

PREFACE

The third volume of the journal *Athena: Philosophical studies* is dedicated to one specific topic: postmodernism and cultural change in Lithuania. This topic is ambiguous for several reasons. First, because ‘postmodernism’ is an umbrella term and its content is constantly shifting. Second, because it is difficult to say to what extent postmodern theories have affected (and infected) the Lithuanian academy. For example, the Lithuanian sociologist Vytautas Kavolis argued that the advancement of modernity in Lithuania was delayed and thus Lithuanian socio-cultural modernization has never been completed. If this is the case we can speak about postmodernism in Lithuania only in a futuristic mode. By contrast, the Lithuanian philosopher Arūnas Sverdiolas argues that postmodernism in Lithuania is more deeply rooted than in Western countries because post-Soviet societies lack any definite and stable forms and moral traditions. If we accept Fredric Jameson’s definition according to which postmodernism is the cultural logic of late capitalism, then postmodernism is a reality that has already happened to us. We have to face this reality and consciously admit the symptom: we should interpret rather than ignore it. The evident hostility towards postmodern theories in our academy is a third reason why the topic of this volume seems to be ambiguous. Even if we agree that postmodernism is relevant in speaking about Lithuanian reality and that we know what it means, still it is usually neglected even by the authors who have absolutely different backgrounds and tools of argumentation.

It is precisely this ambiguity towards this topic that has inspired us to collect a volume, which is full of intellectual debates and tensions. The first section of the volume deals with the new constellations of power under the conditions of late capitalism. Algis Mickūnas in his article “Modernity in Postmodernity” points out that in postmodernity the world is not represented but rather constructed by discourse. Thus postmodernity radically changes the status of the subject: everyone is subjected to discursive powers without being cognizant of this subjection. Another important aspect is that power also changes its forms and is based not on normativity but on performativity. Algirdas Degutis in his article “Reflections on Western Self-De-

construction: Extinction via Liberal Openness” interprets the postmodern call to differences as a threat not only to the fabric of the bourgeois society but also to the identity of the West in general. Andrius Bielskis in his article “Towards an Alternative Post-modernity: the Local versus the Barbarianism of Market Capitalism” draws the opposite conclusion: he contrasts the infinite play of differences with the leftist idea of social community. Vytautas Rubavičius’ article “The Pleasure of Transgression: Consumption of Identities” analyzes the logic of consumption and attempts to demystify the notion of transgression under the conditions of market capitalism.

The second section of the volume deals with the collisions and gaps which appear when postmodern theories confront post-Soviet mentality. Arūnas Sverdiolas’ article “Cynicism: A Lithuanian Version” examines the differences between Western cynicism as described by Peter Sloterdijk and the specific phenomenon of post-Soviet cynicism. Nerijus Milerius’s article “A Topographical Mapping of Lithuanian Philosophy” discusses the strategy and tactics of Lithuanian philosophers in trying to find a proper place between Western theories and the post-Soviet past. My own article “Tell Me Who Is Your Other and I Will Tell Who You Are. Imaginary Identities in Contemporary Lithuanian Art” argues that every imaginary identification is subjected to the gaze of the Other which happens to be double: not only the Other of the totalitarian past, but also the Other of market capitalism. Violeta Davoliūtė in her article “The Popular Movement and Postmodernism: Reflections on the Cinema of Sąjūdis” describes the popular national movement of Sąjūdis as a postmodern phenomenon.

The third section of the volume deals with particular cultural phenomena such as literature, video and media art. Jūratė Baranova’s article “Postmodernism in Lithuanian Literature” draws a paradoxical conclusion that contemporary Lithuanian literature is more “existential” than “postmodern”. Finally, Renata Dubinskaitė’s article “Artist roles in Lithuanian Video Art in 1990-2003” and Renata Šukaitytė’s “New Media Art in Lithuania” examine the emergence of new forms of artistic expression. Both authors reveal the interdependence between these new forms of artistic expression and the emergence of market capitalism which appears to have been our reality for more than a decade. In that case, welcome back to postmodernism!

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