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ART AS FORCE. SITUATIONISM AND POPULAR ART INTERNATIONAL SITUATIONISM

THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL(S): THE REALISATION OF ART

MIKKEL BOLT RASMUSSEN¹

Abstract

The text presents the small international post-world war two vanguard, the Situationist International, and the different factions of the group that all sought to realise art with a view to revolutionizing capitalist society. One faction led by Guy Debord abandoned art and the art institution in favor of an art of war, that is the setting in work of revolutionary actions and the elaboration of a revolutionary theory about a communist abolition of capitalist money economy. Another faction, organized by Jørgen Nash, sought to use art and the art institution in an attempt to provoke bourgeois society.

Keywords: The Situationist International; avant-garde; Marxism; modern art.

The Situationist International is a complex affair with a history that includes a series of publications, the creation, split and dissolution of an organisation as well as a series of concepts, analyses and practices within the fields of urbanism, mass media, political economy, revolutionary strategy, the working-class movement and art and film. These subjects were not to be separated but treated as part of a totality addressed by the group theoretically and practically

The Situationists' project was characterised by its refusal of both the established art world and all reformist political organisations. The Situationists attacked the naive belief in art as well as politics as the

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illusionary means of emancipation from the society of the spectacle. The task was to supersede art as a separate sphere of society as well as politics, state and legislation. In that sense the last thing the Situationists wanted was to end their days in a museum of art or as a topic for a seminar in a dance festival.

It is customary to divide the existence of the Situationist organisation into two phases. From 1957 to 1961 different artistic media like painting and architecture were used as instruments by the Situationists in their critique of the society of the spectacle and its art. In 1961 there occurred a split in the group resulting in the creation of a rival Situationist group led by Jørgen Nash who wanted to continue using art in the battle against a boring and repressive society. This was no longer a possibility the other faction centred around Debord argued replacing artistic experiments with the development of a theory, or revolutionary theory-practice about post-war capitalist society. From 1962 the so-called First Situationist International focused on analysing what they theorised as the society of the spectacle. According to the Situationists the dominance of capital was being perfected through the general commodification of fetishes in the production and consumption of material and symbolic goods – all of which were representations or images. The society of the spectacle disseminated appearances through a symbolic production apparatus of gigantic proportions. In this process where society was no longer justified by reference to anything beyond it. Capitalism was engaged in a sweeping attempt to empty society of all 'association' and 'community' with the object of consolidating the overproduction and consumption of commodities. This development was followed by a parallel attempt in which the state, as the loyal associate of capital, rapidly involved itself in the day-to-day instrumentation of consumer obedience. Capitalism tried to prevent the realization of the new revolutionary possibilities by creating a mirror image in which the division of society was concealed by false representations. The result of this process was the society of the spectacle, the spectacular market society, where people passively contemplated a world beyond their intervention.

Some of the Situationists participated actively in the occupation of the Sorbonne and were among other things responsible for a large part

of the communiqués that were sent out during the occupation. After May '68 the Situationists argued that time was producing revolutionaries and that it was thus no longer necessary with a formal organisation. In 1972 the group was officially dissolved by Debord and Gianfranco Sanguinetti.

It was during the first phase from 1957 to 1961, when artists like Asger Jorn and Constant were active, that the group developed a series of techniques with which the Situationists sought to dominate the artistic media and use art as a propaganda tool. Even in this first phase the Situationists did not regard their praxis as artistic in a straight forward sense, mixing ultra-left currents like council communism and Western Marxism with interest in Surrealism and Dada. "We take our stand on the other side of culture. Not before it, but *after it*. We feel it is necessary to realise culture by transcending it as a separate sphere" (*Internationale situationniste* 1963, 21). Following the almost invisible project of the Lettrist International, which took place far away from the institution of art and the political scene throughout the 1950s, the Situationist project was initiated as an attempt to create a revolutionary avant-garde that could coordinate the struggle against capital. The Situationists wanted to create a counter public sphere where they could unite the dispersed attempts to challenge the existing state of things. The struggle against capital was to take place as an *Aufhebung* of art and politics; these separate spheres were to be superseded by a total revolutionary activity. Art thus formed a part of the Situationist project, but only in as far as art was realised in everyday life; art was not a goal in itself. The creation of works of art to be displayed in galleries and museums was counter to the interests of the Situationists. Revolutionary art took place beyond the institution of art and beyond the separation of artist and spectator thereby overcoming the cultural division of labour according to which some people are creative while most people are mere spectators. Instead of showing people how to live the point was to make people live.

The Realisation of Art

During discussions in the group in 1960 and 1961 there emerged two opposed conceptions of the way to deal with art and realising the

transgressive potential of art in a situation of conformism. A majority headed by Debord argued that art was in fact dead and that it was no longer possible to continue producing individual works of art. Instead it was necessary to engage in what they described as an art of war where they sought to develop an all-inclusive critique of the new forms of domination coming into being in the booming post-war economies.

During the conference in Gothenburg in 1961, Raoul Vaneigem had set forth the complex Situationist stance on art, arguing that 'traditional' modern art was no longer possible as a critical gesture. Only in so far as the entirety of society was reconstructed could 'separate' art be renewed, becoming a kind of post-artistic explosion that united theory and practice. Under capitalist rule, art could at best be a reified expression of a previous radical gesture: Modern art had come to an end. With the defeat of the proletarian uprising in the early 1920s, the conditions of possibility of modern art had disappeared, and art had since been capable only of consolidating ruling tastes. Situationists were free to create critical personal 'non-Situationist' artefacts, Vaneigem said, but it was important that these artefacts were not regarded as Situationist art. There was no Situationist art.

A small minority objected among them Nash and Gruppe SPUR. They argued that it was precisely in art that the Situationists were able to articulate a critique of present society, and that it was in the art milieu that the Situationists had made important advances, establishing contact with experimental artists across Europe. They were sceptical of the way in which Vaneigem embedded Situationist theory in Marxism, referring to the proletariat as a potential class-of-consciousness and as the revolutionary subject in waiting. According to Nash and SPUR, the proletariat had become integrated into the new welfare society and had thus lost its historical agency. It was through art – the last vestige of freedom – that the Situationist project could be set in motion and ultimately realised.

In retrospect, it is evident that both factions actually wished to realise art, but they differed when it came to the means and the analysis of the necessary preconditions. The group that gathered around Debord and Vaneigem argued that it was necessary to negate art as it was just another expression of how the capitalist mode of production separated proletarians from each other and rendered them passive.

The dissenting artists also sought to realise art but did not understand why it would be necessary to revive a Hegelian-Marxist vocabulary concerning the proletariat. Art was still *the* resource. The artists were also critical of the institutionalisation and commercialisation of art in post-war Europe, but they did not wish to relinquish the creativity of the artist. Art was thus not dead. Instead of basing their sense of revolutionary possibilities on the ability of the proletariat to revolt, the artists wished to realise art in the here and now, transforming audience members into active participants. As Nash put it: "The essential in Situationism is the relationship of human beings to the forces of creativity; it is the intention to realise these forces through moments of creativity. The Situationist idea is based on the use and the forces of creativity directly in the social environment". They thus insisted on free use of artistic means of expression and new modes of symbolic production. The revolution will begin in art. Artists should seize power and take over the means of symbolic production, realising art and thereby liberating the aesthetic energy with which humans are equipped. Everybody should become an artist.

When the dissenting artist were expelled in 1962 Nash established the Second Situationist International and carried through a staggering amount of provocations in the art institution and outside trying to set free as much creativity as possible. If the First Situationist International recoiled from the recuperative light of the spectacle, the Drakabygget movement basked in the attention of the media. The bigger the scandal the better. The media was the battlefield and instead of trying to escape and become "angels of purity" like Debord the Scandinavians Situationists sought to work the media, being faster than the media and creating media scandals with a view to causing scandals that would, that was the hope, get people to react.

Nash and Thorsen often worked together with journalists from Danish and Swedish newspapers in order to get attention and cause a stir. When Thorsen walked around in Odense as Jesus Christ, carrying a large cross in connection with the opening of the 'Seven Rebels' exhibition in 1962, he himself called a photographer from the daily paper *Information*, ensuring that his performance did not go unnoticed in the press. Nash and Thorsen were shrewd operators and did not care

about notions of authenticity or artistic copyright, producing fake Jorn paintings, blackmailing gallerists, and cheating colleagues. They sought to scandalise both the established art institution as well as the broader public sphere. The goal was to liberate the spectator from his or her passive role as a consumer of dull representations. Nash described this practice as “spiritual anarchism”.

Détournement

One of Situationists' main techniques for destroying the spectacle and for disrupting the false coherence of the capitalist system was the so-called *détournement* where an already existing expression was changed. In this operation the process of signification is exposed and the original intention is denaturalised. According to the Situationists, the *détournement* was not only supposed to scandalise art, but also to make propaganda for the Situationist cause. The *détournement* technique was used in a range of different contexts over the years: Jorn used it in his artistic modifications where he painted onto old second-rate canvases, Debord used the technique in his films where he appropriated sequences from commercials, newsreels and westerns, and Michèle Bernstein used it in her novels *Tous les chevaux du roi* and *La Nuit* where she mocked the style of *Le Nouveau Roman*. The Danish Situationist, J. V. Martin, used the technique on several occasions where he changed images from the daily newspapers and exposed what, according to the Situationists, was the false coherence of the spectacle. In 1964 Martin produced a thousand postcards with an image of the British call girl Christine Keeler. Martin had drawn a balloon from Keeler's mouth: “As the Situationist International says: It is more honourable to be a prostitute like me than to marry a fascist like Konstantin.” The year before Christine Keeler had caught the public eye when it came out that she was sleeping with a Soviet navy officer, Eugene Ivanov, at the same time as she was sleeping with the British Secretary of State for War, John Profumo. Profumo lied about the affair and was subsequently forced to resign. During the scandal, the photographer Lewis Morley took a series of photos of Keeler to be used in connection with the promotion of a motion picture

that was never realised. In one of the photos a naked Keeler is sitting astride a copy of the Danish designer Arne Jacobsen's famous ant-chair. This photo was quickly reproduced in magazines and circulated all over the world. It was this photo Martin chose for the postcard with which he attempted to scandalise the royal Danish family. The juxtaposition of a naked Keeler and the text bubble, in which the recently celebrated marriage between Danish Princess Anne-Marie and the Greek King Konstantin was invoked, left little doubt as to the Situationist attitude towards the political situation in Greece. The British government, the Greek and the Danish monarchy were, according to Martin, all part of a crypto-fascist world whose days were numbered. Beneath the make-up Keeler was a corpse. The bad reproduction of the postcard just underlined this aspect: It was a matter of time; along with the rest of this world she was doomed. The Danish monarchy and the British government were going down. All these sparkling representations were going to be torn aside by the destructive movement of the revolution.

In the years after 1961 the *détournement* technique was very rarely used in connection with the traditional media of art. Instead, it was in the streets that the Situationists tried to put the technique to use. These activities culminated in May '68 in Paris where several Situationists took part in the occupation of the Sorbonne. Barricades were built and the police were met with Molotov cocktails and bricks. Cars were set on fire, shops were robbed and the walls of the city were covered with slogans and graffiti. For the Situationists this was the right use of the *détournement* technique. A different use of the city suddenly became visible, challenging capitalism's organization of the environment. The fight against the spectacle had to take place here and now. The spectacular market economy and its shining depotentiated representations had to be smashed.

Exit

One of the aspects that distinguish the Situationists from both contemporary and later politicized artistic practices was the belief that capitalism was doomed. In accordance with their reliance on a council communist reading of capital they were sure that capitalism could not overcome its

contradictions; they were sure that the death of the spectacular commodity economy was at hand and they worked hard to make this happen. *Les trente glorieuse* and the golden days of capitalism were just a desperate attempt to postpone the day of reckoning, they argued. The task was therefore to analyse this boom as a temporary phenomena, as a superficial solution of the real problems of capital, and the task of the avant-garde was to accelerate the impending collapse of the spectacle. This vision marked all facets of the Situationist project; they were involved in a civil war and fought for the execution of a gigantic catharsis where mankind would be liberated from capitalism, which had stolen the labour of man. As the group put it in 1962: "The only useful thing left to do is to reconstruct society and life on other foundations" (*Internationale situationniste* 1962, 23).

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ASGER JORN AND THE CONTROVERSIAL TOPICALITY OF SITUATIONISM

ANDRÉ EIERMANN¹

Abstract

With focus on the significance of Asger Jorn for situationism, in view of two Norwegian collections containing works by him, and with particular regard to contemporary performing art, this article discusses the question whether – and if so: as to whether – situationism and its strategies are still of topicality today.

Keywords: Asger Jorn, Co-ritus, Kunstsilo, relational aesthetics, relational antagonism, postspectacular theatre, détournement, dérive.

The performer finishes his text by inviting the audience to follow him on a tour through the building. It is called *Kilden* (meaning *The Source*), and it's Norway's second biggest theatre and concert hall, located in Kristiansand, Norway's fifth biggest city (tendency growing). The performance is titled *FOR ANDRE TING*, a pun playing with the different meanings of the Norwegian formulations *for andre ting* (for other things) and *forandre ting* (changing things), and it is a project I realized with students of the Bachelor's Programme in Theater Education at the University of Agder in 2018.²

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² *FOR ANDRE TING* was first presented on April 20th and 21st 2018, and then again in the framework of SAND-festival on September 14th 2018, developed with and performed by the students Leon Berglie, Åshild Bjørnstad, Ida Vaage Brådalén, Sander Cyvin, Line Hauge, Håkon Henriksen, Fredrik Landmark, Lise Lilletun Christensen, Marthe Løvik Markussen and Truls Ørbek.

As the spectators follow the performer's³ invitation and leave the theatre bar, where they before were received with popcorn, music, and a casual introduction into the performance's ostensible topic: change, they find the performer waiting for them in front of the door to the main theatre hall. But instead of opening this door for them, he just opens it quickly for himself and disappears behind it, leaving the spectators alone on the corridor. However, they do not have to wait long for something else to happen. As if triggered by the performer's slamming of the door, an avalanche of white cardboard tubes comes down a staircase on the corridor's opposite site. Shortly after this, the door of one of the elevators at the end of the corridor opens, and another performer appears.⁴ She slowly leaves the elevator, eyes the white tubes scattered on the floor in front of her, and finally picks up one of them. She begins to compare the tube's form and size with the different elements of the corridor's architecture, likens its length with a segment of a handrail, covers an inscription on the wall with it, leaves it on the edge of a flat-screen installed beneath the inscription, finds another tube hidden behind an edge of the recess the screen is installed in, tilts the tube from a vertical into a horizontal position, follows the horizontal line it indicates across the corridor, arrives at another staircase with another handrail, lays the tube on the handrail, lets it go and thus slowly slide down the handrail until it falls to the ground on the staircase's next landing, finds another tube clammed in a gap between the staircase's railing and a connected balustrade – and continues her way further down the corridor in this manner.⁵

In the course of the tour, which not only leads through the inside of the "award-winning and spectacular building"⁶ of *Kilden*, but finally also out of it and through the surrounding area, more of these white tubes appear and are used in further ways. Actually, for the first time, they already did appear before the audience left the theatre bar, namely

³ Fredrik Landmark.

⁴ Marthe Løvik Markussen.

⁵ For a picture of this scene see Universitetet i Agder, 2018. For further pictures and reports on the project (in Norwegian), see the online sources Anthonsen, 2018, and Eikeland, 2018, (the latter also contains a video-trailer).

⁶ Kilden Teater og Konserthus, 2018.

during the introduction there, when the first-mentioned performer, while reciting his text, opened a cupboard from which they rolled out. And when then, while the performer continued with his text, two other performers⁷ tidied up the scattered tubes by setting them, in three upright rows, into a white cardboard box, the attentive spectator might have noticed that they actually built a little model of another ‘award-winning and spectacular building’ in Kristiansand – very well-known as well beyond the city: the old, closed down corn-silo right next to *Kilden*.

This silo was designed by the architects Arne Korsmo and Sverre Aasland in 1934⁸, built in 1935, and enlarged in 1939⁹, when it also was awarded with the Houens fonds diploma, one of Norway’s most important prizes for architecture. But this award is not the main reason why the silo is so well-known in Kristiansand and beyond. First and foremost, this reason consists in the fact that it now shall become a museum. And not just any museum: It shall become a museum of particular national importance and international visibility.¹⁰ Some even envision it as the “leading museum in the Nordics”¹¹. In any case, however its relevance as museum will finally be assessed, it shall become “Norway’s most exciting” and “most spectacular museum building”¹². And it already has a name: Kunstsilo.

The background of this project is this: The London-based hedge funds manager and art collector Nicolai Tangen, who originally is from Kristiansand, wants to give his art collection – considered as the largest collection of Norwegian modernist art as well as the most important collection of Nordic modernist art – to his city of origin. More precisely: He wants to give an indefinite right of disposal over this collection to Sørlandets Kunstmuseum (SKMU) – Kristiansand’s museum for fine

⁷ Åshild Bjørnstad and Sander Cyvin.

⁸ Nasjonalmuseet, 2019. Many other sources indicate 1935 as the year the building was designed.

⁹ The original building from 1935 had 15 cylinders. In 1939, this number was doubled, so that the building got its present 30 cylinders. Later, the building’s storage part was enlarged as well, and in 1985, a lift tower annex was added on the building’s northern side (see Brandal Olsen, 2006).

¹⁰ See Sørlandets Kunstmuseum, 2018b.

¹¹ See Kristiansand kommune, 2016 (my translation from Norwegian).

¹² See *ibid.*, see additionally Sandberg, 2016, 21.12. (my translation from Norwegian).

arts. But there is one precondition, and this precondition is that SKMU leaves its current domicile and moves to a new building, a building with enough space for the collection – and especially with a particular signal effect: the Kunstsilo. The corresponding plan came first up in 2015¹³, and since then, the project has been, and still is, very controversially discussed in Kristiansand and beyond – which in fact was the actual topic of *FOR ANDRE TING*, respectively the central issue its thematization of change involved.

The latest significant step regarding the changes the Kunstsilo project implies, was that the Norwegian government, in the beginning of October 2018, finally granted support for the project's realization. Since then, it looks like the Kunstsilo can soon be built – as designed by Mestres Wåge Architects, who won the corresponding architectural competition in 2016. The building process shall start as soon as possible, and the opening is planned for 2021.

But what has both *FOR ANDRE TING* and this development in Kristiansand to do with the seminar documented here, *ART AS FORCE – Situationism and popular art*? After all, this seminar, as part of Oktoberdansen-festival 2018, took place in another, very different Norwegian city: Bergen. It even particularly focused on Bergen: as the place where situationism, due to the activities of Gruppe 66, stood strongest in Norway, as the seminar's program text puts it.¹⁴ And apart from that: What has the reference to *FOR ANDRE TING*, to Kristiansand and to the Kunstsilo to do with the particular topic of the text at hand: Asger Jorn and the Controversial Topicality of Situationism?

Kunstsilo and KODE

As regards the reference to *FOR ANDRE TING*, it is first and foremost motivated by *ART AS FORCE*'s declared intention to take its point of

¹³ The idea to transform the silo into a museum was actually not completely new then. Already in 2013, the architect Liv-Marit Engebu suggested to make it the first Norwegian textile museum (see Engebu, 2013, 16.04.).

¹⁴ See BIT Teatergarasjen, 2018b.

departure in performing art, as well as in my interest to approach this text's topic from both a scholarly and an artistic perspective. Not less decisive – or actually: most important – is the fact, that this performance, as I will show later, in fact contains several aspects that are linked to the question of situationism's topicality.

Concerning the reference to Kristiansand and the Kunstsilo, it neither is as far off from the context and topic of *ART AS FORCE* as it might seem at first sight. In fact (not too surprising in a small country like Norway), there is a number of quite concrete links between the current situation in Kristiansand and Bergen's situationist heritage – in particular because this heritage is first and foremost represented at KODE, Bergen's museum for fine arts, which also co-organized and hosted *ART AS FORCE*. The first link – a quite recent one – is that Karin Hindsbo, the former director of KODE, was member of the jury which chose the winner of the architectural competition for Kunstsilo (and before coming to KODE, she additionally had been the director of SKMU). Another link – in this case a historical one – consists in the fact that Arne Korsmo, one of the original silo-architects, also designed the Villa Stenersen in Oslo. This villa was built from 1937 through 1939, almost simultaneously with the silo in Kristiansand, and was originally meant to serve as domicile for both the family and the art collection of financier Rolf Stenersen – who later, in 1971, gave the foreign works of his collection (or more precisely: sold these works at a symbolically low price) to Bergen, where they are now presented at KODE, as the Stenersen Collection.

In this donation lies a further, particularly interesting link to the current situation in Kristiansand – or more precisely: a quite striking similarity. Because just like the hedge funds manager Nicolai Tangen made the building of Kunstsilo the precondition for giving his collection to Kristiansand respectively SKMU, the financier Rolf Stenersen likewise gave his collection to Bergen only on condition that a new museum would be built for it – as it then was done in 1978 in form of the building of KODE 2.

But these are still not all the links and similarities between the Bergen – and the Kristiansand-situation. An additional one – which is of special importance here, as it concerns the question what the

Kunstsilo-project has to do with this text's particular topic and its reference to Asger Jorn – consists in the fact that both the Tangen Collection and the Stenersen Collection contain works by Jorn, and that these works are in both cases highlighted as belonging to the collections' flagship-exhibits.¹⁵

This is not only of interest here due to Jorn's significance for situationism in general. It is particularly interesting with regard to *ART AS FORCE*'s focus on situationism in Norway. For Jorn also played a quite important role for the development of the concept of Co-ritus (even though he finally distanced himself from it), which then became crucial for the work of Gruppe 66 in Bergen¹⁶ – and thus also for Norwegian situationism in general.

Asger Jorn and Co-ritus

The development of the concept of Co-ritus is usually attributed to Jorn's brother Jørgen Nash, Jens Jørgen Thorsen, and Hardy Strid, who signed the corresponding *CO-RITUS Manifesto* from 1962 and put the concept into practice on several occasions. In Bergen, Thorsen did so together with Olav Herman Hansen in 1966, as members of Gruppe 66. But the concept was also significantly influenced by Jorn, who closely worked together with Nash between 1960 and 1963, when their joint project was to transform the farm Drakabygget in the south of Sweden, which Nash had bought in 1960, into a Nordic Bauhaus (as Jorn wanted to call it) respectively the Bauhaus Situationniste Drakabygget (as Nash then named it).¹⁷

As Jakob Jakobsen has described it in detail, Jorn "played a central role in the early development of the place", and "his experimental aesthetic was a decisive inspiration for Nash and the precondition for the activities there."¹⁸ Central for this experimental aesthetic is Jorn's critique of Marx's concept of value, respectively this concept's Marxist interpretation, as he presented it in his text *Critique of Economic Policy*, first published in excerpts under the title *The End of the Economy and the Realization of Art* in 1960.

¹⁵ See KODE, 2019, and Sørlandets Kunstmuseum, 2018a.

¹⁶ See Arntzen, 2011. This article was the main point of departure for the seminar *ART AS FORCE*.

¹⁷ See Jakobsen, 2011, pp. 227-228.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

According to Jorn, value neither consists only in exchange value, nor is it necessarily linked to work. Instead of the human being's workforce, Jorn regards simply "the human being's time and nothing else" as "the variable capital to which he himself owns the property rights"¹⁹ – a property which "only becomes value if this lifetime is realized"²⁰, as he puts it in the text's version published in 1962. This "realization of a lifetime" can, in Jorn's view, only happen "through its variation, its changeability."²¹ Or, as he puts it in the text's first version:

The space time of a human life is its private property. This was Marx's great discovery in the perspective of human liberation, but at the same time it is the point of departure for the errors of the Marxists, because property only gains value in its realization, in its liberation, in its use, and what makes the space-time of a human life a reality is its variability.²²

As regards this variability and the realization of the human being's lifetime, what is crucial for Jorn is sociality – or, as he calls it, the "social value" of individuals, which they gain due to "the variability of their behavior in relation to others."²³ For "[i]f this variability becomes private, excluded from social valorization – as is the case under authoritarian socialism – human space-time becomes unrealizable."²⁴

Just like sociality is for Jorn the necessary precondition for the valorizing realization of human lifetime, the means to enable this sociality, respectively to counteract the privatization of the variability of human behavior, consists for him in art – or more precisely: in experimental artistic activity. Already in his pre- or proto-situationist *Notes on the Formation of an Imaginist Bauhaus* from 1956, Jorn describes the aim of this formation as the promotion of an "integral revolutionary cultural attitude" by the development of "new possibilities of artistic

¹⁹ Jorn, 2015 (1962), p. 200.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 202.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Jorn, 1960.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

experimentation"²⁵ – respectively, as he calls it already half a century before this term's academic boom, "artistic research"²⁶. And in *Critique of Economic Policy*, he speaks of an "artistic liberation", whose "goal [...] is the liberation of human values by the transformation of human qualities into real values" – in which he sees the beginning of "the artistic revolution against socialist development, the artistic revolution that is tied to the communist project..."²⁷

This belief in the socializing, liberating and revolutionary role of art was not only the reason why Jorn then left the Situationist International in 1961, after its conference in Gothenburg had led to the decision – following a suggestion by Raoul Vaneigem – that the groups new principle should consist in turning away from making art.²⁸ His adherence to this belief was also the reason for him to engage in the Drakabygget-project – as a measure to maintain the development of the 'new possibilities of artistic experimentation' he had in mind – and to even take part in the proclamation of a 2nd Situationist International (even though he rather effaced himself in this respect) in form of his contribution to the text *The Struggle of the Situcratic Society: A Situationist Manifesto* from 1962, which is considered as the 2nd Situationist International's constituent document.²⁹

²⁵ Jorn, 1956.

²⁶ Ibid. It is remarkable that Jorn in this context explicitly states that "[a]rtistic research is identical to 'human science'", understanding the latter as "'concerned' science, not purely historical science", and demands "the same economic and practical means and possibilities" for artistic research "that are already at the disposal of scientific research" (ibid.). He thus anticipates what then, in the 1990, in fact happened in form of the academization of artistic research in Europe – in Norway in form of the legal equalization of scientific and artistic research in 1995 – and in the meantime significantly characterizes academic art education. Of particular interest is in this context the contrast between the anti-capitalist attitude on which Jorn's demand is based and those traits of the later boom of artistic research, which for example Tom Holert critically discusses as symptoms of current capitalist approaches to "convert 'knowledge' into a vendible goods and market it as spectacle" (Holert, 2011, p. 43, my translation from German).

²⁷ Jorn, 1960.

²⁸ See Bolt Rasmussen & Jakobsen, 2015, pp. 10-11.

²⁹ Jorn did not sign this manifesto, but is considered as one of its main authors, together with Jacqueline de Jong, Guy Atkins, Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen

Art as Force

Jorn, in contrast to other situationists, thus adhered to the belief in a specific force of art. As Karen Kurczynski puts it, his “neo-Marxist interest in the social role of art” was similar to Theodor W. Adorno’s description of “art as an experimental force”, becoming “historically meaningful as a negative image of society as a whole.”³⁰ And conceiving “the true avant-garde not as a set of professional specialists, but as a collective social force made up of amateurs seeking new ideas and techniques through constant experimentation”³¹, Jorn obviously saw the Drakabygget-project as a particular chance to realize his aesthetic ideas.

The above-mentioned crucial influence these ideas had on Nash and other key protagonists of this project becomes particularly apparent in the interview which most likely is the main reference of the seminar title *ART AS FORCE*, namely the *Co-ritus Interview: Art is Pop – Co-ritus is Art* with Nash and Thorsen from 1963, where the latter states (in explicit dissociation from the 1st Situationist International):

The essential in situationism is the relationship of human beings to the forces of creativity; it is the intention to realise these forces through moments of creativity. The situationist idea is based on utilisation of art and the forces of creativity within art being used directly in the social environment. [...]

We believe that situationism is art and the creative human being (the artist) has to get involved in the social situation. [...]

Art can only be produced through experimental activity (Co-ritus, the concert at the spiral maze at Malmo Town Hall, Co-ritus at Aarhus student society and various wall painting actions are some of our experiments).³²

Thorsen. See Jakobsen, 2011, p. 252. See also the information accompanying the text’s online version (Jorn, Atkins, Nash et al., 1962).

³⁰ Kurczynski, 2014, p. 4. Kurczynski draws this parallel not without taking the obvious differences between Adorno’s and Jorn’s approaches and understandings of art into account (see *ibid.*, p. 199).

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³² Jens Jørgen Thorsen in Nash & Thorsen, 1963.

Indeed, it was exactly one of these wall painting actions – more precisely: Nash’s unauthorized use of Jorn’s name in connection with this action – which finally caused Jorn’s dissociation from both the concept of Co-ritus and his brother, in the same year the interview was given.³³ And apart from this final dissociation, the concept of Co-ritus can anyways be seen as a radicalization of Jorn’s ideas which exceeded their limits. For while Jorn, as Jakobsen points out, indeed “had re-articulated” the notion of “the specialized and singular artist genius that had been the dominant conception of the artist in society ever since the Renaissance”, but nevertheless “remained within it” and “was not able to move beyond his status as a singular creative subjectivity”³⁴, the concept of Co-ritus, with its “demand for collective participation”, posed “a more socially-oriented interpretation of Jorn’s notion of art as an experimental field in the movement between the singular and the social.”³⁵

Yet, it is clear that this notion was the crucial foundation for the conception of Co-ritus. And Jorn’s dissociation from this concept, which was, as mentioned, first and foremost triggered by his personal quarrel with Nash, did not at all mean that he also abandoned his interest in art as social force. Still years later, in his book *Magi og skønne kunster* from 1971, he writes: “I do not want to conceal that I regard the artistic freedom which allows the aesthetic element to permeate social life and environment as more valuable than the one which allows the immurement of art in museums or other isolating surroundings.”³⁶

Value vs. Value

In front of this backdrop, returning to the contexts of Bergen and Kristiansand, one can hardly avoid the question what it means for the value of Jorn’s works when they in fact are immured in museums like KODE and Kunstsilo. And the obvious answer to this question is, that

³³ For a detailed description of this dissociation’s circumstances, see Jakobsen, 2011, pp. 270-274.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 265.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 264.

³⁶ Jorn, 1971, quoted without pagenummer in Høyer, 2010, p. 5 (my translation from Danish).

the value this immurement both presupposes, confirms and furthers is the exact opposite of the value Jorn had in mind – or at least, considering the rather moderate tone of the quote from *Magi og skønne kunster*, a lesser value than the one Jorn favored.

Of course, Jorn's art was already subject to certain kinds of immurement and of financial value added in his lifetime, even while he still was a member of the 1st Situationist International – which was, as Kurczynski remarks, “an ironic situation (to put it mildly) from the point of view of the SI but also one that explicitly benefited the group.”³⁷ In 1959 for example, Jorn's *Modifications* – prime examples of the situationist strategy of *détournement* – were exhibited at Galerie Rive Gauche in Paris, a “well-established and commercial”³⁸ gallery, as Jakobsen points out. And on this occasion, nine of the twenty exhibited paintings were sold to art collectors.³⁹ But in this case, Jorn was actively involved in the presentation and contextualization of his works, first and foremost in form of his text *Détourned Painting*, which appeared in the exhibition catalogue. In this text, Jorn clearly declares his artistic attitude – among other things in form of a critical dissociation from action painting. And in his affirmative reference to what he calls “sofa paintings”⁴⁰ partly lies, as Kurczynski shows in relation to his later painting *L'avant-garde se rend pas* from 1962, “explicit ridicule of opportunistic avant-gardism”, respectively of “the increasing popularity of the term ‘avant garde’ as little more than a label of commercial success.”⁴¹

Obviously, the ‘immurement’ of his works in galleries, museums and collections alone was not the biggest problem for Jorn, at least not as long as he could see the respective curators, gallerists and collectors as a kind of allies in his artistic and political efforts. In fact, the Drakabygget-project was to a great extent financed by sales of his works. And his later donation of a large number of works to Henie Onstad Kunstsenter was, according

³⁷ Kurczynski, 2014, p. 191.

³⁸ Jakobsen, 2011, p. 221.

³⁹ See the corresponding information on the purchase of five paintings by the Italian collector Paolo Marinotti in Storsve, 2017, p. 104. See also the corresponding information, including details about the four further sales, in Elhajoui, 2018, 07.09.

⁴⁰ Jorn, 1959.

⁴¹ Kurczynski, 2014, p. 4.

to the center's website, motivated by his wish that "his works in other media" should "be seen in relation to his paintings."⁴² The fact that he apparently neither was against his works' collection by his contemporary Rolf Stenersen can presumably also be traced back to the fact that Stenersen was to a lesser extent interested in the accumulation of artworks with an already established and ensured financial value than in the promotion, support and defense of modernist art⁴³ – the contemporary art of his time.

In contrast, the actual problem for Jorn were attempts to collect – respectively to appropriate – his work for purposes he did not willingly support or which he even saw as opposed to his artistic and political attitude. His dissociation from both the concept of Co-ritus and his brother Nash, triggered by the latter's unauthorized use of his name in the context of the above-mentioned wall painting action, is one example for this. Another example is his furious refusal of the Guggenheim International Award, which he should receive in 1964, but rejected in form of a telegram to Harry F. Guggenheim with the wording:

GO TO HELL WITH YOUR MONEY Bastard. REFUSE PRICE.
NEVER ASKED FOR IT. AGAINST ALL DECENSY [sic!] MIX
ARTIST AGAINST HIS WILL IN YOUR PUBLICITY. I WANT
PUBLIC CONFIRMATION NOT TO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN
YOUR ridiculous GAME JORN.⁴⁴

In form of this rejection, it maybe becomes most evident that Jorn, due to his fundamental communist attitude, tried to strictly and particularly resist both his work's and his name's 'immurement' and appropriation for purposes in the spirit of, as Kurczynski writes, "the increasingly commercial mainstream art world with its promotion of art as an economic investment, [...] transforming the radical critiques of the prewar avant-gardes into a postwar spectacle of pseudo-criticality."⁴⁵

⁴² Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, 2019.

⁴³ See Ustvedt, 2014.

⁴⁴ Wikipedia, 2014.

⁴⁵ Kurczynski, 2014, p. 191.

In view of this, it would of course be interesting to speculate about how Jorn would have reacted to the purchase of a large number of his works by Nicolai Tangen – and how he would have commented on the use of his works as flagship-exhibits of this hedge funds manager's collection. From a communist perspective like Jorn's, this actually can't be perceived otherwise than as a severe misuse of his art. After all, it is not a secret that, as Melanie Gilligan has stated in 2007 already, "the prominent cultural influence of hedge fund managers in their newfound roles as powerful art collectors" is directly linked to "their mounting control over global economic wealth", and that hedge funds, as "unparalleled tools for siphoning money away from other areas of the economy and into the pockets of a privileged few", "are emblematic for today's widening economic divide between rich and poor."⁴⁶ In general, it doesn't seem too exaggerated to describe hedge fund managers as incarnations of unregulated, neoliberal capitalism. And particularly with regard to Jorn's concept of value, it is quite unlikely that he would have approved of his works' collection by a hedge fund manager – at least considering the usual ways in which such managers treat artworks "as a new asset class", invest in ways that lay the foundations "to further inflate prices"⁴⁷, and thus devalue the non-commercial aspects of art in favor of its financial value's predominance.

