FROM NON-CLASSICAL TYPES OF RATIONALITY TO CRITICAL THEORY: V. FOURS

Gintautas Mažeikis

© Gintautas Mažeikis
Prof. habil . Dr.,
Vytautas Magnus University
Email: gintautas.mazeikis@vdu.lt
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9848-0908

Abstract: In order to interpret the philosophical path of Vladimir Fours, it is first necessary to demonstrate how late Soviet philosophy first allowed and then Lukashenko's regime prohibited the emergence of a plurality of rationalities and a diversity of symbolic worlds. This will help to understand Fours's resistance to this prohibition. Furthermore, it is important to consider what the plurality of rationalities means from the point of view of critical theory. The interpretation of this plurality as constructive can be seen as conducive to the modernization of society and the development of human consciousness. Conversely, it can also be viewed as pathological and destructive. The article provides an interpretation of Fours's theoretical thought process, progressing from the theory of rationalities to the analysis of communicative acts and their pathologies, as outlined in J. Habermas' discourse ethics. It then moves on to E. Laclau and Ch. Mouffe's theory of agonistic ruptures, S. Žižek's concept of hidden prohibitions and C. Castoriadis's empowering imagination. The article also presents the contemporary results and the challenges encountered during this critical reflection.

Keywords: classical and non-classical theories of rationalities, communicative action and communicative mind, ethics and pathologies of discourses, traumatic thinking.

From Classical to Non-Classical Models of Rationality in the Late Soviet Period

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there was a noticeable increase in the focus on critical theory, particularly with regard to debates about classical and non-classical ideals of rationality. In order to understand Fours's contemporary perspective on events in the post-Soviet Union, and to formulate a problem and pose a question, it is important to avoid oversimplifying philosophy in the late Soviet period. Instead, the most prominent and incisive representatives of this philosophy should be discussed. Among the many authors mentioned by Fours, I would like to single out two: Merab Mamardashvili and Nataliya Avtonomova.

But first, the Soviet Marxist perspective on classical forms of rationality must be mentioned. Historically idealist (Hegel and Hegelians) or materialist (Marxist historical materialism) spheres of rationality were discussed by analogy with the development of political classes, the state and relations of production. For example, it was common to distinguish between the rationality of antiquity, the Middle Ages, the New Ages, etc., or the rationality and characteristics of slave, feudal, bourgeois and socialist relations. But this was a linear interpretation of rationality, even if we are talking about a spiral model. It was called the classical theory of the development of rationality, which denied the possibility of multiple alternatives or independent branches or curves of development.

Prior to 1987, the mainstream perspective within the departments of historical materialism was that the plurality of rationalities was characterised by a specific Marxist conception. This conception was predicated on the premise that a distinct rationality typified the relations of production of historical formations. The conceptual underpinnings of this perspective can be traced back to the Young Hegelian debates and the early philosophical and economic manuscripts of Marx. Marx's philosophy does not advocate solipsism; rather, it emphasizes the influence of social relations on the mode of production, productive relations, and consequently subjective thought. The mind is understood as a reflection and expression of the comprehensive, intricate web of socio-economic contradictions and class interests. The classical conception of rationality was interpreted through the lenses of Marxism and was associated with scientific and technical progress. In Western countries, the revision of the concept of rationality in the philosophy of science began before the Second World War due to the challenges posed by psychoanalysis and phenomenology. However, in Soviet Union this philosophical turn was prohibited until 1953,

the time of Stalin's death. Later Soviet Marxist discussion was influenced by post-positivism, represented by T. Kuhn, I. Lakatos, S. Toulmin, J. Agassi, M. Wartofsky, P. Feyerabend, and others.

Non-classical social ontology is predicated on the assumption that sociality is a second nature, created by human beings themselves, by communities in their history (Adorno & Horkheimer 1973). The ontological foundation upon which all cultural and civilizational masonry is built is the activity of social subjects (Horkheimer & Adorno 1987). This ontological basis is inherently distinct from the physical and biological order, and consequently from physical and biological ontology, despite the interconnected nature of these domains. The distinction between social and cultural ontology is pivotal to the argument that the social world is determined, liberated and emancipated, depending on the actions of human beings themselves (Adorno and Horkheimer 1947; Adorno 1966). Consequently, the identification of social categories, both constructive and destructive, becomes an important task of social criticism.

A fundamental difference exists between Soviet Marxist social ontology, which can be simplified to physical, biological and production determinism, and critical theory. The latter speaks of a much greater complexity of ontological action, extending the determinants of imagination, social function, subjective will and other determinants, and showing a greater diversity of the world. The field of social ontology is inextricably linked to the dynamics of political power and economic interests, which serve as crucial factors in its conceptual framework. The social epistemology of critical theory is an area of study that focuses on the functional and dysfunctional aspects of diverse social practices. These practices aim to create, communicate, evaluate and preserve knowledge within various societal contexts. Soviet Marxist epistemology, a one-sided ideological constructivism and theory of knowledge, was subordinated to the goals of Soviet human education. Critical theory, as exemplified by Foucault (Foucault 1972), emphasises critical reflection on the social functions and dysfunctions, the powers and interests that influence our knowledge. This critical reflection does not aim to create an ideological man, but rather to unleash his social and creative capacities so that he can build worlds of diversity and solidarity.

