

Athena



Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas

# Athena

Filosofijos studijos  
2007 Nr.3

REDAKCINĖ KOLEGIJA  
EDITORIAL BOARD

Vyriausiasis redaktorius  
Editor-in-Chief  
Dr. Žibartas JACKŪNAS  
(01 H Filosofija)

Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas  
Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute

Vyriausiojo redaktoriaus pavaduotojas  
Deputy Editor-in-Chief  
Dr. Naglis KARDELIS –  
(01 H Filosofija)

Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas  
Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute

Vyriausiojo redaktoriaus pavaduotoja  
Deputy Editor-in-Chief  
Dr. Audronė ŽUKAUSKAITĖ –  
(01 H Filosofija)

Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas  
Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute

Atsakingoji sekretorė  
Executive Secretary  
Dr. Danutė BACEVIČIŪTĖ –

Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas  
Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute

Nariai  
Members

Prof. dr. Jūratė BARANOVA  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Prof. Paul Richard BLUM  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Dr. Algirdas DEGUTIS  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Prof. habil. dr. Leonidas DONSKIS  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Prof. habil. dr. Abdussalam GUSEINOV  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Prof. dr. Gintautas MAŽEIKIS  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Prof. dr. Algis MICKŪNAS  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Prof. Jan NARVESON  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Prof. habil. dr. Zenonas NORKUS  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Doc. dr. Vytautas RADŽVILAS  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Dr. Vytautas RUBAVIČIUS  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Prof. habil. dr. Mara RUBENE  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Doc. dr. Tomas SODEIKA  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Doc. dr. Arūnas ŠVERDIOLAS  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Prof. habil. dr. Arvydas ŠLIOGERIS  
(01 H Filosofija)  
Prof. habil. dr. Abdussalam GUSEINOV  
(01 H Filosofija)

Vilniaus pedagoginis universitetas  
Vilnius Pedagogical University  
Lojolos koledžas, Baltimorė, JAV  
Loyola College, Baltimore, USA  
Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas  
Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute  
Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas  
Vytautas Magnus University  
Filosofijos institutas (Rusijos mokslų akademija), Rusija  
Institute of Philosophy (Russian Academy of Sciences), Russia  
Šiaulių universitetas  
Šiauliai University  
Ohajo universitetas, JAV  
Ohio University, USA  
Vaterlo universitetas, Kanada  
University of Waterloo, Canada  
Vilniaus universitetas  
Vilnius University  
Vilniaus universitetas  
Vilnius University  
Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas  
Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute  
Latvijos universitetas  
University of Latvia  
Kauno technologijos universitetas  
Kaunas University of Technology  
Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas  
Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute  
Vilniaus universitetas  
Vilnius University  
Filosofijos institutas (Rusijos Mokslų Akademija), Rusija  
Institute of Philosophy (Russian Academy of Sciences), Russia

*Leidinių paremė LR Švietimo ir mokslo ministerija*

Sudarytoja/ Editor Audronė Žukauskaitė  
Lietuvių kalbos redaktorė/ Lithuanian language editor xxx  
Anglų kalbos redaktorius/ English Language editor Algirdas Degutis  
Recenzantai/ Reviewers:  
doc.dr. Mindaugas Japertas, doc.dr. Dalius Jonkus

Redakcijos adresas (Address):  
Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas  
Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute  
Saltoniškių g. 58, LT-08105 VILNIUS, LITHUANIA  
El. paštas (e-mail): kfmī@kfmī.lt  
Tel. (85) 2 75 28 57, faksas (85) 2 75 18 98  
Leidinio tinklalapis (Home page) <http://www.kfmī.lt>  
ISSN 1822-5047  
ISBN ?????????????????????

© Sudarymas/Edited by Audronė Žukauskaitė 2007  
© Autoriai/Authors 2007  
© Vertimas/Translated by Agnė Narušytė 2007  
© Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas 2007  
© "Versus aureus" leidykla 2007

# CONTENTS

<i>Audronė Žukauskaitė</i> . Preface . . . . .	7
--	---

## POSTMODERNISM AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN LITHUANIA

### I. NEW CONSTELLATIONS OF POWER IN THE CONDITION OF LATE CAPITALISM

<i>Algis Mickūnas</i> . Modernity in Postmodernity . . . . .	9
<i>Algirdas Degutis</i> . Reflections on Western self-deconstruction: Extinction via liberal openness. . . . .	31
<i>Andrius Bielskis</i> . Towards an Alternative Post-modernity: the Local versus the Barbarianism of Market Capitalism . . .	52
<i>Vytautas Rubavičius</i> . The Pleasure of Transgression: Consumption of Identities . . . . .	68

### II. POSTMODERN THEORIES VS POST-SOVIET MENTALITY

<i>Arūnas Sverdiolas</i> . Cynicism: A Lithuanian Version . . . . .	82
<i>Nerijus Milerius</i> . A Topographical Mapping of Lithuanian Philosophy . . . . .	98
<i>Audronė Žukauskaitė</i> . Tell Me Who Is Your Other and I Will Tell Who You Are. Imaginary Identities in Contemporary Lithuanian Art. . . . .	112
<i>Violeta Davoliūtė</i> . The Popular Movement and Postmodernism: Reflections on the Cinema of Sąjūdis . . . . .	124

### III. NEW FORMS OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION: LITERATURE, VIDEO AND MEDIA ART

<i>Jūratė Baranova</i> . Postmodernism in Lithuanian Literature . . . . .	135
<i>Renata Dubinskaitė</i> . Artist Roles in Lithuanian Video Art in 1990–2003 . . . . .	156
<i>Renata Šukaitytė</i> . New Media Art in Lithuania . . . . .	173

CONTRIBUTORS . . . . .	187
GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS . . . . .	195

# TURINYS

Audronė Žukauskaitė. <i>Pratarmė</i> . . . . .	7
--	---

## POSTMODERNIZMAS IR KULTŪRINIAI POKYČIAI LIETUVOJE

<i>Algis Mickūnas</i> . Modernybė postmodernybėje . . . . .	9
<i>Algirdas Degutis</i> . Apie Vakarų savigriovą: žlugimas per liberalųjį atvirumą. . . . .	31
<i>Andrius Bielskis</i> . Alternatyvios postmodernybės link: lokalumas <i>versus</i> rinkos kapitalizmo barbarizmas . . . . .	52
<i>Vytautas Rubavičius</i> . Transgresijos malonumas: tapatumų vartojimas	68
<i>Arūnas Sverdiolas</i> . Cinizmas: lietuviškasis variantas . . . . .	82
<i>Nerijus Milerius</i> . Lietuvos filosofijos topografinis žemėlapis. . . . .	98
<i>Audronė Žukauskaitė</i> . Pasakyk, kas yra tavo Kitas, ir aš pasakysiu, kas tu esi. Išivaizduojamos tapatybės Lietuvos mene . . . . .	112
<i>Violeta Davoliūtė</i> . Sąjūdžio judėjimas ir postmodernizmas. Samprotavimai apie Sąjūdžio laikų kiną . . . . .	124
<i>Jūratė Baranova</i> . Postmodernizmas lietuvių literatūroje . . . . .	135
<i>Renata Dubinskaitė</i> . Meninko vaidmenys Lietuvos video mene 1990–2003 . . . . .	156
<i>Renata Šukaitytė</i> . Naujųjų medijų menas Lietuvoje . . . . .	173
APIE AUTORIUS. . . . .	187
NURODYMAI AUTORIAMS . . . . .	195

## 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!

*Audronė Žukauskaitė*



Algis Mickūnas

## MODERNITY IN POSTMODERNITY

*Ohajo universitetas / Ohio University  
Filosofijos fakultetas / Department of Philosophy  
Athens, Ohio 45701, USA  
El. paštas / e-mail: amuali@gmail.com*

### INTRODUCTION

Postmodernity has assumed as many theses as there are postmodern writers. Equally, various forerunners, from Nietzsche to Heidegger, even Adorno, have been credited with the title of FOUNDERS of this philosophy. The task of this essay is not to engage in polemics concerning which view of postmodernity is correct, but to find the transitional processes from modernity to postmodernity. The reason for this ploy inheres in the subject matter itself. If one is to understand the POST, one must at least have a rudimentary understanding of its counterpart, MODERNITY. The appearance of postmodernity must be sought in the problematic of modernity and its incapacity to find resolutions within its own context. At the same time the resolutions offered by postmodernity cannot completely transgress modernity. It might turn out that both rest on the same 'ground'.

This essay selects the 'transitional phenomena' that mediate between the two cultural domains; preeminent among such phenomena are discourse, contingency, system, science, technology, false consciousness, democracy, cynicism and power. These phenomena are transitional in that they comprise the field of mutual concerns and differentiations between modernity and postmodernity. It is important to be cognizant of the designation "cultural

domains”, precisely because postmodernity is not a successor to modernity: at least for the twentieth century, both are present in various guises and combinations. This is one major reason for the difficulties among postmodernists in defining themselves. And this is one reason why the transitional phenomena might be of help in understanding the concerns of postmodernity.

No doubt, many issues will have to be left out, and many excellent discussions will not be cited. The focus of this essay is basically philosophical because the controversies between the two cultural domains are philosophical despite the death of philosophy advocated by postmodern writers. The controversies also rest on various confusions concerning what writers attack which facets of modernity and which facets postmoderns take on uncritically as their own. For example, there is a tendency to take some current postmodern ‘discovery’ in psychoanalysis and employ it to ‘decipher’ all civilizations and even histories as having hidden such a ‘discovered’ phenomenon. Thus, Ulyses and Othello and many others have nothing to tell us apart from being texts of ‘domestication of women’. Despite all postmodern objections to ‘essentialism’ such pronouncements are essentializing. Moreover, one forgets that such ‘discoveries’ are a hermeneutical issue, and specifically an issue of one type of hermeneutics: historical. One cannot simply take contemporary historical meanings from their context and impose them on other historical or civilizational contexts. Hence, one must recognize the limitations of one’s theses. Yet as shall be seen subsequently, it is modernity that provides the discursive logic wherein one can say anything about anything without any criteria that would determine whether a discourse is appropriate or not.

#### THE ONTOLOGY OF DISCURSIVE POWER

“All discourse is fascistic”, announces Roland Barthes (Barthes 1977: 1). Of course this announcement is not to be taken as a universal rule; rather, it is comprehensible mainly within the context of Western modernity. In general, postmodern thinkers, from Lacan through Foucault to Derrida, are concerned with discourse and the way it structures human socio-political and ideological life and above all power relationships (Schiwy 1985: 21). If this claim is correct, we are still in the dark how discourse could assume such pervasive presence. To shed some light on this issue it is essential to consider the modern conception of the “given” in philosophical thought that underlies science.

From Descartes through Bacon, to Kant, modern thought shows a basic turn toward reflection of the subject of thought. This is to say, the given, the validity, and the certainty of experienced phenomena are being questioned. The questioning offers various reflective possibilities concerning

the methodological access to the world. Two major options are contrasted and evaluated by the major founders of modernity: qualitative and quantitative. What is important is that the choice of quantitative over qualitative methodology rests on valuation and volition. One makes a choice not on the basis of experience, but on the basis of reflectively instituted criteria of certainty, clarity, and ideality (Krueger 1962). This opens the door to the primacy of reflective valuation and choice over the experienced nature. The latter will be judged in terms of reflectively established criteria and selected method, and the method will determine how nature is to be regarded.

The choice of quantitative, formal methodology shifts the scientific undertakings away from direct observation to efforts of constructing an all-inclusive discourse, a *lingua universalis* that would be capable of treating all events in terms of formal procedures. The latter being beyond skepticism can comprise a system irrespective of qualitative ambiguities, concrete experiences, and perceptual relationships. The ideal of the formal system lies in its indifference to qualitative content; the latter is deemed to be purely subjective and arbitrary, while the former, despite the fact that it is equally a human invention, is posited to be objective. Thus it is assumed that the totality of the objective world must correlate to a formal-quantitative system comprised of univocal terms. Indeed, as Husserl points out, the quantitative procedures are taken not only as methodological procedures, but as founding for all theoretical thought (Husserl 1962: 26ff). The procedures can be formulated without any relationships to qualitative experience.

In order for the formal-quantitative system to gain concrete value, it must posit an essentially homogeneous nature accessible to quantitative methodology. This implies that human experience is irrelevant and must be transcended toward the methodologically required homogeneity of nature, and that there is no perceptual access to such nature. We should not be misled by the concept of homogeneity that might suggest a geometric, and hence perceivable content; yet geometry itself is quantified, closing perceptual access to homogeneity (Stroeker 1987: 258ff). In turn, the perceived world of shapes, colors, sounds, and multi-leveled interconnections of practical activities and tasks, must be regarded as distinct from the homogeneous reality. Thus, the plurality of experienced phenomena are neither identical with nor can they offer a basis for the theoretical-methodological constructions. Modernity, here, offers a fascinating conversion: what is present in experience is not what is actually given for science, and what is regarded as scientific objectivity, cannot be given in experience. Our experience is contingent, while the theoretical conceptions offer what is necessary; the former must be regarded as subjective, while the latter is given a status of objectivity. But what kind of necessity does this objectivity have? It is necessity of formal-

quantitative discourse, subjected to precise rules of analyses and procedures. This discourse forms a necessary system of objective understanding, while all else is to be subsumed under such a system. In this sense even the human, the experiencing and living subject, is to be regarded as part of the contingent world and, in order to be understood objectively, must be subjected to the formally structured theoretical system.

At this juncture modern thought encounters an irresolvable ambiguity. The positing of the homogeneous world as material, robs such a world of necessity; just as the experienced world, it too must be regarded as contingent. In this sense, the sole necessity is attributed to the formal-quantitative system. But this is precisely the problem: the system is not identical with the posited homogeneous world; the latter is material-contingent, while the former is necessary. Yet precisely this necessity not being a part of the material objective world must be subjective. But above it was suggested that the subject and its experiences are equally contingent. How does one obtain a necessity from a contingent subject? Regardless of the logistic tricks, this issue was not resolved by modernity. It was simply assumed that formal and quantitative structures lend themselves most readily to the construction of systems that are unaffected by vagaries of daily life.

The emergence of the priority of formal over the perceptual and even the posited material domains lends priority, in general, to the discursive practice. Since the latter is formal, it is capable of continuous formal analyses and divisions. Any break in the analysis is a matter of decision. Thus the formal swings in an ambiguity between formal necessity and will, freedom and rules. The importance of this indecision consists precisely in the option to regard the formal either as a priori necessity or as a free construction. Various expressions throughout modernity, from Pico through Galileo, Kant, to Fink's analyses, suggest the taking for granted of the latter option (Fink 1974: 9, 43). The significance of this option is multi-leveled, especially with respect to both, the political and the scientific enlightenments. If the formal discourses are distinct from the contingent subject and material world, then they are autonomous creations. This would mean that the source of all formal-quantitative systems and their laws is an autonomous will. In this sense, the human being is conceived as an autonomous 'law giver', both in the scientific as well as the political domains. Fundamentally, modern thinkers assume that the human is the source of laws, rules, and edicts, and thus all political laws must be reached by free consensus of individuals. This is to say, if the basis of formal systems and their laws is creativity, then there is no other criterion concerning which laws are selected apart from the individual's choice (Volkmann-Schluck 1974: 141). Thus the individual is the master of his/her discursive practice, and is in a position to articulate

the discourse into various divisions and sub-discourses, sub-systems, each capable of assuming its own independence and of creating its own discipline. Luhmann's work in social philosophy has shown the way in which the horizontal articulation of the formal discourses lent itself to the division of the environment into disciplines, and a creation of numerous autonomous sciences (Luhmann 1979: 113-132).

The outcome is not only political freedom of thought, speech and self-determination, but also political equality. No one is higher or superior to others, and each is a creator of his/her own way of life and destiny. In principle, the concept of human autonomy calls for human equality, and demands only one type of political institutions: to guarantee human autonomy and to allow all members of a political community a full participation in public affairs. The laws of the political community stem only from the consensus of the autonomous individuals. The political domain becomes coextensive with the public domain, and all public matters are the concern of all social members. This means that in the final analysis all affairs, from science to economy, are to be adjudicated publicly (Kriele 1980: 57). The argument here is against various idealistic and materialistic readings of modernity. In principle, modernity assumes an ontology that demands the priority of the political-public decisions concerning all domains of social life. In this sense, what is known as "private economy" is a political decision and can be changed politically. The political domain is not only regarded as a concern of everyone, but also as universal (Gay 1977: 397). The fact that at times this is not the case does not detract from the principle of autonomy that subtends both political and scientific enlightenments. Even the great thinkers like Kant lapsed at times inadvertently into anti-enlightenment rhetoric (Gay 1977: 172). Yet this does not cancel his conception of autonomy. Given this conception, with the attendant freedoms of thought and speech, the question is: How such freedom of speech, of discourse turns into power?

Although there are various epistemological and ontological issues, we shall restrict ourselves to an inescapable solution that modernity could offer concerning the relationship between the formal-quantitative discourse and the posited matter behind the perceptual awareness. Since such matter is not perceptually present, the formal discourse cannot be perceptually related to it. This means that in principle no discourse can be regarded as a 'representation' of some reality. Thus there must be another avenue to connect the formal with the material. This domain is praxis. The only connection is the practical application of the formal to the material by an active intervention into the material and its restructuration along the formal-quantitative requirements. This is to say, the contingent material world is PRODUCED in accordance with human calculations. To access the material world by

modern understanding is to shape the world concretely by the rules of such an understanding. All other avenues being closed, the modern person must restructure the environment. This restructuring had assumed various names: production, technology, pragmatics, and praxis. Irrespective of the nominal variations, one underlying assumption persists: the human is an autonomous law giver not only in the public-political domain, but also in the material domain. In this sense, the formal-quantitative discourse obtains a concrete material shape, and the latter is a reflection of the former. Science, becomes applied science, and constitutes one variant of the relationship between formal discourse and the material world: instead of representing the world, discourses construct it.

It is instructive to note that modern thinkers did not view the posited material reality as having any necessity of its own. It had to be contingent. Its necessity originates from elsewhere: first, from the formal articulations comprising the theoretical domain, PRESUMED but not guaranteed to be correlative to material reality, and second, from an act of absolute creation, such that the formal theoretical discursive structure and its rules are the very rules by which the material world was created (Schabert 1978: 141). This is a mythical ploy to legitimate the relationship between the formal and the material. After all, if our invented discourses do not represent reality, then we must guarantee such a representation by mythical means. 'Since' the world was created by formal rules, then our formal discourse must correspond to the material world. Analogous mythical ploy was used by Descartes to guarantee the necessity of the objective world. This persistent insistence on securing mythical assurance for necessity of the material reality indicates a fundamental assumption that in its own nature it is contingent. Thus an appeal to an absolute "geometrician" is not an attempt to placate the ecclesiastics, but a mythological effort to avoid the gap between formal discourse and the material reality. If mythological legitimization is excluded, one is left with a contingent materiality, and the sole necessity resides in the construction of the formal discourse and its practical use for the reshaping of the material world. And this is precisely what the history of modernity reveals.

The previously mentioned horizontal division of the formal discourse into sub-discourses and the establishment of the latter as independent disciplines, correlatively extend the possibility of subdividing the materially conceived world in accordance with formal possibilities. By the eighteenth century, the real was the possible (Volkman-Schluck 1965: 63). This simply means an increased refinement of active reproduction of the material sphere along the possible discursive articulations. Such process yields two consequences. First, there appears a complete disregard of the concrete experience and its meaningful interrelationships in the world; these are regarded to be

totally subjective and contingent. Second, there is a removal of all the diversity of human ties to the world. What one is left with are formally designed discourses and the material reality, and both are detached from the lived experiences; this allows their arbitrary correlation. The term “arbitrary” in this context is quite complex; we shall take only the more significant meanings that pertain to modernity.

The following moments shall be considered briefly: First, an increase of formal complexities and differentiations is parallel to an increase in the contingency of the material facts, leading to more possible rearrangements of the material environment. As Hans Jonas suggests, every refined and produced material fact offers possibilities for further formal refinements, differentiations, and material rearrangements (Jonas 1979: 73-96). Second, the internal articulation of formal systems and their applied reworking of matter provide a basis for a variety of disciplines, each having its specific formal approach and each capable of constructing its own material realization. Third, this process maintains its basic principles of formal and material mediation through constructive activity, and progresses toward a differentiated inclusion of all events, both ‘natural’ and cultural. This leads to formally-materially divided world: semi-independent spheres call for semi-autonomous functions and work. The daily experienced life, the perceptually interconnected world, depends on, is subjected to, and becomes contingent upon the manner in which the formal systematizations articulate the human material: the human is a conjunction of economic, biological, psychological, chemical, sub-atomic, genetic, etc. discourses, where each research and its discourse deems its function to be definitory of the whole being and independent of others.

Some of the more obvious assumptions of this ontology can now be extricated. First, the creation and extension of formal systems is a matter of choice, as it is a matter of choice in the selection of formal-quantitative over qualitative methodologies, although the latter are now given credence although not equal to quantification. Second, the positing of the material, indifferent reality, is an ontological act, and it is basically a presumption. Third, the connection between the formal and the material has no necessity; it is provided by a choice of what the subject decides to make of the homogeneous materiality, and the will to make determines what formal system shall be used to calculate the possible material processes and results. And fourth, the human is a producer of the concrete material environment; its increasing refinement follows increasing formal articulations.

Because of the contingency and indifference of the material, the human assumes a discursive power by connecting the discourse to activity of reshaping the environment. Here emerges a society of semi-independent groups of experts, professionals, workers with functionally prescribed activities, beha-



vioral requirements, and tasks. Yet what is remarkable about the expert production of the material environment is that while each group's activities have no necessary connection with the work of other groups, the concrete results of one group can be calculated and used by most diverse groups, from art to military. This is to say the produced material results can be selected at will and applied in various domains on the basis of new projects and designs. The lateral differentiation decentralizes responsibility, and increases the contingency of the world and the arbitrariness by which one can treat the environment. Resultantly, every formal system and every material result produced as a fulfillment of the former, become increasingly arbitrary, offering formal and material combinations without end. Each specialty is released from the concrete, lived world implications, each has experts in its sphere who need not relate to any other sphere; each can claim that no conclusive evidence has yet been discovered, precisely because the very evidence is produced and can be rearranged per arbitrary design that bears no necessity.

The argument that this process can be explained on the basis of human needs can be countered by this argument's redundancy: 'needs' are also produced as part and parcel of the possibilizing processes that become at the same time needs and fulfillment. We can make it, therefore we want it; we want it because we can make it. The process of increasing contingency and arbitrariness are structures of power, comprise a self-referential systematization of increasing technical controls over the material environment. This means that there are no limits in the 'search for truth', since the search has lost the distinction between knowledge and object; a formulation of an epistemic structure is coextensive with a project to be made. One cannot find any trans-scientific, trans-discursive criteria to check this process. And each domain has no inherent reason to stop the proliferation of its form of 'knowledge' and praxis. There are no physical reasons to cease making more physical experiments and refinements, no biological reason to stop the remolding of the living systems along new designs and codes, and no economic reason to stop the economic 'growth'. Limitations would be regarded as infringements on the 'autonomy of research', the 'needs of production', and the requirements to 'shape' the young for 'productive' lives.

At this juncture it is possible to surmise what is "discursive power". For modernity, its power lies in its realization in the material environment. This realization is what constitutes the concrete, material environment of the modern person. The latter faces a world which is an embodiment of the formal-quantitative discourses and the arbitrariness underlying its application. In this sense we are in a position to appreciate Lyotard's claim that post-modern age is confronted by a power capable of direct production of the proofs of its own truth. But this means that the production is technical and requires



vast technical means, affordable either by governments or by organizations possessing sufficient economic power. In this sense, 'proof' and truth are functions of wealth, possession of appropriate formal discourse, and the produced material results. Lyotard in fact extends this conjunction to include 'justice': thus, discourse, wealth, truth, and justice (Lyotard 1984: 45). Those in charge of wealth, of governments, are the persons who are in a position to exercise power and establish their truths, their justice, in order to maintain the 'system'. Thus, the system becomes self-legitimizing; it constantly strives to increase its efficiency, and thus the increasing ability to produce its self-verification. Its truths will have to coincide with its value, its good, and its justice. What once were deemed to be laws derived from the consensus of autonomous individuals, become now performances in a technical system. Indeed, Luhmann says that normativity of laws will be replaced by performativity of procedures (Luhmann 1981).

It is a peculiar kind of procedure: if reality is what provides the evidence of proof, and correlatively shows the prescription that includes normative, public, and private results, then mastering the rules of a discourse is equivalent to the mastering of the produced environment. And this is precisely what is afforded by modernity and followed by postmodernity. All these factors reinforce one another mutually and constitute self-proliferating discursive practices. If the discursive power is performativity, efficiency, productivity, wealth, and effective verification of its own proposed prescripts, then science is legitimated by its material efficiency, and the latter legitimates science. Governments and economic syndicates become eager subsidizers of scientific ventures. While radically pluralistic, with numerous semi-autonomous disciplines, the system tends to become self-generative and encompassing, of course under the modern-formal understanding of discourses where anything can be said about anything in any discourse. Legal discourse understands everything legally, moral does morally, religious discourse understands everything religiously, and economic discourse reads all events economically, as do all other social discourses. And each one is correct because it does not represent anything nor can it misrepresent anything. It is to be emphasized that all talk of representation is no longer valid and hence any talk of misrepresentation is equally irrelevant. In principle everything is an invented story and, by the background assumption of modern ontology, every story has power to make what it says.

#### AUTONOMY AND SUBJECTION

One creates the formal-quantitative and, as mentioned, even qualitative discourses and subjects the environment to its rules in order, thereby, to free

oneself from the natural and experienced phenomena. One aims at achieving autonomy by establishing and increasing technical power over the material environment. Indeed, all materiality is deemed subjectable to discursive rules of construction. Thus the human body also assumed two dimensions. First, the invention of the “mechanical body” dealing with the anatomical metaphysics, and second, the “political body” to be structured functionally in accordance with the requirements of the produced and productive material environment. The body is here structured by numerous regulations, calculations, controls that shape the functions of the body for utility, efficiency, miniaturization, refinement, and restriction. Military and workshop ‘training’ become equal functions. The training is observed, judged, supervised, graded, and compared, resulting in an increased functional individuation.

What is here formed is a social technology of coercion of the body, a strategy of power that breaks the body up into parts and rearranges its functions in accordance with lateral movements of spacious-temporal efficiency. The body is disciplined and the disciplinings are coextensive with the formal calculations of the production of the material environment into functional techniques and structures. These then locate the body and its functions with precision. The assigned machine, the job description, call for precise body movements and excise the wasted, the undisciplined functions. This is a countermovement to the autonomous process of individuation in modernity. Here the body, the thought, feeling, are individuated, singularized, correlated to technical means, judged, adjusted, and subjected. Each function of the body is divisible into numerous other functions of speed, duration, and skill, capable of being judged and ascribed to the individual. The latter can or cannot perform the required functions, deserves or does not deserve a prescribed degree of remuneration, is docile, correctible, or incorrigible, with a residuum of disruptive chaos.

While individuating, such performative functions are formed for exchangeability. Each not only occupies a place and time but is arranged in a hierarchy of coded skills. The place one occupies is dependent upon the rank in a system of functions, and one can assume such a rank if one accepts precise subjection to the functional requirements of the system. Thus discipline, here, assigns social status in accordance to the degree of subjection and acceptance of coercions, of increased adaptations. The system whips the chaos, the multitude, into shape, into individuality, under the universal law of modern discourse, whose increased subdivision into disciplines calls for an increased articulation and subjection of human functions. The meaning of this subject is SUBJECTION. Thus there appears an army of the fit and the unfit; the imbecile who fails to submit, to be subjected, also ceases to be a viable social subject (Foucault 1977). This view of Foucault, unlike the

views of numerous other postmodern thinkers, is both a critique of modernity and an effort to decipher the constitution of its power. No doubt, there are numerous issues in his work based on the assumptions of traditional logic. Is it possible for Foucault to resolve such issues?

Foucault's methodological undertaking to provide a critique of modernity hinges on the cultural-anthropological question of the possibility of deciphering one's own culture objectively while being caught in the language of the culture. This issue seemed to have been one of the methodological stumbling blocks. Foucault finds a way of circumventing this issue by implicitly accepting the modern production of the individual through disciplining. Our delimited double movement from formal-quantitative method to the production of an environment, to the restructuration of the lived world, and then to the structuring of body functions in accord with the efficiency required to correspond to the produced world, led to a shift from sign to signal. This means that communication between the human and the world is designed to be univocal. The more precise articulation of the human functions, their subjection to the exact environmental constructs, the more efficiently does the system function. It is a kind of militarization of society: a precise command calls for a univocal reaction, instituting a system of signals that must approximate a cause-effect sequence. Discourse is reduced to signalization, allowing no deviations of reaction, no horizon of a sign system, no slack. One perceives a signal and reacts to it without any intermediary of thought or of other signs. At the same time one is trained to deal with the technical world in the same manner: direct reaction to functional requirements.

Foucault has realized that he need not leave his cultural meanings in order to observe them from outside. The meanings have become redundant for modernity. The once autonomous enlightenment individual has been reindividuated by the system and its demands. One is measured, timed, clocked, examined, recorded, surveyed, observed, tailored, and hierarchized to assume precise functions and gestures, feelings and thoughts, required by a technological system. In turn, the system seems to lend an appearance and aura of 'naturalness' to such functions. Thus one is extolled and elevated if one is capable of abolishing signs, of restricting their slack, in favor of signals. In this sense, the cultural practices can be described and analyzed as if every sign were a univocal signal, as if the lived perceptual meanings and their interconnections were replaceable by unmediated and repeatable reactions to signals. Thus modernity for Foucault can be read as a text without meaning and without slack. Nominalism, behavioral theory, and explanatory theses of human action are variations on this fundamental conception. While discourses as systems of signals are modeled upon monastic and militaristic disciplines, they can also be regarded as a war upon the per-

son. Anything personal, loose, and autonomous, cannot be tolerated; it is too democratic, human, inefficient, wasteful, and uneconomical. The more meaning can be excluded, the more one is subjected to identify oneself with the functions of a given discipline, the greater are one's chances to advance in the prescribed hierarchy.

The fascinating point of this shift from sign to signal lies for Foucault in the diffusion of discursive practices. No one is in charge, although everyone is subjected to discursive powers without being cognizant of this subjection. True to the enlightenment, one is still looking for the outstanding individual who has power, who is in charge. Those in charge are equally if not more subjected to the strictures of their specific discourse. One could even say that they are totally dedicated to it. Their individuality, and their claims to being 'in charge' are completely subjected, produced, formed, and functionally individuated. Semiotically speaking, they are the most pronounced signs of 'success' in subjection; they bear the information concerning the systemic categories of hierarchic prestige.

Lyotard, basing himself tacitly on our above considerations, follows out some of the implications concerning the preeminence of information in modernity. If the discursive domain is coequal to the productive-technical domain, then discursive knowledge and its praxis implications become most significant. It is not difficult to see how any discourse will have to be translated into quantities of information, and anything that does not lend itself to such a translation will be discarded. The producers and users of knowledge will have to perform this translation in order to continue producing and inventing. This requires not only a total exteriorization of knowledge, but also of its reduction to the system of signals, its militarization. Since the productive processes are already militarized, knowledge too will become a sought after product and will be used in new combinations and sold as any other commodity. It is no longer avoidable that, in this sense, information emerges as the major stake in the global competition for power. The battles range over information, as once they did over territories, raw materials and cheap labor. At the level of information one can find a conjunction of industry, wealth, military, and politics (Lyotard 1984: 46). Once again this confirms the initial claim of Barthes and our explication of modernity in postmodernity.

Characteristically, the "age of information" is coextensive with our explication and resultantly pervades the pedagogical process. While initial academic institutions of modernity were modeled on Berlin university, stressing "science for the sake of science", the shift to discursive 'signals' demands training in performative information, i.e. an acquisition of knowledge that empowers one to subject oneself to a function. Instead of universal, critical,

and emancipatory education, the university is shifted toward the applied, the professional, technical, and basically functional; although the 'humanities' are still part of the curriculum, they are tolerated as a part of the tradition and are periodically paraded under 'values' and opinions, or denounced as disruptions of 'serious education'. At any rate, their power is merely democratic and has little bearing on 'real' issues. Thus the university, in the true sense of the word, disappears; it becomes a contributor to the technical performance within the social system, and its funds are tied to its ability to produce subjected functionaries. This emphasis tends toward the abolition of emancipatory education in favor of subjecting pedagogy allowing no critical discourse. The latter is 'soft' and offers no tangible rewards. The subject of pedagogy, the student, is no longer concerned with the political domain, with human rights, dignity, meaning, and the general well being of the world. He is focused on narrow, technical expertise, private aggrandizement, and self-enhancement.

The moment knowledge ceases to be an end in itself, calling for emancipation, its transmission ceases to be the responsibility of scholars and students. The educational programs and decisions, the allocation of funds is decided on the basis of a hierarchy of functional needs; technocratic and materially productive programs are extolled financially by political states and private concerns. The academicians are then more concerned with obtaining funds for their technical production instead of discovery or transmission of knowledge. This is not an accusation, not the usual complaint about a loss of meaning and the experienced life world; rather, it is tracing of the results of modern ontological complex that interconnects language, science, autonomy, subjection, production and pedagogy. Moreover, it is a discovery of modernity and its results in the very heart of postmodernity. Indeed, if postmodernism is a critique of modernity, then the term critique means manifesting something that was there all along, although for the most part unnoticed. Once it has become noticed, modern multi-disciplinary multi-discursivity became self-conscious modernity in the guise of power-laden multi-discursivity of postmodernity.

## THE DISCOVERY

Intermixed in the explication of the modern interconnections was the conception of power. Postmodern thinkers tend to credit Nietzsche for discovering power in the most self-righteous, pious, innocent, penitent postures, acts, and looks (Deleuze 1979: 80-107). Following his lead most thinkers who had any awareness of modern understanding, tracked down most diverse issues of power, all the way from Weber and legitimation to Sloterdijk and cyni-

cism. What must be added to these discoveries is the general LOGIC OF POWER and its modern ground. Given these two articulations, we shall be in a position to access post-modernity and its unavoidable philosophical option for the contemporary world. This is not to say that the world has not been living this option; it is simply to suggest that it was couched either in modern or even medieval jargon and thus failed to understand itself.

What, then, is the logic of power? Its first and pervasive mode is self-withdrawal. Great efforts are expended to create a semblance that power is not there and that it is not even an issue. Rarely is power manifest directly as force or violence. For the most part it carries masks of respectability, culture, and is offered reverence both by its possessors and its enemies. The enemies are equally interested in possessing power. History shows that the opponents of power, the liberators from oppressors, had no qualms in assuming power “in the name of the people” against the power hungry enemies. The second mode exhibited by power is its self-proliferation. It has no reason within its own process to limit itself. From Hindu, Greek, Chinese, modern, and current conceptions, there emerges a position that within its parameters power seeks to increase, that will to power is more power, that obstacles to power are enhancements and excuses for expansion of power, and that this increase appears in its most pervasive and diffused form in modern scientific discourse under the abstraction called objectivity. Third, not having any other ground apart from itself, power legitimates itself by success. It never fails. Any failure is attributed to extraneous factors, such as mistakes or confidence, strategies and tactics, and missed opportunities. The solicitation of power is unlimited; in this sense, modernity follows the unchecked proliferation of material power in numerous guises. Fourth, power is a bringer of prestige and esteem. Those in power positions are honored and their views praised. The very success makes the victor right and the defeated, if not wrong, then at least insignificant. Neither the ancients nor the moderns deviate from this claim: nothing succeeds like success (Straus 1975). The basic value is: whatever enhances power is good, whatever leads to its diminishment is evil.

While these general modes are pervasive, there is a specific modern way of exercising power with popular ‘consent’. This mode is ‘arbitrary necessity’. This is one of the first modes that break up the modern conception of power from within. The claim to scientific objectivity led to a legitimating ideology that daily lives are dictated by a system of ‘material conditions’ and the inescapable subjection of the individual to forces that are not under his/her control. What appears through this claim are some of the principle factors discussed above. First, the scientific methodology itself is undergirded by valuation and choice. These have no necessitation, since they constitute the valuation and selection what shall be necessary.

Second, 'material objectivity' is a human product of reconstruction of the environment; hence the reconstruction can either continue, be changed or abandoned. The human is facing a human world. Its only necessity is a habit and an insistence by those who have, for a moment, arrived at the zenith of the hierarchy, that this is the 'best system'. But that is already a valuation. Third, while one still maintains an aura of 'scientificity', the latter is an empty term; as noted above, the formal differentiations, producing numerous disciplines, can no longer be unified under one system. This is what opens the door to postmodern claims, such as Lyotard's, that "postmodernism means incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984: 7). No spider webs of reason connect all things – to paraphrase Nietzsche. Fourth, the very ontology of contingency of the material world and the human not only abolish necessities and all encompassing systems, but above all reveal an arbitrary connection between the human and the world. The human does not grasp objective necessities, but invents connections from a vantage point of interest (Habermas 1970). Fifth, the arbitrary connections involve all the previous points: the selection of methodology, the designation of the world as purely material, the application of method and the transformation of the environment in accord with human designs, and the incrementation of material power and controls.

Thus as a result any discourse is premised on power, and the latter is equal to arbitrariness. The awareness of this arbitrariness comprises a pivot of postmodern call for democratization. The feminist movement, in its various guises, offers one common thesis: change the power relationships between genders where gender differences should not constitute social and political differences. The latter are arbitrary and rest on a tradition of a discursive associations, reflecting only formed habits and not cosmic necessities (Weedon 1987: 41). Postmodern awareness maintains one certainty: all the discursive designations, their hierarchical structurations, do not stem from any 'reality' but are arbitrary constructs (Guerin 1975: 15f). And the issue between modernity and post-modernity hinges on this arbitrary constructionism. One is aware of it, yet one must recon with the material power that such constructions have produced and institutionalized. The dislodging of them is a major undertaking. The onslaught of postmodernity goes under the rubric of CRITIQUE OF POWER (Honneth 1985) and can be read across all texts, whether feminist, proletarian, minoritarian, or aesthetic.

#### BUILDING OF DEMOCRACY

The postmodern building of democracy follows a different course from the one proposed by political enlightenment. Although the latter posited human



autonomy as the basis of the identity of freedom with equality, it failed to offer a clear understanding that hence all decisions of significance are to be treated publicly. It allocated politically too many 'necessities' to the 'private' sector and excluded a free public consensus in this sector, thus forcing a variety of important functions to be seen as 'natural necessities'. And the fulfillment of these became associated with material fulfillment and thus fell into the trap of scientific discourse and its promise of material well being and power. Indeed, such promises were a part of legitimation of an entire system of oppression, calling itself socialism (Levi 1977). One now is well cognizant of the IDEOLOGICAL USE of such promises. At the same time one is equally aware that the scientific claims, in the name of objectivity, were equally partial claims, laden with interests. The postmodern person is no longer taken in by the clean scientific facts and data, offered by the 'heads' in positions of power engaged in not so clean power politics. Such a person is at core CYNICAL (Sloterdijk 1983: 62).

What is this cynicism and why is it so well covered over by modernity, and how does it lead to democratization? First and most intellectualized form of cynicism appears quite innocently in the controversies concerning the above discussed process of subjection. In these controversies the subjection is elevated to 'objective status' in the sense of demonstrating that all social members and their views are results of material conditions. This leads to the vast critiques of consciousness and ideology. All critics of ideology assume the scientific-formal discourse and its ontology in order to claim legitimation for their discoveries of false consciousness. The explanatory mechanism is designed to demonstrate that the 'opponents' cannot help but maintain the ideologies they maintain, and thus cannot avoid being subjected to false consciousness. The opponents are not cognizant of the conditions that lead to ideologies and the mistaken acceptance of ideologies as truths. Thus each person must support his/her class position, and the partial interests that adhere to this position. But no one can espy totality and become free from the conditions. Thus the capitalist as well as the party member constitute the deceived epiphenomenon of production. And this is the crux of the issue: as soon as one necessarily assumes a false consciousness, the process of reification must continue. One must maintain the precise falsehoods in one's head in order for the real, material system to continue. Thus the dilemma: seen from outside, one espies in the ideologies false consciousness; seen from within, the ideologies are completely right. We are faced by a correct false consciousness. This is the cynical posture of scientific modernity.

Everyone accuses everyone else of being a product of blind and meaningless conditions, of a system of signals, and in these accusations each



proclaims to be the only one who is cognizant of and thus liberated from the conditions. We are confronted with an elitist cynicism. No one is allowed to escape through the cracks of scientifically established causalities – no one except those who point to others' restrictions. The elitist cynicism parallels other forms: all self-righteous pronouncements that only water is good for everyone, while the proponents of this doctrine drink wine; or that fornication is a mortal sin, while the elite can fornicate without being tainted by it. Everyone must produce in order to advance social well being and insure progress – everyone except those who surmise the grand purposes of other's labors, and enjoy their benefits by making the pronouncements concerning such purposes. False consciousness is a function of the very process under which elitism subjects everyone except itself – and does so by becoming a partial and interested view.

If each consciousness is as false as its position in the so called objective system requires, then each must be intrinsically locked in its falsehood. And this is what the critics of ideology proclaim: there is a necessary false consciousness. In this view the false consciousness is reified and inserted in the objective requirements of the system: falseness is a function of a system, and is necessary for its preservation. Systemic functionalism not only denies to consciousness an emancipatory right, but also rejects it as meaningless; after all, it might lead to autonomy, chaos, democracy, and even a transformation, if not an abolition of the system. These denials are necessary for the preservation of an aristocratic elitism of 'high culture'. They prescribe to others what they would not do themselves. They constitute the conservative element which is totally anti-democratic and insist daily that the ordered social existence can be best obtained in the context of functional lies paraded as grand purposes. Their cultural politics and ethical attire toward militarization of social existence and labor manifest their total cynicism toward freedom. The latter is reduced to barbaric parody by suppressions, invasions, and interventions, and all in the name of improving the material conditions – their scientization – for freedom and democracy. Obviously the conservative functionaries engage in planning minor deviations: jeans in Russia and Eastern Europe, hard rock in the West. Of course there might be minor surface differences between the East and the West, but as real systems, the nomenclature rulership of the East constitutes the image of paradise for the total law and order conservatives of the West. One practices, here, a schism of consciousness till it appears normal. This normalcy depends on the cynicism of correct mystification in the right heads which, after all, could not encantate their mystifications unless they were able to escape the enchanted circle of illusions and falsehoods pervading the rest of the population, unless the mystified become mystifiers and creators of false

consciousness. And this is precisely its transparent failure: the effort to be scientific, to explain the necessities of others and their proper place, transgresses the scientific posture and becomes postmodern.

There is no metanarrative; the prospect of an all-explanatory system, that would be, at the same time, coextensive with the practical affairs, has not been achieved. A multitude of theories abound, each proposing to be the 'basic science' capable of explaining the others, only to find itself being explained by the others. As Castoriadis depicts, even physicists such as Heisenberg was being ironic when dealing with the "elementary particles". There were so many of them and of such a variety, that one had to become a zoologist to classify them (Castoriadis 1984). Perhaps there are no elements, and perhaps their secret is precisely the modern discourse of formal and quantitative methodology that requires the construction of atoms, elements, and particles. Be that as it may, we should be able to show what sort of 'logic' emerges from this failure and how does it lead to democratization.

First, the modern tradition replaced a presumption of an all knowing, infinite being and truth by an effort to construct one system, to be identified as true. This attempt failed, and the truth, at least in the guise of an all-explanatory system, could not be had. The efforts to achieve it were, despite failures, not abandoned. One still was led by the BELIEF in it. But a belief without a proof is empty unless it has a different purpose than truth. This is to say, a belief can be propagated as truth to the extent that others are sufficiently gullible to accept it and to subject themselves to it. No doubt, such a belief could even be genuine and lend credence to one's otherwise meaningless and relative world. Some cannot envisage that there are many truths, thus making their truth neither better nor worse, but at the same time not the most significant. At any rate, the belief is no longer held on the basis of a demonstration but on the basis of a need. And this is what opens the door to the question: whose need among other needs? This is the hinge which shifts away from the acceptance of the claims that there is a system founded on truth, and replaces it with a multitude of beliefs based on a variety of needs. (Volkmann-Schluck 1978) This variety reveals that the so called objective and self-generating system is founded upon someone's need.

Given a multitude of needs, the need that founds the system is one among others and comprises a value choice. Fundamentally, then, value choices are not material, necessary compulsions, but adjudicative decisions. In a society such adjudications require public participation and thus a political arena where all social members *MUST* participate. For as we have seen, modernity cannot maintain its pretense of an explanatory system without including false consciousness among those who purport to be subjected and having subjected others to its edicts. At this level such

false consciousness indicates a deliberate hiding of free valuation and a choice of the system. Thus the supporters of this choice open the gates to a plurality of choices. The matter of choices that would affect society must be, therefore, a question for public decision. This simply means that one 'expert's' or one group's self-appointed decisions on the basis of 'facts' are inadequate. Facts, after all, are chosen material constructs and not some natural inevitabilities. If the decision is to be acceptable to the members of society, then it must be political, and the latter is essentially public (Mickunas 1986: 335). That this is a postmodern view is obvious from the feminist movement, pointing out that gender differentiations are political and require political adjudication in a public discourse (Weedon 1987: 5). The discourse is not about facts, but about strategies for deposing the traditional values of social relations. The way of abolishing of such values requires the recognition that they have no natural, no material base, but are products of a discourse. Hence, only basic changes in discursive practice can 'deconstruct' the received meanings (Daily, 1979). But such a deconstruction cannot be merely private: it must be public.

The insistence on the public and the political by postmodern thought is tied to the modern forgetfulness that its reduction of the human to a factual-material person led to privatization, and at best to collectivization of private needs and the promise by the modern 'scientific systems' to fulfill such needs. The result is an emergence of a ruling political technocracy which assumes power both in private and state capitalisms. And this is precisely what is at issue for postmodernity: first, the concept of "private" and what belongs in the private sphere is based on a forgotten political valuation, and hence it is democratically decidable. Second, the reduction of all political affairs to a system of expert-technical decisions concerning the private wants of the social members, is a choice of methodology and material construction which is not compulsory but valuative. Resultantly, valuations should not be based on one group's choice; they must be a matter of public decision. Third, the question of current debate concerning legitimation crisis hinges on the technocratic privatization of the public, i.e. its materialization. The latter implies an acceptance of the *de facto* private individual material differences and inequalities, leading to the *de facto* conclusion of the different 'political' status of such individuals. In this sense, the political arena, designed for equal participation of all social members "irrespective of material-economic and power rank", becomes abolished. The only legitimation of political rule is a self-legitimation of rulership by material advantage and power. But as noted, the power rule, justified by an ideology of a 'scientific discourse' is a false consciousness that demands pluralization of views, and thus contains within itself the seeds of self-destruction. Fourth, the material environment,

pervading all 'private' lives is common to all. This environment turns out to be a human construct, design, product, formed on decisions and valuations, and resultantly calls for public adjudication. The constructed environment affects all social members and requires public monitoring. Public's participation is, thus, inevitable.

The postmodern call for democratic politics also accepts the premise that all human events are fundamentally political, and the meaning of politics is a mandatory public participation in all affairs. This is counter to the prevailing journalistic view of modernity that something is 'merely political' or that some social issues are too important to be politicized. For postmodern understanding, social issues are too important to be left out of politics; the latter after all is a public domain. The usual, and quite cynical, view is that the public is incompetent, that it is not an expert in the sophisticated and scientised modern world, and hence the decisions are to be left to the experts and not to chaotic process of democratic ignorance. But the ignorant public has an equally cynical answer: the sophisticated sciences, left to their own devices, have already prepared the annihilation of the planet, and all the public is asked to do is to wait for it to happen. The system-elitism is a factual idiocy that can be deflected from its private aggrandizements only by an insistent public mediation. Without democracy and its sphere of political access to all social members, the modern discursive praxis might be the end decided by someone's solitary value (Sloterdijk 1983: 252ff).

