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TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE POST-MODERNITY: THE LOCAL *VERSUS* THE BARBARIANISM OF MARKET CAPITALISM

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There is something ambivalent about postmodernism. Even the philosophers who are most commonly identified with post-modern thought (Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault and Lyotard) repeatedly expressed their reservations about the label of 'postmodernism'[1]. In Anglo-American philosophical tradition postmodernism is often accused for its alleged relativism, while Habermas in his critical theory argues that postmodernists cannot bring anything fundamentally substantive to the debate on the nature of the normative principles of modernity (Habermas 1981, 1987). Habermas has also argued that the Nietzschean origins of post-modern philosophical discourse are inherently incoherent and thus are bound to fail. Whatever the verdict of the critics of postmodernism may be there is a need for a renewed philosophical debate on the nature of post-modern social order.

While briefly engaging with Lyotard's account of post-modernism I will seek to present an alternative conception of post-modernity. The essential characteristics of the modern social order have been long recognized as disengaged reason/instrumental rationality, capitalism, humanism and the

[1] See: Best and Kellner 1991: 33.

liberal nation-state[2]. To go beyond this essentially modern understanding of the social order we need to question the three pillars of modernity – capitalism, humanism and the liberal polity. Although Jürgen Habermas has always been very critical of the instrumentalism of the capitalist economic order, he firmly believes that, rightly understood, the project of modernity has never lost its liberating potential. Thus I will briefly engage with Jürgen Habermas and his critique of postmodernism. While Habermas is right to suggest that the Nietzscheans (Heidegger, Bataille, Foucault or Derrida) have serious limitations and philosophical problems, he is wrong to think that modernity has been an incomplete project. Aiming at the completion of modernity in the way Habermas envisages it, so I will argue, is hardly possible. The cohesion of social and communicative structures of the modern social order has long gone and thus an attempt to preserve them will only bring further frustration and disappointment.

However, the question we need to pose is whether the project of modernity has been equally exhausted in the entire 'western' world. In this respect the case of Lithuania is instructive. Lithuania, as a small East European country, which got rid of Soviet socialism less than two decades ago, has always sought to re-enter 'the West'. The process of this transition to the West (it has been advanced under the banner of the transition from state socialism to market capitalism) has been slow and painful. Vytautas Kavolis and many others after him (for example, Leonidas Donskis) argued that the advancement of modernity in Lithuania was delayed and thus Lithuanian socio-cultural modernization has never been completed.[3] Although this thesis is broadly correct, the question we have to raise is whether the conception of post-modernity, as it will be presented in this paper, should take into account the case of the delayed/failed modernization. Furthermore, how suitable is this conception of post-modernity going to be vis-à-vis Lithuania?

Capitalism and Modernity: Habermas contra the Nietzscheans

Adam Smith in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* formulated the principles of free-market economy among which the most important were the principle of the division of labor, the 'sanctity' of private property, and the idea of self-regulating price mechanism or, as he called it, the invisible hand. Smith saw the importance of the division of labor as the source of economic efficiency without which market capitalism was not pos-

[2] See, for example, Taylor 1989, chapters 8 and 17; Bielskis 2005, chapter 1.

[3] See: Kavolis 1995; Donskis 2002: 22-31.

sible, while the 'sanctity' of private property as the normative principle and the cornerstone of civilized society. The birth of classical economy, which systemically rationalized the fundamental changes that took place since the beginning of 18th century, was essentially the modern way of understanding the socio-economic environment. In the *Great Transformation*, Karl Polanyi argued that the idea of self-regulating markets, which became dominant and was put in practice since the beginning of the 19th century, was a utopian fiction. It was a fiction because it co-depended on two interrelated political conditions: the development of the modern/liberal state and the establishment of peace due to the balance of powers in the Metternich era. That is, the idea of *laissez-faire* economic order could not have been possible without the emergence of the strong liberal state and without unprecedented peace between European powers. Thus in contrast to classical economics, Karl Polanyi argued that the self-regulating economics was socially constructed and depended on the regulations of the modern state. Furthermore, the *Great Transformation* convincingly shows how *laissez-faire* economic order was fundamentally endangered during and after the First World War when the international gold standard, the 19th century peace between European nations and the liberal policies of leading European empires collapsed. And although Polanyi's belief that *laissez-faire* economic order would not last long was short lived, the lesson of his thesis is as important today, if not more important, as when it was first written. The main lesson of Polanyi's work is not merely the claim that unregulated markets were planned, but his thesis that society itself and its most fundamental relationships become subordinated to the laws of the market. The old social order, traditional family ties, tradition-based morality, and the entire social fabric were fundamentally transformed as the result of the advent of the modern idea of free market order. Hence Polanyi's moral is that it is the markets that should be subordinated to society rather than *vice versa*. I will argue that, following the conception of post-modernity presented here, the subordination of markets to society as such is impossible and that the opposition to the instrumental rationality of free markets is feasible only locally. That is to say, it is possible only within local practices and local traditions.

