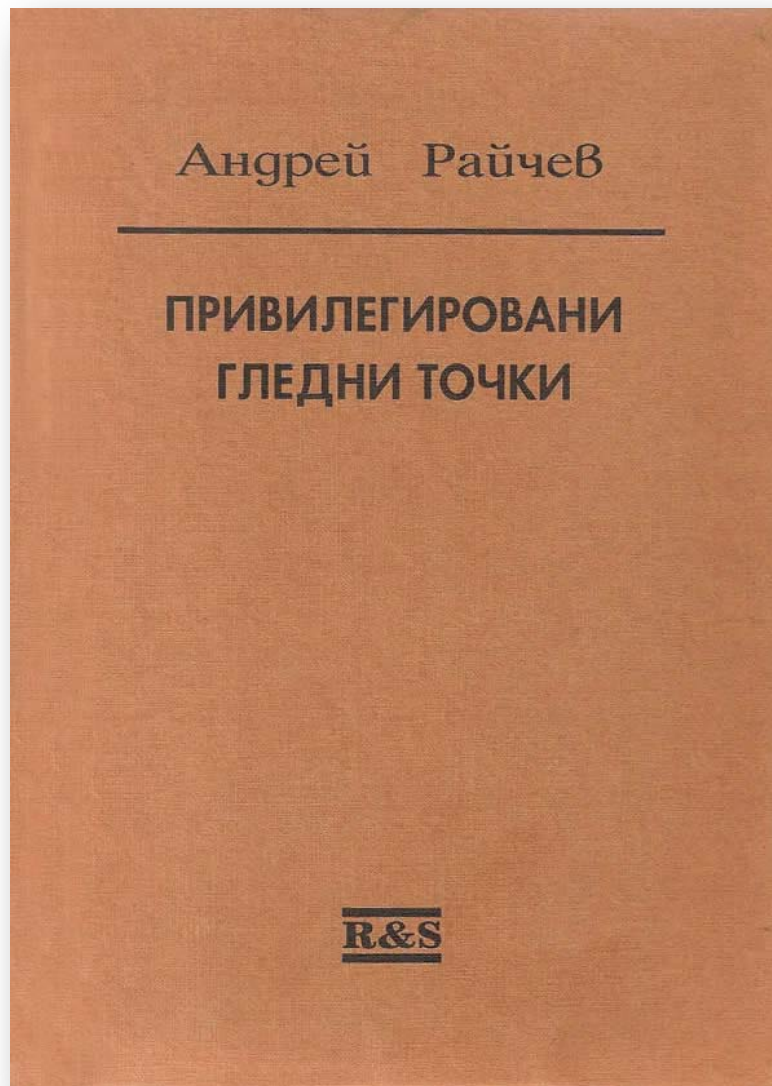


Andrey Raichev

Privileged Perspectives

A book I almost called "Sociology of Lifeless Man"



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Foreword

"All work is directed only to the aim or end, and when it is attained, people are surprised to find nothing else but just the very thing which they had wished for."

Georg Wilhelm Hegel

The division of labour did not bring me anything and I withdrew in 1991. There is no moral in this except that I now lead a better and more meaningful life.

Hence I no longer feel I have any scientific duties: the division of labour in science hardly inspires me in any way. Still, Deyan Deyanov insisted that I continue lecturing at Plovdiv University on a biweekly basis. I agreed in order to keep alive the spirit of the Marx Seminar - an association of young scholars from Sofia which evolved around Deyanov in the mid-70s. Deyanov, incidentally, is also the reason why I ventured to publish this book at all - but only on condition that he himself contributed some sort of afterword. This book incorporates some of my lectures as transcribed by Mila Nikolova, with minor revisions made with the help of Liliana Deyanova and Nina Nikolova. I have edited out tedious digressions (part of which are included as endnotes), added footnotes and, in some places, inserted arbitrary subtitles. I have also included one of my papers written at the time when I was still involved in the division of scientific labour.

5 August 2000 **Andrey Raichev**

Lecture I

On Modernity and Its Disintegration

The subject I will be discussing today is Modernity and its disintegration, its nascent disintegration. Modernity, or the Modern Age, is something that emerged around Florence four or five centuries ago. There's this church there, the Santa Croce, which I happened to stroll into one day and found memorials to Dante Alighieri and Leonardo da Vinci. I was intrigued, and it turned out that Michelangelo Buonarroti was buried in the same church, with Galileo Galilei to the left, and then, Niccolo Machiavelli. As well as Leonardo Bruni, etc. A mind-boggling number of geniuses of whom two were supposed to have been schoolmates. This quaint little town - because Florence is a tiny, very beautiful but otherwise quite forgettable quaint little town - was the cradle of what we now call science and what we now call painting, which were born virtually at the same time; it was the cradle of the paradigm of sculpture and of politics. That is an appropriate symbol of the explosive birth of Modernity. Modernity was actually an offshoot of bourgeois relations, of the emergence of this type of relations among people. Modernity transformed humanity in a matter of centuries. It is a process of "demagification" of social life, to quote Max Weber, of the influx of bourgeois relations in all spheres of human life. Several hundred years on you have a humanity that is changed beyond recognition. A humanity that is not made up of clans but of individuals - of atomized individuals; a humanity that has roads from anywhere to everywhere (this is one of the main distinctive features of Modernity - to build roads and blaze trails, to connect increasingly, to homogenize); a humanity that has developed standard commodity-money relations and is constantly intensifying them everywhere; a humanity that ultimately proves to be global. Modernity has yet to run its triumphant course. There is still a vast periphery that has not been "devoured" by Modernity; a periphery that has not been modernized or, more precisely, has not been pre-modernized. But the main, the most important part of the Modern project is over, and Modernity has arguably not just triumphed, but is the only reality. Everything else is temporary, transient, inconsequential and increasingly imperceptible.

1. [The Commensurability and Main Prejudice of Modern Social Theory]

The main category in terms of which Modernity may be described is "**commensurability**". Everything is commensurable and co-measured. This is the main, fundamental feature of Modernity¹, whereas the different types of order of things, i.e. scheme of things, are presented as "aspects" of a single "common" order¹.

1 *The leading sociologists who have studied this process - such as Marx, Max Weber, Simmel and Sombart - stress in different terms that "the spirit of capitalism" is pure quantity, profitability, rentability, "formal rationality" (see the respective analysis in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*); "the reified relation". Because money, abstract exchange value, becomes an archetype of social relations (see the notes to *Das Kapital*, etc. in Marx, Engels, Subrani suchineniya [Collected Works], vol. 46, p. 91, etc.). By this, of course, I*

*do not mean that there are no differences between the various theories on the origin of capitalism, or that their consequences are not all too often contradictory. I think, however, that it is admissible to ignore certain differences - to avoid discussing here, say, the dispute between Weber and Sombart on whether Judaism or Protestantism was the actual cause for capitalism and what "cause" means precisely in this context. There are lots of books on those questions, part of which have already been included in your eight reading lists - as, for instance, the chapter on Weber in Kolyo Koev's *Metamorfozite na chouzhdnenetsa* [The Metamorphoses of the Stranger]. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism itself, parts of Simmel's *The Philosophy of Money*, the chapter on the society of "discipline" in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, Norbert Elias's *The Civilizing Process*, Habermas's *The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*, Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*. Certain distinctions should probably be made - which I cannot make here - between Modernity, modernization, Modernity and the Enlightenment, Modernity and the obverse of the Enlightenment Reason seen from the perspective of "Auschwitz" (needless to say, "Auschwitz" is a metaphor here); what different authors mean by "critique of Modernity" and which are the normative arguments of this critique, what "Modernity- an incomplete project" means (to quote the title of Habermas's famous acceptance speech upon receiving the Adorno Award); what are the implications of the debate on whether the West is unique or universal and of the recently popular theses of Samuel Huntington; what do communicative rationality and communicative reason mean; what does "we have never been modern" mean in Bruno Latour's concept. I will stop here because it is indeed impossible to "exhaust the inexhaustible". I hope that the main idea of my generalizations, hyperbolizations, etc., will be understood correctly... and their logic followed [p.7].*

To those of us who live in this modernity that seems natural. Yet there is no such effect - namely, presenting all types of order as one - in any pre-modern society. On the contrary - during the Trojan War a soldier who took refuge in the temple, i.e. crossed from one order into another in purely physical terms, could not be killed. The world in general was full of things regulated by different laws, by different logoi: **by things that were neither co-measured nor commensurable**. And the thought that he or she might be living in some sort of single order never crossed the mind of the pre-modern person².

2 *This is more complicated too, and should be considered in context. Since, from some perspective, traditional man has a "God", God is not "dead", there is a total meaningful regulator of his life, his life is totally guaranteed. Whereas in modern society - which is demagified, to quote Weber - there is not one "God" but many gods, polytheism of values (i.e. the values of politics are distinct from the values of religion, of morality, etc.). The value orders are autonomous but share a common spirit - that of formal rationality. And in this sense Modernity homogenizes or makes the world one... [p.7].*

On the contrary, he/she lived in an urban order or in a rural order; there was a particular order in - let's say - the forest, and there was an order in the Christian world and a different type of order in the non-Christian world, etc. The Modern did away with that once and for all. Modernity built roads and information channels, it introduced names, the single currency, single power and, ultimately, a single language; it turned the whole world into a single, global

order.

This commensurability of anything with everything is, I repeat, the main distinctive feature of Modernity. It is also its main problem. Universal commensurability is what has been ailing and will eventually kill Modernity. I think that this age is drawing to an end - the main cracks are already obvious. Respectively, the human sciences which it has inspired are also drawing to an end. This is the subject I will be dealing with today: how our science, i.e. the science of man, depends on Modernity, and how Modernity imbues it with hidden contents which we perceive as natural, whilst they only appear to be such but have actually been transposed - in a way that is invisible to us - from the world we live in; how we sociologists mistake those contents for the truth and thus become something like puppets of Modernity - puppets which, on the one hand, are poisoned by and, on the other, reproduce Modernity; and how all this should come to an end. I wouldn't want to discuss Modernity further. I would rather concentrate on its crisis. Modernity abounds in spasms and cataclysms³.

3 *At the same time, Modernity is freedom, freedom of choice. Modernity individualizes (if we recall Foucault - the analysis of the so-called "descending individualization", cf. Nadzor i nakazanie, p. 201 and passim, in Foucault, Michel. 1998. Nadzor i nakazanie. Razhdaneto na zatvora [Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison]. Sofia: Sveti Kliment Ohridski University Press), Modernity is indeed a "drama of freedom", as Merab Mamardashvili repeatedly notes [p.8].*

The story of the Modern Age is a story of dreadful disasters: of appalling wars and conflicts which humanity had never seen or heard of before; of rare and exotic ideologies which flooded and transformed the world. Those are its internal misfortunes and they invariably have a common cause: nightmarish disbalances that stem from growth as an end in itself. Another key feature of Modernity is that it is growth as an end in itself. Since capital has this property of self-growth by definition, it is self-growing money. And it grows in an absurd way - **the only point is to make more and more of it**. Capital grafts this "spirit" of self-growth onto all other types of order. Science, for example, proves to be growing knowledge as an end in itself, and health care actually proves to be growing health as an end in itself. (In parenthesis, let me illustrate my point: Modernity is the first age that sets out to cure not the person but his or her separate parts. They treat your foot, heart or whatever, instead of treating you yourself. And in this sense the person proves to be the object of a self-triumphant medical order rather than a real participant in it.) Or the rationale of education, say, is to enlarge it, i.e. to have its "light" shine on more and more people who can read or know a certain number of tables, terms, formulas, etc. All too often, that is entirely meaningless knowledge. This is an important feature of Modernity: first, everybody must know; second, they must know one and the same thing and speak the same language, and third, this knowledge must grow as an end in itself. As a result of this incredible expansion, Modernity is suffering from internal maladies. They are associated with the disbalances that appear in it and cause some parts of humanity to start living not simply better than others, but better alongside them. (There have always been civilizations that have lived "better" than others. But they have done so separately, without being elements of one and the same world.) By connecting everything in one, Modernity

postulates all disproportions as its intrinsic feature. Yet those disproportions have become truly staggering - and this applies particularly to the 19th century. On the one hand, there is the emergence of the so-called common human values, or of universal values as they are known these days. Those values are: equality, liberty, etc., and the so-called "human rights" ensuing from them - you know all too well⁴.

4 *Equality, liberty, fraternity (as certain authors note, by the way, it is not accidental that fraternity has become a somewhat obsolete value, tacitly replaced with "justice") are internally contradictory values per se, because, for instance, "equality" - in Modernity - is possible thanks to the market, the abstract exchange which, however, makes owners of some and deprives others of property; which, in turn, makes it impossible to have both equality and justice in society... That is why there is something like an "anti-bourgeois fervour", as noted by the prominent theoretician of revolution Francois Furet (in The Past of an Illusion, his book about communism). Incidentally, the question of universal values is also a very debated, key question, which I will not discuss here. I will only recommend Tzvetan Todorov's The Conquest of America. The Question of the Other and We and Thou, which deal with contemporary humanism, the existence or non-existence of universal human nature and the possibility of universal values [p.10].*

In other words, the said bourgeois idea defining what being happy means. Yet the very opposite emerged at the same time too: being which has nothing to do with those values (I am talking about the 19th century). Workers who worked 12 to 14 or 18 hours a day and who were plagued by assorted pests and parasites, and mass shootings of protesting people who were actually starving. Revolutionary tensions mounted. This gave rise to two types of ideas, without which the entire 20th century would have virtually been a spiritual void. If there is a huge discrepancy between values and being, there are only two ways to deal with this discrepancy.*

**Cf. Marcuse*

First, to abolish the present being and build a better one in harmony with the respective values. Communism and all its variants are based on this procedure. Since our values and the world are dissimilar, the world must be removed and rebuilt in harmony with our values. And the opposite view. In the values-or-being dilemma one could apply the opposite procedure. Some values do not correspond to the world; but one must live in the real world and therefore destroy those values. Fascism in all its forms is rooted in this procedure. Those ideas are **intrinsic** to Modernity. They criticize Modernity for not being good enough and do not want a real alternative to the former. They want a true, kind modernity that is good for people. That's "wooden iron". Of course, I do not mean that Modernity is not "good" for humanity; Modernity has given us a lot - it has given us mass education, mass health care, mass communications, legal order and many things we would be reluctant to give up. But it has also had some disastrous consequences for humanity. To picture this (I simply want to give you some idea of the taste), let me give you an example. Modernity claims, for instance, that a bourgeois city with bourgeois relations, bourgeois education and health care ought to be built

for the poor blacks in Lagos, Nigeria. You should see Lagos a hundred years after the start of this project. Since the Modern assumes that everything is commensurable, Modernity pictures⁵ Lagos as an inferior variant of London.

5 *I certainly do not mean that there is a Subject, an Apparatus... The invisible eye in the panoptical modern power - as Foucault and other authors show - is nobody's; modern power is nobody's, it is anonymous. It is not associated with hereditary ranks, but with the functioning of formally rational institutions [p.11].*

And the attempt to turn Lagos into London cannot but lead to a brutal cataclysm. And this has been a colossal disaster everywhere except, of course, in the centres of Modernity. Which are nice - very nice, even. And where most champions of this project claim that it is wonderful. Let us go back to our main subject. Both communism and fascism have always claimed one thing only: that they would build a world within the framework of Modernity that would be good enough. That is impossible, and this has been proven not in theory but in practice by the utter defeat of all those claims at the end of the 20th century. Yet which are the real maladies of the Modern? Not those we see in the attempt to reform the Modern, but those from which we ought not to suffer. They are actually those invisible contents which Modernity gives us as social rational beings in order to turn us into its puppets, i.e. to make us reproduce Modernity without even being aware of it. Those are the distinctive features of any Modern way of thinking.

The first and most important thing is a strict distinction between subject and object. Since the Modern originated as a project of capital, the presumption is that **the world is lifeless and only humans are alive**. Objects can be segmented, manipulated and reordered, and that can be done by humans only. In such a world **things are identical with objects**. Besides, humans themselves are co-measured, homogeneous and positioned in a definite hierarchy. The most intelligent - the absolute, He who inspires the authors of the project of Modernity - is called "God".*

**As a point of view from which "everything" is revealed to be correct, truthful. Cf. Mamardashvili.*

He has an **invisible eye** that sees everything; everything is on a single plane and is co-measured. Consequently, everything is accessible to the little godlings that the activists of the Modern are. God's deputy on Earth is the scientist, who tries to play God and who has a preconception of right and wrong. Right means higher - at worst, secondary - education for everybody; right means health care for everybody; right means wide-awake West Europeans aged 30 to 50 - a rule with no exception. Children, slumberers, the insane, other cultures, are all deviations - at best, trivial details. And this brings us to the savage who is simply a very bad professor from the Sorbonne. Those people are the only subjects in the world. The bad subject - the dim, clumsy subject - might possibly need to be corrected, disciplined or whatever. This is the first hidden content or, let me say, the first crucial prejudice of the Modern: the subject is animate, i.e. live, and the object is inanimate, i.e. lifeless. The world was never seen like that before - certainly

not by feudal man, the slave-owner or the slave. The world was full of living things to which man was equal or antagonistic.

The second very important content that we have acquired straight from Modernity is that **objective and spatial are identical**. Only that which is in space is objective and, respectively, anything that is not in space is not real.*

**That is why the Dragon that meant so much to us all as children is not important, while serious efforts are devoted to some sort of tiny little worm.*

(Rest assured - that's not true if you ask me. Most things that make people happy are not positioned in space at all.) Or, as a lesser consequence of that, within the Modern, words are objects. And insofar as words are not objects, they are bad words which are subject to correction or to playful correction. This is an attempt to present humans as active and purposive in everything. Anything that is not active and purposive is insignificant and defined as "childish", as "dreams" or "ravings". Yet when you think of it, dreams account for one-third of our life - for all we know, that might be the most important third.

Those two above-mentioned features lead straight to a third, which is an effect - **Man is in opposition to Nature**. We are the first culture to assume that people are in opposition to Nature. The Modern human being has expectations of Nature - he or she uses, changes and is antagonistic to Nature.

Let me go back to commensurability. The Modern world does not recognize incommensurable quantities. It only recognizes things **that have not been co-measured yet**. In other words, there are no incommensurable things - there are only things that are still unexplored. We simply have not been there yet, but everything there is the same. And so the self-complacent conclusion is that wherever you might have been, everything is the same.**

***Even great thinkers of Modernity say "all possible experience". What, for God's sake, do we know about all possible experience; we who definitely don't know where we are in the Universe and what we actually mean by "Universe".*

Why? Simply because you are doing the same thing - you are transforming everything into your image and likeness and ignoring the specific measure of your opposite. (Nevertheless, Modernity does come up against things that are really incommensurable. Precisely such things are qualified as deviations. Because Modernity stumbles on peripheries that are impenetrable, i.e. not subject to modernization, they prove to be deviations and are perceived as maladies.) I would now like to proceed to the question of how we think of Modernity, how it rubs off on us as scholars. Since Modernity presumes a process rather than a state* and, in this sense, is a tendency rather than a status, the central figure in it is the **actor**.

**Cf. Mamardashvili*

The actor crisscrosses all sciences - all knowledge - and mathematizes them. Non-mathematized sciences are non-sciences. Galileo says it in so many words: science must measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so⁶.

6 *That is why Husserl also calls modern science "Galilean", as you probably know; the French historian of science (and a student of Husserl's) Koyre proves that for ancient science nature (fusus) was essentially not subject to mathematization [p.14].*

Science is anything that speaks the language of mathematics. Just as civilization is anything that speaks English. At the core of Modernity is the actor who travels and builds the roads of this Modernity, co-measuring the world. A very important feature of the way his or her mind works is a central prejudice of the modern science of man.

This can be expressed by the following proposition: consciousness is identical to self-consciousness⁷.

7 *See Mamardashvili (Mamardashvili, M.K. 1984. *Klassichesky i neklassichesky idealy rationalnosti* [Classical and Non-Classical Ideals of Rationality]. Tbilisi. As well as Mamardashvili, M.K. 1968. "Analiz soznaniya v rabotakh Marxa" ["An Analysis of Consciousness in the Works of Marx"].- In: *Voprosy filosofii*). Incidentally, Mamardashvili's distinction between classical and non-classical is fundamental in these lectures (I occasionally use "modern" and "classical" synonymously, which is not entirely correct; for example, I talk about modern science as about what Mamardashvili describes as classical science, as a classical ideal of rationality). See op. cit. 1984, as well as Mamardashvili M.K., E.Y. Solovyov and V.S. Shvyrev. "Klassicheskaya i sovremennaya burzhoaznaya filosofiya" ["Classical and Contemporary Bourgeois Philosophy"]. Part 1.- In: *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 12, 1970 and Part 2, *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 4, 1971 [p.14].*

Wherever you have identity of conscious and self-conscious - moreover, without any reflection on that - you have modern science, its respective triumph and respective mistakes. This science is most insensitive to what's going on because it is submerged in its own sauce. It produces self-growing knowledge by the logic of its Modernity. At the core of this insensitivity is the identity of conscious and self-conscious - an identity that is not even problematized in modern science. Conscious and self-conscious, however, are not identical at all. You are self-conscious of only a fraction of the things of which you are conscious. Just imagine yourself being self-conscious while listening to music. And imagine that besides enjoying, say, Vivaldi, you are picturing C-minor, B-flat - the whole score. Absurd, isn't it. Imagine self-consciousness while telling someone you are in love with them. That is virtually impossible. The self-conscious is a minuscule segment of human reality. Yet this identity is postulated as an absolute must; in the entire social science of Modernity people are not just conscious, but self-conscious beings⁸.

8 *This undoubtedly does not apply to thinkers such as Foucault, for whom the modern spirit is reproduced around, on the surface of and within the body as an effect of a new penal power (see Foucault. 1998: 33-34). It is not an overstatement that his genealogy of the modern spirit is non-classical in essence and is of interest to all who want to think this spirit without resorting to a "little man in the head" [p.15].*

And those who are somehow insufficiently self-conscious are simply qualified as dim and subjected to action, to active guidance. **This identity (in most academic treatises that describe the social world) takes the form of a little man in one's head which authors postulate for the purpose of upholding their theory.** A person has another person in his or her head, and it is precisely the latter who is the author of his or her behaviour. In the modern world you simply cannot have any other description of the human being except as a person with a little man in his or her head who is an engine of our sociality. And this little man is a theoretical construction that results from the identity of conscious and self-conscious - he is the supreme authority of which his authors are unconscious.

This is not true, of course. We have consciousness and, occasionally, self-consciousness, but we certainly do not have a little man in our heads. Whenever I try to understand what I am, I actually construct something similar in my mind. That could be thought of as a soul or psyche. But this tends to be a hopeless attempt to answer questions rather than real observation and designation of something.

Yet because of the above-mentioned handicaps, any sociology that is trying to be modern cannot help thinking of the little man⁹.

9 *Pierre Bourdieu's sociological critique of RAT, Rational Action Theory, is extremely interesting. What, according to Bourdieu, ensues from such an ontology of action with regard to "the mission" of the social scientist is even more interesting (see, e.g. Bourdieu, P. 1993. Kazani neshta [Said Things]. Sofia: Sveti Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia Press) [p.16].*

And this little man is locked behind my behaviour and is the author of that behaviour, the presumption being that he wants to eat, sleep and, in general, conscientiously serve the "excavator" which I am in relation to him. He somehow finds out my wishes and makes them come true for me. In this sense he is the active one, the real doer of the action, while his world is presented as passive, as a thing, and as entirely alien to him. Here we have another mortal sin and sociology falls into this trap: all social things prove to be confined to the human mind, whereas the real social world is simply nature that is subject to description. Let me give you my favourite example of the orange which illustrates this line of reasoning. The orange is orange in colour, round in shape and costs five leva. The little man in my head perceives those properties of the orange as **natural** properties of the thing. Imagine that we proceed to analyze those properties as listed. Yes, I can indeed study its colour; I apply a spectrum and reason that the rays refract in a certain way - and establish that I ought to see it

as orange if my sight is normal. Then I study its form and conclude that it is spherical. Hard as I might study it, however, I will not establish that the orange is "mine" or "yours", if, say, you are its seller. This - possession - is my relationship with you, which means that I cannot have the orange without paying the seller five leva. **I will not find possession as a natural property of the orange.** But our little man will - and, please note - **a relationship becomes a property!** Moreover, it proves to be a natural, intrinsic property. Objects belong to somebody by nature, they are invariably somebody's. And, in general, all our relationships are presented to the modern thinker as properties of the things themselves. And, of course, those things punish the thinker. They punish the theory that proceeds to describe them in detail - and then suddenly crumbles to pieces and becomes ridiculous. Why? Because such a theoretical proposition is based on a false presumption. Because those are our relationships that have entered things, they are not properties of the things that have appeared to us. They are elements of the subject that have left the subject and have become, in a very complicated way, an activity on the part of the thing. Things are actually making me dance around them. (The fact that I am standing here before you instead of crawling around on all fours is certainly not a "natural condition", it is a way of reproducing a power relation. And if you start teaching some day, you are bound to do exactly the same.) An extremely important feature of modern society is reproduced - in an invisible, unclear, incomprehensible way. **Because objects appear as natural only.** The only live thing in this modern world of lifeless things are the atomized individuals who are cast away in it, and who co-measure and help the world self-grow. The second extremely important effect of the little man in the head is that a **person's entire behaviour proves to be rational**, whereas the task of science is to describe this rationality¹⁰.

10 *If there is anything irrational it is rationalized, in the Freudian sense of "rationalization". See Freud, S. 1990. Bezsoznatelnoye [The Unconscious]. Moscow (the book includes the Russian translation of The Psychopathology of Everyday Life) [p.17].*

If self-conscious and conscious are identical, one cannot expect that anything could be irrational.*

**The modern scientist uses irrationality as a last resort only, when he/she is hopelessly confused with theory. Just as modern actors destroy their objects of training as a last resort only - out of despair. Unfortunately!*

There is this landmark experiment in which a group of people under hypnosis are made to open their umbrellas at a certain time. And they all perform this innocuous action. They are subsequently questioned by the researchers about the reasons why they opened their umbrellas. Since the participants in the experiment are not aware of their real motive, they have to come up with something. However, they do not offer just any explanation, but **rationalize their behaviour** - more precisely, **they present their behaviour as rational**. Because any behaviour that is not rational is impossible in the modern world - unless it is a deviation. So the participants in the experiment start offering explanations like, for example, that they had supposedly wanted to see how the umbrella worked, that they had opened the umbrella

because it might have been raining, etc.; in general, they try to describe their behaviour as rational. But this is not true. Human behaviour is no doubt conscious, but it is the behaviour of individuals whose consciousness and self-consciousness are not identical and therefore not necessarily rational. On the contrary, people spend most of their life behaving irrationally - consciously, but irrationally.

Another crucial feature of the modern world is the mandatory existence of **centre and periphery**. As I have already said, modernization is a strategy, not a state, and it establishes, in its very genesis, natural centres from which modernization proceeds, and a periphery that is its target. Those centres are not static but shifting; the history of the Western world is a history of such shifts of centres. Needless to say, this pattern has started disintegrating, and today we can see the beginnings of this disintegration. Disintegration starts as soon as the purpose is achieved. Just as pre-Modernity gives birth to Modernity at its zenith, Modernity comes to its end not when someone or something is obstructing its progress, but by developing deep within itself that which will ultimately bring about its own death. And this is largely associated with the disintegration of the notions of centre and periphery.

2. [Non-Classical Theory. Two Opposite Requirements of Non-Classical Theorization]

I think I have shown you why we should be against a Modern science of man. And why we should try to think in a non-classical way¹¹.

11 *Of course, Modern is not identical with classical, nor is non-classic identical with Postmodern. See, e.g. Deyan Deyanov's paper "Noviyat zalog na kriticheskata teoriya" ["The New Stake of Critical Theory"].- In: Sotsiologicheski problemi, No. 2 [p.19].*

We will now move on to the topic of thinking beyond the Modern. This is usually defined as Postmodernity. This term is so broad that it is virtually meaningless. There are numerous Postmodern strategies of thinking. They are a conscious or unconscious, consistent or inconsistent rejection of some of the Modern prejudices which we have discussed so far. And it is not fair to single out a particular model and claim that this is Postmodernism. That would be the same as claiming that something is "non-Renaissance" or "non-Enlightenment". In other words, it would be qualifying something in terms of something else that is no more. The strategy of thinking which a narrow circle of people and myself have been developing for years now, does not have a particular name (we have occasionally called it non-classic*).It is associated with the philosophy of Hegel and the views of Marx, i.e. with dialectic.

**The difference is not in the terms but in the motives: Postmodernism establishes and partly tolerates "the scattering of worlds". It readily establishes incommensurability and remains there. The non-classic coveted by us - as Deyan Deyanov defined it a long time ago - is an attempt to construe perspectives which "bring" the worlds "together" even if they are incommensurable.*

Since you have not studied history of philosophy yet, I must try to introduce to you an important fragment of the logic of Hegel in a matter of minutes, which is impossible without elements of oversimplification.

In this particular case we are concerned with a triad of categories which could serve as a philosophical mainstay in our attempt to understand the world in a way alternative to the Modern. These categories are Hegel's "**Being**" (Sein) "**Essence**" (Wesen) and "**Notion**" (Begriff). If you close your eyes and succeed in picturing the whole world at this very instant, you will see inconceivable chaos. No solid mainstay is anywhere to be found. The only thing we can say about this world for sure is that something else is happening all the time. This, generally speaking, is Hegel's idea of **being**. Being means transition. One thing becomes another, and the latter does not differ from the former in the sense that it is likewise subject to immediate transformation. Anything that is new will certainly not become concrete for us, nor will we know anything about it. Except for one thing: that it will become something else. **This, precisely, is the principle of any being: to be, ergo, to pass, to "have-been"**. This is best expressed by the verb "to be". This "to be", however, has opposite things at its input and output - it was one thing, and has become another. This transition is incessant, and in their constant difference things are completely identical all the time. As long as we are confined to being, we will fail to see a solid mainstay.

The second "level of organization" of the world is defined by Hegel as **essence**. I will illustrate this with an extremely oversimplified example. Imagine that this glass before me is full of a liquid that periodically freezes to ice and then liquefies, and that is the only thing we see in the world. If we follow the logic of being, those events are described as follows: this is ice... this is liquid... this is ice... this is liquid... In other words, something becomes something else, then something else again, etc. The point at which liquid solidifies and I pronounce the statement, "This **has become** ice. **In essence**, it is water", is essential. What's happened? From my point of view, the world has duplicated. I see ice, but behind the ice I discern its own past being, its "has-beeness". More precisely, "water" is the way I can think of ice and liquid as one. The duplication of the world - according to Hegel - occurs on the part of both object and subject. On the one hand, the "in-essence-this-is-water" procedure is in my head but, on the other, the world has really acquired persistent essence. Whatever transition might occur from now on of ice into liquid and vice versa, the essence will have frozen or stopped. This is the perspective of essence. The boundless chaotic billowing of being has stopped and we see a petrified world where nothing happens. Hegel sums this up ingeniously: "Wesen is gewesen", or essence is that which already was, i.e. "has-beeness", past being.

Yet this duplication of the world around us proves fatal to the change of things - nothing ever changes. Everything "is", and only the forms of this "being" change. Behind ice and liquid there is water, which is neither of those two states but the essence, i.e. the ideal per se. Essences "are" everywhere, and they are out of reach. Because all things are phenomena only. If you recall Plato, that is the picture of the world as he describes it.

Let us go back to Hegel. Next comes another phase, which he calls **notion**. Hegel argues that there are essences which, to remain such, should become something else. For example, to be itself an animal should constantly posit itself into something different, go somewhere, kill other creatures and reproduce. This also applies to any possible spirit. The spirit does not exist as a concrete phase, it constantly transforms into its direct opposite. This sounds rather complicated. I will try to give you a simple - certainly not strictly scientific - example. I am watching this object here before me, which is my opposite - it is petrified, static. My cognition of the object consists of my "entering" it, transforming into this object, following its folds and all its peculiarities. At the same time, I am capable of returning into myself. The act of cognition proves to be nothing on the part of the object, and expansion on my part. I have executed a movement - I have transformed into not-myself and have returned into myself.*

**Defined by Hegel as In-sich-Zuruckgekehrstein, "returnedness-into-self".*

Precisely this movement towards one's "non-self" and "returnedness-into-self" is the nature of the spirit and in the nature of lots of things in the social world.

This applies to animate and inanimate beings. Empires are an example of the latter. An empire must constantly grow and expand in order to remain itself. Once they stop expanding, empires will collapse. Capital is an "inanimate", "lifeless", "notion". Modern science is self-growing knowledge, etc.

3.

We are now coming to a point that we will find difficult until the very end. Everyday consciousness, i.e. the consciousness of the ordinary person (broadly speaking, of course), has an explanation for the whole world at any time. Insofar as it is everyday, this consciousness does not find the world confusing in any way. When it does, it is no longer everyday consciousness. I repeat, I am giving you a general picture only. As you will see, all this is very complicated and each step will take huge intellectual effort. I am simply outlining things in order to give you a taste of this type of theorization.

Everyday consciousness "understands" everything at any time. In the world of the everyday person nothing is incomprehensible. Everything is **self-evident**: people are male or female, they are two-legged, and males wear trousers and have short hair. And so on and so forth. We can go on reasoning along those lines to our heart's content. Yet we "scientists" are not excluded from this everyday world and our heads are crammed with this selfsame "knowledge". (This, incidentally, is knowledge, but it is deeply non-reflected, automatically self-reproducing, unjustified knowledge).

This total comprehensibility - this "understandability" - is also one of the main barriers to us students of society. While a physicist finds his or her consciousness alien to the world he/she is studying, and fights this alienation all the time, we are part of the world which we have to study - and this is the "obverse" difficulty.

So our subject of study is something that is extremely amusing. Please note - we have to turn that which has shaped our view in advance into our subject of study. **The subject of what we will be discussing is that which prevents us from seeing it.** To theorize about everyday consciousness means to make a theoretical effort that will show us the way we see. We should see not even our eyes, but the way they function. Not even thinking itself should be our subject - but, rather, the way we think. This is a truly baffling theoretical subject.

We should view the world in a way that will make it incomprehensible to us. We should choose a perspective (you will eventually see why we should call it privileged) that will make the world incomprehensible. **Once it becomes incomprehensible to us as its observers, we will understand why people think in a particular way within this world.**

The privileged perspective is a perspective of power; generally speaking, any power has - first and foremost - a privileged perspective. In our case, however, we are elaborating a privileged perspective that will give us two things. The first thing it gives us is that reality becomes incomprehensible to us (as, incidentally, it is incomprehensible to any power). And, second, what "the juniors" (in this case, people) are doing in it - and why becomes comprehensible. We somehow distance ourselves from our own self, and become both winners and losers. We lose understanding - and, in this case, we stand to gain from this loss, because understanding obstructs our progress; and we will try to restore it step by step - but as another type of understanding. And that will be our rewarding experience of science. At the same time, we gain awareness of the fact that those inside are like blind kittens, scuttling around in ways which we will start to understand. Because we will no longer be one of them. **This is an act of simultaneous empowerment and estrangement.** We leave the circle and marginalize ourselves, self-marginalization being a *conditio sine qua non* for social knowledge. And that is why it is well known (this is a platitude) that more or less all creators, all geniuses, were marginalized. "Consciousness is a disease", says Dostoyevsky; "Consciousness is a hole in being", says Jean-Paul Sartre. I suggest that we marginalize ourselves along this pattern. Are other patterns possible? I don't know, I haven't seen them - or, to be precise, I haven't experienced them - because this is not something about which you can simply inform yourself. This is something that can happen to you. Even if it might be an intellectual-verbal game only, even if we might leave this room afterwards, this is an act of suffering because it is self-imposed exile.

4.

Imagine that we could see all people at the same time, several billions of them and constantly changing. Needless to say, that is impossible. Besides, right now half of them are soundly asleep. The only thing we succeed in grasping is that something else has happened at every instant (in this room included). And that is where we should take our first leap - ice should prove to be water, being should shrivel and give us the essence - and that will give us the second perspective. This raises the following question: if something is something else day in and day out, why does it recur? It changes constantly and yet it is simply one and the same thing. And this is no longer the sentence: "Right, even if it might be something entirely

different, they'll still have lunch the next day." This is the sentence: "Now why on Earth do they still have lunch next day regardless?" You see, we have turned the comprehensible upside down. The most comprehensible has become the most incomprehensible. How could things possibly recur amidst all this Babel? Can you imagine what several billion people are doing at the same time? And each one of them does something different from the other, and will do it again tomorrow...