Admittedly, in the particular case of Tangen, at least three things have to be considered: Firstly, Tangen has repeatedly expressed that his interest in art is not a purely economic one. His master's degree in art history is frequently mentioned as a proof for this, and the enthusiasm he shows for the art he collects indicates this as well. Secondly, according to his own statements, his business practices distinguish themselves from the usual practices of hedge fund managers, insofar as they operate with investment time ranges of six to eight years and more instead of the average two months.⁴⁸ And thirdly, the donation of his collection to Kristiansand respectively SKMU is declaredly based on his wish to give something back to his city of origin – as it likewise applies

⁴⁶ Gilligan, 2007.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See Harket, 2016.

to his AKO Foundation on an international level.⁴⁹ Additionally, the fact that he concentrates on collecting modernist art, which on the one hand could be interpreted as a way of playing it safe on the basis of mainly economic considerations, distinguishes him, on the other hand, from collectors whose “predilection for contemporary art” indicates their “risk-o-philic tastes and constant pursuit of the right kind of profitable edge”⁵⁰, and thus implicitly validates that his interest in art is not only economically motivated, but also attaches importance to an already proven art historical significance of the works he collects.

However, it must remain an open question how Jorn would have seen this. Considering his communist conviction, it is at least very unlikely that he would have assessed these facts as balancing out the inequities caused by the business practices characteristic for hedge funds. And, in contrast, it is not too unlikely that he would have regarded Tangen’s charity-activities – despite and besides their positive effects – not only as the philanthropically motivated ways of giving something back as which they are presented⁵¹, but also as investments in an image polishing which serves the justification and maintenance of exactly those business practices whose negative effects put the claim of philanthropy into perspective.

But this hypothetical speculation about Jorn’s possible opinion on his works’ collection by Tangen should not be misunderstood as an

⁴⁹ AKO Foundation also supports SKMU in other respects (see AKO Foundation, 2019), as well as it, as of late, supports the collaboration between this museum and the faculty I am working at, the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Agder, where it finances a new PhD position, directed at research on the Tangen Collection. This relation to the foundation respectively Tangen was and is subject of differentiated critical discussions at the faculty. This is for example reflected in the fact that the mentioned PhD position’s vacancy explicitly demanded that the respective research shall relate to the area of tension between art historical, societal and philosophic-aesthetical perspectives, and both examine and problematize the conditions of art production, curating, art historiography and critique. Furthermore, the Kunstsilo project in general is part of the faculty’s scholarly discourse (see for example Forskningsgruppe Kunst og barn og unge ved Fakultet for kunsthøgskolen, Universitetet i Agder, 2018, 25.01.).

⁵⁰ Gilligan, 2007.

⁵¹ See for example the way these activities are portrayed in Harket, 2016.

argument in the spirit of the animosities against the Kunstsilo project. On the contrary, the harsh contrast between the different attitudes, represented by artists like Jorn on the one hand and by a hedge fund manager like Tangen on the other, is in fact one of the most interesting aspects of the Tangen Collection's future presentation at Kunstsilo. For exactly the access to works like Jorn's, which this presentation will facilitate, bears the potential to also facilitate and further a differentiated critical discourse about this contrast – and hopefully even forms of institutional critique which can broach exactly this issue.

Of particular interest is the discussion of this contrast obviously with regard to the question which is central for the text at hand: the question whether – and if so: as to whether – situationism, particularly the situationist notion of art as force, still is of topicality today. In other words: To ask what Jorn would have said about his works' incorporation in the Tangen Collection makes particular sense in order to discuss what this incorporation says about the contemporary status of situationism and situationist art, and to what extent this contemporary status differs from situationism's historical status. The relevance of this discussion thereby consists in the fact that – while situationism's art-historical importance and its significance for the development of contemporary art is widely uncontroversial today – the question (as to) whether situationist theories and practices still are (or can be) effective in contemporary art is a quite controversial one.

The Controversial Topicality of Situationism

As regards the question of situationism's historical status, the incorporation of Jorn's works into collections like Stenersen's and Tangen's, respectively these works presentation in major exhibitions of modernist art, can of course be seen as a confirmation of the art historical significance of situationism. At least, it can be seen as an implicit confirmation of this significance. For, in contrast to a number of special exhibitions on situationism in recent years⁵², neither the Stenersen nor the Tangen Collection focuses

⁵² An example for such exhibitions in the Norwegian context was the double-exhibition *An Army of Liars – Situasjonistene i Skandinavia* and *This World We Must Leave – An Idea of Revolution* at Kunsthall Oslo (November 25th 2016 – February 5th 2017;

on Jorn as a situationist in particular. Both collections represent the relevance of his work for modernist art in general – the Stenersen Collection with works ranging from 1943 to 1968 (including two undated works), the Tangen Collection with works made between 1939 and 1970.⁵³ And both collection's information texts chose the fact that Jorn was a CoBrA-artist as the most noteworthy information about him (which of course makes sense in view of both his CoBrA-membership's significance for his artistic career in general and CoBrA's significance for the development of the fine arts in post-war Europe). Thus, his situationist background is not mentioned in these texts. Still, due to the fact that both collections' portfolios contain works from his situationist phase, they indicate at least implicitly that this phase was of a certain relevance for his oeuvre's general art-historical significance.

Regarding the question of situationism's possible topicality, in contrast, the fact that Jorn's works are contained in such collections implies something completely different. First of all, it shows that these works are not at all immune against their appropriation by and incorporation into the – to use Kurczynski's formulations again – “commercial mainstream art world”⁵⁴, which Jorn tried to defend them against. And if the popularity of the term ‘avant-garde’ could – in Jorn's time – be perceived as a symptom of the prewar avant-gardes' radical critiques' transformation into a “postwar spectacle of pseudo-criticality”⁵⁵, the present presentation of Jorn's work as iconic for modernist art can be seen as the result of this work's cold-war anti-capitalist criticality's absorption by post-cold-war capitalism itself – indeed valorizing this work as art-historically significant on the one hand, but also reducing it,

This World We Must Leave – An Idea of Revolution was first presented at Århus Kunstbygning, November 19th 2010 – January 9th 2011). Very recent examples are the exhibitions *Jacqueline de Jong & The Situationist Times. Same Player Shoots Again!* at Malmö konsthall (September 15th 2018 – January 13th 2019) and *The Most Dangerous Game. The Situationist International en route for May '68* at Haus der Kulturen der Welt Berlin (critically described and compared in Henriksen, 2018, 19.11.).

⁵³ Thanks to both KODE and AKO Foundation for granting me insight into the respective lists of works. Particular thanks to my colleague Frida Forsgren for obtaining the consent from AKO Foundation and conveying the respective list.

⁵⁴ Kurczynski, 2014, p. 191.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

on the other hand, to a mere document of a failed and unsuccessful critical project of the past, which no longer is of any topicality in the present.

Especially Jorn's works' inclusion into the Tangen Collection can almost seem like an illustration of the notorious TINA-doctrine, coined by Margaret Thatcher after the end of the Cold War, meaning 'There Is No Alternative' – to capitalism. In fact, if assuming that capitalism has finally won, and if looking for corresponding confirmations, one can hardly come up with a more obvious example than the incorporation of a communist artist's works into a hedge funds manager's collection provides. And even from the opposed point of view, from a perspective which refuses this assumption and rather sees the capitalist appropriation of a communist's artworks as a reason to advocate the necessity of a critique of capitalism all the more, one at least has to admit that this appropriation proves certain limitations of Jorn's anti-capitalist artistic approach – or, more generally speaking, of situationism's force.

Of course, this doesn't necessarily disprove this force's topicality completely. One possibility to assess its current status consists for example in seeing it as not entirely lost, but rather as repressed by 'the archive', as Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jakob Jakobsen describe it in the guide to their exhibition *This World We Must Leave – An Idea of Revolution*, first realized in 2010/2011 and focusing particularly on situationism.⁵⁶

The Challenge of 'the Archive'

"[T]he archive", as Bolt Rasmussen and Jakobsen put it in a Foucaultian sense⁵⁷, "is an instrument of power, it is a place where history is made and staged with a view to legitimizing the prevailing state of affairs", thus having "the function of perpetuating the ruling values and naturalizing the existing

⁵⁶ The exhibition was shown twice, first in Århus Kunstbygning from November 19th 2010 through January 9th 2011, and then again in Kunsthall Oslo from November 25th 2016 through February 5th 2017, in the latter case together with the exhibition *An Army of Liars – Situasjonistene i Skandinavia* (see Kunsthall Oslo, 2016). See also footnote 52.

⁵⁷ Or more precisely: Corresponding to the second of the three ways in which Foucault applies the term, as Knut Ove Eliassen points out (see Eliassen, 2010).

order.”⁵⁸ Accordingly, they state that “there is rarely space in the archives for the revolts and revolutions of the past, and if there is, they are always relegated to ‘history’ and severed from any kind of contact with the present.”⁵⁹

From this point of view, collections like Stenersen’s and Tangen’s, respectively museums like KODE and SKMU/soon-to-be Kunstsilo, can easily appear as prime examples of such archives, and it is tempting to interpret the way they incorporate and present works like those of Jorn as illustrative of how such archives exercise their power. Of course, a closer look soon reveals that it is a bit more complex than that. As regards the Stenersen Collection, it was already mentioned above that its way of archiving Jorn’s works has another history than Jorn’s works’ incorporation into the Tangen Collection. And particularly the fact that a seminar like *ART AS FORCE* was co-organized and hosted by KODE, and that ‘the archive’ thus opened its doors for an event not only explicitly highlighting Jorn’s crucial role for situationism, but also inviting Bolt Rasmussen as keynote speaker⁶⁰, clearly puts an interpretation like the one suggested above into perspective. In a comparable manner – even though in a more general form, and up to now without a particular reference to situationism – the way the Tangen Collection is currently introduced by SKMU also proves that this ‘archive’ neither simply excludes the ‘revolts and revolutions of the past’. When for example art historian Frida Forsgren, in her lecture *Kunst, Krig og Cobra!* on April 10th 2019 at SKMU, talked about a number of Scandinavian artists’ works from the 1940s contained in the collection, the way these works – and the respective, often communist artists (among them Jorn) – contributed to the resistance against the German occupation and the Nazi regime, was one of her lecture’s main aspects. So, in this case, there obviously is space in this archive for the revolts and revolutions of the past – respectively for past resistance against ruling power. And instead of relegating this resistance to history and severing it from the present, the

⁵⁸ Bolt Rasmussen & Jakobsen, 2010, p. 9. See also Bolt Rasmussen & Jakobsen, 2016, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ See BIT Teatergarasjen, 2018b.

act of reminding of it can unfold a quite topical relevance in view of the recent rise and success of right-wing populism. Admittedly, when seeing it like this, the next step in order to avoid the allegation of exercising the archive's excluding power would in turn have to consist in not severing this view from the fact that there is a connection between this success of right-wing populism, the financial crisis from 2007/2008, and the reinforcing effects which hedge fund speculations had on this crisis. Of course, it would be quite a surprise if a discussion about a topic like this would be initiated by the promoters of the Tangen Collection and the Kunstsilo project themselves. But events like the mentioned lecture can at least give impulses for such and similar discussions, and especially panel debates like the one SKMU arranged on June 7th 2018 under the title "En gave til besvær?"⁶¹ open 'the archive' for critical discussions and make room in it for questioning the prevailing state of affairs. Even Tangen himself, though he also has reacted quite annoyed to some of the harsher hostilities against the Kunstsilo project, has explicitly stated – for example in a talk at Arendalsuka 2018, referring to the then imminent assessment of his collection's quality by the leftist Norwegian newspaper *Klassekampen*⁶² – that he in general "loves protests" and has, after all, "never been particularly fond of the establishment" – a statement followed by the remark that his collection's inclusion of "protest art" reflected exactly this.⁶³

⁶¹ For the panel debate's documentation, see Sørlandets Kunstmuseum, 2018, 07.06.

⁶² The talk took place on August 17th 2018 under the title *Regjeringens kulturpolitikk og en samtale om kunstsiloen* in Kulturhuset Arendal. For its videodocumentation, see Arendalsuka, 2018, 17.08. (the quoted statements, translated from Norwegian, are documented between 1:09:50 and 1:10:15). For the assessment of the Tangen Collection's quality in *Klassekampen*, see Hammer, 2018, 18.08.

⁶³ Of course, it could be further discussed as to whether such statements and a corresponding inclusion and affirmation of critical challenges can also be seen as ways of absorbing the respective critique. Additionally, a statement like the one directed against 'the establishment' is, in view of the current rhetoric of right-wing populism, a slightly infelicitous wording and has to be treated with caution. At the same time, when taking into account that Tangen argues in defense of his collection and the Kunstsilo project in the context of a very heated public debate, the expectation that he would expose himself to the contrariness between his role as hedge fund manager and his collection of communist artworks would be quite a high one.

So, on the one hand, a closer look shows that the question of how in – or exclusive an archive like the Tangen Collection – respectively the museum administrating it – is, and how it exercises its power, cannot simply be answered by applying Bolt Rasmussen's and Jakobsen's general assessment of 'the archive'. However, on the other hand, there are as well aspects which at least give cause for discussing to what extent this assessment might be adequate nevertheless. A particular example for this can be found in the context of the more superficial sides of the collection's promotion, or more precisely: on SKMU's instagram-account. On March 29th 2018, the purchase of Jorn's painting *L'Abominable Homme des Neiges* from 1959 was announced via this account, and in contrast to the lecture mentioned above, this announcement almost appears like an invitation to be used as evidence for Bolt Rasmussen's and Jakobsen's thesis that the archive tends to exclude references to 'the revolts and revolutions of the past'. For the painting stems from Jorn's situationist phase, even from the time of his membership in the (1st) Situationist International and his close collaboration with Guy Debord. In fact, *L'Abominable Homme des Neiges* was painted in the same year in which Jorn's and Debord's book *Mémoires*, one of the milestones of situationism, was printed. Among other things, this book presents and exemplifies the situationist key concepts of *dérive* and *détournement* in the context of the situationists' general critique of the 'society of the spectacle', as Debord would then set it down particularly in his homonymous book from 1967. But this situationist and thus spectacle-critical context isn't mentioned at all in the announcement's text. Instead, like in the collection's general information text, what exclusively is mentioned is Jorn's role as founding member of CoBrA, along with an additional brief explanation of the group's interest in primitive and spontaneous forms of expression, and surrealism and automatism as its sources of inspiration.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ See Sørlandets Kunstmuseum, 2018, 19.03. The announcement can also be found on SKMU's official homepage by searching the internet for the terms "Asger Jorn" and "Tangensamling". Since the respective URL consists of four lines of text, it is not indicated here.

It is of course clear that one can't expect a sophisticated art historical treatise on an instagram-page, and admittedly, it might seem a bit unbalanced to contrast the art historical lecture and the panel debate mentioned above with a brief announcement on social media, which, in addition, is obviously not based on the most thorough background research. With considerable certainty, the omission of the painting's situationist context is simply an unintended accidental slip, resulting from a continuation of the collection's general information text's way of referring to Jorn, without checking this way's adequacy for the particular subject it is applied to. But exactly as such an accidental slip, this omission appears all the more as an effect of the excluding power of 'the archive'. In other words: It bears a certain significance with regard to the question how 'the archive' works. For this accidental slip shows, that it, to a certain degree, functions by referring to itself, to its former choices and selections of information – or more precisely: that it serves as the primary source of information for the archivists working in it. Thus, the announcement exemplifies that 'the archive', besides its openness on other levels, at least partially functions as an 'echo chamber'. In this respect, the corresponding effect consists indeed in the exclusion of information about the archived painting's situationist creation context and its revolutionary spirit. And as 'legitimizing the prevailing state of affairs', as Bolt Rasmussen and Jakobsen put it, this effect can particularly be described because it circumvents bringing up the contradictory fact that *L'Abominable Homme des Neiges* is not only an anti-capitalist painter's work in a capitalist's collection, but also an anti-spectacular work which is going to be exhibited in 'Norway's most spectacular museum building'.

From a perspective like the one formulated by Bolt Rasmussen and Jakobsen (at least as regards its version from 2010, which differs as I will show later, from the two authors' more recent views), this must of course appear as a blatantly obvious confirmation of the assumption that situationism's anti-capitalist force, instead of being lost, still exists – and that it exactly therefore is repressed by the archives of capitalism. That this assumption accordingly is linked to the belief that this force just has to be brought to the fore again, becomes particularly explicit when Bolt Rasmussen and Jakobsen describe their exhibition – *This*

World We Must Leave – as a “counter- or anti-archive, where the constantly circulated and repeated narrative of the ‘naturalness’ of capitalism is challenged and rejected”⁶⁵, or when they state that the “concepts [...] which have historically been used to reflect the established capitalist world” – even though the respective “vocabulary may seem in many ways to address an older, now vanished historical period” – have “perhaps never been more relevant than now”⁶⁶ (i.e. in 2010). The same belief is expressed in their book *Expect Anything Fear Nothing* from 2011. This book documents the homonymous conference which took place on March 15th and 16th 2007 in the Youth House in Copenhagen – as “an attempt to shed light on some of the marginalised dimensions of the Situationist International” and “to use the concepts and strategies of the Situationists in the present moment”⁶⁷ (which was the moment after the protests against the eviction of the Youth House had – in consequence of this eviction on March 1st 2007 – resulted in street riots).

Recycling Situationism

The belief in the persistent topicality of situationism can of course not only be found in the quoted texts by Bolt Rasmussen and Jakobsen. In fact, the project to revive situationist concepts and strategies has its own history. A first revival – or, to use a term coined by Knut Ove Arntzen, recycling – of these concepts and strategies, in particular of the strategy of *détournement*, started in the late 1970s, with the development of those forms of artistic activism which are nowadays known as culture jamming. Likewise, the Reclaim The Streets movement, as it developed since the early 1990s, stands in the tradition of situationist approaches.

Concerning the theoretical continuation of situationist concepts with regard to art, it was particularly Nicolas Bourriaud who, with his book *Esthétique relationnelle* from 1998, most sustainably influenced the respective discourse. Bourriaud thereby not only revived the situationist concepts he referred to, but also revised them, particularly in view of the

⁶⁵ Bolt Rasmussen & Jakobsen, 2010, p. 9.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁶⁷ Bolt Rasmussen & Jakobsen, 2011, p. 11.

societal and world political changes which occurred between the 1960s and the 1990s. According to him, “[t]he ‘society of the spectacle’ [...] is followed by the society of extras”⁶⁸ – a “further stage of spectacular development”, on which “the individual has shifted from a passive and purely repetitive status to the minimum activity dictated to him by market forces”, resulting from the fact that, “since the surrender of the Soviet bloc, there are no obstacles on capitalism’s path to empire”, so that “it can permit itself to stir individuals to frolic about in the free and open spaces that it has staked out.”⁶⁹ As regards the way in which art critically relates to this spectacular development, the difference between the 1960s and the 1990s consists for Bourriaud in a change of focus from “[s]ocial utopias and revolutionary hopes” to “everyday micro-utopias and imitative strategies”⁷⁰, from “future-oriented manifestos, and calls for a better world” to “utopia [...] being lived on a subjective, everyday basis, in the real time of concrete and fragmentary experiments.”⁷¹ However, he also sees a historical constant between these two eras, namely the artistic interest in participatory forms, constituting those “convivial relations”⁷² which give his book its name. Therefore, instead of putting the participatory art of the 1990s in contrast to the situationist approaches of the 1960s (and 1950s, to be precise), he attests the art he refers to that it “updates Situationism”⁷³.

As mentioned above, Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics have been of sustainable influence – an influence still lingering in the current discourse on contemporary art. But when referring to this book today, one also has to refer to its critique, which meanwhile has become a discourse of its own, pointing out a number of problematic traits of Bourriaud’s perspective – and particularly calling into question the topicality of situationism he assumes.

⁶⁸ Bourriaud, 2002 (1998), p. 26.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 113.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 31.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 45.

⁷² Ibid., p. 30.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 85.

Rejecting Situationism

The position which has to be mentioned first in this context is the one of Claire Bishop. In her text "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" from 2004, she especially argues that "the relations set up by relational aesthetics are not intrinsically democratic, as Bourriaud suggests"⁷⁴. Democracy, as she points out with reference to the political theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, consists in dealing with social antagonisms, not in excluding or suppressing these antagonisms. But exactly such an exclusion she sees taking place in the examples Bourriaud refers to as 'updates of situationism'. According to Bishop, these examples "rest too comfortably within an ideal of subjectivity as whole and of community as immanent togetherness."⁷⁵ There is, from her point of view, no antagonism in the communities these examples produce, as the members of these communities "identify with each other, because they have something in common."⁷⁶ As examples which – in contrast to the ones Bourriaud refers to – doesn't simply gather "like-minded art lovers"⁷⁷ and, in contrast, actually can be described as democratic in Bishop's understanding of the term, she finally refers to works by Thomas Hirschhorn and Santiago Sierra. "These artists", as Bishop writes, "set up 'relationships' that emphasize the role of dialogue and negotiation" and "are marked by sensations of unease and discomfort rather than belonging", as well as by "a tension among viewers, participants and context", particularly due to "the introduction of collaborators from diverse economic backgrounds"⁷⁸. As designation of this kind of art, Bishop introduces the term relational antagonism, and she closes her text by stating that "[t]his relational antagonism would be predicated not on social harmony, but on exposing that which is repressed in sustaining the semblance of this harmony", thereby providing "a more concrete and polemical grounds for rethinking our relationship to the world and to one other."⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Bishop, 2004, p. 67.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 70.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

In a very similar way, Juliane Rebentisch criticizes Bourriaud in her text "Spectacle" from 2007. Arguing like Bishop with reference to political theories that understand social antagonisms as the basis of democracy, she states that "the problem of our day presents [itself (sic)] precisely not as one of division, as seems to be the assumption behind the demand, which traces itself back to Debord, for more immediate 'relationality' in the context of art."⁸⁰ And the parallel to Bishop's argument becomes even clearer when she therefore concludes: "What is needed, by contrast, is a renewed exposition of the divisions, one that sharpens them into conflict and distance." Thus, Rebentisch likewise calls the topicality of situationism, as assumed by Bourriaud, into question. Or more precisely: She even denies this topicality and states that, quite contrary to Bourriaud's assumption, "the critique of the spectacle is doubly untimely."⁸¹ Firstly, it is, as she argues in correspondence with Bishop, untimely because it, in view of the mentioned political theories, "participates in the utopia, problematic in itself, of social authenticity"⁸². And secondly, this untimeliness consists for her in this critique's unawareness of the fact that this utopia's "central motifs have in the meantime been adopted by the opposing side", namely neo-liberalism, which "includes even the last poor devil by granting him the potential of self-realization."⁸³ In this respect, her argument is actually not too far from Bourriaud's description of a society of extras. Nevertheless, in consequence, she categorically rejects Bourriaud's assessment that art's potential to unfold societal critique would lie in an update of situationism. On the contrary, she concludes that exactly "the diffuse discourse of the dominance of the spectacle [...] blocks such a critique", and she therefore pleads that "it should be suspended indefinitely."⁸⁴

Rebentisch's assessment is thus also contrasting the assumption that situationism's topicality was just repressed by the archives of capitalism. Instead of such a repression, she rather sees the motifs of situationism taken over, absorbed and co-opted by the current form of

⁸⁰ Rebentisch, 2007.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

capitalism itself, and any topicality these motifs might have had in the past, in spite of being problematic in themselves, has from her point of view completely vanished under the contemporary societal conditions. With this assessment, for which the incorporation of Jorn's works into the Tangen Collection can of course appear as a blatantly obvious exemplification, Rebentisch stands in the context of a broader discourse, having its roots particularly in Luc Boltanski's and Ève Chiapello's analysis of 'the new spirit of capitalism', as they carry it out in their homonymous book from 1999 – with the original French title *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*.⁸⁵

Regarding the discourse on contemporary art, the influence of this analysis can absolutely keep up with the one Bourriaud's description of relational aesthetics had. And a particular significant proof for this influence can be seen in the fact that it obviously also had an impact on the way Bolt Rasmussen and Jakobsen describe situationism's contemporary status in their more recent publications. In their introduction to the anthology *Cosmonauts of the Future* from 2015, they write for example: "The Situationist project failed, no doubt about it."⁸⁶ And with particular regard to the approaches of both Jorn and Nash, along with a noticeable reverberation of Boltanski's and Chiapello's analysis, they proceed as follows:

The Jornian idea of an experimental attitude has been perversely realized in the 'creativity' hype. Self-realization is now an obligation and not an escape. Nash's wish to activate people has been turned into a discourse of participation where people only participate in their own alienation, leaving the structures of the system intact. The critique of capitalist production and division of labour has been put to work as new management techniques enabling capitalism to further penetrate the human body and mind. The vision of the city as a great work of art without spectators has been realized upside down by capitalist city planning. [...] The problem is of course that the capital-negating

⁸⁵ See Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005 (1999).

⁸⁶ Bolt Rasmussen & Jakobsen, 2015, p. 16.

dimension was closed down by the forces of history and reaction, transforming the anti-authoritarian project into individualised and hedonistic self-realization. The isolation of the critique of alienation and inauthenticity paved the way for new forms of control and exploitation that have taken on the shape of self-control and self-exploitation.⁸⁷

According to this changed way of seeing it, the formulations indicating a belief in a possible reactivation of a simply repressed anti-capitalist force of situationism, as they are contained in the guide to the first version of *This World We Must Leave*, are missing in the guide to this exhibition's second version from 2016. Or more precisely: They are replaced by other formulations. Bolt Rasmussen and Jakobsen no longer call their exhibition an 'anti-archive', but speak of it as an 'impossible archive' instead. And the paragraph containing the statement that the critical vocabulary of situationism had 'perhaps never been more relevant than now' is replaced by a paragraph describing the exhibition as an approach to "map an escape route through these revolutionary remnants and our own desperation"⁸⁸. Nevertheless, they still see the situationist project as reference point for "a revolutionary critique of present-day capitalist society"⁸⁹ and as an exemplary "attempt at a decisive break with the ruling socio-economic order and a projection of the coming into being of new forms of life."⁹⁰ So, they at least adhere to ascribing the failed project of situationism a certain topicality – inasmuch as they see it pointing "forward beyond the crisis-ridden capitalist order that survives today."⁹¹

If still regarding this capitalist order of today as a form of the spectacle, a possible way of naming the envisioned future beyond it could consist in calling it post-spectacular. And this leads me, finally, to the question how I position my own research in the context of the controversial discussion about situationism's topicality. For the term

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

⁸⁸ Bolt Rasmussen & Jakobsen, 2016, p. 13.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Bolt Rasmussen & Jakobsen, 2015, p. 16.

⁹¹ Ibid.

‘post-spectacular’ is of significant importance in this regard, though, and this is crucial, in a very different meaning – which I use to indicate by writing the term without hyphen: ‘postspectacular’.

Postspectacular Theatre

The way I understand and use the term ‘postspectacular’ originates from my description of a postspectacular theatre in my homonymous study from 2009.⁹² In this study, I proposed this naming for forms of contemporary performing art which critically react and refer to the changed conditions of the spectacle – particularly to the fact that it has incorporated exactly those artistic strategies that once opposed it. Thus, the term ‘postspectacular’, as I understand it, indicates not at all a time ‘after’ the spectacle – and therefore neither implies its end. Instead, it refers to a critique of the spectacle’s current conditions, which is ‘postspectacular’ in relation to earlier, anti-spectacular forms, which, under these conditions, have become spectacular themselves. The ‘post’ in ‘postspectacular’ thus refers to the ‘after’ of this transformation’s recognition, whence the corresponding spectacular conditions are critically dealt with, and not to any ‘after’ of the spectacle as such.

In particular, this critique of the spectacle’s current conditions by a postspectacular theatre consists in challenging the belief in the critical force of immediate relationality. Instead of continuing to emphasize the assumed immediacy of performance by focusing on direct interhuman face-to-face-encounters, presence, bodily proximity and mutual sensing, postspectacular theatre plays with absences, voids, distances and interruptions – and thus evinces a fundamental mediality of performance and of interhuman relations in general, being the only means to bridge the gap between subjects, as well as the gap inside each subject itself.⁹³ One of the performances shown in the program of Oktoberdans-festival 2018,

⁹² Eiermann, 2009.

⁹³ My argumentation is here – as in *Postspektakuläres Theater* – based on the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, particularly in form of its continuation by Slavoj Žižek, and the respective conception of the subject as split and divided from itself.

which can be regarded as a very recent example of a postspectacular theatre, even indicates this focus by its title: *BLANKS* – a solo by Ingrid Berger Myhre, in which she repeatedly disappears behind the scenography's central element, a big wall, or even leaves the room, while the performance, in this blank space, continues without her, replacing her body and its movements by projections on the wall, first and foremost projections of text, for example predicting how long it will take until she will reappear and what she will do then.

As examples like *BLANKS* show, a characteristic trait of postspectacular theatre consists exactly in what Bishop and Rebentisch regard as needed under the contemporary societal conditions: the exposition of divisions. Accordingly, both Rebentisch's position, and later also Bishop's, have been important points of reference for my description and theoretical reflection of postspectacular theatre. But, as my above given explanation of the term shows, as well as the term itself, I don't agree with Rebentisch's assessment that one no longer should refer to the term 'spectacle' in this context. From my point of view, the term still is of theoretical relevance, provided that the changes of the spectacle and its transformation are taken into consideration and analyzed appropriately. And the term 'postspectacular theatre' is, as explained, the result of exactly this kind of approach.

Furthermore, I regard Rebentisch's assessment also as too generalizing in other respects, and this concerns firstly the question about the topicality of a situationist strategy like *détournement*. Of course, Rebentisch doesn't say anything about this strategy in particular. But her general critique of the situationist project, moulded by her rejection of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, implicitly includes this strategy, and thus suggests that it was inseparably linked with the demand for immediate relationality. In contrast to this suggestion, I think that *détournement* is not at all necessarily tied to this demand. On the contrary, it also can be used in postspectacular ways, i.e. in order to uncover the mediality always underlying interhuman relations.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ See also my corresponding argumentation with regard to the topic of participation in Eiermann, 2015.

A Postspectacular Perspective on *Détournement*

Again, examples for this can be found in the program of BIT Teatergarasjen – both in and beyond the framework of Oktoberdans 2018. A first example is the performance *Your Majesties* by Navaridas & Deutinger from 2010, shown by BIT Teatergarasjen in February 2018. This performance can be described as being based on a *détournement* par excellence, namely a *détournement* of Barack Obamas controversial Nobel Peace Prize speech from 2009. This speech is recited on stage by Alex Deutinger while he copies movements which Marta Navaridas performs behind the audience. By this, on the one hand, the speech is divided from both the body and the voice of its ostensible authentic ‘owner’, and thus exposed in its mediality and rhetoric calculus. On the other hand, it also divides Deutinger – both from himself and from the audience, as it, like the movements, clearly neither is an expression coming from him nor an effect of his encounter with the audience. Instead, it affects him from beyond this togetherness, interrupting any sentiment of immediate relationality from the start.

A second example, shown in the program of Oktoberdans 2018, is *Princess* by Eisa Jocson from 2017. In this case, the performance is based on a *détournement* of the Disney film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* from 1937, whose text is used in the performance in fragments, continually repeated and doubled by the two performers Eisa Jocson and Russ Ligtas, who mirror each other in Snow White costumes – and by this broach the issue of both the employment of Philippine dancers in Disneyland Hong Kong and their simultaneous marginalization due to their darker skin color, as the respective program text explains.⁹⁵ In other words: *Princess* uses a classical *détournement* in order to expose the (in this case racist) division between groups of different skin colors. And like in *Your Majesties*, the use of both text and movement which clearly is external to the performers, also divides them from the audience and continually interrupts any sentiment of immediate relationality, also and especially when they approach the audience with a microphone and ask

⁹⁵ See BIT Teatergarasjen, 2018c.

them, in very close and direct face-to-face encounters, questions like for example “What’s your name?” or “Where is your mum?”.

So, as these examples show, the strategy of *détournement* is a quite topical one in contemporary performing art – and not at all necessarily tied to the emphasis on immediate relationality. Instead, it proves to be in fact very suitable for evincing the fundamental mediality of interhuman relations and to expose divisions – in case of both *Your Majesties* and *Princess* even with critical reference to quite concrete political and social issues.

But this is not the only matter which has to be pointed out in contrast to Rebentisch’s generalizing critique of the situationist project. A further one is that even Bourriaud’s description of a relational aesthetics contains aspects, which can be seen independently from his focus on immediate relationality, or more precisely: which can be separated from this focus, by which Bourriaud narrows them. One of these aspects is his application of the term ‘social interstice’.

A Postspectacular Perspective on the ‘Interstice’

Bourriaud’s use of the term ‘interstice’ is based on a reference to Karl Marx’ description of “trading communities that elude the capitalist economic context by being removed from the law of profit: barter, merchandising, autarkic types of production, etc.”⁹⁶ – the *Post Capitalist Auction* by Jingyi Wang (in collaboration with Idun Vik), presented by BIT Teatergarasjen in March 2018, could be mentioned as a further example.⁹⁷ For Bourriaud, the interstice accordingly is “a space in human relations which fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, but suggests other trading possibilities than those in effect within this system.”⁹⁸ The contemporary art exhibition is, from his point of view, the prime example for this kind of space. It creates, as he writes, “free areas, and time spans, whose rhythm contrast with those

⁹⁶ Bourriaud, 2002 (1998), p. 16.

⁹⁷ See BIT Teatergarasjen, 2018a.

⁹⁸ Bourriaud, 2002 (1998), p. 16.

structuring everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the 'communication zones' that are imposed upon us."⁹⁹

It can of course be discussed as to whether this assessment actually applies to art exhibitions – at least as to whether it applies to them in general. But I think that Bourriaud's description of the interstice applies quite accurately to a particular work by Heine Avdal & Yukiko Shinozaki / fieldworks, namely their site-specific project *Borrowed Landscapes*, first realized in 2011. I think so not only because the respective information text almost appears to be inspired by Bourriaud's wording, for example when it describes the project as "[a] series of location-inspired performances set in diverse private and public spaces, rethinking the notion of how we move or are made to move through them as well as the notion of everyday life."¹⁰⁰ The main reason why I think Bourriaud's description of the interstice applies to it is my experience of one of its performances in the framework of Oktoberdans 2012, where it was realized in a supermarket – a particular manifestation of the 'capitalist economic context' – during its usual opening hours.

There are two aspects which constitute a significant particularity of *Borrowed Landscapes* in relation to an art exhibition, as Bourriaud sees it as prime example of the interstice: Firstly, and particularly when realized in supermarkets, *Borrowed Landscapes* opens an interstice not only between the usual 'communication zones', but inside one of these zones – by implanting a performance, consisting in actions that clearly deviate from those usually carried out in supermarkets, into this zone. And secondly, since this happens during the usual opening hours, the project opens an interstice not only for an exclusive group of 'like-minded art-lovers' (to borrow Bishop's wording). Instead, it opens it for two audience's: On the one hand, there is the audience which comes to see the performance and pays for it. On the other hand, there is an involuntary audience, consisting of the people who just go shopping there. And the difference between these two groups is also visible, due to the fact that the members of the first group wear headphones.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Shiba, 2012.

So, the description of the interstice in fact applies to *Borrowed Landscapes*. But – just like the ‘space in human relations’ opened up by the project is not only a space in the relations between members of one exclusive group – the ‘inter-human commerce’ that can take place in this interstice does not at all result in an immediate relationality. Instead, what actually results from it is an experience of divisions and separations. The members of the involuntary audience are clearly separated both from the performers and the paying audience because they don’t know what exactly is going on and what the other audience hears. And the members of this other audience – the paying ones – are clearly separated from the involuntary audience, because they do not know how the latter’s members think of and assess the unusual occurrences they witness. Thus, just like shown above with regard to the strategy of *détournement*, criticizing Bourriaud’s demand for immediate relationality does not at all imply that his description of the interstice must be dismissed as well. On the contrary: If not narrowed to Bourriaud’s focus on immediacy, proximity and convivial togetherness, it proves to be quite useful for illustrating exactly such examples which call the demand for immediate relationality into question and instead evince relational antagonisms.