Max Weber's conceptions of modernity and what he calls rational capitalism are instructive here. In contrast to Polanyi, Weber sought to locate capitalism within nation-states and thus did not consider it being global by its very nature. Influenced by his German predecessors such as Karl Bücher, Weber thought that economics was the prerogative of nations rather than of self-regulating global markets (Norkus 2002: 307). Nevertheless, his conception of rational capitalism was essentially modern, as he rightly believed that economic rationality specific to capitalism was first of all produced only

by Western modernity. Weber's famous dictum about the disenchantment of the world, his conceptualization of types of economic rationality as well as his belief in what might be called the artificial character of capitalist modernity and its rationality[4] clearly indicate that for Weber capitalism was essentially a modern phenomenon.

Jürgen Habermas takes up this Weberian topic. To a certain extent he follows Weber's conception of modernity. Following Kant and Weber, he accepts the differentiation of values into three different validity spheres (normative-political, aesthetic-expressive, and cognitive-scientific). He also accepts Weber's view of modernity in terms of the disenchantment and secularization of traditional religious worldview, but at the same time he follows his predecessors Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in their critique of what they called the instrumental rationality of modern economic order. His engagement with Nietzsche, Heidegger, Bataille, Derrida and Foucault is intended to show their philosophical inconsistencies as well as to convince us that none of them is able to overcome the *aporias* of the philosophy of the subject. The basic problem of Nietzsche, according to Habermas, is his critique of Western rationalism from a non-rational point of view. Nietzsche directs the Dionysian principle of the aesthetic domain against rationalism as such (Habermas 1987: 96). Habermas argues that it is impossible to criticize rationality without adopting the very principle of rationality, otherwise the criticism Nietzsche seeks to advance collapses. Having called this problem "the dilemma of total critique of rationality", Habermas turns to Heidegger. Despite the fact that Heidegger seeks to overcome Western metaphysics, he still remains entangled in the web of the philosophy of consciousness:

The fact that Heidegger sees, in the history of philosophy and the science after Hegel, nothing but a monotonous spelling out of the ontological pre-judgment of the philosophy of the subject can only be explained by the fact that, even in rejecting it, he still remains caught in the problem of the subject in the form Husserlian phenomenology had presented to him (Habermas 1987: 137).

And so the story continues with Bataille, Derrida and Foucault. After meticulous presentation of Bataille's libidinal economy and the role sovereign waste plays in it, Habermas half arbitrarily concludes that Bataille faces the same problems as Nietzsche:

If sovereignty and its source, the sacred, are related to the world of purposive-rational action in an absolutely heterogeneous fashion, if the subject

[4] Weber, for example, claims that humans do not by their very nature want to earn as much money as they can, but rather to live as they are accustomed to live in order to earn as much as it is necessary (see: Max Weber 1992, chapter 2). In this sense it is possible to say that capitalist rationality to maximize one's profit and acquisitiveness are socially constructed and thus artificial phenomena.

and reason are constituted only by excluding all kinds of sacred power; if the other of reason is more than just the irrational or the unknown (…) then there is no possibility of a theory that reaches beyond the horizon of what is accessible to reason and thematizes, let alone analyses, the interaction of reason with a transcendent source of power. Bataille sensed this dilemma but did not resolve it (Habermas 1987: 235-236).