Consequently, the first question we are faced with is, **how is it possible for things to recur, to be repeated?** Repetition is no longer something we can assume to be comprehensible in itself. On the contrary - it is something incomprehensible. And we suffer because of that. While it is entirely comprehensible to everybody else that they are about to have supper because it is 6 p.m., for us this becomes a dramatic question: why will they have supper at six? Why, say, don't they climb on the roof and start singing? Let us do something that seems incomprehensible. I will now lean out of the window and start singing as the man across the street looks on. This is something that will defy his notions of comprehensibility. But that is in the first instant only. He has numerous ways to restore comprehensibility by means of simple procedures. And now, attention please, he is about to apply one of them. He will say, for instance, that I am sick. But why will he say precisely this? Because there is a type of authority that deals with the matter, and he disclaims responsibility. What is this man, who has just seen a loony lean out of the window and start singing, looking for? He is looking for someone onto whom he can shift responsibility. Otherwise he himself should start singing too or kiss me, i.e. he must do something that corresponds to the incomprehensible. He does not do anything of the sort. He simply concludes that I am crazy and there are doctors who are responsible in such cases, i.e. there is some sort of authority and it will resolve the matter. Whether he calls them or not depends on how loudly and how long I go on singing. Second scenario: he calls the police. In the previous society we lived in, we would turn to the police. Even, God forbid, to the priest, who was expected to exorcise the evil spirit in me (something typical of another age). If I were a child, he would turn to my father. Yet either way, he will resort to a power procedure. In other words, when confronted with the incomprehensible (because I have actually defied order, only not in theory but in practice), people will promptly resort to authority, to power, in any form. (Why? Because in this case authority has been threatened. By doing what I have done, I have threatened authority and encroached on the most important thing - I have become a source of words. Whoever becomes a source of new words invariably offends some sort of authority, because it alone has the authority to generate new words).

But let us stop fooling around. Let us now imagine that we have made a Herculean mental effort and have come up with an explanation for the repetition of things. If it is true that there are essences, if we have set out to identify them and have ultimately come up with an explanation, why - even though there are essences and things exist statically - is there history, why are there new things? Why do things become different? At that, not in any arbitrary way, but in some evidently identical way - different societies follow a similar course in history without being similar. If the question before was how could otherness, differentness, exist, the question now is **how are self-changing existents possible?** This is the very opposite and equally

incomprehensible question - and I generally think that those are the two main questions that ought to be at the heart of non-classic sociology.

How could things ultimately not be repeated, even though they are formed in the course of their repetition? How could the wheel not only turn but, turning, head somewhere? (By the way, the little man in your head will promptly suggest an answer. Elementary, my dear: people repeat things, of course, but at some point decide to come up with something original. And half of the histories of humanity have been written on the basis of this very nonsense.)

Two questions will guide us in our reasoning for quite some time yet:

1. How is it possible for things to be repeated, or (to use strictly scientific terms), how is social order possible?
2. How does this order destroy itself, or how are new things, i.e. history, possible?*

**There is something similar in Mamardashvili: the amazement that there is some sort of order in the world, after all, and that despite this there are new developments. This, however, has nothing to do with Hobbes and with his "how is social order possible"; Hobbes assumes that there is a definite "human nature" and solves the problem of how a selfish animal such as each one of us could live in society.*

We should develop a theory that applies two not entirely comprehensible and opposite requirements. I will try to build a theory that meets those requirements.

5. [Basic Definitions of Privileged Perspective]

Is it possible to have a perspective that provides answers to those key questions? It is, and it is called **privileged perspective**. This is a figure that exists in the world and constitutes a kind of conjunction. A perspective from which the world looks the way you see it yourself, on the one hand, and on the other, as it looks when viewed from elsewhere. And since this sounds so abstract that it might even be intimidating, let me explain by giving you my favourite example, which is very easy to understand because we have all been there. This is the example of Santa Claus.

What do children see when they meet Santa? They see Santa only, he is entirely real and magic and he has special powers - you remember well. In the identical situation, however, parents see something else. They know very well that this is a friend or neighbour in disguise. But they also know what their children see. Precisely **this perspective, which takes into account two opposite pictures of the world, is a privileged perspective.**

All such perspectives are power-based because you see a reality that is invisible to another person and, at the same time, you are perfectly aware of what this other person sees. All the power in the world essentially consists of this very presence of two perspectives. Power sees a dual image, while the other party - that which is subordinate in some way - sees a single picture

of the world that is natural for itself. And this gives room for manoeuvring, for achieving concrete power-related purposes. (In the simple case of Santa Claus, the purpose of the parents might be to make their children do as they are told. Or they might simply want their children to have a good time. Or they might want lots of things at the same time.) It is another matter that the person who happens to be in a position of power in the particular case - i.e. who has two pictures of the world - is, in turn, also subject to "superior" privileged perspectives. There is no single global power, behind each power there is another, and yet another... Ultimately, there are purely anonymous power structures, there is an objective play of privileged perspectives. Let us consider Santa. There are two perspectives: the perspective of children - that this is the real Santa, and the perspective of parents - that this is a fake Santa whom children see as real. This latter perspective, which knows two opposite things about the object, is a privileged perspective. Each power has dual knowledge - it knows something and knows how this appears to the subordinates. And this is the pattern in all power situations: there is "them" who possess the two perspectives, and "us" who see the surface only. And those relations include possible denunciation of the object. To go back to Santa Claus, we might have a situation in which one child stands up and denounces Santa before his or her playmates, proving that he is not for real, etc. (That would be a strategy of enlightening the child's "us".) The other possible strategy is for the child to integrate with the parents, to wink at and ingratiate him/herself with them and, by doing so, to actually transform into "them", into another "us".

6.

We have seen that **the privileged perspective is not just a state of mind, but also some sort of state of objectness**. Power is presented not just as a state of people's minds and a relation between them, but also as the presence of definite objects. The appearance of people in proximity to those objects topicalizes - revitalizes - power. That is not done by some sort of prescription passed on from one person to another, but the object itself is overmastered in this way. It is critical to understand that **the privileged perspective is an objectively*existing structure and that it is embodied in an object**.

**Which is not identical with "spatial", although there is a spatial aspect too.*

Along with its many other properties, this perspective is a power structure and exists because of the presence of a certain type of objects. The latter, in a sense, "embody" power, they comprise its objectivity.

Of course, this is presented to people as in camera obscura - "power" is seen as some sort of people who are in opposition to us. Actually, these are sets of relations and objects, whereas the people whom we see as having power over us have actually gone round the object from a side that is invisible to us. Needless to say, they have not "gone round" it literally. (Although certain situations could involve "going round" in the literal sense - "they" have gone right round the mausoleum and are now standing on it. We see the front, whereas they operate with the back of the mausoleum too. And this applies in many cases to all types of power formations - take the prison, hospital, bank, school, church...)

From the privileged perspective the object is both self-evident (as it is to the slaves) and produced (as it is for the masters). While from the other perspective it is self-evident only. In this context, I might add two important points. The first concerns the question of what an absolutely privileged perspective would look like. What is this perspective from which all objects are both produced and, at the same time, revealed in their self-evidence to the "inferior" beings who populate and revolve around those objects produced by someone else. This absolute perspective is simply God, the creator of everything. This is the perspective of absolute power. All things have been produced by God Himself, of course, and He also knows their self-evidence, the way in which people see them. In this sense, He is absolute power. He is also the truth. As I have already noted, all of Classicism*

**In Mamardashvili's sense.*

presupposes that the perspective of God is the perspective of an exceptional scientist who is omniscient. There is something very similar in Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, where the master is the slave's self-consciousness.

And another point which I believe is important. **The privileged perspective divides people into two categories: those for whom objects are only apparent, and those for whom objects are apparent and produced.** However, we would be wrong to assume that in this case we have a relation between individuals. A relation between an individual who is standing on both sides of the object that carries the power structure, and another individual in front, who sees only the appearance of the object. As you will see for yourselves, this is invariably a relation between communities.

Santa Claus divides people in two: children and parents (in the plural). This is extremely important. Any privileged perspective - any power structure - topicalizes existence and correlates two communities by its very emergence. Individual relations in society are the result of a long history of those communities. Individual social relations are a late product. It is also wrong to assume that we are first and foremost individuals who eventually integrate into something. On the contrary. We are originally immersed in a community, whereas history - from this perspective - is our dis-communing.

In this sense, there is no absolutely privileged perspective - nor could such a perspective exist in theory. The social world consists precisely in that the pictures of naturalcy are ordered behind one another, and power relations boil down to their correlation. **Social critique consists of destratification of the so-called natural picture of the world.** "So-called" because there is simply no single natural picture of the world.

Non-classic theory claims to have a very important characteristic. It is neither capable of painting nor tries to paint a "true" picture of the world. But it is capable of answering an entirely different type of questions. How could a strategy of thinking be elaborated in a way that would make the correlation of the so-called "true pictures" comprehensible? I will eventually show you why such sociology should limit its claims: to deal with "lifeless man", with the "lifeless" person, with the subordinate being, with the person as a puppet.*

**When I come to the answer to the question, "how are new things possible".*

For the time being, I will only say that the rejection of Classical sociology is also a rejection of a "true" picture of "man". This, by the way, is understandable: "the lifeless person", "lifeless man", is not just a theoretical construct, but an entirely ordinary product of power. And just as there is no "true", correct power, there cannot be a "correct" lifeless man. There are only different kinds of puppets. There certainly isn't any "true" one.

* * *

Among other things, we have already gained a theoretical weapon with which to kill our "little man in the head" and give him the more scientific name he deserves. (Because he does not deserve a non-classical name such as "little man", but some virtually unpronounceable quasi-scientific definition.)

So we have now realized that "the little man in the head", or the non-explicated identity of consciousness and self-consciousness, is simply **an uncontrolled privileged perspective**. This means, by the way, that some of the theories that employ a "little man" might be useful. The problem is not that a privileged perspective is construed and applied. It is impossible to do without one. The problem is **uncontrollability**: we would not know which knowledge comes to us from the world, and which from the structure of our own head. We would be unable to discern our own thoughts from the implicit contents which have been introduced by Modernity and which we assume are objective

Plovdiv, 24 October 1997

Lecture II

Structures of Activity. Activity and Communication as Opposites

There are lots of things I have to say in today's lecture, since we are coming to the first part of what I want to discuss with you: a theory of activity. We cannot be seriously employed in science unless we know which our "basic" unit* is.

**Cf. Kuhn.*

Each science defines a unit that is assumed to be "prime", incomposite. For example, at certain stages of its history the science of physics developed different theories of the smallest unit in physics - the atom, the quantum or whatever. Traditional sociology does not have anything of the sort,** and compensates for this absence by the imaginary little man in the head of the real person.

***Despite the extensive efforts to discover a unit that is a carrier of the social: groups, class, collective consciousness, etc.*

By assuming that there is a little man in people's heads, we actually duplicate consciousness, we assign it a creative role. And we do this not because we want to, but because we are "deficient" in a specific way - we seem incapable of coming up with any other theory and this proves a convenient way to resolve the issue.

So what's the problem? We must answer two questions: why are things repeated and why, even though they are built to repeat themselves, do they not really do so? If you remember Hegel, why is there an essence, and why does it not simply exist, but transforms itself. How come that in order to be, something becomes something else and this is the principle of any form of life, of any possible sociality, etc. Traditional sociology offers a practical solution to these questions by imagining a back-up little man who is smart and quick on the uptake. And it solves major theoretical problems thanks to this little man in the head. And, second, we confine sociology to the person, to the human being. It is clear even intuitively that sociology does not deal with everything in us, with the entire human being - but it is not clear exactly how far sociology goes. Sociology does not deal with sexuality, music, ESP, nor is it concerned with, say, what makes a clairvoyant a clairvoyant. We have formulated this as follows: **sociology deals with the person as a puppet only**. It is concerned with us only insofar as we are participants in a series of repetitions and recurrences (even though at face value everything is chaos) and insofar as, irrespective of those repetitions, we humans succeed in constantly shattering them and in having history, generating something new. Ergo, there is reproduction (the question of essence in Hegel) and there is history (in Hegel again, the notion). If we want to have such a picture of sociality, we must formulate basic units that are governed by certain laws, and proceed to build a theory and a description in this way. This promptly brings us to the question of the basic unit: which is that unit? Without the little man in the head, without the demiurgic function of consciousness, that is a tough question.

Here is a simple example: what am I doing right now, how many actions have I just performed by dropping this pen on the floor? It is intuitively clear that the action is one, but it is entirely incomprehensible why it is one. Why are we certain that picking the pen from the floor is one action rather than two, three or four? A second example: Here I am, smoking. Anyone will establish this right away. For everyday consciousness all cows are grey and all structures are identical. But everyday consciousness is incapable of discerning that while I am smoking four million muscles (the number does not really matter) are in action - one contracts, another relaxes... At the same time, say, my heart is beating - is that an action? Now that is not even intuitively clear - does the fact that my heart beats mean that I am acting in any way? At face value this is not an action but, on the other hand, I am still "involved". If my heart stopped beating I would not be able to smoke, work, etc. Besides, I am also breathing, which involves two billion cells, every single one of which is ticking away right now.

To define all such things as actions is downright crazy. Then what is an action, what is **one** action?¹²

12 *For a definition of social action see also Max Weber's four "ideal types" of action, parts of the theoretical introduction to Economy and Society, translated into Bulgarian in the Reader compiled by Nikolov, L. and L. Deyanova. 1989. Sotsiologiya na lichnostta [Sociology of the Personality]. Sofia: Naouka i Izkoustvo Press [p.36].*

On the other hand, we intuit that those are undoubtedly different actions, there is no way you will confuse dropping a pen with smoking. They are obviously different, but what makes them different - after all, my body is involved in both, isn't it? So it turns out that something's wrong - our unit of action is not obvious.

1. [Elementary Action, Activity, Operation]

Our whole life may be regarded as a series of actions. Considering that we cannot define "action", let us try to define "object". Let us let action be for the time being, and discuss things. Take this sponge: why is it a single object? It is made up of umpteen million molecules. What gives us grounds to assume that this actually isn't two sponges stuck together? In which case we would say, "Would you pass me the two sponges stuck together, please." In what sense has the chalk soaked in this sponge become part of the sponge, and why don't we speak of chalk and sponge separately? And why by using this am I using a single sponge - that's not clear. Or even worse. Imagine that I started playing football with this sponge - would it be a sponge? In other words, I can posit a particular object as if it were another object. And this would no longer be a sponge but would become a "ball". And that would make perfect sense to each one of us, to the everyday person. Would you pass me the ball, please, I would say, even though we are obviously kicking a sponge - and the person undoubtedly will. Which means he/she has understood what I mean. This is totally bizarre: in some way the object depends on me.

Whether it is an object or not does not depend on the object itself, but on the person who is using it, who is with it. If we were to agree that this sponge was a princess, if we took this seriously and four generations lived with that idea, it would ultimately become a princess. I am joking, of course - this particular sponge would hardly ever turn into a princess. But that is how the principle works. I might add another aspect: imagine that this was the favourite sponge of my favourite late great-grandmother and I cried over it every night. I would take care of it, put it in a gold frame, etc. Something entirely incomprehensible would happen on the part of the object. It would become some sort of very special object because of me myself. It turns out that the thing does not depend on itself. Again there is no unambiguous, obvious answer to the question of what, in fact, an object is.

Please note something very upsetting: apart from everything else, we also speak, the world is full of words. Are words action? If you think about it, that is a tough question. At least one thing is for sure as far as any action is concerned - that it has an object. The object might be imaginary or absurd, but there cannot be action without an object. If I am performing an action - for example, cutting - then there is something I am cutting with and something I am cutting. So which is the object of the word if we regard the word as an action?

Things are complicated - very complicated, in fact. It is certain that we cannot find any solid ground if we proceed from the evidence that comes from everyday consciousness. Everyday consciousness sees those things simultaneously. I have also given you an example of how the social structures vested in an object appear to us as its natural properties. The orange, remember? It is round, orange in colour and costs five leva. Precisely this "five leva" means that I am involved in a sort of relation with you (for instance, I am the buyer and you are the seller); this means that you will not let me have this orange for less than five leva. **Something purely external has, on the part of the object, turned into its natural property** from the perspective of everyday consciousness. The actual property does not matter - let us say, colour. And this applies to numerous objects in the world. Everyday consciousness is incapable of distinguishing any layers, it regards the object as an entity. Yet the object actually proves to be made up of separate structures, which are certainly not fused and hammered into it, but should be identified very carefully.

Whenever you are in trouble you could resort to a thought of Hegel's. Hegel argues that there is nothing either in heaven or on Earth that does not contain something that is mediated and immediate. If you cannot understand something right away, then there is a mediator, something third. And this applies to everything, including the behaviour of your husbands, wives and children. The big problem is that we do not see the unit immediately. Consequently, **there are mediating components which are invisible to us**. For example, if this cigarette was suspended in the air and there was nothing to hold it there, you would have two options. First, to assume that this is a magic cigarette - that would be stupid. Second, to say that there is something else that holds it in the air, but you cannot see it - that would be the correct answer. In other words, you must find, construct and reconstruct the mediating component. We are incapable of defining the unit in immediate terms, and that is because this unit has proven to be mediated in a complicated way.

Let me show you how this works. We are at the micro-level, and our purpose is to identify the micro-unit. We have no device by means of which to observe our units. Marx says that the power of abstraction should replace the microscope and lab materials. If we were Martians, we would have easily seen "the atoms" or "the cells"; but because we are inside, within the human perspective, we cannot.

So. What am I doing? I am picking the pack of cigarettes in order to...? In order to open it - in order to...? In order to take a cigarette. I am taking a cigarette in order to smoke it. We thus have a sequence of, say, a dozen-odd actions, each one of which has a distinct "**in-order-to**" subsequent action - so we have a meaningful chain of "**in order to**".

Yet please note, I am smoking in order to...? You could say anything here: in order to be like my father, calm down because I am upset, look more authoritative, etc. - what have you. Yet whatever you might add, this is no longer an analysis of the action. Something very different has happened. There simply is no "**in order to**" - no "**in order to**" could follow. You answer the question of why someone goes to work in the same way. You could come up with lots of answers: in order to support their children, realize their potential, make money, serve the public good, etc. The correct answer is, because it's Monday, I say. The person, however, only suspects the answer. Thus from one point on there is no longer an entirely logical "in order to", but there was one until that point - it would be very hard for me to take a cigarette if I had not opened the packet. So there is some sort of "in-order-to" chain, but at some point it becomes ridiculous, i.e. we could continue the chain but that would obviously make no sense. There are two ways I can explain the problem to you. One is to take the long road that will eventually bring us to a conclusion; the other is to tell you the final result straight away, and then show you how I have come to it. I think it would be easier if I told you the result.

There is a huge difference between **action** and **activity**.

The idea which I will proceed to justify is that the basic unit of human behaviour is called action, whereas the chains of actions are our activities. There is action whenever there is a purpose. That is easy to understand - it is the said "**in order to**" which I have just defined. If I have some purpose in mind, then the process of achieving that purpose is my elementary action. There cannot be a smaller unit, because there is nothing that we could divide in half. There either is or isn't mediation. Action is not like the electron - it is not something that exists in the world. That is, it exists objectively, it is the most elementary possible process of social behaviour - but it exists only in the sense that it is part of the life of the human body mediated by a purpose. **Activity, however, is not mediated by a purpose.** Smoking, for instance, is an activity. It is one of our numerous activities, and that is why we failed to identify a purpose. Taking a cigarette, lighting up, inhaling, stubbing it out, are all action-elements of the chain, for each one of which a purpose could be identified. But let us first complete our analysis of action: human behaviour is structured at the micro-level as follows: **there are basic units, they are called actions, and each one of them is such precisely because it is mediated by a purpose.**

Why is picking up the pen one action? Because my purpose is to pick up the pen. Incidentally, this purpose could be an element of the activity of declaring a Third World War. I will pick the pen up in a particular way and say, "I hereby declare the Third World War." In fact it does not matter at all what activity an action is part of - it still remains a single action. If you define two purposes - pick the pen halfway up and pick the pen all the way up - you will have two actions. An action may vary by duration - it may be very short or very long. An activity may be even faster than a particular action. Of course, an activity could never be faster than its constituent actions. The important thing is what mediates an action. It is mediated by definition of purpose. Hence we have a sort of pattern - we have a series of actions (a1, a2, a3...) and a series of purposes (p1, p2, p3...). In some way, which we do not know yet, those actions are ordered up to a certain point beyond which there are no purposes. That is activity. Let us say that the former is the atom and the latter is the molecule. But then, the structure of human atoms and molecules is quite different from that of the chemical ones.

What do we see on the part of the object, of the thing? A short while ago we came up against the following problem: we could not give a clear answer to the question why this (in our case, the sponge) was one thing and not two. This question has a very simple and very smart answer: there are as many objects as the actions upon them. An action consists in the transformation of an object from state **A** to state **B**. There is something like change on the part of the object. Apart from actions (a) and purposes (p), there is a change in the object (o), which concerns the state of the object rather than the object itself. If we go back to our concrete example, my action of "moving the sponge" corresponds to the purpose "to move the sponge" and results in the fact that the sponge has been moved. In other words, the basic unit of human existence proves to be triune. That is why it is quite complicated unless we apply the following scheme:

- * **action (a1, a2, a3...)**
- * **purpose (p1, p2, p3...)**
- * **change of object (o1, o2, o3...)**

We see purposes on one side and actions on another, while objects are something else. Understanding the relations among them takes an intellectual effort. The ultimate result, however, is very beautiful and very simple. The basic unit of sociality consists precisely of this: someone has defined a purpose, someone has done something as a result of the definition of purpose, and the state of the object has changed.

Now imagine that the place of the purpose is filled by a word. You will see (this is very important and I will be trying to explain it to you continuously) that everything we have said so far does not apply to one particular person only. And that is the secret of human sociality. The purpose may be in someone's mind, while the action may be performed by someone else. When the teacher walks into the classroom and says, "Stand up!", standing up as a purpose is actually not the purpose of the student (even though it has reached his or her mind), but of the teacher. Yet it is an action of the student and, in this particular case, changes his or her posture.

Note this: we did not need a little man in the head at any point in our analysis - not even in the sense that the purpose could be defined by one person and the action performed by another. What do you call the situation in which one person says (gives orders), and another does (carries them out)? Generally speaking, simply **power**. I will be discussing this in detail further on. "The first nature" of the power of some people over others is that the former say and the latter do, i.e. there are order-givers and order-takers. Of course, it is possible to have both combined in one person. But when someone is "saying" and I am "doing", he/she is my superior and I am their inferior - and that is power in its initial form.

Here we see the tangling of a knot of critical importance, which we will be following very carefully. Most formations of human sociality are power-based, because **power is vested in the possibility of having the purpose defined by one person and the action performed by another**. The basic unit of human existence itself implies the possibility of power. Be it directly - I am myself and, say, I will shut up; or indirectly, "shut up!". A purpose has been defined and imposed. The way in which it has actually been imposed is too complicated to explain in brief, but if it has been imposed, there must have been mediation.

Actually we will see how power in its initial form - this atomic energy vested in the nucleus of human sociality - erupts and produces all the absurdities to be found in this world. Indeed, everything in the world hangs on this "atom", this "cell". The tiny atom of human interaction that is made up of purposes, actions, changes of objects.

By the way, let me show you how we could answer all those questions which we failed to answer at the beginning. Is my heartbeat an action? Of course it isn't. I cannot stop my heart, there is no purpose which I could set out to achieve and stop my heartbeat. Incidentally, they say that some people (yogis) can attain such control over their body that they can deliberately stop their heart. In their case, that is an action. Is my breathing an action? Not normally, but I can stop breathing for a certain period of time. That means that I am doing this on purpose. In that case, it is an action. **In other words, whether something is or is not an action does not depend on the thing itself but on the purpose**. Or, more precisely, on whether it has a purpose. Let us go back to the object. Whether this is a football, sponge or, as I suggested, a princess, virtually does not depend on the object itself in the least. It depends on the actions and purposes enacted in relation to the object. This, precisely, explains why I could possibly fail to identify a particular thing as one object or two. For example, is this a desk, or a desk top and a desk frame? It could be either. For the carpenter who assembles desks this, naturally, will be two separate objects. But if I am a student sitting at the desk, it is **one** object.

The social fabric has a very peculiar property. We cannot imagine any social process that is more elementary. There are far more "inferior" processes than those that are structured as purposes, actions and objects. People will experience various things which they perceive as their actions, but which are not really because they do not follow this pattern. Listening to Mozart, for example. It is extremely difficult to describe listening to music in this context. Mozart orders you to listen or C-minor causes some sort of action - that is downright absurd. And it is definitely not clear which object is changing. We feel that something is changing but

cannot see what and how. According to the theory we are expounding here, listening to music is not really a social activity. It is partly true to say that only puppet activity is social activity. This is precisely what makes a puppet a puppet: you have an order-giver and an order-taker. Here we are on familiar ground. But you will eventually see that this is definitely not the case. We are certainly not studying the human being in his or her integrity (which, by the way, is quite an interesting topic), but the social being, which essentially proves to be subordinate. Let us note something important. Imagine the following situation. I climb the stairs, pause before the front door, take out my keys, unlock the door and go in. All those are actions - at that, absolutely rational actions. There is a distinct purpose, a concrete "in order to". You might very well object that when I perform this procedure every day I do not really have a deliberate purpose. Let us suppose that the first time I climbed the stairs with caution, examined the key, concentrated on the door, etc. In other words, each action did have a purpose originally, but only up to a certain point. That is entirely true.

A.N. Leontiyev, an author whom I would like you to write down and read¹³, has solved this problem by introducing a new term: **operation**.

13 *See Leontiyev, A.N. Deyatelnost, soznanie, lichnost [Activity, Consciousness, Personality] and Problemy razvitiya psikhiki [Problems of the Development of the Psyche]. I have discussed those issues in greater detail in my dissertation (Raichev, A. 1983. Kategoriyata "sotsialna situatsiya" v izsledvaneto na elementarnite sotsialni protsesi i strouktouri [The Category of "Social Situation" in the Study of Elementary Social Processes and Structures]. Sofia) [p.45].*

An action that is routine could become an operation. **This is, so to speak, a "has-been", past, action which has lost its purpose**, but is nonetheless repeated without being topicalized at the level of consciousness.*

**In strictly theoretical terms, it is the object rather than the action that has become more complex. Several formerly separate objects have merged into one. The world we live in is full of many complex objects constructed or, rather, submitted to us by "the authorities".*

The operation is a "has-been", past, action and, if you remember your Hegel, if something has been, then it will be. If there is an essence, then it will be repeated. You realize what I am getting at, don't you? For example, if you are learning to drive, everything you do are actions: you ease the clutch, step on the gas, etc. By the way, you are seated next to an instructor who forms your behaviour and generates your purposes. The moment they are more or less formed, you start "forgetting" them. You simply get in the car and pull off, i.e. you perform a single action only. Your mind will not reproduce the entire chain of distinct actions that lead to the car's pulling off. The actions have become operations. **But if there is a hitch in any operation, it will revert to an action.** For example, the car will not start and this happens when the driver has forgotten to turn the key in the ignition. The driving instructor will tell him/her that he/she has not turned the engine on. And he/she will be faced with a purpose: to turn the key in order

to start the engine. If everything is okay, the driver might not be aware of turning the engine on at some point.

Since operations are past actions they can revert to actions - this is an important element of our theoretical model. Actions tend to become operations. Of the millions of actions we have been trained to perform since childhood, hundreds of thousands have become operations. Just imagine that each time you approached the door you had to define a purpose the way you did when you were taught to unlock the door at the age of two... That is virtually impossible. **The living body assumes the structures of objects as operations.** Imagine that someone like us, who cannot really boast impeccable manners, was having dinner with, say, an English baronet. When it comes to using the cutlery you will notice the huge difference between action and operation - to the benefit of operation, naturally. The baronet will simply not notice the cutlery, the dainty morsels will simply pop into his mouth of their own accord, while you will be worried sick, dropping, dripping and spilling something all the time, etc. You will be simply performing actions, diligently pursuing particular purposes.

As we have already seen, our notion of the elementary particle is **triune. This is the atom of sociality.** I would like to stress this because a person is something very different from his or her sociality. He/she is social too - but as I have shown you with the example of listening to music, there are lots of things in which you could hardly distinguish a purpose, action, object and operation. Applying this pattern will not help you explain half of sexuality, or anything in human creativity. Imagine that you deliberately set out to write a poem. You might eventually come up with something, but you would do that in an entirely unacceptable way. Right now we are dealing only with that which makes up our sociality, which the existence of other people causes us. Precisely those structures account for much of humanity's fortunes and misfortunes. They have wreaked all this havoc because they have gone out of control; to top it all, they are developing autonomously. That is something like a giant, self-sufficient cancer of several billion people. This "negligible" energy which the "tiny little atom" has and (because it is autonomous) has generated our history as a social species. That is not all there is to us - I repeat, there are lots of other things to us and, God willing, let there be even more. But either way, as sociologists we are dealing with the person as lifeless - with "dead man", so to speak: with the question of how humans happen to reproduce, to recur.

Let me sum up those definitions. According to Leontiyev, **actions correspond to purposes, and activities to objects.** Leontiyev argues (and I believe this is an exceptional thought) that **human motives are objects.** I will give you an example straight away. A young man in love walks into a shop, takes out his wallet, buys flowers, runs to catch the trolley-bus, etc. (All this "in order to".) And all this is for the sake of an object: the girl he loves. If he is sincere in his activity, there would not be any purposes, but only an obvious object. In the same way a hunter who stalks his prey in the forest, loads his gun, kills an animal, drags it home etc., ultimately has a single motive: food. His motive is to feed himself and his children. He is entirely incapable of answering why he must feed the children. But the object is given to him as a motive - in this case, the child. And that is a typical, a very nice motive: anything can be done in the name of

the child - but it is impossible to explain why. It is given as the ultimate self-evidence of our behaviour, it is a primary motive of human behaviour. And that is the answer to the question about what those molecules are. Those molecules are organized existing objects in the world, which are self-evidences of our behaviour beyond which no purposes are defined. Of course, I could use this object for a particular purpose. I could, say, sell my child into slavery. From the perspective of this theory I have turned the child into an object of action, I have used him/her for a particular purpose, I have effected a change in him/her. By simply following another ultimate self-evident object - to take money and spend it on food - being incapable of upholding both motives, I have sacrificed one for the sake of the other. And something similar happens to us every day: there are two or three motives that motivate our behaviour, and we must choose one of them, turning activities into actions.

We will come back to those ultimate objects many times (at this stage we will call them self-evident objects); they can be used for a particular purpose too - they can be used to perform actions - but in that case they will be related to another activity in which we have incorporated them. Whatever you may do, there is always an ultimate object beyond which you do not look and which determines your behaviour - your motive.

Now imagine that there is a definition of the purpose of actions and objects, and all five billion people are doing this constantly. We are again faced with the spectre of the little man in the head. The movement of the described atoms cannot make sense unless there is someone who introduces order. In fact we have two factors which are constant: purposes and objects. Actions are sparks which fly between purposes and objects, they are somehow ephemeral. The little men in our heads have the ability to define purposes - they invent purposes and achieve them on the part of objects. We have again spared ourselves any intellectual effort and have produced an idealistic picture of the world: a little man in the head. Someone is doing the creating, creativity is in our heads, and the world is our object. We have already discussed this: that's our picture of the modern world.

2. [Socialized Natural Process]

This is exactly how the bourgeois world is built: distinct individuals-demiurges who restructure nature which has certain deficiencies. This world again exposes us - theoretically - to the danger of assuming that it is natural. And here we are faced with a fascinating intellectual challenge. Let us assume that elementary sociality fits our description. **If we do not find such a strange, original object that motivates action, we will inevitably come to the idea that people are rational beings which willfully define purposes.** The opposite, however, is quite difficult. We should imagine an object that is the object of (suffers from) activity, yet at the same time is not such, i.e. motivates activity. This is an extremely complicated dialectic situation. In other words, this strange object must **both be and not be an object of activity, i.e. it must be autonomous.** It must be something which elicits action from us, not something which we have made an object. Otherwise the world would be entirely lifeless and static with us ourselves as the only

engines - and we would get the profoundly rationalistic picture of the world described by mediocre and not so mediocre philosophers and sociologists. People are rational, they are faced with an object that is actually big enough - but, either way, homogeneous and lifeless - and they spurt ingenious activity from their heads. They are the only demiurges in the world. The other option, however - as I have already said - is to imagine an **object which is an object of activity and, at the same time, is autonomous.**

Are there such objects? The world is full of them. And the simplest, one of the first objects of human sociality, is fire. Imagine fire. Do you act upon it? Fire burns and you can hear its independence even in this sentence: **it burns.** If in the case of the sponge it was **me** who moved it, in this case fire does something **itself**, and I help fire do it. I perform actions around the fire - kindling, sheltering, lighting a spark, etc., but the "actor" is fire itself. **And this applies to every natural process which we appropriate or socialize.** All natural processes cannot be appropriated completely because they are not lifeless. If I were to encroach on the sovereignty of a natural process in any way, I would not "possess" it. In order to possess it, it is I who must do the natural process or maintain my own otherness. There are plenty of examples: waterfalls, boars, all tame animals, etc.

In other words, we notice a very important deficiency of the modern picture of the world associated with the little man in the head. In classical sociology, objects are inanimate, lifeless. **But in fact part - at that, the most important part of all objects - are actually animate or alive¹⁴.**

14 *Latour obviously arrives at a similar conclusion in We Have Never Been Modern; I think that it is worthwhile reading his book from such a perspective [p.50].*

And those living objects of our labour dominate our purposes. Because if I want to have fire or any other natural process, my purposes must be subordinate to that natural process. Note this: we asked ourselves how things could possibly reproduce; how our actions could possibly be repeated every day. And we found the first, albeit very basic, answer. **Humanity repeats its actions because the natural processes which it has appropriated repeat themselves.** The final, ultimate reason (with many intermediate components) for our going round in circles is the following: **there are natural processes which repeat their requirements for reproduction.** Humanity reproduces because it must reproduce its productive forces, literally speaking. If you cannot do that, you are dead.

Consequently, we have arrived at a very strange conclusion. **At the bottom, at the very bottom of social structure, is not sociality but naturalcy. Naturalcy in a processual form.** And if you study the history of humanity, you will see that we are increasingly appropriating - in a clumsy, stupid, inconsistent manner - natural resources. That is the ultimate content of our history. Those natural processes, the productive forces, are the alpha and omega of human history.

3.

I would like to offer you two options of theorizing in principle without excessive use of philosophical jargon. One approach is to ask **what is**, the other is to ask the question of **how is it possible**. Those are two radically different intellectual approaches. Something like the minor and major chords in music, which are completely independent of one another and difficult to convert. The other intellectual approach inquires about the conditions of the possibility of things. When you see an object, you can start describing it - this is a very important endeavour which is certainly not to be underestimated. On the other hand, however, you can start questioning how the particular object is possible. And then certain things that seem obvious become unnatural. This unnaturalness and the attempts to make it natural - to order it in our consciousness somehow - require our theoretical energy.

It is clear that there are social structures - that is as plain as day. They are given in very advanced forms - state, family, etc. - and can be described. This will answer the question as to **what** social structures are and, I repeat, that is a very useful activity - it makes sociology a science and brings it close to the other sciences. Physicists put a lot of hard work into observing and describing how stars are situated, for instance - but because they have an external perspective, they are not concerned with the question of how stars are possible.*

**Actually it would be enough if they could understand the origin of stars.*

They leave this to philosophers, magicians, etc. By contrast, in our world - the world of people who want to understand the structure of the social - simple description, the simple answer to the question of "what?", will hardly yield a significant result, **because most things that are self-evident are wrong**. We are immersed in the world we describe and unless we consider the question "How is it possible?", we are up against thousands of absurd things that appear to be self-evident. The term "social structure" in itself does not offer a description. As you might have noticed, I did not proceed to describe what the person getting into the car was wearing, what he/she had in his or her pockets, the colour of his or her shoes, and so on and so forth. All this can be described, but it would not take us anywhere, we can compile a huge encyclopedia of how people look. But that would be stupid because we have not yet asked a single question of "How is it possible?"

We are actually on the road on which we ask ourselves: **how is social structure possible?** I have tried to show you the ultimate reason for the existence of social structure. **Social structure means that things are repeated. If there is repetition, we call it "structure"**. We are concerned with the question of how structure is possible when there is nothing to suggest that people are in any way adjusted to social structures, that there is a special organ producing such structures. We made some analyses, I showed you the composition of elementary social action, and we came to the ultimate source of social structures: natural processes.

There are social structures because, I repeat, there are recurrent natural processes. Orthodox Marxism describes this as follows: the productive forces determine the relations of production. Broad as this definition might be, it is quite revealing. The ultimate source of sociality is indeed nature. I repeat, of sociality. Not of human mentality or of our imagination, musical talent or sexuality. Nor of our need for food (which has many other causes), but of our nourishment. Here it is very important that you understand something very subtle, which distinguishes vulgar theory from theory proper. Humanity has two sexes which go back a long way in other biological species. Those two sexes do not result from society - society found them as a precondition. But the human family, unlike the animal one, does not result from the structure of the individual. That is why people have formed so many different kinds of families in the course of their history, and those families are not independent of the type of a given society. The family structure of the swallow is fixed, coded in its genes or whatever, but: it ensues from the structure of the swallow, from the swallow itself. And we do not need any analysis apart from a descriptive one to understand how swallows live.*

**Or at least that is what we think now, following the tenets of 20th century science.*

Things are very different in the case of humans. History knows at least six or seven types of human families. And each one of those structures has been presumed to be natural. All have been presumed to be the only possible ones and should therefore be challenged with the question: how are they possible? This is an external perspective; we ought to pretend we were Martians - which is very hard because we are not. We are simply some of those people who have ultimately been driven to the hysterical condition of thinking about society (because the normal person does not). In the critical type of theorization this is done precisely by means of the "how-is-it-possible" procedure.