Another example for this – likewise a project by Avdal and Shinozaki – is *carry on* from 2015, in which I was involved as dramaturge (and, when we realized it in the framework of Oktoberdansen 2016 in Sentralbadet Bergen, as performer). This project takes its audiences, groups of up to ten people, on guided tours through the buildings it is realized in – often buildings which are themselves in a kind of interim status and thus predestined contexts for exploring them as interstices – as well as for opening further interstices inside them, between their usual functions. And often, parts of these tours also lead through the exterior areas of these buildings. So, like in *Borrowed Landscapes*, it also can happen in *carry on* that the audience meets passers-by, who then become a second, involuntary audience.

But what is actually even more interesting with regard to *carry on* is the relation that can be seen between its tour-concept and the situationist strategy of *dérive* – a way of exploring areas, mostly cities, in

contrast to the usual behavior their structures and conditions prescribe, in form of an experimental passage through them.

A Postspectacular Perspective on *Dérive*

Of course, the tours in *carry on* differ quite significantly from the situationist concept of *dérive*, at least from how Debord describes it in his text *Théory de la dérive* from 1956, for example with regard to the duration or the number of participants Debord recommends, and particularly because of the fact that they are guided. But actually, the guiding performers can rather be seen as parts of the environments the tours are leading through. And it's not only them who guide, but also small little cubes, which repeatedly – as a 'leitmotiv' in the literal sense of the word – appear here and there on the way, like little fragments of the surrounding architecture. Furthermore, it's always a group of performers who take the guiding in turns, and on the way, they repeatedly stay behind the audience or disappear, while others appear from unexpected places and take over from them. Sometimes, the audience even has to go a part of the way alone. Thus, one characteristic which the tours in *carry on* in any case have in common with the *dérive* is that they "involve playful-constructive behavior" and facilitate "awareness of psychogeographical effects"¹⁰¹. And – as the performers tend to sort of appear like parts of the respective environments – it also appears adequate to say that the audience members "let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there."¹⁰² In any case, this is also the way the tours are developed in the production process. They result from explorations of the respective spaces which practices exactly this strategy – a strategy also applied by Jorn in the context of his artistic research.

This leads me, finally, back to the beginning: To the reference to *FOR ANDRE TING*, which was, as it probably already has become clear, in a way a way of carrying on *carry on*, so to speak. As *carry on* uses

¹⁰¹ Debord, 1956.

¹⁰² Ibid.

black cubes, *FOR ANDRE TING* uses white tubes. And as the former of course are a reference to the 'black box' of the theatre space, the latter are, as already mentioned, a reference to the 'white cube' of the museum space, which in case of the Kunstsilo will in fact consist of white tubes. The guided tour in *FOR ANDRE TING* continues the way the tours in *carry on* are organized, and it thus similarly relates to the concept of the *dérive*. And like in both *carry on* and particularly *Borrowed Landscapes*, *FOR ANDRE TING* also involves, as its tour leads through the public areas in and around *Kilden*, involuntary spectators (respectively involuntary performers, like a cleaning woman appearing several times from different elevators in one of the performances) and quite clearly exposes divisions – for example when the tour comes to a short halt in front of a site fence blocking the way onto the quay behind the silo.

But these similarities are not the only reason to finally come back to this example. This reason also consists in the fact that *FOR ANDRE TING*, besides relating to the strategy of *dérive*, is likewise based on the strategy of *détournement*. In fact, it combines these strategies. Thus – besides the fact that I still, as promised above, have to explain what it has to do with the question of situationism's topicality anyway – concluding with reference to it appears particularly appropriate.

Finally: A *Dérive* through *Détournements*

Détournement, this strategy so significantly applied and developed by Jorn, is used in *FOR ANDRE TING* in two different ways: On the one hand, the visual reference to the silo in form of the tubes can be described as *détournement* – i.e. as *détournement* of an architectural form, which, in the context of the media attention directed towards the Kunstsilo project and the respective debate, has indeed become an iconic manifestation of this 'spectacle'. On the other hand – and this is the way it mainly is applied – *détournement* is used with regard to text. In fact, a large part of the performance's texts are *détournements* of articles and other texts related to the Kunstsilo project and the controversial debate about it. The text mentioned in the beginning – i.e. the text by which the audience is invited to come along on the tour – is for example the result

of a *détournement* of a text from a promotional video for *Kanalbyen*¹⁰³, a new, very expensive neighborhood, built – and in 2018 still in the building process – right next to the silo and closely linked to the Kunstsilo project and the related plans concerning Kristiansand's future urban development. When looking at this video from a slightly critical perspective, it virtually appears like a direct confirmation of Bolt Rasmussen's and Jakobsen's diagnosis from 2015 that situationism's "vision of the city as a great work of art without spectators has been realized upside down by capitalist city planning", and that the respective "anti-authoritarian project" has been transformed "into individualised and hedonistic self-realization."¹⁰⁴ For what the video promises is exactly a place for such hedonistic self-realization, and additionally, it advertises *Kanalbyen* as the epitome of a social meeting place, built in order to create a convivial social community – of course pretending this community's openness and inclusiveness, and excluding, as far as possible, any indication of the exclusiveness the respective real estate prizes imply and the social divisions and antagonisms connected with this.

When 'change', the ostensible topic of *FOR ANDRE TING*, is introduced in the performance's beginning, the *détournement* of this video's text is, before it gets recited by the performer mentioned in the beginning, introduced by another performer¹⁰⁵ as the last one in a row of examples for change. More precisely: It is introduced as the result of a change of a text, which itself is about an example for change, namely the building of *Kanalbyen*. And the way this text was changed for its use in *FOR ANDRE TING* is explained by the information that words like 'Kanalbyen' were replaced by words like 'staging', or words like 'building development' by words like 'performance', and so on. So, as it then gets clear when the text is finally recited, this *détournement* has changed the promotional text about *Kanalbyen* into a text about *FOR ANDRE TING* itself, pointing in particular to the *dérive*-like tour that will follow by introducing the performance as an 'eventful staging with many different routes one can go'.

¹⁰³ Sørmeqleren / Aptum Kommunikasjon, 2015, 30.11.

¹⁰⁴ Bolt Rasmussen & Jakobsen, 2015, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ Sander Cyvin.

Thus, by concluding with reference to *FOR ANDRE TING*, the topicality of situationist strategies like *dérive* and *détournement* becomes once more particularly clear. And when, in the performance's further *dérive*-like course, the controversial debate about the Kunstsilo project reverberates in form of further *détournements* in and around *Kilden* (whose building project had in fact triggered a similar controversial debate), it becomes equally clear that these two strategies, particularly in their interplay, can indeed function as a means to expose divisions and evince social antagonisms.

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**ART IS POP. CO-RITUS IS ART: ARTISTIC STRATEGY
IN SCANDINAVIAN ACTION ART IN THE 1960s
AND 1970s – WITH SOME ASPECTS OF POSTMODERN RECYCLING**

KNUT OVE ARNTZEN¹

Abstract

The article gives an outline of the situationist movement and its relationship to the COBRA-group. Scandinavian situationism and action art develops the concept of Co-ritus, which also was practiced in Norway by the artistic group Gruppe 66 in Bergen. Postmodern recycling in the title of the article, refers to the use of artistic strategies of actionist and performative kind in the 1970s and later.

Keywords: International situationism, Scandinavian situationism, performance art, COBRA-group, Co-ritus, Gruppe 66, Scandinavian artists in the 1970s.

I. One of the aims of the International Situationist movement, since its foundation in 1957, was to liberate art audiences from the effects of an ongoing process of commercialisation of the artwork – from a situation created by an understanding of the artwork from the perspective of an alleged commercial value that exposed it to alienation and speculation. The Situationists, as Guy Debord stated it in his book *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), wanted to free audiences – both art, and non-art audiences – from the manipulation of the spectacular, replacing it by live, presentational structures. In this, they echoed Bertolt Brecht's criticism of Aristotelian – or conventional, dramatic – theatre, a dramaturgy that exhausted emotion and consumed attention instead of enlightening the

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spectator.² Their approach opened the doors to conceiving of action art, live art or performance art as the 'real' art.

'Performance art' was not established as a critical term until 1970, when, as RoseLee Goldberg has stated, it 'became accepted as a medium for artistic expression'.³ However we can speak since the 1960s of the 'performance space' as a space where the action and the immediate take place. This kind of performativity, as conceptualised since that time, is based in actions in real time that transform a variety of closed or open spaces into performance spaces, and profits from the use of theatrical elements of a non-dramatic or non-linear kind. It is also often based on a dramaturgy of simultaneity, be it a circular story-telling or visual.⁴

The Situationists' concern with the results of the commercialisation of leisure time, was, however, a simplification. Time would show that action art, rituals and political actionism on the one side and pop culture on the other had the potential to merge, to become hybridised; and that non-institutionalised theatrical presentations could sometimes incorporate the language or motifs of pop-cultural phenomena, following the example of cultural forms such as cabaret.

Despite Debord's criticism, art has always had something to do with 'the show' and 'showing', although not in the simple, direct manner, of the classical unity of action. From a postmodern perspective, one could say that art has of late expanded beyond traditional aesthetics, reflecting hybridity, interactivity and a move to entertainment. But in fact art has always been immersed in a process of transgression of boundaries, moving between art as aesthetics and art as a shared, social activity. The theatrical body becomes this way a biographical body, by way of personal stories which the performers or actors share with the audience – a sharing process that takes place in a specific environment and in an interactive setting.

² Bertolt Brecht, 'The modern theatre is the epic theatre', *Brecht on Theatre* (trans. John Willet), London: Methuen, 1984, p. 37.

³ RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2001, p. 7.

⁴ See Knut Ove Arntzen, 'A Visual Kind of Dramaturgy: Project Theatre in Scandinavia', in Claude Schumacher and Derek Fogg (ed.), *Small Is Beautiful*, Glasgow: Theatre Studies Publications, 1990, pp. 43-49.

II. How can we understand this mimetic or non-linear theatrical communication? In what way have art history and theatre studies dealt with such paradigmatic changes in the understanding of art? And how can art from the 1960s and 70s be seen in relationship to developments that took place decades later, during the 1990s and early 2000s? The constant throughout all of these decades appears to be a move towards transgressing the classical-romantic notion of genre, which for so long was dominant for both Western and Soviet cultural politics – despite the big differences existing between the two of them.⁵

We often believe that Situationist practice of the 1950s and 60s took place in a period of unlimited artistic freedom for artists living in Western societies, definitely superior to that enjoyed by artists in the East. This assumption is actually not true, as exemplifies the post-War period in Norway. For 'Art in the Nordic Countries', an exhibition of Scandinavian art from 1945 to 1980 that took place at Sveaborg in Helsinki in 1985, the Norwegian contribution consisted of art more or less 'uncontaminated' by multidisciplinary approaches and hybridisation, focusing the two-dimensional art forms of painting and drawing. Avant-garde movements related to 'action art' were ignored, as if they had never existed.

However, experimenting with art's relationship to sex and pornography was part of a struggle for freedom in the 1960s, a means to break the chains of puritanism that tied society down, and to liberate art from social hierarchies and the dogmas of Socialist Realism. This break was a key priority for, for example, Group 66 (Gruppe 66), which formed at the Bergen Art Society in 1966 after the arrival in the city of the Danish Situationist Jens Jørgen Thorsen, who introduced the notion of Co-ritus, and brought with him films including pornographic material. In order to join the group, Danish artist Elsebet Rahlff, who had recently come to Norway, was sent back to Copenhagen to buy all the pornographic material that she could get hold of and smuggle it into

⁵ This idea was suggested by a visit to the KUMU art museum in Tallinn, Estonia in 2008. The exhibition of Estonian art from the collection at the museum showed how Soviet-Estonian artists made art following a Socialist Realist style – something they were obliged to do during the 1960s – but they did so by introducing a disciplinary inclination, by applying strategies from modernist European art practices such as collage and the use of different media.

Norway, where it was illegal.⁶ Sex, pornography and nudity became a key component of artistic actions, something which on a much larger scale happened in Denmark and Sweden throughout the 1960s and 70s.

Norway was dominated by much more restricted views on pornography and sex than its Scandinavian neighbours, because of a moral and political correctness influenced by puritanism that maintained that sex had to be seen from the perspective of fertility and reproduction. This typically Christian view was to some extent shared by people in the Marxist-Leninist milieus. For the radical political movements of the 1970s, it was important to take into consideration what ordinary people thought about controversial issues. At the time, the Marxist-Leninist movement had a very strong impact on cultural workers in general, encouraging many of them to (openly or secretly) take part in their political movement. And within this political struggle restriction and control sexual behaviour was the norm.

III. International avant-gardism arrived in Scandinavia through the Danish participation in the COBRA group.⁷ Asger Jorn, who was based in Copenhagen, wanted to ensure a free and unlimited artistic practice, untouched by financial and commercial interests. It was important for him to realise creative potential present in all human beings. He looked for 'free zones' of creativity that would result from an understanding of context and psycho-geographical strategies, the drafting of mind maps, and the use of action painting and happenings as artistic tools. Audience or spectators were, following Debord's convictions, to be prevented from becoming passive consumers. They needed to be 'activated' through actionist strategies, and through the experience of the marginal as a geographical and cultural entity.⁸

⁶ Elsebet Rahlff, 'Min tid med Guppe 66, Konkret Analyse og Samliv', 2010, in *Norsk avantgarde* (Norwegian Avant-Garde), Per Bäckström & Bodil Børset (red.), Oslo Novus Publishing Company, planned to be published in 2011.

⁷ The members, as the name of the group suggested, were based in Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam.

⁸ See Asger Jorn, 'Der grosse Schlaf und seine Kunden', in *Situationistische Texte zur Kunst*, Hamburg: Nautilus Verlag, 1990, pp. 55-61. Translation from German the author's.

Such artistic strategies aimed to deconstruct hierarchies of power and open up new perspectives to creativity. Part of this programme implied the dissolution of traditional metropolitan centres, such as Berlin, Paris and New York. In the 1950s and early 1960s cities such as Amsterdam, Brussels and Copenhagen were seen as belonging to the periphery. But breaking away with centre-periphery conceptions and with hierarchies of power also meant breaking away with established aesthetic judgment and taste. Traditional concepts of geopolitical constellations were to be put aside, in a geo-cultural search that gave an increased importance to what was before considered the periphery. As part of his programme, Asger Jorn looked for the original Nordic, and he, together with other Situationists, researched spirals and labyrinths of stone, found in nature or belonging to prehistoric culture. Spiral-shaped labyrinths were seen by them as topographic symbols, beyond ordinary understanding and connected to perceptions of endlessness.⁹ Such attitude led to a new interest on global regions outside Europe, and the kind of creativity that could be found in these areas. The degrading of the idea of the autonomy of the artwork, replaced by a more contextual conception of artistic practice, contributed to this, and resulted in an Scandinavian avant-garde focused on the interaction of body, man, nature and landscapes.

IV. Guy Debord and Asger Jorn had been members of the International Situationist movement since 1957. In 1959 the Danish artist Jørgen Axel Nash joined the group. One of Nash's main sources of inspiration was the German Bauhaus Schule of the 1920s and early 30s, despite Jorn's lack of sympathy for the Bauhaus. In 1960 the Drakabygget (The Dragon's House) was founded in Skåne as a Situationist-Bauhaus project. In 1962, a split took place in the International Situationist, when the German Gruppe SPUR was excluded from the International Situationist, a move that Nash disagreed with. That same year, at the

⁹ See Lech Tomaszewski, 'Non-orientable Surfaces', *The Situationist Times*, no.5, 1964. See also *Drakabygget*, 1963, available at <http://www.infopool.org.uk/7102.html> (last accessed on 15 December 2010).

movement's sixth congress in Paris, Jørgen Nash, the Swedish artist Ansgar Elde and the Dutch Jacquelin de Jong, who was an editor of the periodical *The Situationist Times*, were also expelled. As a result, the Second International Situationist movement was founded in 1962, including the Swedish artist Hardy Strid and, from 1963, Jens Jørgen Thorsen. Asger Jorn also joined it, but in secrecy. The goal of this new group was to create the possibility for every man to take part in artistic creativity of a social and ritualistic kind: "This is the first time it has been said to the audience: Come and join us. Get down to it. Everybody has got right of appeal."¹⁰ and in order to do so they shaped the notion of Co-ritus, through which the Danish and Scandinavian Situationists wanted to break away from the one-sided character of classical perspective.

The origin of this concept is not clear. Norwegian art historian Gerd Hennum has claimed that Co-ritus referred to multidisciplinary experimentation originating in the Black Mountain College of Art in North Carolina in the early 1950s,¹¹ but this term is not used by key literature on the college and artists associated to it.¹² Co-ritus actually seems associated exclusively to a reformulation of performative strategies in the hands of European Situationists. In 1962, from October to November, Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen wrote, in collaboration with Hardy Strid and Ambrosius Fjord, a 'Co-ritus Manifesto' on the occasion of their exhibition at Gallerie Jensen in Copenhagen.¹³ The manifesto seems to have been inspired by the action painting practised by SPUR in Hanover, and by the artists who were part of Drakabygget.¹⁴ A series of Co-ritus events were subsequently organised in Denmark and Southern Sweden, before Jens Jørgen

¹⁰ See CO-RITUS Manifesto from 1962 by Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Jørgen Nash and Hardy Strid: <http://www.infopool.org.uk/6105.html>

¹¹ See Gerd Hennum, *Med kunst som våpen: Unge kunstnere i opprør 1960-1975*, Oslo: Schibsted, 2007.

¹² Such as R. Goldberg, *Performance Art*, op. cit.

¹³ Elisabet Hagund and Kristina Garmer with Jens Jørgen Thorsen and Jørgen Nash, 'Situationists 1957-71, Drakabygget' 1963, available at <http://www.infopool.org.uk/7102.html> (last accessed on 15 December 2010).

¹⁴ Co-ritus was then a concept that originated in the Situationist movement from Northern Germany and Scandinavia, areas that fell outside of Goldberg's perspective, based on an East-West axis.

Thorsen introduced it to Norway in 1966. In an interview to Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen titled 'Art is Pop – Co-ritus is Art – Divided We Stand', Thorsen says:

The position of the audience is non-existing within Co-ritus. Co-ritus wants to abolish the notion of the audience – not like Fluxus that bores them into leaving or makes fools of them by making dry caricatures of European theatre – but by making the audience co-creators.¹⁵

Their key conviction was that art could not take place in relation to either the artist or the audience, but that it needed to unfold on both sides – the process of artistic creation is social:

To make a human being into a spectator is like cutting off his balls. We have nothing against pop or advertising, I love milk even though it is promoted in advertising. We are against those forms which are allowing freedom to pop and not to art. This is our weapon against pop, which the anti-pop people do not have, and it became clear at Strøget and in Montergade, where the police used all their powers to stop us.¹⁶

Thorsen refers to actions that took place in the streets and squares of Copenhagen in the 1960s, shaped by the Co-ritus principles. One of the most striking Strøget events, later referred to as the 'demonstration for the artistic freedom for speech', consisted of action painting made during a beautiful summer evening in August 1965, involving the Danish artists Paul Dissing and Ceaser, and including eighty folk singers and around 3,000 people dancing and singing.¹⁷

¹⁵ Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen, 'Art is Pop – Co-ritus is Art – Divided We Stand', *Aspekt*, no. 3, 1963. Available at <http://www.infopool.org.uk/6304.html> (last accessed on 15 December 2010). Translated by Jakob Jakobsen).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ The resulting paintings are in the collection of the Arkivmuseum in Lund.

V. Co-ritus became a instrument for understanding art not as autonomous production but as lived action. When Jens Jørgen Thorsen came to Bergen to participate in Gruppe 66's artistic project in the Bergen Art Society, he introduced the concept of Co-ritus in the country. And throughout the 1960s and 70s Bergen saw artistic projects reflecting the beliefs of the International Situationist movement and to some extent interacting with it, such as Gruppe 66 (in 1966), 'Konkret Analyse' ('Concrete Analysis') in 1970, and 'Samlivsutstillingen' ('Exhibition of Co-habitation') in 1977. They all took place at the Bergens Kunstforening during the time when Per Remfeldt was its Intendant, rejuvenating the visual arts scene of the city.¹⁸

The three exhibitions were organised by the same constellation of artists, and all three were characterised by a certain degree of actionism. They were accompanied by lectures and organised discussions, and resulted in the publication of books and periodicals. These elements created a discursive frame that allowed for an active participation of the audience. If Gruppe 66 was provocative in its inclusion of pornographic material, 'Konkret Analyse' further explored the Co-ritus strategy by investigating different modes of participation. For example, members of the audience were invited to contribute their writing to an open book,¹⁹ and the exhibition included a puppet theatre for children and performances of jazz, improvisational music and poetry.²⁰ Visitors were welcome by the slogan 'Art Is Dead' – a conviction that in the exhibition space were reflected by the generous use of black plastic.²¹

'Samlivsutstillingen', in contrast, had a more didactic character – the result of its attempt to enlighten spectators about sexual practices and co-habitation. Its strategies were more accessible and perhaps less provocative than those of the two precedent events, but the exhibition

¹⁸ 'Samlivsutstillingen' later travelled to Tromsø (Åsgård sykehus), Oslo (UKS) and Trondheim (Trondheim Kunstforening).

¹⁹ See *Nye Illustrerte*, Issue 2, 1970.

²⁰ See Marianne Roland, 'Performance art og Kurt Johannessen', in Knut Ove Arntzen and Siren Leirvåg (ed.), *Vestlandsmodernismen i norsk teater – en artikkelsamling i forbindelse med "Scene 1935–1992" – En teater- og scenografiutstilling i Bergen*, Bergen: University of Bergen, 1992.

²¹ See G. Hennum, *Med kunst som våpen*, op. cit., p.174.

has been described as Gesamtkunstwerk that included all sorts of artistic expression, from paintings and sculptures to human models and other educational materials.²²

But despite the important differences between them, the active involvement of the audience in these three exhibitions makes them part of the history of Co-ritus.

VI. Co-ritus became a strategy for artists who considered themselves progressive and interested in social engagement, especially in the context of late- and post-industrial society. The central goal for those involved in it was to prevent the exploitation of the newly conquered leisure time of the middle classes, by inviting them to take part in the artistic process rather than being just passive spectators. But, in order to do this, art could no longer remain autonomous.

Besides Thorsen, influential figures in this movement that mixed art and life included the Norwegian artist Kjartan Slettemark, who was based in Sweden and practised an art heavily influenced by theatrical strategies, actionism and happenings. In 1967 he was responsible a happening outside Kunstnernes Hus in Oslo wearing a suit made of jeans fabric and decorated with the Norwegian folkloric painting *rosemaling*, sitting on animal fur and playing tarot with 5,000 Mao Tse-tung cards. Slettemark's happenings, actions and performances share some of the Co-ritus principles, but they lack a clear framing of how audiences were to be included in the proceeds.

Similar actions can be found in the work of other Scandinavian artists in the 1970s, such as Irma Optimist and Roi Vara in Finland or Sigurdur Gudmundsson in Iceland, but by the 1980s action art experienced a conceptual turn towards classical performance, for example in the slow motions actions of Norwegian performance artist Kurt Johannessen.²³ The Danish actionist theatre group Solvognen (The Chariot of the Sun),

²² See Jorunn Veiteberg, *Kunst og kvinnekamp : Ein analyse av og refleksjonar omkring tre utstillingar i Bergen 1975-1980*, dissertation for the Art History department, University of Bergen, 1982, p. 105.

²³ Veronica Diesen, *From Art Action to Art Interactions: Different Aspects of Scandinavian Action Art*, in *Art Action 1958-1998*, Québec: Inter Editeur, 1998, p. 245.

founded in 1969, still reflected the principles of situationist actionism in the 1970s, after the movement as such had faded away. Solvognen made conventional theatre productions as well as organising big action events like *Wounded Knee* at the Rådhusplassen in Copenhagen in 1973, or *Julemandshæren* (*The Army of Santa Claus*) in 1974.²⁴ *Wounded Knee* was staged in connection with a visit to Copenhagen of the American Indian Movement, and *Julemandshæren* consisted of the occupation of a department store and the encouragement the passers-by to take the goods without paying – until the police interrupted it.

The tense relationship that some of these artists had to popular culture in the 1960s and 70s had relaxed into the 1980s, and by that time pop had become adopted as an ironic strategy. This was the case in the work of Baktruppen, a performance company that since 1986 explored the limits of performativity in theatre and street actions. In many ways they have been both recycling and ironising over aspects of the Scandinavian avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s.²⁵ However, the resistance to pop prevailed in performance art contexts until much later, opposed by a search for authenticity that demanded a certain purity incompatible with popular culture.

A striking mix authenticity, irony and social engagement can be found in the actions of the artist group Vestlandske kunstmisjon (Mission of Western Norway), active in the early 2000s. This young women's group from Bergen performed in Salvation Army uniforms and organised raffles and fake weddings that proved an effective recycling of 1960s practice.²⁶

The struggle between art and commerce is today in a very different situation from that prevalent in the 1960s, but the performative and action strategies that emerged at the time have continued since without interruption. Irony has grown stronger as time has passed by,

²⁴ See Nina Rasmussen, *Solvognen – Ffortællinger fra vores ungdom*, Copenhagen: Rosinante, 2002.

²⁵ See K.O. Arntzen, 'Baktruppen Going Beyond Aesthetics Toward a Space for Living: An Essay on Baktruppen's First Decade 1986-1996/97', in K.O. Arntzen and Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk (ed.), *Performance Art by Baktruppen: First Part*, Oslo: Kontur Publishing, 2009.

²⁶ See *Vestlandske Kunstmisjon anno 2003-2005* (exh. cat.), Bergen: Vestlandske Kunstmisjon, 2005.

perhaps as a result of the post-ideological approach dominant in the arts of the 1980s and 90s. This has done away with the perhaps naïve attempt to change people's engagement with culture and society in general, but somehow the impulse of Co-ritus still continues.

This essay is based on a lecture given as a contribution to the symposium 'Art, the Social and Gender Politics in the 1960s and 70s' that took place at the Office for Contemporary Art Norway on 21-22 January 2009, and has been published in the book *What ever happened to Sex in Scandinavia?* edited by Martha Kuzma and Pablo Lafuente, Koenig London 2012.

**POLITICAL AND ARTISTIC RADICALISM IN THE 20th CENTURY:
A SITUATIONIST SOLUTION
FOR AN INTERNATIONAL VALUE CONFLICT¹**

OANA ȘERBAN²

Abstract

At 50 years from May '68 and 150 years from the moment when Marx's *Capital* was published, revisiting the Situationist International appears to be one of the most urgent tasks that any attentive observer of the effects of the French "intellectual revolution" must fulfil in order to explain the cultural synchronicities and mutual interdependencies between the European (Leftist) cultural revolutions of the 20th century. On the one hand, the S.I. explicitly aimed to overcome the collapse of May '68, considered an aborted and failed revolution, by engaging a radical agenda for the reformation of the so-called "society of the spectacle", ideologically framed by Debord. On the other hand, in the light of the *Thesis* and the multiple manifestos that the S.I. movement developed as a cultural program, the ex-partisans of Lettrism conceived their social and political measures, supported by artistic productions, as an intended and necessary radicalization of capitalist *detours*, at the end of which society emerges from "constructed lived situations" through which individuals can resist to alienation and to the consequences of commodity fetishism that expresses the mediation of social relations through consumption objects. There through, in the first part of my article I will explain the manner in which the S.I. ideologically puzzled a set of objectives, concepts and methods

¹ This article represents the improved form of a lecture that I gave on the occasion of the International Conference "Contemporary Philosophy. Problems, trends and perspectives" (28 August – 2 September 2017, Varna, Bulgaria) organized by the Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences; the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences; the Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences; the Romanian Academy, the Department of Philosophy, University of Liège, Belgium; Institute of Philosophy, Slovak Academy of Sciences.

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inspired by the Marxist thought and the May '68 program, as main coordinates that prepare the axiological radicalization developed by Situationism as a two folded-process of political and artistic radicalism. The second part of this research endeavours to reframe the cultural and artistic coordinates of Situationism in order to explain it as one of the last and, arguably, most politicized, avant-gardes of the 20th century.

Keywords: Situationism, avant-gardes, commodity fetishism, detour, alienation, capitalism, cultural criticism, derive, society of spectacle, Guy Debord, neo-Marxism.

This paper deals with the multiple acceptances of “radicalism”, inspired and applied by the *Situationist International* movement, as a challenge to revisit the theme of value conflicts and radicalism in the 20th century. Despite its political origins and objectives, the concept of “radicalism” has at its core the radical critique of the capitalist society, that Debord, for example, takes up to the formula of the “society of the spectacle” (Debord 1977): the massive proletariat, the alienation of consciousness of the modern individual through his work or the capitalist competition among markets which encouraged the expansion of fine arts to the entertainment and new media arts express, at their roots, the opposition with the quotidian, in its political, economic and cultural layers. “The radical theory behind the Situationist theses”³, as Kauffman would put it, lays on the correspondences between *a political radicalism* and *an artistic one*: as an example, in the Situationist discourse, mainly inspired by Debord’s works, the “bad governance” is associated to a complete cultural disorder, easily identified through the phenomena of “bad painting”.

Therefore, my paper is focused on constructing different arguments for sustaining Kauffman’s position that “this radicalization (n.a. promoted by the S.I.), can also be understood as a determination to transcend everything aesthetic, all formal and figural production, and replace it with the ludic requirement to construct lived situations” (Kaufmann 2002, 298).

In order to support Kaufmann’s thesis, I will analyse arguments such as the synchronicity between the radically negative critiques developed among the theoretical productions of the S.I. and the production of anti-art objects, specific to the artistic portfolio of multiple

³ See Vincent Kauffman, “Angels of Purity”, trans. By John Goodman, in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, (ed.) Tom McDonough (Cambridge / London: The MIT Press, 2002).

Situationists; the identification of a political situation and its conversion to an artistic spectacle or representation, the political formalism and the radical aesthetic form or the correspondences between the radical political agenda of the S.I. and the potential of this movement to be regarded as one of the last and, arguably, most politicized, avant-gardes of the 20th century.

In the end of my paper, I will explain the value conflicts between socialism and capitalism, in their numerous formulas, that the S.I. define and try to solve through a cultural and political program, based on the Situationist theses, arguing that this opposition might be regarded as a process of *axiological radicalization*.

Early forms of radicalism in the *Thesis* of the Situationist International

As a modern revolutionary movement, the *Situationist International* reacts to the capitalist historical subversions of the European society, inspired by the Marxist theories from the 19th century, considering that “the radicality of his conceptions”⁴ can truly be followed. The group of the S.I. recommends itself as a revolutionary movement that attempts to continue the theory of the proletariat – according to the third thesis of the Situationist program – by the means of the new social background, which is “radically new”⁵: “the language of power has become frantically reformist” (*Thesis 11*), the technological orientation of the current society reframed the urban conditions of existence as a capitalist outcome of the rational instrumentality, the inherited social inequalities reshaped the popular conceptions on commodity-based well-fare. When the S.I. appeared as a cultural nucleus of reformists, its partisans had the perfect

⁴ See Guy Debord, Gianfranco Sanguinetti, “Thesis on the Situationist International and its Time”, from *La véritable Scission dans l’Internationale* (1972), trans. by Christopher Winks and Lucy Forsythe, in The Situationist International Online Archive, available online at: <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/sistime.html> (last time accessed at August 20, 2017).

⁵ “WHAT ARE KNOWN AS *situationist ideas* are merely the first ideas of the period of the reappearance of the modern revolutionary movement. What is radically new about them corresponds exactly to the new characteristics of class society, to the real development of its temporary successes, its contradictions, and its oppression.” (*Thesis 3*)

historical circumstances to conceive a social critique of their contemporary times by engaging the language of “decomposed domination” (*Thesis 11*).

Culturally, there was already a realm of undermined authority among different spheres of discourse and ideologies: the S.I. showed up when most of the avant-gardes – mainly Dada and Surrealism – lost their revolutionary energy. Hence, the virulent “ruptures” that Dada provoked by abolishing reason and embracing spontaneity, defying the academic standards of creation and fighting against the institutionalization and commercialization of art in a specialized and politically governed markets; that Surrealism proposed by exploring the unconscious dimensions of our psychological parts of creativity, or Futurism supported in a political order, alimanted the appetite of Situationists for finding new forms for *radicalism* in all the aspects of life. By its cultural pedigree, the S.I. born from the left-wing tendency within Lettrism opened its public agenda seeking to apply modern perspectives on the liberty of creation, the role of the new technologies in developing cultural products and the immunization of art in front of politics using all the means of *critical theories*.

The Situationists reacted against the economic framework of their century without silently conspiring against the institutional structures and forums of power that sustained it. They took their protest and reactive thinking as an exercise of public intellectual honesty. Composing the intellectual mass of the students of revolutions whose voices lead the French people on the Parisian streets on May '68, with a high civic sense and with modern convictions about the democratic regime of power, they discouraged the *society of the spectacle*. This concept reflected the ideology of consumption that shaped the material and dramatized approach of the standards of life and social interactions, reduced at simple *representations* instead of lived and authentic situations. Affirming a conduct that is “radical-ontologically revolutionary” (*Thesis 29*), they conceived through passionate discourses the “critique of life as a whole” (*Thesis 29*), considering that society must react against social alienation and commodity fetishism, which have invaded all spheres of ordinary life and culture, by narrowing the means of expression and self-fashioning, as well as the dynamic of social interactions, to *objects*. Individuals became passive subjects of a social dynamics based on entertainment and technologies that depict life as a spectacle.

Against this practical tendency of consuming life without living it, the *Situationist International* emerged towards the ideology of the *society of the spectacle* in its late years of maturity. The concept, proposed by Guy Debord, was launched after the breaking of decors that early Lettrists made, also in their quality as founders of the *Situationist International*, when they interrupted the Mass from the night of the 1950's Easter, infiltrating in the Notre-Dame Cathedral and yelling near the altar the Nietzschean expression, "God is dead" – revealing the age of decadence and hypocrisy that we all fall in – or when they disrupted Charlie Chaplin's press conference in 1952, asking him to abolish his aesthetic projects and condemning his low-art forms of expression restricted to mime⁶.

If the *Notre-Dame affair* experienced radicalism both by the lens of Lettrism and Situationist movement, the action "No More Flat Fleet!" from Chaplin's press conference was already a form of *radical gesture* that true Situationists made as members of the *Lettrist International*, a new movement represented by the radical members of the classical Lettrism, from which Debord was part of. Their polemic was against Isou's respect for Chaplin as a reformer of the cinematic art: this rupture shows that the Lettrist International, that became the Situationist International, had at its core *radicalism* in its most drastic and convincing forms.

Nevertheless, these two moments are part of the history of the Situationist International understood as a chronological succession of

⁶ The Manifesto against Chaplin was considered to have caused a drift among Situationists: there were partisans of his art considering that he reflected in his movies the consequences of capitalism on the individuals' behaviour, as many as the advocates of his condemnation in the name of the fact that he played the role of the paradigmatic modern individual who passes through and reflects social transformation by new means of technology and industrialization that ultimately affect the production of authentic art. The latter embraced Berna's explanations for qualifying Chaplin a symbol of cultural decadence: "Because you've identified yourself with the weak and the oppressed, to attack you has been to attack the weak and oppressed — but in the shadow of your rattan cane some could already see the nightstick of a cop. You are «he-who-turns-the-other-cheek» — the other cheek of the buttock — but for us, the young and beautiful, the only answer to suffering is revolution." See Serge Berna, Jean-Louis Brau, Guy-Ernest Debord & Gil J. Wolman, "No More Flat Fleet!", in *Situationist International Online Archive*, available at: <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/flatfeet.html> (last time accessed at August 20, 2017).