In a similar manner Habermas dismissed Derrida on the ground of his project's fruitlessness as well as because Derrida, despite his original intention, is unable to move beyond Heidegger. Instead, so Habermas claims, Derrida goes back behind Heidegger – to a quasi-mystical experience revealed through the deconstructive interpretation of Judeo-Christian tradition which never shows its true face and which is always yet to come (Habermas 1987: 183). Habermas provides a more sympathetic reading only of Foucault's analysis of the relationship between power practices and a variety of discursive regimes. The significance of Foucault's work lies not only in his ability to show the other side of modern humanism, the side of subjugation and terror, but also his critical attempt to rewrite the history of human sciences through the novel genealogical analysis of modern discursive regimes which form our subjectivity. However, Habermas's verdict is that even Foucault is unable to escape the *aporias* of the modern philosophy of the subject. Being based on the genealogical theory of power, Foucault's pseudo-transcendental historiography is unable to justify and explain itself. That is, if history is meaningless and if it is intelligible only because of the reoccurring structures of power, which change their shape in time, then Foucault's historical analytics is bound to be arbitrary (or perspectival, to use Habermas' term) and relativistic.[5]

The focal point of Habermas' critical engagement with the postmodernists is that all these theories face fundamental difficulties – while criticizing reason they are unable to question their own foundations. The post-modern critics point to the aesthetic experience, but this experience is not capable of changing the moral values they tacitly envision or seek to change (Habermas 1987: 298). Having presented his critique Habermas proceeds to construct his own philosophical argument. He seeks to overcome the *aporias* of subject-centered reason through the introduction of the idea of communicative action. There are already language-based structures inbuilt in our ability to achieve mutual understanding in our common lifeworld. The lifeworld, according to Habermas, "has the character of an intuitive, unshakably certain, and holistic knowledge, which cannot be made problematic

[5] Although Habermas' critique of Foucault is illuminating to a certain extent, his claim that Foucault's genealogy is internally inconsistent and borders on self-refutation is not convincing. For an alternative reading of Foucault's genealogy see: Bielskis 2005, chapter 2 and 4.

at will – and in this respect it does not represent 'knowledge' in any strict sense of the word" (Habermas 1987: 326). Just like Gadamer's tradition, the lifeworld furnishes us with pre-reflective resources and cultural contexts as a background against which language-based communication can take place. Habermas argues that there are at least three functions of the lifeworld: the propagation of cultural traditions, the integration of groups and individuals by norms and values, and finally the socialisation of succeeding generations (1987: 299). Thus the acting subjects, by virtue of belonging to the common lifeworld, interact in the way that leads to mutual understanding. It is this orientation, which, according to Habermas, is already inbuilt in the structure of human language, that allows us to see an essentially Enlightenment premise in Habermas's philosophy. That is, the universal structure of human communication is based on our natural direction towards mutual understanding. Habermas combines the Kantian idea of *Publikum* with the Husserlian conception of *Lebenswelt*, which forms the unquestioned context of our mutual understanding. The combination allows Habermas to claim that three spheres of validity – truth/correspondence (science), the regulative (morality and politics) and the expressive (aesthetics) spheres – should be included in the lifeworld and seen as meaningful in so far as they contribute to our communicative action and the transformation of the social world. Thus Habermas believes there is a fundamental link between goal-directed rationality and communicative rationality.

Even though Habermas believes that the project of modernity can still be restored through the communicative reason due to which the integrity of *Lebenswelt* contexts can be sustained, he does not think that the lost unity of these contexts is possible and even desirable:

The *unmediated* transposition of specialized knowledge into the private and public spheres of the everyday world can endanger the autonomy and independent logic of the knowledge systems, on the one hand, and it can violate the integrity of lifeworld contexts, on the other (Habermas 1987: 340).

Habermas' argument is similar to that of John Rawls's who distinguished between justice/rights and the good and argued that modern culture and politics should accept pluralism, division, and different moral positions. Habermas distinguishes between the contents of particular lifeworlds and the universal structures of lifeworld and believes that appealing to the latter is enough for the project of modernity to be rescued both from its own internal inconsistencies as well as from the radical critique of postmodernists.

