Mihail-Radu Solcan

Annotated Publications List

Books

[1] Mihail-Radu Solcan. *Arta răului cel mai mic*. Bucureşti: ALL, 1998. [The book is an introduction to political philosophy. It covers the following topics: human cooperation, rules, liberty, justice, equality and openness, power, property, individual rights, democracy and markets. On every topic there is an introduction to contemporary debates on political philosophy, followed by my own reconstruction and assessment of the solutions. The main objective of the book is to see how non-arbitrary rules are possible in a world of individual cases].

[2] Mihail-Radu Solcan. *Introducere în filosofia minţii din perspectiva științei cognitiei*. București: Editura Universității din București, 2000. [The book is an introduction to the philosophy of mind from the point of view of the "computational turn" in philosophy. As in the case of the "linguistic turn" before, the real novelty is a set of tools (that might be used for various purposes). The first chapter of the book is a survey of different perspectives on the philosophy of mind. We point out that computer simulation might play a similar role to thought experiments in philosophy. The second chapter is a survey of the traditional philosophy of mind that uses thought experiments. The third chapter is an introduction to computational systems. Criticisms of the "computational turn" are also taken into account. The fourth chapter is dedicated to examples of computational approaches of the mind. The fifth chapter focuses on the new links between philosophy and other disciplines (especially psychology) fostered by cognitive science. The sixth chapter presents some of the open, difficult problems of the mind. The book includes an annotated bibliography].
Individual plans, as plans for action, do not isolate human beings. Connections develop as a natural consequence of human actions. Individuals exchange goods or develop common plans for complex actions. Each connection has a weight that helps individuals to compare it with alternative connections.

Working from the bare, abstract concept of a plan and its possibility conditions, the book makes room, in the end, for a richer structure, the network of individuals. It emphasizes the fact that any central intervention in such a web of interactions is bound to be arbitrary.

While the central total or piecemeal planning is lost in the maze of complexity, liberty is a sophisticated, rational way to cope with complexity.

Lecture Notes and Documentary Survey

[1] Mihail-Radu Solcan. *Logica modernă aplicată în filosofie și științele sociale*. București: Academia de Studii Social-Politice, 1987. [This is a handbook of the handbooks of modern logic. It exploits the idea of presenting books and ideas in context. Formal and informal techniques are introduced. Surveys of famous textbooks of Quine, Kleene, Grzegorczyk and others familiarize the reader with the basic ideas of modern sentence and predicate logic. I wrote it as a suport for my 1985 course in logic].


[3] Mihail-Radu Solcan. *Freedom, Minds, and Institutions*. București: Editura Universității din București, 2003. [The book is built around the idea that total central planning is logically impossible. Instead of starting from individuals and their rights, it uses indirect methodological individualism and takes the impossibility of total planning as the basis from which it reaches until the fundamental plans, the individual plans.

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[4] Mihail-Radu Solcan. *Eseul filosofic*. București: Editura Universității din București, 2004. [The main objective of the book is to show that \TeX{} and \LaTeX{} are more than (excellent) typesetting systems; they offer a discipline for the mind that is extremely useful for writing philosophical papers].
Papers


[2] Mihail-Radu Solcan. The logical structure of political doctrines. Revue Roumaine des Sciences Sociales, 27(4):7–15, October–December 1983. [The paper takes advantage of the esopic language of logic and investigates what is called there a “universal political doctrine”. Though Popper is not mentioned explicitly, the main problem discussed in the paper is taken from Poverty of Historicism (the emphasis on the metaphysical grounds of planning and their lack of plausibility). Using well-known results in logic (Turing’s uncomputability theorem) it proves that a “universal doctrine”, which would contain instructions for its own change, is impossible.

If it is translated into plain language, the paper argues that comprehensive planning is logically impossible. I attempted to offer a “humane” explanation of the logical impossibility of planning in my book Freedom, Minds, and Institutions].