“constructed situations”, and they both reveal the true significance of this concept, meaning the substitution of pre-made contexts of life, beliefs and political setups, with authentic moments of life, which are created, humanized and have an experiential value for the evolution of the individual within a society. The concept was inspired by Debord’s film technique from his 1952 creation, *Jurlementen Faveur de Sade*, a paradoxical cultural product consisting in a movie without images and animated only by voices, arguing that “the art of the future will be the overturning of situations or nothing”, following “a science of situations that is to be created, which will borrow elements from psychology, statistics, urbanism and ethics”⁷. In fact, this dialogue of voices represents the orchestration of the ideology behind Debord’s productions, which insists on the conscious creation of life-contexts, in the name of which, in June 1958, the S.I. defined its program by recourse to the key-term *situation construite*, as it follows: “a moment of life, concretely and deliberately constructed by a collective organization of a unitary ambiance and a game of events”⁸. My point, at this level, is that *les situations construites* that the Situationists propose represent an early form of *radicalism* that might be synthesized as the attempt to substitute the material tendency towards constructing life through the quantity of objects, frameworks and social pre-determined contexts with the quality of the lived moments, in order to revolutionize “behaviours which it gives rise to and which radically transform it”⁹.

The Situationists aimed, in this manner, to invite the modern individual to be the author of any operative perspective on life, by reconsidering the society of the spectacle – I would add here an

⁷ Guy Debord, “Voice 1”, *Howlings in favour of Sade*, 1952, trans. by Gregor Markowitz, in December 1994. Available at: <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/90> (last time accessed at 20 August, 2017).

⁸ See Definitions, International Situationniste, June 1958, trans. by Ken Knabb, in International Situationist Online Archive, available at: <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/definitions.html> (last time accessed at August 20, 2017).

⁹ See Guy Debord, “Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency’s Conditions of Organization and Action”, June 1957, trans. by Ken Knabb, in International Situationist Online Archive, available at: <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/definitions.html> (last time accessed at August 20, 2017).

impersonal, directed, prefabricated narration for our quotidian life that depends on a material basis – following new paths of authenticity, creation and sensitivity. The radical dominant of this program was also supported by other key concepts that shape the Situationist radicalism, in an ideological order, such as *the detour* – referring to the practice of turning expressions of capitalism and capitalist systems against themselves, *the psychogeography* – through which Lettrists tried to cartography emotions and behaviours developed in concrete spaces belonging to our society, *the derive*, as a framework that allows the individuals to abandon their motives for an action or an intervention and to be guided by emotions and new experimental opportunities for shaping their perspectives. These concepts, taken out from their theoretical framework and implemented in the social and practical contexts of life were considered by Situationists the only viable manner to “upset the relationships with people, cities, and ideas with games, derives and constructed situations” (Plant 1992, 89), and starting a whole and impressive social revolution. Nevertheless, the experience that should have corresponded to these theoretical visions had been hardly conceived as possible and commutable from theory to ordinary life: critics of the S.I. such as Plant, Knabb and Banash considered that despite the bold visionary perspectives that these concepts addressed, such critiques are impossible to be separated from a practice that destroys society through acts of “rebellion, subversion and negation” (1991, XI). In my opinion, such standpoints should be framed within the revolutionary and factual context of the S.I.

Debord would defend the fact that May '68 represents one of the many events or manifestations that might be subjected to the patronage of the S.I., not only because it respected the theoretical coordinates of the *Theses* of their movement, also because a critique must be consistent with its outcomes. I strongly believe that the S.I.'s social critique offered the possibility to develop “a radical social transformation” (Kellner 298) that aimed to perform cultural criticism without letting it be operated by instrumental politics. In fact, the entire discussion about radicalism should be put in the terms of Banash's arguments on the reception of the relationship between theory and practice in our postmodern times:

"In their book *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, Best and Kellner argue that the value of any theory is the possibility it offers to actualize radical social transformation. Life Eagleton, Best and Kellner argue that theory must develop an immediate relationship to practice or remain «just another specialized discourse» whose members accumulate cultural capital and theorize «just for the fun of it»." (Quigley 2014, 84; Banash 2000)

But can we consider the S.I.'s social critique a specialized discourse, somehow utopian since many of its ambitions for an organized and liberated society were impossible to achieve? Unfortunately, as Banash continues to observe, the S.I.'s image has been associated, whenever their radicalism was disputed, with the chaotic image of May '68, that actually was a moderated street intervention of civil and intellectual masses, and not a bloody revolution:

"Consider that articles and books on the S.I. are almost invariably scattered with gritty black-and white photos from the events of May '68: cars overturned, students hurling stones, shop windows broken, members of the S.I. in meetings of the occupation committee. This is the image that sells the S.I. in its current academic commodification – theoretically sophisticated revolutionaries who gave up their desks and typewriters to spray paint the walls and put theory into practice for a total revolution." (Banash 2000, 4)

From this contexts, we can barely get convinced by the fact that the S.I.'s radicalism consisted in a total reform of the public space as a cultural and political exercise of reshaping the post-avant-gardes society: we can see rebels, violent peoples, and destructive voices. Therethrough, in order to truly understand the multiple acceptances on radicalism that the S.I. patronage claimed, we have to seek deeper in their written legacy and historical organized events that depict a Situationist solution for the conflict of values that modernity, in the age of its last decades belonging to the 20th century, giving birth to a new form of political and artistic radicalism.

An argument in favour of the Situationist Political and Artistic Radicalism

The most difficult task, that a critique of the Situationist International has, is to prove that the S.I. wasn't just a group of avant-garde, and yet, that there are sustainable arguments that can be brought in favour of considering it as one of the last avant-gardes movements of the 20th century. The revolutionary intentions of Debord or Jorn explain the fact that the S.I. tried to transpose their political perspectives into artistic contents taking advantage by the power of art to perform a universal, powerful and seductive message towards the masses that have been subjected to the *alienation* phenomena provoked by the consumerist life-styles specific to late-capitalism. Arguing that avant-gardes generally represent *radical discourses* that target cultural changes, inspired by the inadequacy between the quotidian framework composed from political ideologies and forms of repression and control, and the general tendency towards a liberated cultural context for creation and free speech, might be a way to highlight the Situationist particularities in this context. But we risk a lacunar reception of the S.I.'s objectives, if we choose only this narrowed path of interpretation.

It is known the fact that the S.I. recommended itself as a Left revolutionary movement inspired by the anti-capitalist directions suggested by Marx, as well as a community which was clearly against any repressive regime of political power. This simple delimitation involves by all means a model of *political action*, which may consist in forms of *resistance, detour* of existent political centres of authority, or *productions of ideologies* and *public discourses* that defend the individual's liberated consciousness, authenticity and non-politicized private life-style.

Clark and Smith brought into our attention the fact that presenting the S.I. as an intellectual group of visionaries that supported societal and political changes but failed to express their beliefs by other means than art is a comfortable position that those who were radical capitalists, in their turn, took in order to present themselves as unbreakable leaders of power:

"We think he should look again at these sentences (which conclude some thirty pages of discussion of the S.I.'s place in modern art), and ask himself whether they are not lofty, contemptuous, and

dismissive. That's how they read to us. They seem to epitomize – and, in view of their publication history, to enshrine – a certain effort to turn the S.I. safely into an art movement, and thereby to minimize its role in the political and social movements of the sixties" (T.J. Clark and D. Nicholson-Smith in McDonough 2002, 491).

In my opinion, arguing for an apolitical reading of the Situationist avant-garde works is as inappropriate as dismissing the Situationist political theory from their cultural productions; on the one hand because avant-gardes are simultaneously artistic and aesthetic revolutions that either generated or supported political revolutions, on the other hand because it would be a non-Situationist interpretation that of ignoring the double delimitation of their revolutionary movement, both by artistic and political backgrounds. Situationists had the privilege to appear after the most important avant-gardes performed their program, changing artistic styles and methods of creation and addressing their power to familiarize the individuals with their unconsciousness, irrational part of their life, as a dimension with high potential of creation. But I consider that it is the Situationists's merit to teach us how to look at avant-gardes as a homogenous cultural project with political and artistic ambitions:

"The very notion of a collective avant-garde, with the militant aspect it implies, is a recent product of the historical conditions that are simultaneously giving rise to the necessity for a coherent revolutionary program in culture and to the necessity to struggle against the forces that impede the development of such a program. Such groups are led to transpose into their sphere of activity certain organizational methods originally created by revolutionary politics, and their action is henceforth inconceivable without some connection with a political critique. In this regard there is a notable progression from Futurism through Dadaism and Surrealism to the movements formed after 1945." (Debord 2002, 31-32)

I argue that this would contradict the main principles of the Situationist axiological orientation, focusing my arguments on the fact that Situationists conceived themselves as a "minority" that emerged

from the left Lettrists and get to inspire all the avant-garde existent groups to be part of a unitary cultural and radical movement. They invited reactionaries among Europe to be the authors of a “classless society” in which “there will no longer be painters, but only situationists who, among other things, sometimes paint” (Debord 1957).

My point is that the revolutionary movement that the S.I. aimed to perform was projected as a “constructed situation”: by any situationist method, they were constructing an anti-capitalist and classless society, in which the political agenda was getting to influence the artistic creation:

“Together we must eliminate all the relics of the recent past. We now believe that an accord for a united action of the revolutionary avant-garde in culture must be carried out on the basis of such a program. We have neither guaranteed recipes nor definitive results. We only propose an experimental research to be collectively led in a few directions that we are presently defining and toward others that have yet to be defined. The very difficulty of succeeding in the first situationist project is a proof of the newness of the domain we are penetrating. Something that changes our way of seeing the streets is more important than something that changes our way of seeing paintings.” (Debord 2002, 49)

The evolution of the S.I. is quite interesting from this perspective: from an International Lettrist group, to the International Situationist, they managed to become representatives of an “International Avant-Garde”, that used artworks in order to combat the emotional influence of advanced capitalist methods of propaganda and diminish the ideological effects of capitalism on individuals relating with their authenticity, desires and liberty.

“Your role, revolutionary artists and intellectuals, is not to complain that freedom is insulted when we refuse to march alongside the enemies of freedom. Your role is not to imitate the bourgeois aesthetes who try to restrict people to what has already been done, because what has already been done doesn’t bother them. You know that creation is never pure. Your role is to find out what the international

avant-garde is doing, to take part in the critical development of its program, and to call for its support.” (Debord 1957)

When Simon Sadler argues that Situationists did not wanted to be just another avant-garde he is right, but in the sense that they wanted to be all the avant-gardes at once. Situationists slogans from their public manifestations such as “Watch Out for Manipulators, Watch out for Bureaucrats” or “Ne travaillez jamais”, definitely coherent with anti-capitalist intentions, gave life to artistic projects and to a revolutionary imagery that transmitted the general idea that the spectacle characteristic to our modern time does not prove that society is dominated by images; it explains that our social interactions are mediated by images. Merlin Monroe’s painting in its Situationist version includes the message “my thoughts have been replaced by moving images” (*Annex 1*) depicting this Situationist thesis, which had also some extended commentaries in the direction of the institutionalisation of art. One of the posters of May ‘68 illustrates the following message: “The police post themselves at the School of Fine Arts – the Fine Arts’ students poster the streets.” In this contexts, posters regarding the economic situation of their contemporary society subjected to capitalism couldn’t miss either: “An S.I. poster from May of ‘68 declines the verbs of participation and profit, clearly breaking the door between proletariats and bourgeois: I participate, you participate, he participates, we participate, they enjoy (they profit)”¹⁰ (*Annex 2*).

¹⁰ <http://www.ideologicalart.com/situationist/>.



(Annex 1)



(Annex 2)

By this means, Situationists succeeded in investing and transposing their political radicalism into one of the most ingenious forms of artistic radicalism: they created by valuing traditional methods of the so-called “classical avant-gardes” such as the poster of the Dada movement, platforms for spontaneous expression. Graffiti, posters, slogans supported their propaganda for a classless state, prescribing what Debord calls in his essay from June 1963, “New Forms of Action in Art and Politics”, that I consider proofs of the Situationist radicalism. Engaging the perspective of constructed situations, in 1963 Situationists were considered successful in creating “a qualitative transformation of society” abolishing the spectacular passive behavior to which late-capitalism encouraged. We might wonder how is radicalism, in its political and artistic versions, compatible with the Situationist movement as “an experimental investigation of possible ways for freely constructing everyday life”?

Debord gives an answer:

“Once it is understood that this is the perspective within which the situationists call for the supersession of art, it should be clear that when we speak of a unified vision of art and politics, this absolutely does not mean that we are recommending any sort of subordination of art to politics. For us, and for anyone who has begun to see this era in a disabused manner, there is no longer any modern art, just as there has been no constituted revolutionary politics anywhere in the world since the end of the 1930s. They can now be revived only by being superseded, that is to say, through the fulfillment of their most profound objectives.” (Debord 1963)

Avant-gardes, including the Situationist movement, have the role to connect individuals with the experiences they plea for, engaging each human being in the struggle with the forms of control and dominance, psychologically or politically projected by means of public and institutional control and dominance. Radicalism, in its political and artistic acceptance, can be defined in Situationist terms as a project of destroying the conventions of obedience that individuals have in front of institutionalized and capitalist forms of governance and continue in depersonalized forms of expression, such as artworks created in order to respect the exigencies of art industries and markets or the expectances of the dominant political perspectives within a society.

In order to sum up the coordinates of my analysis and to skip to the conclusions, I must recall that the Situationist radicalism has as its core two inseparable directions, an artistic and a political component, based on a mechanism of engaging constructed situations of authentic life in the negation of the current society and, consequently, in the assertion of a “positive” new societal context.

On the one hand, this form of radicalism continues the path opened by the avant-gardes. In the same essay, Debord reminds us that the role of the modern art was to destroy conventional means of experiencing language, art and human behaviours. Providing Dada as one of the most prolific examples of cultural movements which aimed to provoke such a radical change, Debord considers that despite the fact

that it created and supported a form of social-critique, it was unarmed and failed, and the proof for its historical lack of success is the fact that "Dadaism itself has become a recognized school of art". In the same time, Debord inspired the radicalism of Situationist International from the modern art represented by cubism and, to be more exactly, from the philosophy of life that artists used to turn society against its destroyers, confronting them by the power of image to depict their crimes and disasters:

"However, the negative truth that modern art has contained has always been a justified negation of the society in which it found itself. In Paris in 1937 the Nazi ambassador Otto Abetz pointed to the painting *Guernica* and asked Picasso, *Did you do that?* Picasso very appropriately responded: *No. You did.*" (Debord 1963)

As a matter of fact, Situationists used aesthetic positivity to put at work the political negativity, and this is exactly the short definition that we might give to radicalism. One can get convinced of my perspective just by interpreting the manner in which Debord himself chooses to criticize the concepts of aesthetic positivity belonging to the neo-dadaists of the modern art as a potential manner to turn back to the negativity of the form of expressions that lack, because of political considerations, for many years:

"Whereas the neodadaists speak of charging with (aesthetic) positivity the plastic refusal previously expressed by Marcel Duchamp, we are sure that everything the world now offers us as positive can only serve to endlessly recharge the negativity of the currently permitted forms of expression, and in this roundabout way produce the sole representative art of these times. The situationists know that real positivity will come from elsewhere, and that from now on this negativity will collaborate with it." (Debord 1963)

Such a perspective was lately reaffirmed by Situationists such as Clark, Gray, Smith and Radcliffe, in a 1967 essay devoted to "The Revolution of Modern Art and the Modern Art of Revolution". In their collective work, they argued that "modern art is at a dead end". In short,

their argument is that avant-gardes had the moral duty to create an imaginary transformation of this world by engaging radical theses, but instead, they insisted only in recreating the nature of creativity by all the means of Dada and Surrealism which let us with an “incoherent, chaotic and incomprehensible” modern art. Situationist art is responsible to repair this failures following the project of art that Nietzsche saw as a transvaluation of all values through which art becomes negation. But this radicalism creates a homogenous project of reforms by addressing the world of art as the world of our quotidian life: reformism and nihilism are two elements that make possible such a project and inspire the radicalism that Situationists exposed in all their creations, from artworks to written discourses. We could also examine this form of radicalism as a manner of associating the insufficiencies and inconsistencies of the capitalist power regarded as “bad governance” with the inauthentic forms of “bad art”, among whom we recognize and identify artworks created just to respond to the exigencies of the market and not to the most personal forms of expression of the artists.

Conclusions

It is true that Situationists, sometimes associated with anarchists, otherwise associated with the name of the democratic councils of workers, are a historical figure impossible to be targeted as an exclusive moderated or an extreme group of the left-wing political order. Nevertheless, this shift between moderated and extreme political positions reflects a puzzle of values that discourage capitalist institutionalization of politics and, implicitly, of arts. Its radicalism is projected as a reactionary attitude that must support a coherent and consistent social critical theory which has the duty, as part of the ideological framework of this International Avant-Garde called International Situationist, to combine all the ingredients of previous forms of radicalism that the cultural movements of the 20th century experienced. Exploring the Situationist axiological radicalism, as a cultural revolutionary program developed on a two-folded areas, an artistic, respectively a political one, provides us a significant

hermeneutical outcome, that of integrating Situationism in the boarder spectre of avant-gardes, albeit its exhaustion is owed to an ideological, Marxist, detour, overshadowed by the latter structure of Pop culture and artistic capitalism. This year we celebrate 50 years from May '68: by this, revisiting Situationism becomes more than a historical recurrent task. For those who claimed that "beauty is in the street!", the S.I. has been a source of inspiration for constituting the radical revolutionary praxis that denounced the bad governance represented by autonomous and detached political art. Situationism plea for a social and politically engaged art (even art forms considered neutral from a political standpoint became, by this position, embedded in a certain political situation, explicit or implicit, assumed or detached, partisan or anarchist). However, from this perspective, bridging divides: May '68 and the S.I., although they both claimed to be representatives of a cultural revolution, they created different "situs" for autonomy, individualism and for a critical and reflexive positioning against capitalism. If the social chaos provoked by May '68 is far from prescribing the terms of a "radical" revolutionary program – Situationists considered it an aborted revolution, the cultural manifestations of the S.I. – including their artistic inheritance – depicts a coherent and radical project of our modern society, that embraces all forms of an avant-gardist and reformatory order: from manifestos to new institutions, values and individual public behaviours. The main paradox is that the Situationist political spectacle asked to the individuals to "watch out for manipulators" and "for bureaucrats". But, as any other ideological construct, Situationism failed by becoming one of these two avoidable extremes. Historically, there is no greater regrettable narrative than that of manipulators who failed to be bureaucrats. They sublimate the need of order through the chaos of streets: but they get to confound the existing laws and institutions with the manifestos and the revolutionary groups. In the end, they rise the spectacular noninstitutionalized bureaucracy of the streets: mottos, placards, banners, revolutionary programs (on key-points), declarations and public statements.

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SITUATIONISM AS NORDIC POPULAR PERFORMANCE ARTS

CLUB BERGEN

ARND WESEMANN¹

Abstract

I would like to introduce you to dancer Yaara Moses from Israel, for one good reason, since I would later like to talk about the danger happening to the arts if an art work is not framed by an art context – such as the frame created by film maker Amit Sides from the Tel Aviv-based Mamash production group in “Over A Low Flame Project”.

Keywords: Yaara Moses, danger to art without context, the feast, ritual praising of the artist, rave, the mute.

I was asked to talk to you about the FEAST.

Okay, most obvious, the feast appears to be the exact opposite to what we call the ARTS.

As you saw in the film it is not dangerous to dance on a street far off from a city, or in a supermarket, shifting your focus to fancy deals, or in front of a roller coaster with much more energy than you can provide yourself, and foremost: to present dance in front of an academic audience. You saw how beautifully the students were ignoring the arts.

Now imagine dancing at the Oktoberfest in Munich. What a frame! How would you call the Oktoberfest in Munich a work of art, hélas [sorry]!

But it is a feast, a fest, and you now may fear to mistake something: dancing at Oktoberfest or dancing at Oktoberdansen is a totally different thing just to keep in mind any difference between the Bavarian one, and the one here in Bergen.

Anyway, you call Oktoberdansen a festival.

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Ritual praising the artist

So look at the word. A fest – and a val. “Val” from “vale” also appears in carnevale, where “carne” is meat, and “vale” is farewell. Carnival, in total, means: Good-bye to meat. This is because a carnival is a feast happening just before spring, during a certain given time: not to hunt any animals while they are breeding or nurturing their next generation under very difficult climatic circumstances. Animals hardly find food, and so, man is adopting the same rule. Carni-val means: Good-bye, meat.

Now, if we are going to translate FESTIVAL accordingly the exact meaning is: Good-bye, feast. If you consider a feast as something happy and wild, a gathering full of unexpected moves and turns, a liberal and even anti-moralistic dancing, eating, drinking, smoking... in consequence, when it comes to arts it says: say good-bye to the feast, to happiness.

An arts festival like this one is, vulgo [in common language]: the exact opposite of a feast. And Oktoberdansen indeed appears being much closer to a holy artist's mass, a ritual praising the artists, with a distinct schedule of happenings (not to be mistaken with happiness), happenings starting and ending at exactly defined time schedules in organized venues, theaters, galleries.

This includes the strangest ritual of it all: In front of the art you are, and you have to be silent. You yourself have to be invisible.

Or seen from another angle, remember the film, the dancer appears to be invisible, except for the camera, of course. So, in theater only the actors may do strange things. You yourself must keep your mouth – shut (like now listening to me speaking). You do not eat, drink, smoke. You are subjected to an art work, you only may judge. You only may react to it at the very end with a merely strange reaction: you give applause. Your hands are clapping.

You react, as if you have to get awake again. Relieved. Good God, it's over! You may think so, and you are giving applause, of course, officially, as a salute to the artists. In other times, during a feast – and I mean a feast without a 3000 watt amplifier and a 10000 watt bassface – clapping was an easy tool to create rhythm as a kind of collective backdrop to the drummers. Today we may even consider clapping as an early immersive tool. So, clapping was originally meant to make the partygoers becoming a part – of the party, of the feast. Today, the so called

curtain applause is marking the end of silence, and to be honest, also the end of the festival: Good-bye theater.

Curtain falls. We can go back to celebrations. Having a drink at the bar. Theater – a dark hall, a secret cave with a holy stage, can invoke the impression of being in a sanctuary, in a church – as you sometimes as well can get the impression of suffering like in a church, on your stool, rather than being part of a feast. Although: churches do mean their celebrations as celebrations. They call it feast, like Easter. And as such, Oktoberdansen can still call itself a feast, too. In this sense, the church redefined the feast as something to make you subjected to god, – or to an art-work.

And this means, radically spoken: the ritual of a theater or dance festival is more likely an act – indeed – of suppressing your will to freedom instead of creating a free act, or a playful arts event.

Rave on stage

Why is that so? If you look at what we call the current mainstream in dance, the most recent successes in the dance world, one of the major tendencies is a highly complex way of using techno music.

Look at the recent shooting stars from Israel, Sharon Eyal and Gai Behar, who are strongly collaborating with a genius techno composer, Ori Lichtik. That's great work. The bass line is grooving, the dancers are like machines, puppets. The choreography is working like an algorithm, stubborn, precise, full of minor variations. Works by Sharon Eyal and her company L-E-V then appear to be a variety, a revue, in the good old sense of the "Ornament of the crowd", a kind of post-military, post-industrial architecture of movement, even dedicating themselves to the digital revolution.

Or, look at Richard Siegal, a master and a descendant of the popular school of William Forsythe. In Richard Siegal's work UNITEXT at the Bavarian State Opera for example, the audiences weren't shaken by the dancing only but again by the close collaboration this time with techno composer Carsten Nicolai, who is better known to many as Alva Noto, an East German pioneer of electronic music, who won every great prize: from the Golden Globe for best film music to the Prix Ars Electronica.

Both, Richard Siegal and Sharon Eyal, among many others (as at Oktoberdansen this year: Softcore – A Hardcore Encounter, Ravemachine

and Crowd), put the rave on stage. They were translating their personal experience of feasting, meaning: of clubbing into art works. Driven by the rhythm of a feast, they are taking signifiers of a rave to the theaters. They use the elements of a highly contemporary party, but subject it to the rules of the theater. You still have to be seated in your chair, while others celebrate their turns and turn-tables. This is a use and misuse of the good old idea of gathering to loose one's mind. These artists are exporting the losses to theater.

The feast of the mute

The feast, to this (and my) generation, consisted of techno music. A feast, that was founded through events like the Love Parade, or early bass-driven events in abandoned industrial sites or office buildings. To this generation techno was what I would call a feast of the mute. German writer Rainald Goetz had big successes with his novel *Rave* in 1998, a drug and music story of a lonesome walkman generation at the bottom of the forthcoming age of the so-called immaterialism (a word invented by the French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard). It was this generation that started to invest less in cars or homes, but in boundless digital infrastructures like mobile phones while at the same time believing in a boundless Europe. Techno was the sound of it. The youngsters of those times are now in charge of being curators – for Sharon Eyal, for Richard Siegal, for a raving generation with its Berlin Berghain club adolescence, its Berlin KitKat-Club ambitions towards liberalized sexuality and a multicultural belief in the one-world-fun-park, as it is offered today by EasyJet or Norwegian Airlines.

All this happened right before the Facebook industry of the howling wolves came up filling its pages with any sort of concern towards ecological disasters (plastic garbage), climate change, sexual harassment, or fear of terror. A whole industry succumbed to political correctness. The feast of the mute – aka the Techno- and Chill-out-generation – staggered into the mad man's fear towards any pollutive festivity: No to cigarettes, no to plastic cups, no to riots. Concerts in Brussels, to pick one contemporary example, are opening doors precisely 7 pm. No bags allowed. No mobile phones. The first band's gig is in 50 minutes to the point. The main gig is one hour. No encores. No

dancing. No drinks. 10 pm is meant to kick everybody out of the concert hall. Brussels' music world is the cleanest in the world.

Compare it to the former rock concert, celebrated like a feast – think of the Burning Man Festival in the deserts of Nevada – it all turned into a well prepared theater show, adapting all rules of a civilized grave for the living dead. Very well organized for disabled persons as well as for the deaf. You will be mute. You clap your hands. Leave the space, don't disturb the neighbors, search for a non-smoking bar. Go to bed.

This is what we call art

Art is in other words controlling the rules of what we call culture. Art has been at the forefront of respecting the art as a holy gem, but not as an interruption in life. A feast, instead, would be a huge interruption. A parade of Samba Schools, or Techno wagons, or Carnival carts, filling the streets and destroying public transportation and security surveillance for a couple of days during an extended period of time. A feast as an interruption of your life would be like 72-hour clubbing in Berlin at weekends, diving into a different world, a club. This kind of feast is made to break with every rule: with sexual rules, with health caring rules, with rules of behavior and rules of reason.

Now looking back at Oktoberdansen you saw it all, too, in a sterile way, on a stage protected like a quarantine station: In here, dancers are allowed to break with sexual rules, with health caring rules, with rules of behavior and rules of reason. It is all done over there, far away, on stage, in a secluded world, where people can show the breaking, the dancing, and a certain dis- or misbehavior. Great!

This is what we call art. I call it a well subsidized practice to prevent us, ourselves, from any dis- or misbehavior. We obey the arts. Those art-lovers, they hate the feast. They love Oktoberdansen, They hate Oktoberfest.

Tell me, why is that so?

BALAGAN¹ AS SYMBOLIC CHAOS – THEN AND NOW

DAVID ELLIOTT²

Abstract

This essay is extracted from the publication that accompanied the exhibition *BALAGAN!!! Contemporary Art from the Former Soviet Union and Other Mythical Places* that was held at the Max Liebermann Haus, Kühlhaus am Gleisdreieck and MOMENTUM in Kunstquartier Bethanien. Berlin in winter 2015. This examined the confluence between Russian art today and the critical attitudes of the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary artistic avant-gardes in their attitudes towards power, order and symbolic chaos.

Keywords: ballets russes, commedia dell'arte, contemporary Russian art, grotesque, parody, political satire, Russian and Soviet theatre and art; Alexandre Benois, Aleksandr Blok, Carlo Gozzi, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Vaslav Nijinsky, Arthur Schnitzler, Igor Stravinsky, John Addington Symonds.

Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806) was a prolific eighteenth-century Venetian playwright, and soldier, now best remembered for injecting disruptive supernatural, or mythical, elements into his plays as satirical or socially critical glosses. His incorporation of this riotous, popular element into his work energized the flagging talents of the increasingly sclerotic genre

¹ “Balagan” is a Russian word, Persian in origin, that originally meant *a portable wooden structure*. From this it evolved to mean *a fairground both* and in more recent parlance has become an exclamation that crystallises delight or horror of abject mess or glorious chaos – a world turned on its head recognised in art and theatre as social parody. See, David Elliott (ed.), *BALAGAN!!! Contemporary Art from the Former Soviet Union and Other Mythical Places*, Berlin, MOMENTUM, 2015, ISBN 978-3-9817801-0-9.

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of *commedia dell'arte* and helped spread its already well disseminated characters, types and traditions even further afield.

Gozzi was quickly appreciated outside Italy: by Friedrich Schiller, who in 1801 translated his play *Turandot* (1762) retelling a story from *One Thousand and One Nights* into German, and by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who staged it in Weimar the following year.

Gozzi's version of this tale also provided the basis for Giacomo Puccini's unfinished opera of the same name (first performed in 1926). Gozzi's colourful characters and elaborate plots also provided inspiration for E.T.A. Hoffmann's wild and horrific imaginary tales, as well for the more staid plays of Aleksandr Ostrovsky that consolidated the Russian national repertoire. He also was a role-model for the Russian/Soviet theatre director, dramaturge and actor, Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940), who in 1914 made a free adaptation in Russian of Gozzi's satirical comedy *The Love of Three Oranges* (1761) that, seven years later, was transformed into the, still popular, comic opera by Serge Prokofiev.



© Vsevolod Meyerhold in the role of *Pierrot*
in Aleksander Blok's play *Balaganchik*, St. Petersburg, 1906

In 1910, Meyerhold was working for the stiffly conservative Imperial Theatres in St. Petersburg. Finding this stultifying, he decided to invoke the spirit of Gozzi to regenerate the by-then-dull Stanislavskian realism that characterized Russian theatre by creating *Doctor Dappertutto*, an alter ego that enabled him, simultaneously, to create different kinds of

performances in non-official spaces.³ Unlike his work for the Imperial theatres, stock characters, expressive stylization and unnatural breaks of narrative or logic – as well as an abstract, almost dance-like style of acting that would eventually culminate in his “biomechanics” of the 1920s – characterized Meyerhold's new, not always successful, productions.⁴ The first of these saw light of day at the “scandalous” premiere of his production of Aleksandr Blok's (1880-1921) short play *Balaganchik* (*The Fairground Booth*) at Vera Komissarzhevskaya's Theatre in December 1906 that completely dumbfounded the audience. Meyerhold also played, to great acclaim, the lead role of Pierrot, as a poetic, ironical hybrid of fluid dance-like mime.



© Boris Grigoriev's painting of Meyerhold as both a successful actor/theatre director and as Carlo Gozzi's avatar Dr. Dappertutto, 1916, oil on canvas, 247 x 168 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

³ The name “Dappertutto”, that means “everywhere” in Italian, was taken from one of the characters in E.T.A. Hoffmann's story *A New Year's Eve Adventure* (1814).

⁴ For biomechanics see Edward Braun, *The Theatre of Meyerhold*, London, Eyre Methuen, 1979, pp. 166-68.

In *Balaganchik*, Blok moved away from the febrile Symbolism that had characterised his previous work towards a more 'modern' approach that flouted clichés of empathy or sentiment or any other expectations of his audience. In its short, broken narrative, the tragic love triangle of Harlequin, Pierrot and Columbine was repeatedly disrupted by the impotent figure of the "Author" who kept intruding into the action, complaining that his play had spiralled out of his control, and that the characters had developed wills of their own. A circus clown also intervened and Harlequin added pratfalls to his established bag-of-tricks.



© Two unidentified clowns as *Pierrots*,
hand coloured photograph, 1880s

In 1910 Meyerhold played the character of Pierrot for the last time in a different work, the studio-ballet *Le Carnaval* – his only non-speaking, “dancing” role – choreographed by Michel Fokine (1880-1942) who was also working with Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. After this, in his cabaret theatre *The House of Interludes*, Meyerhold immediately started work on *Columbine's Scarf* (1910), another commedia, a radically changed

adaptation of a ballet- pantomime that Austrian author Arthur Schnitzler had written in the same year with the title of *The Veil of Pierrette*.⁵



© Mikhael Fokine (*Harlequin*) and Vera Fokina (*Chiarina*) in Fokine's ballet *Le Carnaval* for the Imperial Russian Ballet in Pavlovsk, 1910. Costumes by Léon Bakst

In Meyerhold's version of this work, however, this tale of thwarted love, jealousy and infidelity was moved away from the cloying background of Biedermeier Vienna, in which Schnitzler had set it, to take the form of a fragmented, gothic grotesque, rather like a Hoffmann short story.⁶ Unimpeded, this time, by a complaining "Author", the action was driven by the gesticulations of a demonic *Kapellmeister*. An eyewitness of this production described it thus:

⁵ Theatre director Aleksandr Tairov (1885-1950), a former pupil of Meyerhold, used the same text by Schnitzler for his more faithful versions of *The Veil of Pierrette* produced in 1913 and 1916.

⁶ A grotesque is a comedy that ends in disillusionment.

"Frivolous Columbine, betrothed to Harlequin, spends a last evening with her devoted Pierrot. As usual, she deceives him, swearing that she loves him. Pierrot proposes a suicide and himself drinks poison. Columbine lacks the courage to follow him and flees in terror to the wedding ball where the guests await her impatiently. The ball begins; then, whilst an old-fashioned quadrille is playing, Pierrot's flapping white sleeve is glimpsed first through the window, then through the doors. The dances, now fast, now slow, turn into an awful nightmare, with strange Hoffmannesque characters whirling to the time of a huge-headed Kapellmeister who sits on a stool and conducts four weird musicians. Columbine's terror reaches such a pitch that she can hide it no longer and she rushes back to Pierrot. Harlequin follows her and when he sees Pierrot's corpse is convinced of his bride's infidelity. He forces her to dine before the corpse of her love-stricken Pierrot. Then he leaves, bolting the door fast. In vain Columbine tries to escape from her prison, from the ghastly dead body. Gradually she succumbs to madness; she whirls in a frenzied dance, then finally drains the deadly cup and falls lifeless beside Pierrot."⁷

As the self-professed saviour of Russian theatre, Meyerhold now saw himself as the all-powerful Kapellmeister – or ringmaster – of the alternative cabaret-circus he had created. In this new kind of collective theatrical experience, the director was both the creator and the manipulator of effects while the author amounted to little more than a purveyor of raw material upon which "Doctor Dappertutto" would work his transformative magic. This approach developed and continued throughout Meyerhold's work until the 1930s when it was blocked by the icy chill of Stalinism. It was still clearly evident in the many satirical *balagans*, of different kinds, he produced immediately after the Revolution and throughout the 1920s.⁸

⁷ Ye Znosko-Borovsky, *Russky teatre nachala XX veka*, Prague, 1925, pp. 311-12, cited in Edward Braun, *The Theatre of Meyerhold. Revolution on the Modern Stage*, London, Eyre Methuen, 1979, pp. 102-03. (Translated from Russian by Edward Braun).

⁸ Meyerhold was arrested, tortured and executed in 1940 during the Great Purge.

The revival of interest in *commedia dell'arte* in Russia, along with its relatives – puppet shows, pantomime, cabarets, clowning and circus tricks – was part of an impulse that was sweeping across the whole of western culture.⁹ Yet, before and during World War I, *commedia dell'arte* with its origins in folk custom, ritual and magic, along with its creative battery of tricks and grotesquery, became the model for a new, popular, improvisatory theatre that enabled Meyerhold to adapt and represent classic drama in an entirely new form. At one level, it was a form of escapism, but its increasingly dark inflection also reflected the instability and uncertain mood of this time. He described these theatrical possibilities during 1912, writing in between productions, in a substantial essay entitled *Balagan* that researched the origins of theatre and asserted its primacy against the threat of cinema: “At the present time, when the cinematograph is in the ascendant, the absence of the fairground booth is only apparent. The fairground booth is eternal. Its heroes do not die; they simply change their aspects and assume new forms.”¹⁰ This essay concludes with the following credo: “...when in the art of the grotesque, form triumphs over content, then the soul of the grotesque and the soul of the theatre will be one. The fantastic will exist in its own right on the stage; *joie de vivre* will be discovered in the tragic as well as in the comic; the demonic will be manifested in deepest irony and the tragi-comic in the commonplace; we shall strive for 'stylized improbability', for mysterious allusions, deception and transformation; we shall eradicate the sweetly sentimental from the romantic; the dissonant will sound as perfect harmony, and the common-place of everyday life will be transcended.”¹¹

⁹ See Martin Green & John Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot. The Commedia dell'Arte and the Modern Imagination*, London, Macmillan, 1993.

