be given to someone who would not owe anything in return, for he or she would have to be unaware that anything had been given at all. The situation with volunteerism and altruism is similar: it is the more or less all-seeing eye of the Other that encourages us to be charitable and altruistic, and makes us more inclined to get involved in volunteer activities. Several gazes track what we do: a totalitarian one, watching “from

above”, the gaze of mutual observation and monitoring within a community (e.g. between neighbours), and the gaze that we turn inwards and reflect upon our own actions.

In his article *How to Become a Volunteer* (2014), Jurij Fikfak uses narrative interviews to compare six options, argumentations, and concepts of self regarding how to become and be a volunteer. The interviews included participants in public organizations (e.g., the Red Cross and Slovenian Philanthropy), religious organizations (e.g., Caritas and Ana’s Foundation), UNICEF (a global organization), and alternative forms of organized assistance (e.g., Ana’s Little Star), as well as volunteer groups that are established for emergency relief (e.g., organized aid for Bosnia) and forms of volunteerism in which art becomes a form of collecting funds for those in need.

The different approaches presented in this thematic section of *Traditiones* help broaden the concept of volunteerism, but also establish and reinforce its importance, which enables us to expand the limits of the social world that we live in, and increase the cognitive range of people in communities that strive to understand why individuals, as well as organisations and informal communities at home and abroad, do something that seemingly does not benefit them.

ISKANJE IZGUBLJENEGA PROSTOVOLJENJA

»Meje mojega jezika so meje mojega sveta,« je Ludwig Wittgenstein zapisal v *Logično-filozofskem traktatu* in tako skušal pojasniti, da lahko razmišljamo le o tistem, kar zmoremo ubesediti. Vse drugo je izven dosega našega razuma in posledično zunaj našega sveta. Ne obstaja in nima smisla.

Kako se preoblikujejo meje jezika in družbenega sveta, je razvidno, ko razmišljamo in govorimo o prostovoljstvu. John Wilson ga opredeljuje kot »dejavnost, pri kateri se čas prostovoljno nameni za koristi drugega človeka, skupine ali organizacije« (2000: 215), Louis A. Penner podobno pravi, da je to dejavnost, ki »koristi tujcem in se ponavadi izvaja v organizacijah« (2002: 448), John C. Mowen in Harish Sujana pa pojasnjujeta, da je to »dalj časa trajajoča dejavnost, ki je usmerjena v izboljšanje blagostanja drugih ljudi« (2005: 170). Znanstvenih in laičnih definicij najdemo v literaturi in drugih virih še ogromno, med sabo pa se precej razlikujejo – odvisne niso le od avtorjev, temveč tudi od družbenega konteksta. Prostovoljstvo se v najrazličnejših oblikah namreč pojavlja povsod po svetu, dejavnost pa je opredeljena v številnih jezikih, a je v vseh okoljih ne uporabljajo na enak način. V angleščini, denimo, poznamo številne izpeljanke pojma: *volunteer* označuje posameznika, ki namenja svoj čas, sredstva in trud za druge, *voluntariness* je značilnost dejavnosti, ki jo ta oseba izvaja, *volunteering* pa opredeljuje početje prostovoljcev. Kaj pa v slovenskem jeziku? Besedo *prostovoljec* (*volunteer*) poznamo, ravno tako *prostovoljnost* (*voluntariness*), posebnega glagola, ki bi opisoval prostovoljske dejavnosti, pa v Slovarju slovenskega knjižnega jezika ni.

Združenje za promocijo prostovoljstva Slovenska filantropija je leta 2012 med mladimi in širšo javnostjo to zadrego skušala rešiti, in sicer z natečajem, s katerim bi poiskali glagol,

ki bo ubesedil početje prostovoljcev. Komisija je na koncu izbrala besedo *prostovoljiti*, ki je – tako se zdi – že obstajal v »jezikovni metamreži« in čakal, da ob pravem času prileze na plan.

Zakaj v slovenskem jeziku *prostovoljenja* donedavna ni bilo, medtem ko v angleščini glagol obstaja že dalj časa? Vsekakor je njegova odsotnost povezana z družbeno-političnim ozadjem in odnosom do prostovoljstva v preteklih desetletjih. Biti prostovoljec je imelo v »mladi« kapitalistični družbi, med katere vsaj pogojno uvrščamo slovensko, skoraj pejorativen pomen. Izhodiščno vprašanje mnogih po vzpostavitvi novega družbenega reda je namreč bilo: zakaj bi počel nekaj dobrega za drugega, in to še zastonj, če pa moram zdaj, ko imam možnost in priložnost, poskrbeti zase in za »svoje«? Predvsem nekateri starejši so poleg tega menili še, da so v preteklem režimu izkusili dovolj »prostovoljstva pod prisilo«, pri katerem so se udeleževali delovnih brigad in drugih »prostovoljskih« dejavnosti ter gradili socialistično družbo.