Let me sum up. We have arrived at the conclusion that social structures are possible because of the repetition of natural processes which we humans have appropriated. And if you go back to primitive man, you will see that the story of the origin of man is virtually the story of the appropriation of those processes. Humanity has not only appropriated but, at present, is aspiring to generate new processes. Consequently the fundamental hypothesis from which we proceed is the following. **Specific natural processes generate social structures around themselves.** The picture of the social fabric looks as follows: numerous relations among people, which are due to numerous processes which those people have appropriated and are reproducing. And by reproducing the conditions for their existence, they maintain certain relations among each other. When those theories are vulgarized, this is usually defined as follows: the productive forces determine the relations of production. Generally speaking, however, those things (fires, wild beasts, waterfalls, etc.) determine the others - the social structures. If you incorporate an unknown natural process into sociality, this process will change the social structures. **The evolution of humanity and the existence of history are due to the emergence of new natural processes which are mediated or appropriated.** This is one of Marx's very well known theses. And here we should appreciate the wonderful way in which it answers the two major questions which we formulated at the beginning. Namely, how is it

possible for things to be repeated and how is it possible for them to change without a demiurgic consciousness? The answers: things are repeated because of the repetition of appropriated natural processes; things change because other things appear. What supreme dialectic beauty! One and the same cause of two opposites!

4. [Tool]

The purpose of everything said so far was to give you a general picture of the concept I am expounding. I will now focus on two things relevant to a topic that I will be discussing in more detail later. First, we have presumed that there is definition of purpose, action and object. And this is the elementary cell, the atom, the quantum of sociality. Now imagine that we started complicating things. I want to show you how this form complicates and how it itself starts generating.

(Here we should make another methodological point. A strong theory is a theory that generates. If a theory merely describes, it is worth nothing - or, okay, almost nothing. If we have a notion, this notion should generate; this is what notions are all about - they generate something new.)

Let us complicate the scheme as follows, for instance:

** definition of purpose - action - object - object.*

I am simply adding a "neutron" to the atom. So what do I get? A possibility to perform an action upon one object which would prove to be an action upon another? For example: I have a loaf of bread which I must cut in half. For the purpose, I will use a knife. What is the status of this object, the knife? Am I acting upon it? I am obviously acting upon the loaf. I am performing the action of pressing, as a result of which the loaf is cut in half. I am acting upon one object, but the action turns out to affect another object. Where have I actually defined a purpose? No doubt, "behind" the second object. I have used the first object, upon which I acted directly, as a **tool**. It is possible to define the purpose in one place and act upon something completely different - yet ultimately achieve that purpose. In this case, what would you call the knife?

An implement of labour, an instrument, a tool.

Now let us add a "proton" to our "atom":

** definition of purpose - definition of purpose - action - object.*

What do you call this person who is not me (if I am the first to define a purpose)? The person who is actually acting upon some object which is certainly not the object of my purpose? Say, a slave. For example: I give someone a pole and tell him to start rowing. Now what is my purpose - to go to Athens where I will be awarded a laurel wreath. I am going somewhere, and this person is an excellent rower. In case he does not obey my orders, I have placed another person

at his side who is holding a nasty tool with which he beats him. And all those relations ensue from my purpose. And because of those relations people, who are also related to many other people, will repeat an action while the purpose will really be something completely different. We have thus established something important. The implement of labour, the tool, is something that can act upon one thing and produce another. The purpose has suddenly proved to be more independent. **Concentration of power is possible thanks to the existence of tools, of means.** The very fact that there is a tool makes concentration of power possible. This, by the way, is also one of the answers to the question of why there is always some degree of concentration of power in any society. Tools are actually a source of accumulating power. You realize why I am so preoccupied with power - power proves to be fundamental in this type of theory. (By the way, there is something curious about one of the first technologies of humanity, the ambush. People, instead of luring the beast the way other biological species do, chase it. They make deafening noise and chase the beast away. To all appearances, that is biologically absurd. You want to catch your prey, but instead of drawing it in you drive it off. It looks like it has outwitted you. But then it falls into a trap or ambush. **Actually, because there are tools, a degree of autonomy from those processes is possible.**) Our dependence on natural processes has decreased by the very fact that we have objects which we use with cunning.*

**Hegel's original phrase is "the cunning of reason".*

Our limits, however, remain natural. I might devote my whole life to the purpose of turning this pen into an Indian elephant, but that simply won't work. There is a single field in which people are really free to do anything they want: games. There they attribute functions to objects and nature is almost stripped of sovereign status.

5.

The next thing I want to tell you is something more about purpose. I have called it "purpose" in some cases and "word" in others. Before we move on, however, I must make another methodological point. I must discuss the difference between **initial form** and **advanced form**. To save time, I will use an example. To put it simply, the initial form of money looks like this: commodity-money-commodity. Money is - initially - a means of exchanging two things. That is what money is originally, that is its prime essence. The advanced form of money may look like this: money-money. There may be no commodity at all, it might have virtually disappeared. I go to the money-lender, borrow 100 leva and must eventually pay him back 150. But it is the same money with the same properties - it has simply gone a long way through many mediations. To our great regret, we see the whole world in advanced forms. **And we see things which are, in essence, different phases of something, as different types.***

**To seek phases behind what appears to us as types is a methodological imperative bequeathed to us by Hegel if not even by Schelling.*

That is one of the worst methodological traps threatening us in our analysis of sociality. This is easiest to understand in describing sexual perversions. You will remember that, according to

Freud, the first sexual object of the libido is the mother's breast (oral stage), the anal stage comes later and, after several other stages, the sexual organ comes last. That is the story of infantile sexuality. The objects shift and the infant passes through several stages¹⁵.

15 More precisely, there are five of them, Freud says they are five, but that is not important in this case... My lectures, let me repeat, are not a source of reference. You can find the details in the results of the division of labour - in this particular case, say, in the Dictionary of Freudian Terms, where you can see when a term was introduced and from whom it was borrowed, or how many references there are to the anal stage in each of Freud's works... [p.58].

If the infant does not pass all those stages and remains fixated at one of them, we will see the adult as a pervert. We will not be able to see that this is, essentially, us ourselves, only at an earlier stage. In fact, what we perceive as perverse is a stage of our own development - only it is a past stage. The important thing is that since we are observing from the position of adults and the person observed is adult too, we see the stage as a type.

We have the same thing in the case of money. There is a commodity-money-commodity exchange, and a money-money exchange. They appear to us to be different types. But they are stages. The problem is that objects appear to us in such advanced forms and we need time and effort to identify their initial form.

6. [Activity and Communication]

Generally speaking, there are two things that happen to people and they are in relations of direct opposition. One is **activity** and the other is **communication**. In the theory which I am expounding, those are the two fundamental processes which comprise human sociality in the sense noted above. The sociality of the lifeless, puppet-like being. My thesis is that nothing but activity or communication actually turns us into puppets. This may be activity or communication, or a rather complex combination of the two. I will later explain the sense in which I am using the word "combination", because the two are actually incompatible. The simplest way to make sure that two things are opposite is to establish that upon the appearance of one the other disappears. Imagine this activity: a dozen-odd men in a line are throwing melons from a truck to a shop. What is the motive of this activity: to pass the melons on from point A to point B. This is a collective activity with a clear division of labour. Now imagine that you substitute communication for action. One man throws the melon and the other responds with "What?". Let me put this in another way. I have this routine: I walk into my room and switch the light on. Imagine that I am looking for the switch but cannot find it. But there are people in the room. So what happens? Someone shows me where the switch is. This means that the activity has been interrupted, the object manifests some sort of uncontrollable property, it resists routine activity. The simplest and most natural response would be to ask, "How do you switch the light on here?" In other words, to move to communication. The important thing is that the involvement of communication in activity is related to some sort of

deficiency of the respective activity, some sort of interruption, and communication actually restores the activity.

Why is the opposite impossible? If you ask me what my name is, there is no activity that could replace my answer: "My name is Andrey." The reason **is that communication has formed the structure of activity, and not vice versa**. We are active beings insofar as communication has made us such. The codes of our social activity are not inborn. We sit on the chair in a certain way because that is how we have been taught to - there is simply no "natural way of sitting". There are myriads of ways to eat and how you actually do it depends on communication only. **The structures of communication have determined the structures of activity as their opposite**. Because there is a huge, fundamental difference which we must bear in mind: **communication is freedom, whereas activity is repetition. Communication is a leap in the dark** - you might not get a response at all or you might get an unexpected response, etc. But do not think of communication only as the ability to speak. Communication is a "sign-for-sign" exchange. However, the exchanged signs are ultimately transformed into action, they somehow sink in and are absorbed by activity. Activity proves, after all, to be the ultimate reality.

7.

There are two classes of relations. **One comprises the relations among us - and that is communication**. The other is **our relation with nature - and that is activity**. Ultimately the relations among us, which are the degree of our freedom, ensue from our relations with nature. That is why humanity has a history - because new things "are born" in the relations among us. And here is the general answer to our second question. We have seen that objects "emit", emanate or issue social structures. Relations among people are based on natural relations but, nonetheless, that is not all there is to them. Communication stems from objects, forms activity and subordinates us to objects. But it is nevertheless autonomous. You will not find a compulsory ending even in the silliest dialogue. A chance conversation might turn into anything; when talking, people might do something completely different. That is the area in which we are not simply creatures in the service of natural processes.

8.

At some point communication may be **enactivated**. There are numerous examples which show that communication has become very similar to activity. I go to the ticket counter and ask for a ticket. That is almost not communication, it is almost an action. My "May I have a ticket, please?" is tantamount to pressing a button on a ticket machine. I have spoken, but that is not communication. **I have simply defined a purpose. Whenever that happens to communication, communication is simply enactivated**. The newsreader who reads the news on TV is not involved in communication. (Of course, he/she could be if he/she chose to do so.) In your turn, you watch the screen and communicate with the newsreader, but he/she does not. In any case, we will have either communication or activity. What is the difference? To have activity you must have distinct actions. In other words, purposes transformed into

actions that have changed objects. In communication proper, where there is an exchange of signs, there are no subsequent actions and there might not be mediating purposes. In the case of the melons, when someone throws me a melon and I respond with "What?" as a result of which the melon falls, there are two possible explanations. I might have wanted - inadequately but in all sincerity - to communicate with the other person at this particular moment. But I might have also been engaged in another activity - I might have wanted to show what a bad worker he really is and performed my action for that particular purpose - instead of catching the melon, I might have struck up a conversation. And I would have achieved my purpose, I would have acted, albeit verbally. Words could also be used in action, but that is not their "primary" nature. The "nature" of communication is to have no idea of how it will end. **In real-life communications you do not know how they will end.** Remember the situation in Bulgaria a few years ago, for example - no one knew how a demonstration would end. It could indeed have ended in different ways. There is also a more complicated variant. One half of the demonstrators do not know what will happen, but the other know perfectly well. And this applies to other spheres of life too - say, to love. When two people confess to being in love with each other, they have no plan of how this communication will end, they have no purpose. To the extent that they might even commit suicide - there are such cases, you know.

* * *

We now have the micro-elements of the world which we are describing. It is built like this: we have processes of activity, which consist of elementary actions (respectively, definition of purposes). We have processes of transformation of natural things. But nature has proved to be far less passive than it looks - on the contrary, it is full of active elements, i.e. socialized processes. The world is full of tools, i.e. of ways to define purposes by means of something else, and of processes of communication in which society somehow breaks down. Society simply does not correspond to itself, it gets a chance to change. And if we consider the history of humanity, we will see clearly that **activities reproduce, whereas communication changes.** This is the new way in which we approached the first question: how could things possibly repeat themselves and, repeating themselves, change. That should be impossible. But it is not, because that is how we are built - to be constantly immersed in nature. Yet there is nevertheless an area in which we are not in nature. In communication, we reside in ourselves.

Plovdiv, 7 November 1997

Lecture III

Things as Carriers of Social Relations

Today we will examine the contradiction between communication and activity - which we have already discussed - from a different perspective. We will be dealing with the category of **crisis**. As you will see, this category is also related to the category of **mediator**, and to the problem of **power**. Those three categories are of cardinal importance, they are crucial to the theory which I am expounding.

As you remember, the motive of activity is its object. This is the final self-evidence which people face. They see nothing behind it and that is what motivates them. You remember the relation between action and activity - this relation is very important. Activity is determined by an "object-motive". Actions are the constituent, purpose-mediated, components of activity. The motive is not a purpose, it is much more. The motive actually breaks down into purposes and that is the structure of activity. I open the pack of cigarettes (remember the example), take a cigarette, light it, inhale, etc., **in order to** smoke. My motive to smoke is the cigarette. This motivates me, incites me to action, which is structured in a quite complicated way which I described last time. If they lose their purpose, actions can become operations. When actions become routine, the purposes disappear, they are no longer recognized and do not mediate activity. In this case actions take some sort of latent form as automatisms of the body but not of consciousness. And in this sense we call them **operations**. An action may become an operation and that happens when it proceeds smoothly and, vice versa, it becomes an action again if there is any problem. To remind you of this mechanism, let me give you an example. You all remember how hard it was for you to learn to tie your shoelaces when you were young. Tying shoelaces is extremely difficult for children, and takes them ages to learn. Today that is an operation for you, something which your body simply does automatically. You could easily be listening to Beethoven while tying your shoelaces. To be topicalized as an action, there must be some sort of obstacle - let us say, your laces become tangled or tear.

1. [Elementary Social Crisis]

Let us proceed to the category of crisis.¹⁶

16 *I wrote a paper on this problem in 1986. All who want to study it in detail may read this paper in *Kritika i Humanizum*, No. 4/1993 and No. 5/1998: 60 [p.65].*

There are two possible approaches again: I could tell you the general definition and then go into details; or we could proceed from a concrete case as researchers. I prefer the second approach.

Let us imagine a very simple activity that involves a single object and proceeds smoothly. For

the time being, let us ignore the numerous complicated cases in which one object determines the activities of many people. And to keep things simple, let us imagine that the only thing we are doing to this object is to eliminate it - that could be a sort of consumption. Let us say, we are having coffee, someone is having coffee. For the purpose, we need to apply very strong abstraction. I take a sip, then another, and that is all there is in the world. If we abide by the condition that there is just one object and one activity, what crisis could there be in this activity? And another condition: in this case we will lend the category of crisis the simplest possible content - interruption. (It is obvious that the crisis interrupts something, something goes wrong.)

What crisis could we have?

"You finish your coffee."

You are absolutely right, you have obviously applied abstraction very well. Because there could be all sorts of crises: my cat turns and breaks my cup, my boss tells me to stop with that coffee, etc. But in this case when we have a single object, only one crisis is possible: there's no more coffee.

How will I resolve this crisis?

"You pour yourself another cup of coffee."

Right again. Because there are thousands of other options in this case - for example, I might decide that I am giving up coffee for good, etc.

What has happened to our object? We come to an important point. Coffee, which until now was nothing but a brown liquid steaming right before me, has suddenly acquired a very important definition. The coffee has become a poured cup of coffee. That is nothing short of a miracle. Because it was not poured, it was simply a cup of coffee. At this particular moment it has acquired a past, a history. Incidentally, this applies to any crisis in general. **A crisis makes the history of things visible and history in general is visible because of the crises of things.**

You cannot decipher the history of things when they are crisis-free.

But let us go back to our coffee. What does the situation remind you of? This is "has-been" poured coffee. You probably remember a Hegelian category which I discussed at the beginning. What is that which has been? Essence. Essence is past being. The cup of coffee has merely revealed its essence or, rather, bared one of its essences - it has proved to be a poured cup of

coffee. The revelation of its essence has been provoked precisely by the crisis. This, of course, is a ridiculous example, but you can apply the same pattern to other spheres and you will see that this mental mechanism always works.

Any crisis¹⁷ will always:

- a) give things a past;
- b) and that is their essence.

17 *Certain definitions of the category of "crisis" are reminiscent of Hegel's "contradiction" in The Science of Logic - especially in Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences [p.67].*

That is why, incidentally (generally speaking), people acquire real history only during social cataclysms, live in their past only under extreme circumstances, etc. There is a category which you will probably be discussing in detail with Deyan Deyanov: "practical critique". This is a form of practical critique. Of course, you might very well object that one could presume intellectually that the coffee has been poured. For instance, before downing the last drop you might ask yourself what would happen if you downed it, and realize that there would be no more coffee in the cup. So you would have to pour yourself another. Actually you are thus taking a short cut compared to the path you would normally follow in real life. Your mental contact would not introduce new content, but would only shorten or speed up the crisis. (In parenthesis, and this is critical to understanding crisis as a category - 99% of crises do not occur practically but mentally only.)

Let us see if this mechanism works in reverse. My object has multiplied, the crisis has divided it, created its history. Yet the coffee now includes the pot from which I am pouring it. They are somehow related as coffee-pot, the crisis has expanded our mental experiment. So I go on pouring and drinking, again and again... That is all I do, I have no other activity. What would happen when there is no more coffee in the pot either? By the selfsame familiar procedure, another object would appear as the history of this pot. This history would be a bit more complicated - that is the cupboard with the coffee beans, the coffee grinder, the boiling water, etc. Now what would happen if the pot is too hot and I cannot pour my coffee? The crisis would introduce yet another object, which is not an element of the coffee's history, i.e. it is a mediator. Since I cannot connect the pot with the coffee, cannot posit the object within the framework of activity, I introduce a new object. In this particular case that would be some piece of cloth with which I would pick the pot and pour myself coffee. What if this happened to me every day? The piece of cloth would undoubtedly become a pot holder and, moreover, I would drive a nail in the wall of my kitchen and hang the pot holder there. I would introduce it into the activity and the pot holder would become an element of the history of this activity. In other words, the crisis would be **productive**.*

**Eventually, however, the pot holder would not be distinct from the pot at all. Every "resolved" crisis is simply one of the "natural" objects in the world.*

For a moment please concentrate on what the French psychologist Henri Pierron conducted as a mental experiment. Imagine that the Earth's entire population was wiped out for some reason and that the only survivors were two-year-olds. Would they be able to reproduce the generation that had gone? As far as they were concerned, there would be no objects in the world at all, they would not know what those objects were. Besides, they would not know that not only mentally, but they would be unable to control the material body of civilization. But as I will show you, that is not a question of knowledge.

Back to the main point. A crisis may emanate a mediator for its resolution. Moreover, that is the general case - crises are resolved by mediators. If the crisis is the minus, the mediator is the plus. Or, more precisely, **what appears to us in process as a crisis, appears to us in repose as a mediator**. This is a difficult thought to fathom, but it is very true. Mediators are crises, only in a "solid" state. **They are perfect opposites, yet they are also identical**. Why are they opposites? Because the mediator resolves the crisis, it eliminates the crisis. At the same time, no crisis is resolved (if at all) without a mediator, and no mediator is a mediator unless it has originated from a crisis. If the crisis is not resolved through a mediator, it would simply destroy that which is in crisis. In this case we have death, destruction. There are crises that are not resolved through mediators. For example, much to our regret most of us undergo such a crisis in our 70s or 80s and there are no mediators.

Ergo, crisis resolution sets in motion some sort of mediating structure. Marx has an ingenious but little known formulation in *Das Kapital*. This is what he says: the crisis proves (shows) that things which seem different are actually identical, whereas things which seem identical are actually different.*

**Simply put, Marx thinks of the crisis as phase-shifting. In *Theories of Surplus Value*, Marx says that the crisis is forcible restoration of the unity of phases that have become autonomous, and forcible transformation into something autonomous of phases which, in essence, are an integral whole.*

Generally speaking, this applies to all possible crises. The micro-crisis which we observed actually proves that two entirely different things - the pot and coffee (a child from Pierron's mental experiment would not realize that they are related and they would not be related for him/her) prove to be one and the same thing. They only look distinct, but are actually related. What has topicalized the relation?

The crisis in an activity.

Still, let us follow our coffee-drinker to the end. How far could the crisis go? Let us assume that there is no more coffee in the cupboard either. We start tracing the history of the coffee beans. The "has-beeness", the past being, of those beans is the shop. You go to the shop and ask for coffee beans. And if there is a crisis at this point, i.e. you are told that they do not have coffee, you cannot go further. That is, theoretically you can, but it will be absurd. It is absurd, say, to go to Costa Rica, plant coffee, wait for it for a year to bear fruit, pick the beans and then swim back home...

Something very odd has happened here. You cannot continue criticizing the object, you cannot follow the line of crises and resolve them through ever more mediators - pots, pot holders, cupboards - the way the crisis has been resolved so far. Why? What is so odd about what has just happened? There is no more coffee in the pot - there is coffee in the cupboard; there is no more coffee in the cupboard - there is coffee in the shop. But why isn't there anything after the shop ran out of coffee?

The reason is that instead of activity there is communication. The person is in a form that is the very opposite of activity, he/she cannot uphold the framework of his or her individual activity and must communicate. Instead of the object of activity, he/she is faced with a human being with whom he/she must communicate. This brings us to something of critical importance. Communication has proved to be the opposite of activity not only in terms of structure as we suspected. (Because we showed that activity has an object that is its motive, communication does not. Activity has distinct components: actions mediated by purposes, communication does not.)

The social fabric consists of two entirely different forces, two phenomena, call them as you will. One is activity and the other is communication. And they are direct opposites - one starts where the other ends. And, by the way, as we shall see in a moment, one starts because the other ends.

2. [Things as "Absorbed" Human Relations]

Now let us go back to our boar or fire around which a community is "dancing" and, as we said, generally appropriating natural processes. During the hunt someone starts making noise and performing an entirely anti-biological action - chasing the beast away even though his motive is to catch the beast. And this proves rational. Why? Because there is someone else hiding behind the rock who will catch the boar. If chasing game was simply an individual activity, the above-mentioned noise-making individual first must be crazy, and second, will starve to death. Because his actions are the opposite of any predator's. What guarantees that my actions will actually prove to be in harmony with the other's? For example, my action is beating the tom-tom and his is piercing the boar with a spear. What conjoins those actions? Undoubtedly, communication. You realize, don't you, that a common purpose cannot emerge without communication. Without the communication process, common activity is "wooden iron". You do not necessarily have to think of communication as words; the point is that individual activities come together in some sort of way. **The process of communication starts where**

activity ends, and we now see it quintessentially as follows: **apart from being an autonomous force, the communication process practically "conjoins" human activities.** Yet here we are again, faced with our little man in the head whom we have been fighting from the very beginning and will continue to fight. It turns out that activity is the "language" of my body, whereas communication is the language of my "head". And because there are me and the little man, with two heads, we prove how much smarter we are than this boar and we kill it. That is fatal. Think of the consequences of a theoretical move in which communication is regarded as the opposite of activity, one being material and the other ideal. You will immediately see the demiurge in the head of the person who creates the world of his or her activities. He/she invents his or her communication and, hence, his or her community. And you will get such ingenious results as, for instance, "people dress to keep warm", "people marry to have children", "people go to work to earn money". In other words, you will get an extremely silly and profoundly rationalistic theory and you will never understand what sort of a world you are living in. Because the question is that the process of communication is just as unconscious as activity. Its structures are just as randomly formed as those of activity. True, it can be consciously regulated, but so can activity.

As you remember, in nature we found a type of natural process which we appropriate and which structures activity in depth. In this connection, we noted what I believe is an extremely important methodological point. If we imagine a world without processes which determine us, without boars we chase and fires we stoke, it turns out that the world is lifeless, that we are its only demiurges and humans are lone lords and masters of nature. You remember the consequences of that: virtually all possible negative consequences of Modernity. Modernity essentially boils down to a perception of nature as totally lifeless and passive, an object of our active voluntarism. We do with nature as we will. If we cannot do as we will, this simply means that we are doing it badly. We want to abandon this traditional picture, which has caused humanity so much misery. We should imagine that activity is not lord and master of the world - on the contrary, it is one of its elements. **Humanity simply has processes which it services, and those are socialized processes. We are somehow subordinate to nature.** It now turns out that we must apply the same line of reasoning to communication. Prima facie, communication seems structured as follows: each one of us has a little man in the head (actually, what language does he think in?). (This is like Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theory of the origin of language. He describes the State, the family and other structures as a social contract, and ultimately argues that language is a social contract too. Drawn up in which language, by the way? This is a typical Modernist absurdity of self-confidence and narcissism.) We must imagine the very opposite and try to build a picture in which our activity is subordinate to the processes in the world, just as our communication is secondary in relation to some sort of things among us. Ergo, we have to find entities which, similar to the boar, are self-propelled things. Generally speaking, this is actually a question that ought to be raised in any sociological theory and that ought to torment us. Is society the sum of its individuals, or is it something more? Are there things in society which are something more than individuals? Does humanity boil down to the five billion people on Earth, or is it something more? As the ancient philosophers thought, is the universal on a par with the particular, or is it simply a product of our intellectual exercise? I

deeply believe that the universal is always on a par with the particular and that communities are not simply dissolved in singularities in the world, but exist autonomously.*

**Unless by "exist" we mean something hidden that is in surplus and that "exists in space" in a very different way. This substitution has been commonplace ever since Descartes, but I do not see why we should accept it.*

A theory according to which there are only individuals in the world and everything is reducible to them and their conventions, is a theory that presupposes rational activity on the part of those atomized individuals.**

***The idea of communism is profoundly Modern from this perspective: Society is - ultimately - rationalized. At that, the motive for that rationalization is ignored, yet this motive is deeply irrational. Care for the small, the weak...*

It also presupposes that this rational activity is capable of reaching other individuals by extra-linguistic and extra-social means. This is impossible, this is an **illusion that stems from another illusion - that consciousness and self-consciousness are identical**.

To imagine the world as a sum of subjects who control their communications means to imagine the world as subjects self-conscious of everything. Conceptually speaking, only God could do that. God is the only Being whose consciousness and self-consciousness may overlap. That is precisely why in the Modern, Enlightened picture of the world Man is God. That is precisely what is expected of Man: to be self-conscious of all his actions. God's deputy, the scientist, is self-conscious of half, while an Indian is hardly self-conscious of anything. That is why you turn a "redskin" into God as follows: you capture him, brush his teeth all day long, beat him, etc., until he finally becomes God. Of course he never does, things take a truly tragic turn, the Indians who instigate the others to stop wanting to become God are shot dead, and so on and so forth. The entire moral pathos of the Modern Age comes from the conceptual effort to ultimately adjust man to this profoundly bourgeois doctrine¹⁸.

18 *On the expansion of Modernity and the price of this expansion, on whether we have the right to impose our good on the others and to civilize them, see Tzvetan Todorov's *The Conquest of America* (according to Todorov, the conquest of America is one of the major genocides in human history...). On a critique of Modernity from this perspective see "Arheologiya na demokratiyata" ["Archaeology of Democracy"], a report from a survey conducted by the Institute for Critical Social Studies in Sofia [p.74].*

By virtue of its very structure, everything in the bourgeois world itself is duplicated and co-measured, because the demiurgic consciousness-self-consciousness must be able to go everywhere; it has access to the whole domain of truthfulness. Everything within this domain is objective and anything beyond it is not objective at all. The picture of this total

commensuration is due to the bourgeois, for whom the whole world boils down to activities and their products. The world is one and infinitely accessible for bourgeois activity, for capital respectively, and hence, for its theoretician. By theoretician I mean the type of rationality established at some point after Galileo. Incidentally, to paraphrase Galileo himself, capitalism means to value what is valuable, and to make valuable what is not so. More or less that is the claim of modern science: that is the very idea of mathematics as a universal scientific language. That is precisely why this world has seen outbreaks of violence on a scale that has no precedent in human history¹⁹.

19 *This is demonstrated well in Georgi Fotev. 1986. Sotsialna realnost i vuobrazhenie. Sotsiologichesko izsledvane vurhou Renesansa [Social Reality and Imagination. A Sociological Study of the Renaissance]. Sofia: Naouka i Izkoustvo Press [p.75].*

3.

This was a digression, but the truth is that most classical theories of communication are absurd. **They are based on the presupposition that the person communicates self-consciously. The lifeless world of passive things is populated by rational beings who communicate. The word is something like a means.***

**Language is perceived as a means. That is, as a tool through which one acts. Communication is regarded as one of the types of human activity. Absurd as this might be, it is theoretically inevitable for the modern scientist.*

Let us try to disprove this as a mental construction. To communicate rationally means to mediate every act of communication by means of a purpose. That is, **to communicate rationally means that my words should be my actions**. Admittedly, this does happen. I say, "May I have a ticket to Varna, please" - an utterance that is an action. There is a clear purpose, I articulate this purpose clearly. Instead of rushing behind the counter and snatching the ticket from the clerk's hands, I simply avoid this by replacing it by something shorter and more comprehensible. This action of mine is mediated by a purpose. If we assume that it is true that all my words are rational, this means that each word of mine is indeed mediated by a purpose. How is this purpose formulated? Obviously, in words. Hence we have the sheer nonsense of supposedly having mediated our words through words which, in their turn, have mediated words through words, etc. Hegel calls this **schlechte Unendlichkeit** - bad or spurious infinity. Besides being methodologically wrong, this claim is ridiculously lame.

What, then, is communication? **The alternative is that we are not masters of our words and, instead, there are some sort of things in society which somehow extract our words**. Like lighting a fire which orders our actions. Which are those things that are the hidden units of communication, which structure our communication, extract it from us and organize it in an invisible way? Because the presumption that the person is the source of his or her communication, that communication flows from him/her freely depending on bodily needs - for

instance, the person is hungry, has sexual needs, etc. - produces a very long and dull social theory. And that is precisely how 90% of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance theories of the world are structured. But what alternative do we have, how can we think of the world as a world that governs our communication? It somehow turns out that there are other subjects of communication apart from people. And this gives rise to a thought that is rather scary and that you would rather avoid. Yet you must not, the line of reasoning is entirely correct. If we are demiurges of our communication, there is someone else who communicates, but in some sort of invisible way. This thought is indeed worth pursuing. But please don't think that I will be talking about ghosts.

Let us go back to something which I mentioned at the very beginning. You might examine this pack of cigarettes for two hundred years and still fail to establish that it is mine. There is nothing material in it that makes it mine. Yet none of you will take it on your way out, I hope. I will. So it seems to say something, it somehow indicates that it is mine. The truth is that **99.9% of our communication is absorbed, embodied, by objects**. Or, as Marx says, **objects are an embodiment of social relations**. And we have indeed established several similar cases: the familiar case of the orange which is round, orange in colour and costs five leva. The fact that it costs five leva is not a property of the orange at all, but its owner's relation with me. Or even more complicated: those are relations of all of us at the same time. Because the seller charges five leva, i.e. a totally absurd piece of paper which he/she takes in exchange for a very real orange. He/she, however, looks happier than me even though I have eaten the orange while he/she has received a piece of paper. That is due to all of you. The property of the orange "to cost" is not a natural property, but is somehow attributed to it by us all. What does "us all" mean - those are our relations. Consequently, **our relations have become its property**. In general, all social things, every single one of them, have absorbed a multitude of social relations. And upon every contact with those things people reproduce not only the natural human-thing relation, but all social relations or part of them. That is how society works: communication is **not** but only **appears to be** a free flow of signs from one person to another. Communication is much more than that. And if we have to define its limits, we will arrive at the following conclusion: **all possible limits of activity border on forms of communication which, however, have turned into properties of things. Things "embody" social relations and that is why activities are conjoined in this particular way**, and we pass each other in the street in silence, succeeding in tacitly reproducing a giant social organization of labour. Without any single centre monitoring everything that occurs, people do one and the same thing every time. This, in fact, is our original puzzle: how is it possible to have order in this apparent chaos, when there is no single consciousness that regulates? **This is possible because things are carriers of social relations**. Whereas we are only the surrounding appropriators of those social relations. Henri Pierron's hypothesis may be demonstrated theoretically: children would be incapable of appropriating their social relations from things and, for that very reason, if all individuals aged over two were to disappear, those children would not grow up to be like us. They would simply be incapable of taking their mutual relations from things. Relations among people are not built by people themselves but are given in the things which they have, and can be regulated by people themselves to a very, very limited extent. I am certainly not referring to relations of ownership only. All sociality is encoded in our things, which are conglomerates of social

relations which we bring to life whenever we touch them. This is yet another general answer to the question of how reproduction is possible. Reproduction, repetitio and the very essence of humanity, are due to the fact that things carry social relations. **Things are not only an object of activity, but also a subject of communication.**

Let us go back to the coffee example which we discussed at the beginning of this lecture. What made me realize in the shop that the person behind the counter did not stand between the coffee and me, as a result of which I did not treat him/her as a physical obstacle - I did not remove this person for the purpose of getting my coffee? What is it that made him/her a shopkeeper who I believed had run out of coffee and, say, did not rush to search his or her storeroom? What makes the shopkeeper a shopkeeper? Figuratively speaking, **the counter**. More precisely, **the shop itself**. It is the shop that makes a shopkeeper a shopkeeper. Try to imagine a shopkeeper without a shop, and you will see that it is impossible. The opposite, however, is possible. I am giving you this example to demonstrate that in the simplest, even vulgar sense, things carry social relations. I have never seen the so-called shopkeeper in my life before, but I undoubtedly have entirely clear and simple relations with him/her and that is due to the counter.

"Doesn't the fact that he/she is a shopkeeper actually make the shop a shop too? Because if he/she were not selling inside, it would simply be a room with shelves."

That is a beautiful question and it is worth discussing. You say, "He/she is a shopkeeper." Undoubtedly there should be some shopkeeper, but the word "he/she" is not related to that in any way. "Shopkeeper" is a property that ensues from the existence of the shop itself. This is a predicate which exists beyond and independent of any subject. True, if it is not attributed to a subject, it cannot become a predicate. But this is a property of every possible predicate in the world, you cannot find a predicate in itself. Strawberries are red - but redness cannot exist in itself, you must attribute it to something. But shopkeeping as such does exist - and this is very important - beyond and independent of the concrete individual. And anyone who stands behind the counter is a shopkeeper unless he/she makes a special effort to show that he/she is not. For example, singing nonstop that he/she is not a shopkeeper. People, however, would wonder what sort of shopkeeper that was supposed to be. That is exactly what would happen, because he/she is a shopkeeper by the fact that he/she is standing there, the social relation itself is there and he/she "dons" it. As I said, the predicate must be carried by a subject, and that is even easier to understand in the context of a relation. In our case this is a relation absorbed, embodied, in the counter, which is reproduced between two people who appear on both sides of the counter. As you understand, the relation is defined by something like the following structure:

A - R - B.

A correlates to **B** and if there is no **A** and **B**, the relation is latent only²⁰.

20 *Here I have used the symbols of modern mathematical logic and marked this relation as "R" for the sake of clarity only; a mathematical logician would never designate a reified relation as the counter in this way - incidentally, s/he would never accept reification of relations either [p.80].*

And in this sense our counter (I don't know why this particular word came to my mind) is the relation itself. It is very important that you understand that the universal exists on a par with the particular. (Because shopkeeper is universal, it is considerably more universal than I or me.) Actually, I can utter the sentence "I am a shopkeeper", but saying "Shopkeeper is me" is sheer nonsense. **The universal exists on a par with the particular, but the particular appropriates it - at that, in a way that is very important for us.***

**Let me note that in Modern theory relations are usually between people. This is a shopkeeper because I the buyer treat him/her as such. S/he is playing a role. So am I. There are no objects: it is all a convention. The scientist feels liberally free. "Slave" is a role, and so is "master"...*

Imagine a society in which things do not carry social relations. And every single time a new buyer turns up, you need a mechanism of initiating the shopkeeper. Because if he/she is not there behind the counter, i.e. if there is no thing, how could he/she possibly appropriate a relation? The thing alone attributes this to him/her - at that, please note, in a very strange way. So far we have distinguished two types of things- autonomous things (which make us elements of nature) and tools (means).

Let me give you another example. A defence ministry employee means someone who can pass through a certain door that is off-limits to someone else. This door is the relation between the employee of the said ministry and the other person who does not work there. It is another matter that if I try to walk in and at some point the door lets me through, behind it there is someone who will turn me back. But that is another, very difficult question, which we will be dealing with later. In the case of the counter we might presume that a very bad-mannered buyer will jump over the counter and, ignoring the shopkeeper, take what he/she wants. If the social relation does not work, i.e. if there is a crisis not in an individual relation but in collective activity, then a number of mechanisms restoring order will be set in motion. Society has developed ways to cope with such crises. This happens only if the object fails to work as a social relation, but it generally does work.

4.

Relations are carried by things themselves. Yet it turns out that the thing combines two things - **it is both a thing and a carrier of our relations**. Now I will ask you to write down four words and define them very briefly, blotting out your sociological consciousness. The words are "flag", "coin", "jacket" and "road". I want you to give a brief definition as an answer to the question

"What's a flag?" etc. You are bound to come up with the normal definition that will be suggested by nine in ten people:

flag - a piece of cloth which bears the national coat of arms and serves as...

coin - a piece of metal used as money that serves as...

jacket - an outer garment used in particular cases...

road - a public passage... /paved.../ asphalted track...

As you see, something's wrong with our definition of "road", and I will tell you why in a moment. The procedure which you applied to the first three words is, in essence, the procedure which we traced backwards as genesis. A flag is a piece of cloth - i.e. you define the thing as natural; next comes which... - and here you define the relation. **You have separated the material content and defined the relation which it carries.** Your definition might be better or worse, but that does not really matter - the point is that this is the way to define a thing. Why? Because this is its essence, this is the **duality that it possesses. On the one hand, it is simply a natural thing but, on the other, it carries social relations.** That is why a coin is a piece of metal, you said, and proceeded to list the social relations which it carries. By drawing your attention to a particular thing, I have placed it in crisis; it can no longer work, it cannot be bypassed. Otherwise for any adult it is self-evident what any of those objects is. But if you make him/her stop, unable to bypass the object, he/she will promptly resort to practical critique. He/she will demonstrate - please remember these categories - its **material content** and its **social form**. Every single thing in the world has material content, i.e. is natural, and carries social form.