#### POSTSCRIPT

The conjunction of modernity and postmodernity opens a field of open debate that ranges across all registers of social issues and concerns. The claim of modernity to an all encompassing and explanatory discourse makes sense only in its valuative context and an effort to build a material domain. But the manner of building of such a domain is neither natural nor metaphysical aim but a humanly invented way and hence one among other possible human creations. The system that has been posited as objective turns out to be a power structure designed deliberately for the sake of its own illusory self-generation and self-legitimation. This design assumes the shift from sign to signal, with, in a final analysis, full cognizance that the shift is artificial and leads to false consciousness. At the same time, the invention of one system as true turns out to be a belief and not a proof, and resultantly a belief founded on need. These factors compel the reorientation of all social events toward democracy and political adjudication in the public arena. The latter is pluralistic and offers an equal participation to all social members, unless of course, they are prevented by illegitimate claims of those who are in power

positions in the presumed objective system. Yet the public is all too aware of such claims as partial, interested, and can be seen in their valuative context. The critique of power by postmodernity is coextensive to the process of democratization and equalization. The principle that underlies postmodern thought is the unsuccessful effort of modernity to maintain the identity between freedom and equality.

Received 2007 04 08

Accepted 2007 07 21

## REFERENCES:

1. Barthes, R. 1977. *Le monde*. Paris, 9/10.
2. Castoriadis, C. 1984. *Crossroads in the Labyrinth*. Trans. Soper K. & Ryle M.H., Cambridge: The M.I.T. Pres.
3. Daily, M. 1979. *Gyn/ecology*. London: The Women's Press.
4. Deleuze, G. 1979. "Active and Reactive", in *The New Nietzsche*. Ed. Allison D. B., New York: Delta Books, pp. 80-107.
5. Fink, E. 1974. *Traktat ueber die Gewalt des Menschen*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
6. Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Sheridan A., New York: Pantheon Books.
7. Gay, P. 1977. *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
8. Guerin, M. 1975. *Nietzsche, Socrates heroique*. Paris: Grasset.
9. Habermas, J. 1970. *Technik und Wissenschaft als "Ideologie"*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
10. Honneth, A. 1985. *Kritik der Macht*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
11. Husserl, E. 1962. *Krisis*. Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.
12. Jonas, H. 1979. "Philosophisches zur modernen Technologie," in *Fortschritt ohne Mass*. Ed. Loew R., Muenchen: Piper Verlag, pp. 73-96.
13. Kriele, M. 1980. *Befreiung und Politische Auklaerung*. Freiburg: Herder.
14. Krueger, G. 1962. *Die Herkunft des philosophischen Selbstbewusstseins*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliches Buchgesellschaft.
15. Levi, B.-H. 1977. *La barbarie a visage humain*. Paris: Grasset.
16. Luhmann, N. 1979. "Gesellschaftliche Bedingungen und Folgeprobleme des naturwissenschaftlichen Fortschritts", in *Fortschritt ohne Mass*. Ed. Loew H., Muenchen: Piper Verlag, pp.113-132.
17. Lyotard, J.-F. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Bennington G. and Masumi B., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
18. Mickunas, A. 1986. "Perelman on Justice and Political Institutions", in *Practical Reasoning in Human Affairs*. Eds. Golden J.L. Pilotta J.J., Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing.
19. Schabert, T. 1978. *Gewalt und Humanitaet*. Muenchen: Verlag Alber.
20. Schiwy G. 1985. *Post-strukturalismus und neue Philosophie*. Hamburg: Rowohlt.
21. Sloterdijk, P. 1983. *Kritik der Zynischen Vernunft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
22. Strauss, L. 1975. *On Tyranny*. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press.
23. Stroecker, E. 1987. *Investigations in Philosophy of Space*. Trans. Mickunas Algis, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.
24. Volkmann-Schluck, K.-H. 1965. *Einfuehrung in das Philosophische Denken*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
25. Volkmann-Schluck, K.-H. 1978. *Leben und Denken*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
26. Volkmann-Schluck, K.-H. 1974. *Politische Philosophie*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann).
27. Weedon, C. 1987. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. New York: Basil Blackwell.

Algis Mickūnas  
MODERNYBĖ POSTMODERNYBĖJE

## SANTRAUKA

Šiame straipsnyje svarstomi 'pereinamieji fenomenai', užimantys tarpinę padėtį tarp dviejų kultūrinių sričių – modernybės ir postmodernybės. Tarp jų galime išskirti diskursą, sistemą, mokslą, technologiją, melagingą sąmonę, demokratiją, cinizmą ir galią. Šie fenomenai užima tarpinę padėtį sukurdami lauką, kuriame modernybė ir postmodernybė abipusiai susiliečia ir išsiskiria.

Modernybės ir postmodernybės konjunkcija steigia atviros diskusijos lauką, nusidriekiantį per visus socialinių problemų ir interesų registrus. Modernybės pretenzija į visaapimantį ir viską paaiškinantį diskursą prasminga tikrai jos verčių kontekste ir reiškia pastangą sukurti materialią sritį. Tačiau šios srities kūrimo būdas nėra nei natūralus, nei metafizinis, o žmogaus sugalvotas ir, vadinasi, yra vienas tarp kitų galimų žmogaus kūrinių. Sistema, kuri buvo postuliuota kaip objektyvi, pasirodė esanti galios struktūra, sąmoningai sukonstruota savęs gaminimo ir savęs įteisavimo labui. Šis konstravimas tampa perėjimu nuo ženklo prie signalo, galutinėje analizėje visiškai suvokiant, kad šis perėjimas yra dirbtinis ir veda prie melagingos sąmonės. Tuo pat metu teisingos sistemos atradimas pasirodo esąs įsitikinimas, o ne įrodymas, vadinasi, poreikiu grindžiamas įsitikinimas. Šie veiksniai verčia perorientuoti visus socialinius įvykius demokratijos ir politinio pripažinimo viešojoje erdvėje link. Pastaroji yra pliurali ir užtikrina vienodą visų socialinių narių dalyvavimą, nebent, žinoma, jiems kliudo neteisėtos pretenzijos tų, kurie užima galios pozicijas tariamai objektyvioje sistemoje. Vis dėlto visuomenė pernelyg puikiai nuvokia tokias pretenzijas esant šališkas, suinteresuotas ir interpretuotinas vertybiniame kontekste. Postmodernybės vykdoma galios kritika plečiasi sykiu su demokratizacijos ir lygybės reikalavimo procesu. Postmodernų mąstymą grindžiantis principas – tai nepavykusi modernybės pastanga išlaikyti tapatumą tarp laisvės ir lygybės.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: modernybė, postmodernybė, diskursas, melaginga sąmonė, demokratija, galia, cinizmas.

Algirdas Degutis

## REFLECTIONS ON WESTERN SELF-DECONSTRUCTION: EXTINCTION VIA LIBERAL OPENNESS

*Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas / Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute*  
*Dabartinės filosofijos skyrius / Department of Contemporary Philosophy*  
Saltoniškių g. 58  
LT-08105 Vilnius  
*El. paštas / e-mail: dabart-filos@kfmi.lt*

It seems that instead of having joined the West we have joined a postmodern project of reducing the West to the rest.<sup>1</sup> Western political and intellectual elites are now competing among themselves in Western self-abasement and self-effacement, in making anything smacking of the West passé and odious. We are supposed to be “open” societies welcoming the Other while relentlessly rooting out parochial Western arrogance. The Soviet empire has collapsed, communism in Eastern Europe dismantled, and the communist ideology seems bankrupt. And yet we are ever more surrounded by the rhetoric of the savagery of capitalism and its social injustice. The rhetoric is coming from the West, updated with such buzzwords as “exclusion” and “inclusion”, “marginalization” and “empowerment”. The basic idea is that leaving some people “behind” or “excluded” is unacceptable, that we should be open to the “marginalized” both inside and outside our societies. This openness is touted as the superior virtue of advanced societies, trumping all ancient virtues. Consider a sample of episodes testifying to the prevalence of this mindset.

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to the colleges of the COST Action 24 program (“Evolving Social Construction of Threats”) for useful discussions on the topics of the paper.



Shortly after 9/11 the Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, made a statement which included this bromide: “We must be aware of the superiority of our civilization, a system that has guaranteed well-being, respect for human rights and – in contrast with Islamic countries – respect for religious and political rights.” Yet it turned out that this was a major gaffe. A flock of European politicians rushed to denounce him. The Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, said: “I can hardly believe that the Italian Prime Minister made such statements.” Spokesman for the European Commission, Jean-Christophe Filori, added: “We certainly don’t share the views expressed by Mr Berlusconi.” Italy’s center-left opposition spokesman Giovanni Berlinguer called the words “eccentric and dangerous”. Within days, Berlusconi was forced to withdraw.<sup>2</sup> If this was hypocrisy, we should bear in mind that hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue. And the virtue in question seems to be that of taking no pride in our own civilization. Columnist Diana West wonders, “Five years after the attack on Pearl Harbor, World War II was over, Japan and Germany vanquished. Five years after September 11, we still speculate as to who, or what, our enemy is.”<sup>3</sup> Why? In the official rhetoric, we are waging a “war on terror”. The blatantly lame euphemism seems to be used in order to avoid naming the enemy: “To the progressive mind, the very concept of ‘the enemy’ is obsolescent: there are no enemies, just friends whose grievances we haven’t yet accommodated” (Steyn 2006: 200). Playwright Harold Pinter, now winner of the Nobel Prize in literature, made the following remark in a speech on *September 10, 2001*: America, he said, “is now the most dangerous power the world has ever known – the authentic ‘rogue state’... [it has] what can accurately be described as a vast gulag – 2 million prisoners in fact – a remarkable proportion of them black”.<sup>4</sup>

Consider the responses to 9/11 of Europe’s philosophical luminaries. For Jean Baudrillard, the destruction of the Twin Towers was “the absolute event, the ‘mother’ of all events” ... “they [the assailants] did it, but we wished for it. ... Terrorism is immoral, and it responds to a globalization that is itself immoral” (Baudrillard 2002: 134). The sophisticated Jacques Derrida did a bit of deconstruction. “We are perhaps wrong to assume so quickly that all terrorism is voluntary, conscious, organized, deliberate, intentionally calculated: there are historical and political ‘situations’ where terror operates ... as if by itself, as the simple result of some apparatus, because of the relations of force in place, without anyone ... being really conscious

<sup>2</sup> “Furor at Berlusconi Remark on West’s Superiority”, *The New York Times*, September 28, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> West, Diana, “Are we in denial?” *The Washington Times*, September 8, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Speech to the University of Florence by Harold Pinter (10th September 2001) <http://www.haroldpinter.org/home/florence.html>



of it or feeling itself responsible for it". And he went on: "Can't one terrorize without killing?" "Can't 'letting die', 'not wanting to know that one is letting others die' – hundreds of millions of human beings, from hunger, AIDS, lack of medical treatment, and so on – also be a part of a 'more or less' conscious and deliberate terrorist strategy?" (Borradori 2003: 107-108). The implied suggestion is that the terrorists acted in legitimate self-defense – against the terror of America's omission. Jürgen Habermas, another luminary, just as readily identified the root causes of the attacks: "Without the political taming of an unbounded capitalism, the devastating stratification of world society will remain intractable. The disparities in the dynamic of world economic development would have to at least be balanced out regarding their most destructive consequences – the deprivation and misery of complete regions and continents comes to mind" (Borradori 2003: 36). Since America is quintessentially associated with the evils of "unbounded capitalism", the attacks were at least explicable, if not justifiable. The implied solution seems to be that of redistributing wealth from the West to the rest.

To take another example, consider why Christianity was not included in the list of European values in the drafted EU Constitution? Presumably because this would have meant discrimination against other religions, which is incompatible with openness, the supreme value of enlightened Europe. Presumably all religions and all Gods are equal, so that the Christian commandment "Do not have any other gods before me" is unacceptably discriminatory. British columnist Melanie Phillips draws attention to the case of an evangelical Christian campaigner, Stephen Green, who was arrested and charged with "using insulting words". What did he do? He was trying to hand out leaflets at a gay rally in Cardiff. What was printed on those leaflets? None other than quotations from the Bible saying that homosexuality is a sin. Phillips comments: "by doing nothing more than upholding a fundamental tenet of Christianity, he was treated like a criminal. And yet at the same time, the police are still studiously refusing to act against Islamic zealots preaching hatred and incitement against the West."<sup>5</sup>

These examples of Western self-flagellation could be multiplied indefinitely. It is extremely difficult to find examples of Western elites publicly and unequivocally endorsing traditional Western values and institutions. Why? Because such an endorsement runs the risk of being condemned as bigotry. Any Western chest beating, by contrast, is at most ridiculed as "political correctness" (PC) gone too far. The presumption is that the PC mindset is the right one, even if sometimes it runs amok.

<sup>5</sup> Phillips, Melanie, "How Britain is Turning Christianity into a Crime", *Daily Mail*, 7 September 2006.

## THE UNDERLYING IDEOLOGY

There is a pervasive ideology behind all this that might be dubbed as progressive, compassionate or sentimental liberalism. It is the ideology of those who perceive the traditional bourgeois society as mired in all kinds of oppressive practices, prejudices and stereotypes. They want the society to become more caring, more tolerant and more inclusive. Their compassionate efforts are now directed not only at the traditional targets such as the poor and the sick, but also at children, old people, women, sexual and racial minorities, illegal aliens, exotic cultures, rare animal kinds, depleting rain forests – an infinite series of both human and non-human beings. All of them are accorded the status of “the downtrodden and oppressed”, “the weak and voiceless”, a status that allows them to demand remedies from the powerful and guilty ones. “Compassion” is the battle cry in contemporary Western politics. The compassionate agenda has taken hold of all moral heights and it rules without any serious contenders, left or right on the political spectrum.

Compassion, in this agenda, is not merely a virtue, a supererogatory duty, but a matter of justice, to be implemented with Caesar’s sword. The basic idea is that the “wretched of the earth” are such through no fault of their own, but because of the society lacking in social justice. The world of the compassionate is morally flat: all people are worthy of equal respect, all beliefs are equally worthy of attention, all ways of life are equally welcome, all cultures are equally valuable and a barbarian is the man “who believes in barbarism in the first place” (Finkelkraut 1995: 58). The compassionate liberal is open to everything and “has no enemy other than the man who is not open to everything” (Bloom 1987: 27). Since for him all people are basically equal, any factual inequality is a case of remediable injustice as well as an indictment on the society putting up with it. Again, since for him “people are naturally good and ... do evil because of corrupting external influences”, dealing with evil is tantamount to the elimination of these influences (Kekes 1997: 38).

The compassionate liberal conceives his mission as a struggle against any discrimination, intolerance, inequality, hierarchy and exclusion. Now, since a free society spontaneously evolves all kinds of boundaries, exclusions and hierarchies, he is always hectically busy. He tries to enrich the poor at the expense of the rich; to equalize men’s and women’s opportunities; to confer children the right to criticize the parents; to introduce race quotas at the universities; to desegregate the schools; to ban homosexuals’ discrimination in the labor market, to protect the foxes from blood-thirsty hunters, etc., etc. In short, he wants to make the world flat: to put down all natural boundaries, destroy all hierarchies, traditional mores, manners, ties of loyalty, cultural and ethnic particularity, even national sovereignty. In this he takes

the stance of “aggressive tolerance” towards the dominant ethnicity, culture, tradition, morals and customs – demanding their openness to the outsiders. He wants the entire world to begin anew at the starting line of equal opportunities. Fearful of the unequal results at the finishing line he must vigilantly watch social developments and be ready to take measures against the recreation of inequalities and the emergence of new forms of exclusion and discrimination. In short, he is seeping with political energy and is truly an agent of the “permanent revolution”. He is the driving impetus behind the “progressive” movements of multiculturalism, feminism, anti-racism, post-colonialism and environmentalism.

In these times he is conveniently postmodern: he proclaims the equivalence of all beliefs and values, while at the same time he denies the legitimacy of the beliefs and values dominant in the West – because of their dominance. Postmodernists are aptly described by the phrase “philosophers of suspicion”, which Paul Ricoeur used with respect of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. They share the conviction that anything said or done in Western societies is mere window-dressing, a camouflage hiding something wrongful or shameful. Wherever they direct their critical gaze they see domination, oppression and fraud. The social world for them is an arena of incessant struggle in which they see only the winners and the losers, the oppressors and the oppressed, the manipulators and the manipulated – even when facing apparently voluntary relations. The social world, as they see it, is a zero sum game: anyone’s gain is someone’s loss. The unquestioned assumption is that the better off are somehow to blame for the mire into which other parts of humanity can sink and that they should therefore do something about it.

The archetype of this posturing is Marx’s theory of class antagonism treating the whole history of mankind as the story of the struggle between the exploiters and the exploited. In this struggle all claims to truth or justice, if put forward by bourgeois “reactionaries”, are mere ploys of the powerful. “Dominant ideas in any society are always the ideas of the ruling class” is the relativist thesis of *The Communist Manifesto*. Truth and justice can only be accessible to an agent whose exceptional position allows the transcendence of the struggle. This is the position accorded to the proletariat, the “universal class” of those who have nothing to lose but their chains. By a revolutionary uprising, the proletariat gains not only its own freedom, but also emancipates humanity from the curse of class antagonism. The revolutionary violence as envisaged by Marx is conceived as a retribution, as a response of the oppressed to hidden (“structural”) coercion. Although bourgeois societies would not allow open coercion and their citizens are formally free, the facade is fraudulent, since it masks the “exploitation of labor”. The wage earners, even if voluntarily joining the labor market, are in reality victims of coercion,

for the capitalists only pay them the costs of reproducing their labor power and expropriate the rest of the value created. The system of wage labor is a subtle form of slavery and should be abolished. Only by destroying the system – by abolishing the private ownership of the means of production – the international proletariat can lead humanity to the “realm of freedom”.

As the proletariat failed to live up to the expectations in the West, “progressive” thinkers began looking for other agents of emancipation, investing their hopes in the “liberation” movements of women, racial minorities, student rebels (“flower-children”), homosexuals, and environmentalists, to name but a few. The Marxian proletariat was repeatedly replaced with other agents of change in the hope that one or another would finally achieve a radical social transformation. After the breakdown of the Marxist theory of labor exploitation, attempts at finding faults with capitalism continued unabated. The forms of capitalist oppression allegedly discovered by the critics came to be ever more refined. One can mention Gramsci’s theories of hegemony that saw bourgeois oppression buttressed by Christianity and traditional culture and the Frankfurt school’s attempt to graft Freud on Marxism and to trace the oppressive nature of the bourgeois society to the institution of the family and “the repressive order of procreative sexuality” (Marcuse). One should also mention the cultural revolution of the 1960’s, with its message that one could be an authentic human only by flouting all of society’s mores. The purpose of the revolution was to become “unrepressed” by overturning tradition, conceived as an illegitimate means of control and domination.<sup>6</sup>

Probably the farthest advances in this direction were made by the classics of postmodernism. In his studies of the history of discipline in prisons and madhouses, Michael Foucault stressed the power of the guards and the experts in shaping inmates’ behavior and eliminating deviancy. The distinction between the norm and deviancy has, according to Foucault, no natural or objective basis; the “experts” impose it. The knowledge the experts boast is thus mere imposition of their will constituting an act of violence. By drawing analogies between the prison and other social institutions, Foucault insinuates that the bourgeois society as a whole is but a prison (or a madhouse) writ large. The normal bourgeois is a “normalized” creature. The history of modernity (coterminous with the emergence of bourgeois societies) is a history of subtle subjugation. The older regimes of brutal violence and public executions have been gradually replaced by the more refined, yet more efficient “discursive regime” of the knowledge/power tandem. The regime subjugates and “normalizes” the individual much more effectively than primordial despotism. Roger Bacon’s aphorism “knowledge is power” was an expression of early modern belief that knowledge was liberating, as

<sup>6</sup> For a penetrating dissection of Gramsci and Marcuse see: Kolakowski 1981, Ch. VI and XI.

it provided the means of subjecting the stingy nature to mankind's needs. Foucault reversed its meaning: knowledge brings subjugation, suppression, powerlessness and injustice: "all knowledge rests upon injustice ... the instinct for knowledge is malicious (something murderous, opposed to the happiness of mankind)" (Foucault 1984: 95). Reason, knowledge and truth are mere artifices of a repressive "discursive regime". The aura of truth that surrounds the various forms of hegemony is a mirage, and reason itself is but an expression of hegemony. What is needed is the liberation from reason itself, and its agent can only be the antithesis of the normalized bourgeois – a madman, a deviant, a criminal.

Jacques Derrida holds a similar position. His guiding idea is that every structure that organizes our experience and action is constructed and maintained through acts of arbitrary exclusion. By applying the method of "deconstruction" he attempts to discredit thought and reason as mere products of the male arrogance of the West having no objective basis in reality. The Western „(phallo)logocentric“ categories of thought are products of arbitrary acts of dichotomization and hierarchization; they constitute a hierarchical system with "identity" given priority over "otherness", with the "other" pushed to the margins. Logocentric thought is thus a species of coercion and oppression. Deconstruction is emancipation, for it lays bare all those exclusions and evasions that have been used to marginalize the „other“. Derrida is also intent on liberating the social "other" – the ostracized, the vagrant, and the alien. They are to be empowered and brought back from the margins of society closer to the core.

Now, consider what these endeavors at demarginalization really involve in the social sphere. Since any particular society is constituted precisely by what it excludes and marginalizes (in this sense there can be no completely open societies), the demands to demarginalize the "Other" are really demands to erase all those boundaries that define the bourgeois order of Western societies. Indeed, all emancipatory doctrines share this underlying intention – to discredit and ultimately to destroy the allegedly unjust (exploitative, oppressive, discriminatory) order of the West. Paraphrasing Marx, their ultimate intent is not to explain the world but to change it. Just like their precursor, Marxism, they are not explanatory theories but aggressively practical doctrines: postmodern criticism "seeks not to find the foundation and the conditions of truth but to exercise power for the purpose of social change" (Lentricchia 1983: 12). Foucault and Derrida both acknowledge the ultimately Marxist, or Marxoid, intention behind their endeavors: "If I had known the Frankfurt School at the right time, I would have spared a lot of work", writes Foucault. In an interview in 1978 Foucault castigated industrial capitalism as "the harshest, most savage, most selfish, most dishonest,

oppressive society one could possibly imagine.”<sup>7</sup> Derrida, too, is quite explicit: “deconstruction has never had any sense or interest, at least in my eyes, except as a radicalization, which is to say also *in the tradition of* a certain Marxism, in a certain spirit of Marxism” (Derrida 1996: 92). One should notice a tension, even a contradiction, in the stance of the debunkers. Having exposed the ‘discursive regime’ as a mere ploy of those wielding power they find themselves in the peculiar position – of being above the fray – that is impossible by their own lights. The postmodern deconstruction thus seems to be an absolutist agenda waged by means of selective relativism.

#### FROM ECONOMIC TO CULTURAL EGALITARIANISM

This Marxoid idea of emancipation is radically different from the idea of individual liberty on which the bourgeois societies were initially built. Early modern political philosophers, Hobbes and Locke, were primarily concerned with the absolute power of the sovereign and set themselves the task of limiting its powers. In their theoretical constructions, the individuals’ right of self-defense is merely delegated to the sovereign; his power is limited to the task of making secure an individual’s life, liberty and property. Political power, even if monopolistic, is thus limited – it can only be rightfully used in retaliation to domestic and foreign aggression. The purpose of a political body and the state as its agent is a strictly negative one; specifically, the state bears no responsibility for the citizens’ well being, for their successes or failures in life. This is what the nonpolitical “civil” society is for. Liberty is ultimately freedom from coercion, including coercive intrusions by the state into civil society. All classical liberals have shared this negative conception of freedom with the complementary idea of a “night watchman” state. Emancipatory doctrines, by contrast, used the concept in a much looser way; for them, freedom ultimately meant freedom from all constraints. In fact, it was transformed into the concept of power (freedom as empowerment) dubbed as “positive” freedom. On this conception, a free person is not at all free, if, for example, he has no money to buy a loaf of bread. By giving him the money, the state could enhance his freedom. In other words, the state has the potential of becoming an agent of liberation, of taking over the emancipatory role of the proletariat. Indeed, the transformation was what Jacques Barzun called “the Great Shift” taking place by the end of the 19th century, “the reversal of liberalism into its opposite” (Barzun 2000: 688).

The main concern of early progressives was economic inequality. Today’s progressives are concerned with much broader issues of exclusion and discrimination. In fact, because of the dismal failure of economic egalitarianism,

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Afary; Anderson 2005: 185.



they have largely shifted their egalitarian concerns away from the economic sphere to the cultural/moral sphere and sought the advancement of culturally “oppressed” or “marginalized” groups. The result is what some authors call “cultural Marxism” which entails the same kind of egalitarian solutions as existed under older socialism. Just as the older exploiting classes had to be expropriated to achieve social justice, the oppressed cultural groups are to be emancipated by dragging down their cultural oppressors. Aaron Wildavsky dubbed this attitude “radical egalitarianism”, by which he meant “not only an approach to the distribution of economic resources, but ... the idea of a culture or way of life devoted to diminishing differences among people [or] the belief in the moral virtue of diminishing differences among people of varying incomes, genders, races, sexual preferences and power. ... Distinctions are seen as the beginnings of inequality, an hierarchical ordering of the world. Consequently egalitarians guard against such differentiation and seek to erode it wherever possible” (Wildavsky 1991: 235, xviii).<sup>8</sup>

The feminist author Nancy Fraser puts the idea this way: “The ‘struggle for recognition’ is fast becoming the paradigmatic form of political conflict in the late twentieth century. Demands for ‘recognition of difference’ fuel struggles of groups mobilised under the banners of nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality. In these ‘postsocialist’ conflicts, group identity supplants class interest as the chief medium of political mobilisation. Cultural domination supplants exploitation as the fundamental injustice. And cultural recognition displaces socioeconomic redistribution as the remedy for injustice and the goal of political struggle” (Fraser 1995: 68). In this new egalitarianism, cultural domination is analyzed along the lines of the Marxist analysis of “class dictatorship”: e.g., racism is not regarded as a social attitude or philosophical belief, but is considered as the objective expression of an inequality of power that is outside individual control. In this analysis, an individual does not have to be racially prejudiced to participate in racial oppression, but merely to occupy a “privileged” position in the allegedly unjust system. Racism is thus alleged to be “systemic”, or “institutional”, i.e., built into the very structure of bourgeois societies. In this perspective, no escape from racism is ultimately possible without the radical overhaul of the society.

The expansion of emancipatory efforts to the cultural sphere means that the “structural violence” previously attributed to the economic “base” of the bourgeois society is now also attributed to its “superstructure” i.e., to the web of its customs, traditions, loyalties, gender roles, etc. The expansion of the scope of allegedly oppressive phenomena goes hand in hand with the widening and loosening of the criteria of oppression. While the earlier progressives tried to base their demands on some supposedly scientific theories of exploitation

<sup>8</sup> See also: Gottfried 2005, *passim*.

(rooted in the labor theory of value), in these times of postmodern relativism it suffices to appeal to “felt discrimination” in order to start clamoring about exclusion and to demand inclusion. In practice, any discontent voiced by a homogeneous group is now accepted as evidence that the group has a grievance worthy of political concern. Any group that succeeds at obtaining the status of “discriminated against” comes to be treated as nearly sacred. It becomes the darling of political correctness, so that its detractors risk not only indictment for “insensitivity” but also harsh legal sanctions. This explains why a black man in America can say it loud “I am black and I am proud” and be cheered, while a white man can only say “I am white and I am proud” at the risk of being incarcerated. Again, in a curious twist, the former darling of progressive politics, the white working class, is no longer the object of the emancipatory concern. In the twentieth century, for progressives, the workers had been the exploited producers of wealth. “By the twenty-first, its male members were sexist, racist homophobes; cultural conservatives suspected of harbouring unsavory patriotic feelings. They went from being the salt of the earth to the scum of the earth in three generations” (Cohen 2007: 196). (Likewise in America, they are now the “rednecks”.) The failure of economic Marxism redounded to the detriment of its former darlings.

The issue of homosexuality is another illustration of how emancipation works. Christians have traditionally condemned homosexuality as a grave sin. However, with homosexuals obtaining the protected status of a discriminated group, such criticism has been outlawed in many Western countries. Nowadays a Christian daring to castigate someone as a sodomite or refusing to employ him risks serious legal consequences. Paradoxically, though inevitably, the policy of gay inclusion turned out to be a policy of Christian exclusion. Paradoxically, since the policy was undertaken in the name of equal treatment; inevitably, since the inclusion could only be achieved by crushing the resistance of the excluders. If this is a double standard, then double standards are the only means of achieving the goals of progressive policies, for the equality in question can only be pursued by treating people *unequally*. Compare: for the classical liberal, equality before the law inevitably redounds to all kinds of acceptable natural inequality and hierarchy, whereas for the progressive liberal, just as for the leftist, the natural inequality and hierarchy that emerge from formal equality represent an unacceptable condition, so that “real” equality must involve the destruction of all natural hierarchies.

The expansion of emancipatory efforts, abetted by such slogans as “the personal is political”, leads to an ever more intrusive state, allegedly benign because liberal, and yet in fact ever more oppressive and ultimately totalitarian. Indeed, to attain and to maintain a society of individuals equal in all respects, though naturally unequal, you need an overpowering intrusive



state ready for crushing all extant and reemerging inequalities. That liberals must take this overpowering position in order to bring about equal liberty is one of the central liberal contradictions. Since liberals are against unequal power relationships, they present themselves as liberators come to end inequality, rather than as power wielders. The result is that liberal power is nearly invisible and is thus more sinister than traditional power relations it is replacing. It is because of the prevailing cult of tolerance, non-discrimination and non-judgmentalism that the Western liberal state has become the juggernaut of political correctness riding roughshod over the fabric of the bourgeois society.

#### ASSAULT ON THE CIVIL SOCIETY

Fighting discrimination and exclusion in ever-new corners of social life has become the foremost pursuit of the progressive social critic and political activist. Since for him all people are basically equal (equally good, worthy of respect), no factual inequality or exclusion is ever deserved or justified. Thus the poor are excluded from lavish consumption not because of individual failure or simply of bad luck, but because of the unjust capitalist principles of wealth distribution. Sexual minorities are discriminated against not because most people do not want to deal with them, but because society is dominated by the patriarchal order imposed by heterosexual males, under which “gays and lesbians suffer from heterosexism” (Fraser 1995: 78). The “Third World” is mired in poverty and disease not because of its barbarian habits, but because of the “trauma of colonialism”. The list is open-ended and constantly expanding. The logic of the emancipatory drive is that of shifting the burden of the plight of the excluded (the poor, the homosexuals, the colored, non-Westerners, etc.) onto the alleged excluders (the rich, the heterosexuals, the whites, the Westerners, etc). Cowered by the dominant ideology of liberal compassion the latter meekly shoulder it.

The emancipatory drive and the political activism inspired by it create a political market of social compassion. In this market, sentimental activists and cynical political entrepreneurs (“limousine liberals”) compete for victims of discrimination and for agendas of social inclusion. The activists see the objects of their concern as victims of the “system” they themselves inhabit, as abject, powerless and merely receptive beings, like children. This is why their sentimentalism is always accompanied by paternalist arrogance. Paternalism, however, only gives rise to infantilism, for the more the alleged victims are released from the necessity of taking care for themselves, the more childlike, dependent and burdensome they become. Welfare breeds greater need for welfare. It also creates incentives for the emergence of new

claimants for compassion, as new victim groups are elbowing their way – are pushed by the activists – into the public arena with new “grievances”. All of this is illustrative of Charles Murray’s “law of unintended rewards”: “Any social transfer increases the net value of being in the condition that prompted the transfer” (Murray 1984: 212). As a result of subsidizing individuals because they are poor, there will be more poverty; by subsidizing people because they are unemployed, more unemployment will be created; supporting single mothers will lead to an increase in single motherhood. In short, social welfare programs are ultimately counterproductive. They are also demoralizing, as they tend to reward the misfit and to punish the successful, thus eroding the moral fiber of the society.

Paradoxically, though inevitably, the only winners in the game are political entrepreneurs. They need the victims of the system, for only by attending to their alleged grievances they gain or keep their own elevated moral grounds. They need to have a constant or even growing supply of them in order to use them as moral shields in the struggle for political clout and power. “Groups disliked, distrusted, or feared by the general public are particularly eligible to become mascots who symbolize the superior wisdom and virtue of the anointed” (Sowell 1995: 149). The threshold of grievance has to be lowered continually in order to justify further crusading and, of course, to justify the lofty status of “the anointed” themselves. Progressive politics combined with elitism is a seductive mix. To hunt for new types of grievances, to set the victims and the victimizers against each other, to divide and conquer – this is the winning strategy of the players in the game of social compassion. As Bernard de Jouvenel noticed long ago, “redistribution is in effect far less a redistribution of free income from the richer to the poorer, as we imagined, than a redistribution of power from the individual to the State” (1952: 179). Repeated failures of social programs make no impression on their proponents, for they are in command of the moral high grounds as the “caring” and the “compassionate” ones. They are moral narcissists basking in their own good intentions.

John Rawls is an exemplary contemporary liberal. Assuming the basic equality of people, he considers any factual inequality as morally arbitrary. Postulating equal distribution of goods as the base line, he proposes the “difference principle” for dealing with factual inequality. According to the principle, social and economic inequality should be “regulated” so that it would serve the worst off. The principle is said to be an expression of “an undertaking to regard the distribution of natural abilities as a collective asset so that the more fortunate are to benefit only in ways that help those who have lost out” (Rawls 1971: 179). In other words, inequality can only be justified if it leads to lesser inequality. How far should the regulation go? Since after

any act of regulation there would emerge another group of the worst off, the process should continue as long as there is no worst off group, that is, when all and everyone is equally well-off. The end-result is the situation of social and economic equality. The problem is that the result can only be achieved by dumping property rights, that is, by destroying the basis of a free society. Marxism offered a short cut for this overdrawn procedure by proposing a revolutionary upheaval; Rawls prefers a step-by-step procedure to the same destination. So indeed, “liberals have no enemies to the left” (James Burnham). Current liberalism combines a very simple ultimate principle, equal freedom, with willingness to compromise with existing arrangements while the implications of that principle gradually transform the whole social order. That is what it means to say that liberalism is reformist, and that explains why liberals have a perpetual bad conscience with respect to leftists.

Rawls is chiefly concerned with economic inequality. However, the emancipatory agenda is now set on abolishing any inequality, ending all exclusion and discrimination. “Discrimination” has become a label to condemn and stigmatize as wrong any social situation where people express their diverse preferences for association with other people. But what is wrong with discrimination? Discrimination is a basic fact of life: everyone is constantly discriminating by choosing friends, spouses, business companions, employees, restaurants, clubs, churches. Discrimination in this sense, or freedom of association, is a basic liberty enjoyed by individuals in free societies. “Discrimination” in the pejorative sense is primarily applied to public officials (e.g., judges) if their decisions are perceived as biased and unfair, for in contrast to the private person an official is under an obligation not to follow personal preferences. However, in contemporary usage this pejorative meaning has been turned on its head: now a *private* person can be accused of discrimination if he refuses to rent an apartment to a Moslem or would not hire a self-declared homosexual.

Freedom of association is thus under a massive attack by the liberal state. On the one hand, the policy of “anti-discrimination” is intent on *compulsory integration*, erasing the boundaries that spontaneously evolve in people’s private relations. On the other hand, with the prevailing cult of “multiculturalism” and the postmodern idea of the equivalence of all cultures, many Western countries promote non-assimilation or *compulsory segregation* of ethnic, cultural or religious minorities. By urging and implementing compulsory integration (and segregation), sentimental liberalism is attacking the spontaneous social order that evolves on the basis of property rights and freedom of association. As Paul Gottfried laments, this is “current liberalism’s assault on what the old liberals called civil society” (Gottfried 1998: 25). Specifically, current liberalism gives liberty to speech and actions that undermine

traditional Western order, while it restrains speech and actions defending that order. Western societies are now so saturated with this PC ideology that any attempt to question its tenets or to contest their value is met with accusations of racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, Eurocentrism, imperialism, bigotry, intolerance or insensitivity, with the charge of fascism topping them all. If this is Orwellian thought control, it is the necessary outcome of emancipatory liberalism.

One should again notice the paradox: the policy of fighting private discrimination requires systemic official discrimination. For instance, affirmative action directed at the blacks in America is simply inverted race discrimination or racism against the whites. One should also notice that private discrimination does not lead to the systemic consequences of anti-discrimination policies undertaken by the state. A private person discriminating against another person bears the costs of the practice: e.g., an employer refusing to hire an able man only because of his race faces the risk of losing him to a competitor who is not so prejudiced. Private discrimination, if based only on prejudice, always risks private punishment, and so is unlikely to become common practice. Even in those cases where it becomes common practice, there is no reason to consider it wrong. Some groups, because of their differences, might simply be unable to integrate even minimally. Naturally, they move apart and separate. No attempt at their compulsory integration can do away with the differences – most probably it can only inflame them. Similarly, compulsory segregation, by putting the brakes on natural processes of assimilation, creates within the free societies islands of potentially hostile aliens. “Anti-discrimination” policies thus develop a self-destructive logic: the policy of the inclusion of those who have been excluded at the level of private relations can only exacerbate those features of the excluded that have been the reason for their exclusion in the first place.

Freedom of association is the very core of liberalism as once understood. In some ways it is the fundamental liberty, the most basic to ordinary human living. Yet it is quintessentially a liberty belonging to the older liberalism of the 19th century, the liberalism that sought freedom by *limiting* the power of the state over individuals, families, local associations, and other social institutions. 20th century liberalism, by contrast, sought freedom and equality by *expanding* the power of the state. The freedom to be admitted or hired anywhere trumped the freedom of being able to choose whom to hire or admit. Current liberalism, with its principled demand for the elimination of all discrimination, becomes more and more comprehensive and intrusive, continually moving forward and sweeping aside the remaining ramparts of exclusion. Any ethnic, cultural or national heritage, any attachment to the inherited historical community is supposed to disappear as something rel-

evant to anything significant someone might ever legitimately want to do. The same goes for sex and religious affiliation. None of those things is supposed to affect anything significant in our life together. If they did, that would be discrimination and injustice, and it would be everyone's obligation to use all possible means to root it out. In the name of individual emancipation, all social power is gradually eroded. That is what "diversity" and "inclusiveness" mean. The 'progressive' liberal state is thus an enemy of the 'reactionary' society, for to deny an individual, an institution, or a society the right to decide whom to associate with is tantamount to destroying him or it as an individual, institution, or society. Robert Nisbet penetratingly commented on the flip side of the liberal endeavor: "The political enslavement of man requires the emancipation of man from all the authorities and memberships ... that serve, in one degree or another, to insulate the individual from external political power" (Nisbet 1953: 202).

#### TURNING THREATS INTO SELF-INCRIMINATIONS

John Rawls argues that the factual distribution of goods is morally arbitrary and should be rectified in the direction of redistribution from the haves to the have-nots. And what about the *negative* goods, the bads? Shouldn't they likewise be redistributed? If unequal distribution of goods is morally arbitrary, can it be that unequal distribution of bads (e.g., responsibility for crimes) is not just as arbitrary? The default position for a liberal is to consider it just as arbitrary and to call for the redistribution of bads. The main strategy for doing this is appealing to the "root causes" of bad behavior. The idea is that the offender cannot be guilty all on his own; his misdeeds should rather be explained as an expression of some grievance, as a result of some social exclusion. The society's response should be doing something about the grievance and the exclusion. Responsibility for bad or criminal behavior is thus taken off the shoulders of the offender, shifted to wider social surroundings and ultimately dumped on the rest of the society (including the victims of the crime). On this view, the more brutal the expression of the grievance, the more heinous the crime, the more it is indicative of the perpetrator's social exclusion and the more society ("the system") is to be blamed for such behavior. Traditional punishment, on the liberal view, is no solution, as it does not deal with the "root causes" of the problem, i.e., exclusion and social injustice. It is "the system" that must be changed, not the wrongdoer. The society has to be more sensitive to the excluded, the marginalized, the alienated, the desperate and the depressed. In the liberal's worldview, it is the wrongdoer who is really a victim, one that "is 'trapped' by social and economic forces ... the problem is in the society, not in the people innocently 'trapped'" (Lakoff 1996: 203).

This inversion of responsibility (redistribution of blame) is the main feature of the explanations that appeal to the “root causes” of deviancy and misbehavior. They are really exculpations in the sense that deviant behavior is treated as due to some overpowering causal factors allegedly beyond the agent’s rational control. For the early progressives, it was mainly poverty that was the debilitating and thus the exculpatory factor; for current progressives, new grievances from an ever-expanding list of exculpatory conditions are used to fill the slot. Any failure or misdeed on the part of those assigned to a victim group is portrayed as a “social problem”, that is, not as a problem with the feckless or the wrongdoers, but as a problem with the society. By treating a piece of behavior as a deterministic effect beyond the agent’s control, any misdeed can be interpreted as *caused*, not *committed*, with the blame shifted to the wider society. Because of this selective determinism, responsibility becomes highly and predictably selective – ultimately, it is the ordinary, normal, non-deviant people who are made responsible for the misdeeds of the designated victims and it is they who have to bear the costs of “social problems”. The schema of such explanations is quite simple: the misfortune or the misdeed of an X is due to his (its) unfavorable environment, the “root cause”; the solution is to make the environment more favorable to X. For example, if X is a tramp, the society should provide him with a free dwelling; if X is the “Third World”, the West should write off its debt; if X is a Moslem terrorist, measures should be taken to root out non-Moslems’ Islamophobia. It is always a foregone conclusion that the “root cause” is an element or an aspect of Western bourgeois societies – to be apologized for, to be paid a tribute for or to be eliminated in the name of social or global justice.

Liberal beliefs and policies thus tend to displace the dangers posed to the society onto the society itself. Self-inflicted “Western guilt” that is now occupying the high grounds of a superior morality is but a particular case of this moral and causal inversion. Because of the liberal belief in substantive equality of all peoples and cultures, the worse any minority or non-Western group really is, the worse the West must be made to appear, as the guilty cause of the non-Western group’s dysfunctional behavior. In particular, this explains current anti-Americanism, the prevalent left-liberal belief that “America is the root cause of the forces that assault it and that its adversaries are actually its victims” (Horowitz 2004: 242). In a massive act of denial, liberals and leftists displace the danger Islam poses to the West onto the West itself – onto American imperialism or Christian fundamentalism or Islamophobia. Instead of the threat being the real Islamic agenda to establish an Islamic world theocracy, the threat becomes the fictitious American agenda to establish an American empire or a world Christian theocracy, a threat that must be met by weakening America and downgrading Christianity. This



explains why for a liberal, Islamophobia is a greater threat to “open society” than Islam, a stance reminiscent of the Cold War era progressives who considered anti-Communism greater threat than Communism itself.

Again, paradoxically but inevitably, attempts at dealing with the problem of offensive behavior by looking for “root causes” only exacerbate the problem and encourage such behavior. Why so? Consider the matter from the point of view of the offender. The soft-pedaling policy of looking for “root causes” only confirms to him the reality of his grievances and provides him with reasons to continue the practice. Faced with the liberal response, the offender draws two conclusions: first, that he is in the right, while the indulgent party (part of the “the system”) is in the wrong (and should feel guilty); second, that he can gain even more (be offered more “sensitivity” and “care”) by perpetrating even more outrageous misdeeds. Offensive behavior and indulgent response create a symbiotic combination of rage and guilt feeding on each other: the offending party becomes ever more brazen, while the soft-pedaling party ever more guilt-ridden. The rhetoric employed by the liberal morally disarms him against any rampaging thug. Since offensive behavior, for the liberal, is evidence of his own failed emancipatory endeavors, he should feel most guilty when the offender does his worst – and kills *him*. Portraying the offender as a victim is a gateway to morally sanctioned violence. Having embraced the language of systemic victimology the liberal has no moral defense against the claims of any victim group he has empowered.

The liberal policies are now recreating in Western societies a quasi-feudal order where privileges are accorded not by the principle of individual merit, but by the principle of individuals’ belonging to designated victim groups. A quasi-Marxist categorization of human beings is being used, whereby moral worth is assigned to *groups* according to their place in the victim/oppressor array. This is accompanied by moves of social engineering designed for the benefit of the “victimized”, the “weak”. Societies are to be perfected through elevating the weak and dragging down the strong. Individual merit means nothing, nor does the specific situation. Virtue and vice depend not on what a particular person actually does, but on which group that person can be said to belong to. However, the difference from feudalism is that while feudal privileges were “defended on the supposed excellences of those who were privileged”, the new egalitarianism “appeals to the deficiencies of those whom it favors” (Kekes 2003: 64). The more abject, the lowlier the alleged victim, the more effort should be spent on elevating it (and on downgrading its oppressor) and the more moral worth the effort has. This is weirdly reminiscent of the Leninist understanding of morality: “We say that our morality is entirely subordinated to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat. Our morality is derived from the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat” (Lenin 1963: 272).

## THE ULTIMATE INVERSION

The logic underpinning the policies leads to even more radical conclusions. Let us consider again Jacques Derrida's ruminations on the emancipatory theme. Derrida is fascinating in that he purifies the moral intention behind the political endeavors of postmodern sentimental liberals. Deconstruction is a method for the clearing away of artificial structures created by the marginalization of the "Other". Deconstruction is not mere destruction; rather it is a positive endeavor at making us open to the excluded and marginalized. A deconstructionist implements or restores justice: "Deconstruction is justice. ... I know nothing more just than what I call deconstruction" (Derrida 1992: 21). Justice is openness to the Other. Which other? One's parents, children, spouse, friends, compatriots? It is cheap to be open to those you love or respect. True openness, the morally most valuable openness can only be pure and infinite hospitality offered "to someone who is neither expected not invited. To whomever arrives as an absolutely foreign visitor, as a new arrival, nonidentifiable and unforeseeable, in short, wholly other" (Derrida 1999: 128-129). Derrida is here urging what can be dubbed as *xenophilia* – our openness to, and embrace of, those who are the most strange, the most alien. He formulates – radically and rigorously – the ultimate intention behind all emancipatory doctrines. All of them are intent on achieving "social justice", or in Derrida's terms, "infinite justice" – an ideal situation where nobody has any grievances, and everybody is included in one great family of the whole of humanity. How should one proceed with its realization? John Rawls suggests that we should start with improving the lot of the worst off in our own societies. Derrida urges hospitality to the most alien.

Stephen Hicks calls postmodernism *reverse Thrasymacheanism*, alluding to the sophist Thrasymachus of Plato's *Republic*. Thrasymachus marshaled relativistic arguments in support of the claim that justice is the interest of the stronger. Postmodernists, according to Hicks, simply reverse the claim, for they are on the side of the weaker and the oppressed groups: justice is the interest of the weaker (Hicks 2004: 182). Following in the steps of Emmanuel Levinas,<sup>9</sup> Derrida carries the idea of "reverse Thrasymacheanism" one step farther, to its logical consummation in *xenophilia*. In fact, he carries the idea of liberal non-discrimination to its logical conclusion. Consider: in Rawls' conception, the weak still belong to *our* society, to *us*,

<sup>9</sup> Levinas' philosophy might be summarized by the motto "I feel guilty, therefore I am". Consider: "My being-in-the-world or my 'place in the sun', my being at home, have these not also been the assumption of spaces belonging to the other man whom I already have oppressed or starved, or driven out into a third world; are they not acts of repulsing, excluding, exiling, stripping, killing?" (Sean Hand, ed., *The Levinas Reader*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 84).



and thus an element of discrimination and exclusion still remains. Derrida takes the final step by abolishing the element. The morally most valuable inclusion is hospitality to the absolutely foreign, to the wholly other, thus ultimately and logically – to the deadly enemy. Derrida is the philosophical nemesis of liberalism, showing that with its radical attack on all moral and cultural distinctions and all moral and cultural inequality liberalism is incompatible with any particular social order. Erasing such distinctions is the essence of political correctness that reduces all moral questions to a choice between “inclusion” (“hospitality”) and “discrimination” (“hate”). It makes it impossible to distinguish between bigotry, meaning the desire to hurt some other group, and the legitimate defense of one’s own people, their identity, and their interests. It makes self-extinction the supreme moral virtue.

In Alain Finkielkraut’s penetrating observation on current PC mindset, “We condensed the infinite array of human experiences into a single story line, a single and monumental opposition: It is all solidarity or segregation, openness or ethnocentrism. In short, we were so utterly concerned for the Other that the figure of the Other eventually replaced that of the *enemy*. ... The result is clear: Being at war with one’s enemy is a human possibility; waging war on one’s Other is a crime against humanity” (Finkielkraut 2004: 29). Indeed, if xenophilia is the supreme virtue then defending one’s culture from an onslaught of the Other is xenophobia, the greatest offence. Such is the moral inversion that current liberalism is ultimately committed to.