Habermas might be right about Nietzsche, Bataille, Heidegger and Derrida as well as about the fact that we have a natural orientation towards mutual understanding, at least as far as the structure of our lifeword is concerned. However, it does not mean that mutual understanding will be rea-

ched, since the language-based communicative structures, as understood by Habermas, are too thin and formal. They can hardly guarantee a relatively unproblematic communicative interaction in the contemporary world. Of course, Habermas, as already noted, does not have any illusions about the real possibility of reaching the resolution and agreement in the manner of Kant in his *Was ist Aufklärung?* Kant believed that the public debate on the issues of science, philosophy, morality, and even religion, provided people are not cowards and too lazy to use their own reason, would lead to agreement, resolution and thus to progress. Nonetheless, we see the same modern paradigm of the *Publikum* in Habermas. The Kantian public of scholars is transformed into a pre-reflective lifeworld where individuals have an unproblematic and almost given orientation towards mutual understanding and communication. In both of these thinkers (and also in Rawls) we find the same Enlightenment idea that there is a holistic structure of universality inbuilt in human society, its culture and/or its language.

The argument is not convincing for several reasons. The thin conception of Habermasian universality of human communication or the Rawlsian universal agreement achievable because of our ability to distance ourselves from our values is not strong enough to glue together the late modern, radically pluralist and fragmented society. In this sense the historical distance between Kant's Christian Enlightenment and Habermas' modernity is important. The social world has radically changed and thus modern society does not have moral, intellectual or other resources to provide us with a cultural background ensuring mutual understanding and communication. At the center of this radical transformation of the social world is the institution of the free market. No doubt, Habermas is more than aware of the dangers market capitalism involves:

Enlightenment and manipulation, the conscious and unconscious, forces of production and forces of destruction, expressive self-realization and repressive desublimation, effects that ensure freedom and those that remove it, truth and ideology – now all these movements flow into one another (Habermas 1987: 338).

However, Habermas still believes that a modern normative social theory, such as he himself develops, can furnish us with the tools to oppose the irrational systems of both market capitalism and the bureaucratic state. In the final pages of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* he offers what he calls the model of boundary conflicts (1987: 365). In order to oppose both subsystems (market capitalism and the bureaucratic state) we need to foster autonomous public spheres due to which the conflict between the lifeworld and the two subsystems can be sustained. Thus the role of *Lebenswelt* is to limit the irrationality of a system which cannot be removed by merely ma-

king it function more effectively. And this can only be achieved through the revised normative theory of modernity, a theory that is able to distinguish between emancipation and alienation.

It is at this point that Habermas' project becomes dubious. Habermas is wrong in thinking that the project of modernity can be still redeemed through the highly rationalized lifeworld enabling us to distinguish emancipatory-reconciling aspects of social rationalization from its repressive-alienating aspects. This is so because the very nature of modernity blurs this boundary, as the inherently modern drive for emancipation goes hand in hand with modern forms of alienation. The emancipatory aspect of social rationalization is linked to instrumental rationality and its capacity to shape the natural world in accordance with our desires – and market capitalism, no doubt, is the economic system which guarantees that our emancipatory needs and whims are met through the imposed technological dominance over the natural world. Moreover, there is also a strong link between these two aspects as far as moral and political emancipation is concerned – self-possession, individual liberty and ever-expanding human rights inevitably go hand in hand with consumer capitalism and its commodity fetishism.[6] Consumer capitalism is essentially humanist. Thus the modern idea of emancipation is far more intimately linked with capitalism than Habermas wants to acknowledge. Market capitalism, which was conceptually linked with the modern ideas of autonomy and self-determination, has contributed to the specialization and radical fragmentation (or compartmentalization, to use Alasdair MacIntyre's term) of the social world. Thus market capitalism and the resulting compartmentalization of the social world are inscribed in the very nature of modernity and its historical development.[7] It is precisely because of this that an alternative (i.e. non post-structuralist) conception of post-modernity becomes important. At the core of it is the idea that the modern order of market capitalism can only be transcended if we develop a social theory, which goes beyond the modern discourse of emancipation, humanism and the universal subject, the subject capable of self-understanding achieved through communicative action.