¹⁰ According to Braun, this essay was probably started in 1911 and finished in 1913. It appears, translated by him into English, as 'The Fairground Booth' in Edward Braun, *Meyerhold on Theatre*, London, Eyre Methuen, 1969, pp. 119-142. This quotation is on p. 134.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 142.

ALEKSANDR BLOK: BALAGANCHIK**(*The Fairground Booth*) Premiere, St. Petersburg 30 December 1906***"The plot so far...*

(*Harlequin* puts his hand on *Pierrot's* shoulder who falls flat on his back and lies motionless in his white overalls on the floor. *Harlequin* then leads *Columbine* away by the hand. She smiles at him. General despondency. [*The Mystics*] hang lifelessly on their chairs, the sleeves of their frock coats have stretched to cover their hands; their heads have disappeared into their collars. It looks as though their coats hang emptily on the chairs. Suddenly, *Pierrot* jumps up and runs off. The curtains close. At the same moment the dishevelled and agitated *Author* darts out on the stage in front of the curtain...)

AUTHOR: Kind sirs and madams! I offer you my most profound apologies, but I deny any responsibility! They mock me! I wrote a most realistic play, the essence of which I consider it my duty to set forth before you in a few words: the gist of it concerns the mutual love of two youthful souls. A third person bars their way, the barriers fall away in the end, and the lovers are united forevermore in lawful wedlock! I never decked my heroes out in fool's costumes! Without my knowledge, they have been performing some antiquated legend! I don't acknowledge any legends, myths, or any other such banality! And especially allegorical plays on words: It is indecent to call a woman's braid the scythe of Death!¹² That defames the female estate. Kind sirs...

(A hand thrust out from behind the curtain grabs the *Author* by the collar. He disappears with a scream into the wings. The curtains quickly draw apart. A masked ball. Those with masks circle to the quiet strains of a dance. Among them circulate other figures with masks, knights, ladies, clowns. A melancholy *Pierrot* sits in the middle of the stage on the bench, where *Venus* and *Tannhauser* usually embrace.)."¹³

¹² The Russian word *kosa* means both *braid of hair* and *scythe*.

¹³ From Aleksandr Blok's short play *Balaganchik* (translated variously as *The Fairground Booth* and *A Puppet Show*) (St. Petersburg, 1906), in "Aleksandr Blok's Trilogy Lyric Dramas," London, Routledge, 2003, pp. 26-27. (Edited and translated by Timothy C. Westphalen).

After some time...

“Their dignity is rudely shattered by a clown who runs up and pokes out his tongue at the knight. He strikes him on the head with his sword; the clown collapses over the footlights crying 'Help, I'm bleeding cranberry juice!' and then jumps up and leaves. A leaping, jostling torchlight procession of masks makes its entrance. *Harlequin* steps from the crowd to greet ...the springtime... And he [then] leaps through the window, but the view is only painted on paper and he falls headlong through the hole. *Death* re-appears, a scythe over her back, and all the masks freeze in terror. But *Pierrot* recognises her again as his *Columbine*: the scythe fades in the morning light and colour floods her cheeks. They are about to embrace when *The Author*... pokes his head between them to acclaim the happy ending of his simple tale. As he is joining their hands all the scenery is whisked aloft and *Columbine* and all the masks disappear. *The Author* withdraws in hurried confusion, leaving the baffled *Pierrot* to face the audience alone and play a mournful tune on his pipe.”¹⁴

The Verdict...

“Truly what took place at Vera Komissarzhevskaya's theatre on the 30th December [1906] must be regarded as an insult, not only to the theatre, but also to literature, poetry and dramatic writing; it lies beyond the pale no less of art than of common sense.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Edward Braun, *The Theatre of Meyerhold*, op. cit., pp. 67-8.

¹⁵ *Obzrenie teatrov* (*The Theatre Review*), St. Petersburg 1907, No. 39, p. 6. Translated by Braun, *ibid*, p. 72.



© Sergei Diaghilev, the impresario of the Ballets Russes (left),
with lead dancer Vaslav Nijinsky (centre) and composer Igor Stravinsky, c. 1911

On 13 June 1911, at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, Sergei Diaghilev's increasingly fashionable *Ballets Russes*¹⁶ premiered, to considerable acclaim, *Petrushka*, a Russian ballet-burlesque, choreographed by Michel Fokine who felt he had to struggle with Igor Stravinsky's "difficult" score.

Set in 1830, during the Shrovetide festivities in St Petersburg, the ballet retells the folk tale of *Petrushka* – a Russian variant of Italian *Pulcinella*, English *Mr Punch* or German *Kasper* – as a puppet doomed to suffer because he is unable to express love like a human being. The, still embryonic, dissonance of Stravinsky's music combined with the jerky, angular dance of Vaslav Nijinsky (1889-1950), the star performer of the title role, to express the puppet's anguish and pain with an extraordinary

¹⁶ Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929) was a Russian art critic, founder of the association and journal *World of Art*, patron, ballet impresario, and founding director of the influential *Ballet Russes* (1909-1929) that commissioned many new works from leading composers, choreographers and artists and performed widely throughout Europe and the Americas.

and shocking strength. But the role was also conceived, and enjoyed, as an intentional parody of the traditional choreography of Marius Petipa.

Alexandre Benois, the designer of the ballet, recalled that on encountering Stravinsky's score for the first time:



© Nijinsky as *Petrushka*, Paris 1911

“What I heard surpassed all my expectations. The Russian Dance proved to be really magic music in which infectious, diabolical digressions into tenderness - then, after a culminating paroxysm, it came to an abrupt end. As for *Petrushka's Cry*, having listened to it about three times, I began to discern in it grief, and rage, and love, as well as the helpless despair that dominated it.” When he saw the ballet first performed, however, his serious worries that Nijinsky “did not completely understand what was needed” were completely dissipated: “I was surprised at the courage Vaslav showed, after all his jeune premier successes, in appearing as a horrible half-doll, half-human grotesque. The great difficulty of *Petrushka's* part is to express his pitiful oppression and his hopeless efforts to achieve human dignity without ceasing to be a puppet...”¹⁷

¹⁷ Alexandre Benois (1870-1960), *Memoirs* (Vol. 1), London, Chatto and Windus, 1960, p. 327. (Translated by Moira Budberg)



© Above: Lydia Lopokova as the *Doll-Ballerina* in *Petrushka*, London 1919



The principle characters of *Petrushka* from the programme of the *Ballets Russes*, Paris 1912. Right; Tamara Karsavina as the *Doll-Ballerina*, Paris 1912

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONS***Reflections on the Commedia Dell'Arte, 1890***

In his erudite introduction to *The Memoirs of Count Carlo Gozzi*, English poet John Addington Symons, literary critic, translator, and historian of homosexuality, describes the history, character and types of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* and pantomime and recounts how these have influenced popular theatre elsewhere:¹⁸

Satire is dependent on the recognition of certain typical behavioural or physical features – types – as expressive of common social or personal characteristics; the structure and humour of *commedia dell'arte* is also based on this consonance. By the sixteenth century, François Rabelais, and many other writers, had already made such references in an untrammelled, uproarious way; this coalescence of popular visual, literary and theatrical forms fed into the *commedia*, as well as into later and contemporary forms of satire, caricature, absurdism and parody.

And where would Radio and TV soap operas or situation comedies be today without a liberal larding of such types?

“Let us watch the carnival procession of the masks defile before us (...) First comes *Pantalone*, the worthy Venetian merchant, good-hearted, shrewd, and canny, yet preserving a certain child-like simplicity, which long acquaintance with the world has not contaminated.¹⁹ (...) *Pantalone* wears a black mantle, woollen cap, short trousers, socks and slippers of bright red. A black domino conceals half of his face. He is sometimes a bachelor, but more frequently a widower with one daughter, who engrosses all his time and care. Easy-going indulgence for the foibles of his neighbours, combined with homely mother-wit, is the fundamental note of his character. But as time goes on, he degenerates, dotes, yields to senile vices.”

¹⁸ What follows is written by John Addington Symons (1840 -1893) and was published in his Introduction (parts VII and VIII) to *The Memoirs of Count Carlo Gozzi*, Vol.1, New York, Scribner & Welford, 1890. The footnotes are those that appear in the original.

¹⁹ It is singular that Shakespeare, who uses *Pantalone* as the symbol of old age in *As You Like It*, knew him already in decrepitude.



© Jacques Callot, *Pantalone: Danses du comédie italienne*. etchings, 1621,
National Gallery of Art, Washington

At last he becomes the shuffling slippered *Pantaloön* of our Christmas pantomimes.

"After *Pantaloön* walks the *Doctor* in his Bologna gown; a hideous black mask covers his whole face, smudged with red patches, like skin-disease or wine-stains, on the cheeks. He is *Graziano*, *Baloardo Graziano*, or *Prudentio*, and has a kind of bastard brother called the *Dottor Balanzon Lombardo*. Boasting his D.C.L. or M.D. or LL.D. degree from the august University, *Graziano* makes a vast parade of learning. *Bononia docet* is always on his lips or in his thoughts; yet he cannot open his mouth without letting fall some palpable absurdity.²⁰ Law jargon, quibbles, quiddities, preposterous syllogisms, fragments of distorted Latin, misapplied quotations from the *Pandects*, mingle with metaphysics, astrology, and physical chimaeras about the spheres and elements and humours, in his talk. He is a walking caricature of learning, and the low

²⁰ *Bononia docet* is Latin for 'Bologna teaches' which refers to the University of Bologna being the oldest and most important in Europe for the study of law.

stupid cunning of his nature contrasts with the vain pomp he makes of erudition. To sustain this mask with spirit taxed the genius of a comedian. He had to keep a voluminous repertory of pedantic lumber always ready, to blunder with wit and pun in paradoxes, seasoning the whole with broad Bolognese dialect and plebeian phrases.”

“*Pantalone* and the *Doctor* were only half-masks; that is to say, they held something in common with the stationary characters of written comedy and took a decided part in the action of the play. (...)”



© Maurice Sand, *Pantalone*, published in *Masques et Bouffons (Comedie italienne)*, Paris, Michel Levy Frères ed. 1860

“Next come the two *Zanni*. These are thorough-going masks; twin-brothers from the countryside of Bergamo, strongly contrasted in their characters, yet holding certain points in common.²¹ First

²¹ It was my good fortune, while writing these pages at Davos in the summer of 1888, to become acquainted with two brothers from Bergamo who were living

comes *Arlecchino*, the eldest and most typical of Italian masks, and the one who has preserved its outlines to the present day. His party-coloured, tight-fitting suit reproduces the rags and patches of a rustic servant. On his head is a little round cap, with a tuft made out of a hare's or rabbit's scut. He is always on the move, light-headed, gluttonous, gay, pliable, credulous, ingenuously naive and silly. The glittering ubiquitous *Harlequin* of our pantomimes transforms him into a mute ballet-dancer; but when the type was created, *Arlecchino* spoke and amused the audience as much by his absurdities and uncouth jokes as by his perpetual mobility. (...)”

“Side by side with *Arlecchino* goes his more astute and knavish brother *Brighella*. He is also Bergamasque of the purest breed.... He is the roguish, clever, cowardly, pimping servant of the young spendthrift, who helps his master to deceive his father and seduce his neighbour's wife or daughter. *Brighella* wears a loose white shirt trimmed with green, and wide white trousers. On his head is a conical hat, plumed with red feathers, which yields place in course of time to the white cap of our clowns. His mask is brown, cut off above the upper lip, over which a pair of short moustachios bristle. Like *Arlecchino*, *Brighella* gave birth to a great variety of assimilated types. Unscrupulous, *Pedrolino*, *Beltramo*, *Bagolino*, *Frontino*, *Sganarello*, *Mascarillo*, *Figaro*, *Finocchio*, *Fantino*, *Gradellino*, *Traccagnino* are his more or less legitimate offspring. He enters French comedy under the names of *Scapin*, *Sganarelle*, and *Frontin*. He creates a character of opera with *Figaro*. Unlike *Arlecchino*, who becomes at last a silent ballet-dancer, *Brighella* grows more vocal and distinct as time advances, until, in the plays of Molière and Beaumarchais, he is hardly distinguishable from a servus of Latin comedy modernised. Indeed, just as *Pantalone* and *Il Dottore* approximate to the *senes*, so *Arlecchino* and *Brighella* shade off into the *servi*; and all their countless progeny are variations on the theme of stupid or roguish varlets.”

representatives of the *Zanni*. They had come to help at the hay-harvest, leaving their own farm in the Bergamasque hills. *Brighella's* wit and knavery amused me. I marvelled at *Arlecchino's* simplicity and suppleness.

“The four main masks, with their attendant groups of subordinates, have passed before us; but a multitude whom no man can number and no words can describe press on from behind. Perhaps the first place should be given to the *Servetta*. Her names are legion.

Colombina, the sweetheart of *Arlecchino* and *Pulcinella*, *Rosetta*, *Florentine* *Pasquella*, *Argentina*, *Diamantina*, Venetian *Smeraldina*, *Saporita*, *Carmosina*; under all her titles, and with every shade of character ascribed to her by the free handling of successive actresses, she remains the sprightly, witty, shifty pendant to the *Zanni*. Not a true mask, however; for the *Servetta* wears her own face and form, only assuming the costume and dialect of the region she prefers to hail from. Like her lover *Arlecchino*, *Colombina* underwent a long series of transformations before she became the fairy-like being who flits behind the footlights of our theatres on winter evenings. And, like *Brighella*, written comedy blended her with the fixed characters of drama under the name of the soubrette. *Susanna* in the *Nozze di Figaro* is a familiar example of *Colombina* in her latest dramatic development.”



© Maurice Sand, *Colombina*, Paris, 1860. Right: Henri Bonnard, *Polichinelle*, Paris, c. 1650

"The *Servette* in their many-coloured Contadina dresses have passed by. Close upon their heels press forward a chattering grimacing group from Naples. *Pulcinella* leads the way, for he must still keep *Colombina* in sight. In him, far more than in *Arlecchino*, the genius of a nation lives incarnate; and this he partly owes to a poor artisan of Naples, Francesco Cerlone, who fixed the type with inimitable humour in the last century.²² *Pulcinella* has had whole volumes written on his pedigree. Some authors find him depicted on the walls of Pompeii; others trace him in statuettes and masks of antiquity. The one point which seems to be certain is, that he made his appearance on the public stage toward the end of the sixteenth century, wearing the white shirt and breeches of a rustic from Acerra. His black mask, long nose, humpback, protruding stomach, dagger and truncheon, were later additions. Whatever connection there may be between *Pulcinella* and the masks of classical antiquity ... he was, at his début, regarded as the type of a Campanian villager, established at Naples in the quality of servant. *Pulcinella* is thus the Southern analogue of Bergamasque *Brighella* and *Arlecchino*. Gradually he absorbed the humours of the Neapolitan proletariat and became the burlesque mirror of their manners and ways of thinking. Time's whirligig has made him the hero of our puppet-shows, and he enjoys cosmopolitan celebrity under the name of *Punch*."

²² Scherillo, in his *Commedia dell' Arte*, has resuscitated Cerlone's fame, as Maurice Sand made us acquainted with Beolco.



© Maurice Sand, left: *Pulcinella*; right: *Scaramouche*, Paris 1860

“*Coviello* goes along with him, a Calabrian mask, which was sustained with applause by Salvator Rosa at Rome. He belongs to the buffoon class and is distinguished by his mandolin and ballad-singing. After him walks *Tartaglia*, afflicted with an incurable stammer, which renders his magisterial airs and graces ludicrous. *Tartaglia* has something in him of the *Doctor*; but this part lent itself to great varieties of treatment...”



© PANTINS: *Pierrot, Colombine, Paillasse et Sylphide*, coloured stencil print, Imageries d'Epinal, France, 1863

"But now our ears are deafened with a clash of arms, rumbling of drums, pistol-shots, and shouted execrations. A fantastic extravagant troop of soldiers march upon the stage. At their head goes the swaggering *Capitano*. He is a Spaniard, armed to the teeth, loaded with outlandish weapons, twirling huge moustachios, frowning, swearing, boasting, quarrelling, thieving, wenching, and shrinking into corners when he meets a man of courage. Sometimes he affects the melancholy grandeur of Don Quixote. Sometimes he leans to the garrulity of Bobadil. Sometimes he assumes the serious ferocity of a brigand chief or the haughty punctiliousness of a hidalgo. Still he remains at bottom the caricature of professional soldiers, as they plagued and infested Italy under the Spanish domination. His language soars into the wildest hyperboles and euphuisms. He cannot speak without new-coined oaths and frothy metaphors and vaunts that shake heaven, earth, and sea. But the slightest trial of his valour breaks the bubble, and he cringes like a whipped hound. (...)"

"In the rabble which follows this noisy band ... we discern several buffoons of the long-robed tribe – Neapolitan *Pancrazio*, *Biscegliese*, and *Cucuzietto*, Sienese *Cassandro* and Roman *Cassandrino* – who have more or less affinity with the *Dottore*. *Il Pedante* walks apart, and attracts attention by his Maccaronic Latin and eccentric morals. He has the poems of Fidenzio Glottogrysis in his hands, which he presses on the attention of a smooth-chinned pupil.²³ *Don Fastidio* distinguishes himself from the vulgar herd by his enormous nose, and lantern jaws, and long lean figure, and preposterous citations from the law reports of Naples. *Cavicchio* tells silly tales and sings his Norcian songs. *Il Desavedo* burlesques the "dude" of Parma, and *Narcisino* plays the "masher" of Bologna to the life. *Burattino* comes upon the stage in a score of disguises,

²³ For a short notice of these curious Maccaronic poems, *I Cantici di Fidentio Glottogrysis Ludimagistro*, see *My Renaissance in Italy*, vol. v. p. 328. The obscurity of their jargon veiled considerable indecency. It is noticeable that this book, now exceedingly rare, should have become the text-book of the Pedante.

now gardener, now shopkeeper, now valet, always the fool and knave combined, impostor and imposed on.²⁴ The *Notajo*, with huge spectacles upon his nose and swan's quill stuck behind his spreading ears, murmuring a nasal drawl, and tripping himself up at every step in his long skirts, leads up the rear. Rope-dancers, ballerini, Pasquarielli, Pierrots, conclude the show, dancing and pirouetting after their more vocal comrades."

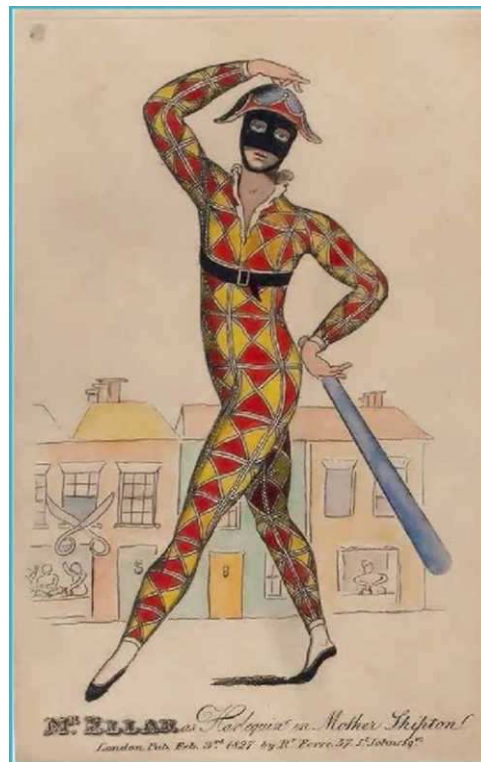
"It is impossible, in a sketch like this, to do justice to the manifold and motley crowd of the Italian masks. ... The mask, the traditional character, was something which a comedian assumed; but he dealt with it as he found it suited to his physical and mental qualities. Each distinguished actor re-created the part he represented. The improvised extempore rule of the game allowed him boundless license."

"Intrigue of a simple kind formed the staple of these improvised comedies. ...The plot, whether borrowed from the written drama, from Latin plays, or from the gossip of the marketplace, was always of an amorous complexion. Fathers, lovers, guardians, varlets, priests, and panders played their parts in it. The action proceeded by means of disguises, sleeping-potions, changelings, pirates, sudden recognitions of lost relatives, phantoms, demoniacal possessions, burlesque exorcisms, shipwrecks, sacks of cities, bandits, kidnapped children. It is singular in what a narrow circle the machinery revolves. Unlike our own Romantic drama, the *Commedia dell'Arte* made but few excursions into the regions of history, fable, mythology, and fancy. Its scene was an Italian piazza; and though we hear of thrilling adventures by land and sea, in forest and on fell, these are only used to loose a knot or to elucidate the transformation of some personage."

"We ought not to marvel at the limitations of this drama. They are explained by that close connection, on which I have already

²⁴ *Burattino* is so kaleidoscopic that at last he becomes the patronymic hero of marionettes in Italy. *I Burattini* are the acting dolls.

insisted, between the *Commedia dell'Arte* and the *Commedia Erudita*. The new comedy supplied little but its masks; and these masks, as we have seen, were types of bourgeois and rustic characters, capable of infinite modification within prescribed boundaries. The end in view was not the delectation of the audience by a scenic drama, but the caricature and travesty of life as it appeared to everyone. That caricature, executed with inexhaustible finesse and piquant sallies of fresh personality, accommodated itself to the antiquated framework of plots as old as Plautus."



© John Rich as English pantomime figure Mr Ellar
(variation of the Italian stock figure *Harlequin*), pub. 1827. @worldofheatreandart

If the *Commedia dell'Arte* lacked fancy and invention in its ground-themes, this defect was compensated by audacious realism and Gargantuan humour. The indecency of these plays cannot be described.

Men and women appeared naked on the stage. Unmentionable vices were boldly paraded. Buffoonery of the vilest description enhanced the finest strokes of burlesque sarcasm. Actors who created types which made the spirit of a nation live in effigy, condescended to tricks unworthy of a Yahoo. We have to accept the species, not as a branch of the legitimate drama, but as a carnival masquerade, in which humanity ran riot, jeering at its own indignities and foibles.



© Claude Gillot, Four *commedia dell'arte* figures, ink and bistre wash on paper, 11.7 x 19 cm, 1715

CARING FOR THE SOUL – THE OTHER LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

LISA CHARLOTTE BAUDOUIN LIE¹

Abstract

In this article the author reflects on the environmental impulses to artistic practice and why she does as she does as an artist. It is a way of accessing to artistic research, and how to reflect upon chaosmagic as an artistic method. The article then uses examples from the artists own productions.

Keywords: environmental inspiration, surprise, listening, chaosmagic, the gift of being surprised.

I went past a graffiti the other day in New York, it said “art is the only escape”. When I got asked to write this text I had to think about why I was asked, and I realised that it’s not so strange at all. I have been thinking a lot lately about how knowledge is transferred, not just the concrete transfer through books and education but also the less obvious channels that are at least as influential - if not more. The choices people make that transfers their ideas.

How I came to meet the situationists

I have grown up with a French father that has had an interest in the situationists since he was a student in Avignon and Paris in 68 and has faithfully collected all their written work, which he has tried to tempt

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me to read, and a mother who is a professor at the university in French literature, specialized in the surrealist movement. Even though we did not sit around the kitchen table debating these things I have a feeling that attitudes, interests, longings and ways of seeing the world can be inherited in some intangible way since my interests have also been going in these directions quite naturally, unintentionally going down those same currents to a certain extent.

Currents trickle down. Through my parents, I was exposed to concepts such as Psychogeography, Détournement, Situationist pranks and Dérive. I found a beautiful sentence in a book by Asger Jorn that my father insisted that I read and which stayed with me «du kan falle så dypt at du beginner å falle oppover» (you can fall so far down that you start falling upwards).

I didn't see *La dialectique peut-elle casser des briques ?* ("Can **Dialectics** Break Bricks?") before I graduated from acting school. The importance of the humour resonated with me and I was surprised to learn that my parents had seen it when it first came out. Of course. We had never really talked about it. Knowledge can come through other things than written or spoken language. It trickles.

SO. How does ideas really travel? How does movements spread? How does ideas move through time and practices? Writhe through time. Through the zeitgeist. Not just the concrete intellectual transferal but also as embodied knowledge twisted into new shapes and needs.

It is like this, this intangible inheritance in art practices too, these connections that are both conscious and not, but still there seeping through time and the sediments of different art practices, through the inclinations of their ideas and ways of seeing the world.

I was raised on old French comedy and the Marx brothers and also, as a side effect of my father's interest in social (inherently political) activism, I also kind of grew up in the carnival, with my sister and a few other kids. My father had a club in the basement. It was about doing something real and not just talking about it. For many years it seemed like a dream almost, a very influential dream, but there were not many regular kids there apart from me and my sister, maybe five, the others came and went.

Kosmopolitt was a club for foreigners in our basement, and every Friday for 9 years approximately from 1982-1991, they alternated

different food styles and topics (I was master of the couscous, and my job was to turn it every now and then before it was being put back in the oven - this was before fast-cooking-couscous.) I remember very well the feeling of waking up as a small child and looking for my mother and descending the stairs to the basement and entering another fantastical (to me) world of happy grownups, strange smells, noises and sounds and community. It was like opening the doors to another world, a carnival dimension.

Also, in the eighties in Trondheim, there was a city carnival in which the club also participated in. For a child this was very immersive experience and I looked forward to it. And suddenly it stopped occurring. I much later learned that it stopped because it went bankrupt, but I didn't know this as a child and no one bothered explaining it to me (since they probably couldn't read my mind or figure out what ideas, places and contexts was important to me). I remember sitting in a green wing chair around may every year for several years waiting for the carnival to come back, but it never did, and I think I am trying to recreate it in my work.

That sense of *communitas*. Doing irrational but meaningful things with other people.

You could argue that the search for these spaces are quite hard in the protestant north after the protestant reformation and then the counter reformation took away most meaningful collective practices in Europe. This especially stripped the north. What we are left with in Norway, is a carnival where everybody dresses up as festive romanticized farmers from the 1800s. Don't get me wrong, I love it. But need more. The scattering of and lack of collective happenings and festivals is connected to the effervescent apathy, the inability and desire to connect, and the lonely rage which I explore in my work.

What do I do?

So, what do *I* do?

I make work in the intersection of performance art and text-based theatre. My style is close to choreography and musical composition, and

it's dramaturgically multi-layered, with different narrative threads working simultaneously. I see my work as temporary sculptures or bodies that work like organisms that the audience are being pulled into, through a hypnotic composition of fragments. Actions, characters, and fictional contracts are constantly changing to become a journey, through a landscape with a strong poetic logic unique to each piece.

And this inner logic of the piece needs to be internalized in the actors, to create a sensitivity towards the structure as a whole. They need to know not only what they are doing, but also why they are doing it - but not necessarily in a rational way- it has to *mean* something. So that it becomes their organism, so that we manage to create a shared reality that we can work and live in. The final production is then a living organism that the audience is invited to be affected by. To be pulled in. Because these places that our actions open up, these temporary realities, are real to us. Important to us.

In this way the pieces are built through and around the performers; their needs, inclinations, timing, humour, what they want and what they lack and what they are looking for. I can't do this work with just anybody, they must have a need for these spaces, to be able to participate in creating them. I call it "the other life of the people" inspired by Bakhtin.

Bakhtin described medieval carnival traditions in his book on Rabelais, as the other life of the people, a parallel life with its own laws. You can't be a mere spectator to the medieval carnival - you have to live it. A maybe romanticised tradition describing the sum of all carnivalesque situations as a space or even as a place with its own rules and structure that you enter into so often that it not only becomes a festival but becomes a life. A parallel life. The carnival tradition has often been criticised for being just a vent for frustration and helping in re-establishing order, this is true, but it also has a strong subversive side. The fact that it shows the construction of the everyday by manifesting the opposite and thus everyday reality does not become absolute, it becomes malleable.

And in times of economic and social unrest the carnival states have been cradles for riot and counter-power to form and arise. I think that carnivalesque states as other dimensions, can be used as a tool for negotiating reality. When it is not used only for flight into fantasy, but

fantasy as a tool to make propositions. You remove yourself or escape to manifest something in reality which is a proposal, an option, you come back with an option. What we can be, how we can be in reality.

There is a link here between all traditions that seek to overturn the stabilised symbols of society to find new roads or just pauses to breathe (situationists, balagan, saturnalia etc.).

My interests have been inflamed with the works of many other artists that work on and with reality while operating between fiction and reality, magick and activism. I go towards the esoteric and occult because it resonates with my understanding of what I am doing. It's a free space from which to think.

I have been influenced by the anarchist poet Hakim Bey's idea of TAZ – Temporary autonomous zones as spaces, that appear spontaneously, like a club, a group, a café, a meeting ground, a relationship, that become spaces and (the way I interpret them) that perfectly places you in time and space for shorter or longer periods of time, these spaces where you belong and have no conflict with being-in-the-world because you enjoy being awake.

Hakim Beys ideas, and especially his poetic terrorism, was in turn heavily influenced by situationist practices and *detournement* and pranks, as counterculture that seeks to change reality by extending into it and changing its signs.

The question is how to create these parallel realities not just as a representation but as actual temporal or threshold spaces. To create realities on stage (or off) that are not reduced to representation or repetition of empty form, but are in its core – and remain – spaces that we live, in and through.

Why I do this? What am I looking for?

I have been making these spaces for us on stage so that we can live in them, and maybe the spectator by association living through us. But now I have started to think, like so many before me – how can you actually involve the audience? And it think there is a paradox between the carnival tradition and ritual magick – on the one hand you want to

be able to open up for everybody, and on the other hand consider that the ritual will not necessarily work if you have no boundaries or focused intentions. So, these are opposite movements in my work that I aim to resolve in different ways.

There needs to be commitment. And a journey, like a quest. You can't just get it, you have to live it yourself. Experience based.

I want to create works that transcend the everyday and that limits consensus reality, but are still perceived as authentic. Authenticity is here understood as an intimacy and identification with the material that stems from lived experience.

The goal is a praxis that opens up real spaces, that invite other authentic ways to be together. I use art as a strategy to create interpersonal (interhuman) spaces, and to build irrational structures that become alternative temporary realities, TAZ, where you can live.

The thing about rituals is that they strive to create reality. I see my structures with its narrative, visual, auditive, relational, dynamic and musical elements, as ritual structures where the rhythm inherent in the combination of all the details and their timing and (by) investment of meaning can induce trance states.

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE WHEN IT SUCCEEDS?

ITS NOT FAKE IT TILL YOU FEEL IT, YOU CAN'T FAKE IT.

IT EITHER IS THERE OR IT IS NOT. YOU CANNOT FORCE IT

When this works I have a distinct feeling of not going to perform a show, but to go home to one of many possible homes that we make for ourselves in the world. The clearest picture I have is that it is like going back into a treasured memory, to live it. When you revisit, you live there, you can hang out and be something else - the parts of us that are in that structure - we are those people, but we are not those people in real life. So yes, I'm not going to strictly perform, I am going to live my other life. One of multiple other lives.

When it works it becomes the other life of the people. When it fails it can become good shows, but this transcendent collective dimension is lost.

Blue Motel & I Cloni

I will give you two examples of shows where I feel we nailed it, this specific worlding I'm looking to create; Blue Motel (2013) and I Cloni (2016).

In Blue Motel I examine the link between cruelty and ecstasy, and the longing for the collective. But also, the collective as the most dangerous place you can enter into. Like a promising light in the forest, where you know that you are saved but at the same time – who are the other people there, and what are they going to do to you?

I Cloni was about the position of the fool in society, historically and contemporary, and also the holy fool. We are fools all of us. Increasing precarity, makes the artists well known precarious position, extend to other types of work. It's about the search for safety and the need to come back home, a metaphysical home that crumbles when you grow up, and you realise that you can never go back, only keep up the pretence for those too young to benefit from the lack of illusion. And the importance of realising that if the dead come back just to tell you to clean your room and pat you on the back, there is no higher truth, and we have to step it up.

In Blue Motel we worked with past life regression therapy and in I Cloni we worked with trance and mediumship, and what I am doing now is continuing that work with western occult and esoteric traditions. The western take on shamanism, mediumship and spiritualism, and ritual magic in different forms. What interests me is that it creates these very concrete interpersonal spaces, especially on a one-to-one level, which maybe can't be recreated with an audience but there will still be traces of these intensities and attitudes and spaces. In how you look and how you listen, how to see and what to see. What to refer to and communicate with. Enter into relationship with.

The gift of being surprised

Balagan is described as conscious chaos and which that needs time to crystallise.

You can't plan for something when you don't know what you will meet on the way.

But you can accommodate all these chance meetings, events and occurrences as meaningful.

I have this memory of my beloved childhood cat. The first time he saw the snow, we put him right in the middle of a great white area. And he reflected upon this novelty for a long time, before he simply started eating. It was the most rational thing to do. And I find this is how I work, I start eating in a corner and see how much I can chew on before a piece is finished.

All this after having made a strict and focused plan, which I then leave to sleight-of-mind for the duration of making the material, and always cross roads with in the composition phase. So, I am initiating crossroads between the conscious and unconscious to boost complexity and to be surprised. To trust that inspiration and experience and skill combine in a much more complex way than you could initiate or imagine solely with your conscious will.

In my practice I work with *errance* as a principle, as the way we learn about the world through flickering, floundering, floating, traveling. To let yourself be surprised and taking risks by letting yourself float and trust that receptivity works in combination with knowledge and experience.

I seek the point in every process where the work starts to take over and dictate its own needs, and add greater complexity, this is the point where I find and invent strategies to handle it.

My practice is about listening, training myself to listen.

Listening to what is going on, what is coming into being, and also the practice is to be honest, and if you are honest there is a lot more going on than in consensus reality. And that is part of the folk aspect, working with magical thinking, like knocking on wood, we rarely think of it, but it's one of the most powerful rituals we have to banish anxiety, and it works and it is also really old.

Esoteric practices create different levels of listening.

We don't agree whether these things are there or not, but they still have importance and effect, so for me it doesn't matter if its objectively true, what matters is – does it have effect – the effect is true.

I train myself, and the ones I work with, to listen to other things than the conscious selves in others and ourselves. To listen to the plurality of what we can be, but are not in daily life. And to be radically honest in this listening practice accepting needs and obsessions, accepting what

comes, what is already present. To encourage radical honesty in how we think and relate to the world – to do away with what you know you should think and feel and go towards what you actually feel.

And in this way find, not only invent. And in this dynamic relationship between finding and inventing, building structures filled with inherent meaning.

The surrealists were concerned with the dangerous aspect of investigating different levels of consciousness and reality. Because you can only return from this as an unnormal person. It changes you. You can't go back to not knowing, having had experiences of a different kind. You can never be ignorant again. That being the whole point. It becomes experience. And the experience becomes part of you. You live through it.

I am searching in what is unrecognised in our secular everyday existence, but that any how informs our choices and attitudes. I look at superstition, spirits, gods and obsessive-compulsive behaviour as the subconscious way to communicate and act – through symbols and images, which creates peculiar logics that are both known and unknown at the same time and that I use in my work.

I think that when we don't talk openly about the voices and visions that flow through us because they don't fit into the everyday consensus reality or accepted topics and ways of being. We don't talk about it in public contexts so it's almost like it's not there, like Cosmopolite sometimes felt like a dream because I had almost no one to talk to that shared my memories. It didn't come up in conversation.