These are the times when we have a nearly ideal case for testing the consequences of liberal xenophilia. Challenged by Islamic resurgence contemporary liberalism meets its nemesis. Islam is a totalitarian religion set on converting or conquering non-Moslems, while contemporary liberalism is an ideology set on renouncing Western exceptionalism and embracing the radically alien. The two intentions are perfectly complementary: absolute intolerance meets suicidal hospitality. In Western Europe that has already defined itself as mere openness (as a gap or a hole), with the growing belligerence of the Moslems already inside, Europeans will try ever more hard to integrate them and will feel ever more guilty for failing. Unless it renounces the ideology of xenophilia, the West will go down not with a bang but a whimper. With the ideology in place, instead of Moslems assimilating to the West, the most likely development is that of European West assimilating *to Islam*. And the development will not be lamented as Western decline but rather welcomed as “social progress”, as advancement towards a more vibrant and colorful “diversity”. Liberalism permits, even welcomes, the dissolution of Western civilization, for in the light of its

principles the dissolution will be seen not as a defeat, but as the transition to the all-inclusive order of the united mankind that has left behind the parochial and divisive distinctions of the past. At no point in this development can a liberal stop giving ground and stand up against the encroachments of the enemy, for he cannot recognize the threatening Other as an enemy without ceasing to be a liberal. Conversely, the West cannot survive without recognizing the utter destructiveness of current liberalism.

Received 2007 03 17

Accepted 2007 03 28

## REFERENCES

1. Afary, J., Anderson, K. 2005. *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
2. Barzun, J. 2000. *From Dawn to Decadence*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
3. Baudrillard, J. 2002. *The Spirit of Terrorism*. New York: Verso.
4. Bloom, A. 1987. *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
5. Borradori, G. 2003. *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
6. Cohen, N. 2007. *What's Left? How Liberals Lost Their Way*, London: Fourth Estate.
7. Derrida, J. 1992. "The Force of Law", in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. D. Cornell et al., New York, London: Routledge.
8. Derrida, J. 1996. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. P. Kamuf. New York: Verso.
9. Derrida, J. 1999. *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. P. Kamuf and others. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
10. Finkelkraut, A. 1995. *The Defeat of the Mind*, trans. J. Friedlander. New York: Columbia University Press.
11. Finkelkraut, A. 2004. "In the Name of the Other", *Azure*, Autumn 2004, No. 18.
12. Foucault, M. 1984. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History", *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow. Hamondsworth: Penguin Books.
13. Fraser, N. 1995. "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age", in *New Left Review*, 1/212, July-August.
14. Gottfried, P. 1998. *After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in the Managerial State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
15. Gottfried, P. 2005. *The Strange Death of Marxism*, Minneapolis: University of Missouri Press, 2005.
16. Hicks, S. 2004. *Explaining Postmodernism: Skepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault*. Tempe, Arizona and New Berlin/Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Scholargy Publishing.
17. Horowitz, D. 2004. *Unholy Alliance: Radical Islam and the American Left*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing.
18. Jouvenel, B., de. 1952. *The Ethics of Redistribution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
19. Kekes, J. 1997. *Against Liberalism*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
20. Kekes, J. 2003. *The Illusions of Egalitarianism*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
21. Kolakowski, L. 1981. *Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
22. Lakoff, G. 1996. *Moral Politics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
23. Lenin, V. 1963. "The nature of communist ethics", in *Reader in Marxist Philosophy*, Selsam, H., Martel, H. (eds.). New York: International Publishers.
24. Lentricchia, F. 1983. *Criticism and Social Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
25. Murray, Ch. 1984. *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950 – 1980*. New York: Basic Books.
26. Nisbet, R. 1953. *The Quest for Community*. New York: Oxford University Press.
27. Rawls, J. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press.
28. Sowell, T. 1995. *The Vision of the Anointed*. New York: Basic Books.
29. Steyn, M. 2006. *America Alone: The End of the World as We Know It*, Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc.
30. Wildavsky, A. 1991 *The Rise of Radical Egalitarianism*. Washington: American University Press.

Algirdas Degutis  
APIE VAKARŲ SAVIGRIOVĄ:  
ŽLUGIMAS PER LIBERALŲJŲ ATVIRUMĄ

## SANTRAUKA

„Politinis korektiškumas“, kuris šiandien viešpatauja Vakarų elito mąstysenoje bei politinėje praktikoje, yra specifinės ideologijos – sentimentalaus liberalizmo – vedinys. Ši ideologija remiasi moralinio ir kultūrinio reliatyvizmo teze – kad visi gyvenimo būdai yra vienodai sveikintini ir kad visos kultūros yra lygiavertės. Šios prielaidos pagrindu šiuolaikinis liberalizmas vykdo vadinamąjį socialinį ir net globalinį teisingumą užimdamas agresyvią nuostatą dominuojančios moralės ir kultūros atžvilgiu. Tolerancija, atvirumas ir svetingumas „kitam“ yra aukščiausioji, netgi vienintelė dorybė, kurią jis išpažįsta. Šios dorybės aukštinimas reiškiasi kaip tradicinių Vakarų vertybių žeminimas. Kova su diskriminacija, vykdoma tolerancijos vardu, iš tikrųjų yra Vakarų civilizacinių laimėjimų diskreditavimas, Vakarų kultūros bei moralės standartų griovimas. Liberalioji kova su ksenofobija neišvengiamai virsta ksenofilija, kuri beveik tiesiogine prasme yra Vakarų savižudybės ideologija. Daugeliu požiūrių ši liberalioji inversija yra marksistinės ekonominės revoliucijos analogas kultūros ir moralės srityje. Kaip ir marksizmo atveju, praktinis jos įgyvendinimas gali vesti tik į ją priėmusios visuomenės žlugimą.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: liberalizmas, politinis korektiškumas, moralinė inversija, Vakarų savigriova.

Andrius Bielskis

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

*ISM Vadybos ir ekonomikos universitetas / ISM University of  
Management and Economics in Lithuania  
Arklių g. 18 LT-01129 Vilnius  
El. Paštas / e-mail: andbie@ism.lt*

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'<sup>1</sup>. 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

<sup>1</sup> See: Best and Kellner 1991: 33.

liberal nation-state<sup>2</sup>. 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.<sup>3</sup> 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-

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Taylor 1989, chapters 8 and 17; Bielskis 2005, chapter 1.

<sup>3</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century, was a utopian fiction. It was a fiction because it co-dependended 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>4</sup> 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

<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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

<sup>5</sup> 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 lifeworld 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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-

<sup>6</sup> For the full argument see: Bielskis 2005, chapter 2.

<sup>7</sup> 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<sup>8</sup>. 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<sup>9</sup>) 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

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Wachbroit 1983, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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

<sup>10</sup>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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup>

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-

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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

<sup>13</sup>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.<sup>14</sup> 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

<sup>14</sup>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'.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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

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

<sup>16</sup> See 'What can the *Philosophes* of European Integration learn from postmodern Aristotelianism' in [www.londonmet.ac.uk/library/t82563\\_3.pdf](http://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.

Received 2007 04 14

Accepted 2007 05 05

## REFERENCES

1. Best, S. and Kellner, D. 1991. *Postmodern Theory*. London: Macmillan.
2. Bielskis, A. 2005. *Towards a Post-modern Understanding of the Political*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
3. Degutis, A. 2006. “Deconstructing Postmodern Xenophilia”, in *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, 8, no. 1.
4. Donskis, L. 2002. *Identity and Freedom*. London, New York: Routledge.
5. Habermas, J. 1981. “Modernity: An Unfinished Project”, in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, Eds. M. P. D’Entreves and S. Benhabib, Cambridge: Polity Press.
6. Habermas, J. 1987. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
7. Kavolis, V. 1995. *Civilization Analysis as a Sociology of Culture*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press.
8. Knight, K. 2007. *Aristotelian Philosophy: From Aristotle to MacIntyre*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
9. Lyotard, J-F. 1979. *La condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.
10. MacIntyre, A. 1988. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* London: Duckworth.
11. MacIntyre, A. 1990. *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*. London: Duckworth.
12. Norkus, Z. 2002. *Max Weber ir racionalus pasirinkimas*. Vilnius: Margi raštai.
13. Pearson, T. D. 1994. “Interview with Professor Alasdair MacIntyre”, in *Kinesis*, Vol. 20.
14. Taylor, Ch. 1989. *The Sources of the Self*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
15. Wachbroit, R. 1983. “A Genealogy of Virtues”, in *Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 92, No. 3, January.
16. Wachbroit, R. 1985. “Relativism and Virtue”, in *Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 94, No. 6, May.
17. Wagner, P. 1994. *A Sociology of Modernity*. London, New York: Routledge.
18. Weber, M. 1992. *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge.

Andrius Bielskis  
ALTERNATYVIOS POST-MODERNYBĖS LINK: LOKALUMAS  
VERSUS RINKOS KAPITALIZMO BARBARIZMAS

## SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje siekiama suformuluoti alternatyvią postmodernybės sampratą, pasitelkiant Alasdairo MacIntyre'o konkuruojančių tradicijų teoriją. Straipsnyje keliama šie pagrindiniai klausimai: koks yra rinkos ekonomikos santykis su modernybe, kokių teorinių ir moralinių 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 pluralistines visuomenes žiūrėti kaip į skirtingų filosofinių ir moralinių tradicijų susidūrimo erdvę.

Vytautas Rubavičius

## THE PLEASURE OF TRANSGRESSION: CONSUMING IDENTITIES

*Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas / Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute*

*Komparatyvistinių studijų skyrius / Department of Comparative Culture Studies*

*Saltoniškių g. 58*

*LT-08105 Vilnius*

*El. paštas / e-mail: rubavytas@hotmail.com*

### TRANSGRESSION AND THE IDEOLOGY OF TRANSGRESSION

Postmodern philosophy abounds with the ideas of flouting, breaking and overcoming of various socio-cultural boundaries, the ideas that are generalized by the concept of transgression. Any reflection on a boundary presupposes a possibility of crossing it, for the act of mentally grasping a boundary amounts to already transgressing it, which will sooner or later manifest itself in creative or practical action. Philosophy, if based on the notion of postmodern deconstruction, does precisely this: it reflects on the boundaries and thus reveals their conditional nature, the incessant interaction between the pre-boundary realm (of the self-evident, the familiar, the normal, and the stable) and the realm across the boundary (of ambiguity, unfamiliarity, abnormality, and open-endedness). It also brings up the social and cultural struggle for the establishment and reinforcement of boundaries, which is the decisive factor in creating individual and group identities connecting the body, consciousness and a territory. The deconstructivist approach to transgression works by 'turning' unconditional things into conditional ones, 'turning' unconditional evidence, identities, taboos and norms into conditional social constructs, which are fixed in some established field of the configuration of power. In this sense philosophical deconstructivism is related

to modernist artistic practices that were consciously breaking (transgressing) various social, cultural and psychological taboos, especially those linked to the expression of sexuality and the social control over that expression exerted by the clear-cut differentiation between the feminine and the masculine. It was the modernist artistic practices that effectively spread an artistic political ideology of liberation: transgression conceived as the *breaking of various taboos and norms through artistic action on the 'boundary'* came to be considered as crucial for the individual's liberation from various limitations imposed by the society, for a revolutionary break-through. However, as a matter of fact, various acts of transgression subsequently turned into repetitive artistic practices and were thus commodified as peculiar brands.

Influenced by modernist artistic practices and encouraged by their supporting ideology an individualist conception of transgression evolved and got finally established: the breaking of taboos and norms came to be seen as an individual and creative act of liberation *par excellence* as well as the essential means of self-expression (and then imitation, ultimately leading to commodification). In part, such an understanding of transgression promoted the romantic imagination about the creative genius, but it simultaneously socialized, politicized and de-spiritualized it. Let us consider the underpinnings of the individualist idea of transgression. It is easy to identify a basic premise of such an imagination: the resolve of an individual determines the action, and liberation is the goal as well as the condition he or she experiences. However, this premise evades several important points: the social nature of an individual, the social contents of freedom and, most importantly, the socially regulative character of taboos and norms. The ideology of liberation that underlies transgression represents taboos and norms as something socially given, something opposing transgression, standing against and restricting the expression of individuality. This is considered to be self-evident needing no grounding. Transgression breaks or transgresses a norm (no matter, whether secular or sacred) and thus produces a shock wave across the social system. There are abundant examples in history about tragic destinies of the 'breakers'. However, we are here concerned not so much with historical systems as with the specific capitalist system we all live in, under conditions of which not only transgressive artistic practices are being developed, but also the concepts and the ideology of transgression are being established.

An important feature of recent approaches to transgression is that transgression is increasingly understood as a condition of both established and emerging norms as well as of all kinds of identities and normalities. It is the idea George Bataille has infused into much of postmodern theory: what transgression does is not to negate the taboo, but to transgress and complete it. Transgression is needed in order to institute and establish all kinds of

boundaries. Of course, the motif of completion sounds slightly ironically in this case: the very act of transgression (and conception) presupposes repetition, a repeated completion; and a taboo can only survive under conditions of the impossibility of transgression. The aporetic nature of a reflection on a norm thus becomes evident: the establishment of a norm (e.g., a constitution) is an 'abnormal' act. In the following I will discuss the transgressive nature of the very capitalist system and the commodifying power of transgression, which fully manifests itself under conditions of consumer capitalism. In particular, I will argue that the sexual aspect of transgression is important in establishing the identity of a consumer and the ideology of consumption and thus that the liberation of the body and sexuality unavoidably acquires an ideological character that is both marketable and conceals the pressure of the system of consumption.

#### THE UNIVERSAL TRANSGRESSIVITY OF CAPITALISM

Dare I say it that until now nobody has exposed the logic of capitalist development better or more profoundly than Karl Marx? Among other things, he made the important claim that industrial capitalism unavoidably turns into consumer capitalism and that this transition manifests itself in the form of globalization. It is worth going back to Marx, if only because his ideas have widely spread in the works of postmodern theorists discussing the peculiarities of consumer capitalism and its characteristic culture. However, there is another important reason: this is the time that we experience as the end of a certain period of history, 'late modernity' (the outspread of the essential premises of modernity) and 'postmodernity' (the 'transgression' of modernity highlighting its basic ontological corner stones), so we need to have a closer look at the roots of the system from the perspective of its possible future development.

It is commonly acknowledged that continuous disruption of social norms and social relationships is a characteristic of capitalist globalization and consumer capitalism. However, it was the *Communist Manifesto* that declared prophetically: "All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify." (Marx, Engels 1975: 12). We should consider several aspects of this idea, which Marx grounds in his studies of the self-evolution of capital. The capitalist system not only replaces the feudal one by breaking relationships, norms, attitudes and various taboos prevailing to it, but itself evolves by constantly breaking all newly emerging relationships without letting them 'ossify'. This means that transgressivity is considered as the necessary systematic characteristic of ca-

pitalism implicating individual acts of transgression. Therefore, we may assume that individual transgression is necessary to the capitalist system and that it constantly reestablishes that system (studies of consumption show how it does it). Another important thing is that the rhetoric of the classics of Marxism shows their admiration for the trans(a)gressivity of the capitalist system: the fixed, which means considered as normal by the society, is 'fast-frozen', and what is in the process of getting established is trying to 'ossify'. Thus we can say, somewhat ironically, that the Marxist spirit fits well the individualist concept of transgression as an act of liberation, since the classics of Marxism looked with contempt at all taboos and norms and considered breaking them necessary for the development of the capitalist system and the subsequent emergence of the new man.

This is the essentially transgressive feature of the capitalist system. However, we are here more concerned with the spread of transgressivity characteristic of the consumerist stage of capitalism. It is commonly assumed that consumption guarantees the vitality and development of contemporary capitalism. The index of consumption is considered one of the most important factors indicating the vitality of economy and society. Among the different aspects of consumer capitalism the subject of consumption is very prominent in the field of postmodern theory as it relates to essential changes in the production of culture and the spread of new information and media technologies. Researchers of consumption stress the significance of transgression in the processes of commodification, the spread of consumption and establishment of the ideology of consumption. They consider various aspects of social life in terms of consumption and try to find out how the economic, political and cultural powers join their efforts to encourage consumption and indoctrinate consumerism (for more see Strasser 2002). This again encourages us to go back to Marx who emphasized those essential features of the evolution of capitalism that have emerged in pure forms of consumption at the time of 'completion' or 'transgression' that we are living in, even though the pattern of consumer capitalism was already in place in 1920s.

Regarding the problems under our consideration here the most important is Marx's idea that consumption is the goal and the basis of all production under conditions of capitalism. The nature of consumption as a foundation becomes particularly prominent during the stage of consumer capitalism. It is a well-known fact that Marxism explains the life of society through economic relations and relations between productive forces, the evolution of which determines the nature of social and political institutions. However, one of Marx's crucial theoretical insights that is often overlooked is this: it is characteristic of the capitalist system that material production

is bound to the production of individuals necessary for it. Thus, material production in its expansion (and expansion is necessary for the accumulation and increase of capital) sets the guidelines for the production of socially determined individuals and the cultural methods of this production. A telling example may be the principle of 'flexibility of workforce' and, more generally, the concept of 'human resources', which is being implemented everywhere and pervades culture and education. People are trained to adapt automatically to the demands of the market, which operate as if they were the force or law of nature, and human beings are taught to consider the ability to adapt as the most important trait of personality guaranteeing success in life.

The theoretical basis of all contemporary thinking about the consumer society (as a matter of fact, often superficial because the legacy of Marx is overlooked by declaring him outmoded or orthodox) lies in Marx's idea, which he argues in various ways, that capitalist production creates not only the thing to consume but also the way of its consumption, and does it not only objectively, but also subjectively (Marx 1974: 13). What does 'subjectively' mean in this context? It means the production of subjectivity, of those psychological and spiritual traits that are necessary for the expansion of production. The subjective aspect in the production of an individual defines the domain of his or her needs, abilities, skills and cultural aspirations, which we usually tend to call the 'inside' of a human being. It is the subjective aspect of the production of individuals that is the main target of contemporary marketing and mass media related to it. Because of the intrinsic tendency of capitalism to break any established order of things it is reasonable to expect that this tendency is also realized at the subjective level: as a cultural development of transgressions leading to the increasing variety of needs as well as to the creation of markets satisfying them.

Another important aspect of Marx's analysis could be described in the following way. The produced and consumed things are commodities. The essence of the capitalist system is that material production is the production of commodities designed for consumption; thus, the capitalist way of production establishes commodity oriented relationships, which acquire their universal and, we would say, pure form in consumer capitalism. The establishment and finally the dominance of commodity oriented relationships means one simple but very important thing: commodity oriented relationships include the special product of the capitalist production system, the consumer as a commodity. In other words, the consumer unavoidably acquires the form of a commodity, which, according to Marx, is expressive of the high level of capitalist development. We should remember that for Marx under capitalism "products (or activities) are exchanged only as com-



modities" (Marx 1974: 61)<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the commodity form and commodity oriented relations cover the entire human being: his or her subjectivity and sociality, needs and life style. The commodified nature of activities emphasized in the quotation is the existential condition of our time, as we live in the world of service markets and perceive ourselves as suppliers and consumers of various services.

The exchange in commodities and their consumption takes place only under the condition that a method of establishing their equivalence is well developed and widely used. Marx thus draws the conclusion that commodity relations are monetary relations. However, these are special monetary relations: money ceases being the sign of a commodity and commodities come to mean money. Precisely this process of a commodity turning into money finds its expression in the consumption of cultural commodities/signs, or in the commodification of imagination.

### CONSUMPTION OF IDENTITIES

At the stage of consumer capitalism a total consumer necessary for the system is produced, in other words, the consumer's identity is created. However, the latter as a combination of one's willingness to consume, to satisfy one's needs and the anticipated pleasure of doing so is itself created by ripping and breaking all kinds of 'hard', stable, 'ossified' identities and social relations that underlie them. The production of individual identities takes place in various markets engaged in a competitive struggle. Identity thus becomes increasingly unstable and flexible, fragmented, liable for both construction and reconstruction. Postmodern thinkers describe it in various ways as multiphrenic, multiple, palimpsest, pastiche, vamped up, and its most prominent features are instability, flexibility, decentralization, all essentially bound with consumption. When culture become a force of production and an inexhaustible storage of signs and symbols, one starts producing fragments of identities needed for the construction of an individual identity according to a chosen model of identity. To choose an identity or to create it: these are the main slogans of our time supported by the consumerist ideology, which claims that the choice of identity and its assemblage from 'elements' supplied by the market is the only real act of the individual's free will, and that the 'assimilation' of a new or improved identity will not only guarantee a new 'dose' of pleasure, but will also help to keep abreast with latest developments. Some researchers into the present condition observe that there is a tendency to seek for a more stable identity based on national, tribal, group

<sup>1</sup> Or see "The Grundrisse", Notebook 1, October 1857, The Chapter on Money, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch02.htm>

and other forms of collective identity, to balance the individual construction of identity, and that it is getting stronger (Kellner 2002: 258). Nevertheless, the tendency denies neither the segmentation of markets so characteristic of contemporary capitalism and the process of the commodification of identities, nor – most importantly – that various collective identities can only be created from their marketable forms or ‘debris’ present in the market or discovered and spread through the channels of mass media. On the other hand, the need to create more stable identities may be encouraged by the need of restructuring the market of identities (life styles).

The systemic production of consumers is being realized also by training people to look at themselves as collections of characteristics that can be offered to the market, in other words, teaching them to use rationally and put a price on the features of their identity (body, soul, character, skills, abilities and self-awareness). Identity is increasingly understood as a life style or a way of life, or any combination of them that allows getting as much pleasure as possible. The marketing segmentation of the market divides consumers into the target groups of consumption not only for the ordinary commodities, but also increasingly for the products of style and identity (Willis 1998: 13). It corresponds to the changes in education and culture as well as self-education: learning to consume such products means learning to appreciate the relevant social formations.

#### LIMITS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE AND TRANSGRESSION OF DIFFERENCE

The domain of privacy is primarily defined by greater ‘permissibility’ compared to the public domain. The public domain is regulated by stricter norms than the private. The separation of the private from the public and the establishment of relevant delimitations is an arena of intense, though not always clearly pronounced, political struggles. The deconstruction of these delimitations, especially transgression, is also a political action constantly opening new areas of struggle for the establishment of private identities in the public domain. Perhaps the most important aspect of this struggle is the politicization of bodily and sexual expression, that is, legalization as publicly permissible of such behavior that yet recently was considered indecent, socially unacceptable or even punishable. The domain of such expression used to be ‘covered’ with categories of indecency, perversion and crime. Transgression and then citizenship established in the public domain by changing the accepted norms and attitudes – these are the two stages of all sexual movements for the right to express publicly the peculiarities of one’s sexuality. This process is marked by the concept of a *sexual citizen*. A sexual citizen

is a person consciously acting in the zone where the public and the private are separated/delimited: such a person generates socio-cultural and political tensions and attempts to establish his or her sexual identity in the public domain. Transgression is an incessant creation and recreation of the meanings of the self, while challenging the standard institutions and traditions that used to marginalize such identities (Weeks 1998: 36). Excess is a characteristic feature of the act of transgression because it breaks both social and political norms; it forces public institutions to include meanings generated from sexual expression into the concept of civil rights.

Such an act of transgression echoes the creation and recreation of identities, as encouraged by consumer capitalism, from 'elements' of identities produced for consumption with the code of breaking and transgressing socio-cultural norms engrained in them. We could describe the essential principle of consumer capitalism concerning the consumption of identities in the following way: all social norms restricting the expression of sexuality in any way are established in order to be transgressed due to multifaceted pleasure experienced in the process of transgression. Cultural industries producing identity markers for the wider population are closely related to sexual movements. Especially people from the urban environment present their complex social identities as well as individuality to the public and establish it there by combining the produced markers of difference in terms of gender, ethnicity (considered as natural or chosen), social class and cultural style (Zukin 1998: 835). In this environment cultural industries that acquire increasingly greater economical power encourage multiculturalism – the establishment of ethnic cultural diasporas, which is also expressive of the need for more stable collective identities.

The life of a sexual citizen characterized by transgressivity becomes an important driving force of cultural economy. On the one hand, new self-identities are created and constructed from industrially produced markers of difference and images supporting them; on the other hand, movements marked by transgression become an important area of cultural industry. For instance, parades and carnivals of gays and lesbians, transvestites and other queer individuals mark the exceptional places of the tourism industry and at the same time prompt the development and spread of a local cultural industry (entertainment, recreation, sexual consumption, etc.).

The carnivalization of transgression can be distinct as a special feature of transgressive action relating social and political aspects of transgression to consumption and culture as well as tourism industries and, at the same time, wrapping the action into the cloth of marvelous, voluptuous general merriment. The carnivalization of transgression helps to accustom the section of the public, which tends to preserve 'ossified' norms, to trans(a)gressive identities by seducing it with the pleasures of celebration and opportunities

of economic gains. Thus, the claim that carnivalization has become an important feature of globalization is quite plausible: cultural industries supply the public with many forms of shocking music, of shock TV and other mass media (Langman, Cangenie 2003: 167) while the tourism industry establishes itineraries for consuming carnival pleasures.

#### PLEASURE AND TRANSGRESSION

The concept of a sexual citizen relates to three different 'versions' of pleasure: sexual, the pleasure of power (political) and liberation (ideological). There is a tendency to treat liberation as the liberation of sexuality and the establishment of new forms of its expression in the public sphere by changing the configuration of socio-political relations and acceptable (ordinary) identities dominating there. Thus, there is a political aspect of violence in an act of transgression: breaking social norms and taboos forces others to adapt to the new social and cultural condition. It is understandable that the fans and ideologists of transgressive action will argue that by undertaking such actions they liberate not merely themselves, but also help the society liberate itself, for the new possibilities of sexual expression, new precepts and discourses of experiences help it understand itself better, and this is presumably serves public good. However, a transgressive act is often a violent interruption of other people's normal life and their understanding of normalcy. It is important to consider this aspect of violence with respect to the others while analyzing pleasure of transgression. Pleasure is obtained both by the liberation of sexual expression and by its enforcement (through power and politics) on others by wrenching off a public area from them. To use religious terms, pleasure is obtained by the legalization of sin extorted from the society that tends to 'ossify' and by the desacralization of sacred things (e.g., the sacrament of matrimony). Image-products of violence and of helpless victims of violence that are so wide-spread in contemporary art and mass media culture echo this duality of pleasure, as do various 'artistic' manifestations of desecrating sacred symbols or their linking to pornography. Artistic practices based on transgressivity characteristically use the shockingly seducing effect of open sexuality, obscenity and desecration demonstrated in public because this attracts not only the audience but also draws the attention of mass media. It is well worth to attend to P. Virilio's reminder (in his analysis of the prevalence of obscenity in contemporary art) that the word "obscene" originates from Latin *obscenus* meaning the sign of a terrible fate (Virilio 2000: 50). He provides a characteristic example: in an art gallery in London, 1997, the American Angela Marshal was selling her works in package with a sexual act with herself, explaining that unless the audience sleeps with her, it is not her audience.

Regarding the logic of consumer capitalism one can say that the ideology of liberation is used to enlarge the market of consumer identities and establish the principle of incessant consumption. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century popular and consumerist culture established the value of idealized images of the body: bodies are perceived as concentrations of commodified forms of health, beauty and fashion encouraging consumption where commodified bodily pleasures set the guidelines for the creation of identities (Langman 2003: 223). No expression of sexuality and the body is imaginable without the market of sexual services. Sexuality and the body are segmented and commodified, as any liberated 'segment' (for instance, areas for decorating or injuring the body) generates a market servicing it. Commodification is a way of establishing property relations, and property relations call for control and subordination, not liberation.

An eloquent example of commodification and transgression wrapped into the mantle of the ideology of liberation and art are sculptural bodies by the professional anatomist Dr. Günther von Hagens. He has invented a way to preserve dead bodies by coating them with special plastic. When various layers of the corpse are taken away, and the 'remnants' are consolidated with plastic, peculiar sculptures emerge. Prepared corpses were used for the purposes of science only in specific places, and artists used animal bodies instead. In 1998, in Mannheim, G. von Hagens arranged an exhibition entitled *Body Worlds (Körperwelten)*. The scandalous exhibition attracted 780 thousand visitors. The bodies that he 'produced' were standing like classical Greek sculptures; some were holding their skin as trophies, while others were showing their entrails. G. von Hagens performed an act of multiple transgression, transgressing more than one boundary and braking more than one taboo, and yet it was a very profitable operation that bestowed on the author the status of a world celebrity, a kind of capital he can put to use. First, a grave was opened, dragged into the daylight, so that the separation between the public space and the grave was transgressed. The exhibition space was turned into a kind of cemetery with prepared corpses exposed. Museums do something similar when they show mummies, but there is a tendency to treat this as normal. The preparation itself can be understood as an act of burial: after all, in all cultures the body is prepared in some way before burial. The visitors of the exhibition are offered an opportunity to enter the graves and participate in an otherworldly 'process' when the bodies appear as artistic objects. The dead bodies have been turned out: they demonstrate their insides; they are manipulated like simple objects. In this sense, archaeology has been also deconstructed: archaeologists have been digging burial places since long ago, but they do not consider their activity as sacrilegious or desecrating the dead. The common understanding is that scientific research

naturally insulates the scientist from such evaluations of his activities, just like the renaming of a corpse into the 'object of research' breaks its links to religion and ethics. Why cannot the activity considered as 'artistic' do this? Thus, the boundary between the scientific and artistic activity is being transgressed, though it was still felt quite clearly in the areas related to human physical activities, diseases and death. G. von Hagens himself has proudly declared that he was destroying the last taboos, which means, liberating mankind. As far as there are those who would like to boast of such sculptures, a market for such objects and producers revealing new areas of artistic application of dead bodies will surely emerge.

### THE LIBERATING DESIRING-MACHINES

Liberation – pleasure – economy of desire. As long as we overlook the economic imperative of liberation, which is also an aspect of social production, we are destined to circle in the environment of mythologems of subjective liberation. However, if the liberation of sexuality is understood in terms of the liberation of desire, the concept of the subject itself becomes problematic because desire annihilates the subject and subjectivity as social products. Consequently, in order to maintain the theoretical approach to the liberation of the subject it is necessary to consider social production as a direct investment of desire. Such an inversion characterizes the concept of G. Deleuze's and F. Guattari's desiring-machines. We will not discuss the peculiarities of the concept here; what is important to us is the liberating vision of the power of desire that draws together all the stages of their philosophical endeavor. Deleuze and Guattari consider desire as production: desire is not a desire for things that one lacks, and it cannot be related to lack, otherwise the duality of the inside and the outside is unavoidable, which desire has to overcome. Desire, first of all, produces psychic reality. When we relate desire to lack we have to admit that the thing one lacks is a product of imagination. This is how psychoanalysis explains desire. According to Deleuze and Guattari, desire produces reality because it operates in reality and nowhere else, because it is the 'autoproduction of the unconscious'. Desire does not lack anything because only a social product, the subject, can lack anything. Under the effect of desire we lose the subject. The only thing that desire lacks is the subject. In other words, desire lacks a constant, established subject because such a subject emerges only if the desire is controlled; thus, desire is identical to its object and it should be understood as a machine related to, and encompassing, the machine of the object (Deleuze, Guattari 1985: 26). The product of this machine is reality produced incessantly, and from the 'gap' that appears between the process of production and the product a residue is being

extracted – the nomadic subject that can originate and support the liberated subject. It is not the needs that support desire; on the contrary, the needs are counter-products in relation to reality produced by desire. Therefore, lack is the counter-effect of the desiring-machine: “it is deposited, distributed and vacuolised within a real that is natural and social” (Deleuze, Guattari 1985: 27). Social reality produces and distributes lack; thus, it also produces the needs, which it imposes on an individual by establishing the subject-like ways of desiring as the expression and satisfaction of needs. In this sense, the needs, as in Marx’s approach, are produced together with the products. Under conditions of market economy lack is the function of the market; accordingly, we can draw the paradoxical conclusion that the satisfaction of needs in market economy is simultaneously the production of new needs, that is, an incessant multiplication of lack. Although social reality is also a reality produced directly by desire, counter-production permeates it operating as desiring-machines mastering that reality, establishing the conditions of self-reproduction based on things that are ‘counter’.

How does desire liberate and how is it possible to use its liberating power? By using the so-called ‘shortcut’ social production: powerful social fantasies produced by artistic practices, accumulating desire and starting to affect social reality as institutions hostile to it. In other words, the products of artistic avant-garde and revolutionary utopias considerably reduce the investment of desire into the machines of social and institutional reality and thus weaken them. Another important point is that the ‘shortcut’ artistic production strengthens the remaining nomadic subjectivity, which means it increases the number of subjects who are changing social reality simply by their presence. Emphasizing the importance of the aesthetic “turn” under present conditions, Guattari claims it is artistic practices that have to create such “desiring-machines which break with the great interpersonal and social organic equilibria, which invert order, play the role of the other as against the politics of auto-centering of the self” (Guattari 1995: 32). However, a question arises: how could the ‘aesthetic turn’ avoid this commodifying trap of consumer capitalism, which has turned artistic practices into production resources increasingly including the ‘layers’ of nomadic subjectivity and involving creators into the preparation and realization of projects based on the marketing logic? After all, the transgressive nature of capitalism manifests itself as the ability to commodify antisystemic inclinations, movements and practices, and the social order is guaranteed as well as consolidated precisely by decentering self-identity and implementing the principle of constructing identity supported by transgression. The production of social fantasies and desired life styles is the domain of mass media and advertisement business that provide the means for turning social fantasies into individual ones. The



consumption industry has successfully mastered the production of fluid subjectivity by turning the liberation from the social shackles of subjectivity into the creation of consumption and identity, that is, into the principle of the consumption of identities. New markets of commodified identities open up by commodifying the genetic resources of humans and all live organisms. On the other hand, artistic practices have become an important branch of culture industry: artists create reproducible images and signs with a code 'inscribed' in their combinations creating an individual (chosen) identity, which is characterized by social exceptionality, and turning such an identity into collective fantasies of individual consumption.

Received 2007 03 04

Accepted 2007 03 26

## REFERENCES

1. Deleuze, G., Guattari, F. 1994. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
2. Guattari, F. 1995. *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm*, Trans. by Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis, Sydney: Power Publications.
3. Kellner, D. 2002. *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and Post-modern*, London and New York: Routledge.
4. Langman, L. 2003. "Culture, Identity and Hegemony: The Body in a Global Age", *Current Sociology* 51(3/4), Monograph 1/2, pp. 223-247.
5. Langman, L. & Cangenie, K. 2003. "Globalization and the Liminal: Transgression, Identity and the Urban", *Research in Urban Policy* 9, pp. 141-176.
6. Marx, K. 1974. *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie (Rohentwurf), 1857—1858*, Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
7. Marx, K. & Engels, F. 1975. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Authorized English Translation, 20<sup>th</sup> printing, New York: International Publishers.
8. Strasser, S. 2002. "Making Consumption Conspicuous: Transgressive Logics Go Mainstream", *Technology and Culture* 43(4), pp. 755-770.
9. Virilio, P. 2000. *The Information Bomb*, Trans. by Chris Turner, London and New York: Verso.
10. Weeks, J. 1998. "The Sexual Citizen", *Theory, Culture and Society* 15(3-4), pp. 35-52.
11. Willis, P. 1998. *Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young*, Buckingham: Open University Press.
12. Zukin, Sh. 1998. "Urban Lifestyles: Diversity and Standardization in Space of Consumption", *Urban Studies* 35(5-6), pp. 825-839.

Translated by Agnė Narušytė

Vytautas Rubavičius  
TRANSGRESIJOS MALONUMAS: TAPATUMŲ VARTOJIMAS

## SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje iškeliamas ir aptariamas sisteminis vartojimo ir vartotojiško kapitalizmo transgresyvumas, pasitelkiant marksizmo klasikų išvalgas apie materialinės gamybos ir jai reikalingos individų gamybos dermę, įrodinėjama, kad kapitalistinis transgresyvumas skleidžiasi įvairiais individualios, meninės ir kultūrinės transgresijos pavidalais. Pastarieji siejami su naujų kūniškumo ir seksualumo raiškos būdų sklaida, įgyjančia seksualaus piliečio pavidalą, kuris savąjį seksualumą įtvirtina sąmoningai veikdamas sociokultūrines ir politines įtampas kildinančioje viešumos ir privatumo skyrimo zonoje. Autoriaus manymu, esminiu vartotojiškumo ir vartojimo ideologijos veiksmu tampa kultūros praktikomis įtvirtinamas transgresijos ir malonumo susaistymas, teikiant tam saistymui laisvinimosi iš visokių tabu bei sociokultūrinių normų reikšmę, o sykiu suvokiant laisvinimąsi kaip galimybę susikurti naują tapatumą. Seksualaus piliečio ir jo veiksmams reiškiamo transgresyvumo sampratoje išskiriamos ir aptiriamos trys malonumo plotmės – seksualinė (individualioji), valdžios (politinė) ir išsilaisvinimo (ideologinė). Atkreipiamas dėmesys į vartojimui ir vartotojiškam kapitalizmui vis svarbesnėmis tampančias transgresija grindžiamas menines praktikas, kurių prekinę formą nuslepia išlaisvinimo ideologija. Svarstoma, kaip šiuolaikinio kapitalizmo aplinkoje gali skleisti išlaisvinanti „geismo mašinų“ bei nomadinio subjektyvumo galia, ir keliamas klausimas, ar vartojimo ir vartotojų kapitalizmas jau nėra tiek pažengęs, kad suprekinimo vyksmas sugeba „užbėgti už akių“ visokiems transgresyvaus išsilaisvinimo būdams.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: ideologija, malonumas, riba, seksualumas, vartojimas, tapatumas, transgresija.

Arūnas Sverdiolas

## CYNICISM: A LITHUANIAN VERSION

*Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas / Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute*  
*Dabartinės filosofijos skyrius / Department of Contemporary Philosophy*  
*Saltoniškių g. 58*  
*LT-08105 Vilnius*  
*El. paštas / e-mail: sverd@osf.lt*

### ORDINARY CYNICISM AND PHILOSOPHICAL CYNICISM

When talking about cynicism it is worthwhile to consider first the everyday usage of this word, since theoretical and critical debates melt into everyday mentality, affecting it and in turn being affected by it. Live thinking leaves its traces in the dictionaries. The writers of dictionaries of the second republic of Lithuania have not offered independent definitions of the word. In V. Vaitkevičienė's *Dictionary of International Words* (*Tarptautinių žodžių žodynas*) cynicism is defined in the same way as in *The Dictionary of Contemporary Lithuanian Language* (*Dabartinės lietuvių kalbos žodynas*), which in turn repeats the older Soviet one: "defiant disregard of morals and shamelessness" (Vaitkevičienė 2001; Keinys 1993). The definition is clearly too narrow: it covers only the action, not the mentality. The dictionary published by Alma littera is more conceptual: it defines cynicism as "a moral principle based on the denial of an individual's dependence on society; it is manifested as nihilist attitude towards spiritual culture, as open defiance of the norms of morality, as sneering at its principles and ideals and as humiliation of human dignity" (Kindurys 2001). The definition adds the clause found in Soviet dictionaries: cynicism is "*a contemptuous attitude towards the rules of decency; shamelessness and vulgar openness*" (Kvietkauskas 1985; Kruopas 1969).

However, our everyday usage of words is insufficient for a theoretical debate. It is even possible that cynicism is not what it seems to be in terms of its ordinary understanding. To grasp the character of our cynical thinking we should go back to the point in Western history when this concept first emerged, that is, to its origins in Greek philosophy, to the Cynicists, and then we can use it as a point of reference in trying to understand the manifestations of cynicism as deformations, transformations and variations of original Cynicism. This does not mean that we derive contemporary cynicism from the classical one; the perspective is only used for the sake of analysis.

In the history of philosophy the place of Cynicism is far from prominent: it emerges as one of post-Socratic schools of practical philosophy, but it seemingly remains a marginal one. Later on Cynicism as a school of thought disappears completely from the philosophical scene. Hegel in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* starts the chapter on the Cynics by observing, "There is nothing of particular to say about the Cynics" (Hegel 1971: 685). I do not know whether Heidegger ever mentioned the Cynics, but he definitely did not consider their thinking in a comprehensive way; apparently, for him they did not belong to the history of Western metaphysics. And yet they were radical thinkers and we should re-center the history of thinking so that it would be possible to juxtapose the Cynics with what is usually considered as fundamental topics of philosophy. The task is of course beyond the scope of this essay, but it takes note of such a perspective.

There are no surviving texts by the most important Cynic, Diogenes of Sinope. We know about him only by what the oral tradition has passed on, mainly through Diogenes Laërtius' and some other authors' written records. Jokes communicate the words of the famous Cynic and tell about his actions, for in this case the close connection between words and deeds is of particular importance. In these stories it is quite difficult to distinguish the Cynical thinking from Stoicism, Epicureanism and Sophistics, as they are mixed with what mundane consciousness considers the strange manners of philosophers in general. The ancient Greek schools of practical philosophy had much in common in terms of objectives: laying the foundations for rational conduct, autonomy and absence of want. Perhaps only historians of philosophy treating the matter from a certain theoretical point of view can separate the school of Cynics from other trends of ancient Greek practical philosophy. I have done much the same by having selected from hundreds of testimonies a mere dozen, which hopefully reveal the basics of cynical thinking.

The name itself, *kynikos*, "canine," shows that philosophers belonging to this trend make an effort to treat human reality from a radically animalist (canine) point of view and to act accordingly. Dion Chrysostom tells about Diogenes that "he laughed at those who suffered from thirst but passed by

the spring of water and looked where they could buy wine from Chios or Lesbo. They, Diogenes said, were much more stupid than grazing cattle who would never pass by a source or a clear stream when thirsty” (Haxov 1984: 165). Cynicism can be characterized as a naturalist critique of culture. The Cynics are intent on reducing and desublimating all that is conceived as the sublime and that constitutes the specifically humane – cultural and social – existential dimension. “Another of his sayings was, that things of great value were often sold for nothing, and vice versa. Accordingly, that a statue would fetch three thousand drachmas, and a bushel of meal only two obols” (Diogenes Laertios 1968: 328).<sup>1</sup> Any moral, value-based, cultural or political discourse, any institution, any dimension of the higher is radically questioned; an individual is faced with bare nature. The Cynics deny the society and its strictures, the state and its institutions; they reject social status, money, political power, family – all those social conventions, which we readily call ‘taboos’ (although today they have little in common with the real archaic taboos). The law of nature, not of society, is what is important for Diogenes. He “said that marriage was a nullity, and that the proper way would be for every man to live with her whom he could persuade to agree with him. [...]” (1968: 348-349). In this case the stress is on individual consent, but sometimes the reasoning is much more radical: a life according nature defies even the ban on incest and cannibalism.

However, Cynicism is not so much a theory of human nature reducing it to animalism as a particular practice based on a direct pursuit of natural living. Diogenes respected only the need for food, shelter and sex. “Being once reproached for eating in the market-place, he made answer, “I did, for it was in the market-place that I was hungry” (1968: 341). For the Greeks the market place or Agora was a public space *par excellence*, and eating was mostly a private affair; Diogenes was brazenly seeking to make the private public, to wipe away the boundary between the private and the public space. He lived “like a dog” in an old tub, did not respect any social norms and prohibitions, was behaving shamelessly, used to eat, urinate and make love publicly. The Cynic homogenized and desemanticized the social space by using any place for any purpose. This is a radical negation of heterotopy essential to culture and it reduces it to natural homotopy.

The Cynics differed from other practical philosophers by their radical, drastically straightforward actions and words that shocked observers and listeners. They used to practice provocative speeches and actions, which had to guarantee them independence from any rules observed by everybody else. They did all this in order to overcome shame and thus dependency on the community. Shame is experienced in the face of the other; it is primarily

1 Translation of Diogenes Laertius is from: <http://classicpersuasion.org/pw/diogenes/dldiogenes.htm>

a social feeling. Shamefulness, feeling ashamed and shaming are powerful mechanisms determining the community's life. The Cynics' attempt to overcome shame was an attempt to overcome their dependency on others by publicizing the private in such a way as to neutralize the public itself. However, while behaving drastically a Cynic still remains essentially dependent on the human context: he is not a dog; he is *like* a dog. Moreover, the overcoming of his dependency is not only psychological, not only egocentric: such conduct effectively eliminates an individual from the community, for the community itself eliminates somebody behaving this way, dissociates from him and rejects him. This is the meaning of the Cynic's provocation and the scandal he creates. "Once at a banquet, some of the guests threw him bones, as if he had been a dog; so he, as he went away, put up his leg against them as if he had been a dog in reality" (1968: 334). The Cynic's action takes place in the interpersonal, social environment and projects the characteristics of that environment, takes them into consideration and attempts to change them.

One more example: "And as he was continually doing manual work in public, he said one day, "Would that by rubbing my belly I could get rid of hunger!" (1968: 334). Thus, even the animal nature, which the Cynic is appealing to, is not yet the most radical basis revealed or at least approached by his thinking: the unachievable goal – the appeasement of hunger without food – is not in the realm of live nature, of *bios*, but in that of the elements, in the Freudians' realm of Thanatos; it is not the independence of an animal but rather the tranquility of a mineral.

The Cynic's action is not technically complicated; its repetition requires no special preparation or knowledge but mere resolve. There is no figurative meaning, no metaphor here: the action is drastically direct; it says something precisely through the fact that something is being done. Such a practice remains effective and repeatable on the same plane as a direct action and not a sign or a reference to something else. A contemporary Russian artist Oleg Kulik used to be chained up naked during art vernissages and barked like a dog, and if somebody approached, he would attack. He bit badly the leg of an art critic's who ignored the warning to beware of the angry dog. On the Internet I found pictures of Kulik having sex with a dog. Probably they are not imitations, for otherwise the very principle of Cynical devilry and directness would be infringed: the Cynic shocks not by "imitating action" (this is how Aristotle defined theatre, a fictional spectacle designed for the observer), but by performing it. Half a century ago Witold Gombrowicz wrote that in their writings Parisian existentialists emphasized the individual's freedom of choice, but when you started taking off your pants in a restaurant they would almost jump out of the window willing

to disassociate from you. It is a significant detail that Eastern Europeans try to perform a Cynical action this way. Of course, others can also understand the meaning of such an action (there is nothing to misunderstand here) but they do not dare to become the Cynic's disciples. The repetition of this uncomplicated thing (Hegel was especially irritated by the simplicity and vulgarity of Cynical practices) is not and never was easy. "Once a man came to him, and wished to study philosophy as his pupil; and he gave him a *saperda* and made him follow him. And as he from shame threw it away and departed, he soon afterwards met him and, laughing, said to him, "A *saperda* has dissolved your friendship for me." (1968: 329).

Therefore, there are two most important characteristics of Cynicism:

1. A reductionist understanding of human nature; desublimation of the dimension of the sublime. The naturalizing gaze bores through any phenomena of cultural existence and entire strata of them, unmasking them as epiphenomena, as conventions and illusions, hiding another stratum of existence from the people entangled in them – nature or even cosmic elements. The examples of the reduction of culture to nature are food instead of art, nourishment instead of taking pleasure in food, masturbation instead of eroticism. The procedures of reduction (desublimation) are on different levels, they function locally: this reduces to that. A particular reductionist solution is cheerfully brutal, but a whole chain of such syllogisms ends darkly: in self-mineralization.

2. A drastic and shocking word or action not only lays bare the nature of things by exposing what is usually hidden. It also changes the existence of the acting person turning it into a quasi-natural one and thus conferring to the performer (but only to him!) a peculiar status in the human community: his presence inside it and at the same time somehow outside it. The action removes the performer from his usual life and traditional community and transfers him into the space of a peculiar Cynical existence. The Cynic not only exposes and unmasking things; he also destroys a stratum of human existence – the dimension of the sublime – in a particular area.

#### THE ORIGINS OF OUR CYNICISM. CREDULITY

When we look at the history of thinking we encounter a paradox. Cynicism created a certain philosophical practice that survived for several centuries in Greece and Rome, but then it disappeared as a definite philosophical school or trend. However, cynicism can be found nearly everywhere and always as a spontaneous (anti)cultural practice as well as a component of daily thinking. It is easy to discover various manifestations and varieties of this way of thinking and acting, but it is often difficult to grasp their es-



sence. I am not going to discuss the variety of its manifestations here; I will only point out some constellations of cynical positions that are important for the definition of our cynicism.