Alternative Post-modernity: A Theory of Rival Traditions

Jean-François Lyotard famously argued that the post-modern condition, as far as the status of knowledge is concerned, is marked by the fact that grand-

[6] For the full argument see: Bielskis 2005, chapter 2.

[7] Of course, there were alternative, non-capitalist, projects of modernity. Many sociologists have argued that Soviet socialism was yet another, alternative, project of modernity (see, for example, Wagner 1994, chapter 2). However, this thesis by no means discredits my claim that market capitalism, which has prevailed and became the dominant socio-economic order and ideology of contemporary world, is essentially a, if not *the*, modern phenomenon.

narratives have lost their credibility. The two main modern meta-stories were the Enlightenment narrative about the liberation of humanity through science, on the one hand, and Marxism, on the other. These grand-narratives provided legitimacy for science. For August Comte positive science was essential and could be justified as long as it brought about technological and moral progress of 'liberated' humanity. The growing mistrust towards them, according to Lyotard, was partly due to the development of sciences themselves – the proliferation of scientific discourses and disciplines shook the grandeur of the edifice of unified science. It has also been influenced by the gradual fragmentation and compartmentalization of the post-industrial society. Marxism, as a powerful alternative to liberalism and market capitalism, has slowly and quietly vanished not only from contemporary parliamentary politics, but also lost its appeal among left-wing intellectuals and academics, something it used to have thirty or forty years ago. And so it is with other possible grand narratives – Christianity being the most obvious one. However, what I want to suggest is that, while accepting Lyotard's thesis on the death of grand narratives, we need to rethink the conception of post-modernity in such a way that the general idea of language games would be changed into a meta-theory of rival traditions.

Alasdair MacIntyre in his post-*After Virtue* philosophical work has been partly preoccupied with the issue of relativism. Many critics of *After Virtue* argued that MacIntyre's conception of moral traditions and his counter-Enlightenment claim – that there are no universal rational and independent standards to judge between competing moral traditions and their truth claims – make him guilty of moral and epistemological relativism[8]. In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* as well as in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* MacIntyre addressed this issue with an epistemological theory of rival traditions. To put it simply, despite the fact that there are rival intellectual and moral traditions (for example, Thomism, liberalism and genealogy[9]) and the fact that their claims cannot be rationally judged from an external/universal point of view, the claims of these traditions are claims for truth. Hence MacIntyre's definition of tradition:

A tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of

[8] See, for example, Wachbroit 1983, 1985.

[9] Although MacIntyre (1990) claims that Nietzschean genealogy is not a tradition of moral enquiry, for the sake of argument it is possible to claim that it is. In *Towards a Postmodern Understanding of the Political*, along MacIntyre's lines, I also argued that genealogy, strictly speaking, is not another tradition (see chapter 4). Nonetheless, genealogy can be seen as a tradition if its proponents, contrary to Nietzsche's urge to overcome him, accept Nietzsche's main arguments and philosophical presupposition as well as hermeneutically apply them to the present situation. A significant part of what The Friedrich Nietzsche Society, which unites a variety of Nietzsche's scholars, does can be seen along these lines.

conflicts: those with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject all or at least key parts of those fundamental agreements, and those internal, interpretative debates through which the meaning and rationale of the fundamental agreements come to be expressed and by whose progress a tradition is constituted (MacIntyre 1988: 12).

