

CULTURE HERE AND NOW

Five essays

Summary

The book comprises five essays written between 2007 and 2020 and performing critical analyses of Lithuanian cultural and social phenomena. In these essays, the author applies and elaborates the principles of the hermeneutic philosophy of culture he works on at large. All essays have been revised and updated.

The essay “The Virtue of Wisdom. In principle and in fact” draws on the Catholic notion of cardinal virtue and wisdom (*prudentia*) to examine a range of phenomena of public consciousness, placing them on the axes of principle / reality, principle / pragmatism, pragmatism / utopia, utopia / cynicism, and utopia / scepticism.

The essay “*Cloaca maxima*” examines the work of the media as the metaphysical machine which produces social knowledge and intervenes into the everyday experience, transforming it. The analysis draws attention to the specific traits that the crisis of representation, observable on the world-wide scale, acquires in Lithuania. It also shows what structure of contemporary sociocultural space the media reveals and how this rearranges (first of all, horizontalises) all cultural codes.

The same approach is taken in the essay “A Barely Literate Culture: A Sociocultural Study” to examine book publishing in the humanities and social sciences, showing the dysfunction of interactions between the major agents of the field (the author or translator, the publisher, and the reader and buyer) and looking into the causes of this dysfunction and its consequences.

The essay “What is the Party in Lithuania? Notes of a dilettante” analyses the eidetic genesis of political parties in the post-Soviet Lithuania, the specificity of their embodiment, their current state, and the perspectives for their further development. The analysis looks into the hybrid and symbiotic character of the Lithuanian democracy and its essential deformations.

In the background of the author’s descriptions of these phenomena of contemporary Lithuanian culture yet without taking them further, the essay “The Matter of Taste” projects a kind of an “aesthetic utopia” which envisions the crystallisation of the essential imponderabilities – taste and wisdom – for the future of society and culture.