Most often cynicism is partial, fragmentary and eclectic; it combines a radical and destructive insight with some components of positive and dogmatic character. It is practiced as a criticism unmasking specific social and cultural phenomena, debasing them, but confining itself to them, not expanding its field of attention and not progressing in the course of its thinking. Sometimes cynicism is used in homeopathic dosages. Most often cynicism is not principled and philosophical; it is merely an instrumental, non-reflective, spontaneous and mundane way of thinking, an anonymous *doxa*. It affects one's conduct not by following a clearly understood principle, but rather by following an interest, an inclination or simply a whim. Cynicism can also stay away from the public sphere and thrive in privacy as a hidden, undeclared, but nevertheless real basis of thinking on par with a peasant's ruse. This contrasts with the philosophical Cynicism most clearly, which was essentially public and used to transform the public sphere.

One might think that for cynicism it is essential to be honest at least with oneself, to have a clear understanding of one's own motivation. Sometimes this is indeed the case but not necessarily: reduced and desublimated are usually the motives of other people, not one's own; cynical clarity makes exception for one's own case; cynical explanations are directed towards the actions of others, sometimes of all others. Motivation by the sublime is reserved the explanation of one's own actions, while the pursuits of others are not recognized as respectable. One speaks of them purely technologically and naturalistically in an unmasking way. The intersubjectivity of such two semi-cynicists is quite unique: they reduce each other's motivations, not necessarily symmetrically, to the same plane. The reciprocal unmasking leaves little common ground by restricting the possibilities of communication between individuals and leading to their atomization: it is difficult to coordinate your efforts with somebody you consider a bastard, and if it is sometimes possible, then only in a restricted area. Compared to the Cynic's action, we have an inversion here along the most important axis of personal responsibility: cynical thinking is no longer based on a radical practice antagonizing an individual with the community and thus freeing him from dependence on it, instead it turns into an individual's means of explaining other people's behavior involving no costs or adverse consequences for himself.

Moving towards our present cynicism we should consider its origins and the conscious or unconscious memory. Its archaeological stratification is quite simple: in our present thinking its most effective stratum was already formed in Soviet Lithuania. The most conspicuous and perhaps the most decisive factor

of this manner of thinking was the dominance of the openly inauthentic and bluffing ideology relying on force and rough manipulation. During the Soviet period, especially towards the end of it, this ideology had few sincere exponents, was hardly taken seriously by most, though quite a thick layer of society was feeding on it. At the same time it was the stuff that used to fill the entire public space, leaving room for no alternatives.<sup>2</sup> For most people it was clear even without any analytical effort that the official ideology was a manipulative bluff covering the rule of brute power. However, precisely this – the experience of the clearly fictitious but at the same time almost omnipotent reality – was massively producing cynical consciousness. This was a “death of ideology” for millions: not a result of critical theoretical thinking, but a constituent of everyday anonymous *praxis* and *doxa*. Having lived in the circumstances of bluff ideology for decades, having had no possibilities to articulate and discuss the alternatives, people were disciplined (not merely taught) to disbelieve totally what was said publicly. There was no need to make any effort in order to become cynically insightful: the duality of the real, the façade quality of the public discourse was obvious to the masses in their everyday experience.

Precisely this experience of having no ideology is the most important source of our present cynicism. This public discourse has now been totally transformed, any monopoly on ideology has disappeared, and it has become very colorful indeed. However, the reservoir of cynicism deep inside remains huge and explanations of public life continue to refer to its resources. The reservoir is being constantly refilled by the actions of the government and other centers of power. The government regulates whatever it wishes to regulate; it pursues its own ideological projects, but does not discharge – again without any explanation – some of its essential functions. The Lithuanian language, something most personal to everyone, has been nationalized; its grammar has been connected to the Legal Code: one may be punished for a linguistic mistake. Sets of traditional beliefs, ethnic culture, and historical facts have become the object of public legal protection and regulation. Seeing so much brand-new and constantly renewed legislation of dubitable quality it is difficult not to be a cynic. On the other hand, the society encourages the government to act this way; it does not question and does not discuss the limits of its competence, on the contrary, it requires overstepping these limits every time this seems desirable. When there was an outbreak of HIV infection in a correctional colony, there were demands to keep the HIV positive behind the bars indefinitely, that is, to condemn them to the harshest penalty envisioned by the Penal Code, life imprisonment, even though getting infected is not considered as crime by the law.

<sup>2</sup> See: T. Sodeika, A. Sverdiolas, “Life in the Retort and Soon Thereafter”, *Lituanus* (Chicago), 1991, vol. 37, No.2.

The society's belief/disbelief in the 'reality' of institutions is of the same order: it manifests *inter alia* through boundless voluntaristic creativity. An institution appears as something that wholly depends on our own discretion. Though there is no king in Lithuania the Royal Union of Lithuanian Nobility was founded; it could have been equally entitled as Imperial or Galactic. It has made its own definition of a nobleman. Obviously, such self-nobilization is still benign, even if exotic. However, the Dadaist construction of societies/institutions coalesces with political activities of the same kind: the prime minister of the republic has given a palace as a gift to the Royal Union in a gesture of an absolute monarch. Universities are being founded following the same principle. No value system, even so delicate, but sometimes inexorable, as taste ever restricts or directs such actions. No wonder, the cynical thought accompanies all these burlesques and grotesques: "who cares about such nobility," "who cares about such universities". These and other pseudo-heterotopies beg to be homogenized, the bogus sublime begs ridicule.

Property is among the main areas of legitimacy. However, the notorious phrase of Pierre Joseph Proudhon *propriété c'est le vol* is not a radical socialist anarchist slogan for us but a statement of fact we observe daily: who are the big-time proprietors if not the most successful thieves? Directors of factories turned into their proprietors in front of our eyes; we do not need to know the *peripeteia* of this miraculous transformation of 'people's' property into private property to be able to look at the result cynically. Under such conditions the principle of the immunity of property appears to be a thing of the same order as communism used to be: pure future, a pure project. Some would say that the origin of property is always a primordial seizure; supposedly, the next generation will be different. However, this is a cynical philosophy of history. In his classical masterpiece Max Weber derived the spirit of capitalism from protestant ethics, but it is hard to believe that a symmetrical reverse origin is possible, that some kind of ethics could be reborn from the spiritless body of our capitalism.

Yet let us return to the archaeology of our consciousness. Marxist ideology was militant anti-ideology: it unmasked all other ideologies as products of false consciousness, as tools of class domination. Class interest and its derivatives were considered a kind of nature, a reality behind any cognitive or value oriented discourse. It was cynical: all other ideas and motives were simulacra hiding the real causes, 'nothing but' expressions of a hidden interest. The so-called historical materialism, or a dialectical version of cynicism, was taught as part of the curriculum of humanities and social sciences and in all textbooks; it permeated public discourse on public issues no matter whether sincerely held or just used as disguise for saying something else by way of hints.

A destructive criticism of the basis of a community's existence is however simultaneously its radical recreation, or creation of a community based on cynicism. The official clichés used to condemn democracy and the rule of law as formal trimmings hiding the real domination of power, so naturally “formal” came to mean “unreal”. This is embodied in the Lithuanian language: our word “formalus” does not have the meaning of the English word “formal” as correct, conforming to the rules and real precisely because of this. For us, “formal” means exactly not the real thing. Today no longer ‘materialist’, but ‘idealist’ principles are proposed as if they were self-evident, without making any serious attempt to reflect on the recent past, to make clear what has really happened with our consciousness during the profound changes in our society and culture.

It may seem strange and yet the pervasive cynicism can be perfectly combined with credulity. If one believes that values have no value, that they are only superficial, feigned appearances reducible to interests and powers so that in the end ‘nothing has any meaning’, it is very easy to start believing in any motive of an actions provided it seems cynical enough. When a real or even only apparent interest is discovered there is a feeling as if one has grasped the real meaning of words and actions of a person or a group.

Our press calls itself the fourth power and ignoring the figurative character of the appellation acts as an independent source of power. As a matter of fact, the huge influence of this self-appointed power comes from manipulation. Most often it is precisely the unmasking devices that are used for manipulation. The effect is almost guaranteed: when we hear that power  $x$  stands behind phenomenon  $a$ , while power  $y$  stands behind phenomenon  $b$  we believe this spontaneously, for precisely this relationship between the phenomenon and the epiphenomenon in social reality seems to us ‘obvious’. The TV program “Do Financial Groups Control Lithuania?” does not give any information; it analyses or reveals nothing in detail; only insinuations are being thrown about. Then the audience is invited to vote by mobile phones and a nearly unanimous opinion is announced: “Yes. They do.” The groups seem to be hiding at the foundations of nearly all social life, and yet there have been no attempts to discuss publicly the anatomy or physiology of any such group. In the same manner the multifaceted corruption is being ascribed to anyone without any argumentation, without providing any evidence. The unmasking phraseology is sufficient for the naively cynical viewers and readers. Civil servants are almost unanimously considered as parasites and bribe takers, politicians, as fools and prostitutes; the words “mafia”, “money laundering”, “politicalization” and the like are being used indiscriminately. Spontaneously cynical presuppositions about the character of the society are being made without any factual analysis and even in the absence of facts.

In Soviet Lithuania the common perception was that KGB was hiding in the shade of any activity. Real experience used to transform into paranoia without any noticeable gap: references to the omnipotent secret service were enough to explain even the actions of active opponents of the regime. The secret service was considered to be the ultimate active agent hidden behind the surface of ideology, power and the whole life of the society. It is indeed very difficult to identify a social actor under the conditions of a totalitarian society. However, the attitude and the difficulty remain despite the fact that the society has been transformed in many ways. The KGB is our greatest trauma: we refer to this construction in trying to find out who creates our social reality, what are the real centers of power. Emptiness remained in the place of the masked power that used to dominate really, and this emptiness has been occupied by phantom bogus powers, which remain mostly unnamed or dubbed as “certain powers” even in the official discourse of governments. Essentially mysterious powers and characters are pushing the figures on the chessboard, while themselves thriving somewhere beyond it, shapeless and nameless.

#### COLLISIONS OF CYNICISM AND WHAT'S NEXT

One should distinguish two regimes of cynicism. Classical cynicism emerged against the background of a live tradition, a ‘spontaneous’, ‘natural’ system of ideals, principles and norms; it existed next to them and on their account as a reductionist criticism of them. Our cynicism is different: it thrives in the context of our direct experience of vertiginous nothing, a gap running across the façade and the foundation of our society. However, in these circumstances radical thinking has been strangely paralyzed and experienced a failure at what might seem to be the moment of its triumph: it cannot unfold effectively because there are no hard things, which one could attempt to shatter, penetrate analytically in the hope of discovering something non-banal in their depth. A piercing cynical gaze does not discover any depth; nothing that would be worth of attention, worth anything, for everything is shallow. Only this shallowness is inverted: the depth and the surface have seemingly swapped their positions. While seeing the physiology of an act, a text or an institution a cynic does not see their surface. When analyzing some phenomenon he pays attention to what is hidden behind it without taking note and understanding what it is. It should be worthwhile taking note of phenomena but hardly of epiphenomena: after all, the truth lies somewhere deeper inside and could be reached differently.

Cynicism falls into an idiosyncratic collision. A naïve cynic says: “interests rule it all”. But if it is really *all* then the circle closes, thinking returns reflectively to itself and is paralyzed. A further movement of thought beco-

mes impossible; it needs a fracture in consciousness or its own defeat, anyway, something Hegelian or rather Kierkegaardian. If there is no such fracture, one has to repeat the same cynical idea whenever some object attracts one's attention. The cynical thinking is dynamic; and yet it does not move in any definite direction, but rotates around those fragments of the sublime, which it yet keeps discovering from time to, fortunately or unfortunately. A target appears, the cynic shoots, (always) hits and the episode ends; another target has to appear so that everything would repeat like a neurotic symptom.

Moreover, our cynicism is two-layered, a cynicism covering cynicism: the social cultural reality and the cynical attitude towards former reality based on cynical thinking and acting, absolutely dominant not long ago and still remaining much alive. However, to think about the cynical reality cynically is to think about it correctly, because it is precisely what one thinks of it. An alternative to cynicism in this situation would be only naïveté, shortsightedness, inability to see what there is, to understand what is really happening and why. Idealism, which follows principles that have nothing to do and do not want to have anything to do with the cynical reality, falls into this category. Such idealists resemble the prudish pupils from the novel by Witold Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, to whom their cynical classmates were whispering obscenities and the prudish were trying to save their virginity by wriggling and squealing like pigs.

A constructive alternative to cynicism would be such an action that would change reality, would create a positive alternative in the social and cultural domain. Of course, a reality based on non-cynical, non-reductionist foundations would also confront a cynical judgment as anything does. However, such a judgment would not be correct and well grounded; it would seem shortsighted, naïve and unable to see what there really is. Such a reality would be resistant to cynicism.

Of course, a whole range of questions concerning the nature of social reality arises here, which should be considered at length elsewhere. However, here it is necessary to be reminded of at least one thing: the human reality is unique because attitudes towards it participate in it and partly determine it; this is why innocent cynicism does not exist. Strangely, Peter Sloterdijk remains on the level of representation in his analysis of Cynicism: Diogenes was "telling the truth," stripping reality bare; the essence of Cynicism was the revelation of (shameless) truth. Yet this is a very disputable assumption, since by his action a Cynic not only reveals but also changes, even produces, reality. It is obvious in Eastern Europe that an attitude debasing the dimension of the sublime and reducing values is very effective; in fact, it achieves what a radical Diogenian action was seeking: it unravels the fabric of communal life and makes it 'natural'.

A Cynic used to do precisely this individually, all by himself, through a radical practice that required huge and resolute efforts. Today's cynicism is not a radical and purely personal practice; on the contrary, it is a ready-made product for mass consumption. The cynical ways of thinking and cynical action are enacted massively, anonymously and without any effort. Cynicism is cheap, anybody can afford it; it is a diversion for a promiscuous and languid spectator.

The dimension of the sublime does not remain the same in the course of modernization; repressiveness is increasingly displaced by permissiveness. These concepts, too, are products of cynical thinking reducing values to the tools of power. Authentic values prevail in a different manner: not by forbidding or permitting, but by fascinating or repelling. 'Eating in Agora' that shocked the Greeks would not be understandable today without a comment. A lyrical character of autobiographic prose masturbates while watching a pornographic TV program in a hotel and switching it on again and again every few minutes in order to avoid extra charges.<sup>3</sup> Not only writers textually exhibit such private acts of desublimated eroticism; they are openly discussed in mass culture publications as innovative sexual practices. Another lyrical character is sobering up on the bank of the Nemunas River, drinks a bottle of beer, urinates into the bottle and throws it into the river.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the romantic bohemian's intent of shocking the bourgeois is ever present. However, the dimension of norm and value is so weak and inconspicuous that nobody is shocked, and in Lithuania one should look for a bourgeois, a representative of middle class with a set of its characteristic values, in the Diogenian way: on a bright day with a torch. A *nouveau riche* is not *bourgeois*; he already has power but does not yet have corresponding values. The *Lumpenproletariat*, the domestic cynics, are not shocked either; they only giggle: "This is cool!" Some say that people write this way because of a hidden longing for something different, and yet the bottle with piss travels towards the Curonian lagoon, indistinguishable from thousands of other bottles, not so conceptual and nostalgic, thrown in just for the sake of a hooligan's excitement. This is our postmodern version of effacing hierarchical divisions.

Of course, it is possible to continue with the debasement of the remaining manifestations of the sublime. There is no doubt that cynical actions and words will be repeated in new contexts. Theoretical writings in the humanities are taking over the leftist cynical positions from contemporary Western authors and re-telling their ideas, as if our own huge experience

<sup>3</sup> See: S. Parulskis, "Kai aš gulėjau puikybės patalė", in *Nuogi drabužiai*, Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> See: S. Parulskis, "Pagirios", in A. Andriuskevičius, G. Beresnevičius, S. Geda, S. Parulskis, G. Radvilavičiūtė, *Siūžetą siūlau nušauti*, Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2002.



of cynicism requiring independent reflection did not exist. The debunking efforts of the new left continue under the guise of postmodernism, as if nothing has happened. But we can raise the question: what next? Is some kind of alternative thinking and acting possible in the situation of cynicism running into crisis at the moment of its triumph? Considering our present conditions and perspectives of thinking, the tectonic shift in our social basis and our consciousness of radical rupture seem to be of paramount importance. After all, we see the archaeological strata of thinking even without carrying out much analytical work, due to the landslide that has opened them to our view. The post-totalitarian experience shows that what I call the dimension of the sublime can be – and was – destroyed. The natural stability of this dimension has become anything but obvious; on the contrary, it is becoming clear how fragile it is. We know that a society can live on cynical foundations. However, our experience also shows what it is like.

It is here that the need of thinking, which would support fragile things, arises. Perhaps a post-cynical thinking could become such an alternative, since due to the massive experience of cynicism it would no longer have illusions about the spontaneous nature of the dimension of the sublime and would try to develop a new constructivism, take responsibility for the foundation and grounding of this dimension. Sloterdijk writes: “In a culture in which hardened idealisms make lies into a form of living, the process of truth depends on whether people can be found who are aggressive and free (‘shameless’) enough to speak the truth” (Sloterdijk 1988: 102). The title of a chapter in his *Critique of Cynical Reason* describes well the horizon of the author’s objectives: “Pissing against the Idealist Wind”. Well, how are we to behave in the far more severe spiritual climate where the materialist wind is blowing? What happens to culture and society in which fossilized materialism (the dialectical and simple one) has turned and keeps turning impudence into the universal form of life? This question has never been of such vital importance in the West; there has been no necessity to reflect radically on a situation symmetrical to cultural idealism, which, as a matter of fact, is gradually disintegrating over there as well.

The possibility of “telling the truth” will probably also depend on whether we have people who are firm and free enough to reveal and tell the truth. Of course, this would be a totally different truth. A brazen “pissing against” would not do in this situation. In our conditions radical thinking should be directed at reconstructing the foundations, defeating cynicism and taking responsibility for the whole. I would call it neither conservative (for I do not think we have much to conserve), nor restorational (for restoration has been discredited here; we would only obtain a historical kitsch). We should rather set a task of a radically critical reconstruction or new construction of

what allegedly has been discredited as camouflage but in reality turned out to be precisely *imponderabilia*: the structures supporting society's existence.

True, this kind of thinking would nearly always be projectionist and utopian and thus it would face the aforementioned and other unmentioned dangers. It is even moot whether the conditional mood, which we are forced to use when speaking about it, is sufficient or whether such words as "necessary", "should", or "need" are at all applicable to thinking, though we cannot avoid them here. Perhaps the only obligation that thinking has is to be itself, that is, to think. Radical thinking is something uncontrollable and it is impossible either to force it to definite conclusions or even to anticipate them. Yet we can still have a particular kind of anticipation – hope, since radical thinking has always been not only destructive, but also constructive. This most profound duality belongs to the essence of philosophical thinking. Moreover, it is very likely that thinking here and now constructively involves the use of the same drastic means of a purely personal word and action as those used by Diogenes.

The contents of such thinking would, of course, be the opposite. The alternative to the animal nature, the divine nature of man, sounds too scandalous; we do not yet dare to use this concept directly, unless we are fundamentalists or lovers of the noncommittally playful retro style. Well, let us then start from the lowest possible political level. Establishing and protecting a dimension of values is a concern that is obvious in any socially significant word or action. We are told that politics is the art of the possible. This classical dictum is very appealing to politicians of the present moment who do nothing else but manipulate opportunities that pop up right under their noses. Principles and distant goals are rejected as politically irrelevant and utopian. And yet the great or history making politics is not only actions significant on their own but also the creation of opportunities and paradigms for those actions. This is especially true and is of particular importance during dynamic transitional and revolutionary periods when each particular political action aspires to a principle, determines the possibilities and impossibilities of other actions, or sets the rules of the game as we are fond of saying: for these are perhaps the only kind of rules, a postmodern equivalent of the archaic taboo, that we are still ready to observe. Of course, this is a dangerous pursuit because the emerging fundamental possibilities are not necessarily all 'good'. They are a mixed bag, destructive and constructive, cynical and anti-cynical. These fundamental possibilities are being created and re-created inconspicuously at every moment; they weave inexorably into the fabric of everyday social thinking and acting thus determining our future.

*Received 2007 03 04*

*Accepted 2007 03 26*

## REFERENCES

1. Diogenes Laertios. 1968. *Žywyty i poglądy słynnych filozofów*. Warszawa: PWN. English translation: Diogenes Laertius: <http://classicpersuasion.org/pw/diogenes/dldiogenes.htm>
2. Hegel, G.W.F. 1971. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Bd.1, Leipzig: Reclam.
3. Keinys, St. (red.). 1993. *Dabartinės lietuvių kalbos žodynas*. Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla.
4. Kindurys, A. (red.). 2001. *Tarptautinių žodžių žodynas*. Vilnius: Alma littera.
5. Kruopas, J. (red.). 1969. *Lietuvių kalbos žodynas*. T. 2, Vilnius: Mintis.
6. Kvietkauskas, V. (red.). 1985. *Tarptautinių žodžių žodynas*. Vilnius: Vyriausioji enciklopedijų redakcija.
7. Parulskis, S. 2002a. "Kai aš gulėjau puikybės patale", in *Nuogi drabužiai*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos.
8. Parulskis, S. 2002b. "Pagirios", in A. Andriuskevičius, G. Beresnevičius, S. Geda, S. Parulskis, G. Radvilavičiūtė, *Siužetą siūlau nušauti*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos.
9. Sloterdijk, P. 1988. *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Transl. Michael Eldred. London, New York: Verso.
10. Sodeika, T., Sverdiolas, A. 1991. "Life in the Retort and Soon Thereafter", *Lituanus* (Chicago). Vol. 37, No. 2.
11. Vaitkevičienė, V. 2001. *Tarptautinių žodžių žodynas*. Vilnius: Žodynas.
12. Нахов, И. (изд.). 1984. *Антология кинизма*. Москва: Наука.

*Translated by Agnė Narušytė*

Arūnas Sverdiolas  
CINIZMAS: LIETUVIŠKASIS VARIANTAS

## SANTRAUKA

Esė mėginama sučiuopti kelis būdingus dabartinės Lietuvos viešajame diskurse reguliariai besireiškiančius ciniškos teorinės ir praktinės mąstysenos bruožus, gretinant ją su graikų kinikų filosofija ir parodant esminius dabartinio čionykščio cinizmo panašumus bei skirtumus nuo šio paradigminio jo pavidalo. Dabartinio lietuviškojo cinizmo susiformavimas daugiausia siejamas su tarybinio laikotarpio viešuoju diskursu, ideologija ir valdžios praktikomis, taip pat antrojoje Lietuvos respublikoje atsiradusiomis jos transformacijos galimybėmis. Ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas dabartinio lietuviškojo cinizmo specifiniams bruožams ir esminiams jo skirtumams nuo atitinkamo vakarietiškojo reiškinių lauko, aprašyto Peterio Sloterdijko *Ciniškojo proto kritikoje*, į kuriuos paprastai neatkreipiamas deramas dėmesys. Nagrinėjamos kolizijos, į kurias atveda dabartinis cinizmas, ir svarstomos galimos šio mąstymo ir veikimo būdo alternatyvos.

RAKTINIAI ŽODŽIAI: cinizmas, kinikai, postsovietinis, *doxa*.

Nerijus Milerius

## A TOPOGRAPHICAL MAPPING OF LITHUANIAN PHILOSOPHY

*Vilniaus universitetas / Vilnius University*  
*Filosofijos fakultetas / Department of Philosophy*  
*Universiteto g. 9/1*  
*LT- 01513 Vilnius*  
*El. paštas / e-mail: nerijus\_miler@yahoo.com*

Any question concerning the conditions of philosophy has a peculiar status in philosophy. On the one hand, it promises to reveal something that remains unrevealed and unnamed when discussing “ordinary” issues in philosophy. On the other hand, there is a lingering suspicion that the very question indicates philosophy’s sickness rather than vitality. Indeed, reflections on the status of philosophy among the sciences and the humanities seem to intensify in situations of crisis.

Among the texts dealing with the issue in the post-Soviet period are some articles and interviews by Arvydas Šliogeris, Algis Mickūnas, Arūnas Sverdiolas, Tomas Sodeika, Alvydas Jokubaitis, Krescencijus Stoškus, Leonidas Donskis, Gintautas Mažeikis, and Nerija Putinaitė. This is quite a lot considering the torpidity of Lithuanian cultural life in general and of philosophical discourse in particular. Yet this is also too little, since the above-mentioned authors have considered different aspects of cultural life, so that with a few exceptions their ideas have seldom met each other in direct confrontation. Despite differences in focus the texts fall into two groups. Both seem to be prompted by a situation of crisis and their difference is the way the crisis is interpreted.

I first present an overview of the two positions and suggest what kind of a topographical map of Lithuanian philosophy they presuppose. The second part of the article is an attempt to describe the discourse of Lithuanian philosophy in a topographical way by identifying the *topoi* (locations) in which those who enter the space of Lithuanian philosophy find themselves.

### CRISIS OF TEMPORAL CONTINUITY

The first group, to which I would primarily assign articles by Arvydas Šliogeris, Alvydas Jokubaitis, and Krescencijus Stoškus, is focused on the transition from the Soviet epoch to post-Soviet times. Although these authors consider the issues of the contact between the new Lithuanian philosophy and contemporary Western philosophy, what they are mainly concerned with is the relation between post-Soviet Lithuanian philosophy and its Soviet past.

If we had to reconstruct what these authors consider the topical issue on the condition of philosophy in Lithuania the emphasis would be on the temporality of thinking, i.e. on whether the philosophy of the Soviet period could be positively integrated in the context of post-Soviet philosophy (answered positively by A. Šliogeris and K. Stoškus who put an emphasis on the so called Meškauskas' school of critical thinking) or whether the Soviet period be erased because of its political suppression of thought (as maintained by A. Jokubaitis, especially in his discussion with K. Stoškus).

One can notice that different answers to the question would refer to different time horizons which influence someone theorizing in "here and now" situation. If we assume that the Soviet regime allowed at least some space for critical thinking, then contemporary philosophy surely has to deal with the accumulated resources of such thinking, despite the experienced violence of that period. Just as surely, if the legacy of the Soviet period is denied any value, then it should be ignored or eliminated as an obstacle for independent thought.

The temporal aspect of the issue has an even wider reach, since the attitude towards the Soviet past would also shape the attitude of post-Soviet philosophy towards the pre-war philosophical tradition. Whatever the judgment on Lithuanian philosophy of the Soviet period, it is obvious that Soviet occupation interrupted the course of pre-war Lithuanian philosophy and that with the end of the occupation some ways of restoring relations with the "lost" history had to be found.

When discussing the conditions for philosophical thinking in Lithuania one should beware of the illusion that it could start in an empty space, without a context, however this context is assessed. The context is primarily the past, which cannot be transferred to the new period automatically,

though the hope is that reconstructing what was lost in the past would shift us towards future. The motif of the past, which shifts us towards future, and the future, which rectifies the failures of the past, is also expressed in a recent text on Lithuanian philosophy entitled "Is there philosophy in Lithuania?":

Suddenly, after getting beyond the forced Marxism and beyond the discourse torn away from reality, one was facing the sad philosophical scene and was impelled by the sight to run away from it as far as possible. In Lithuania today only those workers of philosophy may survive who are able to trim the philosophical field here and there and are capable of learning to walk in its narrow and slowly retrievable spaces. But is there enough of them so that they could meet on an open road some day in distant future, after having accomplished at least a part of such a titanic task? (Putinaite 2001: 605).

As we can see, when the past which has not fulfilled itself refers to the future which has all expectations fulfilled, the present situation becomes the most problematic. The present is something promised, and yet is absent and delayed. The present is delayed since it is an ideal, not to be identified with present "reality".

This image of our relation with the past suggests that Lithuanian philosophy "exists" under conditions of an ever-unfulfilled "present". The most important location on the topographical map of Lithuania is the one where the Soviet past meets the post-Soviet present. The location is not a neutral one; it acts as a magnet, limiting our ability to choose other trajectories of motion. On the other hand, it is often assumed that traversing the location might help to fill up the blank spaces on the map that embrace to a certain degree both the Soviet past and the post-Soviet present, as well as the future.

#### CRISIS OF SPATIAL CONTINUITY

Alongside the bunch of problems relating to the temporal conditions for philosophy in Lithuania there is another set of problems. They come to the fore whenever it is emphasized that when philosophizing in Lithuania we are not only in the area of own past but also in the area of contemporary Western (as well as Eastern) philosophy.

Probably the most radical diagnosis of the dependence of Lithuanian philosophy on Western (and Eastern) fashions in philosophy is that by Alvydas Jokubaitis:

The traditional Lithuanian situation may be described as follows: any two philosophers in Vilnius today raise an issue, which was already inquired into yesterday by two professors in Paris or Oxford. And this is beyond criticism. The very repetition of a Western inquiry is considered meaningful and



important. Without such a repetition, as it was already noted, Lithuanian philosophy would be inconceivable. One reason to consider the situation strange is that we most often merely repeat Western answers rather than raise Western questions. If the humanities in the West duplicate other sciences (biology, economics, philology), as Michel Foucault complains, we, in Lithuania, as it seems, duplicate the duplicates. (Jokubaitis 1997: 77).

It is obvious that by describing the relation of Lithuanian philosophy to Western/Eastern philosophies in this way Jokubaitis appeals to the scheme of there being a 'center' (Western/Eastern) and a 'periphery' (Lithuania). The scheme also presupposes a mechanics in the development of Lithuanian philosophy – that of the transmission of theories developed at the 'center' to the 'peripheral' Lithuanian context. The 'duplicates' and even more so the 'duplicates of the duplicate' can at best approximately convey the thoughts presented at the 'center'. Thus irrespective of the quality of the work the stigma of being a 'duplicate of the duplicate' is deeply damaging.

The diagnosis of Lithuanian philosophy as mere repetition of primary or even secondary sources is not at all unique. We should be reminded that many Western theories, too, have emerged by 'duplicating'. To recall a joke of Françoise Dastur, professor of Sorbonne and now at university of Nice, who told in a private conversation: "German philosophers reflect, French provide interpretations, and Italians do translations". If we interpret the joke in the framework of the 'duplication' theory we have the following sequence: German philosophy is the source, French philosophy is 'the first wave', still having the ability to interpret things, and finally Italian philosophy, which only reaches the original 'source' in the form of 'mere' translation considered as a nominal transmission from one linguistic region to another.

The 'duplication' theory, interpreted in this way, presupposes just one direction, from 'center' towards 'periphery'. This is a scheme of monologue thinking, which leaves no space for mutuality, i.e. dialogue. However, a different approach to the procedure of repetition is also possible. Using the same example of the relations between German, French, and Italian philosophies we could present an alternative sequence: e.g., the works of the German phenomenologist E. Husserl that are still popular among French philosophers are the 'source', the analysis of Husserl's works performed by the Frenchman M. Merleau-Ponty is an interpretation, and the studies of the German scholar B. Waldenfels on Merleau-Ponty are an interpretation of an interpretation, which correct the original 'source', i.e. the works of Husserl. In this sequence the repetition of the questions and possibly the partial repetition of answers is not a merely mechanic duplication of the source. As Waldenfels once noted, even when we quote we do not merely move ideas from

one text to another, we rather grant a voice to the quoted authors. Given the possibility to 'speak' the quoted authors are no longer treated as divine idols, they become partners in a dialogue.

In view of this alternative to the one-way procedure of repetition the critical charge in the evaluation of Lithuanian philosophy by Alvydas Jokubaitis is even more prominent. The charge is that by repeating the thoughts of Western and Eastern authors Lithuanian philosophy lacks self-sufficiency and originality. Lithuanian philosophers reflect under conditions of distorted time and distorted space: for them the processes taking place in Western and Eastern latitudes are much more important than the history of their own country or even the processes taking place 'here' and 'now' in the period of independence. Moreover, when quoting the thoughts of other scholars' Lithuanian philosophers merely rebroadcast the voices of quoted authors instead of listening to them. Consequently, Lithuanian philosophy is at best an echo of the voices of Western and Eastern authors transmitted from 'center' to 'periphery'. It is no wonder that in the *topos* far remote from the 'center' this echo is hardly audible.

#### CRISIS OF RISK

In summarizing the two positions on the crisis of Lithuanian philosophy we can identify their common conclusion: Lithuanian philosophy is always 'lagging behind'. In the former case it is lagging behind the ideal of a futuristic 'superior' philosophy that is impossible to realize in the present situation, while in the latter case it merely follows some Western and Eastern idols, which it rebroadcasts rather than interprets.

In both cases Lithuanian philosophy is condemned as 'immature'. On the other hand, the very features that lead to the condemnation of Lithuanian philosophy as immature may be used to justify it. By pointing at the lack of 'maturity' we may discard many imperfections of Lithuanian philosophical discourse. For example, it is obvious that we still do not have a settled philosophical vocabulary. This is regrettable and at the same time somewhat comical, as when discussions promising conceptual debates end as quarrels over the exact translation of some philosophical terms. However, by recalling our 'immature' age we settle for lower ambitions: an accurate usage of terms requires considerable philosophical skill, and hence disputes on the translation are really substantial. By taking this direction of self-justification and self-excuse one is able to turn a lot of philosophical steps into small 'revolutions', surely local, but still 'revolutions'.

This ambivalent procedure of self-derogation and self-excuse reveals another reason for the crisis of Lithuanian philosophy hiding beneath its

other manifestations, and that is the lack of risk. Lithuanian philosophy is averse to risks, as noticed by Alvydas Jokubaitis:

The reason that explains the dependency and unoriginality of Lithuanian philosophers is not their lack of creativity; but rather the fact that our whole philosophical tradition has been that of following in the wake of the huge Western philosophical icebreaker. Unlike the Westerners who take risks we know the future of our philosophical discourse quite well by looking at them: we know whether phenomenology, hermeneutics, or deconstruction is coming. This is the advantage of lagging behind (Jokubaitis 1997: 76).

There is nothing to add to this observation. Risk is simply absent when you are continuously lagging behind.

Even if it is conceded that Lithuanian philosophy is developing under conditions of little risk, do we not oversimplify the notion of risk here? The diagnosis of its ills envisages only one occasion of risk, that of leaving the laggards and dashing to the ranks of the trailblazers. Still, who today in Lithuania could seriously claim that we might soon not only close on but also overtake those whom we are following? The rhetoric of closing on and equaling relates the moment of dashing ahead to a *utopian* future, which has little in common with the *topos* of Lithuanian philosophy. Thus, by linking the risk to a utopian project the risk is turned into a merely desirable philosophical luxury instead of being the essence of philosophy. Hence the diagnosis of the Lithuanian philosophy as ‘lagging behind’ enables us to justify not only our lack of ‘maturity’ but also our aversion to risk.

The one-dimensional treatment of risk, which derives from the diagnosis of Lithuanian philosophy as ‘lagging behind’, might be interpreted as an indication of the narrowness of the diagnosis itself. By placing Lithuanian philosophy in such a *topos* that it can only be ‘lagging’ behind the *utopian* ideal this diagnosis conceives Lithuanian philosophy in such terms as ‘slack’, ‘lateness’, ‘slow-down’ or even ‘stopped development’, and ‘necessity of catching up’. However, too many phenomena relevant to contemporary developments in philosophy slip through this conceptual net.

#### THE *TOPOS* OF PHILOSOPHICAL STRATEGY AND TACTICS

In our search for the *topos* where Lithuanian philosophers find themselves at present we intend to take a different path. We are going to link this *topos* neither to speculations on the past of Lithuanian philosophy nor to its relations with ‘foreign’ philosophy. When discussing the current situation of Lithuanian philosophy we should consider the attitude of Lithuanian philosophers to what they themselves speak and think rather than localize Lithuanian philosophy in relation to its past or to its ‘external environment’.

In our contemplations on the subject we rely on Michel de Certeau, a French philosopher and semiotician, who has distinguished two types of attitudes towards cognition, those of strategy and tactics. Following de Certeau we will focus not so much on the ordinary usage of these terms, but on the topological positions that the 'strategist' and the 'tactician'.

The essential element of strategy is the subject of will and power who, according to de Certeau, has his own *topos* isolated from the spaces the strategy describes (De Certeau 1984: XIX). Since in his quest for 'objectivity' the subject of strategy keeps his distance from the spaces planned strategically, he relates to these spaces as if from the 'outside'. The view from the outside makes the 'strategist's' perspective one of 'research'.

The 'tactician', by contrast, never has his own place, from which he could survey the tactical spaces from the outside with an objectifying and researching gaze. As de Certeau emphasizes, the *topos* of the 'tactician' is the location of *the other* rather than his own (De Certeau 1984: XIX). Being in such a *topos*, which is not isolated but squeezed into the tactical spaces, the 'tactician', as against the 'strategist', cannot enjoy a comprehensive view. For him, the tactical spaces reveal themselves as fragments rather than as a whole. This is why the 'tactician' is focused on situational practices of cognition rather than overall cognition. De Certeau reminds us that the tactical practice, which constantly adjusts itself to the situation, was called by Greeks *metis*, or courses of action (De Certeau 1984: XIX). Fishes and plants move in the *metis* manner. When a fish meets an obstacle in its way it simply bypasses it. The same goes for plants: if we cut off a branch of a tree it can ramify in the other direction. Thus, tactical practices described as *metis* may be regarded as the art of orientation in space and time, of weaving in and out.

Philosophy becomes strategic in the sense of de Certeau when a philosopher settles *above* the researched territories, i.e. in his own privileged *topos*, from which he seeks to comprehend the researched world as a whole that is modeled and planned. Since the 'strategist' is isolated from the environment he researches, his research has no conditions limiting it. The 'strategist' can include in his view each and every fragment of the investigated territory, but he resists his own inclusion in this view.

Although strategic thinking in philosophy is primarily associated with the modern progress of cognition based on thought, its manifestations can also be found in various procedures of philosophizing in different epochs. In Lithuania, in informal micro-duels strategy often trumps tactics. Moreover, here we often face those forms of strategic thinking, which lead to the sad state of Lithuanian philosophy. Lithuanian philosophy plays safe not because the philosophers are lagging behind the privileged source, but because they settle *above* the spaces they reflect on and discuss.

In the academic milieu of Lithuanian philosophy the following joke has been in circulation: *in the whole world to be an innovator you have to be the first; in Lithuania everybody is the first and everybody has his own strategic vision; hence, to be a true innovator you have to be the second.* In Lithuania even fledgling philosophers have no great difficulty in becoming *the first*, for they just need to come up with topics, which have not been discussed or hardly noticed before. Such fake innovations do not establish distinctive theoretical positions; they rather provide one with a distinctive self-dependent *topos*. For even lagging behind involves taking some risks, just by being in a situation where your own position is necessarily challenged by, or has to be coordinated with, *the other*, on whom you are thus dependent. This kind of ‘innovation’ is a privilege of being the only ‘proficient’ one in some area of the philosophical territory. Many philosophical topics are being fled not because they do not evoke any theoretical interest, but simply because they are *already* named and therefore are being treated as the property of the ‘proficient’.

By avoiding the risks of intrusion into the philosophical territories of the *other* strategic thinking generates a whole range of philosophical aporias, ‘deadlocks’ or ‘impasses’. Let us consider how these aporetic situations affect anyone entering Lithuanian philosophical discourse.

#### A. Aporia of Dialogue

An aporia of dialogue is a situation, in which two alternative strategies, both seeking to create conditions for a dialogue, bring about a condition where no dialogue is possible. Such aporias of dialogue can be observed during annual conferences organized by the Lithuanian Society for Philosophy. It is no secret that critical recourses are too scarce in Lithuania to expect heated discussions, disputes and polemics on any particular topic. Therefore each year, when discussing the theme of the conference to be held, efforts are made at finding issues, which could attract philosophers of different persuasions, e.g. “Postmodernism and its place in philosophy” (1997), “Rationality today?” (1998), “After subject: contemporary trends of philosophical evolution” (2000). Evidently, these are maximally broad descriptions intended to attract for discussions as many participants as possible. However, despite the good intention discussions do not take place precisely because of the breadth of the themes: each participant, bound by no specific theme, presents his position which often has no connection to the concerns of other participants. In the worst case we get a set of isolated visions that do not communicate at all, with each participant attending to the words of others from a safe, indifferent and ‘strategic’ distance.

### B. Aporia of Critical Review

One may distance not only from the position of the other but also from one's own. This is a precondition for the possibility of self-criticism, i.e. the capability to revise one's own position. Yet a view from the all-embracing distance makes a revision of one's own position highly problematic, since the criticism involved here requires rethinking not only of some elements of one's own position, but also of the whole strategic 'vision', of the very core of one's position. This is a situation with only two 'ways out', both of which having little to do with genuine self-criticism: either refusing to revise one's vision because such revision would equal 'spinal fracture' and 'betrayal of ideals' or really changing one's attitudes yet without self-critical revision, just by following philosophical fashions. Neither 'way out' leads one out of the strategic field of philosophizing, since they both belong to the sphere of strategic and in this particular case inflexible thinking.

### C. Aporia of Situatedness

The safe distance, which helps us keep our own inalterable position, creates conditions for another aporia, that of the current situation. The maintenance of a safe strategic distance always goes hand in hand with the hostility to situatedness, and we find its manifestations not only in the field of philosophy but in the whole cultural life of Lithuania. Current situations characterized by the dynamic development of events are dubbed as mere *topicalities* unworthy of serious consideration. This disregard for the current state of world, for what is taking place right before one's eyes is only discontinued when the issues get the attention of the 'authorities' in the West or in the East. In such cases even trifling topicalities may acquire the status of symptoms of 'global' phenomena. And yet it is assumed as a matter of course that the symptoms are to be discovered where they are expressed in the most intense form, i.e. in the West or the East. Thus reflections on the current situation become part of academic studies that allow keeping safe and neutral distance.

### D. Aporia of Classics

The disregard of the current situation of the world or our daily environment as sources for philosophizing is often justified by alleged loyalty to the classics that have survived the tests of time. To be sure, due respect for the classics is a necessary feature of critical thinking. However, under Lithuanian conditions such respect quite paradoxically often leads to contrary results that restrict critical thinking. First, it is assumed that only the history of

philosophy rather than philosophy itself really exists (it is thus ‘forgotten’ that without regard to *this* situation an ever renewing critical thinking is hardly possible). Second, without being tested in today’s world the classics become mummified as museum showpieces, just worth of surveying and putting back to the dusty shelves of history (it is forgotten that many classics themselves considered the challenging of authorities as the first philosophical step). A ‘resurrection’ of the classics would amount to a miracle. Students of philosophy in the early stages of their education find themselves already in the aporethic situation of Buddha’s disciples: *kill Buddha if you see him*. Of course, such a radical act of resurrection of the classics is impossible under our circumstances. Those who refuse to read mummified classics move to other fields that are more congenial to our times or simply leave philosophy.

### RISK OF SINGULARITY

It is obvious that these aporias are just samples demonstrating the way in which ‘strategic’ philosophizing steers philosophy into situations of crisis. We could surely identify many more ‘impasses’ that trap the procedures of education, academic conferences and individual creative work.

Though the list of aporias of Lithuanian philosophical discourse could be extended, we do not suggest that the whole of Lithuanian philosophy is continuously trapped in aporethic situations. Even if a ‘strategist’ seeks to embrace the whole field of reflection while trying to escape his own involvement in this field, the all-embracing ‘strategic’ position is itself just a part of the topographical map of philosophy surrounded by ‘tactical’ spaces. Alongside the locations where somebody settles *above* the reflected territories there are locations where one is settled *nearby* or *face-to-face*.

It is obvious that the shifting tactical stance allows movements in such trajectories on the topographical map that help avoid getting stuck in aporethic situations, the deadlocks. First of all, the ‘tactician’ is always in a situation, which does not belong to him and in which he finds himself facing *the other*. The ‘tactician’ does not even have the choice of whether to challenge the other or not, to start a dialogue or not. Being in the shifting territory of the other is already being in a situation of communication (of either dispute or dialogue). Only the direction of communication remains open, i.e. whether it leads to confrontation or consensus. Secondly, being in the presence of *the other* is a prerequisite of a view that is able to reconsider and revise itself. Even in a situation of polemical warfare it is possible to change the tactics, not to mention the possibility of correcting one’s stance in order to reach an understanding with the other. Circumstances and situations provide the space for critical resistance and opportunity to say “no”, and this resistance



must embrace one's own positions and attitudes as well. Such resistance is a continuous process, not a onetime action. Thirdly, the rationale of the tactical practices of cognition is orientation in real situations; thus philosophical 'tactics' in its essential characteristics is not hostile to situatedness, but is rather based on it and oriented by it. By reflecting on these situations a 'tactician' does not require any warranty either from a Western or from an Eastern authority, which purportedly should confirm the relevance and importance of supposed *topicalities*. Fourthly, since tactical cognition is necessarily involved in a situation of communication (of either dispute or dialogue), the classics of philosophy do not become mummified pieces of history but are the targets of polemical discussions. At the same time the opposition between the alleged 'live' experience of contemporary world and ostensibly 'dead' and 'stiff' heritage of the past is avoided.

However, if any deadlock can be broken is it still meaningful to speak about the crisis of Lithuanian philosophical discourse as generated by strategic thinking? As we saw, it is impossible not to get into an aporethic deadlock of thinking under the conditions of Lithuanian philosophy; nevertheless, it would seem that it is quite easy to extricate from them. However, the aporethic character of strategic thinking shows itself precisely in the fact that it leads to situations 'without an exit' and that it has no resources of its own for extricating itself from the deadlocks. The aporethic situations generated by 'strategic' thinking cannot be solved at the level of strategic practices but only on the plane of tactical practices of cognition. Yet there is no continuous trajectory or a direct path between the *topos* of the 'strategist', which is above the reflected territories, and the *topos* of the 'tactician', which is nearby. Even if, as noted, we can detect both strategic and tactical locations on the map of Lithuanian philosophy, they are situated on separate and incommensurable planes.

As shown by Peter Sloterdijk, a German philosopher of Dutch origins, the transition from the practices of panoramic cognition to the practices of situational cognition is not a matter of continuous 'evolution' but of radical change. Sloterdijk associates the transition with the change in the conception of criticism. When discussing the changes at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. the 'death' of the classical conception of criticism and the impulses of the new critical theory, he says:

I believe that Critical Theory has found a provisional ego for critique and a "standpoint" that provides it with perspectives for a truly incisive critique – a standpoint that conventional epistemology does not consider. I am inclined to call it *a priori pain*. It is not the basis of elevated, distanced critique that achieves grand overviews but a stance of extreme closeness – micrology.



If things have become too close for comfort for us, a critique must arise that expresses this discomfort. It is not a matter of proper distance but of proper proximity (Sloterdijk 1988: XXXIII).

Looking at things at close range, from near proximity reverses the optics of looking: instead of keeping a stable distance as if it could ensure the objective and comprehensive view of the researched territory, the distance is relinquished together with its total and amorphous vision. In this case the task of the critical stance is that of the deconstruction of the 'whole' and the decentralization of the territories allegedly panoramically viewed yet often just projected and anticipated.

Like de Certeau, who holds that in tactics fragments become more important than the whole, Sloterdijk suggests the preference of a fragment beheld at close proximity to that of a whole surveyed from a remote position. Such a fragment is not an elementary part of the whole. The fragments beheld at close proximity are related to each other not by a unifying similarity, which reduces the separate fragments to one homogeneous space, but by the relation of difference. Like de Certeau and Sloterdijk, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have emphasized that nomadic thinking, which may be treated as analogous to the tactical practices of cognition and to the preference of close proximity, combines the reflected elements not to a coherent whole, but to singular sequences of formations combined/separated by the relation of difference (Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 7).

Thus it seems that the overcoming of the strategic view, one that is still strived for by Lithuanian philosophy, has *already* taken place in Western philosophy and needs only be repeated here. However, we would be wrong if we believed that the repetition is an elementary and mechanical procedure. Like every event, such a repetition is a singular and unitary act. Consequently, no theory or an individual theoretical belief can be treated as an unquestioned prototype or recipe according to which other theories and beliefs ought to be built.

The overcoming of the strategic thinking is inevitably accompanied by the risk involved in tactical practices, the risk of singularity. The risk emerges when one abandons the illusion that the event or element, which is being repeated, is conceptually more valid than the event or element in the subsequent repetition. Even when we repeat, i.e. interpret, a text created long ago the text does not necessarily subordinate and enslave the interpretation. An interpretation is not necessarily something secondary in relation to the text that is being interpreted. The risky interpretation is neither a renewal of something 'old' nor an invention of something wholly 'new'. The risky tactical practices render meaningless all attempts at 'originality', a quality that Lithuanian philosophy has always lacked according to the critics of its laggardness. Instead of

demanding fundamental inventions that would allegedly legitimate one's own autonomy and individuality the risk of singularity demands one's readiness relentlessly to reconsider *the very same* event or theory as something *other*.