Things like these we don't really think about or speak about, it's not brought to light. I first started thinking about it when I overheard a conversation about ancestor spirits where one said his ancestors came all the way to Europe with him, and the other said "mine left me at Gibraltar". And I thought what a rich way to relate to reality, sad we don't have that here, and the second later I realized but we do have that, we just don't talk about it. And then starting to map out honestly who and what we are communicating with: who is looking over your shoulder when you are writing something obnoxious, who do you communicate with in a crisis, I bet you it's not only concrete people but dead people and gods and objects like small bears from your childhood or it can be trees, rivers and rocks.

Honesty and truth is not the same.

Chaosmagic

I use faith like a chaos magician, as a flexible tool. I can believe something today and discard it tomorrow, because I recognise that faith has effect in itself.

I am exploring shamanism, spiritualism and ritual magick in my work to expand the possibilities for the performers, not to be limited by lived life, but to expand beyond that, to create false memories and experiences in trance states that become a part of the performers and thus new outposts in an endless inner landscape from which to create from.

To use how the brain works and how magical thinking works, to go with it, not against it. Towards effect and affect, and viewing all information that flow between, through and around us as attempts at communication.

Which practices leads there?

What does it take for something to become another alternative dimension where you can live?

FAITH, SINCERITY, NEED, URGENCY and RISK is needed to create these spaces, and it needs to be embedded in the structure. Without this dedication from all participants these other lives cannot occur. ITS NOT ENOUGH TO SHARE A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE. IT'S NOT THE SAME.

I research and collide in my practice different techniques and strategies for traveling through the mind to places that are described as being behind or outside consensus reality. My research is directed towards art as strategy, not belief systems in themselves. I follow in the surrealist's footsteps in their dream of making the invisible visible through techniques that attempt to reach the subconscious. To deep dive down into the unknown that is informed by dreams, extraordinary and mystical experience and states, and connections past the rational. We can't agree upon its existence, but it remains important to us. It's not important if it's real or not, what is important is what it does to us.

For me, the important thing about rituals is that they produce meaning by using irrational acts to achieve something concrete in reality.

It is an effect that makes the ritual real, and its actions important, it is not a statement or a claim – as opposed to the theatre which is often a recounting of a story or a theme. Theatre is a statement, but the real

dynamic underlying the action is the flesh of the ritual if used in that way. I am fascinated by the energy and presence that can arise when new, but equally real spaces, are opened.

Through the mapping and sharing of entities and landscapes that happens to pass through us or well up in us, we discover complex and interesting areas that we share through the process, and which become a third space between us. This is where the project itself comes into being manifesting as a will, and we work with it.

Victor Turner talks about *communitas*. *Communitas* refers to an unstructured state in which all members of a community are equal allowing them to share a common experience, usually through a rite of passage. *Communitas* is characteristic of people experiencing liminality together. This term is used to distinguish the modality of social relationship from an area of common living. *Communitas* is an acute point of community. It takes community to the next level and allows the whole of the community to share a common experience, usually through a rite of passage.

I am very interested in creating real meetings, real dynamic relationships between the performers (and artistic team and crew) because this will be the most visible (felt) in the end.

The relationship between fiction and real dynamics on stage is what I use in constructing a world, in worlding. There is a convention that says that if it looks like theatre and the performers are talented it's good theatre. But for me it's not enough. The real dynamics is what we understand best. The relation between the real dynamics between the people on stage and the world of internalised meaning and its multiple relations within the structure; memories, ideas, objects, characters – all lived at one point and thus reverberating – is what communicates the strongest.

Where does this take me? Now

I'm interested in those meetings that go straight to the core, transcending the endless everyday chit chat. You know like when you were on interrail when you were 17 and ended up in a train station with a total stranger and had a brutally honest conversation that healed you in some ways. You could do this because you know it will not come back and haunt you in your everyday life. It's an emotional dark room.

Through practicing mediumship, ritual magic and shamanism – I am increasingly turning towards focusing the potential in meeting also the audience, not just as audience members (and not only as people we need to participate in order for the art work to function), but as participants in their own right. This is what I am working towards now. How to facilitate real meetings where the real desires, resistance and fantasy become relevant factors for constant change in the art work itself. I call it caring for the soul. It is something they do in the churches, but what is it today? I think art can be this space just as well.

Caring for the soul (how I met this concept on the plane back in the day and it has stayed with me nudging itself forwards)

I once had a conversation in an airplane with a psychologist who trained priest in caring for their spiritual and emotional needs of the congregation. Their challenge today is what should they care for, when we don't even believe in a soul. What to talk about, how to help.

And I explore this concept of caring for the soul through the interhuman spaces that arise in such practices as shamanism and mediumship. The simple but complicated act of seeing, to simply try to see, to listen with your whole apparatus, honestly and without agenda.

Transcending the everyday is not limited to marathons of seventy hours of techno that takes you and dazzles you and pushes you in ways you need drugs to handle. I want to do things that don't enchant or blind or exhaust you, but to create emotional dark rooms that drag you and push you through tribulations in an honest attempt to meet you. Not to lie to you. To be completely open for the duration of the meeting and then never speak of it again. Do you trust me?

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ART AS FORCE. A HISTORICAL NARRATION OF GRUPPE 66 AND BAKTRUPPEN IN BERGEN, NORWAY

WORM WINTHER¹

Abstract

This contribution is a reflection on the artistic milieu in Bergen and how it contributed to the avant garde in the 1960s and 1970s as well as Baktruppen. The perspective is based on the personal memories.

Keywords: Gruppe 66, Bergen Studieatelier, Baktruppen, Galleri 1, personal experiences.

My name is Worm Winther, and I was a member of Baktruppen for 25 years, from the start to the end. I grew up in Bergen in an artistic home, as my mother was a painter and went to the Bergen Studieatelier at the same time as Laurie Grundt, one of the initiators of Group 66.

My mother and Laurie chose different artistic careers, but retained a close friendship. I was 11 years old in 1966 and went with my parents to the first exhibition by Group 66 several times. I was very fascinated by what was happening there and what the different people in the group worked with in their art.

In 1969, parts of the group formed Finnegårdskretsen, where my mother also became one of the initiators when they started up their artist – directed Galleri 1, intended as a gallery for the expression of different artifacts and genres. I was hanging posters around town for the gallery in those years and got affected by the environment.

I educated myself as a scenographer in Gothenburg, which had an established environment in the genres avantgarde and collective

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thinking, academic environments that overlapped each other and exciting art projects in emergence. I kept in touch with the environment in Bergen, and was connected to projects there from 1978 onwards.

In 1986, I was part of establishing Baktruppen, a group that in many ways was as colorfully composed as Gruppe 66. We had our backgrounds from many different art genres and expressed this in our own manner, which was a new kind of structure at the time. One of the reasons why Baktruppen did not provoke the audience as much as Gruppe 66 and Konkret Analyse did, was that it happened 15-20 years later and that society thus had changed.

Gruppe 66, among other things, had a vision of doing something unpredictable as a group. A compound of artists from several different art forms arose – the visual, music, movements and writing was thought to express something in common. They described themselves as rabulists, and in Laurie Grundt's word – “Vrøvlebøtter”². To quote him: *The substance is diverse in academic forms and the integration of different art forms – a freer form of art*. The group had no vision of continuing as a group, but to form a pillar to show that a diverse art environment working together could give a new experience.

Gruppe 66 also started the idea of an experimental stage, collective studios and an artist-driven gallery. They were in contact with Den Nationale Scene (The National Stage, Bergen, Norway's oldest permanent theatre) and planted a seed for growing an experimental stage there, though it did not receive its necessary nourishment under DNS's management.

Galleri 1 was established at Bryggen in Bergen in 1969 and was artist run by some of the original members of Group 66, plus a few new members who had been on the sideline from the beginning. In 1970, parts of Gruppe 66 hosted the exhibition *Konkret Analyse* ('Concrete Analysis') in Bergen Kunstforening. It was an exhibition intended to spark curiosity, hence the appropriately unclear name. Laurie Grundt stated that *“This is an exhibition that will never be finished, because it is about our own unfinished time”*. The rooms were named 'Motorway – Technical and Psychological Communication', and 'Circus – Politics and Authority'.

² “Vrøvl” – Gibberish, “bøtter” – Buckets.

There was a soap bubble machine there, and in the arena there was a concert – 'Dadascope for a light weight Japanese motorcycle and a chamber orchestra'. The ideological background was that art should not be perceived conventionally, that it would address current problems through cross artistic activities. 25 artists were involved in the project, and much was done in joy and humour. The audience was also invited to participate, as the exhibition wanted to actualise the concept of art as part of our daily lives.

The exhibition caused loud discussions in the established artist environment and the board of the artist association was asked to leave. I was 14 years old and for me the exhibition was inspiring and fun. I was there every day and got a good injection to think alternatively further in my artwork.

In the early 1980's, a multicultural house began to establish itself – the USF Cultural House. While it still was a sardine factory, we did projects and performances there, and I ran a studio called 'Kjølelageret'. In the early years of USF, projects that put the established theater and art environment into rage were also shown. Art works were yet again met with astonishment in Bergen, like after Gruppe 66's projects in Bergen Kunstforening a decade earlier.

Baktruppen originated from a new generation in the Bergen art scene, where everyone had worked in different contexts in earlier projects and came from different artistic branches. The idea of equality on stage was a central value, involving everyone in their respective artistic positions: a common factor for Gruppe 66 and Baktruppen was that everyone can be artists in different areas without being in conflict with their own art branch. Just after the formation of Baktruppen, the members moved to different places inland and abroad. Because we never had a rehearsal space, each project originated where we wanted to meet, from a habitation at Espevær to a monastery in Portugal. This provided constant possibilities for renewal, as we had never established our own premises, and were constantly experimenting. We also performed internationally – the first project we did, was in Berlin.

While Baktruppen performed, we claimed that we were not acting, we dealt with a number of expectations as to who we were and how we were to behave in the public sphere as individuals, artists and members

of Baktruppen. We problematised these diverse identities by challenging ourselves and our customary roles and by acting out unconventional and surprising aspects. We attempted to expand the possibilities for what an artist could be and do in the public sphere. One may say that the members of Baktruppen created a 'Baktruppen identity', or as we often added in conversation: "nobody plays Baktruppen better than we do".

The coherent aspects between Baktruppen and Gruppe 66 was that we were part of each of our contemporary times.

APPLIED AESTHETICS: LITERATURE AND ART

IN THE MIRROR, DIMLY

BOGDANA TODOROVA¹

Abstract

Modern art has an evidently increased interest in political affairs in comparison to previous ages. The art is practically political propaganda when it speaks in the name of the dominating and power values or defends them, as well as when it fights against the “traditional” and established forms and tools to consecrate them within a society. Postmodernism revived the problems of identity, culture, aesthetic canons and standards. From this canvas emerges a complete and stable identity, which today requires reinterpretation by breaking stereotypes. The report will analyze two – revolutionary by their nature – narratives (one of the past and one of the present) as discourses belonging to a new gnoseology – based on the cognitive effort that affects the relation subject–object. Its main aim is the deconstruction of our reality impregnated with implicit political messages, sharply raising the issue of redefining ethics and identity. The direction suggested for such ambition is given by the de-marketization of the art, the discourse of the aesthetic world, overcoming the dividing line between consumers and creators. The report will conclude with the necessity to find again the essence of the miracle – Man, as a new type of humanism in an axiological discourse.

Keywords: art, politics, national identity, revolutionary narratives, cultural dynamics.

Rethinking historical narratives is of current interest in both art and politics; there is a number of claims made to the “common Europe-likeness” of the European history on behalf of both local participants and global players. In the last years, one of the most interesting artistic products offered new and additional insights to the canonical history: we talk here about *Cabaret Crusades* of the Egyptian artist Wael Shawki, representing the Crusades from the position of the Arab literature.

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Irrespective of the majority of efforts to rewrite, bend and supplement history, we must not ignore also propagandist formulations and nationalistic obsessions. Modern art has an evidently increased interest to political affairs in comparison to previous ages (as an example, we find Eugène Delacroix with “La Liberté guidant le peuple”, 1830). Art is practically political propaganda when it speaks in the name of the dominating and power values or defends them as well as when it fights against the “traditional” and established forms and tools. From a professional standpoint, art does not follow from way back simply aesthetic goals and during its entire history it is engaged with different problems – such as expressive means, which carry messages, the messages themselves, for which authors select definite media.

In this paper, I will examine two infinitely delightful and revolutionary, by their natures, narratives, related to the construction of identity in Bulgaria, as part of the European family:

1. The “1877 Pleven Epopee” is a monumental pictorial art piece that is associated with the Bulgarian history. It represents memory and history in their inseparability possibly at a larger degree than it is found in many of the European countries. This can be seen in the perspective and landscape pictorial art². This memorial is built on the same battlefield in the Skobelev’s Park. Along the entire wall, a panoramic canvas is mounted, with 115 m length and 15 m width, which illustrates the dramatic events during the third attack to the city of Pleven. In the bottom of the canvas, the atmosphere in trenches is reproduced using copies of authentic objects and guns from this epoch. In the context of the exhibition, this monument sets an ethical alternative to the glorification of revolution.

The teleological constitution of the monument reveals that the authors made a revolutionary reproduction of the images in the spirit of existing tradition, constructing a new, interesting approach for communicating with an audience. It is a close symbiosis between the role of the acceptor and that of the accepted. There are several important constitutive elements – *the composition of supporting elements* (stones, carts, shells, human bodies),

² The “1877 Pleven Epopee” is a unique monument in the Balkan Peninsula. It is built in 1997 on the occasion of the 100 anniversary of the city of Pleven liberation from Ottoman government.

which additionally increase perception, *the building*, into which the exposition is set, where the exposition is detained in autonomous frames, and *the ceilings*, symbolizing cosmos. This cosmos is not already Monet's garden of roses but the Universe – the cosmos, which is a symbol of the indefinite. This is a smooth transition of the definite (the perishable) towards the infinity. If the chosen marble and the frames contribute to the comprehensive feeling, the artistic canvas requires a wider plan of composition, which deframes the canvas in the line of perspective. It is a vector space that is taken out from the territory of hall to the infinity of the Universe. With this effect, the authors show the superiority of art over the reality. The unity of sign and symbol is important in the art. Also, the social function or conventionality which actually avoids delusions, reveals itself to be important.

The used approach includes image-movement as a necessary condition for the exposure of the objects with purpose. As a result, we receive a correlation of the movements of bodies with the whole rather than the illusion of movement. The entire composition, i.e. the symbol of a movable fixation, is important. Bodies and images move but do not change. The movement itself expresses something very deeper – the time as a mental and spiritual reality.

The Epopee is a piece of art – a monument, which succeeded to self-preserve, having its own internal life and its own logic, which is independent of the politicians and time. One of the most valuable properties of art is its ability of preserve.

2. The first exhibition-installation „In the mirror, dimly”³ is our second chosen example.

The aim of this installation is to make each visitor think about the everyday hypocrisy and falseness. “I think that currently everything is fake – we eat fake food, our politicians, government and presidents are fake... the only real thing is this virtual reality”, says the author Theo Ushev. The installation frames a new gnoseology as a cognitive effort affecting the relation subject–object, in the spirit of Rorty (Рорти 1997, pass.). We see two narratives for the human creative search and role,

³ The first exhibition-installation in Bulgaria: <https://www.vesti.bg/bulgaria/obshtestvo/teodor-ushev-pravitelstvoto-ni-e-falshivo-6079528>.

where the man stands at the border during all his life, fighting against clichés and stereotypes. Stereotypization is a language of politics, the language of global market. Even the favorite European slogan, "*Unity in diversity*", treats the diversity as a repertoire of cultural stereotypes. It was proven that stereotypes imply a national identity, which, in turn, is a package of stereotypes.

The "Epopée"⁷ is therefore a story or narrative for our present, past and possible future. Alternatively, the Ushev's work represents an act of interpretation. Just like the self-identity that permanently reassesses itself is nothing other than a narrative – a vision for the world and ourselves, a preference for the past and a projection for the future – because here, in the Balkans, everything is about history, memory, traditions, irrespective of the fact that politicians impose new identities on us. Here we deal with a specific narrative among the dominating narratives of Europe, Turkey and Russia. The today's story of the politicians – there are too many national ideas and ideals, too many wars and unsolved problems, i.e. too much history – would actually entail the fact that Bulgaria was not in Ottoman slavery, that the Turks are our friends and strategic partners, that there is no history, there are no wars, there are no preset identities: only a global, open vision-of the past.

The events of the canvas are examined through the prism of historicism in painting – a unique combination of historical themes, precise periodization and our biological predisposition for the accumulation of knowledge through experiences which play an important role in the formation and development of our cognitive processes. The interest in history is defined by the mode of understanding the same history. Here, the uniqueness of the occurred in the past events and the examination of revolutionary moments of the artistic product are emphasized. The facts, which are associated with studied events, and the context, which has a dominating role in the analysis of these events and production of new knowledge, are equally important. This type of gnoseology is revolutionary in its essence⁴.

⁴ The concept of revolution itself gradually disappears from the pages of historical literature in the end of the 20th century. It ceases to be dominant and passes to periphery forming a new approach to the new and the old.

The Eastern historical rhythm is not synchronized with the West, especially in the places of former borders of the Ottoman Empire. If Western artists can comfortably remain outside politics, to the East there are no ways for alternative spaces due to social centralization. Artists become either ideologists of political regimes or ministers of culture. Isolation from politics is an impossible mission and there are plenty of plots. It is not a coincidence that American directors permanently produce large scale movies here on the Balkans in the last years. However, these directors are transient and they are not absorbed by the Eastern narratives. A big courage is required to remain on the Balkans and to be a direct participant in the historic quake of events, to re-think them, to dress them in words and present them to the Western reader.

The Balkan world is a traditional society with a patriarchal culture, in which only one person, who is on the top, knows what is needed and wanted. The social is firmly fixed; the past and the present are preset. There is tolerance to the other but there is no space for a gender. We confront a black and white narrative for collective identity. European world is consumptive, open, being the world of postindustrial society. Marriages are not mandatory in it, there is no past and geography. In this world, there is a place for a third sex, but the "other"⁷ is an enemy. It is a world of fragmentation, "political sterility and metaphysical absence" (Стефановски 2003, 337). This is a narrative about the singularities that are patchy just as the rainbow. However, here in the Balkans, irrespective of the feeling for marginality, the value of one's own culture, identity and traditions continues to be evident. Every culture satisfies human needs – spiritual, social, within its structure, according to Bronislaw Malinowski. In the period of formation of national states and nations, the past was constructed as a national past and served to create national identities.

Market values are suitable in taking individual decisions under the conditions of a competitive environment, but they are useless in taking decisions in a situation of mutual cooperation. Market values cannot replace civil ideals. When policy is crossed with business interests, there is always a risk that political influence is used for business objectives. The model that is followed by the Bulgarian politicians is an indirect assurance of public interest: people are allowed

to materialize their own interests resting their hopes on the “invisible hand” of market mechanism.

In addition to historical process, Bulgarian nationalism can be viewed also as a “belief”, i.e., conviction, wherein unification, intolerance, limitation can easily become damnation. Belief is important for both the nationalists and religious fundamentalists rather than empirical evidence. If initially nationalism was the language of populist rhetoric, which inspired liberals and progressive social movements, today it is the language of conservative reactionary forces. It inflames wars and produces revolutions, reshapes borders and forms new states and governments. Cultural ethno-nationalism is directed to the preservation of integrity and uniqueness of a definite ethnic community, referring to its historic heritage and traditions. A national basis is set mainly on the common, consensus and interaction, while the ethnic basis is set on difference, delineation, the consideration and calculation of all phenomena through the prism of their immanent benefits and harms. If the national presumes by default that a difference must be changed to match and even to be subordinated to the common, being in line with the identical, the universally valid, accepting profoundly the cause of the universal, then the ethnic is unyielding and categorical. For the latter, the separate and the specific have primacy. Hence, the common must bow to difference. The specific starts to seem more important than the common, and the particular becomes fundamental for *socium*. From this point, the conclusion that can be drawn is that the partial looks as if it was more high-ranked than the universal. Moreover, it is considered that universality and universalities are deducible from concrete partialness, inimitable identities, which are accepted as the fundamentals of life and history.

Hereafter, inevitably a fatal selection of the initial onset and defining criterion for specification of the future of nation follows: the common *vs.* the different, the national-universal *vs.* the ethnic-unique, the unity of citizenship *vs.* the unity of origin and connection (which are not always directly and evidently shown and expressed). Set on the historic crossroad of these opportunities, the selection of the former or the latter can present also different social-historical and social-cultural perspectives and consequences for the Bulgarian nation, its ethnicities and the state.

What happened with art in the transition years, including the “Epopée” – was a destruction of culture that was done in the name of the culture; in other words, the destruction of a monument in order to delete cultural memory. We face here the demythologization of the idea that the Bulgarian are Russophiles. From this perspective, one bright contrast to the opposition local–global emerges, because the local (ethnic, regional, national) defends the right of difference, unlike the global, which comes with the pretension for unification of differences. Hiding behind this ideology, the Bulgarian politicians introduced their policy of domestic homogenization and regional total control in practice. The “Epopée” experienced transformation from the perspective of heroism to the canvas of a broken perspective. The art itself ceased to signify what was assumed earlier. Drawing on Jean Baudrillard, one might say that art started to die not because it stopped to exist, but because today it exists excessively. Postmodernism revived the problem of identity, culture, aesthetic canons and standards. From this canvas a complete and stable identity, which today requires reinterpretation in order to break stereotypization, is emitted. Cultural managers and different NGOs try to represent the Bulgarian national culture, memory and language through museum collections and exhibitions, albeit they deepen in bureaucratizing culture, and the art can hardly counter-react when it is set under similar conditions. The direction followed by this societal context is represented by demarketization of the art, the discourse of the aesthetic world, overcoming the dividing line between consumers and creators.

The idea that liberal democracy will win as the only possible variant for development of humankind leads to:

- ✓ The raise of market fundamentalism, which came, except for its ideology, also with its consumptive mechanism as worldly philosophy. It created chaos successfully and then sold us the know-how for a global world order.
- ✓ The turn of media in a tool for entertainment⁵. The whole world becomes a big entertainment show and entertainment is turned

⁵ In his book *Amusing ourselves to death*, Neil Postman shows how Western people turn everything to shows, competitions, lotteries, and the people started to “amuse themselves to death”. Cited in Kapushchinski 2006, 303.

to the main contents of culture (Капушчински 2001), against the background of deepening in the world inequality, a small portion of consumers and a flagrant high proportion of marginal people.

The biggest paradox we live in is that the fast rates of growth and development increased dissatisfaction instead of satisfaction. The despair of people, who see that there is no place for them in the contest for more perfect products of consumption, in turn contributed to the increase of "a conflict-genic" factor.

Thinking about history not as the history of states and nations but the history of civilizations is a trigger framed by Arnold Toynbee: S. Huntington only updated it. Such a perspective also has its limitations, since it reviews only conflicts between civilizations, without noticing the clashes within the same civilizations. The phenomenon of civilization itself is underrated, especially the globalization of social life. It shows that people do not longer find answers to their questions in the old, traditional structures such as the church, the government or the nation and look in return for something new. It is not a coincidence that the beginning of the 21st century is marked with weakened states and the boom of small civil and religious non-government forms. This fact changed the narrative structure and context in which we live in. What is called a „community“ becomes increasingly valuable. Patriotism develops at a local rather than global scale.

The installation "In the mirror, dimly", confirms this conclusion. The entire installation is constructed as a Christian temple. Thermal blankets, which are designated for emergency situations, are used for canvases. It is a deconstruction of reality with implicit political messages; it sets sharply the question for redefinition of ethics and identity. The author defends the "ethics of authenticity", which assumes that the man has an internal depth and turning the self to this depth makes him full in a moral and aesthetic sense (Тейлър 1999, 34). The human being has to realize himself interiorly, beyond the mechanisms of institutions. In the social world, he is reduced to *habitus*, if we were to use the terminology of Burger and Luckmann, which leads to a conflict between aesthetic self-achievement and institutional existence (Burger 1992, 16). There is one Self with its dreams and internal struggles, which

raises the question for sharedness of this internal life. There is one uprooted subject, who is extirpated from patriarchal unity of time and place, the man and nature. The mainframe matter of identity is the feeling of trust, of ontological presence. The trust from pre-modern time was built in a "face to face society", the *micro-socium* of the family, the clan and the transcendent world of the sacred. Nowadays, this trust is transferred to institutions that are the new fields of security, which are managed by instrumental principles characteristic for modernity. According to Anthony Giddens, there is dispersion of spheres, separation of disciplinary fields, every one of which is managed by an independent expert system (Heaphy 2007, pass.). The Self starts to adapt to different institutional views, which fragment its monolithic status. Multiple institutionally maintained identities start to live in it. The value of the art loses its obviousness and opens the doors for chaos; the society is deprived of universal values, vital modus and spiritualizing phenomena of culture.

Favoritism of difference and the preferential regime for identity that parallels the reduction of the universal, the all-national, should not be interpreted in a simplified manner. The reason is that we can be and we are different only when we are common, identical and universal in some aspect. Outside community we can be anything but not inimitable and commensurable. We can be simultaneously different, i.e., variations and modulations of something that unites us. Consequently, we accept, assess and react to the other, the different and the ethnically "strange" individuals like similar to us only in this manner. The reason is not that he is exclusively different (Bulgarian, Turk, Roma, etc.), but the reason is that he is before all common, identical to us in its universal role of a man. Human essence or "nature" is important rather than its ethnic appearance. This is the real password for an intersubjective and humane communication, the interaction of people with different ethnic genealogy and identity (Тодорова and Мизов 2010, 72).

The installation is in accordance with the "life-reconfiguration", in which the people of the new democracies were involved. Modern epoch changes radically the attitude to the past, turning itself to the present and the future. A modernistic perception for the past carries a positivistic and naturalistic idea that there is a one-way movement of the

time – from the past to the present and future, and that we can understand our history using science, find historical patterns and through this we will be able to draw conclusions also for the present. However, at the same time the modern age is predisposed to radical breaks with the past, turning its view to value resources and the significance of the present and the future. Herewith, the future has a higher axiological status and sets the landmarks of the present. Generally it is expected that the future will be better not only than the past but also than the present and because of this expectation there is a trend towards detraction of the things, which we leave behind ourselves (Проданов 2009).

The author, Ushev, used the “problematics of deconstruction” (Derrida)⁶ as a tool for analysis of the concrete ideological and political reality in Bulgaria. It is a refusal to subordinate to a new authority and the “belief” that fear can be overcome, that preservation of identity must be defended, in order to search for a new way for unity, beyond the imposed “new leadership”. For the Ushev’s work explains the spiritual formation of an individual, aiming to conceptualization of the bigger gift – the miracle of life, in a contrast to the main feature of modern art, which can be defined as the “petrified reality of the manufactured by capitalistic technologies revolutionary artifacts” (Adorno 1997). It is increasingly more difficult to maintain the transcendent, cosmic divine order, since the return of the past is realized through its marketization, in the form of stock exchange of historical artifacts, symbols and narratives. If early modernism rejects the past, then the later modernism starts its infinite reinvention and reinterpretation, its active inclusion in market turnover here and now, turning it in a fashion model and standard for consumption. The past starts again to possess increasing significance but this is in a completely different way – not as the self-obvious value-normative regulators that existed for centuries, but through multiple reconstructions in the present. Development of the global net of the Internet creates a completely new digitalized situation

⁶ See “Literary theory and Criticism”, Unit 5, 5.1 The problem of Defining Deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, <https://sites.google.com/...deconstruction.../5-1-the-problem-of-deconstruction&aqs=chrome..69i57j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=U>

for the public sphere and the public use of history. In a world that is overloaded with memory and reminiscences, the problem entailed by the selection of sources, data and interpretations is amplified, and the clash between different visions of the events is hardened. Public perception of history regulates our ongoing behavior: it – acquires a normative character. Societies reform themselves by reforming their history. There is a permanent process of interaction between historical traditions and institutions and the newly appearing expectations for the future and alternative assessments of the past. Hence, faster the changes of the present develop, the faster the public perception of history change. However, any change in the present changes the way in which separate individuals and societies perceive themselves and the surrounding environment. Permanent innovations-influence modern societies and the lives of individuals, determining permanent changes in memory and identities, through a permanent rethinking of history and its numerous interpretations. The intensity of the changes in the individual and collective memory corresponds to the intensity of the changes affecting individuals and societies as a result of critical situations. In the first case we have a cumulative principle: the replenishment proceeds from the past (an abstract philosophical norm, in which the accent is placed on identity and the leading role of dialogue). Being considered in this manner, culture is the keeper of human identity. The second case is a paradigm-shifting model. It is the revolutionary phenomenology that proceeds from the present. It focuses on the concrete sociological norm of human behavior that supposes both a partial and a complete replacement. That is to say that the art is viewed as a field for a free choice. The same thing also applies to the human identity and the cultural dialogue. According to this model, the history of culture is the complex of various cultural types which are not liable to a mutual comparison: the choice between them is therefore controlled emotionally and not logically.

Fuller suggests that in the 21st century the Western science will ally itself with the Biblical religions which will lead to an 'anthropic perspective' as opposed to the karmic determinism (Fuller 2002). The neo-Darwinist synthesis in the 20th century becomes its secular alternative, establishing itself as a normative framework for the world. In their works, Dawkins, Wilson and Singer-reject the normative privileges for-the human species

using naturalistic arguments. This idea received the marked support of post-modernism. Fuller claims that monotheists should ally themselves with positivists in order to rehabilitate the collective humanistic project. The understanding of the participation in science as a civil obligation or even as a “religious” service in the sense of Boyle, Newton and Comte has a decisive significance for this project.

According to Fuller, the 21st century will become a witness of the collision between the anthropic and karmic perspectives (Fuller 2002), and the main question that will be asked is the following: Is Man the image and likeness of God and does he has the right of the privileged position in Nature because of this? The West monotheistic religions came to an agreement on this point while the pantheistic and polytheistic religions of the East did not.

Yet in the distant past (1960), ideas for a karmic ideology were criticized. Jorge Luis Borges and Roland Barthes are the first, with their thesis-of the ‘death of the author’, later their thesis is realized in the announcement of the death of the subject, wherein the known statement of Nietzsche for the ‘death of God’ is reflected. Any minimization of the role of Man in the Nature at the background of modern global cataclysms would be fatal. However, one thing that is positive in the idea of Fuller is the term ‘*anthropia*’. In its essence, *it is a new type of humanism*. Ginsburg develops the idea for a secular humanism as the alternative to religion. This new humanism combines in itself the values of religion, philosophy and art. It is destined to define the new position of Man in the rational world. Religion as a cultural form separates from policy and economics turning to the development of a person in its axiological dimensions.

In the *Encyclical Letter*, Pope John Paul II explains the need for the interrelationship between faith and reason. He says that faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth. According to him, through faith and reason, men understand the meaning of life. If the inner meaning of life is not understood by man, then life is not worth living. That is the reason why philosophers of both East and West were interested in the question of “Who am I?” This is nothing but search for truth. Man has a purpose in life. It is a fact that in each man there is always a conflict between *what is* and *what ought to be*.

This is the conflict between the lower ends and the higher end. This double nature results in an internal conflict between the flesh and the spirit, or the lower and the higher selves.

However in our era of high technologies, many people do not believe in miracles. This atheistic claim stems from the wrong definition of *miracle*. It will be difficult to define a miracle. Since the miracle is a phenomenon of religious life, the approach to the concept of miracle can proceed from both religious and atheistic point of view. Christianity is based on the belief in miracle – the embodiment of God in Christ, His death on the crucifix and His resurrection. For a Christian, the miracle is not just a story, but the life itself. Prayer is a way to obtain the miracle by the seeking salvation. However, the world as a God's creation is made perfect, hence there is no need of miracles. Is the God's intervention necessary in a perfect order? Similar questions lead to another one – do miracles really exist? Are not they a sequence of ignorance, delusion?

1. A miracle is something that happens rarely (in Evangelical context it is even single). For Leibniz a miracle is rarely a seen event. It will be good to recall the ironical notice of Cicero in this case – if “miracle is a rarely seen event then wise man is the miracle”. Hence, rarity cannot be the only intrinsic feature of the miracle; it is rather its phenomenological attribute. (Cicero1984, 65)
2. Another feature of the miracle is its exceptionality – it strikes, amazes, causes perplexity or there is a psychological attribute of miracle.
3. With being striking, the miracle impairs the natural rhythm of the things, the laws of nature, therefore, it is often defined as “an event opposing natural laws”. In this approach the intention to comprehend the essence of miracle is seen. Ascension opposes gravity, the miracle “healing” – medicine, the miracle of multiplied breads by Jesus – the law for preservation of matter. A reasonable human mind is unable to conceal these contradictions and the conclusion made is logical from the point of view of formal logic – either/or. The world is either regularity and there are no miracles or the whole world is a miracle, science is false and needless for salvation of the soul. In this way, reliability of

certain events is denied based on reasonable arguments. More and more people turn again to spiritual world but wrongly transfer in it a rational method characteristic for material world. The contrary is also possible – transfer of spiritual methods in material world and then occultism, demonism and others appear.

Hence, the scientific view of life does not opposes the religious view of life but the concept of the world as chaos, a set of accidental events, completely inconceivable by man. Scientific view of life does not deny religion but is based on understanding that world exists and develops due to God's management. This helps us to understand why the world is regular, why laws are similar for whole universe and can be expressed by mathematical language and why they are knowledgeable. Einstein confirms the need of religion so that science can have a solid basis:

“Where religious feeling is lacking, belief in rational nature of reality, science is expressed in a fruitless empiricism and this is the reason that in our materialistic century only deeply religious men can be serious scientists.” (Эйнштейн 1967, 126)

God and world, miracle and law are not antipodes but a two ways of the God's influence on the world. This assumes a concept of God as a personal subject and not an impersonal global Reason since to perform a single act such as miracle is required. In positivism, the miracle is not discussed. We gradually reach atheistic understanding of the miracle as something still not explained from the positions of science. Atheism assumes that even those events that oppose discovered laws can be explained with still the undiscovered laws. However, here, the main fact in relation to science is omitted – it is a whole system, in which one statement must not oppose other statement. The Newton's mechanics do not oppose Einstein's but it is a separate case. If some event opposes the given natural law this means that it opposes the entire physical knowledge. Spinoza attacks Christianity from a pantheistic position. However, the Christian conception of miracle is attacked also from positions of skepticism and sensualism (Hume, 1996). Hume considers knowledge of cause-consequence relations in the world impossible as far

as we try to fix the events themselves and not to associate them. According to him, people fall in the error of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* – the existence of a cause-consecutive relation is the result of human fantasy, which is called by Hume “belief”. The belief in miracles is also a product of human fantasy and it is based on people’s weaknesses, on their predisposition to believe in the unusual and to be lied, unlike natural laws which have their own objective datum thanks to human reason. Hence, from a sensualistic point of view it can be stated that a miracle, irrespective of how unusual it can be, cannot serve as a proof of God, a testament of His being and action.

“Ascertainment by miracles is the first, accidental image of belief. True belief is hidden in the spirit truth.” (IOM 1996, 109)

Each intervention by God in world is a miracle. Absurd is not what contradicts to human reason, but what contradicts to God’s intention. If the death of Christ is His intention for redemption of human sins and if there was not resurrection – this would be absurd. God is unable to contradict Himself. There is no chance that He would not create the world as His own home and make what happened invalid. He remembers us that we forget God’s laws, the value of human life, the intention of what is man. Man became the measure of all things and his Ego assigns normativity to moral, leaving God. Man became the moral legislator. Divine moral appeared dressed in sophistic clothes. Since each individual has wishes different from the wishes of the others, a variety of the kinds of moral is achieved. One wants to rule the world and dominate, the other wants overall submission, some people want terror and violence, the others alternatively – hate barbarity and violence. In this case the following question is raised: If any individual is a legislator of a certain moral fashion, where to find universal values? The hypothesis of Protagoras that my own will or my Ego forms morality practically eliminates moral, which (similarly to the truth) is a global, universal norm of human behavior. According to religious tradition, only God can guarantee morality and moral is absolutely justified. If man is the measure of morality, then who needs heaven-sent Revelations?