What we see here is that a tradition is not just a cultural horizon, as is the case with Hans-Georg Gadamer, but first of all a philosophical argument extended through time. There are certain fundamental agreements, which constitute the content and rationale of a tradition. These agreements are achieved and defined through a long intellectual debate during which philosophical and moral premises can be put to question at any time. However, traditions are not merely sterile philosophical arguments; they are also socially and culturally embedded forms of cooperative practices. "Every tradition is embodied in some particular set of utterances and actions and thereby in all the particularities of some specific language and culture" (MacIntyre 1988: 371). This conception of a tradition allows MacIntyre to bring practice and theory together. A tradition starts with some sacred texts or other culturally important utterances that form and structure a particular community. The first stage in the development of traditions is relatively uncritical and unreflective – they are deeply rooted in culturally embodied beliefs and values. They become more reflective when some commentary and analysis of their core beliefs and values take place. At an early stage a tradition may be even unaware of the existence of other traditions. A tradition moves to the more critical and reflective stage when some discrepancies between its existing system of beliefs and reality/cultural practices emerge. It is then, so MacIntyre argues, that the natural authority of a tradition's beliefs is put to question and the existing beliefs and utterances require a new justification. During the second stage an epistemological crisis may arise caused by an inability to solve internal incoherence and discrepancies. Only when these discrepancies and incongruence between beliefs and social reality are resolved, traditions can move to the third stage in their development and become epistemologically mature.[10]

What is important is that the rational standards of traditions are justified internally – not by appealing to universal standards as such, but through solving the inconsistencies within traditions. The rationality of a tradition is thus always justified historically – through comparing philosophical arguments before and after an epistemological crisis. It is an appeal to best standards and rational arguments available at the time. Thus the epistemological validity of a tradition is justified through its ability to furnish a

[10] For the full argument of MacIntyre's conception of the development of traditions see MacIntyre 1988, chapter 18.

tradition-constituted enquiry with conceptual resources for the resolution of internal inadequacies. However, the internal rationalization and epistemological growth of a tradition is impossible without its ability critically to engage with rival traditions. While the internal rationalization of a tradition refers to what MacIntyre calls interpretative debates between adherents of that tradition, philosophical debates with rival traditions refer to external debates with those who reject the fundamental agreements constituting the tradition. An example of such critical engagement between rival traditions is the debate between the proponents of liberalism and Thomism.[11] In such debates the adherents of rival traditions cannot appeal to neutral rational standards, but only to the standards embedded in their own traditions. However, what is possible is an intellectually honest attempt to understand a rival tradition from the inside, that is, as if it was one's own intellectual and moral tradition. MacIntyre argues that an external critic, being able to learn the language and rationale of a rival tradition from inside, is often far more capable to see and thus resolve the internal inconsistencies of the rival tradition. In such cases one's own tradition becomes vindicated through the incorporation of a rival tradition into one's own. However, there can also be cases when no resolution between two or more competing traditions is possible since none of them have conceptual resources to see and resolve the inconsistencies of their rivals. Furthermore, there may be situations when a new tradition is initiated as a result of the critical engagement between two rival traditions. This was the case with Thomas Aquinas who was able to reconcile two distinct philosophical traditions – Aristotelian philosophy as embodied in Averroists' thought and Augustine's philosophy together with the Biblical tradition. The result was the invention of a new tradition that was Aristotelian in form, but Augustinian in its content.[12]

MacIntyre's theory of rival traditions thus accepts the post-Cartesian and anti-Enlightenment conception of culturally and historically embodied forms of rationality, but it is able to avoid the threat of relativism which post-structuralist philosophers are often unable to escape. The claims of a particular tradition of rational enquiry are claims for truth, provided that the adherents of that tradition are able successfully to resolve the inconsistencies of their own arguments as well as critically to engage with rival traditions. Furthermore, MacIntyre's conception of tradition allows the linking of social practices with moral and social theory. That is, on the one hand, philosophy should not be seen as a sterile academic activity, preoc-

[11] MacIntyre, as a revolutionary Thomist, engages in a critical debate with liberalism in MacIntyre 1988, chapter 17, where he argues not only that liberalism becomes transformed into another tradition, but shows its internal inconsistencies.