In *Difference and Repetition*, while discussing the subject of repetition, Gilles Deleuze reminds us of a complaint by a character in Büchner's play:

It is so wearisome. First you put on your shirt, then your trousers; you drag yourself into bed at night and in the morning drag yourself out again; and always you put one foot in front of the other. There is little hope that it will ever change. Millions have always done it like that and millions more will do so after us. Moreover, since we're made up of two halves which both do the same thing, everything's done twice (Deleuze 1994: 4).

Viewed from the panoramic *topos* of strategic philosophy, each step is necessarily subordinated to the principle of monotony. Nevertheless, the fact that one step is similar to another does not mean that two steps following each other in a sequence are absolutely identical. On the tactical approach to cognition practices, the circumstance that one step has *already* been taken does not render the next step worthless. However trite it may sound yet each step in a row is a unitary and singular event.

In so far as Lithuanian philosophy ignores the risk of singularity, philosophy 'in our latitudes' is doomed to repeat what has *already* been reflected and described. In this regard, however, Lithuanian philosophy does not differ from 'foreign' philosophies complaining of 'decline' and lack of 'new' ideas. Both here and abroad, there is the need of taking the risk of singularity, of traversing anew the seemingly familiar territories of thought. Hence, it is more meaningful to ponder upon the contemporary *situation of philosophy* rather than on the conditions of philosophy *in Lithuania*.

Received 2007 03 20

Accepted 2007 04 09

## REFERENCES

1. De Certeau, M. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Transl. by Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press.
2. Deleuze, G. et Guattari, F. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus*, Transl. by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
3. Deleuze, G. 1994. *Difference and Repetition*. Transl. by Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press.
4. Jokubaitis, A. 1997. "Du filosofiniai režimai" in *Postmodernizmas ir konservatizmas*. Kaunas: Naujas lankas.
5. Putnaitė, N. 2001. "Ar esama Lietuvoje filosofijos? Lietuviškojo filosofinio lauko žvalgymas" in *Naujas Židinys-Aidai*, Nr.11, p. 599-605.
6. Sloterdijk, P. 1988. *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Transl. by Michael Eldred. Foreword by Andreas Huysen. London, New York: Verso.

Translated by Gediminas Pulokas

Nerijus Milerius  
LIETUVOS FILOSOFIJOS TOPOGRAFINIS ŽEMĖLAPIS

## SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje siekiama nužymėti Lietuvos filosofijos žemėlapiu kontūrus. Koncentruojamasi ne į konkrečias Lietuvoje kuriančių filosofų teorijas, bet į pačias filosofavimo sąlygas. Svarstant sąlygas, kuriomis Lietuvoje funkcionuoja filosofija, posovietiniu periodu jau ne kartą fiksuota jos kritinė būklė. Krizės priežastimis buvo laikomi du esminiai faktoriai. Pirma, tai – laiko netolydumas – vientisos linijinės filosofinės tradicijos stoka, atsiradusi pertraukus „organišką“ filosofijos vystymąsi sovietiniu režimu ir jo primetamomis mąstymo klišėmis. Antra, tai – erdvės netolydumas – Vakaruose užsimezgusių intelektualinių problemų perkėlimas į Lietuvos situaciją, neišvengiamai prarandant perkeliamų temų aktualumą ir kontekstualumą. Konstatuojama, jog abiem atvejais į Lietuvos filosofiją žiūrėta per „atsilikimo“, „vėlavimo“, „stokos“, „sulėtėjusio“ ar net „sustojusio vystymosi“, „pasivijimo būtinybės“ sąvokų prizmę. Straipsnyje argumentuojama, jog mąstant šiomis sąvokomis, filosofijos situacija Lietuvoje lieka esmiškai neaprašyta. Esmine filosofijos Lietuvoje charakteristika laikomas jos „strateginis“ pobūdis. Strateginis, visa aprėpiantis, į galutinius atsakymus pretenduojantis mąstymas neigia dialoginę ar kritinę savo paties atžvilgiu poziciją, nėra pajėgus reaguoti į naujus iššūkius, klasifikuoja ir mumifikuoja filosofijos istoriją. Kaip alternatyva „strateginei“ pozicijai akcentuojama „taktinė“ filosofija, nepretenduojanti į visuotinumą, bet atvira rizikai, kitybei ir kritiniams permąstymams.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: Lietuvos filosofija, laiko ir erdvės tęstinumas, strategija, taktika, aporija.

Audronė Žukauskaitė

TELL ME WHO IS YOUR OTHER AND I  
WILL TELL WHO YOU ARE.  
IMAGINARY IDENTITIES IN  
CONTEMPORARY LITHUANIAN ART

*Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas / Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute*

*Dabartinės filosofijos skyrius / Department of Contemporary Philosophy*

*Saltoniškių g. 58*

*LT-08105 Vilnius*

*El. paštas / e-mail: audronezukaускаite@takas.lt*

In this article I intend to discuss how the recent political changes in Eastern Europe relate to the more fundamental changes in the political imagery. When interpreting political imagination we should consider not only imaginary identifications, e.g. imaginary roles, but also take into account its symbolic framework and raise the question who is the Other, for whom the subject is playing his or her role. The article analyses fantasy and anxiety as two ways of dealing with the question opened by the Other: what does the Other want from me? While fantasy offers and enables some temporal imaginary identification, anxiety, by contrast, destroys this false identification. The interrelation between fantasy and anxiety is obvious when one considers such phenomena as multiculturalism and the fear of fundamentalism: multiculturalism is based on the fantasies we have about the other; paradoxically, these fantasies collapse and immediately turn into the fear of fundamentalism if this other does not meet our expectations. The same structure is also valid when considering the relationship with the so-called big Other:

in relating to the big Other the subject experiences anxiety and assumes different positions (pervert's anxiety, hysteric's anxiety, psychotic anxiety). The relationship between fantasy and anxiety gets more complicated in the case of gender identities. Which Other is envisaged when the feminine subject identifies herself with a certain image? The article suggests that in the domain of the symbolic power we can find two different Others: the Other of Soviet totalitarian regime, when women were represented as political agents and the Other of global capitalism, representing women as objects of desire. As a reaction to this double surveillance the feminine identity is experienced as psychotic anxiety, destroying all positive fantasies.

# I. FANTASY AND ANXIETY AS POLITICAL FACTORS

The recent restoration of the nation states in Central and Eastern Europe raises the issue concerning the essence, and, more precisely, the meaning of national identity in an era of globalization. Most of the research on this topic is inspired by a vague intuition that post-totalitarian nations still preserve some specific authenticity, some mysterious x, which makes them different from the Western world. Of course, we should inquire what fantasies or fears underlie this assumption. How, if at all, are these assumptions compatible with the processes of globalization and the rise of the consumer society? And, finally, what is this mysterious x, persisting at the core of national identity?

If we take a look at the poststructuralist notion of identity we see that the very notion of identity is questioned and abandoned as essentialist. For example, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe claim the impossibility of fixing any identity, because the context specifying this identity is always over-determined and changing. "A conception which denies any essentialist approach to social relations must also state the precarious character of every identity and the impossibility of fixing the sense of the 'elements' in any ultimate literality." (Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 96) Any identity is relational, because it is constantly over-determined in the symbolic order, i.e., its content is always changing. "Society and social agents lack any essence, and their regularities merely consist of the relative and precarious forms of fixation which accompany the establishment of certain order." (Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 98) If we can find certain identities in our everyday reality, these should be regarded not as a "natural condition", but as a result of hegemonic power relations.

The impossibility of any stable or fixed identity opens the space for the process of identification. The need for identification arises because there is no identity, as Ernesto Laclau points out. (1996: 56) The notion of identification comes from Lacanian psychoanalysis and refers to different stages of

subject formation. Slavoj Žižek draws a distinction between imaginary and symbolic identification: imaginary identification is identification with the image in which we appear likeable to ourselves, while symbolic identification is identification with the very place from where we are being observed, from where we look at ourselves so that we appear to ourselves as likeable. (Žižek 1989: 105) In fact, these two types of identification are always interrelated, because imaginary identification is subjected to the gaze of the Other, which marks the place of the symbolic.

On the level of imaginary identification we can define two modes of relationship with the Other: fantasy and anxiety. Both concepts, borrowed from psychoanalysis, can be productively applied in the ideological context. In *The Sublime Object of Ideology* Žižek referred to fantasy as “an imaginary scenario filling out the void, the opening of the *desire of the Other*”. (Žižek 1989: 114) Fantasy enables us to evade the submission to the Other’s desire and to counter this desire inventing imaginary roles. From this it follows that every identity is some sort of imaginary scenario, a fantasy, which is constructed as an answer to the question “What does the Other want from me?” For example, Žižek interprets the case of anti-Semitism in terms of a fantasy about “Jewish conspiracy”, of some mysterious power manipulating events. This fantasy of conspiracy is continuously updated and applied to different phenomena, from Da Vinci Code to September 11. In all these cases fantasy functions as a desperate attempt to deal with the lack and the inconsistency of the Other, an attempt to offer some limited answer (anti-Semitism, anti-terrorism, feminist theology) to the question opened by the demand of the Other.

The most important thing here is making clear who is this Other for whom the subject constructs his or her fantasy. As Žižek points out, “apropos of every imitation of a model-image, apropos of every ‘playing a role’, the question to ask is: *for whom* is the subject enacting this role? Which *gaze* is considered when the subject identifies himself with a certain image?” (Žižek 1989: 106) It is precisely this uncertainty about the Other that provokes the subject’s anxiety: its uncertainty about his or her place in the Other’s desire. As Renata Salecl points out, “fantasy and anxiety present two different ways for the subject to deal with the lack that marks him as well as the Other, i.e., the symbolic order. If fantasy provides a certain comfort to the subject, anxiety incites the feeling of discomfort. With fantasy, the subject creates for him- or herself a protective shield towards the lack, while in anxiety the object which emerges at the place of the lack devours the subject, i.e., makes the subject fade”. (Salecl 2000) So if fantasy offers and enables some particular identities, which the subject mis-recognizes as his or her own (for example, a housewife allegedly “recognizes” the insufficiency of her life in

the conspiracy *à la* Da Vinci Code), anxiety destroys this false identification, throwing the subject back into the abyss of emptiness.

In his Seminar on Anxiety (*Le séminaire, Livre X: L'angoisse, 1962*) Lacan introduced a specific approach to this phenomenon. Whereas Freud distinguished between fear (focused on a specific object) and anxiety (which is not), Lacan posits anxiety as having an object, though a peculiar kind of object, one that cannot be symbolized like other objects. This object is *objet a*, the object-cause-of-desire, and anxiety arises when something fills the place of it, when the subject is confronted by the desire of the Other and does not know what kind of object he is for that desire. (Lacan 1962) This means that for Lacan anxiety is not without an object, it is only that this object is unknown. It is important to stress that *objet petit a*, one of Lacan's most famous "mathemes", is a constituent part in the Lacanian definition of fantasy. Lacan defines fantasy as the relationship between the "barred subject" and *objet petit a*, which refers to an "element standing in for the Real within any symbolic system. It is at once what cannot be accounted for within this system and yet that produces this system as the attempt to speak of it." (Žižek et al 2005: 373)

From these psychoanalytical definitions it follows that both fantasy and anxiety operate in the imaginary domain and their function is to fill in the gap opened by the demand of the Other. What's more, both fantasy and anxiety deal with *objet petit a*, a specific object standing for the Real, yet not translatable into the terms of the symbolic. Fantasy and anxiety thus function as a mediator between the Real and the symbolic, and the same element of the Real functions either as a support for fantasy, or as an eruption, which causes the disintegration of the imaginary unity. For example, the dominant ideology of late capitalism is that of calling to invent oneself, to choose between different social identities, genders, and lifestyles. At the same time this ideology reveals the opposite: the impossibility of reaching self-coherence and unity, the "unfreedom of choice". The pressure to choose one's identity makes real choice impossible, first, because the possibilities of choice are always limited and, second, the subject can never be sure if his or her choice is final, or if this identity is precisely that which is expected from him or her. In this way the imperative to choose one's imaginary identity reveals its reverse: the "dizziness of freedom", the subject's original emptiness and inconsistency.

The relationship between fantasy and anxiety can be exemplified by such phenomena as enthusiasm for multiculturalism and fear of fundamentalism. Enthusiasm for multiculturalism is usually based on fantasies about the other that are attached to some particular trait, *objet petit a*, e.g. specific appearance, habits, or cuisine. Though always reductive and limited, these



fantasies function pretty well till the moment when a specific trait starts to appear threatening or even dangerous. If this specific trait, this *objet petit a*, suddenly appears incompatible with our symbolic values, multicultural fantasies immediately dissolve and turn into an anxious obsession with fundamentalism. As Žižek points out, “liberal ‘tolerance’ condones the folklorist Other deprived of its substance – like the multitude of ‘ethnic cuisines’ in a contemporary megalopolis; however, any ‘real’ Other is instantly denounced for its ‘fundamentalism’, because the kernel of Otherness resides in the regulation of its *jouissance*: the ‘real Other’ is by definition ‘patriarchal’, ‘violent’, never the Other of ethereal wisdom and charming customs.” (Žižek et al 2006: 162)

## 2. FANTASY AND ANXIETY IN CONTEMPORARY LITHUANIAN ART

Lacan draws a distinction between two types of anxiety: the hysteric’s anxiety and the pervert’s anxiety. As Žižek puts it, “Lacan emphasizes the way the hysteric’s anxiety relates to the fundamental lack in the Other which makes the Other inconsistent/barred: a hysteric perceives the lack in the Other, its impotence, inconsistency, fake, but he is not ready to sacrifice the part of himself that would complete the Other, fill in its lack... (In contrast to the hysteric, the pervert readily assumes this role of sacrificing himself, i.e. of serving as the object-instrument that fills in the Other’s lack – as Lacan puts it, the pervert ‘offers himself loyally to the Other’s *jouissance*’).” (Žižek 2001: 73-74) The pervert’s anxiety is characterized by the lack of any questioning; the pervert does not doubt that his or her identity is serving for the *jouissance* of the Other. A good example of such perverse anxiety is national identity, performed for the gaze of the Western Other. Žižek argues that Emir Kusturica’s film *Underground* represents “an exemplary case of ‘Balkanism’, functioning in a similar way to Edward Said’s concept of ‘Orientalism’: the Balkans as the timeless space on to which the West projects its fantasmatic content. Together with Milche Manchevski’s *Before the Rain* (which almost won the Oscar for the best foreign film in 1995), *Underground* is thus the ultimate ideological product of Western liberal multiculturalism: what these two films offer to the Western liberal gaze is precisely what this gaze wants to see in the Balkan war – the spectacle of a timeless, incomprehensible, mythical cycle of passions, in contrast to decadent and anaemic Western life.” (Žižek et al 2006; 163)

Here we can observe that very similar trends are guiding contemporary Lithuanian art, especially cinema and the video art of the last decade. The artist usually takes the position of an “ethnographer” investigating the “savage” and documenting the dull and poor reality. This artistic practice

can be interpreted as an attempt at self-exotisation, of acting or playing the masquerade for the Western Other. The films of Lithuanian film director Šarūnas Bartas provide good examples of this self-exotisation. All his films, starting from *The Corridor* (1994) to the last one *Seven Invisible Men* (2005), depict marginal characters, who rarely speak, but spend their time drinking, smoking, and staring at the wall. The films create the image of “Soviet existentialism” and in this way provide the answer to the question: “What does the Western Other want from us?” It is no coincidence that foreign companies are the co-producers of these films: they function as commodities produced precisely for the Western market. The same tendency can be observed in contemporary Lithuanian video art: the examples are the videos by Gintaras Makarevičius (*Naikai* 2002) and Eglė Rakauskaitė (*Gariūnai* 2002). The ideology of self-exotisation becomes obscene in the case of Lithuanian artist Evaldas Jansas’ work *Family video: Eastern* (Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius, 2004). In this video the artist films his relatives meeting for Easter Holiday, and portrays them in the “ethnographic” manner as “savages”. Incidentally, one of these relatives saw the exhibition in Vilnius and immediately demanded an end to the screening of the video. As Lithuanian art critic Erika Grigoravičienė pointed out, “the lessons of multiculturalism were learned by our artists... They make the international audience meet Lithuanian marginals. But do they realize that they themselves are becoming the products of political phantasms of Europeanism? Do they analyze the on-going ethnic hierarchization and asymmetry of the European space?” (Grigoravičienė 2005: 19)

While the pervert assumes the role of serving as the object-instrument that fills in the Other’s lack, the hysteric, by contrast, questions the Other, and makes his lack and inconsistency visible. One example is the latest wave of emigration. An emigrant’s point of view can be described as an “error in perspective”, an anamorphic element, which distorts the otherwise well-balanced view of society. Lithuanian artist and author Paulina Pukytė, now living in London, in her texts for a Lithuanian weekly column<sup>1</sup> regularly depicts London from a very specific perspective, that of a foreigner, so that the city looks like a strange, forbidding place full of ridiculous habits, things and rules. Another interesting example of emigration is a recent advertisement of a cell phone card “Ežys” on Lithuanian TV. The advertisement consists of four video clips that depict two guys from the Lithuanian countryside (speaking a funny dialect) wandering around in London. Here we find the same strategy of an anamorphic gaze: anything that we perceive as a trait of “traditional” England, they interpret as proof that London is an awful, weird place.

<sup>1</sup> Weekly *7 Meno dienos* (7 Days of Art), published in Vilnius.

Here we see the same element, the mysterious x, which constitutes the core of national identity in fantasy and has the opposite effect in anxiety: it becomes a symptom of a lack and inconsistency, of failed identification. The same mysterious x, which guarantees and supports imaginary national identity in one case, appears as an “excess” or “lack” in another. This feeling of inconsistency can only be “cured” if we accept the Lacanian definition of anxiety according to which anxiety is a lack of a lack. What causes anxiety is not some specific lack or inconsistency (mysterious x), but the lack of this lack, the impossibility to fix and define a particular national identity. We can say that the function of art is precisely that of questioning any fixed and stable meanings and demonstrating the relational nature of any identity.

One attempt at deconstructing national identity is the work of Lithuanian artist Audrius Novickas. In the installation entitled *Tricolour sets* (CAC, Vilnius, 2005) Novickas reflects on the tricolor flag as a national symbol of Lithuania and on its role in the formation of national identity. How unique is our national identity? The artist provides the answer by collecting the flags that use the same tricolor combination: the installation consists of flags of Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Lithuania, Mali, and Senegal. The reproduction shows that Lithuania is the third country in the world that has officially announced red, green and yellow as colors of its national flag. So if this mysterious x, which grounds our national identity, appears to be a Pan-African peculiarity, may we not consider Kazimieras Pakštas’ idea of moving Lithuania to the island of Madagascar in Africa? Or, more seriously, can we interpret this deconstruction of national identity as a psychotic anxiety, which results in the denial of any identity?

### 3. FEMININE IDENTITIES: BEYOND FANTASY?

The relationship between fantasy and anxiety gets more complicated with gender identities. Gender roles, as well as national roles, are played *for the Other*; this is why before starting an analysis of gender roles we should ask for whom these roles are being enacted. Lacanian psychoanalysis and the feminist critique have shown that the “play of imagination” is always enacted for the gaze of the Other. As Žižek argues, imaginary identification is always subjected to the symbolic; this is why it is not enough to criticize or disclose the feminine masquerade, what the feminist critique usually does. The most important thing is to disclose and define the symbolic Other for whom this masquerade is being enacted. “Behind an extremely ‘feminine’ imaginary figure, we can thus generally discover some kind of masculine, paternal identification: she is enacting fragile femininity, but on the symbolic level she is in fact identified with the paternal gaze, to which she wants to appear

likeable.” (Žižek 1989: 106) Peggy Phelan, too, argues that the image of the woman always serves as a screen for a male fantasy: “The fetishized image of the female star serves as a deeply revealing *screen* for the construction of men’s desire. The image of the woman displays not the subjectivity of the woman who is seen, but rather the constituent forces of desire of the man who wants to see her.” (Phelan 1996: 26)

When considering how gender images are constructed in Eastern Europe we should raise the same question: Who is this Other for whom women are enacting their roles? Paradoxically, in the domain of the symbolic power we can find two different Others: the Other of the former Soviet totalitarian regime, when women were represented as political agents (“a worker”, “a farmer”), and the Other of the capitalist regime, when women are represented as objects of desire. Of course, the former, the totalitarian Other is denied and neglected in the current political discourse. At the same time any attempt to represent women as political agents is neglected as well. This might be one of the reasons why feminism never became a political priority in Lithuania. The effort to restore the nation state with the traditional values of nation, homeland and family prevented the otherwise “natural” processes of emancipation. Paradoxically enough, this totalitarian Other, though politically outdated and invalid, still has an influence in the economy of visibility. Thus the lack of the political representation of femininity signals that the gaze of the totalitarian Other persists in the economy of visibility and regulates what may be seen and what should remain invisible. Of course, the preference goes to the Other of the capitalist consuming fetishistic gaze: this gaze is omnipresent not only because of old patriarchal traditions, but also because in post-Soviet Lithuania the capitalist regime is conceived as the only possible way of political and social existence, as a “natural” condition.

How to evade this double Gaze? How to invent new forms of visibility? The problem here is that anyone speaking about non-patriarchal, non-sexist and non-totalitarian feminine representations should act like Mata Hari and invent the double strategy of non-visibility. Yet even this double-strategy would not guarantee adequate representation. On the one hand, some feminists insist on making visible some otherwise “invisible” groups: ethnic or sexual minorities, disabled or aging people. But does this “visibility” make them into real political agents? On the other hand, we can imagine some resistance to the fetishist consuming gaze. But does this refusal to be visible changes the real constellation of power? In this context it is worthwhile to consider Peggy Phelan’s concept of “active vanishing”, a kind of compromise between the condition of being unmarked and the condition of being represented: “I am not suggesting that continued invisibility is the ‘proper’ political agenda for the disenfranchised, but rather that the binary between

the power of visibility and the impotence of invisibility is falsifying. There is real power in remaining unmarked; and there are serious limitations to visual representation as a political goal.” (Phelan 1996: 6) Phelan speaks about “active vanishing” or “active disappearance”, which should be understood as a resistance to existing forms of representation: “I am speaking here of an active vanishing, a deliberate and conscious refusal to take the payoff of visibility. For the moment, active disappearance usually requires at least some recognition of what and who is not there to be effective.” (Phelan 1996: 19)

The concept of “double vanishing” can also be interpreted in terms of fantasy and anxiety. The intrinsic problem of the feminist critique is that it neglects any positive fantasy about femininity; instead it manifests itself as a constant anxiety about inadequate representation. This anxiety, as we demonstrated apropos of national identity, can acquire different forms. We can speak about perverse anxiety when the feminine subject enacts fragile femininity for the paternal gaze; hysterical anxiety, by contrast, expresses the fundamental lack in the Other, which incites the feeling of discomfort and confusion about which Other should be taken into account. Another possible reaction is the psychotic denial of one’s own gender identity, the refusal to construct a positive fantasy about feminine subjectivity.

Some contemporary artworks, especially those created by female artists, provide interesting examples of this psychotic denial of femininity. Let us consider the performance/video *In Fat* (1998) by a Lithuanian artist Eglė Rakauskaitė.<sup>2</sup> In the performance the artist used her own body as a substance and submerged herself into the warm fat to remain there for eight hours. The fat, getting cooler, became opaque and gradually concealed the artist’s body, making it invisible. The process was filmed with three cameras and presented on three TV monitors, which were turned away from the spectator in such a way that one could see not the image itself, but only the reflection of the image, mirrored from the glass surface. In this way the gaze of the spectator was interrupted and broken up, as if trying to evade the standardized types of representation.

The process of letting the fat get cool and opaque can be interpreted as a psychotic refusal to pose for the consuming gaze of the Other. At the same time it is a refusal to present the body in terms of social or political agency. This body recalls the Body without Organs, described by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari introduced the notion of the Body without Organs as a counter-strategy to the psychoanalytic interpretation of the body, which subjects it to different forms of organization: fantasy, signification, subjectification. As Elisabeth Grosz puts it, “Unlike psychoanalysis, (...) the Body without Organs invokes a conception of the body that

<sup>2</sup> See: [www.rakauskaite.com](http://www.rakauskaite.com)

is disinvested of fantasy, images, projections, representations, a body without a psychical or secret interior, without internal cohesion and latent significance". (Grosz 1994: 169) For Deleuze and Guattari the Body without Organs means the possibility of the body, which is "free" from any sexual, visual, political appropriations. "The Body without Organs is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole." (Deleuze, Guattari, 2004: 168) In this context the impersonal body of Rakauskaitė's performance could be interpreted as the Body without Organs: it has neither function nor signification, and is incapable of feeling any pleasure or inciting any fantasy.

Kristina Inčiūraitė<sup>3</sup>, another Lithuanian female artist who regularly deals with gender issues, provides an interesting example of "active disappearance". Her videos usually depict an empty stage, which metonymically refers to the empty stage of representation. What images are eliminated from the stage, which is also the stage of our imagination? A woman's voice heard from the backstage suggests that it is precisely a woman's body that is not shown, though the heroines of all Inčiūraitė's videos are women talking about their femininity. This femininity always stands in conflict with the public space: the videos depict the coming-of-age teenagers in a children's foster home (*Spinsters*, 2003), the teenagers constrained by musical education (*Rehearsal*, 2002), beautiful women of the vanishing town of Visaginas who have nowhere to go in their leisure time (*Leisure*, 2003), policewomen feeling awkward about their femininity (*Order*, 2004). But the most important thing in these videos is that although they speak about femininity, female protagonists are invisible – we can only hear their voices in the backstage. This strategy of psychotic denial is the guiding one in all Inčiūraitė's videos: women become invisible as objects of scopic desire but they are heard as social and political agents.

The refusal to participate in the scopic regime is the main theme in the videos *Bathhouse* (2003) and *Lakes* (2004). Here the contrast between the video's topic (woman as an erotic image in film industry) and the visual presentation becomes almost comical. For example, the video *Bathhouse* is shot in an old Austrian bathhouse, a place where bodies are usually naked. The video consists of the monologues of female students from an Austrian acting school on the experience of acting, on nakedness and the erotic, monologues that are accompanied by still images of the bathhouse. In this video the female subjects vanish from our sight and become invisible, but they are heard as subjects, having political and social weight. Another video project *Lakes* portrays the actress Vaiva Mainelytė who recollects the filming of one of the most famous Lithuanian erotic scenes. Ironically, her narration is illustrated

<sup>3</sup> [www.inciuraite.lt](http://www.inciuraite.lt)

by a static image of a frozen lake (actually the scene took place in the same lake, only in summer time). These videos reveal that sexual fantasy fails if not backed up by standard images, the customary visual codes.

Thus we can say that fantasy and anxiety operate as two different modes of constructing our identities and dealing with the lack of the Other. The artworks we have discussed express some recent changes in the political imagery, causing the anxiety and confusion about the Other for whom the subject has to perform his or her role. The analysis of the phenomenon of anxiety reveals the relativity of liberation and emancipation: they only replace one system of symbolic power by another. The issue of national or gender identity is thus totally dependent on this symbolic framework: in other words, the question of identity can be formulated in this way: "Tell me who is your Other and I will tell who you are".

## REFERENCES:

1. Deleuze G., Guattari F. 2004. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London, New York: Continuum.
2. Grigoravičienė E. 2005. "Contemporary Art in Lithuania: Topics and Technologies". In: *Emisija 2004 – ŠMC*. Vilnius: Šiuolaikinio meno centras.
3. Grosz E. 1994. "A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics". In: *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy*. Eds. C. V. Boundas and D. Olkowski. New York, London: Routledge.
4. Lacan J. 1962. *Le séminaire, Livre X: L'angoisse*, <http://www.lacan.com/seminars1b.htm>
5. Laclau E., Mouffe Ch. 1985. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.
6. Laclau E. 1996. "Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony". *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*. Ed. Chantal Mouffe. New York, London: Routledge.
7. Phelan P. 1996. *Unmarked: The Politics of the Performance*. London, New York: Routledge.
8. Salecl R. 2000. "Something Where There Should be Nothing: On War and Anxiety", *Cabinet Magazine Online*, issue 1, winter 2000/01, <http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/1/nothing.php>
9. Žižek S. 1989. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London, New York: Verso.
10. Žižek S. 2001. *On Belief*, London and New York: Routledge.
11. Žižek S., Butler R. (ed.), Stephens S. (ed.). 2005. *Interrogating the Real*, London, New York: Continuum.
12. Žižek S., Butler R. (ed.), Stephens S. (ed.). 2006. *The Universal Exception*, London, New York: Continuum.



Audronė Žukauskaitė

PASAKYK, KAS TAVO KITAS, IR AŠ PASAKYSIU, KAS TU ESI.  
ĮSIVAIZDUOJAMOS TAPATYBĖS LIETUVOS MENE

## SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje analizuojama, kaip politiniai pokyčiai, vykstantys Rytų Europoje, keičia politinę vaizduotę. Aptardami politinę vaizduotę turime analizuoti ne tik įsivaizduojamas identifikacijas, t.y. įsivaizduojamus vaidmenis, bet ir aptarti šiuos vaidmenis simboliniame lygmenyje, nustatyti, kas yra tas Kitas, kuriam subjektas vaidina vieną ar kitą vaidmenį. Straipsnyje analizuojami fantazijos ir nerimo fenomenai, kurie nurodo skirtingas reakcijas į klausimą: „ko nori Kitas“? Fantazija dažniausiai siūlo ir konstruoja tam tikrą laikiną įsivaizduojamą identifikaciją; nerimas, priešingai, šią identifikaciją panaikina. Santykis tarp fantazijos ir nerimo tampa akivaizdus aptariant tokius reiškinius kaip multikultūralizmas ir fundamentalizmo baimė: multikultūralizmas remiasi fantazijomis, kurias susikuriame apie kitą; tačiau vos tik tas kitas ima neatitikti mūsų lūkesčių, šios fantazijos paradoksaliai sužlunga ir akimirksniu virsta fundamentalizmo baime. Tą pačią struktūrą galime aptikti nagrinėdami ir subjekto santykius su vadinamuoju didžiuoju Kitu: didžiojo Kito akivaizdoje subjektas patiria nerimą ir prisiima vienokią ar kitokią poziciją (perversyvus nerimas, isteriškas nerimas, psichotinis nerimas). Santykis tarp fantazijos ir nerimo tampa ypač komplikotas aptariant seksualinės giminės tapatybes. Svarbu nustatyti, į kurį Kitą yra atsižvelgiama, konstruojant vienokias ar kitokias seksualinės giminės tapatybes. Straipsnyje teigiama, jog simbolinės galios plotmėje galima išskirti du Kitus: Kitą, priklausančią sovietiniam totalitariniam režimui, kuris moteris priverstinai reprezentavo kaip politinius veikėjus, ir kapitalistinio režimo Kitą, kuris moteris reprezentuoja kaip geismo objektus. Šis dvigubas stebėjimo ir pajungimo mechanizmas sukelia moteriškojo subjekto psichotinį nerimą, kuris verčia atmesti ir paneigti fantazijas apie moteriškąją tapatybę.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: tautinė tapatybė, giminės (*gender*) tapatybė, įsivaizduojama identifikacija, simbolinė identifikacija, Kitas.

Violeta Davoliūtė

## THE POPULAR MOVEMENT AND POSTMODERNISM. REFLECTIONS ON THE CINEMA OF SAJŪDIS

*Toronto universitetas / University of Toronto*  
*Lyginamosios literatūros centras / Centre for Comparative Literature*  
93 Charles St. Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
*El. Paštas / e-mail: viola.davoliute@utoronto.ca*

Eyewitness chronicles of the popular movement, from the first stirrings of open protest in 1987 to the reestablishment of Lithuanian independence in 1991, highlight the intense desire among people at that time to learn the “true” history of their nation. Commentators spoke of the “return of memory” – a revolution in historical consciousness – as a key factor enabling the political changes that engulfed the Soviet bloc.<sup>1</sup>

The popular movement was indeed a liminal phenomenon that ushered a fundamentally new reality into Lithuanian politics, society and culture. But while the metaphor of memory’s “return” is highly evocative, it provides little insight into the nature of the condition that is logically but inadequately described as “post-Soviet.” The dichotomy of “true” memory’s return as against the “false” memory that reigned under Soviet repression glosses over the extensive work involved in the transformation of historical consciousness. Moreover, it artificially isolates events in Eastern Europe from analogous processes that occurred elsewhere in Europe and internationally. As an alternative, this article examines the popular movement as the Lithu-

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Erich Senn’s *Lithuania Awakening* (1991) provides an accessible account that underscores the importance of the historical question to the politics of the times.

anian expression of a broader cultural phenomenon; namely, the postmodern transformation of the subject's relation to the past.

Especially in view of Lithuania's integration into the European cultural framework, the label of "post-Soviet" is increasingly anachronistic and may even pose an obstacle to the understanding of current cultural developments. Framing the popular movement not simply as an anti-Soviet political campaign, but as a deep and enduring cultural reaction to (Soviet) modernization, allows for a consideration of the ongoing influence of attitudes formed during that period, now that Lithuania, along with all other European states, faces the challenges of modernization and globalization.

A community's orientation towards the past is shaped by many sources, with television and film playing an especially influential role. Petras Abukevičius's documentary film *Lithuania between Past and Future* was widely broadcast and is representative of developments in Lithuanian cinema at that time. An analysis of this film in the context of the cinematic practice in European and American cinema suggests that during the late eighties Lithuania generated its own version of the politics and aesthetics of postmodernism.

#### POSTMODERNISM EAST AND WEST

Although Fredric Jameson was writing in 1984 about the cultural logic of "late capitalism," his celebrated description of postmodernism could serve as an accurate characterization of developments in Eastern Europe just a few years later (Jameson 1984). According to the Slovenian philosopher Aleš Erjavec, the condition of "late socialism" was quintessentially postmodern in that it marked the appearance of a vantage point on the project of modernity, in this case Soviet modernity, as a discrete episode of history with a beginning and, more importantly, with an end (Erjavec 2003). Indeed, the finality with which Soviet modernity came crashing to a close underscores the postmodern character of cultural processes in Eastern Europe even more clearly than in the West.

Abstracting from Jameson's by now familiar argument there are three moments of the postmodern orientation to the past each of which emanates from the "shallowness" of the new "culture of the simulacrum." In the first instance, one finds a popular disenchantment with the grand narratives of modernity and the enlightenment like those of reason, progress and emancipation. This disenchantment leads to a loss of "historicity," or the sense of how one's individual or collective past determines the present. For Jameson, "the past as 'referent' finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts" (Jameson 1984: 64). Ultimately, this loss of the sense of history provokes a wave of nostalgia in the postmodern individual, an intense desire to access the lost historical real.

In terms of cultural productions, the result of this loss of historicity, combined with a growing desire for the historical real, is a paradoxical proliferation of historical images that bear an ever less satisfying relationship to the past. As Anton Kaes said about West German postwar cinema and the representation of that country's past, "the sheer mass of historical images transmitted by today's media weakens the link between public memory and personal experience. The past is in danger of becoming a rapidly expanding collection of images, easily retrievable but isolated from time and space, available in an eternal present by pushing a button on the remote control" (Kaes 1989: 198).

But while the technological proliferation of images in the "capitalist" West was at the heart of the postmodern disenchantment with narrative meaning, a similar and even more pronounced effect was engendered by the ideological manipulation of representation and the suppression of history in the "socialist" East. "Long before Western video technology began to produce an overabundance of authentic images about an absent reality," writes the Russian philosopher Mikhail Epstein, "this problem was already being solved by our ideology, press and statistics, which would calculate crops that would never be harvested to the hundredths of a percentage point." For Epstein, postmodernism in Eastern Europe is essentially a reaction to utopianism, and postmodern culture reflects a fundamental reworking of the relationship between the present and the past. In Soviet utopian modernism, the "future was thought to be definite, attainable and realizable; in other words, it was given the attributes of the past. Postmodernism, with its aversion to utopias, inverted the signs and reached for the past, but in doing so, gave it the attributes of the future" (Epstein 1995: 330).

#### THE POPULAR MOVEMENT AND THE PAST

Epstein's characterization of postmodern culture as an act of reaching for the past as the new future neatly captures a crucial element of the politics of Sajūdis, which sought explicitly to turn back the historical clock to the point where the Baltic States were illegally annexed to the Soviet Union. This movement of "back to the future" found its expression not only in the politics and legislation of restoration, but also in all kinds of cultural productions and practices.

It would be a profound understatement to describe the reception of Soviet ideology and historiography in the Baltics during the 1980s as disenchantment with the grand narratives of modernist emancipation. The incredible surge of the desire for the historical real in Lithuania was marked first of all by an outright rejection of blatant Soviet omissions and distortions of

the past. Gorbachev's apparent hope that a measure of *glasnost* might serve to legitimate the regime backfired miserably in the Baltics, as any one query led to another, unwinding the ball of implausible theories and narratives concerning the "willing incorporation" of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union.

Commemorations of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on August 23 became a touchstone for the public revision of history. The first open demonstrations were held in 1987. Led by a handful of dissidents a few hundred demonstrators gathered around St. Anne's Church in Vilnius.<sup>2</sup> Just two years later, on August 23, 1989, an estimated 1.8 million people, one quarter of the entire population in the region, forged a human chain 650 kilometers long from Vilnius to Riga to Tallinn. It would be hard to imagine a greater demonstration of Jameson's "historicity" in terms of a public sense of how the past determines the present than the mass commemorations in Lithuania from 1987 onwards. Clearly, a profound reorientation towards the past and its significance had occurred, but how exactly to account for the emergence of this new historicism remains a challenge.

The circulation of previously censored or suppressed texts certainly played an essential role. Prominent examples include Aldolfas Šapoka's *History of Lithuania* (1935), long confined to the *spetsfond* of forbidden texts, or the secret protocols to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, well known in the West but suppressed in the Soviet Union, and especially the memoirs of Lithuanian deportees and other victims of the Soviet regime, such as the diaries of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė. Yet while the disclosure of such previously censored information about the past was necessary, it was probably not in itself sufficient to generate a genuine revolution in public life.

Virgilijus Čepaitis uttered a telling phrase in his address to the crowd gathered in Vilnius for the 1988 commemoration of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact: "We must know our history, and not just know it but remember that each of us is there and participating" (cited in Senn 1991: 141). For Čepaitis, as well as for the crowd of tens of thousands gathered for the commemoration, the past is understood as a place that one actually inhabits in the present. It is not simply an object for contemplation but an arena for individual and collective action. This typically postmodern conflation of the past and present, and the mixing of the dimensions of time and space, invokes an orientation towards the past that is best described as ritualistic.

Contemporary observers frequently commented on the ritualistic character of the politics of Sajūdis. Vytautas Kavolis wrote in 1991 of how the rituals of the popular movement revealed a "Baroque popular culture" and a "theatrical cast of mind": "...only in Lithuania are there processions in the

<sup>2</sup> Senn cites an eyewitness who estimates 300 people in the church, 500 demonstrators on the square, and some 2000 passersby who manifested interest in varying degrees (Senn 1991: 38).

tens of thousands carrying crosses across the country to the Hill of Crosses.... Only in Lithuania can young men in the guise of medieval knights march in to defend the Parliament building against Soviet tanks.... This occurs against a backdrop of almost daily celebrations of all conceivable memorial days, numerous re-inaugurations of destroyed monuments, reburials of exhumed bodies of Siberian deportees” (Kavolis 1991: 57-58).

In the cultural context of postmodernism, where every attempt to provide a comprehensive account of history falls short, the historical rituals of Sąjūdis were highly effective. They imbued the referent of the past with a palpable reality and a concrete, meaningful relationship to the present that could inform and drive political action. Instead of attempting to rewrite history the emphasis was on investing specific symbols and sites with a deeply felt, personal meaning through commemorative rituals. In a different context, the French historian Pierre Nora described the emergence of such places over time as *lieux de mémoire*, the historical significance of which is measured in both cognitive and, more importantly, affective dimensions (Pierre 1989: 7-25).

These sites of memory fed the popular desire for the historical real not by offering an alternative grand narrative or interpretation of the past, but by incarnating specific facts or experiences of the past. Places associated either with Lithuania’s medieval grandeur or its modern experience of victimhood were given the greatest prominence. Such sites represented history in the form of a trace, serving as indexical pointers to a glorious and/or traumatic past, to the absent cause of a present seething with emotion.

The *sodyba* or farmstead of Vilius Orvidas (1952-1992) is perhaps the clearest manifestation of a *lieu de mémoire* and postmodern sensibility in Lithuania. This estate-museum is located in Western Lithuania (Samogitia) not far from the town of Salantai. Orvidas, on his own initiative, started gathering stones and trees from villages destroyed during the times of forced urbanization and arranging them into free-flowing art forms.

The place can be interpreted as a sanctuary, a museum, or as an absurdist archive of a lost way of life. He hung trees upside down, carved stones, and arranged relics to make the farmstead into a kind of installation. Word of this place quickly spread among individuals who were discontent or looking for alternatives to the mainstream: from intellectuals to drug addicts, from monks to artists, it became a meeting place, a destination for pilgrimages. His estate became a monument to the trauma of collectivization and the destruction of the traditional way of life.

The example of Orvidas’s museum shows that such sites of memory may indeed have been exploited for political purposes during the popular movement, but they emerged independently of one another during the period of so-

called stagnation under Brezhnev. They represent a broad cultural phenomenon influenced by a profound sense of disenchantment with the present and a postmodern nostalgia for a lost past felt to be the only source of authenticity.

## POSTMODERN DOCUMENTARY WEST AND EAST

According to Linda Williams, an editor of *Film Quarterly*, the postmodern documentary in Europe and America adopted several techniques to address the prevalent skepticism towards the truth-value of visual images of the past. Throughout the 1980s the “loss of the referent” and the sense of disconnect with the past reinforced a desire for the real, leading to an outpouring of historical films with a more reflexive, self-critical stance towards the “reality” of their representations than before. Far from abandoning the pursuit of truth, she says, the postmodern documentary represents an engagement with “a newer, more contingent” truth that “still operates as the receding horizon of the documentary tradition” (Williams 1993: 11).

For Williams, rather than representing in a realistic fashion the events of the past postmodern cinema is concerned with new ways of historicizing the past, of representing the present in relation to the past: “Each of these documentaries digs towards an impossible archeology... The past events examined in these films are not offered as complete, totalizable, apprehensible. They are fragments, pieces of the past invoked by memory, not unitary representable truths but, as Freud once referred to the psychic mechanism of memory, a palimpsest” (Williams 1993: 15). In this manner, one might describe the postmodern documentary as a film focused on memory rather than history.

As such, the postmodern documentary deals with history in the traumatic sense of traces of the past, signs that are inaccessible to the traditional *cinema vérité* that aims to capture action as it simply “happens” before the camera. Thus, the emphasis in postmodern documentary is on the recording the testimony of witness/actors as they perform onscreen the act of recollecting the past. The “moment of truth” in the postmodern documentary thus occurs when the past “repeats” itself on screen in the act of recollection: “We thus see the power of the past not simply by dramatizing it, or reenacting it, or talking about it obsessively... but finally by finding its traces, in repetitions and resistances, in the present. It is thus the contextualization of the present with the past that is the most effective representational strategy” (Williams 1993: 15).

The very title of Petras Abukevičius’s documentary captures the essence of the political culture of Sajūdis as geared towards the generation of a specific vector of historical consciousness. As Williams said of the postmodern



documentary, the focus of *Lithuania between Past and Future* is not to present an objective account of the past or engage in polemics with established Soviet interpretations, but rather to contextualize the present in relation to specific, highly symbolic and emotionally evocative relics that can be seen, touched and filmed in the present.

The centerpiece of this strategy lies in how the film represents some of the central political rituals of the era, like the procession of crosses and the reconsecration of the remains of deportees brought back from Siberia. There is no explanation of what is happening on screen, no discussion of the illegality of the deportation or of the inhuman conditions under which the prisoners lived and died. Instead, scenes of people digging up graves in Siberia and the return of coffins draped in Lithuanian flags at the airport in Vilnius are framed by an extended discussion by the ethnographer Norbertas Vėlius on the mythology and culture of the ancient Lithuanians.

Pointing to the murals in the Department of Philology at Vilnius University as a visual guide, he notes that “our ancestors” have lived on the same territory for over four thousand years,” and how the symbol of the world as a tree symbolizes the rootedness of the Lithuanian nation to the earth. As the film shows crowds of people watching a procession of coffins to Cathedral Square for re-consecration in the church, the sacred heart of Lithuania where the ancient dukes and kings are buried, Vėlius comments “Lithuanians are inseparable from their land. Even after death they return to their homeland... And they could never understand a person who voluntarily chooses to live outside of their home country.” This ritual of return is thus contextualized not so much in terms of a contingent historico-political argument, but in the framework of the most ancient and deeply rooted Baltic myths and beliefs.

The film goes on to visit several sites of memory, places imbued with historical significance that testify to some event of the past that continues to hold meaning to the present. It gives a high profile to Orvidas’s estate, which the narrator describes as a “museum of the absurd” that is simultaneously the very face of contemporary Lithuanian culture: “neglected and fading, but paradoxically alive, producing new meanings in the form of relics sacralized and made into symbols. Looked at from the outside it’s just a dump, a chaos of garbage, the ruins of buildings, accidental sculptures, household utensils and stones, but as an ensemble it acquires a unique meaning crystallized into organic forms in which life becomes ritual and ritual becomes life.”

Perhaps most importantly, the film reflects a poetics typical of Lithuanian culture of the times, which emphasizes the special relationship between the individual and the native landscape, which views the landscape as a repository of memory, and which scours this landscape for the “little dia-

monds” or *deimančiukai*, that is, individuals who have a “special relationship” to the land and thus are the carriers of its memory.

The vocabulary of “little diamonds” was developed by Motiejus Valančius who encouraged Lithuanian intellectuals to search for unique individuals among simple country folk preserving in their memory what was best in the Lithuanian nation. His call was taken up by other Lithuanian documentary filmmakers during the late eighties such as Henrikas Šablevičius, Kornelijus Matuzevičius, and Vytautas V. Landsbergis.

This cinematic aesthetics was clearly influenced by Lithuanian literature, which is also strongly focused on the special relationship between the individual and his or her native land, memory embodied in the landscape, and the traces of historical trauma like scars on the native landscape.

In the opening scene the viewer is treated to a spectacular panorama of the Kuronian Spit (*Kuršių Nerija*) and its sprawling sand dunes by the lagoon. The location itself is highly symbolic – the spit is a natural reserve and the lagoon itself is dying out, shrinking, its flora and fauna becoming extinct. The landscape recalls the lot of the Kuronians, a Baltic tribe assimilated by the Germans in the Middle Ages, who left their toponyms behind as a historical trace of their culture. The figure of an elderly woman emerges from the dunes, walking and singing a folk song – her motion is slow, peaceful, the landscape is beautiful. She then turns towards the camera and, pointing at the sand hills, bears witnesses to the disappearance of olden settlements: “I am standing here now... and here is the second Nida covered by sand... over there is first Nida... and I still live in the third Nida. Everything is under the sand... I am the last survivor who still remembers a bit.”

This motif continues in the film with an interview with Justinas Mikutis (1922-1988). His discourse in the film is fragmentary and more expressive than logical: “I came out alive from the grave. I was alive in the grave... And I was suffering there I cannot describe how. I do not want to present myself as a martyr, but you know, I could not breathe there...” He says that he did not want “to go with the Russians or Prussians,” that “I would rather be a Lithuanian pea.” For the popular movement Mikutis was a sort of Socratic figure or an itinerant sage, a friend of poets and intellectuals who considered him the very incarnation of Lithuanian history because he hid from the Soviet authorities in the basement of his house for 27 years.

This image of the old woman testifying the extinction of Lithuanian villages, or of the small man telling how he hid from the authorities, evokes the prototype of the historical actor who is abandoned and crushed by history. Left alone to bear historical injustice, she or he mistrusts and negates historical discourse and relies only on his or her own memory. Romualdas Granauskas provides a well-known literary example of such a character in

*Homestead Under a Maple Tree*, where an old woman named Veronika testifies the extinction of her native village. She is the last survivor, and the names and life stories of her former neighbors exist only in her memory. The story of her life and of the lives of her neighbors does not fit into large historical narratives and thus can live only in the stories that she tells to herself.