Let us go back to the definition of "road", with which we obviously had a problem. The road is such an ancient and difficult form that 20 or 30 smart people spent two whole minutes trying to separate its material content from its social form - and failed. The road seems to have material content only, it apparently carries no social relation. Yet in fact it does - **the road carries too many social relations, and it is quite difficult to identify the material carrier.** That is why you started talking about purely material carriers of the road - asphalt, pavement... Because you failed to identify the social relations, you started groping for material contents. Incidentally, **each social form is a form of inequality. Things which are equal for all are not social but purely natural.** That is why to understand if something is a carrier of social relations, you must see if it divides people in two. The coin, for instance, divides people in a categorical way, and so does the jacket. We have not established this in the case of the road. Nevertheless, let me tell you that almost 6% of all people are barred from using main roads. And if they are seen there they are caught and handed over to the authorities. Who are those people? Wrong guess: they are young children. They are caught and handed over to parental authority.

5. ["Live" and "Lifeless" Power. Social Order]

I am finding it very difficult to explain things and have the feeling that in the final count you won't understand anything. Either way, we will continue with this line of analysis next time - with the category of **artefact**.

Let us go back to the categories of communication and activity. Remember how we described the main relation between the two? Which category did we apply to the mechanism of "saying-doing" when, in fact, one person gives an order and another carries it out? "Power."

Generally speaking, that's right. The substance of every possible power is that the words of some turn into actions of others, communication turns into activity. If it is true that things carry social relations, this leads to a very strange conclusion. Namely, that 99.9% of power in society is concentrated in things.

For example, the counter "says" something like: "Stay where you are!" I am a buyer and, in this capacity, will not go round and behind the counter. Actually, let us analyze this example. Here's the counter. Along comes a child who is not yet engaged in this social relation. Besides, of course, a counter does not carry any social relations unless there are people, and is nothing but a plain board. The child starts going round the counter in order to get to the chocolates. At this point his Granny who is holding his hand tells him: "You don't go round counters." And this happens, let us say, three times. The fourth time the child no longer needs his Granny, **the counter itself has become a natural object.***

**This is not a form of "training" the child. Or, more precisely, it is not training only. Yet another object appears in the child's world.*

Or, actually, plays the role of authority, of power. The grandmother's authority is parental authority, in fact the purest type of authority, power. "Say-do" here materializes in the most literal sense. The important point, however, is the following: **the grandmother's live power over the child has passed over to the object, becoming its power.** Saying that the counter is in power sounds somewhat ridiculous. But I cannot picture you smiling if we were talking about money. And this applies to lots of things, actually to the most important mediators in any society.

We will now establish something important. **Every thing that has absorbed a social relation is, in this capacity, a mediator.** You have seen that where activity is disrupted a mediator appears and "sticks" it back together; the points where activity is no longer disrupted are mediators, i.e. the points where it is assembled. In essence, society is an assembly of those mediators. And the material body of civilization, all things, are simply a multitude of stronger or weaker mediators with their own behaviour which we go round in circles. We can now go back to our counter. It has proved to work. Let us define this by the following term: **lifeless power.** There is an even shorter term: **order.**

I will stop telling you this as a whodunit and give you the definition. It goes like this: **what appears to us as live in motion as power, appears to us as lifeless in repose as order.** Order is lifeless power, power that does not speak topically. Order is where the thing "replaces" the word. **When it fails to function effectively as things that have absorbed social relations, power comes to life.** We are the target of billions of power impulses, they come from each social thing with which we come in contact, within whose perimeter we fall. Where a thing fails to have power over me, there appears what I see as power: the live person. (The aforementioned ministry with the door and the guy behind it.) Consequently power is not, as the everyday person sees it, a group of order-givers. Power is order itself. And the basic unit of order is the thing-mediator. Things do their giant dance, we are their puppets cast amidst them. (Although that is not all we are.) There is an important vision that breaks the everyday habit. At face value things are passive, our humble servants which we order about. On the other hand there are those bad old guys who won't let us do so. In fact, it is the other way round - the bad old guys help things function. The point is that things function and that is why society exists. Where they do not, people appear as actors of the crisis of things or, more precisely, of the crisis of social relations. When a thing is in crisis, live power appears and corrects this critical state. You can immediately come up with lots of examples: where the traffic lights fail to make people cross when the light is green and stop when it is red, a live policeman appears and makes them do so²¹.

21 *See Elias's analysis in Elias, N. 2000. "Obshtestveniyat natisk kum samoprinouda" ["The Public Pressure for Self-Compulsion"].- In Otnosno protsesa na tsivilizatsiya [The Civilizing Process], vol. 2. Sofia: Atika Press, p. 236 and passim [86].*

At this point I would like to draw your attention to the main appearance of power, the main illusion which it creates around itself. Power apparently takes the form of coercion, of force. That is how most people would define it.*

**In many languages the word itself - vlast in Bulgarian -comes from "strength", "might". The Slavs, however, exotically place it on the border of the word "freedom" (olost, volya or will, vlast...).*

In essence, as you have seen, **the appearance of coercion, of force, applies not to power, but to its means of coping with its inefficiency.**

Where power is efficient, it is silent and static - things themselves rule. Order is reproduced without any further effort of speech. Live power is not coercion but, as I said, a "say-do" mechanism. An unobstructed passage of words across society. Additional tools of power are used as a last resort only when words run into an obstacle and fail to turn into action. And coercion is only one of those tools.

What, however, could possibly obstruct power? What obstacle could stop the word from turning into action? For example, you say "Stand up!" but the other person does not. Let us say this is the established order: the teacher walks in and the students stand up. This is a property of the teacher, on one hand and of school order, on the other, etc. Students have seen it, they have been trained. Yet one student remains seated. One reason could be that he has not noticed the teacher. The teacher says, "Stand up!" - he obviously hears her but does not. What does he actually do? He **responds**. He says "I won't" to himself or out loud. What a word could stumble on while travelling through society is simply another word. **The way power could fail is if words are not followed by actions but by counter-words.** This is the main story-line, the main mechanism by which humanity lives irrespective of the type of society in which events occur. If the **word-action** scheme is obedience, the **word-word** scheme is resistance. Every word in response is disobedience, although not in the sense that power fails because the person has not heard or understood what has been said, but because he resists and responds. This develops as follows: he says, she says, he says, she says... That is why you say, "Now listen to me!" i.e. don't you dare answer back, don't respond. In the comic variant, "When you're talking to me, keep your mouth shut."

(I hope you have now realized the enormous power-related significance of writing. When something is written on a stone, the stone itself speaks. Just imagine, if people have never seen anything in writing and power has always spoken live, what will happen if it starts speaking in a lifeless form. The stone does not simply stand there and mark the beginning of Egypt, but has something written on it. This is the so-called sacred text. People are so overawed by the possibility that this might not be simply lifeless but that it can actually speak, that entire religions have originated around similar things - the testaments, inscriptions, etc.) This is an important theoretical note: what happens in the plot we are unravelling: live - lifeless power. Resistance is possible within the framework of live power and consists of **a retort, a response**. You will find a classical power formula in Ancient Greek drama, where you have an entire chorus that speaks. This is amplification, the effect comes from the fact that the speakers are many. (I strongly recommend reading an exceptional "Romantic" - a Renaissance scholar with a prodigious imagination: B.F. Porshnev.²²)

22 *Porshnev, B.F. 1986. Za nachaloto na choveshkata istoriya [On the Beginning of Human History]. Sofia; and his article included in the quoted book, "Kontrasougestiya i istoriya" ["Counter-Suggestion and History"] [p.88].*

Let me note something. **In principle, in our capacity as everyday people we see nothing but objects that are in crisis.** Only things in crisis discharge energy. This room is full of artefacts that regulate our behaviour. But do not think of macro-regulation only. For example, we constantly reproduce the fact that we must walk on two rather than on four feet. Or the light is always above, the walls are straight and not sloping, the table is raised and not on the floor. All this is not because that is natural - because it is not, it could be any which way. Simply many objects have taken care that I will not crawl among you but walk on two feet - that is even how my

clothes are designed. Thousands of objects operate at any given point in time while remaining invisible. Let me repeat, **everyday consciousness notices only that which is in crisis and fixes it**. In the same way, walking in the street you do not notice people. Something must happen for you to notice them. To become visible, an object must create crisis in activity or communication.

6. [On the Theory of Mediating Structures]

I would like to introduce another brief topic. Actually, it is not brief at all; this is the theory of mediators which we elaborated in the 80s with Deyan Deyanov, Kolyo Koev and Liliana Deyanova. But I will introduce you only to its "alphabet" (at that, with some inevitable generalizations), and that is why I will be brief.

So far we have discussed things as absorbed social relations as if all things were equal. But they are not. There are different types of mediators. They do not all behave like the counter. Some behave in an entirely different way, and that has triggered numerous events in the history of humanity. We gave a rudimentary definition of mediator as an object that carries relations and resolves crises. Marx's classical example of the exchange of commodities. A commodity is exchanged for a commodity: **commodity-commodity**.

When crises arise in the course of this exchange, money appears as a mediator to prevent an endless sequence of exchanges (someone sells coats and needs books, but the other person sells hens, etc.). The **commodity-commodity** structure is transformed into **commodity-money-commodity**. This is the normal behaviour of a mediator, and money has functioned in this, and only in this way, in many societies for ages. In this case money is not much different from, say, chalk, which likewise has some sort of mediating function.

The general formula is **x - m (mediator) - x**.

There are social conditions in which you might have the so-called **inversion in mediation**. In the particular case of money or in the more general case of any mediator. It may invert from intermediary to starting point. In this case, the movement will look like this:

money - commodity - money'; i.e. **m - x - m'**

Money turns into commodities to become more money. The mediator may become a starting point and reproduce at the expense of some sort of processes. Of course, for the purpose money must become someone's self-evident motive. What do you call a person who authors this movement? A capitalist. Most of us have money in our pockets but do not turn it into

goods in order to make more money. In my capacity as capitalist, however, I perform special actions, spend my money on commodities in order to make more money, ultimately. This does not mean that I will never be engaged in the first type of relations. Every capitalist, even the greediest one, will occasionally come out on the market as an ordinary buyer. Nevertheless, the main movement has reversed, money has become an end in itself. The interesting thing here is that **the mediator itself has turned from mediating structure to propellant of the movement.** The theory in question²³ distinguishes three types of mediators (or mediating structures). (The word "type" is not strictly correct here because those types are also stages of development in relation to one another.)

23 *On the theory of mediators, see also Koev, K. 1985. Metamorfozite na chouzhdneta [The Metamorphoses of the Stranger]. Sofia: Sveti Kliment Ohridski University Press; Deyanov, D. 1987. "Dialektocheskaya logika i teoreticheskaya istoriya obshtestvennykh posrednikov" ["Dialectic Logic and Theoretical History of Social Mediators"].- In: Aktualnye problemy vzaimootnosheniya mezhdu formalnoy i dialekticheskoy logiki [Topical Problems of the Relations Between Formal and Dialectic Logic]. Moscow; Deyanov, D., K. Koev and A. Raichev. 1986. "Ot istoriya na obshtestvenite posrednitsi kum teoriya na vsekidnevieto" ["From a History of Social Mediators to a Theory of Everyday Life"], paper at a conference in Gyolechitsa. As well as in Deyanova, L. 1996. Sotsiologiya na simvolnite formi [Sociology of Symbolic Forms]. Sofia, p. III-155; Deyanov, D. 1996; Raichev, A. 1993, 1998 [p.90].*

This theory claims that all mediators may be regarded as:

- a) reproducing quality;
- b) quantitatively expanding;
- c) restoring measure.*

**Mediators of type A reproduce communities. Type B are mediators that disintegrate communities. Type C restore communities.*

Let me explain: type A comprises the majority of objects in the world - our counter or the fireplace at home. (These are, so to speak, the ordinary mediators.) Type B includes "berserk" mediators such as money under capitalism. But it also includes "knowledge" (in science) and many others. These mediators have a tendency towards self-seeking quantitative growth. Deyanov, Koev and Deyanova define the third type as mediators "restoring measure": these are all new and previously non-existent objects that resolve a definite social crisis. It is obvious that every possible mediator originates as type C and eventually becomes type A. Some, very rarely and in special conditions only, become type B. I will not go into details - you will have an opportunity to discuss those questions with Deyanov himself. Besides, I cannot tell you more about this "alphabet" without introducing the apparatus of Marx's syllogism, which would be an unnecessary departure from our main topic. I only want to note two things:

First, however a mediator might expand, it can only push to the periphery but cannot ultimately destroy or subordinate all other mediating structures. That is why its domination is always temporary.

Second, the quantitatively expanding mediator has properties of a privileged perspective. In the movement "money - commodity- money" or, generally speaking, in the movement "m - x - m", the perspective that unfolds from the point of view of the first member is very peculiar. Just imagine. (We will ignore everything but this movement. In other words, we will take the inhabitant of this structure only in his or her capacity as such - as capitalist, scientist, etc.) If the whole world appears to be only a way of "closing" this structure, i.e. turning money into more money, knowledge into more knowledge, etc., the whole world will undoubtedly become comprehensible to us in a peculiar way. We will know "the truth" (i.e. the content of the movement, the absolute motive, so to speak) and, at the same time, will see some people who are busy doing something without really knowing what; people with "illusions". As you see, the conditions for a privileged perspective are there: you have dual knowledge, albeit in a slightly more specific sense.

7. [On the Problem of "Power-Ownership"]

At this point I would like to say a few words about a question that is extremely important but will remain on the fringe of our interest. A number of serious thinkers have tried to develop a theory according to which power and ownership have an identical "substance" or are the same by origin and function. (Here sociologists are like physicists, who have long been trying to build a picture in which the fact that there is an electric current and the fact that stones fall downwards prove to be a manifestation of one and the same thing.) The description we are elaborating offers an additional chance in regard to this issue. The category of "ownership" virtually demands definition as a universal privileged perspective. It is almost self-evident: every object of ownership divides the world in two distinct parts and presupposes the existence of "dual knowledge". The fact of possession (insofar as it is required of the participants in a given situation) is their mutual reference to a huge invisible "eye", or to a privileged perspective from which the object is seen in two ways. To top it all, there are also rules by which ownership changes, i.e. there are rules of changing participants' perspectives, which is an obvious manifestation of the said privileged perspective.

Yet before we triumph theoretically, we should note two important conditions. First the concept of "own" or "mine" is entirely and unreservedly comprehensible only when it applies to the consumption of an object or to its use. The carrot is mine in the sense that I have eaten it - there is nothing incomprehensible here. But the secret of ownership as a social relation concerns the very opposite case: **that the carrot is "mine" or "yours" when it lies undisturbed in the basket.** In other words, the problem is the advanced form and its **non-deducibility** from the initial one. The problem is, moreover, the oppositeness of the advanced to the initial form, because it becomes possible for "you to have eaten my carrot". The second major difficulty is that the said universal perspective has some sort of strange limitation, and that applies to all societies. Namely, there is no society in which the possible object of ownership itself is unlimited - nor apparently could there be. It is true of any society

that all objects break down into objects that may belong and objects that simply cannot belong to anybody. Both difficulties will be resolved if we try to imagine that "**mine**" (i.e. the form which is natural for us today) **is a derivative and very late complication of "ours"**.

In this case things look as follows: two communities are formed in relation to all objects. The perspective of the dominant community is that the objects are theirs. The perspective of the dominated community is the opposite. (Here the word "theirs" should not mislead us: they do not think of the cows as their "own", they simply interact with those cows in what they regard as the usual way. What is new is that "the others", the Helots, so to speak, cannot do so. As you see, this explains the paradox "you are eating what's mine".) At the level at which the two communities start building supra-community interaction (i.e. the level at which they start becoming one society), there appear a series of objects that cannot be categorized as somebody's property! (This is the solution to the second difficulty: entire segments appear in society's material body that neither are nor are not somebody's property: **they simply do not divide the world in two communities.**)

If this is true, then **ownership is, by origin, "has-been", past, power. Only not of "one individual over another" but of one community over another.**

Incidentally, they say that this is how the State emerged: as domination of the conquering community over the conquered one, whereas the history of statehood is a history of the formation of an objective perspective (i.e. of objects) from which those two are no longer contrasted as alien, but only as different within a single framework (i.e. as classes, if we want to use a traditional term).

That is all I have to say. I needed this last theoretical digression to show you the possibilities of the expounded theory, more or less. To me the problem nevertheless remains a problem, because what we have said does not describe gifts or giving, sufficiently well. Still, we have something to be proud of: **in essence, ownership is power.** However, this is not because "the owner is free to dispose of his or her property", but because the perspective from which ownership is possible implies the unlimited power of an "us" (invisible but present) and, at the same time, a complete identity of the perspectives of all possible kinds of "them".

Plovdiv, 21 November 1997

Lecture IV

The Invisible Structures of Power

In our analysis so far, we have aimed to answer two main questions: how is it possible to have such a structure of the social world in which things are repeated, and how could this repetition stop being such of itself. We banned the use of a basic procedure - namely, attribution of a demiurgic role to consciousness. We do not want to postulate a consciousness which is independent of all sociality and which, on the one hand, guarantees the repetition of things whilst on the other, ensuring their changeability.

I can now formulate those basic problems at another level, by simply defining them by another word that is in common usage. The first question is about **everyday life**, and the second is about **history**. Everything we have discussed so far may be formulated as follows: how is everyday life (i.e. the repetition of things) possible, and which are its properties? And, considering that all of us are immersed in everyday life, how is history possible?*

**As Kolyo Kolev shows even in his dissertation on the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz, everyday life should not be thought of - as in Schutz's case - as "paramount reality" (in opposition to the "finite provinces of meaning" such as art, science, etc.); on the contrary, with the expansion of Modernity each one of those provinces acquires its own form of everyday existence. Actually, this ensues from the theory of mediators too.*

How does humanity not simply move round in circles as a hamster in a hamster wheel, but ultimately moves in some direction? Following a line of reasoning in which we persistently avoided the little man in the head as an explanatory model, we stumbled across the possibility of explaining things by resorting to the absurd presumption that objects seem to be alive somehow. And it turned out that we had found the right direction - this bold presumption proved true. **Objects are live in the sense that they embody social relations.** They are a multitude of social relations and this multitude of relations is, as I said last time, their social form. You can set yourself the task of distinguishing on the one hand the social form, and, on the other, the objective, material content of each social object. Of course, this social form is not natural. It exists only because we are alive. Our life and our dance around objects, generates and attributes it to an object. As you remember, following Pierron we presumed that if all people except children died, so would social forms: children would not be able to engage in those relations.

Indeed, to answer the question "What is a king?" one must point to the crown, the thrown, the mantle. And yet, the king himself ought to be included too. **Objects carry social relations, but those relations come to life only in the processes of activity and communication.** They are activated only in the course of the two processes which, as I tried to show you, are opposite in character: the processes of communication and the processes of activity. We also found a final, fundamental source - namely, the natural processes appropriated by humanity, i.e. all those boars, fires, waterfalls etc. They are actually the ultimate source that generates and changes

social structures. But they are an in-direct source: the sun moves the leaves of this tree. It warms the Earth, something happens with the temperature, the air moves in a certain way and, ultimately, you have a gust of wind that stirs the leaves. But the ultimate source is the sun and, were it to die, the leaves would soon stop moving. In the same way **the ultimate source of social structures and their dynamics are the natural processes which we appropriate and mediate**. They are the alpha and omega, our life ultimately boils down to their repetition. Unlike the static object - for example, this pen which I can move any way I want without changing it - **if society does not dance around the fire in a certain way, the fire will go out**. And this applies to a whole series of processes in nature that are called "socialized", which are the ultimate source of social structures.

This, of course, is a **materialistic conception of history**.*

**As Marx initially called that which Engels later renamed "historical materialism".*

Radically different doctrines are possible, but they will all have a single common denominator - you would have to assign creative functions to the human or some other spirit.**

***It is not accidental that noting the non-classical nature of Marx's discoveries, Mamardashvili says, "Marx's thinking is the first serious thinking in history without a god."*

Some people think that between these two options there is foremost a value-related priority. Would you prefer to regard society as materialists, i.e. to throw out consciousness and explain things without it, with consciousness itself appearing only as a late definition of what you are explaining? Or, on the contrary, would you want the spirit to move this society? In explaining the world, you might postulate the human spirit or the spirit of some other superior being, which will consistently paint the same picture in the same way. Those two types of human doctrines have run through human history ever since the dawn of time; there are hardly any grounds to claim that either is "more correct" than the other.***

****Because both are important to people; people love building them.*

They may be criticized as possibly being illogical from an internal perspective only. Consequently, we do not object to this second possible type of concept but are simply not concerned with it in this case. Once it is required, the materialistic explanation will entangle us in numerous mental difficulties. The reason is that every day, every instant, society appears to be the product of the spirit.

This is a very general summary of our previous lectures, simply a reminder of the main theses. Today we will try to cover further ground.

1. [Machines]

We will start by winding up the problem of **how objects generate social structures**. I was surprised that you did not ask a logical question during our discussion of, generally speaking, the appropriation of natural processes. The fire is burning and needs a concomitant structure of actions that keeps it burning. Action, you remember, is the basic unit of human activity and, by burning, fire "defines" a series of successive actions, for example, eleven in number: I chop wood, take a stick, etc. And by this very fact fire defines the basic structure. It predetermines the way those actions are performed - by one person, by two, by a group, etc. Either way, the social structure, the matrix of what society will do, derives from nature. And this applies to all socialized processes - a boar you must catch, a wild horse you must tame, etc. I thought that you would promptly think of and ask about **a particular type of processes which are not appropriated from but introduced into nature**²⁴.

24 *See Hannah Arendt's very important theory of activity in The Human Condition [Bulgarian translation in Kritika i Humanizum, 1997], the distinction between labour, work and action, i.e. three fundamental human activities, three main categories of the human condition, of vita activa. As well as Hannah Arendt's critique of Marx's view of labour, of the idea that labour is an "external necessity imposed by nature", and is therefore independent of any social form of human life (incidentally, let me remind you of the little known fact that Arendt's book is based on her course of lectures on Marx) [p.99].*

These are all **machines**. Globally speaking, all the machines we produce are something opposite to what happened to humanity in the pre-machine period. In this period humanity studied natural processes and only mediated them to its benefit and maintained them, naturally, within certain parameters. Earthquakes are not yet even a socialized process. If there were an earthquake right now, all we could do would be to try to survive. But we still do not have ways to make this process useful, acceptable or controllable. Some day, given the advances in technology, there might even be a show like "Earthquake in Nevada", 200 dollars a ticket. What would they have done then - they would have simply succeeded in mediating, i.e. socializing the process, appropriating and using it according to their national character. Let us concentrate on **machines**. Since this type of object plays a key role in human history, it is worth considering. **At face value, machines are something like a socialized process in reverse. A process simulated by us as if it were natural.** Above all, it is very difficult to define machines. In Das Kapital,* Marx has some very interesting thoughts on the subject.

**Chapter XII - XIII..*

In his day, the exact sciences were engaged in a debate on machines that has long since been forgotten.

(At that time science generally perceived the precise definition of things as its main task: a task so tedious that if you open one of the 19th century German encyclopaedias, you will see that the map of America is described in words. This description runs for, say, 16 pages, so if you stick

to this absurd text you could well-nigh draw the real physical map of America. This, however, is perceived as true science, contrary to some sort of ridiculous pictures. Science proper demands huge intellectual effort; pleasure is sinful.)

Let us go back to the two theories trying to define machines in the age of Marx. They are very simple and comprehensible. One theory tries to show that machines are a complex aggregate. For example, levers - but lots of them, arranged in a certain way. Simply put, **there is no qualitative difference between a machine and a screwdriver**. A mechanism, plus another mechanism, and yet another, etc. The result is absurd, because it turns out that any human device is a machine. According to this definition, buttons are machines because they are ultimately round objects with two holes for threads, etc. This definition proves too broad and is futile because it attempts to explain everything. The second line of reasoning was that machines replaced human effort. **A machine is anything that uses forces of nature instead of human forces**. According to this presumption, an ox drawing a plough is a machine too and, generally speaking, there have always been machines. The problem is that both theories try to define machines **from the latter's perspective**.

(You will always be stronger than your opponents in sociology if, when you stumble on a problem - say, you are discussing objects - you promptly associate it with social structures. And when something goes wrong in regard to social structures, you promptly move to objects. When something is incomprehensible, always resort to its mirror, to what has made it, to its opposite.)

In our case, no matter how carefully we examine machines, we will not be able to identify their difference and specificity. We will not see what exactly makes a machine a machine. Because, says Marx, **"the historical element" is lacking. We cannot understand machines because we do not regard them as a social structure**. That is precisely why Marx tried to build a theory of machines as a social structure. This theory can be summed up in a single sentence, the definition is as follows: **machines are "has-been", past, manufacture**. Marx is a student of Hegel and, as you remember, in Hegelian terms "has-been", "past", means "essential". Every past being is an essence. By saying that machines are past manufacture, Marx says: in essence, machines are manufacture. In other words, a social structure absorbed by and embodied in an object.

This theory is very elegant and yields very interesting results. Because when the first machines appeared, i.e. the first specific social structures absorbed by objects, **they blew up the world. That is because they reproduced social structures**. Every reproduction of a machine, every production of a machine, every introduction of a machine into another country changes that country. But not because the machine is the successive smart screwdriver or very powerful hammer, but **because it carries a social structure** which it spews out, transforming the social fabric.*

**Latour offers a similar analysis related to the pastoralization of France.*

How does this happen? We have established this effect theoretically, and we ought to examine it in detail. It is easy to grasp. For example, I am working with a non-machine, I am assembling

this lighter in my own workshop. I have the separate parts - one is forged, another is carved from ebony and yet another is processed in some other way. So I take the first part, join it with the second, add the third, etc.; finally, I close the lighter. I needed this boring description for one reason only. Who is the subject and where is the entity in this case? I fully understand the purpose of my action of turning nut number four, by force of the fact that my labour is foreseeable - I have decided that I will ultimately produce a lighter. The lighter is my motive, which I have broken down in purposes. If there are two of us, the apprentice and myself, he is aware that I am in charge of the process and realizes very well that I have assigned him a concrete operation. And, let us say, I strike him if he does not do it properly. He is fully aware of the purpose of his labour, his labour is comprehensible and concrete. Our division of labour is technologically completely transparent. This apprentice will be replaced by a second, third or a seventh, the manufacture might be very large, but **humans will remain the subject of production.**

Once you install a machine this inverts. If you introduce a machine that makes those three separate parts and assign a person to perform a single operation on the machine, this leads to a radical, very important change. **The person doing something with the machine is no longer a subject of his or her labour. The subject of labour is the machine, which "knows" and guarantees the whole; it assembles the whole and will "understand" the lighter as the end result.** The person by the machine only assists it. And that is why he/she is not an artisan but a worker. And his or her labour is not concrete but abstract.*

**This tends to be an oversimplification; in Marxist theory any labour is abstract, insofar as it produces value (not value in use); with the advent of machines, however, abstract labour became a practical truth.*

He/she performs labour in general and therefore becomes human in general. In pre-machine societies people were occasionally even identified by their labour and described themselves by their occupation. Sometimes even their surnames came from their occupation: Kalaidjiev (Smith), Abadjiev (Taylor), Boyadjiev (Dyer), etc. Labour was one of the most important identity markers. And vice versa - from the most important, central activity in the life of an individual, labour became an abstract, incomprehensible activity in post-machine societies. A worker might pull a lever his or her whole life without knowing what would finally roll off the assembly line. Incidentally, this is the general case - he/she has a vague idea only. Who has produced this abstract working being, this creature and, ultimately, this partial, fragmentary being? Who has placed him or her in entirely different structural relations with, say, the master? The master no longer expects the worker to polish something conscientiously and no longer cites the bad product as an argument. The worker is expected to turn up on time and do forty strokes a minute or pull, press, etc., depending on the machine. Most importantly, **the subjectness is inverted.** The social structure is reproduced in two senses. First, it is a value and an end in itself. Second, it has turned the concrete individual into an abstract individual. **As a result, there is abstract labour, labour in general.** Once you have labour in general, you have a lot of other things. For example, education in general. None of you could give a clear answer to why you are studying, neither could children. Children simply study to learn the alphabet.

This is unprecedented: learning was based on an entirely different principle. Today, however, schools produce abstractly employed people.*

**Toffler says in The Third Wave that the three courses of the hidden curriculum in schools of the second wave (i.e. in Modern schools) are in precision, obedience and monotonously repetitive labour (p. 55-56 of the Bulgarian edition).*

Or take health care - things are exactly the same. The person becomes abstractly ill. Medicine in Modernity stops treating the concrete individual, and starts treating the disease. In other words, they do not treat me but my sick foot to which I am apparently appended. The emergence of abstract labour produces abstract medicine, education, music... (I am not talking about Abstractionism as a school, but about the making of music for an unidentified, anonymous audience.) People prove to be disconnected - their life is disconnected. And what is the prime cause? The prime cause is machines which belch this type of social structure. I am deliberately oversimplifying things in order to show you the logic of the process. An object, in this case a very peculiar object, starts embodying a social structure - the manufacture. The machine itself starts spewing out social structures and this has deep, profound social consequences. Because it gradually adjusts all spheres of human life accordingly and disconnects the individual him/herself. And thus in some two or three hundred years, you have an entirely different world. Those are secondary effects of this prime organism - the machine - which is one of the prime causes of all this. (I say "one of" because what has happened cannot be understood without an analysis of the simultaneously expanding mediator "money".) By the way, if we stick to this definition, would computers qualify as a machine? Could you say that the computer is "has-been", past, manufacture? The computer is past book-keeping, a past institution. It is not a machine because it lacks this main property: to produce abstract labour. **Computers are an entirely different type of device which produce order or order things.** And they will drastically change human history. Machines destroyed the old and produced the modern world. Computers will destroy this world and produce the next one, whatever it might be. Computers are power objects capable of coordination and management, and of self-reproduction. And computers will develop a single global quasi-order - this is the main effect of the emergence of computers - without an underlying subject. Computers themselves will guarantee the flows of power without the participation of any live subject. Just think of the possible consequences of the advance of computers from this perspective: which social structures will they destroy? Just as machines made us abstractly employed and, as a result, many spheres (education, medicine, etc.) became abstract too, and everything changed, computers will do more or less the same. The first obvious effects are: they will destroy states and wipe out national identity... I wonder what they will do to the family! If you ask me, computers will close the gaps between generations and genders, and might even "create" a third gender.

The main time bomb ticking away in computers has nothing to do with the obvious. It is obvious that computers intensify various existing things (better communications, smart machines, etc.). It is also obvious that computers produce new phenomena - for example, the Internet. Yet the main change is entirely different, just as machines seem to simply be a more productive

manufacture but have actually changed the world through something completely different - through the emergence of abstract labour. Computers establish global quasi-order and this creates a unique, unprecedented opportunity for the emergence of centres of power at random points. We will very soon be living in a world in which there will be new communities and groups of people formed in an entirely new, unfamiliar way. Not only the order (language, religion, customs) but also the place (country, class...) will no longer pose an obstacle to the association of people. In other words, radically new social structures will emerge in the Information Society. Social subjectness will be appropriated in radically new ways. Of course, everything I have said so far is only an attempt to **imagine** - to picture the computer as a non-machine. Yet just as Mediaeval Man would have trouble imagining the machine society (and to him cars would be nothing but improved carts, a notion which, albeit not exactly "wrong", misses the main point: the emergence of abstract labour), left to our own imagination and conjectures we likewise inevitably think of the future as an expanded present. We do not think of the future by its own measure.

Is there an alternative, are we doomed? We are not, because we have theory. We must heed the conclusions of theory and only then try to imagine what such a world - such a picture - would mean.

Computers are not a machine because their essence is power, they are a "has-been", past, power structure and "multiply" power structures wherever they end up. (As we have seen, the same applies to machines: they produce abstract labour and abstract individuals in the peripheries which they have "infected".)

Consequently, we have something like "abstract power": power in general, before any activity-related content.

(If you have trouble imagining or visualizing this, think of it as a Roman legion that conquers a new province and imposes the Roman legal system by force, regardless of the ethnic identity of the province, regardless of anything.)

Theory suggests that computers could have two main effects. First: appearance of enormous and universal power structures capable of extending their perimeters with no limitations on size and with little if any limitations in time. From our present perspective, those are powerful social technologies. Thinking in terms of this future society itself - theoretically - goes like this: reproductive processes exist if and only if they are globalized and included in giant power games.

In a sense, non-globalization does not exist in such a world. (Or, in Hegelian terms, it is not real.) Because only that which is globalized and subordinate to the emerging giant abstract "nobody's" power will be reproduced automatically. The rest will prove accidental, insignificant, negligible and destructible. Non-globalized things will not have systematic guarantees of their survival. (Which does not mean that they will not survive, but that they will require special subjective efforts for their survival. They will exist "by force", only because someone wants them and only as long as someone wants and supports them.)

Second, from the perspective of the individual, such a new world would appear as total control over this individual on the strength of the obvious circumstance that in such a world the individual would not participate in **separate** types of order. Globalization will unite not only the powers over the individual. It will also unite irreversibly the now separate worlds in which the individual is immersed.

Another theoretical effect of which I am almost certain is that in such a world the main dividing lines - the main contradictions - will be along the lines of integration vs marginalization. More precisely, it will be possible to appropriate subjectivity by force (i.e. one would be able to rebel against the authorities, to use our present terms) only through collective marginalization. (Which in our world today sounds like "wooden iron", but that is precisely what theory suggests.)

It also ensues from this that an extremely important feature of Modernity will disappear. Namely, that political struggle and political revolution are major forms of confrontation between power and ownership. Therefore we might expect the emergence of a world that has developed forms of non-political struggle.

And finally, if you consider the emerging theoretical picture carefully, you will see that money will also lose many of its present properties and acquire new ones. At least for the time being, I do not have the power of imagination to picture such a world in more concrete terms.

* * *

So, we have already discussed the problem of how **objects carry relations at several levels**. First, in our favourite example of the orange that is round, orange in colour and has a price tag, we have seen that everyday consciousness does not distinguish social from natural properties. We have seen, second, that objects carry social structures, social relations. You remember how we broke down objects: flag, coin, jacket. We extracted the social relations or social forms, and were left with the material content.*

**In which social relations are also "compressed", only they are former, past, now invisible. The orange looks orange "by nature". But the number of colours in a society is a matter of language, not of "spectrum".*

We have also seen that historical movements are propelled not by people but by self-operating structures. At face value, history or change is always for the better. Yet historical action itself is always blood, debauchery and perversion, it is always some form of destruction. And this is precisely because people only follow the crisis of self-operating social structures. That is why revolutions are so violent. They are spontaneous, but not in the sense of many people suddenly rising and behaving in a bad-mannered and aggressive way. By "spontaneous" I mean that they involve self-operating anonymous social forms that crush anything they happen to encounter along the way. And they can encounter nothing but us ourselves, and that is why they crush us.

That is why it is so terribly important to put this spontaneity under control, which is not impossible.

I would now like to demonstrate a full analysis of a thing that embodies many social relations. I will use an object that you know all too well: the school report card. You remember it well. This analysis is of a type I value very much - artefactual analysis.*

**For the sake of precision and brevity, the text from # 2 to # 8 is from a paper I wrote back in 1985.*

2. [Artefactual Analysis. Case Study: "School Report Card" as an Artefact]

The investigative technique proposed below may be defined as artefactual analysis or, more precisely, **static** artefactual analysis (in contrast to genetic artefactual analysis). By "artefacts" I mean social objects as non-apparent to everyday consciousness entities of social form and material content* (e.g. flag, crown, money, uniform etc.).

*This is not a definition of "artefacts", but only an introductory note (the problem is discussed in detail at the end of the paper).

The said technique is based on a procedure which I would define by the nonce word "en-ridicule". (I am taking this liberty because the everyday equivalent of this procedure is ridicule.) En-ridicule essentially consists of developing a peculiar, "odd" perspective on the artefact. A perspective from which it appears to us as rather dual or di-chotomous: on the one hand, as material content and, on the other, as social form, as an inanimate, lifeless thing and as a relation "assimilated by the thing".

(This dichotomy of "mind" and "body" provokes a reaction similar to laughter because it produces the object of any possible laughter: absurdity. The distinction between "mind" and "body" triggers a crisis in the object: it makes it absurd.)

Then how should we view the artefact so that it would appear to be absurd, paradoxical or nonsensical?

To answer this question, we ought to consider why the artefact could appear to be such. And if it could, why doesn't it look that way in everyday life? Could there be a procedure or something similar which, "under normal circumstances", hides the said absurdity? By what do we actually judge that the mind or spirit, is in the body? That the social form is fully vested in the material content? (It stands to reason that if the spirit is in the body, this means that a person is alive, that he/she runs, jumps...) Precisely functionality is what conceals the duality of the artefact - its dichotomy.