[12] For the full argument see MacIntyre 1990: 112-118.

cupied only with highly specialized and often barren issues of almost no significance to human life as such. On the other hand, the moral and social practices of a community acquire justification and authority partly through their practitioners being able critically to reflect on their moral importance and validity. It also offers an account of philosophical enquiry that requires its practitioners to be more reflective about their own arguments, moral positions and culturally inherited premises. It also requires them to take a more partisan approach to their own philosophical enquiries and their own traditions. Although there are similarities between Lyotard's notion of language games and the theory of rival traditions (e.g. their anti-essentialist and anti-Cartesian character), there are important differences as well. The problem with Lyotard's Wittgensteinian language games is that their characterizations are too abstract, since they do not explain how these games should be played. What Lyotard claims about them is that all of them necessarily have rules, as without rules there is no game, and that each utterance in a particular language game should be seen as an *agonal* move (Lyotard 1979: 23). This Nietzschean claim puts Lyotard in conflict with the hermeneutic conception of human understanding. What is important for Gadamer and MacIntyre is not so much the *agon*, but an attempt to understand the subject matter/referent through our ability to grasp its meaning. Furthermore, Lyotard distinguishes narrative and scientific knowledge, while MacIntyre argues that tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry is both narrative and 'scientific' at the same time.[13] Individuals find their place in a tradition through being able to tell a philosophical story about how their personal histories interlink with the history of the tradition. The narrative structure of traditions also signifies their being open-ended.

The importance of the theory of rival traditions is that it directs us towards an alternative conception of post-modernity. Our social and cultural reality today can be seen in terms of the co-existence of several rival traditions which have competing understandings of the human good, the self, morality and of how social practices should be structured. One of them, in fact *the* dominant tradition, is liberalism. Contrary to the traditional understanding of liberalism as one of the three political ideologies, MacIntyre rightly understands liberalism as the dominant theory and socio-economic practice of *modernity*. At the core of it are the idea of the primacy of individuals over community, the conception of the self constituted and expressed through preference maximization (no matter what these preferences are), the primacy of the liberty to choose any conception of the good over the good itself, as well as the socio-economic order of market capitalism together with

[13] In this sense MacIntyre's conception of tradition is closely linked to T. S. Kuhn's notion of scientific paradigm.

its dictum of profit maximization. Thus modern humanism, individual liberty (whether negative or positive), the liberal-democratic state, which supports and restricts the markets, have produced the modern economic order of market capitalism.

The dominance of liberalism, however, does not mean that it is the only tradition. Thomism, or revolutionary Thomism, is another one.[14] It is based on theoretical and moral premises different from those of contemporary liberalism not least because it rejects the main social practices of the liberal bureaucratic state and market capitalism. However, what I want to suggest is that, contrary to Karl Polanyi, this rejection of the liberal order is possible only locally. The local is important partly because modernity destroys traditional communities that are essential for the development of *arêtes*. Local forms of community are also important because it is first of all locally that the structures of common good can be realized. Without the latter human flourishing is hardly possible. Now, since today there is no viable *global* alternative to liberalism and market capitalism, the only way to oppose it is not through an alternative project of modernity, i.e. socialism, but only locally, that is, only through our ability to sustain local forms of community and culture where human life and social relationships are not judged by the liberal standards of economic effectiveness and profit maximization. It is possible through our attempt to engage in such co-operative practices that are based on internal standards of excellence (those standards which internally define what these practices are) rather than relying on external standards of effectiveness through which the external good such as fame, prestige, power and money can be achieved. Revolutions should be fought not globally, but first of all locally – at the level of our daily practices in universities, hospitals, schools or local counties, where the structures of common good can be rationally formulated and achieved, where we are asked to pursue first of all the goods internal to those practices rather than the spoils of strategic battles and tactical games – prestige, money, fame or power.

The Case of Lithuania: Not Enough Modern?

Where does all this leave Lithuania? If we accept Kavolis' thesis about the strangled modernization of Lithuania, then the conception of post-modernity formulated here may become problematic. Although the idea of post-modernity is primarily important for our ability to *conceptualize* contemporary social reality beyond the modern ideas of humanism, instrumental rationality and the global order of market capitalism, its temporal aspect is

[14] The recent work of Kelvin Knight, especially his *Aristotelian Philosophy: From Aristotle to MacIntyre*, (Polity Press, 2007) is an example of philosophical work advanced in this tradition.

also significant. Post-modern societies, as many social theorists from Jean-François Lyotard to Daniel Bell have argued, are post-industrial knowledge-based societies. There is no reason to believe that Lithuania and other East European countries are lagging far behind this general trend of transforming their economies into the information and service based economies. However, there is certainly an area where Eastern Europe, in particular Lithuania, is far behind West European liberal democracies, namely, social welfare together with the entire network of the institutions of social provision. Furthermore, it is not European and modern enough as far as the vibrant civic society and left-wing social criticism are concerned. Thus what Lithuania and other East and Central European countries need today is good old European socialism in order to oppose the forces of aggressive capitalism and the neo-liberal agenda that have become today's dominant ideology.