The visual narrative of the film charts a path from the Kuronian peninsula to Vilnius, interviewing witnesses and surveying various other sites of memory such as Orvidas's estate, the Hill of Crosses, a typical country farm, and then returns to the Kuronian peninsula. This circularity makes the viewing of the film into a ritual act, taking the viewer on a symbolic pilgrimage across the landscape of Lithuania, charged with symbolic meaning, and in this process the film transforms the landscape into a sacramental realm.

#### LEGACY OF THE POPULAR MOVEMENT

As a mirror of the times and as an expression in its own right of the cultural climate of the popular movement *Lithuania between Past and Future* suggests a mixed legacy for current cultural developments. The film was a response to a postmodern nostalgia for the historically real; it imbued certain sites of memory with a deep, affective resonance through the enactment and representation of powerful political rituals. It undoubtedly helped to mobilize Lithuanians to act in concert to reject the Soviet rule, but it also reinforced a model of national identity based on a sense of collective trauma and deep attachment to the sacred soil of Lithuania.

This highly affective mode of self-understanding may prove to be somewhat out of step with the globalizing impetus of European integration. If one interprets the postmodernism of late socialism as a reaction against the perverse model of Soviet modernization, then it follows that the cultural legacy of this period could work against the modernizing demands of labor mobility, multiculturalism and free market exchange now emanating from Brussels.

Having rejected one model and embraced the new European model of modernization Lithuanians are forced to confront again many of same challenges to their traditional ethnic identity and way of life. While there are no clear-cut answers to these challenges, it may be helpful to realize that the situation in the "post-socialist" space is not fundamentally different from that elsewhere in Europe. Postmodernism is indeed a pan-European reaction to the global processes of modernization, and while its cultural expression may differ from place to place many of the same essential features are in evidence.

*Received 2007 02 24*

*Accepted 2007 03 15*

## REFERENCES

1. Epstein, M. 1995. *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture*. Trans., Intro. Anesa Miller-Pogacar, Amherst: Massachusetts University Press.
2. Erjavec, A. (ed.) 2003. *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition: Politicized Art under Late Socialism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
3. Jameson, F. 1984. "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", *New Left Review* 146 (July-August).
4. Kavolis, V. 1991. "The Second Lithuanian Revival: Culture as Performance." *Lituanus* 37:2.
5. Kaes, A. 1989. *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
5. Pierre, N. 1989. "Between Memory and History: Les lieux de mémoire." *Representations* 26 (Spring), pp. 7-25.
6. Senn, A. E. 1991. *Lithuania Awakening*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
7. Williams, 1993. "Mirrors Without Memories: Truth, History and the New Documentary." *Film Quarterly* 46.3, pp. 9-21.

Violeta Davoliūtė  
 SAJŪDŽIO JUDĖJIMAS IR POSTMODERNIZMAS.  
 SAMPROTAVIMAI APIE SAJŪDŽIO LAIKŲ KINĄ

## SANTRAUKA

Sovietiniam režimui besipriešinantis Sąjūdžio judėjimas, ėmęs ryškėti Lietuvos politiniame gyvenime devintojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje, turėjo ir platesnio kultūrinio fenomeno – postmodernizmo – bruožų. Petro Abukevičiaus dokumentinis filmas „Lietuva tarp praeities ir ateities“ atskleidžia pokyčius, žyminčius Lietuvos visuomenės orientaciją į praeitį, ir šiuo požiūriu gali būti lyginamas su postmoderniu kinu, kuriamu Vakarų Europoje ir Amerikoje. Postmodernios tendencijos, pastebimos Sąjūdžio judėjime, turi rimtų pasekmių ir dabartiniams Lietuvos integracijos į Europą procesams. Atmetusi sovietinį modernizacijos modelį ir siekianti naujo, europietiško modelio įgyvendinimo, Lietuva priversta susidurti su tais pačiais pavojais, kurie išskyla tradicinei etninei tapatybei bei gyvenimo būdui. Kadangi nėra aiškių atsakymų kaip šių pavojų būtų galima išvengti, verta įsisąmoninti, kad „posocialistinės“ erdvės situacija nėra iš esmės skirtinga nuo kitų Europos šalių situacijos. Postmodernizmas yra paneuropietiška reakcija į globalius modernizacijos procesus, ir nors jo kultūrinė raiška skiriasi, bendri bruožai taip pat yra akivaizdūs.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: postmodernizmas, praeities reprezentavimas, Sąjūdis, dokumentinis kinas.

Jūratė Baranova

## POSTMODERNISM IN LITHUANIAN LITERATURE

*Vilniaus pedagoginis universitetas / Vilnius Pedagogical University*  
*Socialinių mokslų fakultetas / Faculty of Social Sciences*  
*Filosofijos katedra / Department of Philosophy*  
*Ševčenkos g. 31–228, LT- 03111 Vilnius*  
*El. paštas / e-mail: juratebaranova@yahoo.com*

### RECENT LITHUANIAN NOVELS AND THE 'EVERYTHING IS ALLOWED' CRITERION

Does postmodern literature exist in Lithuania? Or do we just use the concept of 'postmodernism' and apply it to literature? If we only use the concept, with what purpose? If, however, postmodernism exists as a phenomenon in Lithuanian literature, and not only as a concept, how to find and recognize it? How to explain it descriptively? It is not so easy to answer this question. It seems it must also exist as a phenomenon because when interviewing Tomas Venclova, Jurga Ivanauskaitė asked for his opinion about postmodern literature as a phenomenon and wondered if he, like many others in Lithuania, negated it categorically. Negation should perhaps be understood as criticism here, not as negation of existence. Ivanauskaitė did not explain in any detail what postmodern literature specifically was. Venclova answered that he did not negate it categorically, but could not say he liked it very much. We will know what is valuable in postmodernism, according to him, when we have some distance in time. Neither did he specify, which particular literary works by Lithuanian authors should be attributed to postmodernism. He

only shared with us a criterion to recognize it. He referred to Leszek Kolakowski's claim that postmodern literature seems to be written according to the principle of "everything is allowed" (from shocking scenes of sex or horror to kitsch as a principle and that use of texts that was called plagiarism in the past).<sup>1</sup> I feel that this definition is not descriptive but judgmental, as it implies some negative moral commitment of postmodern literature: kitsch, tastelessness, plagiarism and horror. I try to recall any work by Lithuanian authors that would fit the definition offered by Kolakowski. It seems my knowledge of Lithuanian literature is too poor. Nothing comes to my mind immediately. Therefore, I have to do some research. I read once again some recent Lithuanian novels: *Three Seconds of Heaven* (*Trys sekundės dangaus*) and *Doriforė* by Sigitas Parulskis, *The Green* (*Žali*) by Marius Ivaškevičius, *Erosion* (*Erozija*) by Gintaras Grajauskas, *The Life of Sundzu in the Sacred City of Vilnius* (*Sundzu gyvenimas šventajame Vilniaus mieste*) by Ričardas Gavelis, *Placebo* (*Placebas*) by Jurga Ivanauskaitė and *A Name in the Dark* (*Vardas tamsoje*) by Renata Šerelytė. I have not yet reread Herkus Kunčius. I find all kinds of things in these texts, but I do not find any illicit use of borrowed texts. The authors put only their own texts into their novels. I do not find any horror scenes either. Neither is there much eroticism. True, the main character of Parulskis's novel *Three Seconds of Heaven* does not shy away from recalling his erotic escapades. He might have even written them down somewhere in order not to forget this unique experience. He calls it 'The Catalogue' (Parulskis 2002a: 159-177). The hero finds solace in these reminiscences, for he lives in an environment where men "love only their parachutes". Yet these reminiscences are neither perverted nor horrible, it is mere heterosexual eroticism. And the main character loves only Maria, though she remains an unattainable dream. The dose of erotic descriptions is quite modest: from page 159 to page 177. It is all in one place. If you want, you can simply skip the pages. This is not Henry Miller and even less so George Bataille. Eroticism in George Bataille's novel *Story of the Eye* (translated into Lithuanian) is really shocking. It merges with death and dirt. A sample of Bataille: "wearing only knickers, she collapsed in a pool of liquid manure under the bellies of the grunting swine. Once the door was shut, Simone had me fuck her again and again in front of that door, with her arse in the mud, under a fine drizzle of rain, while Sir Edmund tossed off." (Bataille 1979: 46). I could not retell the story of Bataille's novel. It would be a too difficult psychologically. I am not a fan of novels of this kind. I have read it for professional reasons, as I am impressed with Bataille's philosophical meditations in his book *Inner Experience* in which there are no such transgressions. Yet the intrigue in his novels develops by the principle: "what else could we trans-

<sup>1</sup> See Venclova, T. "Agnostikas su tikėjimo potencialu," (Ivanauskaitė 2005: 283).



gress?" The criterion for being 'postmodernist' suggested by Kolakowski and Venclova is suitable for this novel. Bataille followed the principle 'everything is allowed' thus destroying all moral taboos he came across. However, there is not an inkling of Bataille's conception in the novels by the Lithuanian authors I have mentioned. The narrator of Parulskis's novel, a paratrooper, if compared with the characters in Bataille's novel, looks like a meek Catholic longing for his beloved Maria and God, waking up from time to time on his prayer-book and recollecting his sins. And he does not even intend to joke with God. He reflects on his own hovering in some nondescript emptiness, some overwhelming gap. This is existentialist literature. Searching for the meaning of everything that exists. Similar to what Camus or Sartre wrote. I think it is far away from postmodernism thus defined.

#### POSTMODERN WRITING – FREE WRITING?

In order to find postmodernism in Lithuanian literature we have to define its criteria differently. Let us try another start. Aušra Jurgutienė has taken a different path. She has followed Umberto Eco who interprets a postmodern literary work as an open text. In such a novel the story loses its center and the linear development of the plot. It can be read from anywhere because the world it creates has no boundaries and no natural laws of change. It reveals no meaning. Such a novel exhibits scattered images not related by any tight semantic ties. The aesthetic effect comes from an incoherent mosaic (Jurgutienė 2005: 4). The author writes because 'it writes' this way for him. And this kind of writing is what a novel is. I like this definition because I find it easier to understand how to assess *Ulysses* by James Joyce. Usually critics classify Joyce's *Ulysses* as a modern novel; nonetheless, according to the criteria suggested by Jurgutienė and Eco, this novel may be classified also as postmodern. Its semantic labyrinth intrigues the reader, but it does not let him or her to admire a coherent story and the clear motivation of its characters in any way. The main character in Parulskis's novel *Doriforė*, a writer, returns in his thoughts to this novel by Joyce. The writer even quotes it, somewhat confusingly for the reader and the critic. Perhaps Parulskis follows Joyce and creates a postmodern novel? Again, I doubt this hypothesis. First of all, this quotation from Joyce's novel comes to the main character's mind quite naturally. After all, he is a writer: he reads what others have written. Perhaps he has read this phrase before going to get his car fixed at a car service. This is why he has something to do here: he does not do any small talk, but meditates on Joyce. He has something to think about. He prepares for writing. He does not waste time. Of course, a writer keeps thinking of something all the time. Of course, he might want to write a novel similar to

Joyce's. It would be fine if the novel received such an international recognition. But even if this is what the narrator dreams about, this still does not mean that Parulskis, as the writer of this novel, is following the same way. The story of the novel is sufficiently clear and coherent. And, I would say, self-ironic. It can be summarized. The writer as a character wants to write a novel because this is his job. And also he needs money, as he has nothing to live on. Eager to insure himself from vicissitudes of fate he persistently visits his publisher in order to reach an agreement on the theme, because he wants to write a bestseller. But everything goes wrong: he is stuck. He seems to love his wife, but another woman intrudes in his life. He is not very active in that love triangle, and when both women leave him he understands that he loves his wife. Finally it emerges that his new lover Diana is also a writer who has written a better novel than he has, and the publisher chooses her, not the hero of our story. He is terribly disappointed and tries to commit suicide. Unsuccessfully: he is found out by a passer-by collecting horseshit. And here, perhaps, the most self-ironic subtext of the novel is hidden. Neither intellectual irony, nor sophistication, nor women have helped him, as he was saved by blind coincidence. This is a novel about how impossible it is to write a novel. It is impossible to love, impossible even to die at one's own will. This is a story about the risk of the total defeat of a writer as a writer and as a man. The story is coherent, and the book is written in short chapters. Parulskis, already as a writer, does not fall into writing as such, does not take pleasure in the possibilities opened by it. The novel is constructed. Its size is quite modest. It does not become larger only because the writer likes to submerge into writing as it happens with Joyce's *Ulysses* or *The Post Card* by Jacques Derrida. Such mosaic writing allows combining philosophical and literary discourses, writing out all associations undulating around the chosen subject. *Placebo* by Ivanauskaitė tends more towards this style of postmodern writing. For instance, all the stories created by cat Basete could be considered as inclusions of mosaic writing here.

Of course, we could wonder whether it is not an unexpected turn in the plot when the main hero of Parulskis's novel, *Doriforė*, leaves unexpectedly for Crete with Diana in order to bring back the remains of his brother who has suddenly turned up but already killed himself. Perhaps it is. But this 'unexpectedness' is possible only when a coherent plot pushes forward the events. I think it is coherent in this novel. As far as this aspect is concerned, a novel by Gintaras Grajauskas, *Heresy (Erezija)*, too, could not be classified as postmodern. True, three plot lines intertwine here. They are cut and arranged one following another, but the main action of the novel also moves forward very clearly. Two hitmen wait for the writer at his home. They are seemingly intent to kill him for some written text. One hitman, who is not too

literate, starts reading the text because he has nothing else to do: he wants to understand the reason for the commissioned murder. He understands neither the text nor the reason. The parallel slashed pieces are presumably the writer's manuscripts, difficult to understand for the unsophisticated reader, the hitman. But the reader cannot fully understand them either. Both the mythology of Lithuanian nation and a Franciscan monk's journey to Lithuania are told in an original way. But what to expect from a writer who does not come near his home for quite a long while? Perhaps he was drunk and wrote a load of rubbish. The plot of the novel is constructed in a very sophisticated manner, but everything turns around the writer's poor writing. When the writer appears he looks quite miserable – much like the hitmen, as they no longer know whether they should kill him. Their boss has disappeared. One of them is particularly funny. He thinks and speaks in the slang of a character from Lithuanian comedy show "Bicycle News," a newsagent from Šiauliai. Another hitman is more intellectual. While the hitmen wait the writer does not even suspect anything and probably drinks alcohol with abandon, because when he comes home he is not very stable on his legs and not very surprised finding them there. However, a conversation with them allows the writer to understand the value of his writing more profoundly, the meaning and purpose of the craft he has chosen. He admits having written poor texts, but begs to judge the situation reasonably: nobody kills people for such things. Everything ends self-ironically, like in *Dorofoře*: despite very unfavorable circumstances, both characters, the writers, stay alive. Others die. In one novel it is a brother, in another, two hitmen who were supposed to kill the writer. The novel *Heresy* is quite funny to read. Its form is lovely and modest. I do not dare to say that Grajauskas just throws at us some unrelated impressions. *The Green* by Marius Ivaškevičius seems much less coherent and more mosaic than the novel by Grajauskas.

#### POSTMODERNISM AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL MYTHS

Perhaps *The Green* by Ivaškevičius, like *Heresy* by Grajauskas, could be dubbed as a postmodern novel according to another criterion: postmodern writing is a writing that demystifies established myths and interprets national symbols in a new and playful way. Such postmodern writing is exemplified by the texts of Kostas Ostrauskas. Particularly memorable is his talented deconstruction of *The Drowned Maiden* (*Paskenduolė*) by Antanas Vienuolis. I read the play long ago, perhaps more than ten years ago. It was then that the first time I understood what postmodern writing was really about. Veronika wades into the lake. She will drown herself, but then she suddenly stops and changes her mind, turns back and joins the Vilnius University.

When one plays with a text created by somebody else – whether it is a literary fiction or a narrated myth – one can truly create something that could be called postmodernism. However, if one starts playing the same game with life, ‘making art’ from somebody’s painful wounds left by history,<sup>2</sup> still uncured and undeserved, then one creates not a postmodern game, but a cynical text, perhaps unexpectedly so to the author as well. I do not want to identify postmodernism with cynicism, out of respect for the former. A text as a fact of culture is something different from facts of life. A postmodern game, in my view, is playing with texts and cultural signs. In this sense the novel by Grajauskas, *Heresy*, meets the criteria of a postmodern game. It treats with irony both the writer’s profession and the omnipotence of reading. It plays with myths that were discussed and described by others long ago. Ivaškevičius fails in this. By seemingly reconstructing he deconstructs historical reality. In fact, in Ivaškevičius’s novel *The Green* nobody talks about reality either. When reading the novel we do not have an impression that he talks about live, real historical characters. Made-up characters do not have real experiences. The plot remind of a constructed computer game. I have borrowed this idea from Jolanta Kryževičienė, a presenter of the radio program “Culture Week”. I complained to her that I was slightly bored when reading *The Green*.<sup>3</sup> I do not find real heroes, I do not grasp the main idea; I do not find irony or self-irony. I do not understand what the characters talk about with their lovers. There seem to be many erotic locutions but they are planted into the text like bits of lard into a ‘false rabbit’<sup>4</sup>: they never quite merge into the general fabric of events. Sometimes it is difficult to understand what is happening here, what the heroes are talking about and who shoots whom. I do not raise the issue of whether this incoherence is the author’s postmodern objective or whether this has just happened in the process of writing. Incoherence can sometimes be simply a sign of an unsuccessful novel. The novel will not become more suggestive simply because we label it with a plummy word ‘postmodern’.

A much more subtle example of a free interpretation of the past is an earlier book by Ivaškevičius, *Story from the Cloud* (*Istorija nuo debesies*, 1998). Here he plays not so much with reality as with historical Lithuanian legends and myths. Constantly changing perspectives of life and death create quite a lyrical mood of the Lithuanian nation wandering imperceptible roads between life and death, always in the rain. Being in the rain (*lietus*) becomes the

<sup>2</sup> A reference to the post-war period when Lithuanian partisans moved to forests (hence they were called ‘the green’) to fight against the Soviet regime, – translator’s note.

<sup>3</sup> My judgment might be also determined by gender. I have never met a woman who liked the novel. Yet male readers accept it better. They manage to admire the author’s literary talent and quality of the text.

<sup>4</sup> A Lithuanian dish made of minced meat and baked in the oven, – translator’s note.

very name of Lithuania (*Lietuva*). The mist spread by rain envelops historical realities (Mindaugas, Mažvydas, the story of Kražiai); Vilnius is like a stone washed by rain. The historical narrator himself speaks from the transcendental perspective of a cloud. It is not very important to whom exactly the text is addressed: "Hello again, my lost children, so carefully treading along the paths of the past and looking for a way to the cloud" (Ivaškevičius 1998: 174). Perhaps the dead and still living generations are meeting in the rain? However, this historical narrative is inserted into another story in which the real character, the writer, lives. Similarly to *Heresy* by Grajauskas stories from different levels are intertwined and inserted into each other. Yet the real space of the beginning of these stories remains recognizable: there is one privileged character – the writer creating these new tales. Since the novel by Ivaškevičius was published earlier than that of Grajauskas, it is possible that Grajauskas has borrowed the idea from Ivaškevičius. However, if the writer of Grajauskas begs the reader only for sympathy with his human frailty, the writer of Ivaškevičius evokes one's sympathy with the first words of the book. It emerges that everything that will be written here will be his letter addressed to his diseased granny Petronėlė; this will be like a continuation of stories "from the cloud" that she used to tell him as a child. The grandmother used to fall asleep without having finished the stories she made up. The stories inserted into the novel are simply the ending of that unfinished story. "Death does not have an address," the main narrator says. Thus the reader becomes the addressee of these stories. The plot of the novel acquires the value of a recognizable experience. In this novel Ivaškevičius creates a pagan-like community in which the living and the dead are united; he deletes the border between life and death: "Death brought him to the very end of the pier and put his foot into water. And the voice deep inside told him that it feels good to die. It is not scary to die; it is the same as to stand at the end of the pier and, having immersed one's foot into water, moan how cold water is. But if you jump in you will be embraced. Cool and well, nobody would banish you back to the shore" (Ivaškevičius 1998: 50). I would not risk saying that in this novel Ivaškevičius only plays with signs. In a symbolic and encoded form he talks of fundamental things.

However, Ivaškevičius's most successful attempt to give a new life to the past is probably his play *Madagascar* (*Madagaskaras*, 2004). Some characters of the play, like in *The Green*, have historical prototypes, people who really lived. In this very good-humored play<sup>5</sup> they become unavoidably parodied. Yet the play does not become cynical because of this; it rather conveys a tender interest in remarkable personalities who lived here long ago (like the granny Petronėlė in *Story from the Cloud*). Geographer and dreamer Ka-

<sup>5</sup> A successful production by director Rimas Tuminas and exhilarating acting.

zimieras Pakštas becomes Pokštas here, and the exalted poet Salė reminds of Salomėja Neris. A creator's ideas or attitudes no longer belong only to him/her, but become facts of common culture. In new interpretations they can acquire new meanings. Life marked with blood, historical injustice and violent death is something quite different. Some things are funny, while others are not. *Madagascar* makes us laugh – because of its use of old-fashioned Lithuanian idiom that sounds peculiar today, because of the paradoxically idealist characters who are in search for themselves in abstract projects, and because of dialogues woven by the talented author. Salė is exalted as she is waiting for an exceptional, unexpected love of her life: “I don't know when and where he will climb into me. Maybe he is already standing behind the door. Maybe he is still walking on the street. Maybe he is not born yet. Maybe he is dying in the most dismal hospital and is suffering horribly” (Ivaškevičius 2004: 30). The episode depicting the meeting of Salė and Pokštas is very playful. Salė with her friend Milė wade in the sea and see Pokštas. Salė is excited: maybe it's him. Milė, Salė's friend, says to Pokštas: “Salė feels uncomfortable when a well-made man grinds his attention into her”. Pokštas answers: “I like to stand facing the sea”. Milė is not put off: “In this case, it's the same. Monsieur, you are shamelessly facing Salė. And when you are staring at her like this, Salė feels as if she is naked”. The statesman Pokštas is not groping for words: “It would be utterly unforgivable if Lithuania, just out of prudence, turns away from the sea again” (Ivaškevičius 2004: 33). In *Madagascar* Ivaškevičius cajoles the reader, and this is mere pop, while *The Green* is real literature, as a correspondent of mine tries to convince me, critic and writer himself. To my mind, the attractiveness of a literary work should not belittle its value. Ivaškevičius finds a new form through which history can reach contemporary readers and viewers. Such writing, even if outrageous, does not let the past rot on its own and remain just a fact mentioned in history and literature textbooks. In this it is, of course, postmodern. However, as much as it engages us or makes us laugh, it is still nourished by reality. Thus, even if it is postmodern, it is not postmodern to the end.

#### SELF-IRONY AND CHANGING PARAMETERS OF TIME AND SPACE

We will persevere with our search for the criteria of a postmodern novel. We will try to approach it from still another perspective. I now read Ona Bartkutė's review of *Heresy* by Grajauskas, “(Her)etic Erotics of Erosion” (“(Er)etiška erozijos erotica”) in which she tries to define what is intrigue in a postmodern literary work. The intrigue is manifested “only through playful self-reflection of an ironic and self-ironic narrator changing the parameters of space and time, varying points of view and roles” (Bartkutė 2005: 4).



The novel by Grajauskas can indeed be called postmodern according to this conception of postmodern literature. What is more, such a definition reveals a wider perspective on Lithuanian postmodern literature extending beyond *Heresy* by Grajauskas.

Narrators of Gavelis and Ivanauskaitė were the first to vary points of view. Even to alternate between life and death. Both in *The Life of Sundzu in the Sacred City of Vilnius* and in *Placebo* the narrator exposes events from the otherworldly perspective. *Placebo* does not flinch from looking at what is happening from a cat's point of view. We see that the narrator Julija is quite ironic. She perceives the world light-heartedly. Yet the target of her irony is not herself but others. She did not like women but wanted to be liked by men. And, obviously, she liked herself most of all. Even when dead she felt superior, as a lover, to her only friend Rita. The narrator is strong and confident. In the other world, she does not feel as if she has lost her life like heroes-writers of *Doriforė* or *Heresy*. In *Placebo* Ivanauskaitė does not yet create a self-ironic narrator. However, she uses the trope of irony very widely. Self-irony appears in her next novel, *Fortress of Sleeping Butterflies*. The plot of this novel is coherent and well stringed. Points of time and space do not change here. The main character Monika is self-ironic. She and other characters (the prostitutes, in particular) are quite forthright.

The self-ironic narrator has been gaining ground in recent Lithuanian literature. Such a narrator directs the point of his or her irony primarily at himself/herself. This is perhaps the supreme form of irony. It is not novelists who have developed the trope of self-irony, but writers in 'minor genres': poets (e.g. poet Marčėnas) and personal essayists. The genre was initiated by Rolandas Rastauskas and Herkus Kunčius, and continued by Sigitas Geda, Sigitas Parulskis, Giedra Radvilavičiūtė, Alfonsas Andriuskevičius and Gintaras Grajauskas. Then various authors of the cultural weekly *Šiaurės Atėnai* joined in: Giedrė Kazlauskaitė, Danutė Kalinauskaitė and Darius Klibavičius. When they start writing novels personal essayists bring to the genre their experience of self-ironic writing (Parulskis, Kunčius, Grajauskas). If a postmodernist in literature is defined as self-ironically caricaturing not only his/her personal but also professional basis – the writing itself, then we can find quite a lot of such postmodernist authors. For instance, the protagonist of Marčėnas's poems feels the existential indeterminacy of his actions, hovering between spaces and worlds of different status. The poet really comes out to be "<...> neither devil nor a cuckoo/ neither worker nor intellectual,/ nor Danish Prince, both straight and bent,/ not knowing whether to be or not to be," as he writes in the poem *Creations (Kūrybos)* (Marčėnas 2005: 36). In his review of the latest book by Marčėnas, *Worlds (Pasauliai)*, poet and literary critic Marcelijus Martinaitis cannot avoid the word 'postmo-



dern'. Martinaitis says that Marčėnas's poetry can be linked both to classical canons and to postmodernism. Marčėnas is bold in his predilection for 'old fashioned' rhymes, and he even refers to his book *Worlds* as 'lyrics', using the word that has already disappeared from postmodern usage. "However, he somehow sloughs off these canons when he goes out to the street, to countryside, to Mežiuskės, to midnight solitude and his *vers libre* transforms into mundane language" (Martinaitis 2005: 4). Martinaitis tends to consider as postmodern Marčėnas' use of varied means of expression as well as his light, elegant rhyming, which allows covering a wide spectrum of moods, subjects and nuances without stumbling on formalities.

If we follow the criterion for understanding postmodernism as suggested by Martinaitis, then talented personal essayists also have the ability to describe the mundane lightly and elegantly by covering a spectrum of most diverse subjects and nuances. In this sense they could also be called postmodernists. Yet I would add the aforementioned talent for self-irony as an additional necessary criterion. The author parodies not only himself, but also the writer's profession in general.

"I do not write novels because I am weak and old," says the narrator of Rastauskas's essay "Cloaca of the Sentence" ("Sakinio kloaka"). Such a modest attitude of the narrator is imposing: "I am a squaddie of the sentence. The sentence is my freedom and my salvation. The corps of the text is my blight" (Rastauskas 2004: 177). However, the essayist awards the power of global judgment to his hero; he even asks himself how he imagines contemporary Lithuanian novel. And he answers: "It is a schizophrenic kind of literature. At best, it is possible to create a novel about writing a novel, i.e. about how it is impossible to write a novel" (Rastauskas 2004: 175). As we have noticed, Parulskis has written a novel about how it is impossible to write a novel (*Doriforė*). Grajauskas has also created a parody novel about a bad writer as seen by a hitman: "'he will be buried with orchestra, while we will be laid under somewhere at the hedge; nobody will ever find our grave,' Keisas was enjoying his drunken rage. 'And what has he done so far? What has he done in his life? Nothing! He has written a lot of rubbish and he cannot understand the stuff himself'" (Grajauskas 2005: 221).

Literary critics diagnosing the crisis of contemporary Lithuanian novel can relax and have a rest. Narrators created by the writers diagnose themselves the crisis of their own writing, the inability to write a good novel, and the fundamental redundancy of their profession in general. They even uncover graver diagnoses. For instance, the narrator of Parulskis's essay "Acting but Redundant" ("Veikiantis, bet nereikalingas"), does not say as the subject of Rastauskas's essays does that the writer is schizophrenic, yet he diagnoses something else: 'confabulation'. This is a psychopathological phenomenon of fil-

ling the gaps of memory with made-up events and fantasies. Someone with the psychopathology inserts things he/she has imagined into the narration of past events. This is particularly characteristic of patients with the Korsakov syndrome. Since 'filling the gaps of memory' is a trait of all writers the narrator draws the conclusion that all writers have this condition (Parulskis 2002b: 57).

However, another problem arises here. Although contemporary Lithuanian essay writing is based on self-irony as the main trope, personal essay writing avoids the shifting of space and time. Surely, in this case the text, like any other text, is written and thus is constructed. Yet this is done from a personal perspective, a real perspective experienced by the author. And it is even not important what kinds of events are narrated in an essayist's text: whether they are real facts or fantasies and moments of experience that have never happened. The narrator of an essay always seems to be very real and alive. He/she attracts the reader precisely because of his/her reality.

#### IS AN ESSAYIST A POSTMODERNIST?

I will answer at once: essay writing can be both postmodern and belong to experience. I call the latter personal. Rastauskas, Radvilavičiūtė, Andriuškevičius and Parulskis are personal essayists, although they insert literary and cultural allusions into the fabric of their text woven from experience.

Examples of such interweaving are evident in an essay by Alfonsas Andriuškevičius, "Life with Japanese Women" ("Gyvenimas su japonėmis"), and by Radvilavičiūtė, "Attraction of the Text" ("Teksto trauka"). The narrator of Andriuškevičius' essay "Life with Japanese Women" reads a diary written by a lady from the Japanese Emperor's palace and plays an identification game with its heroes: not with the woman Idzumi Sikibu, but with one of her lovers, prince Atsumiti. The narrator identifies himself with him absolutely, then partially and finally dissociates: he wonders what he, imagining his life with Idzumi Sikibu, would do himself, what he could do partially and what he could not do at all. It so happens that wishing to disguise himself Atsumiti travels to Idzumi in a female palanquin. At this juncture the narrator protests, stating unambiguously "no way!" and reveals his masculine nature opposed to any transvestism. The narrator is also very skeptical of the prince's idea of asking his new lover, acknowledging her superior poetic talent, to write a farewell poem to his former lover. I like the narrator's confession that to him the prince's habit of signing other people's verses with his own name is disgusting; as he expresses this himself with ironic elegance, "complete non-egocentricity" (Andriuškevičius 2004: 139). The narrator's humane reliability is thus demonstrated. The narrator then reveals certain aspects of his own idea of masculine honor as he opposes

the prince's design to house his wife and lover under one roof, moving the latter for one day into his palace. The narrator is appalled by the prince's lies when he tells his wife that he has moved his lover to the palace so that she could serve him, combing his hair, and suggests his wife also to find some work for her. Thus, at the end of the essay the reader sees the prince making a complete fool of himself as his wife leaves him, and after a year his lover Idzumi Sikibu marries, for some reason, someone else. We do not know why, the narrator does not go into details. However, the prince's loss is a gain for the narrator. Having lived in a virtual space for a year, intruding as 'an unwanted third' into intimate interpersonal relationships of Idzumi Sikibu and prince Atsumiti, the narrator, as a character of Herkus Kunčius would say, "has enriched his soul": understood something about himself and revealed this to his reader. Besides, he also hit also another target: the reader was comfortably and charmingly introduced into a new cultural experience, that of a life-style in the Japanese court at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. However, I would not call this essay postmodern because experience outweighs everything else; the reader does not lose the traces of the 'live narrator'. Such traces do not disappear in Radvilavičiūtė's essay "Attraction of the Text" either. All the criteria of suggestiveness that the author used in her text: retrospective return to memory, closeness to the reader's experience, the reader's total immersion in the text and the ability to reveal banal things in a new way, are linked to her real life experiences. One gets the impression that the text is attached to the narrator's life like a dreamy insect attracted to a source of light. The source of light is the narrator's talented grasp of life and her experience, her ability to see and interpret that experience in a unique way, without any premeditated criteria. Criteria seem to come later. Quotations of texts by other authors dissolve in the newly created fabric of the text. At the end of the essay the narrator covers the imaginary lens of the TV camera with honey brought from her relative Emilija. She has learned the code – covering an orifice in a tree to which a secret has been told – from a movie from Far East. Yet this cultural code does not become very significant. Neither do the texts by E. Tode, H. Murakami or R.M. Rilke. The reader is attracted by the narrator's inner struggle with the mystery of life and death, her tremor in the search of the fifth criterion and her fear of public spaces. The essay testifies that an attractively created text eliminates all other texts infused by the narrator. This is why this essay by Radvilavičiūtė is not postmodern either. Radvilavičiūtė does not become a postmodernist even when the narrator of her essay "Hello" ("Sveika") starts thinking directly of postmodernism. The narrator is thinking about the dream she has just dreamt, remembers Baudrillard who wrote that dreams were produced, and makes a playful conclusion: "somebody must have planted this one for me". Then the

chain of associations develops along the trajectory suggested by Baudrillard: "One can only guess as to who and why. He also wrote that wherever we were, we lived in a universe sometimes similar to the original, and illusion became impossible because reality was impossible" (Radvilavičiūtė 2004: 131). In the same essay the narrator reflects on the relationship between reality and illusion at some length. She analyses M. McLuhan's book *Understanding Media* where the author considers the differences between a citizen and a nomad. She agrees with his argument: "Art has been replaced by a dream. Happiness, by pleasure. Achievements, by éclat. Truth as passion, by passion as truth. Drama, by pornography. Heterosexuality, by the polymorphous. And literature, by journalism. Damned postmodernism has wrecked it all" (Radvilavičiūtė 2004: 121). Postmodernism as a phenomenon seems to be the object of reflection here, but the essay does not become postmodern because of this as it is written from a perspective of distance dictated by experience. Likewise Rastauskas in the essay "New York from a Foot's Flight View" ("Niujorkas iš kojos skrydžio") from his book *Another World* (*Kitas pasaulis*) weaves in long fragments of another text into his essay (one by Czesław Miłosz dedicated to Allen Ginsburg and translated by Rastauskas). However, reality has not disappeared. The narrator is recognizable; he is all 'here' at this particular moment, in New York.

In his postmodern essays, Kunčius, on the contrary, places the narrator beyond the perspective of time and space. He is not contextual, but rather floats amid different images of culture. I think this disappearance of the context of time and space is one of characteristics of postmodern art. In her book *Anamorphoses: Non-Fundamental Problems of Philosophy* (*Anamorfozės: nepamatinės filosofijos problemos*), Audronė Žukauskaitė says much the same by referring to contemporary research into postmodernism: "in postmodern reality all events lack definite time and place, their true essence" (Žukauskaitė 2005: 58). Kunčius creates postmodern essays because in contrast to personal essayists listed here he not so much interweaves texts with reality, but constructs such essays exclusively from cultural allusions. He parodies the very possibility of the narrator's real identity. In postmodern essays the 'experiential' narrator withdraws. Cultural allusions, references to others' texts and play gradually take over.

Postmodernists distance themselves from the past and so-called life because they enjoy playing with allusions generated by the signs of diverse cultures. Kunčius plays with these symbols so perfectly that in this playfulness he surpasses classical postmodernism as he has also distanced himself from the latter. He plays already with postmodernism. His essay "My Adopted Stepsister Manuela Gretkowska" ("Mano įdukrinta netikra sesuo Manuela Gretkowska") offers the image of Umberto Eco behind bars in some Eastern

European prison together with hardened recidivists. The narrator thinks that he could really test the universality of semiotics here. He suggests imagining that Umberto Eco says to his cellmates: "There are seven hundred names of God". And then starts listing them all. "How long would they let him doing this?" asks the narrator. "At which name would they interrupt him? Besides, how would they interrupt him?" The narrator is interested in whether Umberto Eco would survive in this extreme situation. He enjoys these mental experiments – as if he was only thinking, not living. I come to the conclusion: Herkus Kunčius is the only of aforementioned writers who has created the postmodern essay genre. All other personal essayists can be considered postmodern only according to the concept of writing suggested by Martinaitis, with self-irony added by me. I would, however, separate writing based on experience from postmodern writing. Writing based on experience is modern. Postmodernism has changed the relationship between reality (no matter what kind of reality, subjective or objective) and the text that describes it. Postmodernism has emerged from the idea that a sign, in this case a word or a text, can no longer say anything about reality. It no longer speaks of truth as a reflection of reality (even as refracted by imagination). We see the world only through perspectives of shadows and illusions cast by it. Thus postmodern writers play with the signs of language and symbols of culture. Texts refer to other texts and multiply each other. Irony, grotesque and caricature are called for. Eclectics and collage are welcome. Simulacra displace experience. This is the game played in some works by Herkus Kunčius. It is here that the perspectives of time and space get changed; disordered, plotless writing appears; characters emerge whose prototypes are not to be sought in reality. One can also notice similar tendencies in Gavelis' novels and in Ivanauskaitė's *Placebo*. On the criterion as I have defined it here, I could not refer even to aforementioned personal essayists and writers as postmodern. I would rather call them modernists or 'followers of experience'. Postmodern culture is oriented towards a secondary entity – the text – not to reality. Meanwhile authors discussed here are cautiously and carefully to slide towards reality, not illusion.

I find similar insights in the book *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction* (ed. Edmund J. Smyth, 1991). Modernist literature, it is argued there, was based on a realist representation of subjectivity, with the world constructed either within consciousness or with the help of consciousness. It was focused on the stream of consciousness, experience of time and memory, and the influence of the unconscious on conscious experiences. Modern writers were Proust, Joyce and Woolf. Modern literature was based on the premise that literature still represented something: some flashes of existence (Woolf), reflex memory (Proust) or epiphanic moments of insight (Joyce). Umberto

Eco introduced the concept of 'the open work'. The openness of the work is the fundamental ambiguity of artistic message. Eco thinks that this is a constant in all works of art of all times. He considers the two novels by Joyce: *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* as well as Kafka's works as perfect examples of 'the open work'. Kafka uses symbols: trial, castle, waiting, passing sentence, metamorphosis and torture, not to be understood literally, that create an indefinite message, open to new reactions and reflections. Joyce's *Ulysses* eliminates the one-directional flow of time in the coherent space, while in *Finnegans Wake* he has created an endless cosmos from the ambiguity of words (see: Eco 1989: 9-11).

Modernism seems not to have fully parted with the past. Yet when we pass from modernism to postmodernism the concept of artistic space as a constructed world changes. For modernists it is the subject who creates the world; for postmodernists, it is the language. However, the language no longer represents anything. It feeds on, experiments and plays with itself. Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, a typical example of a postmodern novel, and *Ulysses* are still assigned to modernist literature by some critics. Modernist subjective writing can create a double context in which an episode might appear both as a fragment and as a meaningful part of a written text. A narrative connects scattered fragments of experience into the total whole. Postmodernism disrupts the perception that events are embedded in common time and turns it into 'the present of the past'. It does this with irony. Old forms become parody and pastiche. We see this also in the play of Herkus Kunčius *Matas* recently staged by the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre. In postmodernism subjectivity is replaced by a certain cosmic point of view. Modern literature comprises various pluralist views, but they are synthesized and controlled by one privileged interpreter. Writing based on experience by the essayists discussed here shows this very clearly. In postmodern literature, by contrast, independent pluralist discourses coexist. Pluralism of contexts is fragmented. One can notice that Western literary theorists have made use of the philosophers' insights in defining the criteria of the postmodern work of art. They are impressed by the idea of the disintegration of a coherent overall narrative as introduced by Jean-François Lyotard (Mephram 1991: 145). To summarize, a work of modern fiction creates a single world with numerous interpretations, while a postmodern work speaks of many unrelated worlds. To my mind, the personal essay is a genre close to modern literature.

#### KUNČIUS: A POSTMODERN ABSURD NOVEL

Herkus Kunčius transfers the experience of postmodern essay writing not only to his plays, but also to his novels. More than ten years ago I reviewed a



book by five authors, *Lithuanian Shift: Essays on Culture, Politics and Society* (ed. Almantas Samalavičius, 1994), published in English. Kunčius was one of the five. I wrote in the review: “The lyrical hero of H. Kunčius is, as usual, very pleasant and, for some reason differently from writings by this author in Lithuanian, he plays very little with erotic paradoxes. He is focused on the search for experiences of an authentic world. ‘I am happy to exist – to be... I like this,’ such would be the hero’s philosophical explanation to those who would not understand this purposeless wandering at the point x in the world just with a cigarette between his lips and his father’s old unbuttoned coat. I would like to follow him because he frees himself from the tiring tension of the demanding, goal-setting world <...>. H. Kunčius’s hero is free: the present is boring to him, but history opens as a space of a possible play of imagination still in hand. ‘Sometimes I am a soldier in the battle of Verdun, sometimes I am an astrologist or aristocrat in a prestigious, yet bourgeois, salon of Paris,’ he says. That hero of H. Kunčius is also somewhat even happy: he does not suffer; he is not torn by contradictions. It is not he who gets mad; the surrounding world gets mad. He only observes it with his sober gaze of a connoisseur who knows his worth. The statement “absurdity, madness and stupidity simply thrive here” should be applied to the world in general. If we want to stretch H. Kunčius to the general idea of ‘Lithuanian shift,’ we could say: look what postmodernist Lithuanian essay writing is like” (Baranova 1995: 41).

Many years have passed since. Kunčius is an exceptionally productive writer: he has published a collection of essayist prose *The Mirth of the Full Moon* (*Pilnaties linksmybės*, 1999), *My Struggle Bambino* (*Mano kova Bambino*), novels: *Past Continuous Time* (*Būtasis dažninis kartas*, 1998), *Ashes in a Hoof of an Ass* (*Pelenai asilo kanopoje*, 2001, written in 1996), *Brain Dressing* (*Smegenų padažas*, 2001, written in 1997-1998), *Excursion Casa Matta* (*Ekskursija: Casa Matta*, 2001, written in 1998), *The Tumulus of Cocks* (*Gaidžių milžinkapis*, 2004). Some novels, *The Ground Will Always Give a Shelter* (*Ir dugnas visada priglaus*, 1996), *Matka Pitka* (1998) and *Not to Spare Dushanski* (*Nepagailėti Dušanskio*, 2004)<sup>6</sup> were published by the *Metai* magazine; in 2006 they were published as a book. The play *Studio of Genius* (*Genijaus dirbtuvė*) was staged by the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre. In 2002 his novel *Ornament* (*Ornamentas*) was published. What has remained constant, what has become dated and what novelties have emerged in Kunčius’ prose after all these years? I can say this at once: the charming, carelessly happy, joyous narrator of Kunčius’s essayist prose, after having walked around some of his essays (“Flying Zeppelin II” (“Skraidantis cepelinas II”), “The Glow of the Near North” (“Artimos šiaurės pašvaistė”)), appeared in

<sup>6</sup> The critic Algimantas Bučys has written more exhaustively on this novel by Kunčius – almost in a post-modern manner (i. e. freely, as ‘it writes to him’) (see: Bučys 2006).



the novel *Past Continuous Time* (*Būtasįs dažninis kartas*) and was dropped there. In the following four novels, there is no trace of him. There is no longer any opposition or distance between the joyous narrator who enjoys life and the crazy world. There is only the crazy world left. It is not clear where this narrator, whom many readers have come to like, has disappeared: has he 'died' like Nietzsche's God? Departed for other, better, lands or times? Or simply merged with the stupidity and madness of the external world, seeing no sense in resistance? Dissolved in absurdity? Enjoying absurdity? Perhaps the author has decided to describe the madness of the world to the fullest extent, in order to create a grotesque of total meaninglessness. As the narrator disappears from 'here and now' the novels are woven by using the author's favorite play of changing imaginary historical perspectives. The plot becomes obsolete. The action is driven by pure text. The reader is waiting for some coda or all-explaining and legitimizing end. This is like waiting for Godot. Such writing is not even a deconstruction of meaning, but destruction *par excellence*. It seems to be done not so much by the hand of the author as by the hand of the world. Kunčius lets the madness of the world speak for itself, sure, by strengthening and caricaturizing its voice, revealing what is rough, mordant, meaningless and forbidding in it. Reality has everything in it: Kunčius wrenches out and magnifies some selected aspects of it. Magnified, absurdity becomes easier to recognize. In one of his interviews Kunčius says that he is now more interested in physical and psychological violence than in love. The "naïve sadism" he is writing about is something people experience in daily life; he finds it described in crime news, hears stories from the director of Panevėžys women's jail: for instance, that of a woman who stabbed thirty knife blows into her tiresome husband, apparently without any reason. Kunčius comments: "There is no need to look for some deep motivation of this particular act, for like in my literature life is simply just such. And I am interested in it" (see: Jonušys, Kunčius 2004: 3)

Kunčius' novels seem to meet almost all the criteria of postmodern literature discussed here. The "everything is allowed" criterion is valid, as his writing does not avoid shocking sexual and horror scenes. This also the 'free', relaxed writing for the sake of writing without structuring the text and without creating an intrigue or pseudo-intrigue, as pointed out by Jurgutienė, exemplified by the uproar of preparations for the funeral of Kaštonė the Mare in his novel *Excursion Casa matta*. Finally, ever since the time of his essayist prose Kunčius has enjoyed the play of mixing the perspectives of different historical epochs, times and spaces. He transfers this predilection to his novels. The action of a novel usually takes place not at a particular point in time and space, but only in a text created by the writer. If the narrator ever emerges, alongside the characters of the novel, he is unavoidably ironic and self-ironic.

There is indeed an abundance of ‘traumatic’ grotesque and irony in Kunčius’ ‘absurd’ novels. The story of *Ashes in a Hoof of an Ass* is told from the perspective of an experienced executioner. He considers himself very positive, even sentimental: he loves Marta, he writes modest letters to her. He enjoys life and is intent on self-education. The narrator says: “I have everything I need. When I have a free minute and lie down and read existentialists, I often think about existence. I am interested in this. My horizon is wide; I have time left for self-education without which one cannot live these days” (Kunčius 2001: 10). We can clearly hear the tone of Kunčius’ self-ironic narrator. Yet in this novel, it is precisely the ‘horror scenes’ (in the wording of Venclova) that create the distance of a playful game. For instance, the narrator tortures Marta seeing her no longer as Marta but as a witch. He offers her not love, but forelocks to be hammered into her chest. The torturer says this to his beloved: “This is the stake which will be hammered in and will pierce your sinful heart.” He then describes what is in wait for the girl in detail: “First I will starve you, torture you with thirst; you will suffer in the damp cellar where rats will gnaw you and insects will sting. You will dream of the stake pierced into your heart as salvation. The hangman’s rope will become your most desired bride. The knife of guillotine will become the groom of your dreams.” The narrator recites this in succession and repeatedly hits her with a cane over her wounds. I cannot accuse the writer for nurturing pervert fantasies or cultivating sadomasochist impulses. Unless there has never been a woman in history who was similarly tortured to death and unless the executioner’s profession was not real. Alas, it was not Kunčius who invented it. There have been more scenes of cruelty in the world than Kunčius has described in his novel. Kunčius would perhaps say that though we may abhor such a world, this is how it is. Yet despite these possible parallels this text seems to be written from a cosmic perspective. The writer’s narrator simply reincarnates in the executioner’s mind. He plays with its possible ambiguity. The cosmic perspective and relaxed writing where “everything is allowed” and all boundaries transgressed are the features that are even more prominent in another novel by Kunčius, *The Tumulus of Cocks*. The action is like that in a science fiction movie. During the thaw icicles become very dangerous; when they fall, people die; there is no development of action in time or space. A parody of sadism is recreated here as well: starting a crime investigation inspector Svajūnas Kudriašovas cuts off his female client’s foot. Apparently, in order to make it more similar to the deficiency of her dance partner who has disappeared; it comes out that he has just one foot. The reader looking for some logical connections – why was this necessary – would spend his effort in vain. One could only expect them from a classical crime novel. Svajūnas Kudriašovas as a detective is a peculiar one: he has the Down

syndrome, yet he has graduated a prestigious university and has distinguished himself in intelligence service. Subsequently, discredited for some reason, he was brought back to his homeland and now has a private practice. Thus, there is no coherent plot here. Heroes from various epochs mix here: Duke Oginskis, Virgilijus Pacas and young Čiurlionis. Homosexual relationships thrive. They are treated with irony: “the kiss was damp, but sweet” – this is how the author describes the erotic intimacy between Duke Oginskis and Hetman Pacas. I could not retell the story of the novel: although there is action the story is nonexistent, nothing meaningful or recognizable happens; events are not related through cause-effect chains. I cannot say that reading this novel I experienced the same pleasure as I did with Kunčius’ earlier novel, *Past Continuous Time*, where the narrator is still very close to the author telling his impressions of charmingly ‘doing nothing’ in Paris. As a reader I regret Kunčius’ turn from writing based on experience to postmodern writing. Yet as the author of the present quest I am relieved: thank God, there is at least one real postmodernist in Lithuanian literature. I do not think that postmodern writing is privileged writing. I like writing based on experience, but I understand that it is possible to write in many different ways. Writers do experiments and perhaps do them consciously.