We do not see, on the one hand, the inanimate, lifeless thing and, on the other, the relations hidden within it, because the object **functions**.

So we must view the object as if it did not function. Or we must view it as non-functional. In this sense, the methodological procedure of en-ridicule essentially consists of defining the non-functions of an artefact. We apply two perspectives at the same time. We know perfectly well that the object is functional (ergo, rational, visible, transparent), but try to en-ridicule it, to see it as non-functional, irrational, non-transparent.

(As we shall see, this is "nonsense" or "non-function". Nonsense which [although no one realizes this] makes profound, albeit uncontrollable sense for everyday individuals, and non-function which has an important but invisible function.)

3.

The object of our analysis will be the artefact "School Report Card".*

**Today (1985) this artefact is officially called "School Report Card" (Ouchenicheski belezhnik). In the 70s and earlier, it was called "Report Card" (Belezhnik). Before that, it was known as "note-book" (tefterche). The variant from the 70s is most convenient for the purpose of our analysis.*

(A preliminary note. Most of the facts we will observe result **not only** from the "Report Card", but from the effect of numerous other artefacts: teacher's register, classroom, school uniform, syllabus, and so on and so forth. However, we will examine only the "report card" as if [and insofar as] precisely this artefact embodies school order.)

A glance at page 1 of the Report Card is enough to convince us of the exceptionally high degree of non-functionality of the texts that figure there.

Above all, what major facts are recorded on page 1?

- * That we are dealing with 7th Secondary Polytechnic School, Sofia;
- * That the student is Boyan Stamatov Boyanov;
- * That he is a male student (not female, as evident from the masculine suffix of the noun "student" in Bulgarian) in Grade 9;
- * That he is in this grade for the first time and his form number is so and so;
- * That he was born on a particular date and lives in a particular place;
- * That his parent (guardian) is the person X, living at such and such an address;
- * etc.

(Myriads of facts are implied: that people are male or female, that population centres are towns or villages, that there are numbered houses in the streets, and so on and so forth.) This is solid information, which begs the following question: what is its function and, more precisely, who reports those facts to whom? The student to his parents? The parents to the school? The student to teachers? Teachers to parents? This information is so non-functional

that the explanation which comes to mind is along the lines of, "this is recorded in case the report card is lost!"...

On the other hand, why shouldn't the report card say that the boy is a fan of a particular football club? Why doesn't it say whether he is sanguine and good at basketball? Why not: "Favourite snacks: ice-cream, cake, chocolate, other (cross out redundant)"? Incidentally, the implicit sense of the said non-functionality of the text is more than obvious.

This text gives the child an identity by:

- a) making the order at Home and the order at School commensurate;
- b) making the student B. commensurate to all other students.

By its non-function (in the above-mentioned sense of the term), the artefact in question comes close to solving the problem posed by Galileo to science as such: "Measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so."

The order at home and the order at School are incommensurate even only in the sense that at home we have Young Boyan, The Child, and at school, No. 4 in the register or the guy nicknamed The Boatswain.

The report card **co-measures** the child as an object of two types of authority (parental and teacher's). It fixes and records those identities of the student which are wholeheartedly recognized by these two types of authority as his unchangeable identifications. (In this sense it works as a contract, although that term is inappropriate because it presumes awareness of the procedure.) The fact that, say, the child "is very short-tempered" (a fact important to parental authority) or pious is excluded from his identity (contrary to his sex, age, etc., which are "compulsory").

At the same time, the child proves to be co-measured (i.e. "same - different"*) with all other children of his age in the country.

**Many layers of this text would have been impossible without the analyses of the school "disciplinary space" (and of any disciplinary space) in Michel Foucault's Discipline and Punish, Part III.*

The act of co-measurement has established a single social space and, most importantly, a **single perspective** from which all children are visible and, ergo, **comparable**, at the same time. Your being a "student" automatically implies a number of more concrete identifications: at a particular school, in a particular town, etc. There is a single, anonymous and "correct" (in the sense of independent of the carrier) perspective. By this very fact a particular type of order (at school) is presented as Order in general, as natural order. At this point it is important to understand that **the name or identity proves to be a content**.

The habit of everyday life prevents us from recognizing this fact. The very opposite is almost obvious: that the name is a convention, a pure form whose content is precisely naming. In

other words, (in our case) there is a tall, agile, etc., boy, whom from now on we shall call "Boyan Stamatov Boyanov, a student from such and such grade at 7th Secondary Polytechnic School, etc."

Yet once it is emancipated, our artefact (not just it alone, of course) presents things as in camera obscura: the starting point now is precisely "Boyan Stamatov Boyanov, etc.", and the forms of his existence are his sexual behaviour, memory and imagination - all his deeds. In the broad sense (as identity), the said name proves to be the starting and end point of certain production and reproduction processes. "Boyan Stamatov Boyanov, etc." is emancipated as reality, and everything "he" does at school ensues from and returns as a result to this individuality-identity.

Whatever happens between September 17 and March 30, the child's actions on those two dates will be the actions of one and the same human being. In other words, the child is a personality, an individual, a subject. And his personality is, consequently, above all his subordination and his inclusion in the order. (Every co-measuring is based on the construction of a privileged perspective, which is a power procedure.)

The act of co-measuring heterogeneous things creates content! The latter starts appearing to be the intimate essence, a precondition of the co-measured things.

Apparently, the mechanism here is an invariant of any individualization. Iskur Street is not the sum total of those **houses**, but vice versa: Iskur Street has "numbers", and there might even be no house at a particular "number"! "Number 28 has not been built yet..." In other words, **in a sense the house already exists**, even though not a single brick has been laid. Insofar as there is an act of co-measuring, of individualization of the houses on Iskur Street - all those houses **have been attributed** identity (i.e. content, in a sense). The universal has generated its particulars!!! As a demiurge, power has generated its own objects. The latter may also be formulated in less dramatic terms: there is an order that is reproduced as a starting and end point. In this case, literally an "order" - an order or sequence of co-measured things.

Thus - to go back to our case study - the report card is one of the ways to fix or record identity-individualization and, by this very fact, a way to em-body a hitherto non-existent content. It demonstrates properties of an emancipated mediator. Just as "money" co-measures sewing and hunting, two activities that are in themselves incommensurate, and em-bodies a new content - the value of clothes and the value of game - the report card co-measures two types of order, em-bodying my identity and individuality on the boundary of two types of order (at School and at Home).

4.

I put such emphasis on the em-bodied new content because it explains yet another obvious and quite incomprehensible non-functionality of the artefact under consideration: the ridiculous "multiplication" of the **covers**.

The school report card has two to four covers:

Above all, page 1 itself, the text "Report Card of...", could be regarded as a cover. Second, there is always a "cover proper", i.e. the page made of harder paper that says, "School Report Card of X from Y, etc." (in some variants, just "School Report Card"). It is obvious that such repetition is non-functional, and it is just as obvious that the consistent reproduction of this repetition suggests that this "non-function" is important. The third cover: although it is not compulsory, it is commonplace. It is designed by the student him/herself - as a **dust jacket with a sticker**. The jacket is white, blue, etc., and the sticker says the selfsame "School Report Card of...". This third homemade cover does not duplicate, but **replaces** the second one. It does several things at the same time: it protects the "cover proper" and carries specific aesthetics - it relates it to the other attributes of the school bag: copybooks, textbooks. The stickers and dust jacket are of the same type; the student has carefully written his or her name on the sticker, and his or her form number on special round stickers in the top left-hand corner.

Finally, there is a fourth cover: it is of transparent plastic (nylon) and has an obvious function - it wraps the artefact, protecting it from the effects of the environment.

Let us also note that:

* there is no fifth cover (not even occasionally). The appearance of fifth, sixth, etc. covers would not be perceived as diligence but as mockery of the school order;

* when the covers increase to four, production of school report cards itself might be adjusted for the purpose of reducing them to two. Namely, the producers might include cover 4 into the "composition" of cover 2; we can come across such a cover made from impregnated paper, which itself has the said "protective function". The student will subsequently be asked to bind this cover, etc. Thus the number of covers ranges from two to four, and "tends" towards three. The situation is similar to the famous scene in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*: "What's this, Yossarian?" "This is the name of Yossarian, sir!" It is the same thing: What's a "Report card of Boyan S. Boyanov from Grade 9A, etc.?" It's the name of Boyan S. Boyanov's Report Card! The "identity card of the citizen of the People's Republic of Bulgaria" has precisely three covers too. Incidentally, banknotes also bear the inscription "1 lev." What's a "lev"? The name of the Bulgarian currency, of the lev... So this is probably a property of any artefact that co-measures different types of order. It generates its own forms and, more precisely, **borders**.*

**Just as in politics every border is a past war, generally speaking every possible border is a past crisis.*

5.

So much for this group of "non-functions" - so far they have all proven related to the formation of the student's identity-individuality. An identity that co-measures two types of order (and two

types of authority), at the same time attributing the student an individuality that makes him/her commensurate to all other students.

Another whole group of non-functions which we will examine below are "devoted" to the transformation of a process of **communication** - and all forms of training are communication by origin - into **activity**.

The text on p. 2 and 3 of the report card has an obvious function: the child must remember the timetable, the parent might not be sure exactly who teaches maths, etc. Finally, the grades and notes (p. 4 and 5) inform the parent of the student's achievements. We will be concerned, however, with the non-functions only.

There are several lines here.

First, the recorded timetable of classes and teachers is an important procedure introducing a formal-rational structure (i.e. activity-based structure) of school time. The process of communication acquires purely formal boundaries **independent** of the content of this communication. Whatever might happen between 10 and 11 a.m., a biology class will start at 11.15! This introduces, so to speak, **external** forms of formal rationality into communication, quantifies it and, most importantly, strips communication of independence of content (eliminating the most intimate essence of any live, "non-en-activated" communication - a final result that is "unknown" in advance). By contrast, any activity is an activity precisely because it has a preliminary, externally defined and formally definable final result, i.e. motive. The same applies to p. 4. Whatever the child might say about Cervantes, however he/she might understand the problem of the Huguenots, no matter how dramatically he/she might articulate the difference between aldehydes and ketones, his or her statements are registered as **repetition**. The formal final result is strictly recorded too: either 2* or 3 or... or 6.**

**Students in Bulgaria are graded on a scale of 2 to 6, 2 being "fail" and 6 "excellent".
**Naturally, the report card is not the only guarantee of this. What is important for us here is that this artefact also contributes to that.*

Besides, "Excellent 6" means that he/she has repeated the foreknown truth in full. "Very Good 5" means that he/she has repeated it with certain deviations, etc. (ironically, "excellent", i.e. something that "excels", is thought of precisely as "normal".). The most important thing, however, is that the act of co-measuring (grading) draws an internal boundary in the "student-teacher" dialogue, i.e. communication en-activates.**

*** The habit of everyday life prevents us from understanding what is actually happening. Let us imagine, however, a society in which medical authority dominates and apart from the external boundaries (from 2 to 4 p.m.), watching movies has internal boundaries too. What would that look like? For example: every 20 minutes the film stops and a medical team measures viewers' blood pressure (and fines them if their blood pressure has dropped).*

The presence of the so-called "Report on Annual Achievement and Conduct" (p. 12 and 13) has the same effect. All the grades are added up and, following the application of certain procedures, something like a final result (for the term or the year) is derived. Those efforts climax in the average grade for the school year, which presents things as if the student's whole time at school was dedicated to a single activity, with a single final result. Let me also note that unlike live communication, en-activated communication may be **ritualized**. (That is, fully emancipated from its origins and transformed into a process reproduced as an end in itself.) This is a rather broad and different topic, but here it is worth noting that the possibility of ritualizing the learning process is vested in the very structure of the artefacts mediating this process.

6.

The report card does not merely co-measure, but hierarchizes the two types of order (and the two types of authority) which it mediates.

This is evident from the fact that the texts written by the parents and by the teachers are nonsymmetrical. Teachers write texts of the type "Geography. Good 4", or "No homework in...". The parent only signs, i.e. certifies that he/she has been notified. The very structure of the report card rules out the possibility of the parent's writing a text of the type "Boyan had a bad night. Please take measures."

In this connection, it is especially important that the student's conduct is divided into two general parts: "academic achievement" and "other". Academic achievement is described in particularly brief terms: "Date. Subject. Grade." The structure does not provide for a text of the following type: "3 [pass], because he/she does not know that the sky is a colloid solution." "General conduct" is described in greater detail - the description includes not only the result (bad, good), but also the reason - a particular "deed" ("beat up a fellow student", "helped a friend in distress"). In other words, the notes are motivated, but the grades are not. (By analogy, future subordinates write in their job applications, "I kindly request to be appointed... I am attaching a CV." We will not come across, "I am appointing... I am attaching a CV.")

Both sides have their motives, but only one side explicates them: the hierarchically inferior one. (It is another matter that under certain circumstances those who have superior status may also - in some cases ritually - explicate their motives; this practice gives rise to the so-called "official motives", the basis of the so-called "official language".)

All those non-functional procedures socialize the child by cultivating in him/her the disposition to accept as natural a world that is divided into "working time" and "leisure time" - a truly unique distinctive feature of contemporary civilization.

7.

A couple of words about the student's attitude to his or her own report card. It is described "normatively" on the last page, 16, in the so-called "instructions", which say, among other things, that:

- * "the report card is compulsory";
- * "the report card shall always be brought to school";
- * "the student must... offer [sic!] the report card for signature";
- * "all deeds of the student shall be entered on the righthand side" (a magnificent formulation in which the dialectic of essence and deed is intuitively grasped). And others. The following text seems to sum it all up: "The report card must be updated regularly and carefully."

From a **functional** perspective this means the following: the report card is a report card, this artefact is precisely this particular artefact and nothing else (which is another **heading**, only at the very end...).

However, the very presence of such a text shows that there are certain deviations in the practical functioning of the artefact and that precisely those deviations are the object of description. (If students had what the school would consider an undesirable habit of hanging their report cards at the school gates, the "instructions" would have undoubtedly included a text barring or restricting this.)

Consequently, which are those deviations? The child "forgets" his or her report card, tears out and replaces pages, fakes his or her parent's signature, records non-existent grades, etc. All those actions have one common denominator: the student weakens the functions of the report card as a mediator between the two types of order (authority) and tries to mediate them in person. It is important to note a particular characteristic of this strategy. Placed in a situation in which he/she cannot change certain types of order "from the inside", the student focuses his or her deviant behaviour on the relations between the particular types of order, on the artefacts which build the reality that is seen as "order in general", as standard order. This is an alternative to the above-mentioned way of individualization, of appropriation of identity.

8.

In conclusion, I would sum up as follows: the multitude of non-functionalities of the artefact in question are grouped (and summed up) in two main comprehensive non-apparent socializing functions:

- a) inclusion of the child into an order (or, from another perspective, subordination);
 - b) development of skills of performing abstract (learning) activity and activity in general.
- In their unity, those two functions form an important characteristic of the experience of the everyday worlds which the child inhabits. The hierarchically superior "public" sphere proves to be abstract, and the child in it, an abstract individual. The private, hierarchically inferior social sphere is experienced as more concrete, and the child in it acquires the self-consciousness of a

concrete individual. (But, of course, of a quasi-concrete individual, because this is only one of the everyday worlds and, therefore, an abstraction.)*

**This is the end of my 1985 text.*

9.

I hope that you will avoid what is admittedly the most disgusting theoretical weakness in sociology: the assumption that the authorities (or the minorities, as Toynbee calls them) are the demiurge of history. They never are the demiurge of history, they are invariably its victim. Any empowerment consists in reproduction of the old, and any struggle against power consists in the creation of something new. The struggle against power may take many different forms, some types of power even fight power. Either way, power first and foremost has one concern: how to close the cycle. How to become round and static, to reproduce itself as power, while reproducing the others as subordinate. It is another matter that this could have side effects. Single order is an apparency and that is why single power is an apparency too. There are as many powers in society as there are types of subjectivity. Our contemporary society indeed has very strong political power, the power of powers. But there are other societies in which, say, religious power plays a globalizing role. The different types of power have different codes, different systems, and clash. We discussed a case study of struggle between two weak authorities - teachers' and parental authority - and established that there are mechanisms of struggle and harmonization between them. And there have been many clashes between them, many crises, which have gradually established some sort of status quo that is different in each society and, perhaps, in each type of school.

I will now read you a text. Your task is to hypothesize about the author, to try and guess who he is or whom he reminds you of.

"Those who want to gain access to power should remember... several preconditions:

"You must not aspire towards power expecting immediate benefits.

"If you love power passionately and consider being in power itself as a gift, you shall experience perfect bliss from power...

"But if your feelings are turned towards other things - you shall fight for power in their name only... Second, if one loves order, power is comparatively easy to gain. But sincerity is needed here. In the struggle for order and power you must always have a noble purpose. "The purpose of the struggle for power must be order itself, not the superiority over another person...

"Third, if you win power, never relinquish it, even if it threatens you with death. If your power does not obsess you completely... for whom else will it be valuable?

"Fifth, do not be frivolous but anxious. Frivolity is not compatible with any power.
"Sixth, develop your character... [otherwise]... you need not aspire to seize power."

So, who's the author?

"Machiavelli."

It does sound a bit like Machiavelli, true. But it is not. The author is called Abai Kunanbayev, he lived in Kazakhstan in the 19th century and was a so-called philosopher-poet. But he did not write exactly what I have just quoted. This was an excerpt which I edited from his incredibly boring "32nd Speech" eulogizing science and knowledge. I replaced the word "knowledge" with "power" and the word "science" with "order" everywhere.

And from an extremely tedious text got something that is well-nigh pornographic. Actually, the generic term "power" is substituted for the specific term "knowledge". That is why the text sounds true but cynical. It plays on our society's fully permitted praise of science as order, of knowledge as power, and the fully banned praise of political power as such. The latter must be eulogized in a way which hides the fact that it is power: on the contrary, the emphasis should be on its side-effects. Namely, the benefit to the subordinates, the fact that power is requisite coordination, etc.

This is an eloquent illustration of the unquestionable fact that different types of order (respectively, different types of power) are identical by "nature", in essence. If, incidentally, you want an even more obnoxiously cynical text, replace "power" with "capital" and "order" with "money" or "property"... and "struggle for" with "accumulation"...

10.

Any possible struggle against power is a struggle against mediating structures. This is very plain in the case of report cards. Students try to weaken the mediator in every conceivable way. How? For example, they fake their father's signature. What have they actually done - discoordination of the two types of authority, i.e. they have weakened the power of the report card as a mediator. Let us say that measures are taken against that. The child soaks the report card in water, burns, loses, forgets it, etc. All this has a single denominator: to overpower the mediator. And if you trace any possible uprising or revolution, you will find exactly the same - the target are the mediating structures because they are carriers of power. As I have shown you, the arrogant, "lifeless" power, the true power of the lifeless structures which govern all of us every day, is invariably structured as follows: the scheme is originally **something-mediator-something else**, and eventually changes into **mediator-something-mediator**. Every lifeless power, every self-acting order has this structure - of a self-reproducing mediator. This mechanism is much more obvious in the case of money, as I have shown you. Money was originally just a mediator between two commodities, and eventually became an end in itself. The same applies to knowledge. At first, someone informs him/herself about the properties of

mushrooms in order to avoid poisoning. Later, however, he/she becomes a mushroom scientist who discovers the four hundred and fifth mushroom species merely as an end in itself. I am not making fun of this person nor claiming that what they are doing is useless. I am establishing the fact that they will then target the four hundred and sixth species with amazing passion, and increase their knowledge of mushrooms without any other motive. You might very well say that what scientists do serves society. That is true. However, a mediator has appeared in itself as an end in itself.

The structures of our reified world carry the "codes" of our activities. The structures and crises of our activities determine the structures of our communication, and this is the (general) structure of the world which I am describing. I will repeat my claims in regard to the theory I am expounding: **I am not describing the person as a whole, I am describing the puppet, the "lifeless" person.** The human being has all sorts of other aspects, but I confine my studies to the subordinate being. **The possibility of our being puppets ensues foremost from our actual dependence on nature in the act of appropriating its processes.** And those natural processes determine the structures of our activity which, in turn, order the structures of communication. What is the general way in which the one generates the other? **Crisis. Crisis produces a mediator that resolves the crisis, but continues to exist after resolving the crisis.** In some cases it even becomes autonomous and "goes berserk", turning into an expanding mediator. This ultimately proves to be the cause of the existence of everyday cycles and of the fact that those cycles rotate repeatedly but change. We have shown this with our case study of the machine which, embodying certain social structures, starts multiplying them, breaks all other social structures and changes the world. Of course, to be fair we must admit that the world has been actually changed by the combination of two "berserk" mediators - machines and money. But their synchronic analysis is far too complicated for me.

11. [Ideology]

At this point, we should approach the extremely important question of where human consciousness comes into all this. Let us start with a familiar example. Santa Claus is an object-carrier of a privileged perspective and one of the ways in which parental authority exists. As we said, Santa Claus has one face turned to children and two faces turned to adults. Parents can go round, study and dispense with him, but for children he is in-dispens-able. For them he is freedom incarnate.*

**The statement that freedom is a necessity, i.e. indispensable, explains why Santa Claus makes children so happy.*

What does Santa tell children? He asks them if they have behaved themselves, they say they have, and he gives them presents. This is doublespeak, because Santa Claus is a double, dual, object. Children cannot see and realize what is actually happening. It turns out that they are communicating, for them every subsequent statement is a flight into the unknown. Santa, however, can pursue a "purpose", i.e. act and, hence, perform activity.

The one communicates, while the other acts! This is the simplest definition of ideology. When certain judgments are pronounced and seen by the recipient as a description of the natural world and by the speaker as a means of achieving a particular end, this is ideology in its initial form. Let me repeat, we are dealing only with communication among puppets. Sweeping ideological processes are under way all around us, and there are such wherever the picture of the world is seen as natural by some and, at the same time, is a pure purposeful description for others.

Of course, God forbid, you must not think that those others are the smart grown-ups who sit down and think those things up. **Just as the machine self-acts, order self-generates ideologies, and most ideologies are born spontaneously.** The "purposes" pursued by ideologies are actually ways of self-maintenance of order. Order self-sticks through ideologies. **Where there is a crisis in order, an ideology appears and starts overcoming the crisis.** We repeatedly go back to the thought that everyday consciousness is so "stupid" that it does not notice objects in repose. It sees the social object only in motion, in crisis. (Of course, this crisis may also be formed artificially or deliberately.)

As sociologists you will repeatedly make the following mistake: you will ask questions which deliberately trigger a crisis in the object - and get answers to those questions. Let us take the following question: "Do you think that Sofia should be Bulgaria's capital?" If you ask this question, you will see that 80% of the Bulgarians think so, 10% don't know and another 10% are against. Glancing at the results, you will say that there are strong sentiments against Sofia in this country. But this is a total illusion, you have forced the crisis in the object. In their real everyday life, people do not think at all that Sofia should or shouldn't be Bulgaria's capital. They know that Sofia is the capital, and take this for granted. Let me tell you my favourite question from a real poll. I have actually asked people in a telephone interview, "Should there be a Moon around Earth?" And around two per cent said that there shouldn't. Another three per cent didn't

know.

Let us go back to the question about Sofia as Bulgaria's capital. **The fact that it is, is taken for granted.** As if this were something natural. This fact, however, could become visible under certain circumstances. For example, if every Sofianite were to start receiving two million leva a month. In that case the fact would promptly become visible, believe me. And what would happen if Sofianites were to start receiving two million leva a month? The country would promptly split into Sofianites and non-Sofianites. Nothing special would have happened, the fact itself would still be there - Sofia is Bulgaria's capital. But this is no longer seen as a value-neutral circumstance, but as a value-"utral" one.*

**The irony is that if you look at the cash flows, Sofianites actually do get extra money, but in a form invisible to most people: through parks, buildings, foreigners, etc.*

A social **value** is exposed. Please pay attention to what I will say next (in fact the Frankfurt School has examined this problem in minute detail): every value forms a community and antagonizes

people.

You will not find any value in the world in relation to which you cannot promptly identify two groups. The fact that the Sun shines is value-neutral only because and as long as it shines for all.

However, one can think of circumstances in which its shining will become value-related. Values are the way in which inequalities exist. Respectively, you can ask which inequalities any value system maintains. Values are the most intimate way of dividing society in two. You might say that there are universal, non-divisive values - for example, children; it is somehow taken for granted that children have always been a value for all. This, however, is not true, even if just because it excludes the children themselves.

Values in general emerge as a way for two groups of people to cohabitate, but to cohabitate in a way in which the fact of their division is invisible to them. Confrontation might not be radical, but is nevertheless inevitable. (Because one particular perspective is presented as universal.) Let us continue forcing our object. From invisible it has now become visible to us. It pulsates, we notice it. The cycle in which the individual is included, goes on rotating. But unlike the normal rotation, you have noticed the concrete object - which is no longer "normal". In this sense, and in this sense only, everyday life is darkness and nothing should be visible in it. Let us use another example - say, the front door will not open as usual. I will never notice it unless it is in crisis. At first it intensifies its presence in my consciousness, somehow becomes more and more of a door. And this is the first stage of disintegration in my everyday life. What happens if I fail to cope with the crisis in my consciousness, i.e. fail to get used to the fact that there is something wrong with the door? The door swings back on me every time, and this goes on and on. What will happen next? There is a stage that is especially important for us. The person will start building ideologies about the door, for example, as follows: "Who installed this device?" Apostolov. "I can't bear those Apostolovs and their devices." "All the Apostolovs in the world are bad." Now this is genuine ideology. Of course, I am giving you an absurd example. You know how we will ignore everything else and become obsessed with the Apostolovs and the said device that has broken down. In the person's head, however, the door that knocks him/her down every day is substituted by Apostolov, who is "actually" pushing him/her. We thus have one of the most important procedures in any ideology: **substitution**. An object that is absent in the given situation proves to be the subject of one's discontent. Due to a quasi-connection which one establishes between the object and that which is absent²⁵.

25 See Louis Althusser's *On Marx and his paper "The Ideological Apparata of the State"* (Bulgarian translation in manuscript). As well as a translation of G. Lukacs's *History and Class Consciousness in Sotsiologicheski problemi*, No. 3, 1984 [p. 132].

An extremely important and interesting procedure has been applied. If the person succeeds in coping with his or her world as it is, then everything is fine. If they fail to cope slightly, their world simply pulsates. But if they cannot uphold their object in their world, the everyday world cracks. And the person starts expanding it. But not in the way we pursued as analysts, i.e. by proceeding towards the object's past. He/she expands the world by introducing other things that exist within his or her horizon. If we really want to cope with a crisis, we must go back to its past and identify its essence. And that is what we have been doing all the time. By contrast, to cope with the crisis the person relates it to another co-existing object. **He/she substitutes communication for a real activity-based relation. And that is an ideological relation.** In the

general case, the ideological relation is a logical absurdity, because it relates two independent objects. And this connection between them is assumed to be real. The content of the head, the so-called "beliefs" of the everyday person, boils down to the sum of those relations. This produces the content of the puppet's consciousness.

Let us take another example. If a marriage is on the rocks, the husband, instead of identifying the causes of the problems, starts hating his wife. For her part, instead of seeing why her life is falling apart, she starts blaming her husband. The thought that this man has ruined her life is distinctly formed in her head. That is not true or it is only partly true. This is ideology per se. The ideological judgment has nothing to do with reality except by pure chance. What's the problem? **That the world must prove to be whole.** But it is not. The consequence of those two is "**consequently**". And this "**consequently**" is always an ideology, whatever the "**consequently**" might be.*

**Ideology mediates things that cannot be mediated in reality. It is similar to Levi-Strauss's description of the genesis of the myth propelled by an unsolvable contradiction in a given culture. See Claude Levi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology.*

Being incapable of coping with those cracks, people interconnect objects and those interconnections are not activity-related but exist only in the world of communication.

We are confronted with two properties of the ideologeme. The first is that the ideologeme is an arbitrary relation between objects that are not related by activity. The formulation of such a relation is actually a false resolution of the crisis that has emerged - the real crisis is not there at all. Second, both the husband and the now despicable Apostolov have one main property - they have become value-marked. Yet as we have already seen, if there is a value there are two groups: "**us**" and "**them**". Consequently, those two main properties may be defined as follows:

1. Ideology is a relation between objects unrelated in activity. In this sense, ideology is similar to madness. But it is collective. And in this sense it is similar to a norm.
2. At the same time, this is always associated with a division into "**us**" and "**them**".

And this applies to any possible ideology. As well as to any ideological systematization, which is a complex form of existence of the separate ideologemes. Every ideological system pieces together the life of the person and, at the same time, makes his or her life possible. And that is why Apostolov has not simply turned out to be bad, but all possible Apostolovs have turned out to be bad (now this is almost tantamount to systematization). And the next step is to exile all those whose surname is Apostolov. This brings us to a very important point. What will happen if the person still fails to cope with the problem situation? What would he/she ultimately do? When an object is in crisis I must do something to change it. I must perform a socially-oriented action in order to resolve the crisis.

There are a number of clear rational actions which could resolve the crisis: to talk with my wife, to call someone to fix the door, etc. The point, however, is that the path to the socially-oriented action that marks the end of every social crisis runs through all mediating units which we have outlined. Through the tensions that have flared up in one's head, and then through ideologies. And you get a staggering regularity. Why do I actually say that I can no longer live with that hag (my wife)? This is a way for me not to perform an action in relation to her. **Ideology proves to be a deterrent along the road to the socially-transforming action, it is the way not to perform this action.** This is a way to "paper over" the crisis without radical action.

What is really amazing, however, is that **what has stopped me from acting has steered me towards a particular course of action which I will take when I can no longer stop.** Let me explain this once again.

Because my salary is low, I cannot live like that any more. Then the Gypsies who help me cope with my salary appear in my head. What do I mean by "help"? I somehow attribute my low salary to them, they are the cause. I remain a slave who goes to work every day and is ridiculously underpaid, despised by the whole family, etc. The way to cope with this situation are the Gypsies, whom I start hating more and more. If it is not the Gypsies, it will be something else - it might be the Jews or the Protestants or the communists... there have been and there are such societies. Some "them" must appear or, in other words, some value that will distinguish me (the good guy) from them (the bad guys), and this value is my way to survive in the critical situation. But if and when I fail, this selfsame value will steer me along a particular course of action. So, instead of demanding more normal conditions of work, I will beat up a couple of Gypsies. **That is why the socially transforming action* always targets its deterrents.**

**This is close to the sense in which Hannah Arendt uses the category of "action".*

This is a striking dialectic. The way in which this action stops proves to actually pave its way. And that explains why most social actions in human history have not been prompted by rational, but only by ideological motives. You can hardly ever explain and talk people into conducting a rational change. You can talk them into taking or prompt them to take ideological action only. What problems you will thus resolve is another matter altogether. But you cannot solve their problem in a rational way because that is not the way the socially transforming action works. It first "tries" not to be performed, if possible. It turns out, however, that quasi-relations have paved the way along which the social action will, nevertheless, ultimately proceed. Knowing the ideology of a given power, you - consequently - can always forecast the way in which it will be toppled.

Yet the main thing which we ought to note (and appreciate) as theoreticians is that ideology is something like a **"fake" privileged perspective.** For the subordinate person, the world doubles and becomes comprehensible or transparent. He/she "understands" something incomprehensible about the others (e.g. "the communists are to blame") and sees things from a "dual" perspective. The others - the stupid ones - simply aren't aware of this. Here the slave has

remained within the framework of communication, which for others is an activity, but he/she believes that he/she is in power.

12. [On Symbols]

Let me tell you a couple of words about the basic unit of every possible ideology. This is the **symbol**. I hope that some of you will study this very interesting problem in greater detail, perhaps in your future theses. As the action is the basic unit of activity and the chain of actions is our activity, so the symbol is the basic unit of the ideological. Numerous books have been written on this subject. Do you remember how an object is defined as a tool? For example, my finger is not warm enough to light my cigarette, and hard as I might try to light it with my finger, I won't be able to. The tool is an object which transforms one action into another. In the case of the lighter, for example, the action of "pressing" turns into the action of "lighting". And every tool is defined very simply: as transformation of one action into another. We established this in the course of our discussion on the structure of activity.

The simplest, primary, basic definition of the symbol is that it is a **non-tool**. You cannot use the symbol to do something that would prove to be something else. In fact, that is probably how symbols originate, they are tabooed tools. There are more than enough examples of that in the world around us. But even if you look at history, you will see that the first human artistic activity, i.e. one of the first productions of symbols, is the production of drawings mainly of the attributes of the female and of death. You remember Venus of Willendorf. A depiction of what cannot be touched, the unusable, the tabooed, the inaccessible. Most theories presume that this is the mother, the taboo on incest, etc. What all descriptions have in common, however, may be defined as "non-instrumentalization". The same applies to the father's hat, the future crown - touching it is forbidden, etc.

The main property of the symbol is that it is beyond the realm of activity, it is on the actual boundary of activity and communication. And it is banned as a tool, in the sense that it cannot be put to direct activity-related use. For example, I cannot wrap myself in the flag because it is not an element of activity, it is a solidified object of communication. And this is the second important definition of the symbol. The symbol is a way in which communication can reside on the side of objects.

First, what will happen if I use the symbol in activity? Desacralization ("washing the flag"). And second, if I change its role within the framework of communication what will happen? (In other words, if I use it, but in communication?) For example, if I decide to use the national flag, only smaller in size, to mark this place as off-limits. What will I have done with the national symbol? After all, I have not included it into an activity that definitely desacralizes or desecrates it. I have not washed it to show that it is, after all, a "piece of cloth" or a "rag" only, I have simply planted it here. What's this little flag in this case? It is no longer a symbol, it is a sign only.

This transformation of the symbol into a sign is extremely important. Ninety-nine point nine per cent of the definitions of the symbol proceed from - I believe - the wrong thesis that the symbol is a sign which... In other words, the presumption is that there are signs, some of which are symbols. In the theory which I am expounding, we have the exactly opposite result - the symbol is primary and the sign secondary. And probably that is how human language originated too. In fact, symbols gradually turn into signs. The more vague and primitive the consciousness, the more the symbols that populate it. And vice versa, the more the symbols that have succeeded in turning into signs in your consciousness, the closer you are to Modernity. This is certainly not a value judgment, I do not mean that either is better than the other. The symbol, I repeat, is not a former, past sign - on the contrary, almost every sign is a former symbol or a former other sign, that is the other possibility. **The symbol is a non-tool, an object of communication residing on the side of "things", i.e. it is a sort of "as-if-thing".** I would like to tell you one last thing about the symbol before we end this whole cycle. The symbol is inexhaustible.*

**Cf. Lossev (Antichny simvol i mifologiya [The Ancient Symbol and Mythology], Problema simvola i realisticheskoye iskusstvo [The Problem of the Symbol and Realistic Art], etc. But this is a common place for all who deal with the symbol, from Peirce to Ricoeur, and from Cassirer's seminal The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms to Umberto Eco.*

Let us compare it with the sign. The sign must have two main properties - the first is that it has nothing in common with the object. Clouds are not a sign of rain, they are the cause of rain. While the drawing of "rain" is a sign of rain, for example: "Attention, rain!" It is very important that there should be no real connection between the sign and the object it signifies. The word "desk" has nothing to do with the desk as such. And the second compulsory property - all signs are ultimately reducible to one another. Namely, I can describe one sign through other signs. For example, a cow is a mammal, cloven-hoofed, horned, etc. In other words, there is a way in which I can order some of the other signs in the sign system so that they will tell me something about one of their elements. If the element cannot be reduced to the other signs, then it does not belong to this sign system. If you tell me, for instance, the wonderful word "crocklefether", it will not mean anything because I cannot come up with a sequence of words that would be reducible to the said crocklefether. Or I would define it and say: crocklefether is the name of the specific state of the typhoon when it passes right over Varradero, Cuba. That's it, I have reduced "crocklefether", and the sign system has been enlarged by the addition of one more sign. Those two properties of sign systems have been described in detail. **The symbol, however, is irreducible.** Take one of the most popular symbols of the Modern Age, the symbol of Fatherland: hearth and home... Thousands of pages have been written about that hearth and home: it is inexhaustible, poets describe it over and over again, and are emotional every single time. You can add as many senses and meanings as you want to the said hearth and home, or to every single symbol, yet you will never exhaust it. Why is this property noted by virtually all authors? The symbol demonstrates a very peculiar property that has nothing to do with activity. And nothing in the world has this property except the symbol. There are, of course, cliched symbols of which we are sick and tired, but there nonetheless appears a painter who extols the same old thing in a novel, unfamiliar way²⁶.