Algirdas Degutis in his charismatic and partisan account of what he calls post-modern xenophilia has argued that the progressive liberalism and post-modern tolerance of Western democracies vis-à-vis Islamic fundamentalism threatens the very existence of the 'West'.[15] He thus presents himself as the guardian of the West and its values. No doubt, he is naïve and rather chauvinistic in most of his accusations, but he is right at least in one important respect, namely in his implication that the West is undergoing a deep cultural crisis. In a similar manner, but without Degutis' dramatization, Alasdair MacIntyre claimed that the West has already disappeared:

I think the great disaster has already happened. I think the West is already gone. What we have to do is find means of constructing and sustaining local forms of community through which we can survive this age (Pearson 1994: 42).

I have argued elsewhere that the 'West' is gone not so much because of its alleged moral ills, but because of the important changes in the way we see the global world: the ideological dualism between the West and non-West is no longer tenable and we can no longer take the alliance between Europe and America for granted.[16] What I want to suggest here, however, is that the demise of the 'West' is the fate of modernity itself and that there is no need whatsoever to lament this process. Liberalism, as the dominant theory, ideology and social practice of modernity, is bound to move us towards further emancipation and all-pervasive humanism precisely because we live under the economic order of unfettered markets and consumer capitalism. Thus any form of cultural conservatism is inevitably bound to fail in the long

[15] See his paper 'Deconstructing Postmodern Xenophilia' in *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, 8, no. 1, p. 49-63.

[16] See 'What can the *Philosophes* of European Integration learn from postmodern Aristotelianism' in www.londonmet.ac.uk/library/t82563_3.pdf.

run because of the ever-deeper expansion of consumer capitalism. Thus it is extremely naïve and short sighted to think, as Algirdas Degutis does, that liberal tolerance is somehow disconnected from the market order of consumer capitalism. The demise of 'the West' is due to the spread of consumer capitalism as much as it is due to anything else. Therefore, since liberalism, both conservative and progressive, is not the intellectual tradition which can oppose the preference maximization type of rationality, it is possible to do so only locally and only on the basis of alternative moral and philosophical traditions. There is no doubt that Lithuania and other East European countries can do so perfectly well – they can systemically oppose the dominance of profit maximization locally. But they also need to catch up with other Europeans and their modernization as far as the institutions of social welfare are concerned. This is one of the reasons why the emergence of philosophical discourse and social criticism on the left is so vitally important. Thus a twofold strategy is desirable and needed – the good old European socialism (simply because it is still *terra incognita* in Lithuania) and the post-modern philosophical emphasis on the local.

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ALTERNATYVIOS POST-MODERNYBĖS LINK: LOKALUMAS *VERSUS* RINKOS KAPITALIZMO BARBARIZMAS

SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje siekiama suformuluoti alternatyvią postmodernybės sampratą, pasitelkiant Alasdairo MacIntyre'o konkuruojančių tradicijų teoriją. Straipsnyje keliami šie pagrindiniai klausimai: koks yra rinkos ekonomikos santykis su modernybe, kokiu teoriniu ir moraliniu pagrindu galima kritikuoti modernią rinkos kapitalizmo tvarką ir ar galima Lietuvos sociokultūrinę realybę suprasti alternatyvios postmodernybės sampratos dėka? Straipsnyje taip pat yra pristatoma bei kritikuojama Jürgeno Habermaso filosofinė modernybės samprata, ypač jo teiginys, jog modernybė turi būti suprantama kaip neužbaigtas projektas. Atmetus Habermaso modernybės, viena vertus, ir Lyotard'o postmodernaus žinojimo, kita vertus, sampratas, siūloma į pliuralistines visuomenes žiūrėti kaip į skirtingų filosofinių ir moralinių tradicijų susidūrimo erdvę.