[7] Mihail-Radu Solcan. După revoluție: instrucțurarea opțiunilor publice. *Revista de cercetări sociale*, 1(4):22–29, December 1994. [The first part is a public choice explanation of the 1990-1992 elections in Romania. The second part tries to clarify the nature of the support for post-communist and anticommunist parties in Romania. The hypothesis is that people brought into towns by the industrialization process during communism tend to support post-communist parties. Empirical evidence is considered in the case of the post-1989 political elite. In the case of the post-communist parties, around 60 per cent of the members of the elite are born in rural areas. In the case of the anticommunist parties only approximately 30 per cent are born in rural areas. Even if we take into account the small towns, this percentage is still only around 40 per cent].


[9] Mihail-Radu Solcan. Cum l-am descoperit pe Michael Oakeshott. In *Michael Oakeshott: Raționalismul în politică*, pp. 131–136. București: ALL, 1995. [This is a note on Oakeshott and his approach to the problem of the nature of the nazi political system. It argues that the main moment is the focus on the aim of the Nazis to obtain power and expand power. Thus power becomes an end in itself and this generates a dynamic political regime that does not stop its expansion].

[10] Mihail-Radu Solcan. Fals cuvânt înainte la *Mizeria istoricismului*. In *Karl Popper: Mizeria istoricismului*, pp. VIII–XVI. București: ALL, 1996. [Popper rejected the idea of prefaces to his works, but the contract of the publishing house with the copyright providers required a preface to the Romanian edition of the *Poverty of Historicism*. Thus I wrote a "pseudo-foreword" explaining the nature of the philosophical ideas of Karl Popper and why there can be no "preface". Popper’s philosophy of knowledge was anti-authoritarian. A preface would be a *place of authority* from which a judgment is formulated. There can be no such place].
The main objective of the paper is to show, following Berlin, why ideas, not just true ideas, deserve our attention. There is no ideal or absolute truth with which to confront ideas. Discrepancy between ideas has its own value. Confronting ideas with ideas is crucial.

The relativity problem that such an approach raises is left open in this paper, but we stress the fact that Berlin did not accept relativism.

The hayekian solution of the problem of planning is taken as the paradigm of applied social epistemology. The paper examines the hypothesis that the breakdown of communism can be explained as the result of a knowledge dependency. Communism had to rely upon the import of new ideas, including ideas concerning economic structures and political institutions. When these ideas became corrosive, it broke down.

The paper considers the empirical evidence of a double system of information (for the general public and for the communist elite). The latter system is a secret system. It serves a double function: it gives access to real news and it gives access to new ideas from the external world, mainly from the West. As long as the West itself is dominated by socialist ideas, nothing happens. But when the free market becomes popular, the ideas connected with it destroy the system even when they are partially applied.

The article is published together with other essays on “Romania as an exception”. The paper argues that exceptionalism is a trap. It examines the presuppositions of the idea of exceptionality. The article claims that individualism is the adequate methodology for the analysis of a world of cases. From this point of view, the discussion on exceptionality makes sense only as a discussion on cases for which there is no precedent. The paper suggests that the balance between the quest for precedents only abroad and the obsession that precedents are exclusively local is to be sought in a process of integration through competition.

This is a review-essay on David Friedman’s book *Hidden Order - the Economics of Everyday Life* (New York: Collins, 1996). It stresses the significance of “it depends” and “least bad solution”-type of answers in David Friedman. This means that we have
to take seriously arguments and not rigid social schemes, even preconceived "capitalist" ones].


[16] Mihail-Radu Solcan. Naţionalismul şi dinamica puterii. Polis, 5(4):98–111, 1998. [The paper starts with a contrast between the “Mayflower view” and the “national view” of the constitutional foundations of the state. According to the first view the state is legitimate because it has at its roots a compact among its citizens, for example an agreement to preserve individual rights. According to the national view the state is legitimate because it has its roots in the common “blood” and the shared “historical land” of an ethnic community. Nationalism has two dimensions: the first is the aim of the reunion of the people of the same blood in one state; the second is the desire to put within the boundaries of the national state the historical and sacred territories. Practically, this leads however to the incorporation within the limits of the national state of alien ethnic groups. The reasonable solution seems to patch the national view of the state with elements of the Mayflower view, for example to stipulate ethnic minority rights. One can show, however, that this patching leads to inconsistent constitutional texts. Logically, from an inconsistent text can be inferred anything. Thus is laid the ground for arbitrary government and an expansive dynamics of the political power.