26 *From which it obviously ensues that - cf. Mamardashvili again - the symbol is a "constructive machine" which constitutes a world (cf. Mamardashvili, M.K. 1984. Klassichesky i neklassichesky idealy rationalnosti [Classical and Non-Classical Ideals of Rationality]. Tbilisi, p. 59-61, 66; Deyanova, L. 1996. Sotsiologiya na simvolnitye formy [Sociology of Symbolic Forms]. Sofia) [p.140].*

We are now coming to a very important point. **The symbol is a bond with the beyond, it is the simplest way for the otherworld to exist, or - it is a bond with "God"** as a way in which people conceptualize, recognize and systematize transcendence. Yet there is transcendence not only in the sense that something exists somewhere in space. This is a fundamental property of human communication, which is due to the following: **words may exist without a person who utters them.***

**And vice versa: something that is non-existent in reality may be designated. In this case, it somehow "designates itself". It acquires its own content (for details, see Lecture V and VI).*

Activity is impossible without a subject, tool and object. A person who is in the field and is wielding a hammer without a stone is simply mad. Just as there is no hammer that strikes a stone without the participation of a person. And third, a person who makes as if to strike a stone without a hammer in his or her hand is raving mad. None of this occurs because activity makes us natural, when we are engaged in activity **we do not reside in ourselves**. In activity, you remember, we are subordinate to nature: we become part of nature. When we act, we are equal.**

***Cf. Marx.*

If three people are hoeing a garden and are not dressed in tell-tale clothes, you can never tell who's the king, who's the field-keeper and who's the general. The act of hoeing itself makes them equal because it makes them natural. Once they discontinue their hoeing activity, you will identify them immediately. The guy with the ingratiating smile is the field-keeper, the one with the loyal face is the general, and the democratically condescending one is the king. You will have no trouble identifying them because they are no longer acting but communicating, and in this sense reside in themselves.

Communication is very different from activity and that is because of the following: **the word is separable from the person who utters it** - at that, it is separable by millions of kilometres and thousands of years. In essence, the voice is a gift **of God**, comes **from the otherworld**. And the prohibition "No smoking!" does not mean that this is so by nature. Who has said this and when? It doesn't matter. Or, "No one in this country shall have the right to speak out against the king." This is not the voice of the king, this is the voice of the Almighty. The voice, however, is fiction, an idea. The voice comes from transcendence. The symbol is an element (in the said sense) of the otherworld, it is something that is self-expressive.

Inexhaustible and autonomous. What does this remind you of? Of a thing, of course. **Symbols are the "things" of communication.**

And I will not be surprised if one of you eventually brings me a text in which you break the symbol down into social form and material content, or something of the kind.

Plovdiv, 5 December 1997

Lecture V

Supra-Individual Self-Consciousness

The topic I will be dealing with today is a topic which I have never discussed or written about before, and that is why I am asking for leniency. My exposition will be rather fragmentary, and will probably raise problems which I myself have not resolved conclusively yet. I will start with a metaphor, parable or something of the sort - I will tell you why later. I first want you to make and keep in mind a chain of associations. I will eventually come to something that is called modern European myth or modern European utopia - you will see why I am inclined to use those terms alternatively.

All told, this is a variation on the biblical tale of the Crucifixion. Jesus Christ is nailed to the cross and endures the ultimate humiliation and suffering. His suffering is both physical and spiritual, he is on the threshold of human pain and despair. First, he dies in despair, with the feeling that his Father has forsaken him - those are his last words. Besides, he suffers excruciating physical pain, death by crucifixion is exceptionally cruel. He is humiliated, reviled. The myth puts strong emphasis on the fact that he suffers for real, that is of crucial importance. He endures all that real pain and suffering even though he is God, i.e. omnipotent and immortal. The metaphor I am suggesting is the following: just imagine transplanting the self-consciousness of God in the head of Jesus. And imagine that while his body dies on the cross after all that suffering, he has a second hypostasis. He not only suffers - I am in utter despair and excruciating pain - but, in addition, has self-consciousness - I understand everything and am watching you. Let me put it in another way - imagine that he is not simply crucified but is actually watching carefully who is doing what to him, somehow recording the actions of the people around him: this one's stabbing me, that one's putting a crown of thorns on my head, the other is giving me vinegar to drink, yet another has betrayed me, etc. What would Jesus be in this case, what would he become? Satan, he would be Satan incarnate, simply tempting mortals. He would become an agency that tests. And just as Satan might appear to someone in the shape of a beautiful woman to provoke thoughts and lusts that run counter to his faith, that is exactly what the Christian God would do if he had self-consciousness, or if he simply took notes about who was causing him what with the idea of eventually punishing them. For Jesus, that would be a sort of game. All his spiritual and physical suffering would boil down to an illusion played out for the sake of others, to make them show their possible vices or virtues, which would then be punished or rewarded accordingly. By transplanting self-consciousness in the main biblical symbol, we get Satan, a vile, horrible, despicable creature. And there is nothing wrong with this creature, he is only pretending to suffer and, far from despairing, knows perfectly well that he will yield up the ghost in an instant. But in that case he would be evil because he would be lonely, being aware that what is happening is not real for him but only for the others. That is what I want you to keep in mind, abstract as it might sound to you right now. I think that **the key to modern European transcendence lies in the metaphor of Jesus**. An entire civilization is based on this "contention". And you will see the reason why I have been tempted to conduct this myth-spoiling experiment because, as you realize, I am spoiling the myth. I am spoiling God, planting self-consciousness in Him, I am turning Him into His absolute opposite.

It is quite strange, really. Actually all it takes for God to become Satan is for Him to be self-conscious. But the Christian God is not, He says, "Why hast thou forsaken me?". A man who has never done anybody any harm is killed in the worst possible way, suffering infinite despair and pain.

1. [Transcendence as a Privileged Perspective]

Let us approach the modern European myth from the aspect of an internal problem of what I have just told you. We said that we would make a materialistic attempt to understand the human world, where the spirit is not the agency that generates social forms. On the contrary, the human world proves to ensue from the existence of certain material things. We have outlined the situation as follows: there are primary natural processes, which we humans appropriate (the fire, boars, etc., discussed earlier). Because we appropriate those natural processes and there are many of us, this leads to the emergence of certain social forms that are reducible to certain activities performed by us. Those activities correspond to forms of communication. The forms of communication correspond to some kind of models of grouping. The essence of any progress from one level to another may be reduced to a very simple mechanism: **something - crisis - "rectified something"**. This "rectified something" becomes such thanks to a mediator born out of the crisis. We have seen this mechanism work right across the range from the simple example of the coffee pot (which is hot, therefore a cloth with which we hold it appears) to every possible level of human existence. Every new thing is the result of a crisis that has been mediated. **Mediation is the essence of social renewal and, generally, the social organism grows thanks to crises and their resolution through mediation.** All discussed forms of social organization contain this mechanism - things develop in a certain way, a crisis flares up, and a mediator for its resolution appears. We have also seen that some mediators become autonomous or "go berserk", as we put it. We have seen this in the textbook example of money, which suddenly turned from mediator between commodities into capital, a starting point. We have also seen it in the case of science, which turned from a mediating element into a self-seeking whole, etc.

In essence, we established that powers are based on certain mediating structures which evolve as self-based. We identified power in general as lifeless power, power of things that embody social relations, and saw live power only as a form of "compensation" for the non-functioning of lifeless power.

You remember, the profound substance of the social world are the natural processes that we have appropriated - all sorts of fires, winds, boars, etc. We have **taken** all this from nature, but **taken** in a specific sense - those are things which occur or happen, and we only help them to happen by mediating them.*

**At this point socialized processes may arguably be defined as one of the several classes of artefacts. An important and very peculiar class, which comprises three sub-classes: 1/ "fire" type - subject to routine regulation, i.e. to "labour"; and 2/ "boar" type, requiring, so to speak, "war". I suspect that those two classes, plus a third (3/ artefacts, which maintain relations with the*

otherworld), are the root cause of primary caste division: brahmins, warriors, producers. If you ask me, those are probably three former age categories: youths (future warriors, princes), adults (future producers), elders (future brahmins). Perhaps primitive society identified those three subclasses of artefacts with the three age groups.

We have thus answered both global questions which we faced at the beginning: how is it possible for things to be repeated, and how is it possible for them to change in the course of this repetition? Or, in other words, how is everyday life possible, and how is history, i.e. new things, possible?

This is the pattern which we have outlined so far. Yet all this - which includes interrelated levels and mediators - **has the character of an entity**. And that is the question which I will now tackle. What do I mean? The entire multitude of mediations, trans-mediations, re-mediations, berserk mediators, etc., being incapable of having integrity, (because such integrity is impossible, it is like spilt froth), must function as one. It must be recognized by people as an integral whole. It should be possible for all those entirely random circumstances to be assembled, wrapped as one and thought of as such by all members of a given society. We have also seen that the existence of any value or symbol promptly highlights two things: first, the inaccessibility of the respective value or symbol (definite artificial rules between the person and the social form) and, second, inequality. Something cannot be a symbol unless those two conditions are met. **There are special procedures of touching symbols, but symbols invariably divide people into two types.**

Going back, we have so far examined ideology only as an aspect of the crisis or as a way to end this crisis. You remember: in order not to destroy something, I hate it; "hatred" is the way to "avert" a socially oriented action. This is the general mechanism, although this selfsame action is ultimately inevitable. Ideological accumulations are the deterrent of socially oriented actions, even though those actions will ultimately occur along the lines followed by ideologization. All this would mean that the entire content of our consciousness essentially comprises aspects of those crises that build vertical social structures. Yet none of them would emanate consciousness of totality due to the nature of the genesis of ideology. In other words, ideology may serve anything but the whole. And if it is not recognized as whole, there will be no whole. Simply put, it turns out that not only is there a huge number of local crises whose possible development we have described, but also that the whole is, in a way, constantly in crisis. And that is entirely logical, because the whole itself is heterogeneous, it is not-one by genesis. Why? Because to be whole "by nature", it should have emerged in some sort of uniform way. But it has emerged entirely randomly, spontaneously - one thing from the boar, another from something else - in general, our sociality has countless sources. Besides, our bodies contain much, much more than this puppetry, it is merely one of our fragments. Nevertheless, everything must prove to be an integral whole in some way. Most importantly, it must be thought as such. Because otherwise we would not register the existence of a single quasi-order. This means that the huge number of crises and sub-crises, the huge number of types of order that function simultaneously, the sum total of all that, **should be seen as a single quasi-order**. It turns out that the model we are expounding has a very serious internal problem. In addition to

having to show the unity of order in terms of genesis, i.e. that all things originate by means of uniform materialistic mechanisms without being generated by consciousness, we must also explain something else. We do not only have to show that consciousness itself is an aspect of this giant self-functioning whirlpool of things - in addition to this genetic unity, we must also find another, additional, second unity, which is a pure unity of our consciousness. In other words, in addition to being puppets of those things, we people should perceive everything as one and natural. This cannot be explained by the scheme we have outlined so far. It cannot ensue from either the boar or the fire.

So let us think about it. In fact, the separate levels of this "pyramid" are mechanisms of the origination of the content of our **consciousness**. The entire content of our consciousness of puppets has, up to this point, been explained, defined and demonstrated. But that cannot be the source of our **self-consciousness**. The strange kaleidoscope of objects, self-functioning and rotating us around itself as puppets, does not require unity. But it would have fallen apart if we did not have this consciousness of unity. This unity is due precisely to forms of our **self-consciousness** of it as such. Just as a short while ago we transplanted self-consciousness in the head of Jesus, we ourselves have transplanted our self-consciousness from somewhere and it is a rich, meaningful identification.

Self-consciousness - it proves here - is not merely a mechanism or an empty scheme in our heads. **It contains something: it contains the definition of this unity, because it introduces the latter.** The social world in general is not whole in itself, it might very well fall apart. So many things in the Universe are falling apart. But the social world does not because of **the existence of forms of quasi-unity which we attribute to it.***

**You might come up with a very smart objection here: it actually is falling apart (and that is history). That is, it does not appear to be falling apart because it is doing so constantly. But this again raises the question of the direction of this disintegration. In other words, it is moving in some direction, yet any movement inevitably has a content of its own.*

In other words, by consistently avoiding demiurgic consciousness as a methodological device, we have come to something paradoxical. Just as we are about to complete painting our picture, it turns out that we ultimately do need this self-consciousness. Where does it come from? It turns out that self-consciousness is a demiurge, after all. That perhaps our entire house is built of self-falling and self-rising bricks, but we ultimately must add the element of demiurgic self-consciousness. And admit: yes, but in addition to everything else people have self-consciousness, they are conscious of and recognize all that, and that is why it is whole. In that case, it ought to be true that each person is conscious of the whole, which is ridiculous, or that only some people are - which is obnoxious...

However, we have mechanisms of thinking this whole, but they are not individual at all. In other words, I believe that there are some forms of collective self-consciousness. Or, to avoid the terms used by other sociologists, I may define this self-consciousness as supra-individual - a

supra-individual self-consciousness which, at that, functions spontaneously. It "thinks" instead of us autonomously and independently.

If you remember, we demanded something truly paradoxical: we said that things ought to be live. And they actually proved to be live, to be full of social relations. We demanded that the objects of our activity be, in essence, its hidden subjects: and we were saved by fire and boars. Then we asked for "live words" without humans, objects in communication: this role was played by symbols. We have now come to yet another terrible requirement: everything said so far will prove worthless unless we decide that there is supra-individual, extra-human self-consciousness.

Let us first specify what we want. Self-consciousness means above all **duplication of the duplication of things**. You know something and you know you know it. To have such a mass form of self-consciousness, the world must be duplicated. So the agency we are looking for must be able to duplicate things. Every single thing must be what it is and, besides, it must be known that it is what it is. In other words, we need a **privileged perspective, a perspective that reveals not only reality, but also the perception of this reality**. We must answer the following theoretical question, a task which I long believed was hopeless: **is an objective privileged perspective on all this possible?** Without humans? Strictly speaking: **supra-individual?** How could there possibly be something that can duplicate reality at any moment (whenever it wants to) and from which one can see things in a particular way, while, at the same time, objectively comparing them to something else - to yet another thing?

What do I think is the solution to this problem? Transcendence, the otherworld*, is such a privileged perspective.

**Which we see in the form of myths and mythologemes, utopias and utopemes, etc.*

Everything around us is due not only to its origin and has not only originated from each other, but is also due to the existence of the otherworlds with which we live. It is due to the descriptions of otherworlds, of transcendences.

The world is whole because there is a described otherworld. Ergo, every possible social world is due to a certain type of otherworld. I realize that such a proposition sounds absurd, but this is the theoretical result²⁷.

27 *This, however, would not seem strange at all but, on the contrary, almost trivial to researchers of ancient cultures such as Maurice Godelier or Annette B. Weiner. As well as to people who have set out to understand the Gift, gift-making (e.g. Ivailo Ditchev in his book Darut v epohata na negovata tehicheska vuzproizvodimost [The Gift in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction]. Here I only want to note that my theory is meant to be sufficiently general: general enough to apply to both contemporary and the earliest societies (whatever the latter might mean) [p.151].*

The world is possible as a single material totality because people think otherworlds. If they did not think those otherworlds (I am consistently referring not to the actual existence of an otherworld but to the consciousness of such), there could not have been a social world. What does that otherworld actually do? It creates the True existence of things, and also turns the things themselves into nothing but shadows. This is exactly as Plato argues, word for word. There is a true republic, a proper one, precisely what it should be, and the real republic is only a realization of that true republic. There is also a true family, and the same applies to any social structure. In other words, to any order and power. Every society has a specific coating of otherworlds which describe what the true society should be like and de facto compare it with that which is not-true.**

***At the personal level there is pre-biography: that is, a preliminary description of our possible life or lives.*

The important procedure here is that the real world is not-real, whereas the not-real world has true reality, i.e. the world that is absolutely non-existent in space. But the existent one may prove to be whole only at the expense of this non-existent world.

This raises many questions. The otherworlds (for the time being, we could also call them both myths and utopias) thus prove to be not merely an element of our consciousness, but a fundamental way for society to exist as whole. Strange as this might sound, it appears to be true.

2.

The otherworld is a second reality of society; and, at that, to the extent where it might be at odds with reality itself, to the point where people are capable of rallying into huge masses and of breaking or building society precisely in the name of that otherworld. The otherworld is something that is **sound and durable**, sounder than every possible social thing, **autonomous** and invariably **supra-individual**. For example, in the head of each one of us the notion that the family is made up of two people, husband and wife - is sounder than all things in this room. And contrary to things, this notion takes centuries to obliterate - at that, in a very, very specific way. The notions that there are adults and children, that males and females are one biological species, that the state is the natural structure of society, that doctors and patients are in opposition rather than an integral whole... all these notions come from nowhere else but your otherworld. Because the family could easily be made up of 17 husbands and 19 wives, there is no justifiable reason preventing such a composition in reality. **There is no reason in reality, but there is in transcendence.** Not to mention the fact that there are numerous family models. Okay, there might never have been one with 17 to 19, but there have been models with 1 to 17 and, in some places, still are. And that is how all members of the respective society have thought the world. And they have regarded the very idea of any other type of family as perverse. Today, of course, this notion is not too strong for us, for us family and kinship ties are very individualized, we think ourselves mainly in terms of the self and are not particularly concerned with this issue. Let us take another example. If you learn that there is a society in

which each child is scalped on, say, his or her fifth birthday, that would make you sick because you know a child's head is not to be touched. You will thus find the story that they once made lampshades from human skin equally repugnant. Imagine that a nice young man who has just made lampshades from human skin walked into this room and asked you out for coffee. You do realize, don't you, that you could not possibly accept - at that, not out of fear. Your feelings for the SS guy are exactly the same as your feelings for the heretic in the Middle Ages. From your present perspective you define Mediaeval Man as a savage who burned the heterodox on the stake. But he felt exactly the same - that person was against God, he/she was bad, he/she was a heretic.

* * *

So, we regard the otherworld as a privileged perspective. The way to duplicate the world as True and as it actually is in reality. To know what is and to know you know. The existence of transcendence, of an otherworld, is the way that is available to humanity. But how should we approach that otherworld: isn't it arbitrary? Isn't any account of the otherworld merely a figment of the imagination? Could transcendences have common properties? And how could we discover them?

The category "privileged perspective" gives us hope here. Having reached the theoretical conclusion that the otherworld is a universal privileged perspective, we can presume that transcendence is related to power structures and so to every possible order. This line of reasoning promptly suggests a possible solution: power ought to treat the otherworld as a description of a true, ideal world. **Or, strictly speaking: transcendence is an ontology of power** (a description of the world as it really is). **Power, therefore, recognizes what it does through the prism of the otherworld only.** The otherworld is its self-consciousness. (And that is easy to imagine. Try to imagine the situation of a khan who must lead his people from one place to another. What actually shows him the right direction? Why should he head north rather than, say, south? Imagine the unrestricted action of power when it has to demonstrate its self-consciousness. Now let us imagine the diametrically opposite situation. The selfsame khan would not need any self-consciousness if a rival for his leadership appeared - the incumbent ruler would immediately kill his rival without resorting to an otherworld to justify his action. The situation is comprehensible, reality defines clear purposes of action.) **In maintaining order, justification of the actions of power does not require any justification other than order itself. Order must be maintained because it is order.** And this idea will make sense to any sergeant-major in the army. But there are also situations in which power is incapable of justifying its actions with arguments from real life. And those are all situations in which order is not sufficiently self-justified.*

**Here we should be happy that we are good theoreticians: those are precisely the situations in which society must demonstrate its integrity in practice.*

3. [The Otherworld as "Ontology" of Power]

Thus, the world is whole because people think otherworlds. Could we talk of that otherworld? We find ourselves in an embarrassing situation. Our theory is up against a topic that is extremely difficult to study. Of course, in this case I am not referring to the otherworld as such, but to the otherworld as it is thought by people. The otherworld must have its manifestations. It is undoubtedly well manifested in the systematizations and self-descriptions of that otherworld - these are the respective myths, utopias, religious doctrines, etc. This is a sphere which it might prove fruitful to investigate. Yet this is not the otherworld itself, but its systematizations. In the way it actually works, the otherworld itself hardly has anything to do with those systematizations.

Let us say, Thomas More probably systematized some otherworlds that existed in his society, but those are nevertheless his systematizations within the framework of the society that inspired them. All the more so, considering that once it is systematized, the otherworld becomes part of "this world", turning into an element of this world. The same applies to, say, the communist utopias. They also have the "deficiency" of being built as an element of this world rather than of the otherworld.

That is why another approach to the otherworld comes to my mind. Let us apply a property of the privileged perspective: that the privileged perspective is a power structure. In its grave crises to which trivial solutions are inapplicable, power resorts to the otherworld as to its ontology, as to a description of the world. Power, as we already know, is always the invariant "say-do", words turning into actions. But there are cases in which the usual action is inapplicable, those are crises of a special type.

What ensues from this? That **each social order has a correspondent otherworld**. We could describe the otherworld of a given society on the basis of the way in which order presupposes and power conceptualizes it. Not the scholars or the researchers, but power itself. One possible approach is to examine the "otherworlds" of now defunct social formations, and then try to see the otherworld in our own heads.

* * *

Of course, what I will tell you now is just a sketch or, I would even say, a game. But that is exactly what theory allows us to do. The most important thing is to bear in mind that the otherworld is not so much a description of another world as, rather, **a way to understand what is "true" in this one**.

Even a brief overview of communism as an otherworld will show us that there is something in common, something identical in all manifestations of this transcendence. Prisoners are not punished but reformed; soldiers are not conquerors but sacrifice their lives in the name of the others; hospitals do not individualize patients but make them "like the others". United, people overpower nature. In other words, "equality"* runs through the entire transcendence.

**In inverted commas because "equality" is the equivalent in this world. That which truly belongs to the otherworld has no name, it may be examined only in terms of this world.*

By contrast, "activity" is something like a central object that we can readily identify in any bourgeois transcendence. The punishment of prisoners is something like "payment" for the committal of banned deeds. Soldiers aspire towards their ultimate realization in individuality. The brave defeat the elements. In sum, Kipling.

In other words, the two opposite transcendences of late 19th century modern European societies are something like mirror images (and in fact, if you ask me, that is also how they gave rise to one another). If, generally speaking, one is "centred" on "activity", the other is centred on "communication".

To be precise, Weber's famous "Protestant ethic" (which we would define more appropriately here as transcendence) simply has a direct (and derivative) opposite in the Otherworld of communism.

By the way, I hope you realize that what I have just said is no more than an idea of a future a research plan.

Still, I insist that the problem is theoretically solvable: **the actually existing order may be computed on the basis of a given otherworld.**

* * *

I believe that the opposite problem is also solvable. Namely, could the inhabitants of a society visualize their own otherworld? **Could we make the "invisible" itself visible.** (Stanislaw Lem jokes that the first axiom of the science of draconology is that "There are no dragons." But it turns out that they are non-existent in four radically different ways.) In the same vein, let us consider the following: what's that which is non-existent for us? (Our otherworld, our actual otherworld.)

Could we visualize our own supra-individual privileged perspective?

Let us review the types of order which we* have.

**"We" here is rather vague. Let us say, "we" are today's wide-awake adult Europeans.*

We have prison. We do not want imprisonment either as reform or as payment. Our coveted prisons tend to be, rather, like temporary riddance of those people - keep them there, but in conditions that are not too bad, let them go from time to time, and lock them up again. Somehow there seems to be no joy from the fact that someone has been justly punished, or desire for their reform. Our utopian hospital today is no longer the automaton for weak or deviant people that we found in the previous two otherworlds. We are living increasingly in a world where the norm is declared an accidental state around which the majority rotates. We increasingly want hospitals to treat the whole person, not his or her separate parts. Let us take

a look at the army, the figure of the Warrior - central and particularly important in most of the early societies. The utopia about the army in today's society is to have no army. Finally, nature - a foe of the societies before us, we are now filled with an overwhelming desire to go back to nature. And we are horrified to establish that we are only hurting nature, we are probably the first people to do so.

We have gradually compiled a list of associations about ourselves, about our own dreams of what order should be like, what power should proceed from. First, it is obvious that we are beyond the realm of the bourgeois and the communist worlds. Yet what positive messages do we glean from our otherworld? What does it recommend us if we think ourselves as power? What corrections of the order that is in crisis are "self-evident" for "us"? Keeping fit. Drugs and smoking are very, very bad for you. Dancing is great and music is very important. And all those are international, global phenomena. The world we live in **is not unified in any of its words or doctrines**, but is almost unified in music.

We could make a very good guess about the central object of our otherworld. **I myself have no doubt at all that the central object of our now evolving otherworld is something that would be called "body" in this world. And that this is the future main transcendental, sacred object of globalized humanity.** And that looking for a "what's to be done" recipe in their ontology, all possible powers in all possible crises will find one thing: **"take care of the body."** Human rights are and will be increasingly identified with **bodily "rights"**. It seems that this is how Modernity is ending the turbulent history of its otherworlds.

* * *

We might also tackle another problem - more for pleasure or, if you want, from a sense of intellectual superiority. We have come to the point where we can invent an otherworld ourselves. Could we be brazen enough to say something like, "I don't like the available otherworld, I want another one"? I think that if anything big could possibly happen to humanity at present, that is the emergence of internal alternatives to what I have guessed is our central object. We are entering a society with a central transcendental object ("the body") whose logic becomes a hidden guide in all possible crises of order. The alternative to every possible "body" is some type of asceticism. This ought to mean that our "anti-utopias" would take the form of asceticisms.

We could demand an alternative, but we must name it. Yet if we name it, it will no longer be transcendental. Are such actions, which form a transcendence that will then become an alternative to the one existing for us at present, possible? Here is the solution: if that object places us in a community and makes us "together",* could we create a togetherness that provokes the emergence of a new transcendental "central" object?

**Because it makes our world whole. It makes it possible to overcome crises in the whole.*

I believe that is possible. The solution is mass asceticism, mass refusal to do something in particular (for example, to watch TV or to buy certain drinks or to use energy), and that, in a non-

centralized way, without a command centre. And if everybody did that, at some point they would prove together in a very special way.

That would be the least trivial state that we could possibly imagine. Formation of a togetherness that generates its own cause! Religion before God... a phenomenon that would generate essence!

* * *

Incidentally, I am far from insisting on the concrete contents in the last paragraph. I do insist, however, that the theory expounded above provides a solution to such conundrums. As far as I myself am concerned, a single interesting problem remains: where the hell does the Otherworld come from?

I do not have an answer yet.*

**The next, final, lecture is my attempt to provide an answer. Two years after I told my students everything recorded above, I invited them to see Andrey Tarkovsky's *Stalker* and expounded my answer as a commentary on this film.*

Plovdiv, 20 October 1999

Lecture VI

*Staalker**

** Also known as Stalker, from the eponymous Russian film (1979) directed by Andrey Tarkovski and based on Boris and Arkady Strugatsky's novel Roadside Picnic. According to Microsoft Cinemania 97, a "[s]tark, eerie, cerebral story of title character [...], who guides [the Scientist and the Writer] through the "Zone", a mysterious, forbidden waste land." This is how the film is described in the Time Out Film Guide: "The Stalker [Staalker] leads two men, the Writer and the Professor [Scientist], across the Zone [...] towards the Room, which can lay bare the devices and desires of your heart. However, let no one persuade you that this is sci-fi or common allegory. [...] The wettest, grimmest trek ever seen on film leads to nihilistic impasse - huddled in dirt, the discovery of faith seems impossible; and without faith, life outside the Zone is impossible. But hang on in to the ending, where a plain declaration of love and a vision of pure magic at least point the way to redemption. As always, Tarkovsky conjures images like you've never seen before; and as a journey to the heart of darkness, it's a good deal more persuasive than Coppola's" (Time Out Film Guide. 1993. Edited by Tom Milne. Penguin Books, p. 667).*

Staalker is one of the world's masterpieces. It is arguably one of the greatest heights ever reached by the human spirit, comparable to things like Rakhmaninov's music and Dostoyevsky's novels... This, of course, is a film about faith... about faith and fear. If we consider the story in the film, the main message is the following: people are afraid to and simply cannot discover faith. Our civilization, humanity as we know it - a product of Europe - is denied faith. And whatever terrible obstacles we might surmount, we inevitably come to a point where we seem to have surmounted everything, and yet...

We are evil, that is why we are afraid...

I will not go into this, **this is only one possible interpretation of the film and, of course, there are thousands of others.** I will go into the intellectual aspect of the question only. The film is, I believe, also an intellectual masterpiece. It is arguably a comprehensive study (in the best sense of the word) of things which science is incapable of studying (or at least cannot investigate in such depth or has not yet proved that it can). The reason, of course, is that normal science is not at all sensitive to this type of problematique. Science, as you know, solves conundrums and is, in the final count, simply a division of labour among people who are acquiring knowledge.

Let me repeat: I will ignore all the aesthetic, many-layered and very difficult things in this film that are much deeper than I can see. I am concerned only with the intellectual aspect of the question.

Which is the subject of study in the film? What does Tarkovsky study? What's his story about? His story is obviously about the Zone. In other words, about the otherworld. **The subject of this**

story is transcendence, the otherworld. This means the otherworld not in the way it is experienced by the person who is immersed in it, but from a specific perspective that allows observation from, so to speak, "the outside". In principle, observing the otherworld is an uphill intellectual task because this is precisely what the otherworld consists of: it is not given, it is not here and now, it is not subject to observation. Tarkovsky builds a perspective from which the otherworld becomes visible as to an outside observer. I want to show you what he says about that otherworld. Of course, the otherworld itself cannot be seen; what can be seen is how the person lives in the otherworld, how he/she is immersed in it, and that is its reality. I will not venture an opinion on whether God exists - that is a personal question. **But the otherworld does exist, in the sense that it is part of social organization.** Every single social organization in human history presupposes some kind of otherworld. That otherworld is of crucial importance for social organization. Arguably, **the primary, "ultimate" reason of any type of social order is its otherworld.** Of course, no one's individual self-consciousness contains those associations. No one says, "Yes, this is what the otherworld is and that's why there should be such and such order", but that otherworld de facto builds the order* in a given society.

**The self-consciousness of "otherworldliness" also takes the form of systematizations-reflections. But that is secondary.*

And vice versa - the correspondent otherworld may be deduced from any type of order, there are as many types of otherworlds as there are social orders. We might presume that they correlate, and the question is exactly how. Those of you who attended my course of lectures last year and the year before are familiar with one of my main theses, which I will simply remind you of now: that **the otherworld, which can take the form of a utopia, myth or other such systematizations, is an "ontology" of power. It is a way for power to think "the unthinkable" and justify its actions in critical situations, in situations in which it does not know what to do because it cannot repeat the things done up to then.** When any type of power is in real crisis and is incapable of taking the next step on the "etc..." pattern, the only ontology, the only world which offers guidance, is the otherworld. That is precisely what all possible parents, doctors, teachers or politicians do - generally speaking, all types of power in crisis resort to the otherworld as a source. (In some cases they stress this very fact explicitly. In others they hide it. It doesn't really matter.)*

**The following refers - albeit from an entirely different perspective - to what Weber calls "charisma". I think that it is worthwhile rereading Weber's analyses from such a perspective. Actually at this point, as I said at the beginning, the sociology of lifeless man demonstrates its limitations itself: Staalkership is now a problem of a sociology of "live" man.*

1. [Conditions of Possibility]

Let us go back to the film. You might find this film shocking, it is a very difficult, an extremely difficult film, which you simply need to see several times. It follows the pattern of the Russian fairy-tale. Almost after Propp: there is a hero who leaves home; there is the very important figure of the trickster, of **he who changes into** - straddling the border between this and the

otherworld. In fairy-tales this is The Witch, The Fairy (in Slav fairy-tales, Baba-Yaga), who **is on the border of this and the otherworld, and guides people in the otherworld**. The Witch has ambivalent properties, she can change into something and then into its opposite. Or this could be the Big Bad Wolf, who rolls and becomes human... In general, this object-mediator **introduces the living to the otherworld** and instructs them how to follow the rules of the otherworld, pointing out the way to the chosen destination and helping them on their journey home. So in this aspect the film is similar to the pattern of Russian and many other fairy-tales. One of the reasons why the film is so tedious, so difficult at times, is that it does not use a single story-line other than those for children. It employs the simplest devices only, and that is why an innocent might react in exactly the same way as people without musical experience react to Rakhmaninov - they find him raucous and boring. I repeat, the film tells the most trivial story possible: Staalker and another two heroes, the Writer and the Professor, travel across the otherworld. Staalker is their guide. Those are the conditions of the problem. From this point on we can start reading Tarkovsky's revelations.

The first simple layer in the film is Staalker, analyzed as a **guide in the otherworld**. Actually Mozart, Bulgakov and Picasso are such guides in the otherworld too; they will lead you to **places where there are no rules. Where most of the things you know do not work. A genius,* they say, thinks the unthinkable**.

**Genius is the most frequent form in which people are inclined to notice Stalkers.*

Even though it looks different at face value, the otherworld is actually tedious, dangerous and cruel. Strictly speaking, if there were any rules there, if anything was a recurrent law, that would simply be yet another order and this order would have "yet another" otherworld. **The Zone (the otherworld) rules out any repetition in principle, it is unique in every single aspect.** I will come back to that in a minute.

What is Staalker's motive? This is the first layer. The film suggests the three possible answers to this question very clearly.

1. He does this for money.

This perspective is soon denounced. It becomes clear that he cannot doom himself to such a miserable life for money; moreover, we see that his family is living in horrible conditions, i.e. money is no answer at all in this sense. It becomes clear that this is a lame perspective and we arrive at a second one:

2. He does this for power.

If you remember, at one point that is exactly what the Writer tells him: here you are, with our words at your disposal. In this case Staalker starts appearing to be a creature who holds power as an end in itself. This is a limited perspective too, because he eventually proves to be suffering and takes no advantage of this power whatsoever; on the contrary, he proves to be

dependent on his audience, and this is shown excellently in the film. So the first hypothesis, that Mozart wrote his 40th Symphony for money, is replaced with the idea that Mozart took enormous pleasure in watching everybody sitting in silence and listening to what he wrote. This hypothesis, however, is ruled out too, because Mozart was actually obsessed with whether they would hear his music or not; he suffered terribly, he was even driven to despair if the audience heard nothing or did not hear what he wanted them to hear. You will find this in the film too: the two protagonists refuse to step into the Room. And Staalker proves heavily dependent not on how they treat him, but on how they treat the Zone. And here we come to the third hypothesis, which is usually **applied by everyday consciousness to all possible Staalkers:** 3. He is a freak.*

**Which is a self-justified perspective.*

These three perspectives on Staalker **of everyday consciousness, of the consciousness of people who do not need the otherworld**, are well defined and presented in the masterpiece which we have seen. Of course, they are criticized, they are in inverted commas, because they are not true. Or, more precisely, they are only stages in the elaboration of a particular perspective. However, there are far more interesting and important perspectives.

To come to those perspectives, we must ask a very simple question which the Writer puts to Staalker. "Why don't you enter the Room?" Why should other people be taken there when Staalker can do it himself. Now apply this question to other Staalkers. For example, you ask Rakhmaninov, "Why do you write music instead of sitting back in your armchair and enjoying it?" Staalker suffers all the time, virtually all the time, even physically - he has difficulties. He is cold and in danger. He is simply on the brink of death all the time. Why doesn't he actually use the Room? Why should Mozart have worked so hard and died at the age of 40-something, instead of simply lying back and enjoying the music in his head? What's the problem? We arrive at a perspective which I believe is the first important element in the analysis of this **type of people, who must link the otherworld and reality, i.e. they must link the other with this world. The answer as I hear it is the following: the new cannot but be communicated; otherwise it would not emerge, only not in the sense that it would not be "known", but in essence: its communication is a condition for production.***

**Nor would it be possible otherwise, if the formula of the charismatic leader really is, "It is written, but I say unto you!". Charismatic authority cannot be exercised unless it has someone "unto whom to say".*

There would be no Zone unless you led someone across it. Tarkovsky, incidentally, provides an answer to that: **when we are not here, no one knows what everything looks like, it does not exist, it becomes when we are here.****

***The otherworld is a type of togetherness, but in direct terms. This is illustrated by the fact that most Stalkers have enormous*

If Staalker did not lead somebody across the Zone, he would not be able to travel across the Zone. The absurdity of the borderline creature, Staalker, is that his otherworld, in which he objectively exists at face value, would not come into being if he did not lead people across it. **It turns out that** the Witch cannot travel across the otherworld by herself, she would simply stay home in her house on hen's legs. To go there, she must have somebody to lead. This is a specific type of marginality of those creatures. To be able to be in the position of "Staalker", they must not only be able to think some kind of otherworldly meanings, but they must communicate them and give them to somebody as a condition for their existence, as a condition of possibility. And, even worse - this somebody must take them. And because they are taken, but only partly, Staalker actually suffers again. Staalker's suffering is caused, first, by the Zone itself - it is terribly hard for him to move across the Zone. And, second, it is crucial for him that the others do as they are told - that they enter the Zone. And the deeper they penetrate into the Zone, the more important this becomes.

Staalker is the subjective form of what the Zone is in an objective form. But... The Zone has certain properties which have nothing to do with what is natural in this world. What is the main thing there, what does Tarkovsky say? **The Zone cannot be understood or discerned,* because everything in it is unique, nothing is repeated.**

personal problems with the trivial articulation of meanings, i.e. with the trivial forms of togetherness.

**Dis-cernment, i.e. dis-section.*

In the Zone you can simply "be", it is not subject to understanding, to reflection. This is stressed dozens of times in the film.

We are now coming to what I believe is the most important and the most difficult point. The solution offered by Tarkovsky is that **in the Zone there is no mediation** of any kind. **In the Zone we are immediate.** This brings Tarkovsky's concept (or, rather, the interpretation of his concept which we are now expounding) close to one of the key problems of Christian civilization in general... or to the contradiction that has been at the heart of our entire culture for the past two thousand years. By "our" I mean this large region to which we belong too. For us the soul confined to a body is a contradiction, because **to be itself**, the soul should be **not-itself**. In other words, **to be immediate, the soul must be mediated. To become itself, the soul must turn into its opposite.** So there is body and soul. And for the soul to be such, it must pass through its direct opposite, i.e. it must prove to be submerged in matter. The simplest way of illustrating this is European cognition. Cognizing this object, my spirit turns into its **negative**, gives itself up to the object and only "then" returns into itself. I have cognized the object, and in doing so have existed as a spirit. But without its "negative", the spirit has no content of its own: neither moral nor aesthetic nor intellectual.