Po gospodarski krizi, ki je postala očitna leta 2008 in je marsikoga zatolkla tako globoko, da se sam ni mogel več pobrati, je prostovoljstvo v Sloveniji in drugod po svetu znova pridobilo jezikovno in družbeno veljavo. Ljudje so se začeli bolj pogosto obračati po pomoč k prostovoljskim organizacijam, ponuditi pa so jo bili pripravljene tudi mnogi posamezniki. Veljavo so v »letih suhih krav« začeli pridobivati še drugi pojmi, ki jim posvečamo tematski blok revije *Traditiones*: altruizem, vzajemnost, solidarnost, medsebojna pomoč.

Vzajemnost je bila tudi ključna tema bienalne konference Evropskega združenja socialnih antropologov (EASA), ki je tik pred izbruhom globalne krize potekala v Ljubljani. V okviru te osrednje znanstvene prireditve s 1.500 udeleženci je potekala delavnica, na kateri so za izhodišče razprave o prostovoljstvu in altruizmu izbrali pesnitev angleškega metafizičnega pesnika Johna Donna, ki je postala svetovno znana po zaslugi Ernesta Hemingwaya: »Noben človek ni Otok, povsem sam zase; vsak človek je kos Celine, del kopne zemlje; če Morje odplavi grudo prsti, je Evrope manj, prav tako kakor da je bil Rtič, prav tako kakor da je bilo Posestvo tvojih prijateljev ali tvoje lastno; ob smrti vsakega človeka je mene manj, zakaj včlenjen sem v Človeštvo: In zato nikdar ne pošiljaj vpraševat, komu zvoni: zvoni tebi.«

Na delavnici, katere izsledke v tej številki objavljamo, so se posvetili prostovoljstvu kot esencialni človeški aktivnosti, ki povezuje ljudi z različnimi družbenimi in kulturnimi ozadji ter se udejanja v najrazličnejših oblikah. Udeleženci in udeleženke prostovoljstva niso obravnavali le v kontekstu dobrodelnosti in altruizma, temveč so se spraševali tudi, koliko je v prostovoljnih dejanjih egoizma, sebičnosti ter skrbi zase in za svoje ljudi. Izsledki mnogih raziskav prostovoljstva – pa ne zgolj etnoloških in antropoloških, temveč tudi socioloških, psiholoških, ekonomskih in celo bioloških – namreč poudarjajo, da te dejavnosti niso utemeljene zgolj na nesebični skrbi za druge, temveč so pogosto povezane še z izboljšanjem prostovoljčevega ugleda in kopičenjem socialnega kapitala, s čimer se posamezniki lažje in hitreje povzpnejo po družbeni lestvici. Z etnološkega in antropološkega vidika lahko prostovoljstvo razumemo in obravnavamo tudi kot »družbeno lepilo«, ki povezuje posameznike ter vzpostavlja in utrjuje skupnost – podobno kot jih povezuje obredna menjava darov, ki sta jo obravnavala Bronislaw Malinowski in Marcel Mauss.

Njunim teorijam sledi tudi Tomoko Hayakawa (2014), ki v svojem članku obravnava

prostovoljstvo kot sistem obdarovanja, in sicer v kontekstu socialnega dela v Londonu. Pri tem ugotavlja, da ljudje preveč izpostavljen altruizem v takšnem kontekstu mnogokrat sprejmejo negativno, saj vzpostavlja pokroviteljski odnos med »prejemniki« in »darovalci«. Takšno razmerje Marcel Mauss plastično opiše v *Eseju o daru*, ko pravi: »Darovati pomeni pokazati svojo superiornost, pokazati, da si več, da si višje, da si *magister*; sprejeti in ne vrniti ali ne vrniti več, kot si dobil, pomeni podrediti se, postati klient in sluga, postati majhen, pasti nižje (*minister*).« (Mauss 1996: 147-148)

Tudi Jo Puckering (2014) obravnava prostovoljstvo v sodobni britanski družbi, le da se osredotoči na visokošolski sistem, ki sooblikuje odnos do prostovoljskih dejavnosti, in sicer po eni strani z različnimi pobudami in akcijami, po drugi pa z raziskavami tega pojava. Kot ugotavlja avtorica, so prostovoljske organizacije, raziskovalne institucije ter snovalci prostovoljskih politik (pre)pogosto pod vplivom izsledkov o ekonomskih učinkih prostovoljnega dela. To delo pa je seveda večplastno in njegovih učinkov – še posebej dolgoročnih – še zdaleč ne moremo izmeriti in ovrednotiti z ekonomskimi kazalniki.