The issues concerning social epistemology and ontology have been addressed by a range of theories of rationality. Indeed, even prior to the period of Perestroika, Ernst Cassirer's theory of symbolic forms of thought was translated and commented on by Karen Svasjan (Svasjan 1980), who directly or indirectly opposed the prevailing dialectical logic of the time (Ilyenkov 1977). Consequently, a non-classical axiology

emerged and was subsequently reformulated, signifying a theory of values that increasingly de-emphasised the postulates of Marxist ethics and sought to define other ethical assumptions, including the ethics of discourse. Merab Mamardashvili's book "Classical and Non-Classical Ideals of Rationality" (Mamardashvili 1984) was published in the context of these debates, although the author had been working on it for at least a few years prior to that. The book was written during the late days of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR, Leonid Brezhnev, a period of profound social and political stagnation. During this period, formal tributes to Marxism-Leninism were limited to a few non-committal quotations from the Marxist classics, which permitted a neutral analysis of Western philosophy and the raising of topical scientific questions. Mamardashvili (2023) explores the notion of observation in two distinct fields of enquiry: quantum physics and psychoanalysis. In both domains, the act of observation is inextricably linked to the observer's engagement in an objective process.

The paradoxical nature of non-classical rationality becomes apparent when considering consciousness itself, or the Cartesian cogito. Self-observing thought is not neutral and objective to itself but hope to be objective and neutral. Moreover, participatory observation is not only subjective but intersubjective, depending on the historical development of society and contemporary relations. Consequently, Mamardashvili (2014) posits the question of multidimensionality of the phenomenon of consciousness. The resolution to this paradox necessitates an examination of the mechanisms of language through which the observation of rationality can be effective. Consequently, there is a requirement to study the philosophy of language and other means of rationality, including myth and poetry. In this work, Mamardashvili remained within the domain of classical Marxist and post-Kantian philosophy, and did not address contemporary Western theories of rationality.

In 1977, Natalija Avtonomova translated and edited M. Foucault's book. In 1988, she published her own book, entitled 'The Intellect. Reason. Rationality'. In this book, she continued Mamardashvili's reflections in a very different way in relation to Foucault's epistemologies. She interpreted the ideas of the Marxist and new epistemological horizon as presented by A. Roger and P. Langevin of the Union Rationaliste and their journal "Cahiers Rationalistes"; the neo-realists G. Bachelard and F. Gonseth and their journal "Dialectica"; the French structuralists C. Lévi-Strauss and J. Derrida; the philosophers of the Frankfurt School — T.-W. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, J. Habermas; the phenomenologists-existentialists G. Gadamer and P. Ricoeur. Similar, but more Marxist ideas were presented by I. T. Kasavin and Z. A. Sokuler in 1989:

"The ongoing debate has not only failed to clarify and clarify the concept of rationality, but, on the contrary, has led to a complete lack of definition of both the concept itself and the grounds for its explanation..." (Kasavin, Sokuler 1989: 192)

They proposed that, in the New Ages, the researchers may have operated under the assumption that they possessed a similar comprehension of the concept of rationality — both in terms of its meaning and significance. However, as the debate progressed, it became evident that this assumption was not supported by enough evidence. This was due to the intensive development of related fields such as sociology, ethnology, cultural studies and other sciences, as well as the growing artistic and social involvement of society. Consequently, classical rationalist philosophy was found to be inadequate in providing a satisfactory explanation for the processes that were underway.

The fundamental question that emerged during the discourse on the multiplicity of rationalities pertained to the selection of well-reasoned alternatives and the form that scientific communication should assume in order to facilitate rational judgment. These inquiries were articulated within a liberating socio-political milieu, in Perestroika. During this period, philosophers were preoccupied with the challenges of modernization, while seemingly neglecting the dissolution of the Soviet Union (which occurred in 1991), the emergence of new conflicts in post-Soviet regions, the rise of new dictatorships, and even the persecution of philosophers.

Fours: From Theory of Rationalities to the Critical Theory

Fours initiated his philosophical inquiry by pursuing the ongoing discourse surrounding Mamardashvili, Avtonomova, and the Western philosophers who provided commentary on these figures. A significant number of the aforementioned issues were addressed in his early article, entitled "On the Problem of Rationality of Philosophical Knowledge" (Fours 1988).

In this article, he presented the dialectical ideal of classical rationality, with reference to the classic works of late Soviet Marxism (see T. Oizerman, I. Avtonomova, A. Bogomolov, I. Alekseev). Fours discussed two problems: firstly, the inconsistencies between "the ideal of rationality and real philosophical knowledge", and secondly, the differences between rationality and consciousness. It is important to note that consciousness characterises individual actions, while rationality

characterises public, socio-historical processes. In order to comprehend the authentic historical progression of objective rationality, it is necessary to recognise the interconnection between ontological and gnoseological theories of reality. In this discourse, Fours delves into G. Berkeley's theses and offers an interpretation of classical works pertinent to the subject.