Yet that is precisely what you have in the otherworld. **People there do not know, first, the cause of their action nor, second, its effect.** The otherworld, according to Tarkovsky, has this extremely important property: **the spirit there resides in itself** directly, without any effort, immediately. In a world in which there is not a single causal connection and nothing is determined. The spirit resides in itself. That is why, as you might have noticed, in the course of the film the heroes almost fall apart - more precisely, **they fall apart to the extent to which their spirit is not self-determined.** They have gone there with a very simple motive. The Scientist has gone there to destroy the Zone, he is carrying a bomb (I will tell you why in a minute), while the Writer has gone there for inspiration. Once they are in the Zone, they lose this as a motive and prove to be **simply moving...** None of their actions is determined nor leads to something successive. **The logic of their behaviour fully coincides with the "logic" of the Zone, i.e. the Zone alone moves them, and this movement is, in essence, the Zone's only "reality".** Their actions are not motivated, this is how the otherworld works - nothing in it is mediated.

And this brings us to the next point. I do not entirely believe in what I am about to tell you, but I want to show you how Tarkovsky resolves the issue. The otherworld in which people are immersed eliminates all connections from reality. There is no rationality. What proves to be real? Which is the only reality which they find and with which they invariably comply? Tarkovsky discusses this in so many words. Remember the scene in which the Writer halts on the threshold, thinks, and finally decides not to cross it; that is when he mentions another person called Dikobraz. Dikobraz is a creature who entered the Zone for practical purposes. He used the Room and then committed suicide - this is an important story-line. What happened? Dikobraz - earlier - had caused the death of his brother, the person whose poem they read (incidentally, a poem by Tarkovsky's father, Arseny Tarkovsky), and then went to pray for his brother's life in the said magic Room. And he did not get his brother at all, but got money, because he really wished for nothing but money, says the Writer. **Wishes are the only reality that we find in the otherworld, a reality that creates the otherworld. Will - real, true will, not the imagined, conventional will.** So the only possible reality of the otherworld are the true volitional impulses. Consequently, according to Tarkovsky, things stand as follows: there is this world and there is an otherworld. That otherworld is an object of our faith and, respectively, an object of our fear. **The way in which the otherworld exists in this world are profound, immediate, non-mediated human wishes.** To prove that this is exactly what Tarkovsky thinks, I will remind you of the last scene in the film. He shows that the wish of Staalker's child turns into immediate action. The little girl moves things by looking at them to the sound of Beethoven, remember? Wishes come true here. The little girl, who is a freak physically too, links the otherworld with reality. In this case the reality linked with the otherworld proves to have the ability to move objects "spiritually".

If you think about it, this is essentially a Christian formula. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove" [Matthew 17:20]. This is the same thought.

2. [Zone. Possible Postures in the Zone]

We, however, are outlining the intellectual construction and trying to reflect on the otherworld itself. That is why we will depart from Tarkovsky's perspective and approach the Zone as if it were an object. The first distinctive feature of that Zone, that otherworld, is that it is structured (and this is shown beautifully in the film) along the lines of the opposition sacred vs most sacred.*

**An opposition studied by Durkheim, Cassirer and Lossev.*

This is a strange, very interesting opposition. You will find it in almost all human creations dedicated to the sacred. The whole space of the church is sacred, but there is one most sacred place in the centre which is in opposition to the sacred itself. So we have a formula **sacred - super-sacred. The Zone has a centre, this is of fundamental importance.** It has an exit point, something like an exit to "this world", **the place where wishes come true.** This is **the point at which it merges with reality.** So the otherworld is not something beyond which there is an infinite field but, rather, a circle with a centre. That is what the human - or, at least, our, European - otherworld looks like. The centre of this circle is the most sacred, the most transcendental, but by a natural dialectical paradox precisely this centre is the point of union with reality. That is the way it is built. We are not in a situation in which our world is surrounded by some sort of infinite otherworld. On the contrary, our otherworlds, precisely those that determine our life, are like mounds, with a most important object in the midst of those mounds. And reaching this most important object, we interact with reality. Probably that is how all possible otherworlds are built.

The Room itself has a centre, and this centre is in opposition to the Room itself in two senses - **the centre is most-it, most-Room, and the centre is not-it.** Because **from there you contact reality.** And perhaps all possible otherworlds, hence all utopias, all myths, have this important distinctive feature.

3.

I will now proceed to the three postures in the otherworld which Tarkovsky describes as possible for the European spirit. They are those three people, the main characters in the film. The writer has gone there with a purpose; this purpose is his problem. The Scientist has gone there with a preliminary purpose, and his problem is precisely the means of achieving his ends. In other words, **Tarkovsky studies the transcendental through the means-ends opposition.** In principle, **there is an otherworld because we are a finite spirit.** The otherworld exists because humans are mortal. Our spirit cannot inhabit the world without a body. That is why we are, on the one hand, free beings who can shift their thought in an instant from the star Vega to the tiny little bug in the corner of the room. The world is entirely subordinate to our spirit, our mind. Yet on the other hand, our spirit is finite, it depends on something very insignificant in this world in a hateful and fateful way. This is the basic contradiction which accounts for the very existence of an otherworld. The notion of an otherworld stems from this definition of the

spirit or the mind. I have a mind and I have a body, and this is an unbearable contradiction for our culture. This contradiction is at the heart of our Christian civilization. It transforms into numerous lesser contradictions. The way to cope with a contradiction of this type is by dissolving it. (You know the dissolution of the life-death opposition in certain tribes described by Levi-Strauss; next comes, say, the hunter-gatherer opposition, then carnivore-herbivore; a series of dissolutions of oppositions thus lead to a magic object that has the two contradictory properties, i.e. some sort of vulture, coyote or owl: another trickster.)

So we come to an object that has the two contradictory properties and succeeds in reconciling them, in resolving the contradiction, and this object proves central for the respective culture. Let us go back to our contradiction between mind and body, which is unbearable; we, therefore, constantly try to dissolve it until we find a magic object that would resolve the contradiction. A mediator. The mediator, of course, emerges spontaneously.

In the case of *Stalker*, the contradiction breaks down into the means-ends opposition. The two are studied separately. Let us start with the Writer - this is a person who is very gifted but who is in utter despair and no longer has anything of any value in the world. Essentially, that is why he no longer has a purpose. The Writer is a moral, very sophisticated and very brave person. He has no complexes or prejudices. He has simply stopped liking himself. And that is because he has no purpose. He is trying to find a purpose. And on the threshold of the Room he realizes that he would actually find nothing but himself. And does not dare to step into the Room because he does not like himself. Here Tarkovsky shows something extremely important, he reveals the entire tragedy of the situation: ultimately, the Writer is doomed because he does not like anything about himself which, in turn, is because there is nothing that he values more than himself.*

**There is no supra-individual reality to which he can submit. And, consequently, there is no necessity which he can recognize. He experiences this - correctly - as a kind of non-freedom and suffers because of it.*

Appalled by that, the Writer does not dare to cross the threshold. You must love the otherworld, wish it for its own sake the way *Stalker* does, in order to gain integrity, says Tarkovsky; the alternative is despair.

Let us consider the Scientist. It is important that he denies the need of an otherworld. And the story of his journey across the Zone is the story of the rejection of this idea, and the Scientist is also driven to total despair. The simple practical intent of planting a bomb and withdrawing to the right distance before it goes off, crumbles to pieces in the course of the film. But it crumbles to pieces because it is only a means. And, strictly speaking, there is no end behind this means. If you remember, the Writer tells him at one point: You are in fact permanently avoiding the possibility of recognizing where you are. The Scientist is not connected with the Zone in any way. He treats the otherworld as if it were real and he fights against God. The Scientist treats the Zone as if it were something from real life, and wants to get rid of it. This struggle becomes hopeless once he realizes that the Zone is embodied in its "visitors".

Finally, let us see the attitude of Staalker himself to the Zone. Unlike the other two, he is not in quest of ends and does not use means. He treats the otherworld by its own measure. He actually creates it. Because the otherworld, the Zone, is under his "control". He travels across it, throwing some sort of nuts and bolts... The Zone emerges from his hands, from his head. Tormented and suffering, he keeps making the Zone, toiling on and on... Without knowing why. But he leads people there. He takes huge delight in the very act of leading people there, and the result drives him to utter despair every time. The more successful he is in making the Zone, the worse his suffering back home. He realizes over and over again that they "haven't understood anything". Remember the scene of despair back home, with his wife. (But, as we have seen, **they have nothing to understand**; the Zone does not exist without them. **There is simply no object to understand.**)

Still, there is something in the social world where you reside in order to return and bring something new. **Residing on the boundary itself means residing in the otherworld, because that is where the otherworld starts from.***

**And, if you ask me, boils down to this selfsame boundary...*

Innovators simply go there, observe, and then come back. The otherworld is the only possible source of the new in the Christian spirit.

All that the previous sentence describes is the way in which our civilization is trying to think and order its otherworld.

* * *

Do you remember the metaphor (the spoiled Christian myth) which shows that if we only transplanted self-consciousness in the head of the crucified Christ he would prove to be his opposite - Satan?

We now have to see that crucified on the cross, Jesus is on the very boundary of the otherworld, he is looking down on it, so to speak. That is, in our terms he is on the threshold of every possible Zone. That is also what he is "expected" to do. To come back and bring something new (the most radical new possible).

However, the conventional interpretation of the myth is, of course, that this is the threshold of the True Zone, the true otherworld - at that, the True otherworld that "belongs" to all of us. And, consequently, **there neither is nor could there be any mediation or any self-consciousness here by definition.** If the crucified Christ had the self-consciousness of God, he would have simply been an element (admittedly, a strong and powerful element) of **this world**. Naturally, there are no such radical expectations of any Staalker in Christendom. And that is why Staalker from the film, as well as any real-life Staalker, **is exasperating**. We are exasperated because he seems to be manipulating us in some way and pretending somehow. But he is not a god, after all. He can neither go nor take us to the otherworld. He merely roams

its boundaries and gives us hope. Yet hope inevitably and invariably ends in disappointment. This is because there simply are no "true" hopes. Hope is so coveted precisely because the real world dispels it. But even when it is dashed and given up, hope does not necessarily leave us desperate and helpless.

Hope can also give us experience.

Well? It turns out that experience is past hope.

Final Illustration:

Behaviour-as-a-Tool and the Non-Identity of the Self. Levels of Expression

"My behaviour is my tool" - this is the formula which the Modern Age substitutes for the never problematized and therefore never articulated "I am how I behave". I will try to support the thesis that a phenomenon, which I will arbitrarily call "behaviour-as-a-tool", has emerged within the framework of the "identity" problem as we know it from the history of Western European culture in the last two centuries.

As we know even from the studies of the young Marx, the fact that part of my life proves to be not-life (but only a means or a tool) ensues from the reification of social relations and from the new division of labour. This topic will not be analyzed here. It is only important to note that the reduction of entire "sectors" or "segments" of the life of the individual to the status of "behaviour-as-a-tool" ensues from entirely objective socioeconomic conditions.

I am primarily concerned with the following: when behaviour proves to be a tool, when "self" cannot be directly reduced to and immediately derived from the individual's behaviour, this creates the very **possibility** for the emergence of an identity problem. Consequently, I am certainly not claiming that there are problems in self-identification even before there are "behaviours-as-tools": all I am saying is that in the form in which it is known to Western European culture, the problem of "what am I" is a projection foremost of the fact that an individual's actions might not express this individual **directly**.

Examining several transformations of the "sense" of non-identity, I will bear in mind the producers of spiritual values, the intelligentsia employed in human studies. There are at least two considerations here: first, due to the character of their work, the intelligentsia articulate or "document" intimate problems of their self-identity; second, by force of their social status the intelligentsia employed in human studies convert into tools things which from other positions look like intimate essences (personal drama, spiritual crisis, inspiration and moral efforts). Having said this, I can now proceed to explicate the main perspective of the analysis offered below, namely:

For individuals themselves, their non-identity **becomes visible** as their "non-belonging to", i.e. it is presented as an external relation. **De facto** (behind the back of the individual) their non-identity stems from the internal structure of the personality: from the fact that the individual's behaviour has become his or her tool. Those are, so to speak, the visible and unseen parts of the iceberg; my task is to try to link them.

Things are complicated by the fact that "the invisible part of the iceberg" (the definitive contradiction) undergoes development; this leads to unexpected and inexplicable changes in "the visible part". I will try to analyze precisely the hidden connection between those changes. I hereinafter refer to stages in the development of the "sense" of non-identity in this sense only.

1.

The simplest form of identity crisis is to be found in the consciousness of the individual's split personality as a "private" and "public" individual. This crisis is manifested in the Romantic rebellions from Byron (a textbook example) to Oscar Wilde (on certain conditions). Something unprecedented in the history of Western Europe has appeared: private life in opposition to public life. The home-as-castle, "privacy", the Private "creative laboratory" as centres of individuality and uniqueness or **essence**, versus public places, public opinion, the public as centres of public validity and non-uniqueness or **appearance**.

Two lives! Between "me" and "me" there has appeared a cascade of mediating units which are **my** (possessed by me, controlled by me) publicly valid behaviour. My public life, i.e. "life before the eyes of society", is only a tool of life **in essence**.

That is why atomized intellectuals experience their "self" as **confined** within the strict limits of social norms and roles; their own behaviour-as-a-tool is experienced as an externally imposed straitjacket, and this is manifested in protests against "belonging to". Those intellectuals feel non-identical with their publicly valid behaviour and, naturally, see simple rejection of this behaviour as the solution.

Hence the most important characteristic of this earliest stage in the development of the "sense" of non-identity: **"self" is experienced as a content (rich in definitions), and behaviour-as-a-tool, as its form (poor, limited, inadequate)**.

"Give me a chance to be my TRUE SELF!" "True self" is crucial here; BEHIND the behaviour-as-a-tool there is a full-fledged "self", a real individual; a human being exiled beyond the barriers of his or her own activity. That is why here we will not observe the crippling convulsions which the identity crisis will cause eventually. On the contrary, this crisis still takes the form of intense internal energy. The "self" is something wonderful; the "self" is endowed with natural needs, with genuine gifts and with true values. That is why the society-transforming fervour is so optimistic (however it might identify) and so constructive (hard as it might try to parade as destructive). Destroy the misconceived society, liberate our true values, give freedom to our creative, sexual and other potential...

Admittedly, in this case we can talk of a nascent tendency towards social disintegration (usually in the form of liberal social critique in weak form: **as radical re-identification**). Literature and history offer more than enough examples in this respect: irrespective of whether the hero might die for the liberation of a foreign land, steel his will on a bed of nails, embark on a journey of self-discovery or leave the Fatherland to become a worker - there is a single common denominator: non-identity taking the form of re-identification. Be they amusing and intimate, demonstrative and sensational, timid and incomplete, all those are aspirations towards re-identification.

These are the "conditions of the problem" which behaviour-as-a-tool imposes at this stage: **in my life space, self and non-self behaviours are concomitant**. Typical oppositions: "true love -

publicly valid marriage"; "true vocation - imposed occupation"; "honest and modest life in the service of humanity - vain celebrity", and so on and so forth - the list is virtually endless. "Better to be fit and rich than poor and sick", we joke today, without realizing that we are actually dismissing precisely Romantic notions.

Hence this "self" (in terms of the classical German philosophical tradition) is **particular**. It is **self-determined**.

Yet that is precisely why the "self" cannot be experienced tragically; only "its destiny-that-never-was" could be tragic: misfortune could come only from the "bad environment" that has prevented the free expression of the wonderful "self".

2.

"Behaviour-as-a-tool" spills over into more and more "segments" of my life; to the point where I can think **any** behaviour of mine as a tool. The myths of "true love" and of the "vocation to serve" grateful humanity are dispelled; they are dispelled not by force of spiritual rebirth, but because the social organism has "disassembled" you to the point where you can no longer harbour the illusion of a truly private life; it lays bare the fact that every behaviour is public. This brings us to the first metamorphosis of the sense of identity: the advent of the age of the Nightmarish Self. (In Nietzsche's terms, this is the "God-is-dead" stage.)

The main difference is that if the identity crisis was hitherto experienced as an impossibility to express the "self" in public behaviour, now (considering that **everything** I do is a means) the "self" is in principle inexpressible in **conventional behaviour**.

This is an imprisoned "self"; no longer a "self" with poor and inadequate means of expression, but a "self" **denied expression** in behaviour.

Admittedly, at this stage the "self" is still experienced as unique; but this uniqueness no longer arouses admiration but provokes anxiety, a sense of abandonment and doom. "No behaviour of mine is a behaviour of THE SELF!" This is a "self" **doomed** to freedom; to freedom BEHIND and irrespective of behaviour. That is why we are faced with a "self" that "does-not-belong-to" **at all**. Literature offers ample illustrations: perhaps the most terrifying of them is that well-nigh the only adequate action of the "self" (for this type of sense of identity) is suicide.

This explains why unlike the Romantic "self", in this case there neither is nor could there be an urge for re-identification. Because there are no **true** behaviours, consequently there cannot be community-with-other-people but only similarity-to-them. Yet this similarity seldom offers solace or hope; in the pure case, it is experienced as negative ("My inferno are others"). Why? We could grasp what has happened in all its depth if we reflect on the figure of the Other from this perspective. I simply know that there are other people **similar** to me, but I also know that we shall never be **together**. The most intimate essence of the centuries-long experience of the Christian God is sacrificed here: that God is precisely the togetherness of people, their word, love.

That is why: "God is dead".

The only consistent "society-transforming" recipe available to this type of perception of the world is **demonstration**. And indeed, between one social norm and another there can be no difference, considering that both are **norms**, i.e. "builders of my behaviour", of what makes me inadequate and miserable. No norm could be adequate to the "self". "What's my only option?" To demonstrate, as an end in itself - and hopelessly - my only true characteristic: that I am... myself! And the nightmarish self is locked in the vicious circle of what Jean-Paul Sartre has articulated so well: "He isn't what he is. He is what he isn't."

If at what I have arbitrarily defined as the "Romantic stage" the "self" turned its loneliness into a **pose** (and actually the pose was an important component in the constructive re-identification of non-identity), here we have a "tragi-hysterical" (what Dostoyevsky appropriately calls "nadryvnoye", i.e. heart-rending) experience.

Let us examine the source of this experience (which, precisely, will be lost in the next metamorphosis of the identity crisis).

The tragic nature of this experience is **possible** only because the self-imprisoned-behind-every-behaviour still remains, to one extent or another, a full-fledged actor. **It** thinks, **it** feels, **it** is ultimately the author of the behaviour-as-a-tool (even though it experiences the meaninglessness of this behaviour hysterically). It tries - albeit in vain - to demonstrate its true self.

But indeed - in vain. "If there is no God, nothing is forbidden" or, in other words, **anything may be converted into a tool!** If there is no absolute value, there is no **own true** behaviour. (This ideological construct reflects things as in camera obscura: we have seen that the situation is the very opposite; precisely because "my own" behaviour proves socialized, the illusion of the existence of absolute value is dispelled; this, incidentally, is the "inverting nature" of any ideological construct born in the whirlwind of everyday life.) Either way, if in the first of the stages under consideration selfhood is concomitant with non-selfhood in **space**, here they are, by contrast, concomitant in **time**: the tragic, inarticulable "self" is **permanently** present behind the everyday submersion in behaviours-as-tools, in worlds of non-selfhood.

The drama seems to have reached its climax. Now what?

In every atomized intellectual, however, there secretly lives a complaining but otherwise tireless Robinson Crusoe, who is always capable of surprising us. Yet another act unfolds before our very eyes. The sense of non-identity undergoes yet another metamorphosis.

3.

The experience of the uniqueness of the self proves to be in crisis or, in other words, the experience of the self as an agency in general proves to be undergoing a crisis.

This third stage is associated with the **full emancipation of behaviour-as-a-tool**. For the atomized individual, this becomes visible when and insofar he/she recognizes the loss of his or her authorship on "to want...". Let me explain.

The thought that most things you do are not interrelated, that they are a huge conglomerate without **integrity**, is something that you can live with, after all. Activity is a tool. In a hundred years you will get used to that too. But **the things you want also prove to be such a giant meaningless conglomerate**.

The very act of overmastering the object of my need is not an act of freedom, a triumph over the object, but vice versa - a triumph of the object over me myself. It is not I that I assign myself totality by using objects, but it is the social-reproductive process that proves total at the expense of my particularity and abstractness. So to speak, **it is not I who watch TV, but TV watches itself through me**.

In the consciousness of the atomized intellectual the fact of his or her complete socialization has been exposed: not only as a producer but also as a user. He/she is not an agency! **The new sense of non-identity is essentially an experience of non-authorship of behaviour-as-a-tool**.

If until now the Self was groping in the dark behind the control panel of its behaviour-as-a-tool, having lost all hope of finding a lever through which to express itself, it now simply knows that this control panel is fake!

Let us examine the roots of the transformation that has taken place: behaviour-as-a-tool has become fully emancipated. To the point where it becomes clear that THE SELF is not its author. Torn by his or her own abstract needs, the individual discovers behind the many "wants" only a formal agency. I want. I have tea in the morning, I go to the movies on Saturday night, I take a particular route on my way to work, I always read a particular magazine, I never swim beyond the buoy, but I love my afternoon nap* - what all those things that have nothing in common actually do have **in common** is precisely "me", the "self".

The "self" is only a form behind my-behaviour-as-a-tool ("tool" ought to be in inverted commas from now on too: because we must ask: **whose** tool?). The inversion is complete: in the first stage the "self" was the content that took inadequate forms ("behaviours-as-tools"). Now the "self" proves to be an empty form of their existence!

This looks like an absurdist distortion of the Oedipus myth. If Oedipus IS without having done, now the "self" does without BEING. My behaviour does not belong to me: inverted guilt! In this vast, unprecedented conglomerate of events, people, information, change (change without change, because what change in Chaos?), in everything and constantly, amidst the momentous transmutations of my own behaviours, there is a single stable light; the formal "self". But it is neither in the Centre nor in the Periphery, but simply **Somewhere**. **In other words, "self" loses its status of a privileged position in principle. This is also the major change in the sense of non-identity**.

This is no longer a sense of abandonment-in-the-world or a sense of desertion.

Overwhelmed by pride, the Romantic atomized intellectual raises his fist to the skies. Overcome by sophisticated exhaustion, the atomized thinker from the turn of the century declares: "God is dead!" The truth is that everything occurs twice: first as a tragedy and then as a farce! Today the selfsame atomized individual may easily pronounce: "God is not dead. He is simply disabled." And His images and likenesses are in-valids: beings whose self-consciousness is invalid. Self-consciousness as an appendage and morality as an affix: two useless crutches for a behaviour that is independent of them, fully emancipated and justified in advance.

4.

Even though my intention is to give a general outline, ignoring the details and building ideally typical constructions only, I cannot overlook the question of how the reviewed new sense of non-identity impacts on social thinking and socially oriented actions. The atomized Romantic intellectual is a builder of a Rational society "by nature." The hysterical Self cannot acknowledge any social form and is, rather, a destroyer and Self-destroyer (but never "in the name of..."). In the new situation of non-identity, the Playful Principle tends to be dominant.

Relieved of the sublime (according to the Romantic self) or nightmarish (according to the hysterically-tragic Self) responsibility for its actions, the "self" can now experience its behaviour as an (admittedly imposed, but nevertheless "own") - tedious or pleasant - adventure. This is an unexpectedly easy (given all the dramatic twists and turns) ending of the drama. (The analogy that springs to mind is of the almost comic "fall" of the Roman Empire in 476. After the horrors of the early 5th century, the bloodless palace coup and the move of imperial regalia to Constantinople pale in comparison.)

Why have I used the word "adventure"? Because it implies a kind of irresponsibility. We have seen that the self is no longer a privileged position and that, consequently, all perspectives are equal. There is yet another complete inversion: the identity crisis was initially experienced as a **lost** sense of belonging. On the contrary, now the total, absolute non-belonging of my behaviour to me leads to **potential belonging (but also to non-belonging, respectively) to everything and to anything!** I can have it any way! (Certainly not "nothing is forbidden"; the classical formula presupposes that the diabolical substance of my individual will is pressing forward behind my back. That is why I am "burdened with universal guilt". Things are different in this case: I can have it any way, what happens hardly matters, after all the action isn't mine, is it!...)

The price for recognizing all perspectives as equal is unprecedented social-practical impotence. Some sort of absurd triumph of "to understand means to forgive". So it becomes possible to argue that primitive cultures are not less developed than any other culture; that what humanity has so far assumed to be progress must stop (because what progress could there be, considering that any "self" is just as formal and valuable, and, in essence, formally valuable, as any other?).

This stands to reason, because any social action requires a privileged perspective; action is an abstraction, an evil, to quote Hegel; it defines its object as inferior in principle. How is action possible without a privileged perspective? How is it possible to have action that recognizes its object as equal and, therefore, itself as, so to speak, un-real?

It is possible as a **playful** action. The "play" in which the new sense of non-identity finds comfort consists above all in the arbitrary introduction of Order in Chaos and of Chaos in Order. This is the only remaining "degree of freedom" of the no-longer-unique-self: to reorder numerous variants of Order.

That is why the Other is no longer the person towards whom I am striving passionately or, conversely, who is my inferno: that-which-intensifies-my-abandonment-and-loneliness. Here the attitude to the Other is - almost childish - **curiosity** within the framework of partnership. That is a huge change and it is manifested across a very broad range: from the new problems of sex life to the fact that a murderer may write memoirs which are read by everybody... The most important and crucial change brought about by the new sense of non-identity is **the scattering of the different Everyday worlds**. If the "self" is only formal, if it is not an agency, the connections between the different situations in life weaken dramatically. The illusion that what is happening Here and what is happening There are interconnected by myself or within myself, is dispelled. On the contrary: Here and Now are emancipated; I only **pass** from Here and Now to There and Then. What I do Here and Now is not merely insignificant, incomprehensible and untranslatable in the language of There and Then, it simply does not exist. It is not. The everyday worlds have scattered; the connections between them are purely formal; the principle of their order is **alphabetical**, by rubric (just as what "Avicenna" and "aquarium" have **in common** in the encyclopaedia is the letter A).

The price for the playful principle proves to be terrible: the "selves" prove to be many, even countless. Just like the everyday worlds, they prove to be de facto independent. The atomized intellectual becomes aware of a new fact: "self" is not even a formal entity - "self" is simply an illusion, a construct, almost an ideologeme. My immersion in an everyday world destroys all other worlds; not only the different types of Order, but also the "selves" alternate periodically. Then what does the "true self" mean?

The incident is over: it means nothing.

5.

The "behaviour-as-a-tool" has done its job. We started with the fact that recognition of the "self" problem became possible for the atomized individual **because of** the emergence of behaviours-as-tools. Now the behaviour-as-a-tool has devoured its own offspring; the development of that which lent content to "self" has destroyed this content.

[THREE FINAL ILLUSTRATIONS]

Generally speaking, so far my exposition has constantly attacked the notion that the atomized individual is the natural and only possible human condition. A notion which implies that freedom may be demanded only as individual, personal freedom; as re-compense, as something almost supplementary. Yet as we know all too well (I apologize for the impassioned overtones), people cannot be free unless they are together; on their own they can only be unhappy.

As a counterpoint to everything noted above, I would like to believe - although with some uncertainty - in a line of thought that is as old as the world and at least as unsatisfactory: "That there is no ethical order in things is the only, yet sufficient, reason for humanity to be a community." And because I feel incapable of providing arguments in support of this position, I will try to illustrate it - directly, as well as indirectly- three times:

1.

I will take the liberty of inventing and then commenting on an imaginary "case study". "The inhabitants of the fourth planet around Vega became obsessed with chess. But as rational beings, they took around 1,500 years to make a move because they thought out all possible variants in every game. An adventurer from Earth decided to earn a living by playing a blitz game on a thousand boards at the same time on Vega-4. He lost every single game and immediately proposed a new round: on 10,000 boards. The Vegans never understood how a rational being could think so fast.

"And so the story goes on and on."

Actually the inhabitants of Vega-4 required that a rational being be in complete possession of his or her behaviour. They required that every single one of his or her actions be transparent for the rational being him/herself. They could not undertake any action unless they understood what they were doing. By contrast, as *Homo sapiens* the earthling played chess in the way people act in everyday life. In other words, the guarantee for a rational action is inherent not in the subject but in the object. There exists a Cosmos and it does so in a way that lends order, i.e. meaning, to my kaleidoscopic, non-transparent-to-myself actions.

The subjectivity of individuals does not lie in the fact that they are the **authors** of their actions. As everything else in them, their subjectivity also belongs to the World.

Subjectivity is belonging.

The atomized individual neither is nor can be a full-fledged being (the ancient authors claim the same when they say that the finite spirit is a contradiction). Should the atomized human being take him/herself to be such, should he/she want his or her atomization to be their prime distinctive feature, they could not help wondering why there is some sort of order at all. It is mysterious, says Wittgenstein quoting Lessing, not what the world is but that it is at all. At the

core of such experiences there lies the consistent and heroic, but futile effort to think thoroughly, to accept thoroughly, to feel thoroughly the absurdity of "I am I".

2.

What is the meaning of life? A clear and tabooed question, ironic, even.

Let us discuss the strategies of an answer.

First, "Kant said...", "Socrates says that..." In other words, we could excuse ourselves with the weariness of what we regard as our history and which constantly seeks an answer and repeats the question. The numerous puns on the topic are an expression of this inevitable weariness; "the problem of problems" has become a byword.

Second, "Today we **associate** the question of the meaning of life with..." (anything that comes to mind); I am not discussing the possible end of the statement - only the **weakened form** of answering. In other words: the problem is unsolvable, **and yet**. Why "and yet"? Because this question should be answered in an accessible way - or rather in a way important to each one of us.

What do those two strategies have in common? An answer **must** be given (literally handed by the respondent to the inquirer). But everybody knows in advance that instead of a solid object, what will actually be given is "guidance", "instructions of use", not an object of flesh and bone, not even specialized knowledge.

There is also an alternative strategy. Let us compare the following two texts:

What is the meaning of life?

and

"What is the meaning of life?"

It is enough to replace the former with the latter and there will be a thousand things to say. For example: The question of the meaning of life is addressed by the atomized individual when he/she is in a situation of.

Or: The formulation of this question presupposes a certain type of social structure, and the answer varies in terms of one's socially belonging to.

Or, again: Most societies apply at least two models of building the socially valid pattern of answering. Those models have their origins in.

Or even: The question is itself a pattern of imparting a structured coherence to a certain type of everyday life. A secondary ideologeme that organizes and interprets everyday life. This is associated with.

And so on and so forth.

It is enough to close the inverted commas. It is enough to stop answering and start **criticizing the question**.

Enough, therefore, not to form a community with the inquirer.

This is what happens: I take the position of an authority (the question is yours and yours alone, while the answer is mine). "You are asking me because..." you are this, that or the other. But I thereby also impose on myself the rigours of tedious, unproductive reflection; I predetermine the fact that whatever I say will not be our-knowledge-together, i.e our con-scientia, but vice versa: knowledge-power, knowledge-solitude or loneliness.

3.

A brief digression.

By force of the incontestable "definitio est negatio" (or to define is to limit), there are thousands of ways to displace any predicate in "to be..." We might cite definitive features indefinitely, and each one of them, just like the 99 names of the Muslim God, will only express the hopelessness of our effort to stop.

Yet the predicate in "I am..." is invariably a socially valid object. Not an object FROM which I am free, but an object WITHIN which I am free; an object-freedom, so to speak.

(Children confuse their freedom directly with Mum. Teenagers may confuse their freedom with power or money. Either way, the discussed object-mediator in "I am I" is invariably thought as necessary; hence the term object-freedom.)

Yet whatever this object may be - illusory, absurd or ridiculous - in its deep structure it implies an "us".

4.

And a final illustration.

For every type of rationality there is something that may be called "preconception of the truth". The moment I heard that the Sun was an absolutely black body I was sure that was true. That the anthill is **one** living creature **appears** to be - as a preconception - much nearer the truth than the opposite - and obvious in everyday life - judgment.

This is generally one of the strangest formulas evolved by humanity: the truth runs counter to the evidence gathered from everyday experience. Why?

The first thing that should come to mind is that here we have an ethic or aesthetic experience of the new fact of knowledge. The problem, however, is not that this knowledge is experienced as "good" or "beautiful", i.e. as valuable, but that the **transition** itself from "knowledge" to Knowledge is experienced ethically or aesthetically.

But whence this intoxication with the fact that something has been inverted? That black is actually white? And big is small? Why are we never intoxicated with "white is white" and "small is small"?

I, for one, do not doubt **that this inversion is underpinned by cog-nizance as an individual act. As an act targeted not "against" nature, but against everyday consciousness, against the knowledge of All of us.**

Any cog-nizance is dis-junction from some and con-junction with others (today this might not be as obvious as it was with ancient priests or alchemists, but such is the nature of every possible con-scientia).

Unlike the age in which I am simply initiated, i.e. given access to Knowledge, and the age in which I am given an opportunity to multiply, to acquire Knowledge, i.e. in which I am enlightened, we have the outlines of an age in which the act of cog-nizance is an act of disjunction, of "leaving together". Unlike both the ritual of initiation and the pursuit of enlightenment as an **activity**, the act of cognizance here is an act of **communication**.

Deyan Deyanov

ON THE LIMITS OF SOCIOLOGY OF LIFELESS MAN

Let me note at the very beginning that even though I repeatedly discussed Andrey Raichev's text with the author prior to publication, it continues to shock me, and that this shock would be far stronger for those for whom the encounter with the book is unexpected. The shock does not come from the charismatic idiom, but from the mental exertion and from the discoveries in which it crystallizes; an exertion that is productive even when Raichev is mistaken; discoveries that carry profound implications for critical theory¹ (even though Raichev himself does not always point them out).

1 *As, incidentally, for a critical sociology. I believe that the distinction between critical theory and critical sociology comes from the perspective applied by the critic of Modernity: if this perspective remains within the confines of Modernity itself, as in the case of Bourdieu or Habermas, we have critical sociology; if it looks back on Modernity, we have critical theory (albeit substantially different from that of the Frankfurt School). Let me add here that if the withdrawal from the division of labour in science is not just an effect of the ecriture, i.e. a pose, it is a conditio sine qua non for critical theory and an indicator of the privileged status of its perspective.*

In this afterword I would like to highlight those discoveries, point out those implications and trace the genealogy of those misconceptions. Misconceptions which I believe come from an **oscillation between critical theory and sociology, between non-classical thinking and Postmodern ecriture** - an oscillation of which Raichev is semiconscious and which stems from ambiguity in the treatment of the problem of power and from irresolution in identifying counter-power. At the same time, however, this oscillation seems to be a productive contradiction that stimulates his thought.

Perhaps I should also note here that in Raichev's book the distinction between non-classical thinking and Postmodern ecriture, between theoretical content and lecture form, is not always clear. His hyperboles serve as theoretical idealizations, his oxymorons, as signs of the dialectic exertions of an inquiring mind, and his grotesques, as mental experiments².

2 *Cf., for example, the pen that is supposed to become an Indian elephant; or running out of coffee as a crisis; or, say, the opinion poll on whether Sofia should be Bulgaria's capital.*

That is why even though he appropriately avoids excessive use of sociological jargon and skillfully employs something which I call "philosophical Esperanto"³, Wittgenstein's opening statement in the preface to *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* fully applies to Raichev's book: "This book will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it - or similar thoughts.

3 *Even though Raichev's book is designed precisely as a textbook - a collection of lectures delivered to students.*

It is therefore not a textbook. Its object would be attained if it afforded pleasure to one who reads it with understanding" (Wittgenstein 1988:50). Actually the book, to continue with Wittgenstein's aphorisms, will afford pleasure to those who use it as a ladder that may be dispensed with once you have reached what is **the privileged perspective of Raichev himself**. Yet as a result of his semiconscious oscillations, that is precisely where he condenses perspectives and confronts readers with symptomatic ambiguities: something like pitfalls for the ladder climbers, which make them doubt whether they have actually reached the top. That is why my afterword will concentrate mainly on protecting readers from those pitfalls by tracing two **story-lines** along which Raichev's discoveries unravel, **but which I believe are not to be found in his book**. The story-line of the sociology of lifeless man, of the person as a puppet, which, having arrived at the answer to the question of "How are new things possible?", ultimately defines its limitations itself in the problem of Staalkership (cf. Raichev 2000: 139); and the story-line of live objects, of socialized natural processes, which embodies Raichev's critique of Modernity - a story-line which, however, does not converge with the problem of Staalkership. I believe that, to quote Mamardashvili, precisely the singular point at which this convergence has not occurred is the privileged perspective of Raichev himself. My strategy will be to continue those two story-lines to that singular point, to converge them in it and to raise the problem not of Staalkership and the Zone in general, but of the Zone in which Staalkers can be our guides to an otherworld that has surmounted the Modern one. My thesis is that this zone may be defined as a **zone of positively elucidated regress**.⁴

4 *This is my thesis, which I would not want to attribute to Raichev; nevertheless, it has been inspired precisely by his theory of socialized processes.*

1. Socialized Natural Processes

Thus, as "live objects of our work", socialized natural processes (e.g. fire, boars, etc.) are, says Raichev, "the alpha and omega of human history" (Raichev 2000:46-7). I think this is the non-classical discovery that triggers the chain reaction of all implications which rid both Marxist critique of political economy and critical theory in general of their Modernistic dogmas. It should be noted here that Raichev, who previously did not distinguish between fire and boars as socialized natural processes, now does so⁵ - **not by their material content, but by the social form of their socialization** (i.e. as artefacts).