Pri oblikovanju predstav o prostovoljstvu in altruizmu je izjemno pomembna tudi vzgoja. Skupnosti, ki želijo, da bi njihovi člani prostovoljno skrbeli za druge ljudi (ali pa za živali, rastline, okolje, skupne dobrine itd.), so oblikovale številne sisteme in strategije za »vcepljanje« prostovoljstva in altruizma, ki poteka sočasno s privzgojo empatije in čuta za moralnost. Pomembne institucije, ki se ukvarjajo z vzgojo na tem področju, so osnovne šole. Na kakšen način v Sloveniji poteka izobraževanje o prostovoljstvu med mladimi in kako se prepleta z državljsko vzgojo, sta spregovorili Simona Bezjak in Eva Klemenčič (2014) ter analizirali mednarodno raziskavo o državljskem izobraževanju in vzgoji. Eden od njenih zanimivih izsledkov je, da prostovoljstvo v Sloveniji ni sistematično vključeno v obvezno izobraževanje in da slovenske šole od učencev ne zahtevajo prostovoljskih aktivnosti v lokalni skupnosti, nekoliko paradoksalno pa so slovenski učenci bolj vključeni v prostovoljstvo kot vrstniki v drugih državah.

Situaciji v Franciji se posveča Bénédicte Halba (2014), ki v prispevku prostovoljstva ne obravnava le v povezavi z altruizmom, temveč tudi s konceptom *drugosti*. Prostovoljstvo je namreč pogosto povezano s pomočjo ljudem, ki so drugačni po načinu življenja in izhajajo iz raznolikih družbeno-ekonomskih okolij (npr. migranti). Halba poudarja, da je takšno prehajanje ločnic med družbenimi skupinami in gradnja »mostov« med njimi pomemben del vzpostavljanja evropske skupnosti, ki ni zgolj Evropska unija, temveč jo lahko razumemo precej širše.

Dan Podjed (2014) se v svojem prispevku osredotoči še na enega od vidikov prostovoljskega razdajanja oziroma darovanja, in sicer na opazovanje. Pri tem se navezuje na misel filozofa Jacquesa Derridaja (po Godelier 2006: 255), ki pravi, da »pravi dar« ne obstaja, saj bi moral to biti dar nekoga, ki daje brez razloga, ne da bi vedel, da to počne, in sicer nekemu, ki mu ne bi bil zato nikoli nič dolžan, ker ne bi vedel, da mu je kdo nekaj dal. Podobno je s prostovoljstvom in altruizmom: bolj ali manj vsevidno oko Drugega nas spodbudi, da smo bolj dobrodelni in altruistični ter da se raje udeležimo prostovoljskih dejavnosti. Pogledov, ki nas spremljajo, je več: od tistega totalitarnega, ki nas opazuje »od zgoraj«, prek vzajemnega

spremljanja in nadziranja v skupnosti (na primer med sosedi) do pogleda, s katerim se zazremo vase in reflektiramo lastna dejanja.

Jurij Fikfak (2014) je v svojem prispevku »Kako postati prostovoljec« s pomočjo narativnih intervjujev kontrastiral šest različnih možnosti, argumentacij in konceptov sebstva (concept of self) o tem, kako postati in biti prostovoljec. Pogovori obsegajo sodelavce državnih ustanov, npr. Rdečega križa in Slovenske filantropije, cerkvenih ustanov, npr. Karitasa in Aninega sklada, globalne ustanove UNICEF, do alternativnih oblik organizacije pomoči, npr. Anine zvezdice, oblik prostovoljstva, tj. skupin, ki se organizirajo za trenutne potrebe, npr. organizacija pomoči za Bosno in oblik, v katerih postane umetnost oblika zbiranja sredstev za pomoči potrebne.

Raznoliki pogledi v tematskem bloku *Traditiones* prispevajo po eni strani k širitvi pojma prostovoljstvo, po drugi strani pa k njegovemu uveljavljanju in utrjevanju. Na ta način se širijo tudi meje družbenega sveta, v katerem živimo, in kognitivni domet ljudi v skupnostih, ki skušajo razumeti, zakaj posamezniki, pa tudi organizacije in neformalne skupnosti doma in na tujem, počnejo nekaj, od česar vsaj navidez nimajo koristi.

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