One postmodernist for the entire contemporary Lithuanian literature – is it a lot or very little? Those who do not like postmodernism can be relieved: thank God, only one. Those who admire it may be disappointed. I am happy having found at least one according to the criteria I have used. A researcher who defines them differently would perhaps find more of them. I would agree to call the novel by Gintaras Beresnevičius *Paruzija* (Beresnevičius 2005) postmodern, but I doubt whether it is correct to refer to the first novel (2005) of this productive essayist and religious studies scholar as the first postmodern novel. Not only Kunčius is a postmodern writer; as we have seen, other professional writers have traveled the trajectory of postmodernism before: Gavelis, Ivanauskaitė, Ivaškevičius and Grajauskas. As Sprindytė has pointed out, Kunčius is simply “our most coherent postmodernist”.<sup>7</sup>

Received 2007 03 16

Accepted 2007 03 28

<sup>7</sup> After having written this text and read it at the Šviesa Santara conference in Chicago I found an article by Sprindytė (2002: 37-51). In this article the critic raises the question whether it is possible to use the concept of ‘postmodernism’ to discuss contemporary processes in literature. She deplores the indefinite usage of this concept and yet ends with the discussion of Kunčius as the most coherent postmodernist.

## REFERENCES

1. Andriuškevičius, A. 2004. "Gyvenimas su japonėmis," in Andriuškevičius, A. *Rašymas dūmais*. Vilnius: Apostrofa.
2. Baranova, J. 1995. "Šiek tiek apie "Lietuvišką kaitą" – Lietuva dar nesibaigia ties Lenkijos siena," in *Lietuvos rytas/Mūsų malūnas*, 5/05/1995, No. 104.
3. Bartkutė, O. 2005. "(Er)etiška erosijos erotica," in *Literatūra ir menas*, 22/04/2005.
4. Bataille, G. 1979. *Story of the Eye*. With essays by Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes. Trans. by Joachim Neugroschall. London: Marion Boyars.
5. Beresnevičius, G. 2005. *Paruzija*. Vilnius: Tyto alba.
6. Bučys, A. 2006. "Senovės žydų ir bolševikų "Raštai" H. Kunčiaus tekste", in *Literatūra ir menas*, 19/05/2006-16/06/2006, No. 3096-3100.
7. Eco, U. 1989. *The Open Work*. Trans. by Anna Cancogni. Cambridge, London: Hutchinson Radius.
8. Grajauskas, G. 2005. *Erezija*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos.
9. Ivanauskaitė, J. 2005. *Švelnūs tardymai*. Vilnius: Tyto alba.
10. Ivaškevičius, M. 1998. *Istorija nuo debesies*. Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla.
11. Ivaškevičius, M. 2004. *Madagaskaras*. Vilnius: Apostrofa.
12. Jonušys L., Kunčius H. "Literatūra kaip ideologija. Laimontas Jonušys kalbina rašytoją Herką Kunčių", in *Šiaurės Atėnai*, 5/06/2004, No. 21 (703).
13. Jurgutienė, A. 2005. "Apie rašymą ir Parulskio "Doriforę", in *Literatūra ir menas*, 18/02/2005.
14. Kunčius, H. 2001. "Pelenai asilo kanopoje," in *Pelenai asilo kapopoje. Smegenų padažas. Ekskursija: Casa Matta*. – Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla.
15. Marčėnas, A. 2005. "Kūrybos," in *Pasauliai*. Lyrika. Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla.
16. Martinaitis, M. 2005. "Aidas Marčėnas, kuris pats save sukūrė," in *Literatūra ir menas*, 13/05/2005.
17. Mephram, J. 1991. "Narratives of Postmodernism," in *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, ed. Edmund J. Smyth. – London: B.T. Batsford Ltd.
18. Parulskis, S. 2002a. *Trys sekundės dangaus*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos.
19. Parulskis, S. 2002b. "Veikiantis, bet nereikalingas," in *Nuogi drabužiai*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos.
20. Radvilavičiūtė, G. 2004. "Sveika," in *Suplanuotos akimirkos*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos.
21. Rastauskas, R. 2004. "Sakinio kloaka," in *Kitas pasaulis*. – Vilnius: Apostrofa.
22. Samalavičius, A. (ed.) 1994. *Lithuanian Shift: Essays on Culture, Politics and Society*. Vilnius: Vaidoto Oškinio leidykla.
23. Sprindytė, J. 2002. "Lietuvių proza: krizė ir atsinaujinimas? Lūžio ir pervartų laikas. 1989-2002," in *Darbai ir dienos*, 2002, no. 31.
24. Smyth, E. J. (ed.) 1991. *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*. London: B.T. Batsford Ltd.
24. Žukauskaitė, A. 2005. *Anamorfozės. Nepamatinės filosofijos problemos*. Vilnius: Versus Aureus.

Translated by Agnė Narušytė

Jūratė Baranova  
POSTMODERNIZMAS LIETUVIŲ LITERATŪROJE

## SANTRAUKA

Ar egzistuoja postmodernioji literatūra Lietuvoje? Ar mes tiesiog vartojame tokią sąvoką „postmodernizmas“ ir taikome ją literatūrai? Jei vartojame vien tik sąvoką – kokių tikslų ją vartojame? Jei vis dėlto postmodernizmas lietuvių literatūroje egzistuoja ir kaip reiškiny, o ne vien tik kaip sąvoka, kaip jį aptikti ir atpažinti? Kaip deskriptyviai aprašyti? Straipsnio autorė aptaria įvairias galimas Lietuvos kultūros diskurse susiklosčiusias postmodernizmo literatūroje sampratos variacijas. Tomas Venclova pasiremia Leszeku Kolkowskiu ir sako, kad postmodernioji literatūra rašoma pagal principą „viskas leista“ (nuo šokiruojančių seksualinių ar siaubo scenų, nuo principinio kičo ar neskonybės ligi tokio svetimų tekstų naudojimo, kuris anksčiau buvo vadinamas plagiatu). Autorė reiziumuoja, kad šis apibrėžimas ne deskriptyvus, o vertybinis, nes iš anksto implikuoja neigiamą postmoderniosios literatūros moralinį angažuotumą: kičą, neskonybę, plagiatą ir siaubą. Kita vertus, Aušra Jurgutienė renkasi kitą kelią. Ji seka Umberto Eco, kuris postmodernų kūrinį interpretuoja kaip atvirą tekstą. Tokiame romane pasakojimas praranda centrą ir linijinę siužeto kryptį. Jį galima skaityti nuo bet kurios vietos, nes jame kuriamas pasaulis be ribų ir be įprastų kaitos dėsnių. Jame neat-siveria jokia prasmė. Toks romanas eksponuoja pabirus tvirčiau semantiškai nesuregztus vaizdus. Estetinis efektas pasiekiamas iš nerišlios mozaikos. Trečia vertus, yra sakoma, kad postmodernus rašymas yra rašymas, kuris demistifikuoja nusistovėjusius mitus, kuris naujai ir žaismingai interpretuoja tautinę simboliką. Ketvirta, teigiama, kad postmodernaus kūrinio intriga atsiskleidžianti tik per kaitaliojančio žiūros taškus, keičiančio erdvės ir laiko parametrus bei vaidmenis ironiško ir autoironiško pasakotojo žaismingą autorefleksiją. Autorė peržvelgia šių kriterijų aspektu personaliąją eseistiką ir prieina prie išvados, kad personalieji eseistai yra modernistai, išskyrus Herkų Kunčių. Kunčius savo postmoderniose esė patalpina pasakotoją anapus laiko ir erdvės perspektyvos. Jis nėra kontekstualus, o plūduriuoja tarp skirtingų kultūros įvaizdžių. Autorė mano, kad šis laiko ir erdvės konteksto išnykimas yra vienas iš postmodernaus meno kūrinio bruožų. Be to, ir Kunčiaus romanai leidžia jį kvalifikuoti kaip nuosekliausią šiuolaikinės lietuvių literatūros postmodernistą.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: postmodernizmas, modernizmas, lietuvių literatūra, atviras kūrinys, autoironija.

Renata Dubinskaitė

## THE ARTIST'S ROLES IN LITHUANIAN VIDEO ART IN 1990-2003

*Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas / Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute*  
*Dailėtyros skyrius / Department of Fine Arts Studies*  
*Saltoniškių g. 58*  
*LT-08105 Vilnius*  
*El. paštas / e-mail: renata@cac.lt*

The very first video art pieces appeared in Lithuania only around 1989. In early 1990s there were only two or three video cameras in Vilnius that were shared between artists who were keen to experiment with a new medium, and maybe one or two more in other places of Lithuania. However, by the middle of the decade, more and more painters, sculptors, graphic artists turned to making video art, and ultimately it became the most popular medium in contemporary Lithuanian art. In general, the decade was characterized by an intense search for new areas in art, as if rushing through western contemporary art history and trying all possible means of expression. Nevertheless, for most Lithuanian artists mechanical or digital reproduction turned out to be the most appropriate form for artistic activity. This can be explained by several reasons:

- 1) better accessibility of cameras;
- 2) importance of challenging the boundaries between artistic and non-artistic production (e.g. between moving images in art / in mass media and advertising / in home movies);
- 3) devaluation of the concepts of individual style and art as handicraft;

4) understanding of art as an instrument for research and turning its attention closer to the phenomena of reality.

Even in this narrow field artists use cameras in very different ways, consciously or unconsciously applying different strategies and approaches. In this essay I aim at determining what are the forms and functions that the figure of the author acquires in Lithuanian video art in the 1990s and how this reflects differing conceptions of the subject, of the artist's identity and of attitudes towards representation. These questions are tackled by invoking some contemporary theories centered on the issue of the subject. After doing research into numerous video works of the 1990s I have identified 6 different roles/strategies of the author and I have entitled them metaphorically: Narcissus, Challenger of Senses, Actor, Ethnographer, Contemplator and Dialogist. Most often artists use different strategies in their different works and only in exceptional cases one of these metaphors fits an artist as an accurate label. Nevertheless, the suggested analysis provides a lot of information about contemporary art in Lithuania today.

## NARCISSUS

Analyzing early video works created in isolated situations with the only participant, the artist himself, Rosalinda Krauss claimed that the main driving force of video art was narcissism, because the work related to the specific psychological state of the artist, who communicated only with his double in the monitor (Krauss XXXX: 51). (The analysis was later criticized because of overlooking how important the relations of artists/viewers and provocations of audience were in those works.<sup>1</sup>) Yet no matter how accurate or inaccurate was Krauss' analysis, the term narcissism in its broader sense is still applicable and useful while talking about video art. It is also used in cultural studies and sociological theory to characterize the whole 20th century. For example, according to sociologist Anthony Giddens "narcissism" best describes late modernity in its incessant search of personal identity, its concern with mostly personal matters, such as one's own perfection and authenticity (Giddens 1991: 171). I use the term narcissism to categorize those video works, where the artist observes himself, his own body, makes self-analysis, uses images to articulate and represent what he is, and thus to establish his existence.

As the relation between an image and a body is central to narcissistic art, one is prompted to invoke the Lacanian "mirror stage" theory. The influential theory of Jacques Lacan maintains that mirror identification is

<sup>1</sup> For example in Wagner Anne M. "Performance, Video and the Rhetoric of Presence", *October* 91, Winter 2000.



crucial to the formation of the “I” as a unity,<sup>2</sup> but it also foregrounds the essential split in the subject, because his wholeness is given to him only from the outside, by the gaze of the Other (Lacan 1977: 4). The unity of the “I” is never stable, it has to be recreated again and again. Lacan’s theory explains why self-representation is so important and why so many video artists create artworks centered on themselves. Yet one has to say that the tension between the “I” and its image is even more evident in contemporary Lithuanian photography. In Lithuanian video art self-reflective works usually leave the problem of self-image behind, by concentrating on other problems of the “I”. Narcissus is interested in personal identity in general, which, according to Giddens, is something that has to be constantly created and sustained in self-reflective activity – the “I” that is integrated into the personal biography, the “I” that is used by person in changing contexts (Giddens 1991: 76). The creation of an integral story about oneself is what helps the person to understand and present himself to the others. Lithuanian video art has a few significant diary/autobiographic works. One of the earliest is Karla Gruodis’ video “Unnamable Memories” (1995), a traumatic return to her childhood, an attempt to realise the dream that she gave up in the past – to become a ballet dancer in spite of her age, in spite of her bodily pain. This attempt means patching the holes of her biographic project. “Stenograms” (2001) of Evaldas Jansas combines the fragments of textual and visual diaries, reflections upon himself and his surroundings. Gintaras Makarevičius’ video piece “River” (1999) shows the artist sitting by the river, eating, wading and reading his diary, remembering painful episodes of his life. The artist exposes his deepest crises, despair, and failings to control his own life. The camera gives him the possibility of a therapeutic publicity through the transformation of these experiences into an image, an artistic reality distanced from the artist. Both Jansas and Makarevičius share the concept of “lifelike art” (or “art cum life”), where art and life are inter-related and inseparable, where art plays an important role in the process of constructing one’s “I”. Lithuanian art critic Erika Grigoravičienė says that their self-exposing works are grounded on the principle of subversive therapy, when weakness is being turned into advantage (Grigoravičienė 2001: 70). Jansas films himself as a victim or as a passive, obedient citizen also in his other works: “I Do not Fit the Bridle” (2000) and “Beauocratic Trilogy” (2001). Paradoxically, this overtly passive position of the artist articulates a suggestive critical message,

<sup>2</sup> Paul Valéry states that there are three bodies. The first body or *My body* is the experienced body, which does not know what is the body as a whole, as a form, it is “a strange, asymmetrical space in which distances are exceptional relations. <...> My right hand is generally unaware of my left. To take one hand in to the other is to take hold of an object that is *not-I*.” The *Second body* is the one which others see – an image, a portrait. The *Third body* has unity only in thought, as a combination of its anatomical parts and pieces. (Valéry 1990: 399).

and this is a posture typical of the artistic anti-hero of the second half of the 1990s. Camera becomes not only an instrument for the formulation of his own history, but also a weapon against others, against the anonyms that are on the side of discipline and control. The personal attitude of Jansas and Makarevičius might be described by the term “beyond the biographic project”, which is formulated by Latvian art critic Kaspars Vanags and means the conscious attitude of a loser. Both artists recoil from active gestures, do not analyse their aims, do not think of themselves in the future. Their passive self-reflection is directed only to the failures of the past or to the momentary present. Vanags claims that this is not an expression of personal failure, but rather a critique of the consumer society with its imperative of personal success (Vanags 2000: 41).

Conscious passivity of the artist and the new possibilities granted by video camera lead to a new type of auto-portrait, which is indirect, phenomenological and does not show the image of the artist. Preconditions for such a portrait have been formulated in the cinematographic conception of Jean-Luc Godard (he started creating self-researching films around 1994). According to Godard, the autoportrait of an artist must show not the artist himself, but rather what he perceives, receives, notices; it leads to the formulation of the concept of *artist-as-receiver*. Godard uses Heidegger's understanding of being, which comes from the German language itself: instead of “there is” Germans say, “it is given” (“es gibt”). This means that the artist is not really a creator, but rather the site where words and visual forms install themselves. Kaja Silverman says: “Godard suggests <...> that the seen precedes the seer – that our perceptions are gifts from elsewhere. Extraordinarily, he also maintains that the seer himself emerges out of what he sees: that the visible worlds not only gives *itself* to him, but gives *him* to himself” (Silverman 2001: 29).

The role of the artist-as-receiver is exceptionally passive, it seems as though the artist does nothing at all, merely lets the camera follow the direction of his look. This strategy is characteristic to many of Jansas' works, where absolute naturalism of filming is legitimated – the camera accepts and expresses all the artist's movements, swings and hand-shakings. His video “The Way Home” (2000) is a real phenomenological auto-portrait, which shows the drunk artist going out of a bar back home. The camera itself creates an expressive portrait of its master without filming him as the camera's rapid movements, strange positions and darkness in which it is sometimes left reveal the physical state of the artist. The surroundings accidentally caught by the lens and automatically recorded sounds tell about his favorite places and companies he spends time with. Phenomenological auto-portrait is also created in Laura Stasiulytė's work “Everyday Speech” (2000), where she

films her day starting from the walk with a dog and ending with shopping. The camera shows what she sees herself (always at the level of her eyes as if becoming the substitute for them). But she also makes a step from narcissistic self-reflection to inter-subjectivity, as the film's soundtrack is her everyday speech sung by a little boy in plainsong manner. Her self-reflection here is supplemented by the Other, who gives new intonations and connotations to her own words and her own routine.

According to the Sigmund Freud, narcissism is the state of ego-libido, to which everybody returns each night while sleeping. The self-representation through ego-libido is necessary if one wants to be able to approach the Other and be capable of object-libido, interpersonal relations and love (Freud 1994: 414). Narcissistic auto-portraits reveal the closest link between art and life; Narcissus often uses art as auto-therapeutic media.

#### CHALLENGER OF SENSES

The Challenger of Senses belongs to the tradition of performance and body-art; he is concentrated on his bodily sensations, seeks extraordinary experiences and arouses psycho-physical reactions of viewers. He aims at reaching more authentic states of the subject and experiencing what happens to the rationally and socially constructed "I" when it finds itself in extreme situations. This strategy exploits the materiality of body, various conditions of trance, phenomena of illness and madness, pathologies, shamanistic practices etc. – anything that denies rationality, language, social order and representation itself. But this search for authenticity does not necessarily mean that there is a belief in a substantial essence, to be reached by pulling off the veil of ideology, language, power, social structures etc. Quite often this strategy leads to the condition of non-identity, where the subject is transitional, where the "I" disappears in unarticulated, unspoken experiences.

Post-structuralist theories deny the possibility of going beyond representation, beyond the Symbolic. Jacques Lacan affirms the power of language, which is our unconsciousness, over the subject, but he also claims that in some aspects the pre-Symbolic also participates in the formation of the subject's identity. The pre-Symbolic is also called the Real, which is the unrepresented reality and is mostly related to the sensual experiences of the subject. As philosopher Audronė Žukauskaitė puts it: "the subject can be interpreted insofar as he is symbolized in the system of significations <...>, but the act of symbolizing can never be total, because it rejects or denies some unrepresented residual. This residual, though rejected in the subject's formation process, never ceases to determine the subject" (Žukauskaitė 2001: 74). This pre-linguistic residual is a determining negativity interpreted in terms

of materiality, corporeality, and sexuality. The breakthrough of the Real in the subject manifests itself in disorders of speech, loss of self-identity, mental derangement. The post-modern thought kills the normal, healthy and self-sufficient subject and poses instead a 'schizo', a totally free individual, deconstructed subject, who is not afraid to go insane anymore. But The Challenger of Senses is not destroyed by the Real, nor does he want to go mad for the sake of freedom. He rationally builds the frame of his work and has at least a hypothesis of what will happen during the event he has planned. This is a self-conscious throwing of self into the environment close to the Lacanian Real for the sake of reversing and recreating the order enforced by the Symbolic. The Challengers of Senses seek the Dionysic subjectivity, "the madness with the possibility to go back, transgression pierced with eroticism and fear of death" (Ališanka 2001: 64).

Gintaras Makarevičius in his video "Position and Strategy" (1998) puts himself in absolute darkness that eliminates any possibility of spatial orientation. He blindly tries hitting the punch ball, desperately stabs at the void and gradually loses the sense of his own body limits. In the situation all the learnt subject positions lose any sense, thus fresh experience of self becomes possible.

The video performance of Evaldas Jansas "An Anthology of Meaningfulness" (2003) shows the artist, with a rope tied to one of his legs, running and painfully hitting the ground again and again as the rope stops his movement forward. It is the metaphor of a bonded person, but the bodily experience of these bonds is central for the work suggesting that comprehension of meaningfulness or meaninglessness is unreal until the body itself does experience it in categories of pain, not words.

In her piece "To Overcome Shame" (2002) Eglė Rakauskaitė transforms language into the plangent scream. It is the scream of the body, which is marginalised and denied by the Symbolic. In the description of her work Rakauskaitė declares the rehabilitating attitude towards pathology: "they say that modernisation and industrialisation made us psychically insensible. While evaluating psychic disorders skin-deep we can determine disbalances of mind expressed in exterior and behavior. We have to be careful asserting some behavior as pathological only because we ourselves are too silly to understand its logic ..." (Jablonskienė 2002). The author challenges rationality equating it with narrowness and searches for repressed truths revealed in pathologies. Shame expresses concern about inadequacy to some social norm or image of the self. The artist overcomes it by screaming out the pre-social depth, which is probably not her personal depth, but the depth of human nature common to all subjects. The theme of scream is repeated also in Jurga Barilaitė's works.

The antirational strategy and search for authenticity by the Challenger of Senses is closely related to the feminist critique of visibility. Visibility, which connotes the oppositions of subject and object, the observer and the observed, clear limits and distance, is challenged by tactility. The traditional patriarchal subject is perceived as having clear, solid, Apollonic form, while the woman is associated with formlessness, liquidity and abjectness – aspects that are impossible to perceive with the ‘objective’, rational sense of vision. The woman’s comparison to liquids is partly related to her biological specificity, but it also condemns her to the imprint of corporeality and non-identity: “Body fluids attest to the permeability of the body, its necessary dependence on an outside, its liability to collapse into this outside (this is what death implies), to the perilous divisions between the body’s inside and outside. <...> They attest to a certain irreducible ‘dirt’ or disgust, a horror of the unknown or the unspecifiable that permeates, lurks, lingers, and at times leaks out of the body, a testimony of the fraudulence or impossibility of the ‘clean’ and ‘proper’” (Grosz 1994: 194). According to Luce Irigaray, the reason for the disfavor of liquids is the fact that they are culturally unrepresented in the existing ontological models, which subordinate everything to entity, integrity, solidity and self-identity (Grosz 1994: 135).

In some of Eglė Rakauskaitė’s works liquids become the main challengers of senses. In video performances “In Honey” (1996) and “In Fat” (1998) the artist’s body is dipped into thick sticky material, which not only wreathes her body, but also seeps into it through her skin eliminating boundaries between inside and outside, and because of difficulty to breathe through small pipe turns the performance into a test on survival. Liquid destroys definite subjectivity and a body as a visually perceived form (as warm fat gets cold, it hides the body from our eyes and buries it). Experiences with liquids also dominate Karla Gruodis’ video “X Beats Per Minute” (1996), where the images of her pregnant body in water interchange with images from echoscope. Liquids, matter, disgust, mother’s body, prenatal or posthumous conditions are discussed in the theory of the abject formulated by Julia Kristeva. “In Honey” imitates the return to a womb, while “In Fat” has the liquid material gradually turning into a solid coffin. These are abject or liminal states beyond the opposition of subject/object and beyond any social descriptions. The subject is constructed socially through repression of the abject. Some contemporary theories turn to the zone of disgust, dirt and horror regarding it as a locus for the recreation of the traditional subject. Disgust is the result of Apollonic culture, it is fear to lose clear boundaries that builds the order, but Dionysic postmodern imagination tries to incorporate everything that exists and scorns visual sublimation.

Many of Evaldas Jansas' video works show a living, suffering body and abject matter. In a three-cycle work "Image as Auto-Portrait" (2000) he tries to get closer to 'authentic' reality through illness and the abject. The first part shows a true-life situation where his body is attacked by a fit of epilepsy. In the second part he transfuses his blood from one part of his body to another as if aiming to experience the usually insentient circulation of blood, which makes us alive, but usually arouses our disgust or fear of death. In the third part the artists urinates into plastic cup and voids into a plastic bag, confronting something terribly ugly coming out of him. It is the conscious act of self-cleaning, which does not deny the experiences of the dirty sphere, but reflects the influence of waste on the subject as a system. Jansas deliberately regresses to the organic and stresses the narrowness of cultural subject defined by sterility.

While Narcissus uses camera as an instrument for self-articulation, Challenger of Senses needs the apparatus only to document what is hardly representable – the bodily experiences.

## ACTOR

Actor is an artist, who while filming himself in some specific role takes a deconstructive position. This is a strategy, which also prolongs the tradition of performance, but rather than searching for authentic experiences it means playing with non-identity, wearing different roles in order to declare critical positions. Actor's strategy is the reaction to the factors of ideology, power, unconsciousness etc. that destroy the notion of classical, humanist subject. In postmodern theories the subject is described in negative terms (Michel Foucault and Judith Butler relate "subject" to "subjection"). Postmodern theories of the subject are exhaustively analysed in the works of Lithuanian philosopher Audronė Žukauskaitė, who links together arguments of deconstruction, psychoanalysis and critique of ideology. In those theories the subject is said to be incapable to determine either the meaning of his affirmations, or his psychic of social identity: "all these disciplines share the critique of integral and self-identical subject – <...> the notion of subject is related not to the inner thought, but to the external textual, psychic of social actions" (Žukauskaitė 2001: 9). In the deconstruction theory, the subject is determined by coincidental junctions of meanings in the sets of significant; in psychoanalysis, by desire and the unconscious Other; in critique of ideology, by various forms of power. According to Louis Althusser, ideology is effective as long as it is unseen, unrecognised as compulsion and is regarded as a natural, 'innate' order or a person's own choice. The appearance of Actor means that ideology has lost the appearance of 'natural

order' and that subject positions proposed by it are not conceived as innate. The Actor is always ambiguous: though he fulfills his role, he knows he is acting, which enables him to appear in the meta-position to ideology. He accepts the state of non-identity as self-identity; this strategy is subversive and allows him at least not to become the locus of enforced identity.<sup>3</sup> While *performing* somebody (a woman, a father, an artist, a tourist), he refuses to simply *be* somebody, equally criticising himself, the role he plays and the system, which creates that role.

Actor's strategy is the key to Dainius Liškevičius video-performance "30 Times" (1995). Wearing a black suit and black sunglasses suggests the artificiality of his symbolic action (he crawls around the carpet counter-clockwise as if going back in time) and refers to the performativity of any subject's actions. In the video "Don't Beat Me" (1999) the artist couple Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas divide between the roles of the observer and the observed, the punisher and the victim. In the first episode we see the man writhing on the floor, beaten with a belt and kicked by a woman's foot. The camera in woman's hands captures and fragments the man's body; it is also the instrument of punishment. In the second episode the observed man-victim attacks the observer-viewer. With this work the artist couple analyses, illustrates and reverses panoptical mechanisms as well as traditional gender roles.

The critique of dominant gender order is present in several works of another artist couple Aida Čeponytė and Valdas Ozarinskas: in the video installation "Red" (1997) and video piece "A Man and a Woman" (1999). In the latter the artists remake the love scene from Claude Lelouche's film of the same title: they impassively perform the ritual of heterosexuality in slow motion, monotonic loop. The original film proposes an interpretation of sexual stereotypes, but the video takes it to a much more extreme version.

Kristina Inčiūraitė is an artist continuously returning to the theme of femininity and gender in general. In her video "Downstairs" (2000) she embodies the bride and exploits the act of repetition, which is central to ideological subject – by repeating again and again the same role or behavior the subject comes to believe that it is natural and substantial. Since ancient times the wedding ritual is one of the most important instruments of normative control and forms of a subject's socialisation. Here the artist descends the stairs of a wedding registry office in celebratory manner four times with different bridegrooms and uses repetition to subvert the ritual instead of maintaining it.

<sup>3</sup> Lithuanian writer Eugenijus Ališanka relates the figure of the actor (performer) to the return of dionysic element to the contemporary culture. The return of Dionysus means that identity is now understood as the illusion of Apollonic authoritarianism. The figure of the actor is a figure of dreaming author or critic, who exists and does not exist, who is split and unite at the same time (Ališanka 2001: 23).



Strategies of Actor might also be traced in those pieces, where artists themselves do not act, where other persons perform some role stressing the artificiality of a situation. For example, in Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas' video "Karaoke" (2001) pedantic, tidy 'bank officials' sing the "Abba" hit song "Money, Money". Ironic and mocking gestures are also characteristic of the works by Academic Training Group.

Actor criticises by demonstrating the artificiality of things, copying, re-making and playing with different identities and denying their substantiality. Actor destroys illusions, but usually builds nothing on these ruins.

#### ETHNOGRAPHER

Hal Foster uses the term "artist-ethnographer" in contrast to Walter Benjamin's term "artist-producer." Ethnographer transforms the concern with class and capitalist exploitation into concern with race and colonial regimes, and tackles cultural/anthropologic issues rather than social ones (Foster 1996: 174). In white and culturally homogenous society of Lithuania neither race nor cultural imperialism are important, thus the term of Hal Foster is used in much wider sense here. In Lithuanian art criticism artist-ethnographers are not so much romantic revolutionaries as attentive researchers sensitive to local contexts. The research itself, no matter what is researched, is the main characteristic of Ethnographer. In this essay artists who investigate themselves or something else through themselves (through their personal experiences or performed roles) have already been named as Narcissuses, Challengers of Senses and Actors. The specific aim of Ethnographer is investigating other persons, histories, social issues etc. But these artists-researchers also differ from each other in the methodologies of observation and involvement. The relation of the researcher to his object is a very problematic question, which was given special prominence in the feminist critique of dominant visual regimes. The problem of representing the Other is also very delicate in the cases when not-white, not-heterosexual, foreigner, psychotic, abnormal persons are researched and shown. In relation to these questions I divide Lithuanian artists-researchers into three groups. The very term "ethnographer" shows that it is the most 'scientific' position, which keeps the biggest distance between the author and the character. As Jonathan Friedman puts it, "ethnography renders the Other's identity to ourselves and, via the conditions in which it is executed, back to the Other. By speaking of him, or for him, we ultimately force him to speak through our categories" (Friedman 1992: 332). In the artworks of Ethnographer the ethical problems of representation stay behind the scene, the relation between the artist and his film characters is minimal, because his aim is only to identify, name and show.

Deimantas Narkevičius presents a historical-social study of the diminishing industrial community of a small Lithuanian city Elektrėnai that was built in Soviet times and represented Soviet utopia ("Energy", 2000). He composes the many-sided ethnographic portrait of the city. Eglė Rakauskaitė researches disparate social groups: street musicians, Vilnius' beggars, market people. Representation as violence is analysed in video by the artists Aida Čeponytė and Valdas Ozarinskas "White" (1997), where they expose an old sick woman lying in bed. The observation lasts few hours and reveals the weakness of the Other and the cruel power of the observer. In his video "Hot" (1999) Gintaras Makarevičius shows the meeting of an ex-factory's staff, which the artist himself initiated, aiming to document the old Soviet communication habits of the diminishing community. Ethnographic attitude is obvious in Darius Žiūra's video "Gustoniai" (2001) showing the portraits of village people. They face the camera silently for one minute each, obviously shamefaced, feeling uneasy. Nomeda ir Gediminas Urbonas' complex video and media installation "Transaction" (2000) is a penetrating research on questions of femininity in Lithuanian society: they exploit the knowledge of psychologists, academic discourses of humanitarians and display fragments from Lithuanian films that represent traditional roles of women-as-victims. Audrius Novickas video „V.I.P. Tour in Vilnius" (2002) uses someone else's footage, which is in many ways similar to newsreels, and changes nothing, leaving us with this 'objective' document. Artūras Raila creates the compilation of archival films on Lithuanian history in "Forever Lacking and Never Quite Enough" (2001). Kristina Inčiūraite's video "Voices" (2002) and other videos from the cycle "Scenes" are investigations both of female self-perception and of institutions obviously in decline after the Soviet regime has changed into the state of wild capitalism.

But even in some ethnographic works one can feel the participation of artist. It reduces the distance between the author and the characters and slightly changes the situation of representation. For example the video by Evaldas Jansas "Dujis" (2001) shows radically marginal images: the process of making drugs, pricked bodies and drug taking. But the generalising voice of the author is often replaced by a woman's private stories, and there are so many close-ups and the characters behave so naturally that the viewer feels the artist is really participating in the situation. Similar traits are typical of some of Gintaras Makarevičius' videos. It might be called the strategy of the participating observer. Sometimes Makarevičius shows his own face as if to prove he is there *with* the characters ("Relatives", 2000, "Pit", 2001). His "art cum life" attitude softens the violence of representation, but the characters of his works are still easily classified by particular social categories.

Ethnographer is a socially engaged artist, archivist, publicist, who represents different social groups and their problems. This social/documentary attitude is very typical of Lithuanian video art.

### CONTEMPLATOR

The term Contemplator does not describe a specifically contemporary artistic position. On the contrary, non-critical contemplation of the world is quite typical of the romantic conception of art and of the majority of Lithuanian traditional artists. Contemplator observes without analyzing, classifying and generalizing. I borrow the term Contemplator from the dialogic philosophy of Martin Buber who uses it in contrast to that of the observer (or ethnographer), who acts in search of knowledge. Buber's observer aims to memorize the observed, to note as many traits as possible, and in this way he reduces the observed into the sum of features. Contemplator, on the contrary, does not take any effort; he calmly waits for what will be given to him. Some intention exists only at the beginning, but later on everything happens by itself (Buber 1962: 150–151). The observer aims at some 'objective' knowledge, while Contemplator only wishes to be enriched by experiences of otherness, to extend the field of his perception. If it were possible to differentiate between "traditional" and "contemporary" contemplators, I would say it is the difference of attention to the object of contemplation and contemplation as an experience itself. It might be said that the latter attitude is possible only with cameras, because the experience of contemplation and recording is simultaneous. The passivity of Contemplator reduces the violence of representation, the artist's gaze accidentally stumbles upon some object in the aimless wandering of his eyes rather than depicts or represents something.

The most consistent Contemplator is Darius Žiūra. The looking itself is his method and his aim. The video "Milky Way" (2001) is a view of Vilnius' panorama monotonously twisting around. The piece "Palanga" (2000) is made out of more than 40 hours of filmed material, which illustrates the artist's mania of filming. Its montage does not offer any narrative, any hypothesis, any generalization; it is simply the document of contemplative observation or filming without any aim. A similar stance is evident in Darius Mikšys video "Focus on the Girl" (1997), where he films only faces of many different girls in the street. Even the title suggests that the aim is only to focus the lens at faces, nothing more. One could say it reminds of fetishist phallic gaze, but the object of observation is the face, which is the surface of personality (while fetishist gaze fragments and concentrates on some special parts of body). Emmanuel Levinas says that the face is exactly what resists turning the Other into an object, what constitutes the irreducible

otherness. "I wonder if one can speak of a look turned toward the face, for the look is knowledge, perception. I think rather that access to the face is straightaway ethical" (Levinas 1985: 85). Thus the artworks of Žiūra and Mikšys are the results of observation, which do aim neither at knowledge, nor at the expression of a particular idea. The radically anti-artistic emphasis on looking itself is evident in video installations by Linas Jablonksis "Ambience. Fembience. Shitbience." (2002) and "Mezzo vs. National Geographic Channel" (2003). In the latter we see several hours' recordings of the artist's favorite television programmes. As he says, they are "without beginning and end, without meanings, without intention to say something, without artistic aspirations and any authority. To be, to look, to listen."<sup>4</sup> Such tendencies are also noticeable in the works of the younger generation. For example, Laura Garbštienė simply films a beautiful trace of the plane in the sky in the video "Trace" (2002).

The Contemplator does not really care either about the Self or about the problems of others; he is a disinterested observer of the environment. Most often he is interested only in his own experience, not in the artistic result of it.

#### DIALOGIST

Rephrasing Buber we might say that the passive observation of Contemplator begins and ends with himself. It is a non-communicative strategy. The Ethnographer communicates with his video characters no more than is needed for the collection of research material and its final generalization, inevitably objectifying filmed persons. By contrast, Dialogist is essentially open to relations with the Other, allows the film character to act and even to create on his own; the author sometimes nearly disappears in that relation. His works are based on the dialogical conception of an artwork (as explicated by Mikhail Bakhtin), where hierarchic relation between the subject and object is replaced by the communication between the equals. In the dialogical artwork the character talks for himself, the author lets him speak and does not take the privileged position, which might allow him make judgments and draw conclusions. The author is only the voice among other voices, the medium, through which the character can speak (Bakhtin 1994: 270). Video media are very suitable for establishing the independence and autonomy of characters. In the dialogic artwork it is much more important *to listen* rather than to see. In Lithuanian videos of late 1990s characters speak much more than before, there are many interview works and sometimes the visual part of works is reduced to a minimum.

<sup>4</sup> From the archive of the exhibition "Parallel progressions 3: etc." held in the Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, 2002-2003.

The content of “The Legend Coming True” (1999) by Deimantas Narkevičius seems to be ethnographic, as it is a research into the genocide of Jews. But in this film the main aim of the artist is to let the Jewish woman tell her story and make us listen to her. She is even not shown (not objectified), but acts as an independent, individual, live voice. The artist illustrates her story by subtly filming landscapes or leaves the viewers with absolute darkness, to concentrate only on listening.

Dialogical artworks are created when the author directly communicates with the characters, whose individual experiences inevitably influence him. Mikhail Bakhtin says that dialogue can turn against any of its participants at any time. Alfonso Lingis concurs: “To set oneself forth as a subject of discourse is to expose oneself to being contested and discredited” (Lingis 1994: 87). Very often the artist does not hide his participation in the dialogue, leaving his image, questions, laughter, remarks after montage. In his video “Mania: Wishes” (1997–1998) Jansas asks his friends to wish him something on the occasion of Christmas and New Year. He finds out how others disclose themselves while at the same time revealing him: the wish demonstrates the values of the well-wisher, but is also formulated having in mind what the other person might want. The interview method is vital to Irma Stanaitytė (“Privacy” (1999), “Interventions”, 2001).

“The Father’s Film” (without date) by Artūras Raila is about the relation of father and son, with the relation itself being the main theme. In comparison with the scientifically ethnographic or the distanced contemplative observation the look radically changes its violent, appropriating nature; here it is identical to care as the father’s camera follows the little boy’s journey through the crowd with concern and pride.

Dialogist often raises fundamental, existential questions. In his work “Body-Soul: Each in Other” (2000) Evaldas Jansas provokes other people to explain how they relate themselves to the categories of body and soul. He finds really extraordinary answers and stories, thus a polyphonic space of dialogue is created, which expands the artist’s own understanding. Video by Eglė Rakauskaitė “Other Breath” (2001) shows old people who talk about and evaluate their own lives, analyze their relation towards age and towards approaching death and remember the most difficult experiences they have passed through.

Sometimes Dialogist not only encourages characters to speak, as the dialogic situation can also be expressed in bodily relations. In the contemporary ethics built on the conception of radical otherness of the Other, non-verbal connections are very important, because it is at the bodily or material level that otherness manifests itself in the strongest way. In the video by Ginataras Makarevičius “The Same Breath (Oral Interview)” (1999)

the distance between self and the other is made absolutely intimate. The characters approach the camera, open their mouths and blow hot breath. When the lens gets clear again, we see another person doing the same, including the artist himself; all the characters and the author share something from inside their bodies. The structure of video installation “Sighs” (2000) by Laura Stasiulytė is similar, but the breath of the artist (shown in one monitor) and other people (in another monitor) are synchronized so that while one blows out, another breathes in, as if sharing the same air. In the video “Counting of Plaits” (2002) Stasiulytė’s hands count hundreds of plaits on her black friend’s head; she does it so carefully that the friend drops off, thus expressing her full commitment and trust in the artist. The artwork helps to reduce the distance between persons and realizes the most intimate dialogue of touch.

Dialogist films the others not as members of some class, age or gender groups but as personalities. This is why the majority of such works is about issues common to all members of mankind and about the relations between persons. Dialogist constructs the initial situation, but later on many things escape his control. Dialogist thus approaches the model of artist-as-initiator, which is best expressed in other media than video (he offers the idea and gives it for others to realize). Possibly the most radical strategy of an artist-initiator in Lithuanian video art is Artūras Raila’s video project “Video of Painters” where camera goes from hands to hands from one painter to another making the artwork of shared authorship.

None of these artistic characters is dominant in contemporary video works, though in the middle of the 1990s there were more Ethnographers and Dialogists. The project by Raila mentioned above may be the beginning of a new artistic role in Lithuanian video art.

*Received 2007 03 17*

*Accepted 2007 03 28*

## REFERENCES

1. Ališanka, E. 2001. *Dioniso sugrįžimas: chtoniškumas, postmodernizmas, tyla*, Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla.
2. Bakhtin, M. M. 1994. *Проблемы творчества поэтики Достоевского*. Киев: Next.
3. Buber, M. 1962. „Zwiesprache“. *Das dialogische Prinzip*. Heidelberg : Verlag Lambert Schneider.
4. Foster, H. 1996. *The Return of the Real*, Cambridge, London: The MIT Press.
5. Freud, S. 1994. „Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse und Neue Folge“. *Studienausgabe*, Band I, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag.
6. Friedman, J. 1992. „Narcissism, Roots and Postmodernity: the Constitution of Selfhood in the Global Crisis“ in *Modernity and Identity*, ed. by S. Lash, J. Friedman, Oxford UK and Cambridge USA: Blackwell.
7. Giddens, A. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press.
8. Grigoravičienė, E. 2001. *Antropologinės 7-10 dešimtmečio Lietuvos dailės dimensijos*, PHD Thesis, Vilnius Academy of Art.
9. Grosz, E. 1994. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
10. Jablonskienė, L. (ed.) 2002. *Susitikimų platforma*, exhibition catalogue, Vilnius: Contemporary Art Centre (without page numbers).
11. Krauss, R. XXXX. „Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism“ in *October* 1, No.19.
12. Lacan, J. 1977. *Ecrits*, London: W.W. Norton and Company.
13. Levinas, E. 1985. *Ethics and Infinity: Conversation with Philippe Nemo*. Trans. Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
14. Lingis, A. 1994. *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
15. Silverman, K. 2001. „The Author as Receiver“ in *October* 96, Spring, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
16. Valery, P. 1990. „Some Simple Reflections on the Body“ in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Part 2, ed. M. Feher, B. Naddaff. M. Tazi, New York: Zone.
17. Vanags, K. 2000. „On the Biographic Project“ in *Mare Arcticum: The Baltic Art Magazine*, Issue 1 [6].
18. Wagner, A. M. 2000. „Performance, Video and the Rhetoric of Presence“, *October* 91, Winter.
19. Žukauskaitė, A. 2001. *Anapus signifikanto principo: dekonstrukcija, psichoanalizė, ideologijos kritika*, Vilnius: Aidai.



Renata Dubinskaitė  
 MENININKO VAIDMENYS  
 LIETUVOS VIDEO MENE 1990-2003

## SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje, pasitelkiant psichoanalizės, poststruktūralizmo, feminizmo ir kitas teorijas analizuojamas Lietuvos video menas. Išskiriamos ir metaforiškai įvardijamos kelios pagrindinės autorinės strategijos arba menininkų vaidmenys, atspindintys, kokios temos ir kokie reprezentacijos metodai aktualiausi jų kūryboje. „Narcizas“ filmuoja save patį, rašo video dienoraštį, mėgina kurti savo „aš“ istoriją. Narcisistiniuose darbuose labiausiai išryškėja meno ir gyvenimo sąryšis, menas suvokiamas kaip savotiška autoterapinė priemonė. „Pojūčių bandytojas“, tęsdamas performanso ir kūno meno tradicijas, sutelkia dėmesį į savo kūno potyrius, nekasdienius, kartais šokiruojančius išgyvenimus, kurie leistų perkurti socialinės tvarkos primestas nuostatas, ir siekia būsenų autentiškumo. Tuo tarpu menininkas „Aktorius“, filmuodamas save tam tikroje rolėje, užima dekonstruktoriaus poziciją – jis kritikuoja, demonstruodamas visa ko teatrališkumą ir dirbtinumą, deklaruoja savo poziciją, demaskuoja, griaua iliuzijas, kopijuoja, perkuria, parodijuoja. „Etnografas“ programiškai domisi kitoniškumu, antropologija, užsiima stebėjimo, tyrinėjimo, įvardijimo, klasifikavimo veikla. Tarp menininko ir kūrinių herojų ar vaizduojamų objektų išlaikomas akivaizdus atstumas, hierarchinis stebėtojo ir stebinčiojo santykis. „Kontempliuotojas“ taip pat stebi aplinką, kitus asmenis, tačiau jis ne analizuoja, o užsiima neklasifikuojančiu ir neapibendrinančiu žiūrėjimu, tai nekritiškas, pasyvus stebėjimas. „Komunikatoriaus“ darbai atsiranda, kuomet menininkas atsiveria dialogui – lygiaverčiam santykiui tarp autoriaus ir jo filmo herojų, kai filmo herojams leidžiama patiems kalbėti už save, o autorius siekia neprimesti savo pozicijos, maksimaliai sumažinti vaizdavimo prievartą. „Komunikatorius“ inicijuoja bendravimo situaciją, tačiau toliau jau daug kas yra ne jo valioje, taigi, jis savotiškai dalijasi autoryste su video darbo veikėjais.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: videomenas, autorinės strategijos, menininkas-narcizas, menininkas-pojūčių bandytojas, menininkas-aktorius, menininkas-etnografas, menininkas-kontempliuotojas, menininkas-komunikatorius.

Renata Šukaitytė

## NEW MEDIA ART IN LITHUANIA

*Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas / Vytautas Magnus University*

*Menų institutas / Art Institute*

*Laisvės al. 53*

*LT-44309 Kaunas*

*El. paštas / e-mail: r.sukaityte@mi.vdu.lt*

Electronic media art began to appear in Lithuania in the second part of the 1990s, but the preconditions for the development of this art form existed earlier, in the interdisciplinary projects, mail art, light installation and video art practices of the second half of the 1980s. That period witnessed active attempts at establishing a neo-avant-garde in the audiovisual and visual arts, along with the beginnings of interdisciplinary and subversive artistic strategies and the emergence of a specific language and discourse for media art. The political, economic and socio-cultural changes that took place in the country during the 1990s were significant for the development of this new generation of art: the restoration of independence and the integration into an international sphere of politics and culture, the development of a free market economy, of information and consumerist society, as well as the modernization of cultural institutions and increased artist mobility.

From their very introduction in Lithuania, the electronic media became a mode of expression and an object of reflection for artists of the young generation. Media art was endowed with all the characteristics of 'new art'. It adapted advanced information and communication technologies and the

discourses of cyber-culture to the art context as well as new understanding of author and authorship. Moreover, there was a shift in the status of the new artifacts: the emphasis was no longer solely on object and the process, presentation and information, but also on interaction and communication. Electronic media art proposed a broad space for experiments because it is heterogeneous and complex, it unites linear and non-linear means of expression, sonic and visual information, textual and visual data, it can be experienced interactively or 'passively', without any need for tactile activity. The latter form of media art in particular (usually presented in photographic and video formats) soon established itself on the national art scene and acquired institutional status. At the same time, net art, interactive installations, CD-ROMs, multimedia art or virtual reality projects became part of youth subculture and was seen as a kind of 'counter-cultural' phenomenon.

In this article, necessarily fragmented (as the development of Lithuanian new media art is quite spontaneous and fragmented), I will try to identify the dominant new media art practices and creative strategies used by Lithuanian media artists. The definitive examples will not be set out in a chronological order, as the article does not aim to draw a historical survey of the matter. Instead, the survey will start with the analysis of artifacts, which focus on simulation and reflection of institutional models and new identities, proceed with the works, which employ collaborative and participatory strategies and will end up with the works that are structurally or thematically associated with the discursive qualities of electronic medium itself. Since artists usually use several different strategies in their works, the categories outlined above do not always serve as the only identifier of a particular work.

## NEW INSTITUTIONAL PATTERNS

Lithuanian new media artists usually work independently from the main artistic institutions, as they prefer staying outside the mainstream of contemporary art and choosing partnership as well as support of other media artists and communities. One of the first collaborative internet projects based on institutional structure is *Instituto Media* (<http://www.o-o.lt>) launched in 1998 by a group of young artists, Mindaugas Gapševičius, Kęstutis Andrašiūnas and Darius Mikšys. This was a study of how an institution could function in virtual space. In their own words, "the project was designed as an attempt to transfer an institution into the Internet and study its functioning on the web. An academic institution was chosen, since at present we have the broadest experience of the activity of such institutions.