Examples from the recent history of South-Eastern Europe are examined. Further, the legislation of Romania is examined and examples of the patch of the Mayflower view upon the national view are analyzed].


My essay formulates the idea that Mircea Flonta’s views in the philosophy of science may be characterized as “rationalist relativism”.


[20] Mihail-Radu Solcan. John Locke şi ideea de libertate. In Silviu Culea, editor, *John Locke: Al doilea tratat despre cărmuire*, pp. 297–314. Bucureşti: Nemira, 1999. [This is an essay on Locke written for the Romanian readers of the *Second Treatise*. It develops the idea that the meaning of liberty is the non-arbitrary solution of conflicts. It tries to show that reading Locke makes sense not only when one tries to understand 1688-89, but also when one is puzzled by 1989].


[24] Mihail-Radu Solcan. Instituțiile și teoria formală a acțiunii. In Adrian Miroiu, editor, *Instituții în tranziție*, pp. 17–54. București: Punct, 2002. [The main aim of the paper is to identify the concepts and the analytical tools of economics used in the theory of institutions. The paper classifies the approaches inspired by economics in four groups: (1) an approach which combines public goods and transaction costs; (2) an approach focused on
the concept of public good; (3) an approached focused on transaction costs; (4) an approach which rejects both public goods and transaction costs.


Volume Editor


Readers and documentary digests

[1] Adrian-Paul Iliescu and Mihail-Radu Solcan, editors. Limitele puterii. Bucureşti: ALL, 1994. [This is a reader in political philosophy focused on the topic of the limits of power].

[2] Mihail-Radu Solcan, editor. Filosofia analytică. Bucureşti: Academia de Studii Social-Politice — Universitatea din Bucureşti, 1982. [This is a reader in analytic philosophy. The main parts of the book are: (1) the concept of analysis; (2) logical positivism and ideal language philosophy; (3) postpositivist philosophy; (4) analytic social philosophy. It contains introductions to each part and surveys of the main lines of the development of analytic philosophy. Excerpts are from such authors as Jaakko Hintikka (for the concept of analysis), Wittgenstein (both from Tractatus and the Investigations), Łukasiewicz, Austin, Quine (from Word and Object). The part on social philosophy emphasizes the contribution of John Rawls to the development of a theory of justice].

[4] Mihail-Radu Solcan, editor. Dezbateri pe marginea problemei corp-minte. București: Academia de Studii Social-Politice, 1984. [This is a documentary introduction to the body-mind problem. It argues in favor of a distinction between the body-mind problem and the (then officially emphasized as the "fundamental problem") matter-spirit problem. The main part focuses on Popper-Eccles views. The second part concentrates on physicalism. The third part is an introduction to the views of such influent authors as Ryle, Smart or Quine. The final part explores the impact of artificial intelligence on the debate and the researches on the ability of gorillas to learn a language].

[5] Mihail-Radu Solcan, editor. Conceptul de mecanism economic și diversele sisteme economice. București: Academia de Studii Social-Politice, 1985. [This documentary introduction was part of the professional "servitude" at that time, but offered me the possibility to discover the free market economics. The volume contains digests both on the planned and the market economy. It also has a presentation of Coase’s and Williamson’s views on the firm, on Mancur Olson and the rise and decline of nations, on Montias’s views on economic systems. There is a short reader also on microeconomics, game theory (Schotter and Schwödiauer) and information theory (Marschack and Redner). I had put simply a number "1" on the volume, in order to underline the fact that it is much more to be said about economic systems].

[6] Mihail-Radu Solcan, editor. Problema raționalității în gândirea filosofică și științifică actuală. București: Academia de Studii Social-Politice, 1985. [This is a documentary introduction to the debate on rationality. It emphasizes the cultural aspect of reason and rationality in its first part. The second part is an introduction to the rationality of action (with digests of the views of economists, such as Shackle or Axelrod). The philosophical aspects are summarized in a small reader (with excerpts from Popper, Feyerabend, Agassi and others). There is also an ample presentation of the
views from the famous book of Douglas Hofstadter *Gödel, Escher, Bach* on logic, philosophy, art and artificial intelligence.

Reviews and documentary summaries


Translations (other translations than those included in readers and documentary digests edited by me)