According to Gospel of Matthew, Jesus Christ says as follows: "Do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). In the 17th century, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) reduces his own natural laws (moral philosophy) to this postulate. They are not laws if they are only derived from nature but they can be qualified as similar only in their correlation with the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. In this sense, divine law creates the natural law, i.e., initial human moral.

We look for the problem outside of us, in the message. However, if we try to change the message, which religious people believe to be God's message, this means that we want to correct God. However, God send it to us so that we can correct ourselves. This is since we accustomed ourselves to the great miracle called life. Life ceased to be a sign. It ceased to surprise us and to make us to think about its value. Through its own language religion expresses the truth of being. So, philosophy is obliged to understand this objective wisdom, this Revelation of human existence, which is implicated in religious symbols. It may be no accident that discussions about religion occurred in philosophy more than once and particularly in the 20th century, when Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) announced the death of God. Indeed, what Friedrich Nietzsche says is that God was murdered, murdered by man. By stopping to believe, people stray away from God, killing Him, but in fact they are unable to kill an infinite Being (encoded in all of us) by the words "Get up and walk!" (Хайдеггер 1993, 170).

"Get up and walk!" is directed to a sinful, confused man who lost his Ego. "Get up and walk!" is the formulation of being, the moral and ontological truth, demonstrating the law of life, opposite to death. The Biblical imperative "Get up and walk!" is God's principle of resurrecting life, man and society. This norm preserves the individual and his autonomy and demonstrates the belief in his abilities and powers. It is axiological significant also for the society in general. It is especially valuable in relation to the human soul and mind as well as for the development of philosophy. When bloody assaults happen, we turn to His mercy. The goodness of God-Being is in the fact that He gives man again and again new opportunities to do good things. The real being is turned to the life. Ultimately, we must believe in life, in ourselves, in the

opportunities, with which we are provided, otherwise we will continue to stray away from God, to turn to nothingness, to non-existence. Instead of life (God), we will start to cultivate death (Devil).

Co-creation (cooperative creation of God-Being and man) is a possible salvation. In this way, God-Being saves a man for eternal life, since man does not know which of his actions will be considered good. The choice of good is set within the man and he relies on this assistance from heaven???. One must believe in life, to love life, and this belief will also maintain the conviction that we have the right to state: "I am Human!".

Concluding remarks

The position of the artist is at the intersecting point of cultural epochs. The anthropic perspective discussed, revealed by the first case – that of the Epopee, is a reference to the epoch of Renaissance when Man is given the status of a hero. The person is in a competition with God, creates societies and cultures, technologically dominates Nature and undermines the abilities of demiurge. If we look closer at the second case, we will see the horror of the artist regarding the current political and religious extremism and fanaticism. We will recognize new trends toward heroism. These are the new political leaders, anti-globalists, terroristic leaders who consider themselves new 'crusaders' struggling against the world evil. This heroism is a bad advisor regarding a dialogue for values, a compromise and synthesis as the goals of a rational discussion are strange to it. Such heroism cannot be the form of an axiological discourse. The author shows us the false nature of an axiological polarization. Therefore, the mass conscience constructs social values without being interested in their critical analysis. The ideological strategy is to justify your own values and to criticize the values of the other. Certainly, being at the first and second levels of cultural dynamics, representing an empirical subject, the artist can prefer and form a definite axiological significance, using the cumulative method and the method of a paradigmatic jump. The past turns to fundamentals for the formation and reconstruction of various identities. Identities in themselves are something that becomes a subject of permanent reinvention and

construction, as interpretations of the past have a key role in this process. The fights for the future are actually the fights for the past.

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SOME ASPECTS OF THE IMPURITY OF ART IN ION IANOȘI'S THOUGHT

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There is a famous medieval idea very well expressed by John of Salisbury in his *Metalogicon*: “very often, we know more not because we would have progressed ourselves in our personal development but because we are supported by the force of others’ mind and we have spiritual treasures that we inherited from our ancestors”. John of Salisbury was quoting at his turn another famous thinker, Bernard de Clairvaux, who said that we are like dwarfs or pygmies mounted on the shoulders of gigantic beings. We can see hence more and further than them not because we would have a more precise power of seeing or because we would be more gigantic than them, but only because we lean upon and rely on them.

The works of Ion Ianoși are full of ideas that prove to be of interest even today. I would like to mention such an interesting idea – **the impurity of art** – Ion Ianoși uniquely used it in some of his theoretical works such as *The Nonart – Art* (two volumes published during 1983-1985) or in his trilogy about the sublime (published during 1983-1985), as well as in some works of aesthetics (as the volume *Project for a possible aesthetics* published in 1975). There are also some more recent works which could be regarded as applications of this topic in areas such as philosophy and history of culture. I would mention especially his study about Constantin Noica and about the Romanian philosophy. Mentioning these studies one can prove in a convincing manner that this topic was a fundamental one for Ion Ianoși, who tried to develop his researches using it as central objective.

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My intention is to find out what is its basic structure, which could be its sources and also, to unveil some contemporary applications for it. Firstly, I would remark a basic trait of Ianoși's thought: a convincing dynamism of the interconnections of ideas, based on a real dialectic. Any artistic and cultural phenomenon is studied having in mind certain internal dynamics of the analyzed work. The author is interested to discover how the work is inserted in a wider cultural context including not only the evolution of artistic ideas but also their interference with those belonging to other spiritual realms as religion, philosophy, sciences, social and political thought. We can speak of a holistic way of treating the topics. In fact, the Hegelian dialectics is present in Ion Ianoși's works. Concepts as "content", "form", "idea", "concrete way" and "immediate reality" are rearticulated by Ion Ianoși being afterward used as conceptual instruments for later on constructions specific to his theoretical attitude. In his Introduction to the *Nonart - Art*, the author observes that the 20th century was dominated by "differentiating positions" which separated ever more clear and visible the various realms of human thinking among science, religion or art. The author proposes an opposite motion, towards the integrating options as his purpose is an analysis of art in connection with the other forms of human creativity. We have to mention that his voice is not singular. During the interwar period, there were thinkers belonging to other philosophical orientations as John Dewey, for instance, who, stressing out the exploration of the immediate artistic experience, pointed to the fact that the artistic experience should not be separated from the other daily human experiences and art should not be kept under a special condition. The Avant-garde movements and especially the new types of contemporary art as *performance*, *installations*, *street art* are exactly the expression of such an integrative option and attitude.

The author tried to extend his research including all sorts of human creativity. He remarked that there is a "quite-artisticity" and an "artisticity-however" when discussing the non-artistic realms as those oriented to knowledge or ethics or religion. This is why his work where he debates this topic is named *Non-art - Art*. He analyzed what distinguishes and what related art and non-art but also the non-art from art. He starts from the observation that there is a wider aestheticism

which includes the reality as well as the human consciousness, or in other words, nature as well as culture. At the level of reality, the author refers to the aesthetic character of nature and also those products of man which are not considered properly artistic. The two sides are analyzed taking into consideration the relationship between them by means of a fundamental criterion – the work understood as *poiesis* (or human creativity).

When analyzing the aesthetic character at the level of human consciousness, the author takes into account the “aestheticity” of science, religion, philosophy and art. The criterion that assures a good connection among these realms is the “form”, the articulated expression of the idea. In all these realms, the appearance gave by the form (how it looks like) is, in fact, the process of coming out (or the appearance) of the idea, says the author reaffirming Nicolai Hartmann’s theory of the process of appearance. Even a form that only looks like being artistic supposes the expressed appearance of thought content.

Coming back to the concept of “form”, the author stresses out the notion of “live form” which is specific to art and which stimulates the life of each individual. The live form is the expression of the live feeling. “Senses, observes Ion Ianoși, are not primitive, especially in art: they are complicated, they intermediate and shape the accumulations of the rational thinking”². They are polished in a superior manner combining affectivity, thought and will. Let us remember that Gadamer also stressed out the role of *Erlebnis* understood as a feeling, experience which he considered as another name for *res cogitans*, for human consciousness understood as the most elevated unity of meaning. It is not the sensation in itself but this complex feeling which should be the object of the aesthetic research. Taking into consideration that the psychological phenomena have intentionality as any psychological act has a content which is its object, in any perception there is an entire world of consciousness. The perception is not only a mental image of the reality; it is also interpretation as it is performed by means of the prior knowledge already existing within our mind. As a consequence, perception is a cultural form not only a natural one. That explains why

² Ion Ianoși, *Nearta – Artă (The Non-Art – Art)*, București, Cartea Românească, 1983, vol. II, p. 14.

the supposed appearance of the perception is a way of manifestation of the consciousness itself perceiving the reality by means of the senses. The artistic object is perceived simultaneously, at three levels of perception at least: as a phenomenon of sizing, and appropriation of it: the physical level, or the material one, the emotional subjectivity level, expressing the pleasure or the dislike which means the level of spiritual values and the level of the artistic object as meaningful or as a sign having a content which has a real, concrete form.

Ion Ianoși mentions also the fact that the authenticity of the work is given especially by the lived feeling which is unique, and personal. The artistic object makes real the personal living experience. The object materializes the personal feeling. "Concrete is the reality but also its ideal reflection" in art, adds the author. Through the effort of work, the feeling manifests creative in any realm of human activity even in science as the act of work supposes creativity (*poiesis*). As a consequence, the act of creativity seems to be a result of combining opposite things: the sensitive and the intelligible considered as completely different. The problem of oppositions and their combination is one of a long history in philosophy. The most famous was Nicolaus Cusanus during the 15th century who analyzed the *coincidentia oppositorum* in his *De Docta Ignorantia*. Giordano Bruno reused it in his studies of astronomy and philosophy concerning the de-centralized universe. It was also a mathematical problem which could be expressed in the question: is it possible a circle with its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere?

During the 20th century, a Romanian philosopher studied this problem based on the new discoveries concerning the fractal theory and non-Euclidean geometry. His name is Ștefan Lupașcu and he exploits the logic of the included middle, not the excluded one as in the Aristotelian logic. Or, here is what Ion Ianoși says: the entire difficulty supposes an exceeding of the methodology of *either/or* using a different one: *and/and* where it is not enough a simple and mechanical mix of components but a construction of a new organic structure."³ In this way, it is possible to assure constructive opposition to the dominant attitude of the last two centuries, the imposed rationalist superiority. This theory

³ Ibid., p. 28.

concerning the combination of contraries in a new unity can be detected in the work of art when the artistic sensible expression is the manifestation of the intelligible. The "form" of expression concretizes this intelligible. Asking himself how something similar could be achieved in science (where we speak of course only about a "quite-artisticity"), the author remarks that we should take into consideration the process of creativity and to the fact that in science, at the level of the intelligible content should exist "an immutable unity and organicity" of the theorem or the research performed and which is based on a cosmotic articulation of ideas and demonstration.

In his *Logic of the beauty*, Liviu Rusu thought that beauty has its own logic as other domains of the spirit. He considered that even the concept *logos* is based on life impulses and of the entire reality. Liviu Rusu quoted Heraclitus who said that the universal *logos* was able to assure the unity of norms necessary to the existence of the world. The *logos* was for Heraclitus the eternal law of the universe. The continuous becoming is based on the dialectic of opposite forces which assure through their collision the cosmotic characteristic of the whole reality. Nothing happens accidentally as there are rules able to assure the order and hence the beauty of the whole. In this case, *logos* is not only a power of the human spirit, but it also functions as a fundamental pulsation of the entire existence, it is the real reason for being of this existence. Liviu Rusu considers it not only the reason performing abstractization processes of thinking; it is a live reason orienting the entire existence towards a harmonic universe. In this way one can reach a way of thinking logics in a very wide sense: a natural logic, of deeds, a social logic or one regarding the feelings Blaise Pascal was telling us about, calling it "the logic of the heart". As a consequence, there is a logic of the beauty which at its turn is a product of human spirituality. "It is not the logic of an abstract reason; it is a live one which exists in pulsations towards order and light".⁴ We can see thus that the "cosmotic organization of ideas" as Ion Ianoși said, is based on a *live logic* which assures the beauty.

⁴ Liviu Rusu, *Logica frumosului (The Logic of Beauty)*, Bucuresti, E.L.U., 1968, p. 6.

Coming back to the “artisticity” however of science, Ion Ianoși insists on the adhesion of the scientific researcher to a certain orientation in research, a certain theorem or research method. This adhesion favored, during history, certain specific orientations of research, certain methods in comparison to others. One can speak hence about the fact that even in the core of the abstract scientific domains it is possible to speak about subjectivity and aestheticity. The fact that *poiesis* includes not only the personal emotions of the artist but also aspects of the cultural and historical context in which the artist lived, is one of Ion Ianoși’s ideas present in almost all his works. The dynamic perspective of the interference of oppositions within the artistic creativity and also in the non-artistic one includes also another dimension, the archetypal one which C.G. Jung called the collective unconsciousness. This collective dimension was developed later on in the philosophy of the imaginary developed by the French philosophy, especially during the second half of the 20th century by philosophers like G. Bachelard, G. Durand, M. Foucault, or J.J. Wunenburger. In Romania, the influence of Jung’s theories was developed by Lucian Blaga in his works on the philosophy of culture. Blaga speaks about a stylistic archetypal frame, responsible for certain specific characters of national culture.

All these aspects we tried to discover within Ion Ianoși’s work reveal, in a certain measure, the amplitude of the author’s studies and give us a hint about the multiple perspectives that could be explored from now on starting from his works.

The exploration of these texts helps us to meet again with a highly educated spirituality which offers us a creative cultural dialogue not only for those who had the opportunity of meeting him but also for those who had it not as it favors the development of still interesting ideas about aesthetics, culture and values.

PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

DOGMAS IN SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

ANGUEL S. STEFANOV¹

Abstract

It is usually admitted that dogmas are principles that are meticulously followed, but yet they lack a sound argumentation. The aim of my presentation is the suggestion of two claims. The first one is that the epistemological place of dogmas in science (as is for instance the central dogma of molecular biology) seems to be in what I. Lakatos has named “hard core” of a research scientific programme, but at the same time they are specific “focal” elements of it. The second claim is that dogmas in philosophy (as are for instance Quine’s two dogmas of empiricism, or Laudan’s two dogmas of methodology) play analogous role like metaphysical research programmes play in relation to scientific theories. While these programmes may justify our preference for theories, dogmas, as well as their rejection, may justify our preference for metatheories.

Keywords: dogma, science, philosophy, Laudan.

It is usually admitted that dogmas are principles that are meticulously followed, but yet they either may lack a sound argumentation, or in the process of acquiring new knowledge they may prove to be false (at least in some respect). Anyhow, different kinds of dogmas could be discerned in scientific, and broadly speaking in social practice. They could vary for instance in relation to how we understand the contention that they lack a sound argumentation. The latter fact may be due to historically incorrect (or insufficient) knowledge about the subject of a dogma, due to a practice submissive to some powerful agent, and so on, and so forth.

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The aim of my presentation is the suggestion of two claims.

The first one is that the epistemological place of dogmas in science seems to be in what Imre Lakatos has named “hard core” of a scientific research programme, but at the same time they are specific “focal” elements of it.

My second claim states that dogmas in philosophy play analogous role like metaphysical research programmes play in relation to scientific theories. While these programmes may justify our preference for scientific theories, philosophical dogmas, as well as their rejections, may justify our preference for metatheories, i.e. for philosophical theories and approaches.

Starting with my first claim, I’ll firstly provide as an example a well-known theoretical principle in biology – the so called *central dogma of molecular biology*. Then I’ll introduce the notion of what I name a “focal” element within the hard core of a research programme.

After the consolidation of the synthetic theory of evolution, the central dogma of molecular biology was formulated by Francis Crick in 1958. It states that the transfer of information from nucleic acid to nucleic acid or from nucleic acid to protein may be possible, but such a transfer from protein to protein or from protein to nucleic acid is impossible.

This dogma has turned to be a key prohibition principle, and thus its epistemological location is within the hard core of the research programme of molecular biology, and more broadly speaking, of the synthetic theory of evolution as a whole.

I call a “focal” element within the hard core of a research programme such a conceptual part of it, which either focuses on itself the first blow of criticism at the end of the degenerative stage in the history of a research programme, or allows further theoretical specifications. I mean here the stage when degenerating problem-shifts occur in a deploying scientific research programme, i.e. when the problem-shifts are not “at least theoretically progressive” (Lakatos 1980, 34).

The central dogma is an element of the second kind. It is not totally rejected as a principle regulating the flow of information; however, a specification was added to it. The latter concerns the activity of prions, which are protein-only infectious agents. Prions are agents of analog heredity, in contrast to the mainstream, mediated by nucleic acid, digital heredity.

As an example of a dogma of the first kind (that is to say, of the kind of rejected principles staying in the hard core of a relinquished research programme) is the principle of classical science that "Nature does not make jumps", or as Leibniz put it: "*la nature ne fait jamais des sauts*".

As it is well known, this principle was rejected for the first time in Bohr's theory of the atom for the sake of an explanation how energy is being emitted in the form of photons. This has happened when the research programme of classical physics has been abandoned, and that of quantum physics has been endorsed. The electrons around an atomic nucleus do make jumps from one to another energetic level, when the atom either emits or absorbs definite portions of energy. The latter are named quanta of energy within the micro-world.

Let me go now to my second claim. It was the contention that there are philosophical prejudices assessed as dogmas, and that they play analogous role like the one played by metaphysical research programmes in relation to scientific theories. While these programmes may justify our preference for scientific theories, philosophical dogmas, as well as their rejections, may justify our preference for metatheories (for philosophical theories and approaches).

As it is known from philosophy of science, in spite that we can speak loosely about verifications of scientific theories, inductive procedures can never guarantee the truth of a theory, i.e. they cannot justify a theory. Or, as K. R. Popper writes:

"...we can never justify a theory. But we can sometimes "justify" (in a different sense) our preference for a theory, considering the state of the critical debate; for a theory may stand up to criticism better than its competitors" (Popper 1993, 149).

He argues to this effect that reliable metaphysical research programmes are indeterminism, realism, and objectivism (Ibid, 150).

Prejudices as they may seem to critically-minded authors, specific philosophical predilections ought to be clearly outlined, so as to be assessed as dogmas. And if so, they (as well as their rejections) fulfil the requirement of my second claim, because of their general methodological normativity.

I shall adduce as examples of dogmas in the philosophical realm (the well-known, I presume) Willard Van Orman Quine's two dogmas of empiricism, as well as Larry Laudan's two dogmas of methodology.

Let me start with Quine. He insists that Modern empiricism has been conditioned in large part by two dogmas. One is a belief in some fundamental cleavage between truths which are *analytic*, or grounded in meanings independently of matters of fact, and truths which are *synthetic*, or grounded in fact. The other dogma is *reductionism*: the belief that each meaningful statement is equivalent to some logical construct upon terms which refer to immediate experience. Both dogmas, I shall argue, are ill-founded. (Quine 1994, 20)

What is the philosophical result of their abandoning? Let us have a look at what Quine himself has said on this point:

One effect of abandoning them is ... a blurring of the supposed boundary between speculative metaphysics and natural science. Another effect is a shift toward pragmatism. (Ibid)

Quine's quotations do support my claim that philosophical dogmas, as well as their rejections, may justify our preference for philosophical theories and approaches. Thus the endorsement of the outlined dogmas lends support to empiricist philosophy, and their rejection diminishes its methodological plausibility.

The rejection of the second, of the reductionist dogma, really justifies our preference for epistemological pragmatism through what is known to be the Duhem-Quine's thesis. In its lapidary and strong version it is suggested by Quine himself:

Any statement can be held true come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system ... Conversely, by the same token, no statement is immune to revision. (Ibid, 43)

The very interesting situation here is that the correct criticism of the reductionist dogma may either open the way to new theoretical insights, or lead to a disputable pragmatist exhortation. The latter is clearly expressed in the attempts at a defense of obsolescent theories

through the stubborn raising of ad hoc hypotheses. Thus one cannot always save Newton's mechanics by explaining the "anomalies" of planetary motion through the presence of yet unknown cosmic bodies. However, I shall not dwell on the instrumental threat coming from the strong interpretation of the Duhem-Quine thesis, since my intention here is only the demonstration that a dogma, or its rejection, may justify the preference for a philosophical approach. In this very case the outlined dogma supports the empiricist philosophy of meaningfulness, based on the verification theory of meaning.

The abandoning of both dogmas backs the philosophical position, which proclaims the "blurring of the supposed boundary between speculative metaphysics and natural science". This is good news for post-positivists. My incidental comment here is only that Quine's initial criticism of Kant is not convincing, to the effect that Kant's project is in the realm of transcendental metaphysics, while Quine's criticism, based on exploring the meaning of meaning, stays in the field of semantics.

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The case of Larry Laudan's *two dogmas of methodology* is concerned with the long lasting discussion about theory appraisal as a means for the *establishment of scientific progress* (Laudan 1976, 585-597).

The first dogma is the "cumulativity postulate" stating that a theory exhibits cognitive progress in comparison to its predecessor, only if it provides a wider explanation of the problems in their respective domain. *The second dogma* states that progressive theory change can be ascertained only if there is translatability among the object languages of the theories.

L. Laudan has tried to show, however, that both of the above dogmas are epistemological exaggerations. We often concede for example that a theory counts as progressive, although it cannot solve some problem that has been solved by its predecessor; or in spite of the fact that the object languages of the two theories might not be mutually translatable, because they are assessed to be incommensurable.

It turns out that abandoning of the dogmas that L. Laudan has explicitly formulated, paves the way to a new epistemology, i.e. to a new philosophical conception of scientific progress. This conception (meta-

theory of scientific progress) was put forward as more adequate description of scientific practice than the metatheory containing the above stated two dogmas.

Whether Laudan's pretention about all this is arguable is another question. Carl R. Kordig (1980, 141) showed for instance (in a short remark at that) that Laudan's claim about ranking theories on the base of their problem-solving capacity is a very weak criterion for progress. The question just mentioned is no doubt an important one. But it could be separated from Laudan's proposal itself, which aims at changing the epistemological understanding of scientific progress.

I shall not touch upon the putative merit of Laudan's proposal, since my second intention in this short essay was quite different. It is worth saying to this effect that making dogmas in philosophy explicit, is of great importance for the elucidation of the plausibility of philosophical theories and approaches.

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WITTGENSTEIN ON VALUES

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Abstract

According to some authors like Bertrand Russell and Wolfgang Stegmüller, Wittgenstein's philosophy is divided into early philosophy – *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* – and later philosophy – concentrated around the *Philosophical Investigations*. On the other hand, according to an author like Anthony Kenny, Wittgenstein's philosophy is a continuum, we cannot talk about two totally distinct periods. Starting from this controversy, the aim of this paper is to show that if we look at the conception of values of the Austrian philosopher, we see that in his philosophy we can identify both elements of continuity and elements of discontinuity. Therefore, I think that in Wittgenstein's philosophy we can talk about rather thematic continuity and methodological discontinuity.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, values, thematic continuity, methodological discontinuity.

The context of the discussion

Although he published only one work during his lifetime, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* – in original, in German, in 1921, translated into English in 1922 –, Ludwig Wittgenstein is nowadays recognized as one of the most profound and influential philosophers in the history of philosophy. Along with philosophers such as Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell or Rudolf Carnap, he is seen as one of the initiators of what we call today the linguistic turn of analytical philosophy. Being extremely demanding with the way of expressing his ideas, he left unpublished thousands of pages of manuscript. Works like *The Blue and Brown Books*, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*,

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Philosophical Investigations or *On Certainty* are published posthumously with the support of some of his former students like Elizabeth Anscombe, Georg Henrik von Wright or Rush Rhees.

But the reluctance to publish something after *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* had good reasons. Wittgenstein's philosophical view has undergone important changes which he recognizes in the *Preface* of *Philosophical Investigations*: "Four years ago I had occasion to re-read my first book (the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) and to explain its ideas to someone. It suddenly seemed to me that I should publish those old thoughts and the new ones together: that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking." (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. viii) Consequently, he refused to publish anything until his ideas reached the desired shape. With regard to these changes, British philosopher Bertrand Russell proved to be categorical:

"The earlier Wittgenstein whom I knew intimately, was a man addicted to passionately intense thinking, profoundly aware of difficult problems which I, like him, felt the important and possessed (or at least so I thought) of true philosophical genius. The later Wittgenstein, on the contrary, seems to have grown tired of serious thinking and to have invented a doctrine which would make such an activity unnecessary." (Russell, 1959, pp. 216-217)

For Russell, there is a fallacy between the Tractarian perspective and the one from the later works. In his opinion we have a Wittgenstein I (WI) and a Wittgenstein II (WII), between which there is an obvious discontinuity. In this regard, the British philosopher Anthony Kenny claims – contrary to Russell's interpretation – that between the two periods of Wittgenstein's philosophy we can identify elements of continuity. According to Kenny, the Austrian philosopher remains consistent in the following respects: philosophy is purely descriptive; philosophy is not a natural science; philosophy consists of logic and metaphysics; philosophy is the doctrine of logical form; logical propositions are unique. (Kenny, 1973, pp. 181-183)

Starting from this debate, the aim of this article is to show that by a careful analysis of what Wittgenstein tells us about values in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and in later works, we could see that his philosophy is under the sign both of continuity and of discontinuity – more precisely, that his philosophy is marked by thematic continuity and by methodological discontinuity.²

Wittgenstein on values in early philosophy

The aim of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was to show that the problems of philosophy are, in fact, pseudo-problems. To achieve this aim, Wittgenstein begins by investigating the limits of thought, the limits of what we can say meaningfully about the world. But since thought is indissolubly linked with language, his investigation of the limits of thought becomes an investigation of the limits of language. The entire book is edified around the distinction between *meaningful propositions*, *senseless proposition* (*sinnlose Sätze*) and *nonsensical propositions* (*unsinnige Sätze*).

The *meaningful propositions* are the propositions of natural sciences. They are directly related to the facts and they are true or false in terms of experience: “4.11 The totality of true propositions is the total natural science (or the totality of the natural sciences)” (Wittgenstein, 1922, p. 44). For Wittgenstein, the only role the language has is to describe facts. A proposition has meaning if and only if it represents something from the world. This results in the fact that propositions of natural sciences are all that can be *said* about the world. They are the limit of language, the limit of thinking and implicitly, the limit of the world. From a scientific point of view, the world is seen as part.

The *senseless propositions* are the propositions of logic and of mathematics. They are true or false no matter how things are in the

² In “Wittgenstein on scepticism in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and in *On Certainty*” (*Revista de filosofie*, Tomul LXV, Nr. 4, 2018, pp. 349-356) I argued that if we look at how Wittgenstein rejects scepticism in the two periods of his philosophy, we can identify both elements of continuity and elements of discontinuity. This time I argue that if we look at his conception of values, we can see more accurate that his philosophy bears the mark of both continuity and discontinuity.

world. They are tautologies – propositions necessarily true, that admit any state of affairs – or contradictions – propositions necessarily false, that reject any state of affairs. *Senseless propositions* are important, despite the fact that they are not related to the facts and therefore does not represent something in the world. They describe the structures of the world and trace the boundaries between the meaningful discourse and the senseless one. They are also seen as conditions of possibility of *meaningful propositions*: “6.124 The logical propositions describe the scaffolding of the world, or rather they present it.” (Wittgenstein, 1922, p. 80)

The *nonsensical propositions* are the propositions of traditional metaphysics, ethics and aesthetics. They are propositions about why there is something rather than nothing, about the meaning of life, about the best way to live our lives, in short, about values. Since they are about what is “highest” for us, that transcends the world, they do not describe facts and represent nothing from the world. Values are what it is *showing*. We cannot *say* anything about them: “6.421 It is clear that ethics cannot be expressed. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one).” (Wittgenstein, 1922, p. 88) From a metaphysical, ethical or aesthetical point of view, the world is seen as a whole: “6.45 The contemplation of the world sub specie aeterni is its contemplation as a limited whole”. (Wittgenstein, 1922, p. 89)

In these distinctions Wittgenstein is, however, deeply influenced by the works of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell. He sees in Frege’s propositional and predicate logic and in Russell’s theory of definite descriptions, the best way to distinguish a real problem from a pseudo-problem. This might be because at the time of the *Tractatus* he considered them the most appropriate methods of logical analysis of language. The Tractarian approach is a semantic one. From this perspective, we have a relationship of representation between language and the world. The language reflects the reality. The names mean objects, the meaning of a word lies in the object it designates. Therefore, we have a representational theory of meaning. Equally, since the only function of language is to represent an object, a fact or a state of affairs and these are the only things about we can *say* something, it seems that in what concerns Wittgenstein we cannot ask a question nor formulate a problem about what goes beyond the limits of language, about values. The questions and the problems are indissolubly linked with facts, to what we can empirically investigate.

The attempt to *say* something about what it is *showing* is a *nonsense*. The problems of philosophy are, in fact, pseudo-problems because there is nothing to be solved there. When we understand the logic of language, these problems are dissolved: “6.52 We feel that even if *all possible* scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all. Of course there is then no question left, and just this is the answer. 6. 521 The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of this problem.” (Wittgenstein, 1922, p. 89)

As we can see, contrary to the common pejorative use of *nonsense*, Wittgenstein distinguishes between *sense* and *nonsense* and between *saying* and *showing* to emphasize how important are values in our lives. Values are our guide in everyday life, they influence our decisions and how we act, they are the condition of possibility of a good life. They shape our attitude towards the world. For these reasons, values cannot be part of the world. What lies in the world bears the mark of contingency and relativism. It is a mere coincidence that the facts are as they are. They cannot be taken as life rules. This role can only be fulfilled by something outside the world, with a necessary and absolute character: “6.41 The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is and happens as it does happen. *In* it there is no value – and if there were, it would be of no value.” (Wittgenstein, 1922, p. 87) In fact, what Wittgenstein is trying to do is to separate the realm of values from the one of facts and to keep values away from the threatening spectrum of the relativity of facts. In his view, values cannot be reduced to the facts. One of the biggest mistakes of the contemporary world is the attempt to provide an answer to the most feared existential questions by resorting to natural sciences. Science will never tell us, for example, what the meaning of life is or how to live. Equally, the religion cannot say something about the facts. The scientific knowledge is on the one side of the boundaries of language, the religious belief is on the other side.

However, the approach adopted by the Austrian philosopher recalls the Humean distinction between *is* and *ought* and the impossibility of deriving the latter from the former. In his works,³ David Hume seeks to

³ For a detailed exposure of the context of Humean distinction between *is* and *ought* see David Hume – *A Treatise on Human Nature*, pp. 455-476.

prove that there is a clear distinction between reason and morality. Reason is a passive principle that has no influence on sensitivity, while morality is an active principle that influences affections and determines actions. Under no circumstances can the rules of morality be derived from reason. Reason is about what it *is*, morality about what it *should be*. There is no case in which we can derive values from facts. But unlike the Scottish philosopher, Wittgenstein distinguishes between facts and values just to show that: "7. Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." (Wittgenstein, 1922, p. 90) Convinced that through this logical analysis of language, he showed that the problems of philosophy are actually pseudo-problems that are scattered once we understand the way the language works, Wittgenstein enters into a long period of silence which will last until the end of the 20's.

Wittgenstein on values in later philosophy

After nearly a decade of silences and evaluations of his own work, Wittgenstein returns to philosophy, reconsidering substantially the approach from *Tractatus*. He is now interested especially of two different issues. Firstly, that when we learn a language, we do not learn how to put in correspondence words with objects, but how do we use that language. Secondly, that the meaning of a word lies in its use, not in the object it designates. Thus, its new investigations are focused, mostly, on how we learn a language and what is the meaning of a word. Wittgenstein's critique of ostensive learning is manifested in *Philosophical Investigation*:

33. Suppose, however, someone were to object: "It is not true that you must already be master of a language in order to understand an ostensive definition: all you need – of course! – is to know or guess what the person giving the explanation is pointing to. That is, whether for example to the shape of the object, or to its colour, or to its number and so on." – And what does 'pointing to the shape', 'pointing to the colour' consist in? Point to a piece of paper. – And now pointing to its shape – now to its colour – now to its number (that sounds queer). – How did you do it? – You will say

that you 'meant' a different thing each time you pointed. And if I ask how that is done, you will say you concentrated your attention on the colour, the shape, etc. But I ask again: how is *that* done?" (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 16)

This time, for Wittgenstein, when we are young children and we learn from our parents how to speak, we are not yet able to distinguish between acts like naming and showing. Rather, we are trying to interact with our parents and imitate their gestures and sounds until we get their agreement that what we are doing is right. The relationship between language and the world is no longer similar to the one between two mathematical sets, one with names, the other with objects, between which we have an isomorphism. Learning of words such as "electron", "number" or "unicorn" shows us that the ostensive learning might be missing out from the language study exercise. The language is rather intertwined with the practices of a human community and the meaning of a word is rather its use in one of these practices. Wittgenstein calls them *language games*. To ask, to thank, to pray, to sing a song, to play a play, to formulate a hypothesis, to tell a story are all examples of language games. They are called "games" because to the Austrian philosopher the variety of the linguistic practices resembles with that of games like chess, go, playing cards, etc. They have no essence, not even the same rules, but they are members of the same family and function according to the model of family resemblance.

This time, the language game is what makes the difference between meaningful discourse and nonsensical discourse, between sense and nonsense. Our words get enlivened and retrieve their meanings only when we integrate them into our linguistic practices through which we interact with each other and with the world. For example, a language game is what makes the difference between meaningful doubt and meaningless doubt. It is what shows us that a meaningful doubt is that doubt directed towards what we can know, the facts, while the meaningless doubt is the skeptical one, directed towards the very context in which it is formulated, towards the language game itself. Or – to bring into discussion one of the most eloquent examples offered by Wittgenstein – a language game is that communication

situation between a builder and his assistant who must build something with beams, bricks, slabs and pillars.⁴ The builder asks the assistant to give him, in turn, the building materials saying: "Beam!", "Brick!", "Pillar!" or "Slab!". If the assistant gives him the building materials in the required order, it means that both of them have understood the language game and that the communication is successful. But, if the assistant gives to the builder a brick instead of a beam when he asks "Beam!", or a pillar instead of a slab when he asks "Slab!", it means that the assistant did not follow the rules of the language game and did not understand what he was told.

Through this example we can see that, unlike the Tractarian approach, where the emphasis lies only in the relationship between the language and the world, Wittgenstein is now interested in how a human community uses language to communicate. His new approach is a pragmatic one, in which the meaning of a word is its use. The language has no longer a single function, that of representing the world, but a multitude, given by the diversity of the language games.

From the perspective of this new philosophical practice – one of the most original in the history of philosophy – Wittgenstein is now turning towards the question of philosophical problems and, implicitly, towards the question of values. His attitude towards this kind of problems remains almost the same. He still believes that the philosophical problems are an attempt to overcome the limits of language, but unlike the approach from *Tractatus*, he no longer places them beyond these limits. He is now trying to show how these problems can be dissolved. All those philosophical questions like "What is truth?", "What is knowledge?" or "What is time?" disappear when we observe how language works and the multitude of language games in which we can use them. If we take, for example, the question of time and we realize that in some contexts we can talk about it as a running water and in other contexts as a material substance, or that some human communities simply do not have the word „time“ in their vocabulary, we see that there is nothing that we could rightly call the essence of time. The

⁴ For a detailed exposure of this example, see Ludwig Wittgenstein – *Philosophical Investigations*, pp. 3; 5; 8-10.

illusion that all these particular cases have a common feature is nothing but the consequence of an improper use of language. This is similar to that of Saint Augustine when he asked himself about time and argued: "How is it possible that one should measure time? For the past can't be measured, as it is gone by; and the future can't be measured because it has not yet come. And the present can't be measured for it has no extension." (Wittgenstein, 1969, p. 26) According to Wittgenstein, once we understand the *grammar*⁵ of the word "time", the philosophical problem of it vanishes. Things are similar for any other so called philosophical problem.