5 *And even cites this difference as a possible reason for the emergence of "primary caste division" (cf. Raichev 2000:126).*

Here he has in mind work as a form of their occurrence, and action - he calls it "the Warrior" (leading to the emergence of the caste of warriors - cf. Raichev 2000:136) - as a form of their termination⁶.

6 *If we insist on defining action by its material content, it could be both hunting and war; but by its social form it is precisely an action: something caused by a purpose that has befallen us, a purpose which we can only confirm, reject or postpone - depending on the means at our disposal (cf. Deyanov 1998:127-8). Work, as we will see further on, acquires a purpose only in the course of production, i.e. as working action (Tatigkeit).*

To them - to what we may call a periodic table of socialized natural processes - we should add sacrifice as appeasement, a return gift offered to the gods in advance, without which they would not bestow on us the conditions of possibility of work and action. Raichev provides for this with the cell assigned to "artefacts, which maintain relations with the otherworld" (Raichev 2000:126), but has not given them differentia specifica precisely as socialized natural processes. Raichev, however, does not point out precisely some of the profound implications of his non-classical discovery: it is above all a critique of Marx's theory of work (and, hence, of the work theory of value and the theory of surplus value). In essence, by problemizing socialized natural processes he renounces Marx's concept of work as work of Homo faber, who uses his instruments only for "throwing, grinding, pressing, cutting" (cf. Marx 1968:191) an object that is denied a life of its own (i.e. **denied the possibility of cooperating**⁷).

7 *The irony here is that Marx, insofar as he does not think socialized natural processes as cooperating with man, is not far from Descartes's thinking "of animals as mere machines [...] while to the eyes of the middle ages, animals were assistants to man" (see Marx 1968:401).*

Precisely as such, in Marx's theory work is indistinguishable from action (i.e. it is working action (Tatigkeit) that has a purpose - which work in its initial form does not). Thus, in Raichev's theory, there can no longer be work which Marx thinks as equally inherent to all social forms (cf. Marx 1968: 196), but is de facto industrial work (at that, as if embodying the telos of Modernity). Perhaps all this may also be summed up as follows: insofar as Marx was concerned with socialized natural processes, he thought them only as means rather than as objects of work (i.e. he did not distinguish between the harnessed and the cart horse); Raichev regards them precisely as objects of work.

Hence in this initial form, work - as a mediating structure - may be thought as follows: socialized natural process, i.e. object (Gegenstand) of work - implements of work that socialize this process - socialized natural product⁸ (by its syllogistic form: P-U-I).

8 *When Marx says that "[t]he elementary factors of the labour-process are 1, the personal activity of man, i.e. work itself, 2 the subject of that work, and 3, its instruments" (Marx 1968:190), he is mistaken in two ways: 1) he forgets his methodological imperative that activity may be studied only through its objects; 2) he superposes the "elementary factors" of work and of action, which is true in the case of working action only.*

In other words, there is a fire that is fed wood to keep burning and produce warmth, or a hen that is fed corn to lay eggs. It is obvious here that Raichev's critique of Marx's theory of work has profound implications not only for the theory of production which proves to be **working action** that has (not only figuratively) a product - the work of keeping and fattening a pig (for instance); and the action of slaughtering the pig (since the pigsty is, in essence, an extended ambush). There are also profound implications for the theory of consumption which, in turn, proves to be work that socializes the natural processes which reproduce the human body; and for a radically new approach to the problem of the dependence of relations of production on productive forces (and vice versa⁹).

9 *There is something symptomatic in the fact that - discussing Marx's theory of machinery - Raichev is concerned not so much with how capitalist relations of production determine the appropriation of new socialized processes from nature (or of their "introduction" into nature through machines), as with how, by spreading, they determine new social relations. I will try to decipher this symptom further on.*

Let me note only this - even if it does not thematize them, Raichev's book hints at quite a few of those implications.

Next I will only sketch the implications of the theory of socialized natural processes for the work theory of value and of the theory of surplus value. If we assume that live objects cooperate with us, we can no longer claim that only human work creates value (that was true only thanks to the idealizing presupposition that, to quote Mamardashvili, "objects have been eviscerated", i.e. that nature is, in essence, a machine - **an idealizing presupposition which was practically true in the age of Marx, but is no longer true today**¹⁰).

10 *Consequently, the work theory of value may be criticized only for lacking, as Marx himself would say, a "historical element".*

Nor could we claim that "exploitation of nature" is only an innocuous metaphor - if socialized natural processes cooperate with us, **any acceleration of those processes would mean that they would create not only value, but also surplus value**. This could be formulated as follows: having been forcibly extracted from the division of work in the community, those processes were dumped in the social division of work; but the ideology of Modernity has refused to

recognize their participation in this division (something which Latour also realizes, albeit within a different paradigm).

2. Machines and Socialized Natural Processes

Raichev proposed - as we shall see, under the influence of the problem of the socialization of natural processes - a methodological reinterpretation of Marx's theory of machinery as early as the 80s (cf. Raichev 1988:14-27). Since this thesis receives only a passing mention in the book, I will have to go back to his 1988 paper. Raichev proceeds from Marx's idea that "[i]t is not the work [...] that serves as the starting-point of the machine" (Marx 1968:389) and that "[o]n a closer examination of the working machine proper, we find in it, as a general rule, though often, no doubt, under many altered forms, the apparatus and tools used by the handicraftsman or manufacturing workman" (ibid.: 384), and draws the following laconic conclusion: for Marx, **machines are past manufacture**. And to add that for a Hegelian student of logic - insofar as in Hegel essence is "has-beeness", past being (cf. Hegel 1974:266) - this means that "in essence, machines are manufacture" (Raichev 1988:18; cf. Raichev 2000:88). It would not be an overstatement to say that - insofar as Marx does not formulate this methodological concept explicitly - this theory is largely Andrey Raichev's personal contribution to the critical history of technology, i.e. to the history of the formation of "the productive organs of man [...] that are the material basis of all social organization" (cf. Marx 1968:383)¹¹.

11 *At that, following Marx's methodological pattern, Raichev's book outlines an interesting theory of the computer as "past book-keeping, a past institution" (Raichev 2000:93); even though this idea is obviously original, I still cannot judge if the theory is plausible.*

Let me note, however, that in his 1988 paper Raichev also says that the machine is a mediator - something that is not to be found in the book (Raichev 1988:18-20); I think that this particular thesis is worth reconsidering. Above all, here the problem before Raichev (a problem, however, of which he is not fully aware) is: what does the machine actually mediate? The solution which I would suggest may be formulated as follows: **as a machine, the machine is a mediator between implements of work**¹² (even though to those who are involved in the process of production the latter are incorporated in the machine).

12 *It should be kept in mind that this is a problem of the greatest difficulty - the problem of the cell-form (to quote Marx's metaphor) of technology as a mediating structure; just as in "the analysis of economic cell-forms, neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of use" to the critical theoretician and "the force of abstraction must replace both" (Marx 1968:8); "[t]o the superficial observer", Marx adds, "the analysis of these forms seems to turn upon minutiae", and this analysis "does in fact deal with minutiae, but they are of the same order as those dealt with in microscopic anatomy" (ibid.). Thus, if "in bourgeois society, the commodity-form of the product of labour [...] is the economic cell-form" (ibid.), the implement of labour is the technological cell-form of the same.*

And then: what does the so-called inversion in mediation consist of, i.e. the fact that "from a mediator, the machine turns into a starting (respectively, final) point of the reproductive process" (ibid.: 19)? Although not without some hesitation, Raichev specifies this inversion in time: that is the point at which "machines start producing machines"; if, however, we assume that as a machine, the machine mediates the implements of work, the problem in the inversion in mediation - let us use this term for the time being - is not in the production of machines by machines, but in that **the machine mediates itself through implements of work**;¹³ and just as thanks to money many things that are not commodities become commodities - e.g. conscience or the bones of saints (cf. Marx 1968:114, 143), thanks to the mediation of the machine things which, by their own measure, cannot be implements become such - e.g. reagents or hormones.

13 *I think that this is the only way in which we could reinterpret - while avoiding all methodological pitfalls - Raichev's formula of "means of production - ... production ... - means of production" (Raichev 1988:20).*

Latour's monsters are produced precisely by means of those implements of work (with all unindictable consequences of their expansion - cf. Latour 1994:50).

Raichev says in his book that besides socialized natural processes, there are many "processes which are not appropriated from but introduced into nature", adding, "[a]nd these are all machines" (Raichev 2000:86); that is why machines are, as if were, "something like a socialized [natural] process in reverse" (ibid.: 99). In other words, it is not only machines in their initial form, past manufacture, the artisan work process broken down into operations (as well as its non-natural products) that are introduced into nature. So are, it seems - in the form of machines - natural processes which, as such, are not found in nature but are the product of Homo faber¹⁴ who has socialized, through reagents, hormones, etc. (i.e. through what Husserl calls Galilean science), objects of work which are essentially processes found in nature.

14 Here is what Hannah Arendt says about this: "[...] began to prescribe conditions and to provoke natural processes. What then developed into an ever increasing skill in unchaining elemental processes, which without the interference of men, would have lain dormant and, perhaps, never have come to pass, has finally ended in a veritable art of 'making' nature, that is, of creating 'natural' processes" [...]" (Arendt 1997: 231; cf. 147-152).

Thus we seem to have here socialization not of the conditions of the natural process, but of its very progression (Prozessierung; hence the possibility to accelerate this process). In actual fact, we have the very opposite: this socialization deprives natural processes of their own life, terminating not the process itself (as in the case of boars), but its self-progression¹⁵.

15 *This is precisely what happens in the case of broiler chickens as machines (cf. Raichev 1988:21).*

The machine here proves to be a successor to the laboratory. At that, if we reconsider the above from the perspective of Bruno Latour, it would not be an overstatement to say the following: here we do not have processes introduced into nature, but introduction of nature into the expanding laboratory (cf. Latour 1994:32; cf. also Chalukov 1992:115-44). The mathematization of nature proves to be its laboratorization (because unyielding matter may be practically idealized precisely in the laboratory).

Thus, in their initial form machines are, to quote Andrey Raichev, past manufacture (i.e. they are mechanical machines); in their productive form they produce products which are not to be found in nature and, at the same time, have as their object of work natural processes that are socialized through implements of work which are, anyway, a product of modern science (i.e. machines may be chemical, biological, etc.).¹⁶

16 *Perhaps precisely here one may invert materialistically what Hegel says about the objectified rationality ("object") which passes through the following phases: mechanism, chemism and teleologism (cf. Hegel 1974:383-99). Machines are precisely such objectified rationality (it is not accidental that Weber calls them "geronnener Geist").*

This means that **work is industrial and, at the same time, work on the socialization of natural processes**; historically, this had no precedent before modern capitalism, which first saw the emergence of industrial capital in free form. Thus modern capitalist relations of production extracted and socialized new natural processes, thereby determining - in their turn - productive forces that inspired hope of humanity's infinite progress.¹⁷

17 *Here is what the Cartesian utopia was at the time: "[...] knowing the forces and action of fire, water, air, the stars and all other bodies that surround us, as we know the different crafts of our craftsmen, we could employ, in the same way, our knowledge for beneficial purposes for which it is appropriate, and we could thus become masters and owners of nature" (Descartes 1978:291). If heterotopies are, to quote Foucault, utopias that have actually come true (cf. Foucault 2000), aren't we in a heterotopia in which Descartes's political dream has come true?*

Yet that was precisely when - due to non-recognition of the idealization of Modernity that there is no unyielding matter but only matter that has not yielded yet as, after all, an idealization only - an ecological time bomb that would explode several centuries later was planted (cf. Deyanov 1996).

3. Mediating Structures and Artefacts (A Methodological Digression)

At this point we need a methodological digression from our story-line: even though Raichev offers only a general outline of the theory of mediating structures (cf. Raichev 2000:78-82), this theory has profound implications for critical theory in general, as well as for his own discoveries (and misconceptions). One might even say that whatever the changes in his vocabulary, Raichev keeps his theoretical microscope focused precisely on mediating structures (from socialized natural processes and his critique of Marx's theory of work, to the theories of machines and artefacts in general, to the problemizing of the otherworld as an ontology of power and Staalkership). Insofar as without introducing the apparatus of Marx's syllogism it is virtually impossible to go into the details on which we have differences (at that, essential) with Andrey Raichev, whereas its introduction would be a useless digression (cf. *ibid.*:81), I will opt for something like a strategy of compromise - I will employ this apparatus as a last resort only, at that, without going into technical details (of "philosophical Esperanto"). Above all, I would like to make a careful distinction between mediators restoring measure and mediators maintaining quality or expanding quantitatively: just like socialized natural processes, the former are live objects. That is so because to restore measure in the immeasurable (cf. Hegel:261) means to resolve a crisis, which is possible only through the emergence of new objects - crown, money, implement of work, etc. (cf. Raichev 2000:84); whereas the emergence of such new objects invariably presupposes a Staalker, a charismatic leader who will communicate the new - by the formula, "It is written, but I say unto you!" (*ibid.*:143). Which is this live object?¹⁸

18 *Here we are again following Marx's imperative to study activity through its objects - at that, we are extending this imperative to rituals and live communication; I am surprised that Raichev does not try to find a live object through which to study the live communication in the course of which Staalker communicates the new - this undoubtedly ensues from the logic of his theorization.*

Undoubtedly, **the body of the charismatic leader of which the new object is born - as if through the demiurgic power of his/her discourse** (cf. Deyanov 1999); the body of the charismatic leader - in opposition to, say, the body of the king, which is an extension of the crown, a mediator maintaining quality. On the contrary: when the crown was born - it is worth oversimplifying this process - it was born of the body of a charismatic leader, and that body obviously could not have been an extension of the crown. As we shall see further on, this essentially applies to quantitatively expanding mediators too: if the capitalist in "M-C" from the "M-C-M" formula is a personification of money as capital and his/her body is an extension of money, then - I am oversimplifying things again - the body of the charismatic leader of which money was born cannot be an extension of money. Hence this calls for **a meticulous distinction between two mediators which seem to have accreted**: the mediator that resolves a crisis and the mediator through which the structure within which this crisis is resolved, functions (Marx would say, "within which the contradiction has a form in which it can move"); restoring

measure and mediators which - given that measure is restored - either maintain quality or expand quantitatively.¹⁹

19 *Raichev thinks that those are not types of mediators, but stages in the development of one and the same mediator (cf. Raichev 2000:78); I believe that he is mistaken here because he does not identify the different layers of this accretion. As we will see further on, if he had done so, he would have found that Staalker's live power is, in its very essence, counter-power.*

From here let us address what Andrey Raichev - I would say, with some methodological carelessness - calls inversion in mediation (cf. Raichev 2000:77). I believe that what has been said so far implies that even at the stage at which the so-called immediate relation between commodities is mediated by money - C-M-C, i.e. **without any stage of inversion in mediation - we also have inverse mediation: M-C-M'**. Even though - due to the accretion of the quantitatively expanding mediator with the mediator restoring measure - the power of money as capital accretes with the live power of the charismatic leader and appears as such, this is not so in reality (and that is the only reason why Weber's routinization of charisma is possible - in this case, as the liberation of the power of money as capital from charismatic authority). We will see that what Raichev thinks as an effect of the inversion in mediation, mediators that have "gone berserk" (cf. Raichev 2000:78), is an effect of a restructuring of quantitatively expanding mediating structures, which - both historically and logically - follows mediation (ergo, inverse mediation too): the production stage is wedged in between the stages of circulation. All I will add here is that there is also inverse mediation (contrary to what Raichev seems to think²⁰) both in the case of structures maintaining quality and mediating structures restoring measure; only in their case there is no quantitative expansion.

20 *Discussing inversion in mediation, Raichev admittedly says that given certain historical conditions, every mediator may become a starting and, respectively, end point of the process (cf. Raichev 2000:78); but he then says that only the quantitatively expanding mediator "has properties of a privileged perspective" (i.e. "dual knowledge"- cf. *ibid.*: 80); this implies that Raichev seems to think that at the stage of inversion in mediation, every mediator may become quantitatively expanding. Yet this implies, in turn, that there is dual knowledge in every inverse mediation - irrespective of whether there is quantitative expansion; this may be reformulated as follows: not every power is capital-based (even though it may accrete with capital-based power).*

Let me return briefly to the abandoned story-line. The restructuring of quantitatively expanding mediating structures so that the production stage is wedged in between the circulation stages as a result of which mediators go berserk, may also- on condition that we think it in terms of Marx's syllogism²¹ - be thought as inversion in mediation: the production wedged in between M-C and C'-M' (logically U-I and P-U) is productive use of the work power and means of production. In essence, it is production of commodities by commodities, C-C' (logically I-P).

21 *In Marx's syllogism, as in Hegel's, I, P and U in succession function as a "mediating medium" (cf. Hegel 1974:366). Only, as a result of the structural inversion to which Marx subjects Hegel, the order of the syllogistic figures is inverted.*

In handicraft production, prior to which there never was industrial capital (even though here it is not yet in free form), the production stage follows the circulation stages. In modern industrial capitalism the production stage, wedging in between the stages of circulation, frees industrial capital (profit becomes the "main incentive", says Marx). Motivated by profit and following the idealization of Modernity that there is no unyielding matter but only matter that has not yielded it, the capitalist rationalizes formally - through machines - not only work, but the natural processes themselves. This very **restructuring of the economic mediating structure may be thought syllogistically as inversion in mediation**, as transition from the P-U-I syllogism to the U-I-P syllogism.²²

22 *Since mediation itself is thought as essential in Hegel's syllogism (and, hence, in Marx's), the final stage is dropped as "formal only".*

And, as noted above, this, precisely, plants an ecological time bomb whose action is delayed by several centuries.

Without going into the details of the problem of artefacts as unities of material content and social form²³ that are indistinguishable for those immersed in a given structure, let me only note here that when something is said to be an artefact, mediator or thing that has "absorbed a relation", it is as if the same thing is said.

23 *The problem of artefacts and artefactual analysis is only mentioned here in passing, since it is treated in the appendix to this afterword.*

In reality, however, here there is a change of perspectives from which the object may be thought, and the omission of any one of them (or their condensation) is not methodologically harmless. I am noting this insofar as the technique preferred by Andrey Raichev, artefactual analysis (cf. Raichev 2000:97-107), could - its productivity notwithstanding - set methodological traps along the path of critical theoreticians. I would be tempted to say that the problem is in the possibility of deducing, from one and the same artefact (e.g. a thing - school report card, clock, etc.), social forms imposed on its material content by different mediating structures; however, it would be more appropriate to avoid this temptation too, in order to avoid the trap of reified thinking, and to state that this thing - insofar as it has absorbed social relations from different structures - **is not one, but several artefacts**²⁴.

24 *I think that even though it is somewhat oversimplified, the following generalization is possible here: when we think through the artefact (e.g. through the thing), what we seek is the mediating structure, the relation embodied by the thing; when we think through the mediator, i.e. through the relation, we seek the thing, the artefact; those two perspectives reciprocally presuppose each other and form something like a spiral along which the critical theoretician's thinking progresses. Ignoring either would be methodologically inadmissible.*

4. The Limits of Sociology of Lifeless Man

I think that it is time to cast methodological light on Andrey Raichev's discoveries: the otherworld as ontology of power and Staalkership (cf. Raichev 2000:133-150). Above all insofar as, raising the issue of Staalkership as a sociological problem, he himself declares - after repeatedly stressing that he is concerned with the person as a puppet only - that it is precisely here that sociology of lifeless man demonstrates its limitations itself (cf. *ibid.*: 139).²⁵

25 *In essence, even socialized natural processes (as "live objects") define this limit - if we follow Latour in interpreting sociology not as a science of society but of as-sociations, "i.e. of the heterogeneous communities of human non-human actors among which we have existed ever since the dawn of time" (cf. Chalukov 1992:121-2). I think that Raichev would accept this interpretation.*

And then, insofar as despite his interesting ideas Raichev does not remain true to himself and remains with them, instead of conceptualizing them methodologically - perhaps because he has not yet thought them through or followed them up, perhaps because of his withdrawal from the division of work. Here the method is - in psychoanalytic terms - displaced; whereas the chance comes from the fact that there are symptomatic points in which the displaced returns. Those symptomatic points, however, may be identified only if the problems of the otherworld as ontology of power and of Staalkership (as problemizing charisma from the perspective of critical theory) are examined from the perspective of the preceding lectures. I will now proceed to follow up Raichev's thoughts (or to "think through him").

Without going into technical and other details, I would like to go back to Staalker's body (of which - as if through the demiurgic power of his discourse - the new is born), in order to conceptualize it through Raichev's own methodologemes. Staalker's body is, as I said, a mediator that restores measure (i.e. resolves a crisis); hence - if we apply artefactual analysis - we might establish that the social form of that body (contrary to its material content) is the form through which this crisis may be resolved; in other words, it assigns form to the immobilized by crisis formless matter - a form in which the contradiction will move.²⁶

26 *This requires learning to think the contradiction between form and matter in non-Aristotelian and even non-Hegelian terms; that is, to think matter that self-assigns its forms. This*

means here that the form in which the contradiction will move - even before this form has materialized in its own matter - is a form of the body of the charismatic leader.

All this means that we are faced with an entirely new live object - **not a socialized, but a socializing natural process which, at that, by resolving a crisis, socializes itself** (cf. Erikson who says in, I think, Young Man Luther, something like that: the charismatic leader resolves his problem which he cannot resolve otherwise, by resolving a problem of the society in which he lives). This very body, which is a source of demiurgic discourse, is also the source of what Raichev calls live communication (in which we "reside in ourselves"- cf. Raichev 2000:56).²⁷

27 *Yet as a source of live communication it is also the source of live power; but, insofar as it resolves crises through something entirely new, something that establishes radically new order, this power is counter-power (I think that this is precisely what escapes Raichev: for him the otherworld is invariably an ontology of power which must do something new, but so that "things could be repeated" - cf. e.g. Raichev 2000:132).*

It is also precisely the body that sacrifices itself (cf. socialized natural processes which are artefacts maintaining relations with the otherworld - *ibid.*:126). At this point, I can sum up that the expounded theory of mediators restoring measure and of Staalkership gives us the key to Marx's enigmatic formula on **production of social relations**.²⁸

28 *Marx's formulation, "production and reproduction of social relations", is from a letter to Anenkov from 1846. What is problematic in it is how the person immersed in personal or reified appearances may penetrate them in order to produce a relation. It is not difficult to see that if it is reconsidered from the perspective of Staalkership, this problem is resolved in its general form. In essence, this also solves the second question which Raichev raises at the beginning of his book: how, considering that "things are repeated [...], is history, new things, possible?" (*Raichev 2000:26*).*

Here I would like to address a problem which escapes Raichev, but which has profound implications for his theory of charisma. According to Raichev, the fact that transcendence is ontology of power means that "there are also situations in which power is incapable of justifying its actions with arguments from reality"; and those are, he adds, "all situations in which order is not sufficiently self-justified"; precisely then power "recognizes what it does through the prism of the otherworld only", i.e. "the otherworld is its self-consciousness" (cf. Raichev 2000:151-2). In other words, this happens only when power "does not know what to do because it cannot repeat things done until then" (cf. *ibid.*: 138-9) - to resolve crises, generating new ones.²⁹

29 *Notably, according to Raichev this thesis applies to any authority (parental, school, etc.;(not only to political power - cf. Raichev 2000:139), as well as to any society; that is why, precisely, there are otherworlds (in the plural) rather than an otherworld.*

Precisely here Andrey Raichev does not realize that he has fallen in a logical trap: **what happens when the otherworld itself is in crisis?**³⁰

30 *We will see eventually that what is experienced as a crisis of the otherworld itself is a phenomenal effect of crises that belong entirely to this world.*

And, hence: isn't only that which resolves precisely such a crisis in the otherworld itself, truly new (I am referring to "the most radical new thing possible", as he says himself - cf. *ibid.*:150)? Staalkers - as Staalkers - generate precisely such "most radical new things possible". As we shall see, however, this logical trap is an effect precisely of what I have defined as ambiguity in the treatment of the problem of power and irresolution in identifying counter-power. I believe that there are three forms of crisis, i.e. of phase-shifting (cf. Raichev 2000:59), which Raichev does not distinguish: crisis of means (e.g. the knife that does not cut or the coffee that runs out), crisis of conditions (e.g. soil that has been tired or water that has been polluted) and crisis of ends (as in the case of any *illutio*³¹ that has become an illusion).

31 *By *illutio* Bourdieu means that stake in a social game, which is worth living and dying for (cf. Bourdieu 1997:128). Precisely the *illutio* defines the socially valid ends in a society; instead of "ends", Raichev would say "motives", "self-evident objects" here (cf. e.g. Raichev 2000:45); I think, however, that they are actually ends that cannot turn out to be means.*

This triunity is due to the fact that **action presupposes - besides adequacy of the means to the ends - adequacy of the conditions to the means and of the ends to the conditions**. Hence, the three forms of inadequacy of an action differ in essence even though we might be tempted to generalize them as "crisis"; hence, also, the three forms of resolving those crises. The important point for us here is that the experience of a crisis in the otherworld is a phenomenal effect precisely of the inadequacy of the ends to the conditions. It is obvious that overcoming such inadequacy requires counter-power, i.e. Staalker - contrary to the other two forms of crisis, in which power turns to the otherworld as its ontology, but in order to do something new in the name of "the repetition of things". This, however, solves the ambiguity in the treatment of the problem of power and the irresolution in identifying counter-power in their general form only. Here we are up against the limit of sociology of lifeless man (and not just of sociology of lifeless man).

5. A Sort of Interim Summary

I said at the beginning that my strategy would be to continue Andrey Raichev's two story-lines - of the limits of sociology of lifeless man and of socialized natural processes, the focus of Raichev's critique of Modernity - to the point where they converge, the privileged perspective from which both his own discoveries and their profound implications for critical theory are possible; and to raise the problem not of Staalkership and the Zone in general, but of the Zone in which Staalkers may be our guides to an otherworld that has surmounted the Modern one. I also said that my thesis would be that this zone may be defined as a zone of positively elucidated regress. What did I have in mind?

The ecological time bomb planted by industrial capitalism is about to explode, and the termination of certain socialized natural processes, which we are witnessing, certifies that the idealization of Modernity that there is no unyielding matter but only matter that has not yielded yet is an **idealization only**. In other words, the accelerated extraction and socialization of new natural **processes** has proved to be termination of natural processes which have not been socialized, but were a condition for the progression of the socialized ones: cf. ozone depletion, water pollution, etc. (we will eventually see, however, that this crisis of conditions proves to be a form of a crisis of ends in modern industrial capitalism). The solution to the problem is obviously **to socialize natural processes through which the progression of the terminated ones will be restored**; and that is precisely why they are also - to use Raichev's metaphor - the omega of human history (cf. Raichev 2000:47). Restoring those conditions **requires, however, delaying rather than accelerating**, terminating the expansion of the quantitatively expanding mediators that have gone berserk, through mediators restoring measure (i.e. the problem is ecological by its material content only) and, hence, industrial capital that is not in free form (i.e. by its social form is a problem of the critique of political economy). This, precisely, is the point of convergence of the story-lines of socialized natural processes and sociology of lifeless man which itself defines its limits in the problem of Staalker; in this case, however, this is Staalker who guides us to an otherworld that has surmounted the Modern one. What is the essence of the otherworld which is an ontology of this Staalker's counter-power? What is the essence of his/her privileged perspective, which will also be a privileged perspective of critical theory as a critique of Modernity?

Here I will only outline my solution: a new, non-classical critical theory cannot remain confined to the critique of progressivism (as in the Frankfurt School or even Foucault), but must positively elucidate the nature of regress. Regress not as decline or a return to the noble savage, but as retracing the steps of Modernity - in the name of solving the contradictions which Modernity itself leaves in its wake. The solution of those contradictions requires, as noted above, socialization of natural processes which restore the progression of the terminated ones; terminating the expansion of quantitatively expanding mediators through mediators restoring measure and, hence, industrial capital that is not in free form, etc. This is, so to speak, the objective content of the new privileged perspective; which is subject to study by the critical theoretician; but as such, this new privileged perspective is not yet an ontology of power. Or, in Weberian terms, a new economic ethos is conditional on a new religious ethic; but the

sociologist of religion cannot invent this ethic - s/he may either stumble on it empirically, or calculate (just as Uranus was discovered by mathematical calculations) that a new religious ethic is expected on the firmament of history. As noted above, this is my own thesis, which I do not want to attribute to Raichev; but it would have been impossible without his theories of socialized natural processes and Staalkership.

I think that I can now sum up: despite the ambiguity in the treatment of the problem of power and the irresolution in identifying counter-power, despite the subsequent oscillation between critical theory and sociology, between non-classical thinking and Postmodern ecriture, Andrey Raichev is the spokesman of a new kind of intellectual dissidence. Some time ago, referring to the non-classical analytics of Mamardashvili's consciousness, I made a distinction between political and philosophical dissidence; I have always been amazed by Raichev's immunity to political dissidence; but I have also been amazed by how this immunity does not prevent him from remaining a philosophical dissident. I think that this ambiguity accounts not only for his shortcomings when he was expected to show political resolve, but also for his present advantages; since philosophical dissidence is - let me repeat - that which makes it possible to develop long-term strategies that remain productive after it has performed its political functions.

By this I mean that - after Privileged Perspectives - critical theory simply cannot be the same. However we might criticize Andrey Raichev for his Postmodern ecriture, for his rejection of methodological explanations, for his tendency not to distinguish between the perspectives of critical theory and of sociology, etc., his non-classical discoveries³² compel us: to go back to the methodological models of Marx and Hegel, ridding them of their Modernist dogmas; to seek the new roads of critical theory away from those explored by Lukacs and the Frankfurt School (including Habermas) and to turn to the non-classical analytics of Mamardashvili and of Foucault, Arendt and Latour; to realize that the future of the critique of Modernity requires not crypto-normativism or normative justification, but reflection on its own privileged perspective.

32 *Some of those who read my afterword prior to publication suggested that to talk of discoveries - here and now - might be irritating (for some people or others). Nevertheless, I support the thesis that discoveries are possible even on the Balkans - at that, after Ancient Greece; and, if they are there - as I believe they are in Raichev's case - they should be identified as such, without any euphemisms.*

The political implications of this philosophical dissidence are hardly foreseeable at present; but - I think Adorno said this - good theory is already political practice.

Appendix

On Artefactual Analysis and Ethnomethodological Experimentation

(Methodology and Power)

Artefactual analysis³³ is a research technique that may serve as a starting point of an ethnomethodological experiment³⁴, as well as - **due to a seemingly methodological blockage of thought** - confine itself to the separation of material content from social form.

33 *This is an excerpt from a paper written in 1992, "From Ethnomethodology of Opinion Polls to Non-Classical Polling" (cf. Deyanov 1992:189-91) in which, accepting Andrey Raichev's artefactual analysis as a technique, I criticize the form in which he applies it; I am quoting his original paper (cf. Raichev 1989) rather than his book, since one of the quoted passages is not in the book. Even though since the time of writing (1992) Raichev has been increasingly moving away from power towards counter-power and from sociology to critical theory, I think that my critique is still valid.*

34 *I am referring to the technique of artefactual construction, proposed by Nikolova and Subeva, which makes it possible to combine artefactual analysis and ethnomethodological experiment. According to Nikolova and Subeva, artefacts (in my paper, the questionnaire) may be not only analyzed, but also deliberately constructed so as to provoke the unquestionable self-evidences of "the victims" (in my paper, the respondents) of the ethnomethodological experiment: they thus prove to be methodological artefacts (cf. Nikolova & Subeva 1989:33). If ethnomethodological analysis separates social form from material content, artefactual construction assembles them in a way in which the artefact provokes the empirical to "become self-expressive" and to "enridicule" the artefact (ibid.: 24-7).*

In essence, this methodological blockage is only a symptom of the fact that methodological thought is preoccupied with power. Decoding this symptom presupposes something like a socioanalysis of the unconscious power impulse of the analyst of artefacts (school report card, questionnaire, etc.) towards deviations from the norm that governs the codified space constituted by those artefacts. "Enridiculing" the artefact "school report card", Raichev's thought is blocked precisely when faced with the semi-raised problem of those deviations. When he comes to the student's attitude to his/her own report card (which, he says, is normatively described in the so-called instructions), Andrey Raichev concludes that they show how "in the practice of functioning of the artefact, there are certain deviations which, precisely, are the subject of the description" (Raichev 1989:87). Translated in everyday terms, this means that "the child 'forgets' his/her report card, tears and replaces pages, fakes the signature of his/her parents, enters non-existing grades, etc." (ibid.:88). But for Raichev those deviations are not interesting per se - **they are not regarded as ethnomethods subject to empirical registration** by means of which students try to redefine situations that are embarrassing for them, but as anecdotal details which may help artefactual analysis through their "enridiculing" effect. In other words, the deviations are not regarded as evidence of the incommensurability of the everyday typizations, scales and systems of the student's relevance vis-a-vis those that are encoded in the artefact "school report card". It turns out that the study has missed everyday life, i.e. its subject of study, and that is because **the phenomena of this everyday life are reduced to epiphenomena.**

By contrast, in the ethnomethodologically motivated artefactual construction, the artefact which reifies a research method is designed to provoke the unquestioned self-evidences of those who are the subject of research, to form sub-questions and to enable registration of empirical deviations. In the case of the report card - registration of the ethnomethods of students who are "abnormally" redefining an embarrassing situation, as well as of the ethnomethods of teachers who are restoring the authority of the norm over students; in the case of the questionnaire - the ethnomethods of the respondents, who are also "abnormally" redefining the situation of polling, and of the ethnomethods of the pollsters who are, in their turn, trying to restore the authority of the norm over the deviant respondent. In both cases, the researcher does not ignore the perspective of the subordinates; on the contrary, s/he reflexively tries to avoid being blinded by the normalizational impulses of power. Methodological (re)construction of the artefact enables us to break down the unquestioned self-evidences and background expectations of the "victims" by the structures of sub-questions, as well as to typologize them on the basis of the ethnomethods applied in an attempt to eliminate the normative requirements encoded in the space constituted by the artefact. **The empirical evidence itself proves to be "enridiculing" here:** in the case of the questionnaire: from the substitution of political by moral approval (all respondents - and there are quite a lot of them - who say "[then President] Zhelyo [Zhelev] is a good man") - to the non-distinction of the official sexes in the ID questions (the female from the Rhodopi Mountains who adds "girl") - to the non-distinction of the official stratification schemes (the woman who identifies as "intelligent pensioner"). This "enridiculing" empirical evidence allows us not only to declare that public opinion does not exist (cf. Bourdieu 1992:161-72), but also to record **the precise way in which it does not exist** in a Rhodopi village, in the Gypsy neighbourhood or in the posh residential areas.

Where Raichev takes advantage of this "enridiculing" empirical, he is concerned with it only as a **symptom of a crisis of power**, and - even though he is not aware of this - is blinded by the normalizational impulses of power and ignores the perspective of the subordinates. That is precisely why this empirical appears as unrestrained anecdotes rather than as "persistent", "irreconcilable" research data. Hence **the very procedure of "enridiculing"** which he proposes in his paper "Artefactual Analysis" is, **prima facie, arbitrary** - as if lacking a privileged perspective, with a privileged perspective which, as he says, should be elaborated: "enridiculing is above all elaborating a specific, 'strange' perspective on the artefact", from which the artefact 'will appear to us as if duplicated or divided: on the one hand, as material content and, on the other, social form, as an inanimate, lifeless thing and as a relation assimilated by the thing" (Raichev 1989:80). **In fact, in this case the privileged perspective is certainly not arbitrary:** this is, so to speak, the privileged perspective of the artefact itself, but not as an embodiment of "naive" power, but as an embodiment of power in crisis - of power threatened by confrontation with counter-power. Thus the self-confined artefactual analysis - even if those who are practising it do not necessarily have to be aware of this - proves to be **(preventive) critique of the effects of that counter-power**. That is also why only the texts incorporated in the artefact may constitute the empirical evidence of this artefactual analysis deprived of ethnomethodological "fieldwork" follow-up: the enridiculing empirical evidence proves to be only an ephemeral move that leads back to the enridiculed artefact: the interest is not in the

incommensurable, the particular, the unyielding matter ("the deviant"), but - through them - in the co-measuring, the universal, the formalized (in the "norm" to which the "deviant" must be returned). The threat of possible counter-power has enabled power, so to speak, to topicalize itself, to duplicate itself and, thus, to acquire a privileged perspective from which to observe itself. That is why irrespective of the non-classical declaration that - just as in Tom Stoppard's play - Rosencrantz and Guildenstern will prove to be in the centre of events, they will remain "unimportant", "secondary" characters (i.e. "important" only insofar as Hamlet must be returned to this centre - cf. Raichev 1989:91).

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