We also wish to explore the relation of physically and virtually limited spaces. In real space and time the functioning of an institution is restricted by its premises and the regularity of activity, which is necessary for the interactivity and existence of that institution. In virtual space it is restricted by technology and the quality of the connection. The web makes it possible to avoid the expropriation of a physical location. It is replaced by the site of a server – a quantity of magnetic memory” (Federspiel 2000:30).

The project was launched with writing a manifesto and drafting of the institutional scheme. The main task of the virtual institution was to gather and disseminate information on the Internet in various formats: sound, image, text, search engines and links. The institution's structure consisted of a focused electronic mailing list, a media resource base, an electronic journal and Internet radio and TV. *Instituto Media* was to play the role of an intermediary in the coordination of the activities of all these entities, gathering and dissemination of information, initiating new projects and creating communicative chains of reference. The authors of the project emphasized the dynamic nature of the institution: the processing, archiving and transmission of data. In this case transmission can be seen as a form of story-telling, and therefore the Institute's founders accentuated the variety of interpretations more than the sending and receiving of information. We could say that *Instituto Media* functions as a communication network, through which the *o-o* community exchanges information.

In 2002 the *Involved* group (Augustinas Beinaraivičius, Henrik Rysbakke Nielsen, Miriam Wirz) tried to combine virtual and physical space in their projects. These artists used the Internet as a space for discussions, debates and exhibitions, and as a platform for transmitting various informational materials. On their website ([www.involved.lt](http://www.involved.lt)) one can find not only audiovisual material about *Involved* events, but also information about contemporary art projects in Western European countries. Physical space, the cafés of the French Cultural Center and the Contemporary Art Center, is used for presentations of art projects and discussions, a place for getting together in the flesh. The artists know how to coordinate their activities in both kinds of space. They start discussions about topical problems in society and culture in the net, and continue them in physical space, usually with musical events and audiovisual projections organized in bars and cafés.

The interdisciplinary artists Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas use the model of the 'temporary media lab' for creating independent spaces and new contexts for electronic culture. Such a model makes it possible to experiment in the field of social interface, to influence cultural policy, to create and generate a new artistic language and specific communities. Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas started developing their institutional model

in 1993, when they, together with a group of colleagues, founded the NGO *Jutempus Interdisciplinary Art Program*. Under the aegis of this organization various local and international art, culture and media projects were launched. It generated innovative strategies for artistic collaboration and promoted critical discourse in virtual and physical space. One of the most significant early international projects was *Ground Control – Technology and Utopia*, carried out in 1997. It became the framework for an investigation of cultural differences between Western and Eastern Europe, it analyzed the phenomena of technophobia and technophilia and it furthered collaboration between Lithuanian and British artists. The project was implemented through the use of both traditional and modern communication spaces: broadcasts over the Internet, the physical venues in the two countries, and a reader with collected critical writings. Another significant interdisciplinary project that made use of various contemporary communication media and strategies was *tvvv.plotas*, developed in 1998–1999. The project was devised as a space for discussion, and consisted of a program for local television, videoconferences, live conversations and Internet broadcasts. *tvvv.plotas* analyzed the situation for the contemporary artist in various socio-cultural contexts, looking deeper into the discursive possibilities of its selected media.

From 2000 Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas have been developing the concept, structure and action strategies of *VILMA*, the Vilnius Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Media Art. *VILMA* does not have a physical body; it exists as a temporary media lab, a continuous experimental project. According to Urbonas, “*VILMA* is planned as an annual event, whose form is drawn together over the year and emerges from the conditions linked to the event. In this way, it allows for a focused set of workshops and lectures to engage in the methodological enquiry associated to a project, within the economy of the event structure. This quality offers that the issue is also what kind of contemporary institutional form could develop. *VILMA* addresses the desire for a space of experiment related to the issues of technology that define new media, and orients new media to artistic practice, and onto culture and society. *VILMA* is the scripting of a voice from relations between international and local situations.” (*VILMA*: [www.vilma.cc](http://www.vilma.cc)). As is traditionally typical of institutions that propagate media culture, *VILMA* actively shapes its activities in virtual space through an Internet journal *VILMA\_balsas* and through systems of email communication, as well as in physical space through creative seminars, public lectures and actions or presentations of artworks.

The activities of the temporary media lab developed by the artists aim at the generation of a critical socio-cultural context, as well as the promo-

tion of public critical discourse and new forms of creative collaboration in their local community. The first yearly VILMA project was the creative laboratory *RAM6/Social Interaction & Collective Intelligence* in August 2004, part of the international collaborative project *RAM – Re-approaching New Media*. The project was initiated and implemented by institutions in six northern European countries that promote and research new media art. Their objective was to expand the international network of professional artists, IT specialists, designers and media activists, and to encourage the dissemination of progressive ideas in the fields of art, science and technology. During the *RAM6* event new mechanisms for collective creation, interaction and functioning were analyzed and generated, with the help of modern technology. Moreover, alternative strategies and communication models were explored that would answer to the needs of modern society and be able to create new communities, transcending geographical, social and cultural boundaries.

In 2005 VILMA acquired new content. It became a *Pro-Test Laboratory* and was embodied in a new physical space, a pavilion next to the *Lietuva* ('Lithuania') cinema theatre in Vilnius. According to the project's authors, "*Pro-Test Lab* is constructed as a spatial device to register the scenario of protest and generate an action. The logic of the spatial device refers to the Lumière Brothers' early model of the cinema camera that performed a twofold function, both recording and projecting the action. *Pro-Test Lab* is generating and archiving all available forms of protest against the situation of the *Lietuva* cinema, focusing on the discourse of public space versus corporate privatization" (Lovink 2005). Initiating the collective protest actions 'For *Lietuva*', the founders of the Laboratory invited the public to reflect critically on the city council's activities and to express their opinion and show civic initiative concerning the privatization and destruction of public spaces in the city. The *Lietuva* cinema was the last functioning non-commercial cinema theatre in the Lithuanian capital, but it was closed on 25 September 2005 and will be converted into flats. With the cinema closed down, VILMA has to find new physical spaces and devise new strategies for action. Such forceful positions on current social and political issues are also characteristic of other projects by Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas.

## RE/CONSTITUTION OF IDENTITIES

Many new media artists use digital media as a tool for perception and construction of identity. Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas react to the ongoing changes in the communities and institutions that surround them. They observe, analyze, document and communicate through various chan-

nels. Among their most frequently addressed themes is women's identity in post-Soviet society and the changes it undergoes. The works *Transaction*, *Karaoke*, *RR: Ruta Remake* all testify to this interest. In the latter, the artists invite the viewers to create a new identity for a contemporary woman (whom they can both see and hear), by modeling the voices of women of different generations as they have been recorded with traditional media. In *Ruta Remake* the artists used the audio-visual archive material gathered during the work with *Transaction*: films of the Soviet period, pop music video clips, voices from radio and interviews with cultural activists who participated in the project. The female voice is deconstructed with the help of original methods and technologies. The shadows cast by the hands of the viewer/performer are caught by a special light-sensitive device that generates a script and transforms it into sound by blending fragments of voices stored in a special archive. (For this process the TeraMIDI electronic device is used, which converts light signals into a MIDI signal). The new woman's voice is thus modeled through an instantaneous 're-writing' or 're-mix' of the *Ruta Remake* voice archive. In a first stage, young women working with the female voice (composers, DJs) were invited to perform. Afterwards anyone who wanted to participate in the process of writing a scenario for a new woman's voice was welcome to contribute. During this interaction, it was almost as if the work went through a process of individuation. Its perception in itself became a performance, where the performers were the ever-changing active viewers.

Kristina Inčiūraitė attempts both, to explore the particularities of contemporary woman's identity and to create new images by using new methods of representation. Inčiūraitė refuses the idea of the woman as an element of the spectacle. Choosing not a woman's image, but her voice creates the woman's identity. The woman has to be not only seen, but also heard in the society. According to the artist, "images of women in the society are widely represented as objects of desire. In my works, by criticizing the established stereotypes of the scopophilic gaze, I present a woman who is not visible, but participates actively in specific situations." While choosing the verbal form of women's identity, the artist does not agree with the feminist idea that spoken language belongs to the sphere of male domination; the male experience and the unconscious encoded in it do not allow woman to take the position of the subject. In her works – *Differences* (2003), *Spinsters* (2003), *Repetition* (2002) and *Leisure* (2003) – Kristina Inčiūraitė makes the visual sphere completely secret; she as if lowers a curtain in front of the observer and makes him/her listen to woman's voice. She ignores the perceptual space of the screen and focuses entirely on what is happening behind the screen. Therefore, the artist destroys the linear structure of the



work of art, thus confirming gender issues even more (the post-structuralist adversaries of feminism attribute linear structure to the sphere of men). This strategy is in line with the statement of Michel Foucault that “the monolithic stratum disappears where everything that is visible and what is legible is mixing ... things and words separate. The eye “was destined to see and only to see, the ear to hear and only to hear” (Foucault 1994: 43). The artist’s method is quite alien to the area of audio-visual arts where usually everything should be visible on the screen. Film and video are shown in order to be seen and observed. While exploring the issues of women’s identity the artist is able to leave a wide field for the observer’s imagination to maneuver, to use the out-of-shot acoustic space.

A young artist Bartošas Polonskis in his interactive work *Gliukai* (2006) invites a viewer-participant to reflect on his/her identity and to construct it. He performed a study of man-machine interaction by simulation of human physical movements in the form of animated character. The electronic substitute reduplicates and interprets the actions of an *interactor* and continually repeats a simple text about the constant change in everyday life and the necessity as well as ability of ‘self-revival’. Motor information is recorded in the memory of the machine and transformed into digital sonic and visual information. In his work Polonskis uses various playful interactive strategies, which invite the audience to re-create its identity and to reflect on one’s daily life.

Gintaras Makarevičius in his video *Vaskiči* (2004) presents the documentation of a game of war played by local boys in a courtyard that resembles the world of computer games rather than the real game. The film is structured so that it reminds you of a virtual space with virtual heroes: the boys’ movements and language as well as the playground look like the world of a computer game. The viewer can understand it thanks to his/her experience in virtual games of war. This work is a good example of how the virtual world can influence the way we behave. It is a kind of simulation of cybernetic reality and the elements of it.

#### COLLABORATION AND PARTICIPATION PRACTICES

The founders of *Instituto Media*, who were among the first propagators and creators of net art in Lithuania, drew together a group of activists with an interest in new media. These artists presented and initiated not only net art but also projects in other media. They disseminated information about new phenomena in art, and they participated in international media art projects and networks. The net art artifacts of Mindaugas Gapševičius are often structurally and thematically associated with the Internet. They have

a complex nomadic structure: a group of people, using special programming software, create a system that acquires new elements as a result of the interactive communication of users who join the 'network' (the artifact). The users/viewers become co-authors of this net art project, members of a concrete virtual community. The project *asco-o* (<http://www.o-o.lt/asco-o>, <http://www.d2b.org/asco-o>), realized in collaboration with the French artist d2b, is a spam art project. The authors see this work as a joke. The title in itself is meaningless, as it is simply a link to the ASCII, the American Standard Code for Information Interchange. Users/viewers can make small transformations (anonymously writing messages to pre-programmed receivers and receiving answers in the same way), they can observe processes on a display and in this way participate in a community game. The project *asco-o* should not be identified with the images seen on the display. The latter provokes ever-new stages of interactive communication, and that creates the foundation for the work. This project is, according to Mindaugas Gapševičius, an infantile form of ASCII art. Yet the authors never intended to expand the project and turn it into a complicated ASCII mailing list work.

Many of the net art projects by these authors are characterized by this textual/performative form. The artifacts come to be seen as invitations to collaborate, to write or construct or 'draw' or gather data together. This is no coincidence; it is a result of the communicative nature of the Internet. More than any other medium the Internet has a capacity for drawing together communities with various interests, for helping to create and sustain contacts between different users of a network. This is considered to be one of the most valuable properties of net art. In Mindaugas Gapševičius's works, the viewers are quite often drawn into a common creative process. They are encouraged to create content (usually texts), to give it away to selected or identified recipients (<http://www.o-o.lt/action/boring/>, [http://www.o-o.lt/mi\\_ga/subject=](http://www.o-o.lt/mi_ga/subject=)) or to manipulate some details in a work (Field: [http://www.o-o.lt/mi\\_ga/field](http://www.o-o.lt/mi_ga/field)). This is also characteristic of Kęstutis Andrašiūnas's works ([http://www.o-o.lt/ke\\_an/digirose6.html](http://www.o-o.lt/ke_an/digirose6.html)). In one of his newest works, *Carpets* (<http://triple-double-u.com/>), Gapševičius uses the strategies of e-commerce. He sends out emails with the suggestion to buy the paper 'original', signed by the artist, of an electronic carpet 'woven' with the help of ASCII technology. Buyers get a better deal if they buy several units.

Kęstutis Andrašiūnas's work *3IP* (<http://3.o-o.lt>), which was realized in Berlin, was also based on communication according to the logic of the medium. In the course of interaction between man and machine and between machine and machine, IP addresses are converted into three-dimensional images. The 3D animations are created anew each time, and are

stored in the server database. The results of the image generation methods used in the project are not foreseeable (since it is impossible to know in advance the choices made by participants in the project). Therefore the creative process becomes unpredictable, acquiring playful elements. *3IP*, just as *asco-o*, could be characterized as interactive communication based on the expressions of the Internet. However, the 'creative activity' of the viewers/users is rather limited. This passivity is typical not only of these, but of many other net art works. The viewers are only executors/performers of the functions proposed to them by the program functions created by the author. Although it is possible to freely choose the content of the texts and some of the codes, the forms of the actions executed are determined beforehand by the programming software.

In 2000–2001 Kęstutis Andrašiūnas organized the virtual *OSF Banner Campaign* (<http://www.o-o.lt/action/banner>), where he brought together various net art projects that criticized the activities of the Open Society Fund (financed by the American philanthropist George Soros) and its influence on the development of art in the countries of post-Communist Europe. This was social critique expressed through textual, visual and audiovisual information. Such unified net art projects are very often realized, and in this way artists not only share the benefits of working as a group, but they also stretch the boundaries of concrete projects and make them more effective. Another project by Andrašiūnas of this kind is *DE\_TEXT* ([http://www.o-o.lt/ke\\_an/de\\_text/](http://www.o-o.lt/ke_an/de_text/)). It is an attempt to create an electronic text database, which would deliver maximum benefit to its users. The program should quicken and simplify the exchange of texts. There is also a special search system to ensure more efficient text transmission.

Mindaugas Gapševičius also actively collaborates with net artists from other countries. He has initiated a number of joint projects (*Bridges*, *Source for Art Schools*, *Tinker Net* etc.). Most collaborative international net art projects have an open, audio-visual hyper-textual structure that can be infinitely expanded as ever new members join. In some of the projects there is some form of selection, and some 'rules of the game' are defined: you have to know a password or meet some conditions if you want to join the creative group. In other projects the aim is to conquer the unlimited space of the Internet, through the use of various strategies for transmitting information.

Artists' works that are realized on the Internet differ fundamentally from works of art displayed in physical space. They do not have material, palpable form. They exist in a digital format, as sound and image information, conveyed in the form of hypertext. Net art does not have a definite visual language. In interactive works it constantly changes as viewers surf through their structures. Moreover, different artists use different forms of

expressions. Some experiment with pure form, others operate at the level of discourse. This is ephemeral, non-commercial art. It functions outside the market systems of the galleries. It is not meant to be shown in exhibitions. It is not bought or collected. Perhaps that is the reason it is not particularly popular among Lithuanian artists. Yet interest in the platforms of electronic art expression has been growing recently.

#### YOUTH MANIFESTATIONS

From 2000 onwards there has been a steady increase in activities on the Internet by young artists, electronic music composers and media activists. They have sought to realize their ambition and mission to draw together an electronic cultural community, to create independent spaces for exhibitions, communication and information and to enter the international media art circuit. Designers, DJs, VJs, visual artists and media art activists create these Internet projects. The titles and contents of the projects and portals testify to the young generation's quest for free and dynamic expressions of alternative culture, as well as to the typical rhetoric and aesthetics of the media subculture: *artscene.lt*, *surface.lt*, *d117.net*, *kitoki.com*, *rutrut.lt*, *surfaces.tinkle.lt*, *fluxus.lt*, *movethemovie.lt*, *miglos.ten.lt*.

In recent years there has also been a swell of initiatives to unite media culture with youth culture not only in virtual space, but in physical space as well. The bars and clubs of Lithuania's larger cities have become a kind of multicultural centers combining entertainment with cultural and artistic activities. *INTRO*, a center for youth culture and entertainment in Vilnius, has been very active in this field. It has hosted presentations by sound artists from Lithuania and abroad, VJ and DJ evenings, contemporary art exhibitions, public discussions with artists and other events. In 2003–2005 *Cinema/Bar Barbakanas* organized film and video art screenings for its visitors, and collaborated actively with various European cultural institutions. The bar was an open young artists' initiative, with close links to students at the Vilnius Art Academy and the Lithuanian Academy of Theatre and Music. The *Blue Orange* bar in Kaunas, which has long been a favorite hangout for students and artists, has expanded its activities from 2004 onwards with evening programs dedicated to electronic music and audiovisual art. The cafés of the French Cultural Center and the Contemporary Art Center in Vilnius are also open for innovative media art projects and for public discussions on current topics of contemporary culture.

In this survey of points of attraction for electronic culture and for media art enthusiasts and authors it is important to single out the multimedia

festival *Centras* ('Center'), a periodical event in Kaunas since 2002. Its initiators Gediminas Banaitis and Emanuelis Ryklys aim at furthering creative applications of advanced technologies, in reaction to the pragmatic view of information technology that is becoming predominant in Lithuania. This initiative has become a platform of expression for young creators and experimenters in the field of electronic art, a place where they can present their experiments, receive comments and feedback from like-minded colleagues and discuss current issues of media culture. Although small in scale, the festival contributes to overcoming the isolation of media culture in our country. It has helped people to get together and join international networks for practitioners in electronic culture. Every year at the *Centras* festival, young and ambitious Lithuanian artists present their newest works: D117, G-Lab and rutrut, Saulius Paliukas, Aurelija Maknytė, Tautvydas Bajarkevičius, Titas Petrikis, Saulius Arlauskas and many others. Although this initiative does not aspire to become a prestigious international festival of electronic media art, it is very important for developing Lithuanian media culture and encouraging the use of information and communication technology in art projects, since they are naturally grounded in the needs of the arts community and address creative issues that are topical at a regional level. In addition, that and other 'young initiatives' do not aim at self-representation, but answer to the cultural needs of media artists, activists and 'art consumers'.

#### TECHNOLOGICAL DISCOURSE AND AUTO-REFLECTION

Various interactive strategies are employed by Lithuanian media artists in works that are structurally and thematically associated with the discursive qualities of the medium itself. Usually such interactive installations are self-reflective in character and closely related to current discourses in cyber-culture, whereas the actual artifacts are constructed according to the principles of already existing devices and media. One of the first works in this category was Vytautas Žaltauskas's installation *Rotation* from 1998, put together from three computer monitors functioning like radars that register flight patterns. The whole triangular construction, with a computer screen in each corner, rotated around its axis, registering a supposedly stable object of observation: the moon. If you turned the construction a few degrees in any direction, the trajectory of the object under observation would also change. If you looked at the image on the monitors you would see 'objects registers by radar' because of the automatization of the viewing process brought about by the device.

Darius Mikšys's *9 Tracks* (2004) functions according to the principles of interactive television. The work consists of 9 parallel video loops on one

DVD. These are fragments of travel videos by the artist's friends that have nothing to do with each other. Different people shot them at different times and in different locations. By using a remote control panel viewers/interactors can freely surf between these video clips on the screen as if they were television channels, and thus edit their own version of this road movie. According to the author, the work is an experiment with non-linear cinema dedicated to viewers who like 'zapping' but hate television. The author analyses the impact of interactive media on traditional cinema by investigating how the introduction of an interactive parameter changes the visual structure of film, its relation to reality and its reception by the viewers.

Mindaugas Gapševičius's electronic video compilation *Ambii* (2002) can also be seen as an experiment in electronic cinema. It is an idea-based 'moving images' work without narration with a painterly rather than an audio-visual aesthetic, which emphasizes its material and metaphorical qualities. The work is compiled from 9 'low quality ambient' soundless video fragments, reminiscent of post-impressionist or 1950s abstract expressionist painting. Viewers press the appropriate key on a computer keyboard and see the selected video fragment on a monitor. In the image that appears they can, at first, make out representational fragments (outlines of trees, houses, people etc.) but they become gradually more abstract, until all contours disappear on the screen. This closeness of new-generation imagery to painting is not accidental, since the digital creation now tends to negate the reproducing functions of photography and become a new kind of painting in time, using special programming software instead of brushes. As William J. Mitchell points out, the essential characteristic of digital information is that it can be manipulated easily and very rapidly by the computer, thus computational tools for transforming, combining, altering, and analyzing images are as essential to the new media artists as brushes and pigments to a painter (Mitchell, J.W. 1992: 7).

The digital video works by other Lithuanian artists with professional artistic education stand out because of their plasticity, their abstraction and their use of strategies and means of expression borrowed from op and pop art. Characteristic examples of *electronic painting* are Saulius Paliukas's digital video *Drive without Drugs* and *Video Fluids*, which are rhythmically crafted collages of abstract dynamic images, Aurelija Maknytė's *Skaters* and Darius Žiūra's studies of mediated digital images from *South Park*. New media allow artists to use new creative methods in order to 'enlarge' and 'emphasize' significant media culture discourses and to create autonomous virtual heterogeneous worlds.

I have tried here to give a condensed presentation of Lithuanian new media art trends and the emblematic initiatives. I have introduced various authors and their artifacts that have already made a significant impact on

national and international new media art scene. The work of Gediminas and Nomeda Urbonas, Mindaugas Gapševičius, Kęstutis Andrašiūnas, Darius Mikšys and others present a wide range of creative strategies and discourses in Lithuanian new media art. Besides, the work of the artists mentioned in the text has stimulated many young artists to take interest in the new tools for the creation of novel heterogeneous worlds and exploration of identities.

*Received 2007 04 05*

*Accepted 2007 04 30*

## REFERENCES:

1. Federspiel, S. 2000. *Net Art Guide*, Stuttgart: Fraunhofer IRB Verlag.
2. Foucault, M. 1994. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books.
3. Lovink, G. 2005. *Hacking public spaces in Vilnius. Politics of a new media space inside the Lietuva (soviet) cinema*. In: <http://www.populism2005.com/index.asp?sivu=50&menu1=8&menu2=14> (03.15.2007)
4. Mitchell, J.W. 1992.: *Visual Truth in the Post-photographic Era*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
5. VILMA In: [http://vilma.cclen\\_index.php?mid=11&nid=58](http://vilma.cclen_index.php?mid=11&nid=58) (03.01.2007)



Renata Šukaitytė  
NAUJŲJŲ MEDIJŲ MENAS LIETUVOJE

## SANTRAUKA

Šiame straipsnyje siekiama nubrėžti pagrindines Lietuvos elektroninio meno kryptis ir įvardyti jas formuojančius menininkus bei aktyvistus, išskirti jų taikomas kūrybines strategijas ir pagrindinius naujos kartos artefaktų bruožus. Elektroninės medijos šalyje nuo pat jų išplitimo tapo naujos kartos menininkų refleksijų objektu ir raiškos bei eksperimentų priemone. Naujos medijos suteikė galimybes kurti simuliacinius institucinius modelius ir juos testuoti bei taikyti naujus bendradarbiavimo, bendravimo ir kūrimo metodus bei re/konstruoti naujas tapatybes ir „iš arčiau“ pažvelgti į visuomeninius elgsenos modelius. Lietuvos medijų menas yra heterogeniškas, apjungia linijines ir nelinijines medijas, audio ir vizualinę informaciją, tekstinius ir vaizdinius duomenis, egzistuoja *on-line* ir *off-line* patyrimo erdvėse. Būtent pastarasis medijų menas (dažniausiai pristatomas kaip vaizdo ir video instaliacijos) greitai įsitvirtino nacionalinio meno erdvėje, įgijo institucinį statusą. Tuo tarpu tinklo menas, interaktyvios instaliacijos, CD-ROMai, multimedijų menas ar virtualios realybės projektai tapo neatskiriama jaunimo subkultūrų dalimi, savotišku „kontra-kultūros“ reiškiniu.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: naujųjų medijų menas, elektroninės medijos, tinklo menas, interaktyvios instaliacijos, medijų laboratorijos.

## APIE AUTORIUS

**Jūratė Baranova** – filosofijos profesorė Socialinių mokslų fakultete Vilniaus pedagoginiame universitete. Vadovėlių *Politinė filosofija* (Vilnius: Pradai, 1995), *Filosofinės etikos chrestomatija XI–XII kl.* (Vilnius: Alma littera, 1998), *Istorijos filosofija* (Vilnius: Alma littera, 2000), *Etika: filosofija kaip praktika* (Vilnius: Tyto alba, 2002), kartu su Tomu Sodeika – „Filosofija XI–XII kl.“ (Vilnius: Tyto alba, 2002) bei knygų *XX amžiaus moralės filosofija: pokalbis su Kantu* (Vilnius: VPU leidykla, 2004), *Filosofija ir literatūra* (Vilnius: Tyto alba, 2006) autorė. Interesų sritys: šiuolaikinė filosofija, etika, politinė filosofija, literatūros filosofija.

**Andrius Bielskis** – politinės filosofijos profesorius ISM Vadybos ir ekonomikos universitete Lietuvoje. Apsigynęs daktaro disertaciją Warwicko universitete, dėstė Warwicko ir Astono universitetuose Didžiojoje Britanijoje. Jo tyrinėjimai apima politinės filosofijos, socialinės teorijos ir moralės filosofijos kryptis. Ypač domisi dorybių etika ir jos sisteminiu pritaikymu politinėje teorijoje. Rašo mokslinius straipsnius apie Aristotelį, MacIntyre'ą, Foucault, Nietzsche'ą, Gadamerį ir Habermas'ą. Taip pat yra knygos *Postmodernaus politiškumo supratimo link (Towards a Post-modern Understanding of the Political)*, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005) autorius. Ruošia naują knygą apie Alasdairą MacIntyre'ą ir Emmanuelį Leviną.

**Violeta Davoliūtė** – baigė Vilniaus ir Oksfordo universitetus, Toronto universitete Lyginamosios literatūros centre apsigynė kultūros studijų krypties daktaro disertaciją. Savo disertacijoje, remdamasi postmoderniomis reprezentacijos teorijomis bei atminties ir istorijos sąveika, ji tyrinėja liudijimų literatūros ir filmų atsiradimą dešimtajame XX a. dešimtmetyje bei tai interpretuoja kaip naują žanrą, kuriuo atkreipiamas dėmesys į postmodernią reprezentacijos krizę. Panašiomis temomis išspausdino nemažai straipsnių, dabar ruošia publikacijai knygą, skirtą kolektyvinės atminties vystymuisi Lietuvoje. Ji bus spausdinama Rodopi leidykloje pavadinimu *Atminties kraštovaizdžiai: trauma ir vietovės poetika* (*Landscapes of Memory: Trauma and the Poetics of Place*).

**Algirdas Degutis** – vyresnysis mokslo darbuotojas Dabartinės filosofijos skyriuje Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institute. Paskelbė tris monografijas (*Язык, мышление и действительность: очерк теории значения в аналитической философии* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1984) (*Kalba, mąstymas ir tikrovė: reikšmės teorijos analitinėje filosofijoje apybraiža*), *Individualizmas ir visuomeninė tvarka* (Vilnius: Eugrimas 1998)), *Kalba, pažinimas ir veiksmas* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2007), daugiau nei 100 mokslinių ir publicistinių straipsnių, išvertė per 30 politinės filosofijos veikalų (J. Locke'o, F. Von Hayeko, L. Von Miseso, M. Friedmano, R. Nozicko ir kt.). Mokslinio darbo sritys: analitinė filosofija, politinė filosofija.

**Renata Dubinskaitė** – doktorantė, meno kritikė, kuratorė. Ji studijavo meno istoriją ir teoriją Vilniaus dailės akademijoje, 2002 m. įgijo magistro laipsnį už darbą apie subjekto tapatybės problemas Lietuvos, Latvijos ir Estijos video mene. 2004 m. įstojo į doktorantūrą Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institute ir video meno tyrimus praplėtė sąsajomis su dokumentinio kino praktikomis (disertacija „Dokumentiniai lietuviškojo video meno aspektai“). Nuo 2001 m. Šiuolaikinio meno centre Vilniuje kuruoja parodas, koordinuoja spaudos ir viešuosius ryšius. Spausdina straipsnius apie šiuolaikinį meną kultūrinėje spaudoje, parodų kataloguose ir kitoje spaudoje.

**Algis Mickūnas** – Ohajo universiteto filosofijos profesorius. Knygų *Komunikacijos mokslas: jo fenomenologinis pagrindas*, su Josephu J. Pilotta (*Science of Communication: Its Phenomenological Foundation*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1990), *Fenomenologinė filosofija*, su Davidu Stewartu (*Exploring Phenomenology: a Guide to the Field and Its Literature*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990) į lietuvių kalbą išversta 1994 m. (Vilnius: Baltos lankos), *Visa aprėpianti dabartis. Algį Mickūną kalbina Arū-*

*nas Sverdiolas* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2004) autorius. Mokslinių interesų sritys: fenomenologija, šiuolaikinė europietiškoji filosofija, XIX-XX amžių Europos filosofija.

**Nerijus Milerius** – Vilniaus universiteto Filosofijos fakulteto Filosofijos katedros docentas. 1995 baigė Vilniaus universitetą (MA), 1998-1999 m. studijavo Paryžiaus XII-ame Universitete ir įgijo DEA (pirmosios doktorantūros studijos) diplomą, 2000 m. Vilniaus universitete apsigynė daktaro disertaciją „Kasdienis pasaulis ir savastis“. Skaitė paskaitas Lietuvos, Baltarusijos, Rusijos, Indijos universitetuose. Paskelbė apie 20 mokslinių straipsnių. Mokslinių interesų sritys: šiuolaikinė filosofija, vizualumo studijos, filosofiniai urbanistikos pagrindai, kino filosofija.

**Vytautas Rubavičius** – Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno instituto vyresnysis mokslo darbuotojas. 2001 m. Vilniaus universitete apgynė disertaciją „Postmoderniojo diskurso hermeneutiškumas ir „estetiskumas“. Knygos *Postmodernusis diskursas: hermeneutika, dekonstrukcija, menas* (Vilnius: Kfmi leidykla, 2003) autorius. Paskelbė virš 20 mokslinių publikacijų. Mokslinių interesų sritys: postmodernusis filosofinis diskursas, filosofinė hermeneutika, komparatyvistinė kultūrologija, kultūrų sąveika globalizacijos sąlygomis, kultūra ir vartojimas. Rašytojų sąjungos narys, daugelio grožinės literatūros, poezijos ir kritikos kūrinių autorius, vertėjas.

**Arūnas Sverdiolas** – vyriausiasis mokslo darbuotojas Dabartinės filosofijos skyriuje Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institute. Knygų *Kultūros filosofija Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1983), *Steigtis ir sauga* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1996), *Būti ir klausti. Hermeneutinės filosofijos studijos – 1* (Vilnius: Strofa, 2002), *Aiškinimo ratas. Hermeneutinės filosofijos studijos – 2* (Vilnius: Strofa, 2003) *Visa aprėpianti dabartis. Algį Mickūną kalbina Arūnas Sverdiolas* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2004), *Apie pamėklinę būtį ir kiti etiudai* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2006) autorius. Išspausdino daugiau nei keturiasdešimt straipsnių moksliniuose leidiniuose, parengė ir išvertė per 20 knygų. Mokslinių interesų sritys: kultūros filosofija, fenomenologinė ir hermeneutinė filosofija, kultūros teorija, humanitarinių mokslų metodologija.

**Renata Šukaitytė** yra Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto, Menų instituto (Kauņas, Lietuva) doktorantė. Savo disertacijoje ji analizuoja elektroninių medijų meno vystymąsi ir jo kultūrinę reikšmę Lietuvoje, Latvijoje ir Estijoje XX a. 10 deš. Vytauto Didžiojo universitete įgijo meno kritikos bakalauro laipsnį, o Lodzės universitete (Lenkija) įgijo kintotyros magistro laipsnį. Mokslinių interesų sritys: naujų medijų menas ir kultūra, šiuolaikinio kino tyrinėjimai.

**Audronė Žukauskaitė** – vyresnioji mokslo darbuotoja Dabartinės filosofijos skyriuje Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institute. Knygų *Anapus signifikanto principo: dekonstrukcija, psichoanalizė, ideologijos kritika* (Aidai, 2001), *Anamorfozės. Nepamatinės filosofijos problemos* (Versus aureus, 2005) autorė. Sudarė ir išvertė Slavojaus Žižeko darbų rinktinę *Viskas, ką norėjote sužinoti apie Žižeką, bet nedrįsote paklausti Lacano* (LRSL, 2005), sudarė penkis leidinius šiuolaikinės filosofijos ir kultūros temomis. Mokslinių interesų sritys: šiuolaikinė filosofija, psichoanalizė, lyčių studijos, vizualinės kultūros studijos.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Jūratė Baranova** is Professor of Philosophy at Vilnius Pedagogical University (Lithuania). She is an author of books *XX amžiaus moralės filosofija: pokalbis su Kantu* (Vilnius: VPU leidykla, 2004) (*Moral Philosophy of XX Century: Conversation with Kant*), *Filosofija ir literatūra* (Vilnius: Tyto alba, 2006) (*Philosophy and Literature*). She is also the author of these textbooks: *Politinė filosofija* (Vilnius: Pradai, 1995) (*Political Philosophy*), *Filosofinės etikos chrestomatija XI-XII kl.* (Vilnius: Alma littera, 1998) (*Anthology of Philosophical Ethics*), *Istorijos filosofija* (Vilnius: Alma littera, 2000) (*Philosophy of History*), *Etika: filosofija kaip praktika* (Vilnius: Tyto alba, 2002) (*Ethics: Philosophy as Practice*), and, with Tomas Sodeika, *Philosophy* (Vilnius: Tyto alba, 2002). Among her areas of interest and research are contemporary philosophy, ethics, political philosophy, and philosophy of literature.

**Andrius Bielskis** is Professor of Political Philosophy at ISM University of Management and Economics in Lithuania. After completing his doctoral research in philosophy at the University of Warwick, he taught political philosophy and political theory at London Metropolitan University, the University of Warwick and Aston University in Britain. His work covers political philosophy, social theory and moral philosophy. He is especially interested in virtue ethics and its systemic application in political theory. He writes

scholarly articles on Aristotle, MacIntyre, Foucault, Nietzsche, Gadamer, and Habermas. Andrius Bielskis is the author of *Towards a Post-modern Understanding of the Political* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005). He is currently working on a new book on Alasdair MacIntyre and Emmanuel Levinas.

**Violeta Davoliūtė** - a graduate of Vilnius and Oxford Universities, defended her doctoral thesis in cultural studies at the University of Toronto Centre for Comparative Literature. Building on postmodern theories of representation and the interplay of memory and history, her thesis interprets the rise of testimonial literature and film through the 1990s as the emergence of a new genre meant to address the post-modern crisis of representation. She has published extensively on related issues and is currently revising a manuscript on the evolution of collective memory in Lithuania, for publication by Rodopi, entitled *Landscapes of Memory: Trauma and the Poetics of Place*.

**Algirdas Degutis** is a senior research fellow at Culture, Philosophy, and Arts Research Institute, Vilnius, Lithuania. In addition to 50 scientific articles, he is an author of three books: *Язык, мышление и действительность : очерк теории значения в аналитической философии* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1984), (*Language, Thought, and Reality: Outline of the Theory of Meaning in Analytic Philosophy*), *Individualizmas ir visuomeninė tvarka* (Vilnius: Eugrimas 1998) (*Individualism and Social Order*), *Kalba, pažinimas ir veiksmai* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2007) (*Language, Knowledge and Action*). He translated more than 30 books of political philosophy (J. Locke, F. von Hayek, L. von Mises, M. Friedman, R. Nozick). Areas of scientific interest: analytic philosophy, political philosophy.

**Renata Dubinskaitė** is an art critic, curator and PhD student. She studied art history and theory in Vilnius Art Academy, which she graduated in 2002 with her Master degree diploma on problems of subject's identity in Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian video art. In 2004 she started doctoral studies in Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute extending video art research with the links to documentary film practices ("Documentary Aspects of Lithuanian Video Art"). Since 2001 she curates exhibitions, coordinates press and public relations in the Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius. She constantly publishes articles on contemporary art in cultural press, exhibition catalogues and other publications.

**Algis Mickūnas** is Professor of philosophy at Ohio University (USA). He is an author of the books: *Science of Communication: Its Phenomenological Foundation*, with Joseph J. Pilotta (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum



Associates, 1990); *Exploring Phenomenology: a Guide to the Field and Its Literature*, revised edition, with David Stewart (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990; translated into Lithuanian in 1994 as *Fenomenologinė filosofija* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos); *Visa aprėpianti dabartis. Algį Mickūną kalbina Arūnas Sverdiolas* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2004) (*All-encompassing Present. Algis Mickūnas in conversation with Arūnas Sverdiolas*) Areas of specialization and competence: phenomenology, contemporary European philosophy, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century European philosophy.

**Nerijus Milerius** is a graduate of Vilnius University (1995). He achieved DEA at Paris-XII, France (1999), defended his PhD thesis (“Everyday World and Selfhood”) in Vilnius University (2001). Recent positions: Associate professor at Vilnius University. Visiting lecturer in EHU (former location in Minsk, recently in Vilnius), Russian Academy of Sciences, Universities of India etc. He is an author of about 20 scientific articles. Research interests: contemporary philosophy, visual studies, urban studies, philosophy of cinema.

**Vytautas Rubavičius** is senior researcher in Culture, Philosophy, and Arts Research Institute, Vilnius, Lithuania. He defended his PhD thesis “Hermeneutics and “Aesthetics” of Postmodern Discourse” at Vilnius University in 2001. He is the author of the book *Postmodernusis diskursas: hermeneutika, dekonstrukcija, menas* (Vilnius: Kfmi leidykla, 2003) (*Postmodern Discourse: Hermeneutics, Deconstruction, Art*) and of more than 20 scientific articles. Fields of scientific research: postmodern philosophical discourse, philosophical hermeneutics, comparative cultural studies, interaction of cultures in the situation of globalization, culture and consumption. He is also a member of Lithuanian Writers’ Union, an author of numerous works of poetry, fiction and critique, and a translator.

**Arūnas Sverdiolas** is head researcher in Culture, Philosophy, and Arts Research Institute, Vilnius, Lithuania. He is the author of the books: *Kultūros filosofija Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1983) (*Philosophy of Culture in Lithuania*), *Steigtis ir sauga. Kultūros filosofijos etiudai* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1996) (*Constitution and Preservation. Studies in Philosophy of Culture*), *Būti ir klausti. Hermeneutinės filosofijos studijos – 1* (Vilnius: Strofa, 2002) (*Being and Asking. Studies in Philosophical Hermeneutics – 1*), *Aiškinimo ratas. Hermeneutinės filosofijos studijos – 2* (Vilnius: Strofa, 2003) (*Circle of Interpretation. Studies in Philosophical Hermeneutics – 2*), *Visa aprėpianti dabartis. Algį Mickūną kalbina Arūnas Sverdiolas* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2004) (*All-encompassing Present. Algis Mickūnas in conversation with Arūnas Sverdiolas*), *Apie pamėklinę*

*būtį ir kiti etiudai* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2006) (*On Simulacric Being and Other Sketches*). He published more than 40 scientific articles, edited and translated more than 20 books of philosophy. Research interests: philosophy of culture, phenomenological and hermeneutical philosophy, theory of culture, methodology of humanities.

**Renata Šukaitytė** is a doctoral student at Vytautas Magnus University, Art Institute in Kaunas (Lithuania). Her PhD thesis is focused on the analysis of the electronic media art development and cultural significance in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the last decade. She holds a BA in Art Criticism from Vytautas Magnus University and MA in Film Science from University of Lodz (Poland). Her scholarly interests cover the area of new media art and culture as well as contemporary cinema.

**Audronė Žukauskaitė** is senior researcher in Culture, Philosophy, and Arts Research Institute, Vilnius, Lithuania. She is the author of the books: *Anapus signifikanto principo: dekonstrukcija, psichoanalizė, ideologijos kritika* (Aidai, 2001) (*Beyond the Signifier Principle: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, Critique of Ideology*); *Anamorfozės. Nepamatinės filosofijos problemos* (Versus aureus, 2005) (*Anamorphoses: Non-Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*). She edited and translated Slavoj Žižek's Reader *Viskas, ką norėjote sužinoti apie Žižeką, bet nedrįsote paklausti Lacano* (Vilnius: LRSL, 2005) (*Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Žižek But Were Afraid to Ask Lacan*). She is the editor of five volumes on different aspects of contemporary philosophy and culture. Research interests: contemporary philosophy, psychoanalysis, gender studies, visual culture studies.

## NURODYMAI AUTORIAMŠ

1. Leidinyje skelbiami atskirai temai skirti moksliniai straipsniai bei studijos, aprėpiančios įvairias šiuolaikinės filosofinės minties raiškos sritis – etiką, estetiką, kultūros, mokslo, kalbos filosofijos, filosofijos istorijos tyrimai. Leidinyje taip pat spausdinamos reikšmingų filosofijos darbų recenzijos bei filosofinio gyvenimo apžvalga.

2. Tekstai spausdinami lietuvių, anglų, vokiečių ir prancūzų kalbomis.

3. Straipsnių ar studijų struktūra: antraštė, autoriaus vardas ir pavardė, mokslo įstaigos, kurioje darbas atliktas, pavadinimas, adresas (įstaigos ar autoriaus namų), telefono ir fakso numeris, elektroninio pašto adresas, straipsnio tekstas, straipsnio santrauka anglų (antraštė, autoriaus vardas ir pavardė, ne trumpesnis kaip 1000 spaudos ženklų tekstas) arba lietuvių (jei straipsnis parašytas angliškai, vokiškai ar prancūziškai) kalba.

4. Pastabos pateikiamos išnašose puslapio apačioje.

5. Šaltiniai nurodomi pagal šiuos pavyzdžius:

*Monografijos:*

Degutis, A. 1998. *Individualizmas ir visuomeninė tvarka*. Vilnius: Eugrimas.

Leidimas nurodomas, jei cituojamas ar nurodomas šaltinio leidimas nėra pirmasis.

*Straipsniai iš žurnalų:*

Greimas, A.J. 1974. Struktūra ir istorija. *Problemos*, Nr. 2 (14).

*Straipsniai rinkiniuose:*

Hayek, F. 1984. Competition as a Discovery Procedure. In: *The Essence Of Hayek*, ed. by Ch.Mishiyama and K.Leube. Stanford : Hoover Institution Press.

Šaltiniai pateikiami originalo rašyba.

*Kaip cituoti elektroninius šaltinius žr.:*

[Http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/using\\_the\\_library/html/harvard\\_system.html#Citation](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/using_the_library/html/harvard_system.html#Citation).

[Http://wwwlib.murdoch.edu.au/guides/harvard.html](http://wwwlib.murdoch.edu.au/guides/harvard.html)

6. Tekste literatūros šaltiniai nurodomi vadovaujantis Harvardo nuorodų sistema: skliausteliuose nurodoma šaltinio autoriaus pavardė, leidimo metai, puslapis ar puslapiai. Autoriaus pavardės galima neminėti, jeigu iš konteksto visiškai aišku, kuriam autoriui priklauso nurodomas darbas.

7. Pateikiama straipsnio (ar studijos) ir visų jo priedų 2 komplektai, išspausdinti popieriuje (dvigubu intervalu) ir įrašas į diskelį Winword formatu, ne mažiau kaip 20 000 spaudos ženklų arba 0,5 aut. lanko.

8. Straipsnis (ar studija) pristatoma su 2 recenzijomis arba su leidinio redakcinės kolegijos nario rekomendacija; straipsnio svarstymo mokslinės institucijos padalinyje protokolo išrašas prilyginamas recenzijai.

9. Straipsnius, studijas, vertimus, recenzijas, apžvalgas prašome atnešti į KFMI 215 kab. arba atsiųsti adresu KFMI, Saltoniškių 58, Lt-08105, Vilnius, tel: 2752857, 2758662, 2751898; faks. 2751898.

## GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

1. Each edition of this periodical will be devoted to a concrete philosophical theme. Scholarly articles and studies published in each edition of *Athena* may discuss problems that are specific to particular domains of contemporary philosophy, be it ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, history of philosophy, and so on. Yet all these articles and studies, while discussing different cases from different areas of contemporary philosophy, in each edition of *Athena* should have in common a particular philosophical theme chosen for that particular edition, so that all these different cases from different areas of philosophy might reveal different aspects of one chosen philosophical theme or problem. A new philosophical theme for each following edition of *Athena* will be announced for potential contributors in advance by electronic means. Reviews of important philosophical works and synopses of philosophical life in Lithuania and abroad will also be published in this periodical.

2. The texts will be accepted and published in Lithuanian, English, German, and French.

3. The structure of each submitted article or study should be as follows: the title, the author's full name, the name of the scholarly institution wherein the research was conducted, the address of the institution or the

author's home address, the author's work or home phone number and, if available, fax number, e-mail address, the article's text, the article's summary in English (the title, the author's full name, and the text of article's summary, no less than 1000 symbols). If the article itself is submitted in English, German, or French, a summary in Lithuanian of indicated length is required.

4. The notes should be presented in the form of footnotes (that is, the notes at the bottom of the page).

5. Bibliographical sources of the text should be cited according to Harvard citation system, that is, in the brackets should be indicated the name of the source's author, the year of the source's publication, and the relevant page (or pages). The name of the author need not be mentioned if in the process of source's citation his/her identity is absolutely clear from the context. The sources should be indicated according to these examples:

*Monographs:*

Degutis, A. 1998. *Individualizmas ir visuomeninė tvarka*. Vilnius: Eugrimas.

The number of cited or indicated source's edition should be given, unless the edition of the source is the first one.

*Articles from journals and other periodicals should be cited as follows:*

Greimas, A. J. 1974. Struktūra ir istorija. *Problemos*, Nr. 2 (14).

*Articles from collections of articles should be cited as follows:*

Hayek, F. 1984. Competition as a Discovery Procedure. In: *The Essence Of Hayek*, ed. by Ch.Mishiyama and K.Leube. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

All sources should be cited in the language (and writing) of the original.

*If you need information about how to cite electronic sources, please consult these websites:*

[Http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/using\\_the\\_library/html/harvard\\_system.html#Citation](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/using_the_library/html/harvard_system.html#Citation).

[Http://www.lib.murdoch.edu.au/guides/harvard.html](http://www.lib.murdoch.edu.au/guides/harvard.html)

6. The author should submit 2 copies of his/her article or study and all its annexes, both in paper form (printed at double interval) and electronic form (information in a floppy disc should be stored according to the Winword format). The length of submitted article should be no less than 20 000 symbols, that is, one half of an authorial printer's sheet.

7. The submitted article or study should be accompanied by written reviews of two scholars, both experts in the field, or with a recommendation of one of the members of the editorial board of *Athena*. If the article undergoes an expert scrutiny in the department of a scholarly institution, the extract from the minutes is required and will be considered equal to one written review.

8. Articles, studies, translations, reviews of books and synopses of events should be delivered to the Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute (CPARI or, in Lithuanian, KFMI) in Vilnius, room 215, or sent by mail (the address is: KFMI, Saltoniškių 58, LT-08105, Vilnius, Lithuania).



## Athena

Filosofijos studijos  
2007 Nr.3

Viršelio dailininkas *Adomas Matuliaskas*  
Maketuotojas *Linas Vaškevičius*

Tiražas 300 egz.

Išleido „Versus aureus“ leidykla  
Rūdninkų g. 10, Vilnius LT-01135

[versus@versus.lt](mailto:versus@versus.lt) | [www.versus.lt](http://www.versus.lt)

Spausdino UAB „Petro ofsetas“  
Žalgirio g. 90, Vilnius LT-09303

[repro@petrooffsetas.lt](mailto:repro@petrooffsetas.lt) | [www.petrooffsetas.lt](http://www.petrooffsetas.lt)