In what concerns values, it has to be said that the Austrian philosopher no longer places them beyond the limits of language. Since he now believes that a language can only develop based on a *form of life* – only on the basis of the activities of a human community – Wittgenstein rejects the idea that we cannot *say* anything about what is „higher“ for us, about the existence of God, about the meaning of life or about what is a good life. For example, in this situation the religious belief is placed on the same level as the scientific knowledge. The religious believers and the scientific researchers form human communities in which they are involved in linguistic activities and practices through which they communicate to each other. But their linguistic activities and practices are fundamentally different, they have totally distinct language games. A religious community is characterized by a special use of words like "God", "to believe", "soul", "The Last Judgment", "afterlife", "resurrection" etc., words by which they try to make sense of their ephemeral existence, to express an attitude towards life, a commitment to a way of life:

"The word 'God' is amongst the earlier learnt – pictures and catechisms, etc. But not the same consequences as with pictures of aunts. I wasn't shown [that with the picture pictured]. The word is used like a word representing a person. God sees, rewards, etc.

⁵ In Wittgenstein's philosophy by *grammar* we do not understand the usual set of rules of correct syntactic and semantic usage of a language, but the set of rules which determine which linguistic practice make sense and which does not.

"Being shown all these things did you understand what this word meant?" I'd say: "Yes and no! I did learn what it didn't mean. I made myself understand. I could answer questions, understand questions when they were put in different ways – and in that sense could be said to understand." ... Also, there is this extraordinary use of the word 'believe'. One talks of believing and at the same time one doesn't use the word 'believe' as one does ordinarily. You might say (in the normal use): "You only believe, oh well..." Here it is used entirely differently; on the other hand it is not used as we generally use the word 'know'" (Wittgenstein, 1967, pp. 59-60)

Equally, a scientific community is characterized by a proper use of words such as "to know", "to be sure", "to doubt", "experience", "opinion", "truth" etc., words by which they try to understand the world in its particular aspects. Its language games presuppose the formulation of hypotheses about facts, respectively their testing and confirmation or refutation in the search for empirical evidence:

"90. 'I know' has a primitive meaning similar to and related to 'I see' ('wissen', 'videre'). And 'I knew he was in the room, but he wasn't in the room' is like 'I saw him in the room, but he wasn't there'. 'I know' is supposed to express a relation, not between me and a sense of a proposition, ('like I believe') but between me and a fact. So that the *fact* is taken into my consciousness." (Wittgenstein, 1969, pp. 92-93)

But the language games of a religious community and the language games of a scientific community do not intersect. They are concerned with fundamentally different things. The firsts are concerned with values, with what we believe in and guides us in life. The latter are concerned with facts, with what we can know about our world. None of them can say anything about the object and purpose of the other. Since the religious belief has nothing to do with facts, it cannot pretend to provide knowledge. At the same time, the scientific knowledge is about what we can experience through our senses and therefore cannot pretend to provide us with evidence for our religious

beliefs or with rules for living our lives. In Wittgenstein's terms, the experience and the truths about facts are not necessary to our belief in the existence of God or in the afterlife. His attitude in this respect is manifested in the final passages of the *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Ethics and Religious Belief*, where he tells us that our belief in the existence of God is not imposed by a certain experience of the senses or by certain visions, but by our existential experiences. We never have the sensitive experience of God, we do not perceive Him as we perceive the objects and events out of which the world is constituted. The belief that God exists is imposed rather by our weaknesses that torment us when we try to understand our evanescent existence and to give meaning to our lives. The idea that God exists can be imposed only by certain existential crises we seek to alleviate and the belief that only an Omnipotent and Benevolent Divinity can relieve our consuming sufferings. To the Austrian philosopher our religious beliefs cannot be shaken not even in situations such as those in which certain scientific discoveries would prove the immortality of the soul or in which certain archaeological discoveries would invalidate the Bible's narratives. For him, the religious belief expresses the acceptance of something as true, an adherence to a way of life and not an activity that implies the game of evidence.

Through these considerations we see that Wittgenstein's later philosophy continues to be influenced by Hume's distinction between *is* and *ought*. To Wittgenstein the realm of facts and the one of values remain fundamentally different. The facts bear the mark of contingency and they are "objects" of science. The values bear the mark of necessity and they are "objects" of aesthetics, ethics and religious belief. The latter cannot be reduced to the former, values cannot be based on facts. Science is natural. It can only tell us how the world is. Aesthetics, ethics and religious belief are supernatural. They can only guide us on how to live.

Continuity and discontinuity in Wittgenstein's conception of values

Through this comparative analysis we have seen that for Wittgenstein values occupy a special place throughout his entire philosophical work and that this is not a fortuitous aspect. Throughout his entire life,

Wittgenstein was a perfectionist both professionally and morally. His main purpose was to build an honest character to himself and to make sense of his life. In this regard, he proved to be extremely demanding with himself. In his youth, he gave up his share of wealth in favor of his brethren, considering that a good life does not necessarily mean a rich life. During the First World War he volunteered in the Austro-Hungarian Empire's army, considering it a duty to serve your homeland. At the same time, believing that one of the most important things is to come to the aid of others, he gave up engineering studies and tried, though unsuccessfully, to become a country teacher. At one point he even tried to become a monk. In short, he tried desperately to do something with his own life, each time having the feeling that he was failing.

The values are to Wittgenstein the most important and „highest“ in life. If we want to live a good life, then we have to build it on a solid value system untouched by the threatening spectrum of relativity. Taking into consideration the above reasons, science cannot tell us how to live, since it is concerned with facts that are contingent and values cannot be left to chance. Philosophy is facing similar issues, despite being an activity that involves clarifying thoughts, which could help us live better. The system of values upon which we guide our lives can only be imposed by our religious attitude, by our commitment to a certain way of living. The distinction between facts and values made by Wittgenstein and the stipulation of the irreducibility of the latter to the former – because they are more important – is a constant of his philosophy. In this regard, from what I have presented it follows that this is an element of a thematic continuity.

However, in the context of the discussion of values, Wittgenstein attaches a particular importance to the activity of clarifying thoughts, which in his philosophy acquires the dimension of a therapeutic method. All his philosophical research has been under the sign of a permanent search for a way to see the world better. As I highlighted, in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, under the influence of Frege's philosophy and of Russell's philosophy, he claimed that the only function of language is that of representation and as a consequence, he adopted a semantic approach. But when he comes to the conclusion that the human language is intertwined with the activities of a human community – and that it has a multitude of

functions –, he criticizes and rejects the representational picture of language, in favor of the one that implies the understanding of language through language games. As any honest intellectual should do, Wittgenstein continually sought the truth, beyond any particular interest and he was willing to adjust his philosophical views whenever the evidence required it. Shaping two fundamentally different philosophical practices in search of a better way to understand the human language and the world, and the total renunciation of the youth specific period is a trademark of Wittgenstein's philosophy. In this regard, from what I have presented it follows that this is an element of a methodological discontinuity.

In conclusion, with regard to the debate about the continuous or discontinuous character of Wittgenstein's philosophy, I think that the best way is to take into consideration a thematic continuity and a methodological discontinuity. The first one is obvious when it comes to the idea that facts and values are distinct and irreducible to each other. The second one is obvious when it comes to the philosophical practice that Wittgenstein adopts in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the one he adopts in post-Tractarian period.

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IN HONOREM

ON THE SUBLIME

ION IANOȘI

(Trans. by Mihaela Pop)

In his acknowledgment, the author explains why he chose the sublime as the topic of his work. "The sublime was never too sympathized by those who praised the pure and the purist ideas and they were right as it proved the interference between the aesthetic and other values as well as the interference between art and products of other creative domains. This is indeed the most important problem of the sublime: its fundamental ambiguity between *outside* and *inside*. The sublime always suggested the aesthetic tendency towards something different, the art capacity to be more than simply art. It urges us to take distance from the center of artistic work (its beauty) but also it brings us back to it. It is wittier than the beauty in which we can be confident (aesthetically and artistically). The sublime generates a stimulative lack of trust in what you have already reached. It is by all means problematic." (...)

"The sublime appeared to us as the best particular realm of finding examples (proofs) for the general idea about the interference between what belongs and what does not belong to art or seems not belonging or belonging to it." (...)

Speaking about the work, the author mentions that "in order to get a complete demonstration, it should contain two parts: The Sublime in aesthetics and the sublime in art." (...) "The second part is dedicated to practical examples of sublime as they were produced in the proper art and also in the *art* of religion, philosophy and science. In the beginning, we start the first part, dedicated to the realm of ideas. Later on, we shall

reach the proper sublime feeling but we shall pretend also certain receptivity (openness) for ideas as without ideas even the reason could not be accepted as a reason."

Chapter I – From rhetoric to poetics. (The Greek-Roman Antiquity)

"At the beginning there was the Word..." That moment for the sublime belonged to ancient Greece. In its later ancient period, the Greek mind found a linguistic solution in order to express a certain way of being impressive, magnificent, especially for a rhetoric style using the adjective *megaloprepes* or its substantivization – *megaloprepeia*. Another word that was to reach a more famous cultural carrier was, however, *hypsos*, which was included in the title of the well known anonymous work *Peri hypsous* (about the sublime). The substantive *hypsos* signified in a stressed manner the distance or the height and through an extension of meaning it suggested an elevated spiritual way of living, either of the world and of man in the world or of the human capacity to appropriate the universe, to transform it through reason and language in an inner property as the most precious one." (...) "Any dictionary of Latin language explains the group of related terms *sublimis*, *sublimitas*, *sublime*, *sublimo*, *sublimes*, etc. using examples from ancient Roman authors. We can also add an adverbial form that many academics considered to be older than the others and situated at their origin. It is the word *sublimen*, which suggests in a better way how the word was composed of *sub* and *limen*, the last one meaning threshold or even the upper threshold of a door (gate). The result is as paradoxical as possible as this meaning combines something situated below (under something) with something else situated above (over something) in a contradictorily co-existence but full of meaning even a decisive one in symbolic meaning.

Sublimen indicates an effort made up to the upper limit of a door and finally of any given situation. *Sublimen rapere (arripere)* is a formula used in Latin comedy and it indicates the ascendance of a man towards the sky and his loss of mind in this condition. Coming back to *sublimis*, a fundamental term for us, we maintain its basic ambiguity of which only this meaning of ascendant movement was going to be kept alive.

Sublimis meant, therefore, a proper ascendance from bellow to above, from earth to air, towards skies. It was not an absolute transcendence, only an imagined one within the limits of immanent movement. This idea was to be supported by the particle *sub-* which suggested that the limit was the upper threshold. To reach the sub superior limit meant to preserve the real expansion before the non-reality of imagination; at the same time, it meant to put a limit to the non-limitation to imagine the infinity by means of a terrestrial measure (limitation). We have to point out also against any confusion between *sublime* and *sacredness* which speaks about a transcendent movement.

Sublimis, equivalent for a (measured) physical ascendance, developed its meaning to all that was elevated, high, large, powerful, famous, distinguished, noble, glorious, well known, magnificent, sumptuous, vigorous, grandiose, and perfect. The soul keeps its corporality but it also emancipates itself in a freer one, more volatile, more playful. The initial suggestion of limits included also a tendency towards un-limitation, or infinity at least as potentiality, but able to be explored linguistically, aesthetically or philosophically. It did not mean an absolute transcendence only an imagined one – by the Latin practical and applied way of thinking – within the limits of reality itself. This should have been kept alive by the particle “sub-” which suggested an elevation but only bellow the upper threshold of the door. To reach the superior limit but not exceed it, this meant to maintain the expansion within the real world, *before* the unreal or ideal world. It meant to establish limits to the unlimited itself, to imagine the immeasurable according to an earthly measure.

The etymology can help us to avoid the excesses of metaphysics. A safe feeling of delimitation warns us from the beginning about dangerous confusions between *sublime* and *sacred* or any transcendent absolutism.

Sublimis is the equivalent for a well-measured physical ascendance, extended to various mediate meanings which would contain almost all that is elevated, high, big, strong, illustrious, distinguished, noble, glorious, famous, superb, magnificent, sumptuous, vigorous, grandiose, perfect – and we could go on listing other synonyms. An ascendance is convertible in something else, an elevation generated another one, visible, ascendant tendencies generate less powerful hypostases but more important. The

soul belongs to a personal body but however, it emancipates in a more playful volatile and free spirit. It then contemplates the various forms of materiality, embracing them in its proper tonality. This word and its family members suggest not only a limitation, but also an unlimited tendency present as potentiality, at least, and which can be explored linguistically, aesthetically and philosophically.

This double meaning with its transfer from the immediate level to the mediated one was inherited by the Latin languages. During the Middle Ages, the term was used also in collateral domains, for instance in alchemy for an increasing heat capable to favour the separation of volatile parts of matter. Later on, the sublime passed from alchemy to chemistry. According to some interpretations, the meaning used by aesthetics was facilitated by this chemical term “sublimate”, since the 15th century. The word “sublimation” got a distinct use in psychoanalysis, later on. If in chemistry this word means a transformation from a solid condition to a gaseous one, it supposes an expansion through a process of volatilization. The sublimation of a passion means in psychoanalysis, a specific mechanism of the Ego in its self-protection. By means of this mechanism, certain instinctive pulsations are detached from their initial object and integrated in different ways under the super-Ego control. This transfer proves to be a purifying one and also effectively a spiritual elevation.

In medicine, the term indicated either a superior muscle or an ampler respiration process.

The Sublime Gate meant precisely the monumental Gate of the old Sultan's palace in Constantinople and symbolized, in general, the ruling of Ottoman Sultans in their empire. The *sublime* and *sublimity* in Romanian have their equivalents in the neo-Latin languages: *sublime*, *sublimité* in French, *sublime*, *sublimidad* in Spanish, *sublime*, *sublimita* in Italian, *sublime*, *sublimidade* in Portuguese. All these languages valorized the figurative sense of the Latin source.

While pronouncing this word, almost nobody still thinks today to the physical state of raising or suspending in the air, almost everybody recognizes the spiritual state equivalent to the physical one and which could get a long series of synonyms – from *big*, *great*, *grandiose*, *monumental*, through *high*, *superior*, *elevated*, *ethereal*, *pure*, *noble*, *prodigious*, *admirable*, *fascinating*, *heroic*, to *extraordinary*, *miraculous*, *celestial*, *divine*. The address

of these approximations is clear. It refers to somebody or something of maximum value, a person, an impulse, an action, a deed as elevated as possible at the spiritual intellectual, moral or aesthetic level. These facts, feelings, acts generate through their value meaning a great admiration a validation of an already known nobility.

The level of exception reached by these facts exceeds by far what is usually known. This is proved in a paradoxical way by an ironic or even depreciating meaning in order to suggest for instance the enormity of stupidity or an absurdity or even it is used in order to unveil that single step which separates the sublime from the ridiculous. In this sense, the sublime tends to destroy the appearance without content, the enormous which became enormity. Thus, the second word has two opposed meanings sliding gradually from what is serious towards what is ridiculous. With or without motivation, the claim to grandeur is kept anyway.

In a supposed hierarchy the sublime refers thus to a high place or a superior rank. It can belong to real persons, within a distinct social order where the noble character is validated by a noble pedigree. It can, however, be extended in a democratic manner to the spirit and soul nobility or that of thought and deed. (...) Among all these domains art will be any time a constant space of expression. From the proper height to the figurative "elevated", the pathway was covered by all the languages of Latin origin. We could also add English words. English etymological dictionaries discover the same path from *sub+limus* and *sublimis* to *sublime*, *sublimate*, *sublimation* etc. Their meanings are the same: to reach a higher level, physically or spiritually; a great height for a visible aspect of things and also an ideal height proper to certain thoughts, ideas, truths, or to certain individuals situated at a higher level due to their noble character and grandeur; to reach a high intellectual, moral, spiritual level approximating perfection or to reach an adequate manner of expression where high thoughts require elevated stylistic ways of expression. All these meanings indicate exceptional facts of nature, of human activities and arts inspiring together through their grandeur a strong emotion and a deep respect.

This transfer from a fundamental sense to a figurative one can be proved also for other European languages. We shall choose three groups of examples.

In German, during the 17th century, the verb *erhaben* emancipated from *erheben* (to raise, to lift). The adjective *erhaben* became the equivalent of *altus, celsus, excelsus, sublimis*, namely for *hoch* (high) in a more decisive meaning. As a consequence, *Erhabenheit* (as a noun variation) became the equivalent for *excelsitas, sublimitas* used to express the excellence of certain images and expressions, the grandeur in nature or art and to which more profound feelings belong. Some other related languages indicate the same double origin. They can use and multiply the sublime (*sublimeren, sublimere, sublime, sublimitait*, etc.) or can follow its concrete proper meaning. In Swedish, *adel* (noble), *hog* (high), *uphold* (elevated, risen, enthusiastic as exalted). In Norwegian: *opphoyd, begeistred* (enthusiastic), *stolt, foredle*. In Dutch: *verheven, hoog, goddelijk* etc.

In Slavic languages the etymological proc is similar. In Russian: from *vîsoko* (high) to the act of lifting (*vozvîsat, vozvîsit, vozvîşenie*). This last word means both action and a high position; the quality of being high (*vozvîşennost*). Then, *vozvîşennoe* is the equivalent of the sublime as an abstract concept. In almost similar ways one can obtain the equivalent terms in Ukraineian (*pidniati, pidneseni, pidnesennist, visoki, velicini, visokit, velicunist*), in Bulgarian (*vzvişen*), in Tcheque language (*vznesensenny, vznesenost, vysoki, uslechtily, uslechtlost*) and in Polish language (*wysoki, wzniosly, wznioslosc, wynioslosc, podniosly, podnioslosc, wywyziszony*). The derivation from a high level is present also in Hungarian language where the equivalent for sublime and sublimity (*fenseg, fenseges*) contains the word “fenn” (up). The word means the fact-of-being-high.

Preliminaries

When referring to Platon, we are interested in how the ancient Greeks arrived at the sublime awareness and to a concentration of meanings in a linguistic sign with functional value. The *Lysis* tries to approximate the beauty as “slippery” (vague), something that escapes from us but which is equivalent to the “good thing”. The *Symposium* talks about the steps of initiation: physical beauty, moral beauty than the beauty of knowledge and the absolute one.

Menon describes the immortal soul of Pindar and other poets inspired by gods and Socrates talks about magicians, poets and politicians inspired and governed by gods" (99d).

Phaidon mentions Socrates who, a short time before his death stirs the souls of his audience generating "an unusual mixture of pleasure and pain" (59a) and who opposes the body, the unseen, immortal and wise soul.

Phaidros speaks about the "madness of Muses" which is superior to human wisdom and about the soul which elevated the human being (22a) towards the divine world an universe of essence without colors form and untouchable which can be contemplated only through mind (27 d).

The *Laws* make a distinction between a gracious beauty, a moderated and feminine art, and an earnest beauty, a great art that belongs through its grandeur and majesty (*megaloprepes*) to the manhood. (802d).

One can remark this overcoming of the limits of beauty or this beauty always oriented towards wisdom, greatness and eternity (which moves from the aesthetic realm towards ethics and metaphysics). We can extract an implicit tendency towards the sublime or a superior beauty coinciding with the sublime level. The distinction between a masculine beauty and a feminine one can be considered as a suggestion for the 18th century's distinction between sublime and beauty."¹ (...)

"Later on, Aristotle inherited from Platon the moral and metaphysical extensions of beauty. Aristotle rehabilitated art by analyzing it with the instruments of moral virtues. We refer especially to the theory of "passion-purification" exposed in his *Poetics* and *Politics* where he analyzed tragedy as causing fear and compassion in order to generate that purification process of passions (1449b); or his analysis on music which can modify our feelings, can stimulate the enthusiasm of our souls through a completely moral emotion (V.5, 4-5). It can also shape the mind and purify the soul by compassion, fear, horror or enthusiasm, a moral cure, a woundless joy equivalent to superior soul purification (V, 7, 4-7). Through his *catharsis* theory, Aristotle rehabilitated the aesthetic feeling and artistic works after their strong Platonic accusation."²

¹ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

² Ibid., pp. 22-23.

German philosophy – 17th – 18th centuries

Writing about the *Analytics of the Sublime*, Ion Ianoși remarks the fact that Kant “appreciated E. Burke’s psychological observations which offered a reach source for Kant’s researches on empirical anthropology. Burke’s *inquiry...* was written in 1757 and Kant’s *Remarks o the feeling of beauty and sublime* was published in 1764. Kant makes rigorous distinctions between the two feelings and establishes connections to objects, human beings, gender distinctions and national characteristics. One can draw two columns of characteristics and consequences of the sublime and beauty: the sublime is impressive and scares, the beauty charms; large – small; simple – adorned; mindfulness – cleverness; esteem – love; tragedy – comedy; melancholic – sanguineous; the strong – the fair sex; esteemed – loved.

A synchronic abbreviated and condensed typology emerges which would attract in the future many philosophers belonging either to the well rationalized spirits or to the more playful ones.

If the dichotomy sublime – beauty is going to decline in England during the following decades, in Germany however it will shape many other variations as classicism – romanticism, naive – sentimental, Apollonian-Dionysan, Apollonian-Faustic pairs analyzed by Tudor Vianu in his first study *Art Dualism* (1925) taking into account his opinion: “The art dualism is a German problem”.³ (...)

The great philosophical achievement in the way Kant thought the sublime was the significant opening it favors within the aesthetic realm towards a possible and necessary connection with morality and reason. Imm. Kant considered the three *Critics* (1781, 1788, 1790) as a philosophical introduction to the system as a doctrine. A critique prepares the doctrine as it clarifies the sources and limits of reason.

The Critique of pure reason draws the necessary design for the transcendental philosophy, the entire architectonic plan is extracted from principles. Thus, it gets a proper systematic character. Due to systemic needs, Kant added to *The Critiqe of Pure Reason* and to *The Critique of Practical Reason* which were the fundaments for construction

³ Ibid., pp. 106-107.

of the knowledge of nature and freedom, *The Critique of Judgment* in order to analyze aesthetics and teleology. The judgment is a medium term that mediates between understanding and reason."⁴(...)

"The first part of *The Critique of Judgment* is *The Critique of the Aesthetic Judgement*. It contains two unequal sections, the Analytics and the Dialectic. The Analytics is also splitted in two unequal parts: the Analytic of Beauty and the Analytic of the Sublime. The fundamental tool of aesthetic judgment is the judgment of taste. The beauty is analyzed through its four moments: quality, quantity, relationship of purposes and the aesthetic satisfaction modality. This is the equivalent of a definition of the principles of Kant's aesthetics.

The position of the sublime remains however ambiguous being at the same time internal and also relatively external to the aesthetic realm. This ambiguity has become later on the core of dispute among many illustrious philosophers. Some of them kept under attention especially the connection sublime – beauty having equal rights on the destiny of "beauty changes" or "aesthetic categories". Others contested this relationship claiming that the analytics of the sublime is only a consequence of the analytics of the beauty or of *The Critique of Practical Reason*.

The inciting difficulty is caused exactly by a proliferation of arguments about the autonomy or heteronomy of the sublime in opposition to the univocal autonomy of the beauty which was going to contribute to the theory of aesthetic autonomy". (...)

"The marginalization of the sublime is comparable to the condition of a border county which opposes to other territories, more centrally situated. This is also the reason the sublime can play an intermediary role. The analytics of the sublime helped Kant's aesthetic to assure that connection between theoretical philosophy and moral philosophy."⁵

"Kant maintains and develops the opposition between beauty and sublime which was so much a characteristic for the 18th century. Beauty is qualitative, limited, formed; the sublime is quantitative, unlimited, and lacks form. Beauty is based on the object, the sublime is strictly subjective; beauty is connected to the sensitive, the sublime supposes the

⁴ Ibid., p. 108.

⁵ Ibid., p. 109.

supersensitive. Beauty supposes a way of feeling, the sublime – a way of thinking. The former is connected to nature, the latter, to culture. Beauty should be contemplated, the sublime moves us emotionally. One inspires love, the other – respect. One acts directly, the other –mediated. Beauty pleases directly (immediately), the Sublime is mediated. Beauty is confident to itself; the Sublime builds fidelity on infidelity. The former is pure pleasure; the latter supposes a pleasure obtained through pain. Beauty is harmony, the Sublime is contradictory. Beauty means accord, the Sublime means conflict. (...)

The combination Kant achieves between a certain recent English tradition and his personal perspectives is relevant and instructive. One could say: from the letter of continuity emerges the spirit of a challenge that had been unimagined before. There is one of these metamorphoses: Kant considers the sublime “a negative pleasure” in opposition to the “positive pleasure” generated by beauty. Kant’s beauty is the result of the collaboration between imagination and understanding while the sublime makes evident the conflict between imagination and reason. There is a disaccord between imagination as the power of representation and the superior level of judgment on principles that help the human being to participate to the intelligible world. The feeling of dislike results from this disagreement between imagination and reason. The pleasure follows this conflict. This change from dislike to satisfaction is due to the incapacity of sensitive powers that stimulate the awareness of superior reason powers which are not limited by the sensitive ones. The representation of nature is that pretext that awakens in a conflicting and painful way the use of our intellectual powers. This inadequacy persists as nature cannot become the image of our ideas and the fact of becoming aware of this incapacity generates pleasure as it implies respect towards us as rational beings. Simply said, the obstacles of sensitivity work in order to overpass towards reason and morality. Kant makes a distinction between a *mathematical* sublime, of measure and a *dynamic* one, of force. The former, results from extensions up to the absolute, the latter, from intensities, up to the ideal.

The measure and the force, however, do not belong to the object itself. They are only attributed to it by a subject whose soul and spiritual powers are their mobile. That is why when discussing the mathematic

sublime, the qualification “big” should be correlated from the beginning with “in an absolute manner” in order to block any physical measurement of the object supposed to be sublime; the extension up to the absolute is assured by the “imagination in itself”.

The respect is generated in connection with our proper unlimited capacity of extension or intensification which we transfer in an imaginative way to a bigger and stronger object. The sublime keeps us in the captivity of sensitive nature but it can also detach from it due to its freedom which assures its own rules. The four possibilities of considering an object in connection to the feeling of pleasure – agreeable, beautiful, sublime and good – are thought as steps of humanization where the object diminishes in its importance while the idea of our humanity goes increasing. The beauty indicates the adequate site of the aesthetic valorization; what pleases in its simple appreciation, without any purpose. The sublime is situated in an eccentric zone, at the very end of the aesthetic realm and in the proximity of the ethic one. Each realm considered for itself, it results that the sublime is not anymore completely adequate to the aesthetic judgment. The sublime assures the connection with the “pure” morality considered as a human accomplishment and its values based on freedom. There is a quite static vision where beauty and sublime are coordinates of the same realm, as sides of the same aesthetic space. In another vision, a relatively “moved” one, the sublime comes to be something else than only aesthetic aspect, it takes us out from the *pure domain of aesthetics*. The possibility of a dual vision to the relationship beauty – sublime is legitimated by each one’s nature. Beauty communicates rather with the object of the sensitive intuition and with its artistic metamorphosis achieved by the understanding. The sublime, instead, facilitates a certain contact with the reason as mind power that operates with Ideas in order to speak about the intelligible, essential, noumenal world. The sublime is, for Kant, like a signal introducing morality. It is still aesthetic but also already ethic; it moves and moves us from one realm to the other. Or, it becomes an approximation of the ethic inside the aesthetic and with the proper aesthetic procedures, it is not completely adequate either to the prior aesthetics or to the following ethic.

An aesthetic value more than only aesthetic but less than “purely moral, dashing towards morality, but still maintained within the sensitive limits as otherwise it could not be any more aesthetic. This is the astute duality that patronizes the Analytic of the Sublime and which we could also call *dialectic* if we would not risk confusion with the disparaging Kantian meaning as in the conceptual pair *analytic – dialectic*. The network of contradictory terms within a spatial structure (which we considered as static) and a temporal one is indeed remarkable and extremely inciting.” (...) ⁶

“Kant succeeded mainly to demonstrate theoretically this intermediary condition which is essential (neither – nor, either – or, and – and). He taught us the paradoxical belonging of the sublime to the aesthetic values and also to other many values. He especially stimulated us to understand the sublime as correlated to various spiritual tendencies governed by freedom.” (...) “The limitation of the sensitive explains Kant’s suspicion for art. This means that for the sublime, the optimum realm cannot be art but only nature, especially that one which is unlimited and uncontrolled. Only such a kind of nature can support our maximalist efforts towards the infinite, the absolute.” (...) ⁷

“The connection between the third *Critique* with the first one and especially, through the sublime, with the second, is evident. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, he reaches the problem of the sovereign good as the principle that determines the final purpose of the pure reason. He mentions the *sublime ideas of morality*. It is no doubt the two fundamental reasons contribute to the achievement of the two forms of sublimity. The sublime is thus opened towards the fulfillment of Kant’s contradiction and it is after all, the school of human dignity.” (...) ⁷

The object of aesthetics is, for Hegel, the kingdom of the beauty, more precisely, of fine arts. He does not place anything else near the idea of artistic beauty, though extensively as “the ideal”. After a general definition of beauty, Hegel develops the becoming of the ideal in particular forms of artistic beauty and hence he proposes the three successive forms of arts: symbolic, classical and romantic. His development has an

⁶ Ibid., pp. 110-114.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 115-118.

historic and logic character. The symbolic form evolves at its turn in three phases: the unconscious symbolic, the sublime one and the symbolic aware of its form. The symbolic sublime debates partially critically and partially favorably, Kant's opinions on the sublime, especially its subjective dimension. Hegel agrees on Kant's need to consider the sublime as an overpass of nature by the human mind but he criticizes Kant's theory as being too subjective and rational. He proposes a sublime included in the substantial content which is represented in art. The symbolic sublime is thought of as the first step necessary to purify the work of art from empiric sensitivity. More precisely, the objects used are not enough adequate to express the searched infinite; the object is the expression of an inadequacy, a lack of harmony between form and its meaning."⁸

"The logic of the Hegelian dialectics makes suitable the symbolic unsuitable situations. He finds the proof in a common period of both the history of religion and art. The content is raised above the particular phenomenon in which it is represented through a form without form and an intuition inaccessible to any intuition. This content is expressed on one side affirmatively and negatively on the other side in the *art of the sublime* as well as in the religion of sublimity prior to the religion of beauty.

Hegel places the sublime phase of art and religion in ancient Judaic culture. In fact, there are not two distinct manifestations but only one, and a substantial one. The problem is the symbolic relation between God and the human being, between finite and infinite, lack of power and almightiness, a cunning relationship where the human being has to humble himself in order to be able of ascension, has to assume his unworthiness as the price of dignity."⁹

"Hegel situated the sublime manifestation *before* the classic period. The Jewish sublime is then replaced by the highest phase of aesthetic manifestation, the Greek beauty which is once again religious and artistic at the same time. In Greek culture, the beautiful individuality, the beautiful measure, the harmony between the abstract generality and the interested singularity celebrates its victory. If, in the historical intuitions of the majority of philosophical constructions prior to Hegel's

⁸ Ibid., p. 119.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 144-145.

one, the sublime was correlated especially with a romantic overpassing of the classic characteristics, in the Hegelian vision, the sublime is situated temporally before it. We could propose an interpretation referring to the Hegelian symbolic, classical and romantic periods, which could attribute to each of them equal potentialities of sublimity. This interpretation would not betray the spirit of the self-developed Hegelian spirit.”¹⁰

“Nicolai Hartmann’s aesthetics has its origins in ontology as he distinguishes between the first plan and the second (back) plan of the work of art as a product of objectivation. His research develops a structure of the back-plan containing many sub-layers which assure the *process of apparition* and the “*shaping*” and “*stratification*” of this back-plan.

The beauty, which was considered for centuries as singular, is now seen in plural manifestations due to the “multiplication of aesthetic values”. Among these values, Hartmann analyzes the sublime and the gracious. He is interested to establish the special position of the sublime taking into account Kant’s considerations. Its specific higher relevance is due to its homogeneity which opposes clearly to the heterogeneity of numerous subspecies of beauty. This fundamental “alterity” of the sublime (differentiating it from the beauty) determines implicitly its proper characteristics.” (...) The sublime is unitary in its massiveness no matter if it appears in nature or in humans’ life as moral, philosophical, religious sublime or as aesthetic sublime as well. This unitary and unifying structure of the sublime is present whenever it manifests, even in non-aesthetic realm but always aesthetically convertible due to its simple and calm contemplation, distant from any purpose. Except for the ornamental art, the sublime can be found in all the arts. Its presence is relatively reduced in painting but it increases in sculptural painting or in sculpture and also in poetry. It reaches the highest intensity and purity in architecture and music, that is to say, in those arts which do not represent reality.”¹¹

(...) “Hartmann defines his position in connection with Kant’s theory of the sublime. He has two objections to Kant’s theory hoping that in this way he would temper any excess. Being interested in the ontology of the work of art, he criticizes the fixation in subjectivity, in

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 146-147.

¹¹ Ibid., pp.160-161.

the exclusive debate about the impact on the human soul. As a *realist*, Hartmann wants to eliminate the play game with the infinite so characteristic for the first Romanticism. He admits up to a certain point the emotional conflict of resistance and adhesion but he insists to identify the objectual foundation of measure and of what overpasses us and generates the moral grandeur of the sublime.

From almost negative determinations he looks towards one as positive as possible. He operates hence successive detachments, firstly from the transcendent, absolute, metaphysical and divine realm; then, from the quantitative, from what is oppressing, and from what is based on non-value. He supports instead the essence of the sublime as immanent, qualitative, spiritually elevating, and affirmative. His demonstration has an anti-romantic profile and it is programmatically "realistic" in his way of providing as many species of the sublime as possible, all objectively sizable as normal presences of things and of our contact with them. The big and the grandiose, the serious and the solemn, what overpasses, what is very deep in meaning, the well defined, the well articulated, the perfect, the silent and unmoved, the overwhelming, what is humanly grandiose and generous, the huge, the enormous, frightening, monumental, the concise, colossal, what is thrilling and terrible, the tragic. The sublime is that beauty, says Hartmann, which assures the need for grandeur, for something "that exceeds" and which vanquishes without much effort the obstacles raised by human fear and pettiness."¹²

Through these approximations, Hartmann's ontological attitude becomes clear telling us about levels, artistic shaping and coming out to the first layer of the work of art. To the transcendent metaphysics, Hartmann opposes an immanent explanation and a realistic one concerning the impact between sensitive and super sensitive, about the overpassing of the sensible and the ascension to the intelligible and moral levels within the work of art. The use of various profound sublevels of the work of art explains also, through its partial apparition at the exterior levels, the degree of non-determination, of hiding, obscurity, abyss and mystery. This last one is explained in a non-

¹² Ibid., pp. 162-163.

mysterious way. Hartmann clarifies the presence of the sublime especially in arts expressing inner life: in a Greek sculpture, suggesting great ideals and universal ideas; in an architecture with monumental tendencies and especially in music, opened to the total freedom of play with forms and to the miraculous adequacy of expression (specific to the exterior levels) with the hidden depths of the work (the final deepest interior levels).

Hartmann maintains the philosophical frame and its systemic edification but with an evident diminution of the metaphysical side. This ontological accent revives in a certain measure the Hegelian purposes even if he has suspicions on the Hegelian dialectics of certain metaphysical transcendence. Hartmann missed something from the dialectics between subject and object but he gained for his work a plus of clarity in the categorical plan and in a more careful positioning of arts. Hartmann succeeded in maintaining the philosophical aesthetics in an unfavorable moment for it, in a period dedicated especially to what is called a positivistic attitude, not very interested in the study of the categorial beauty and its artistic “changes”.¹³

¹³ Ibid., pp. 164-165.

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