Soviet philosophy posited the notion that scientific and technical progress should be explicitly linked to the development of productive social relations. This task provides a rationale for the growing popularity of Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, as his philosophy was directly oriented in a similar direction: to explain the ways of modernization, social relations and communication, and the role of philosophy in modernization. In his theory, Habermas distinguished between two forms of communication: the first, known as 'closed, specialised communication', and the second, designated as 'open communication'. The latter was the subject of extensive discussion and promotion, and was regarded as an unfinished project. It was based on broad communication, which was deemed to be suitable for discussion and further development in the social sciences. Consequently, scholars such as Fours and a nascent generation of philosophers of rationality began to study Habermas, and, by extension, critical theory in general. Subsequently, in 1989, he expanded upon this considerations by delving into the intricate relationship between myth, philosophy, and the conceptual framework of philosophical knowledge (Fours 1989).

In the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Fours embarked on a period of contemplation concerning non-classical knowledge and its concomitant rationality, adopting a perspective analogous to that of Avtonomova. This intellectual foray commenced with an examination of Foucault's analysis of the archaeology of knowledge and his critique of social ontology and epistemology. The crux of Fours' inquiry revolved around the paradoxical relationship between the repository of knowledge and authentic discourse, and it was arguably discursive analysis, in conjunction with a critique of rationalities, that guided his transition to the study of critical theory, particularly that of Habermas. In the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a period of social and cultural transformation ensued, necessitating a novel approach to open philosophy. It became evident that the proliferation of alternatives, both in number and quality, could no longer be adequately explained by classical rationality alone. This approach proved incapable of providing a comprehensive explanation or even led to the distortion of underlying processes.

In the aftermath of 1993, the theme of crisis and plurality of rationalities emerged as a pivotal philosophical concept within

the Russian-speaking post-Soviet sphere, thereby engendering an imperative for critical theory. The philosophical study of science has been distinguished from the philosophical study of the humanities by a series of questions, firstly those of classical and non-classical theories of rationality, then those of humanitarian knowledge, and finally those of the theory of argumentation in the social sciences and the ethics of discourse. In analysing the problems of rationality in social philosophy, Fours turns to Habermas's communicative rationality.

The turn was influenced by the social needs of the post-perestroika society and accepted the new reality of the role of symbolic power, the falsification of democratic values in Belarus and Russia in the mid-1990s, and the problem of rationality in a situation of absurdity. In the article "Communicative Rationality and Social Modernization" (Fours 2012b), the author emphasises that, in his opinion, the philosophical solution to this problem is a "communicative-pragmatic transformation of rationality" and a "praxeological" application of the new model of communicative rationality. Praxeology is predicated on a discursive ethics that elucidates the terms and norms of the consensus or social contract. The proponents of this theory posited that the absurdity of the new discursive reality could be surmounted by an ethical and communicative rationality and the practice of consensus. Fours inquired as to the possibility of integrating public philosophical thought into the practice of consensus-building and stressed the problem of political relations between different modes of rationality. It is evident that certain social groups have adopted a favourable stance towards the new modernity and the Western concept of horizontal self-organization. Conversely, other groups have demonstrated a preference for the hierarchical, profoundly mythologised political regime of Lukashenko. Consequently, political practice has encroached upon the domain of philosophical reasoning.

The concept of social relations implies that we are talking about a communicative act, and the concept of class consciousness can be conceptualised (operationalised) through the concepts of communicative action and the established, communicative mind. Fours turns to Habermas's discussion with Karl Otto Apel on Kant's transcendental philosophy. The basis of social relations and communicative reason is transcendental schemes of understanding, or, as Kant puts it, the capacity for transcendental apperception. The question that arises is the origin of these transcendental schemata and their relationship to our capacity for speech. Moreover, the transcendental mind does not presuppose ruptures, whereas post-Hegelian philosophy increasingly speaks of the radicality and importance of revolutionary ruptures, of

negation and the possibility of withdrawal and the formation of a new imagination shaped by them.

On Communicative Acts
and Their Pathologies

The plurality of communicative social acts, and their historical development, presupposes a plurality of transcendental schemes or discursive practices, yet this does not imply that they are all equal in terms of scientific justification, even in the context of the social sciences. This is the problem of scientific universality, which is evident in the fact that certain narratives and communicative acts exhibit pathological characteristics, while others, though yet to be recognised, can facilitate modernization. The crux of the issue lies in the need to discern the pathological relationships in appropriate contexts and to recognize the challenges posed by modernization, particularly in the context of political matters. This predicament gives rise to the critical-political examination of scientific norms, their hegemonic character and application.

Fours was a philosopher-polemist, and each of his texts deals with intractable, paradoxical problems. He distinguishes between rational and communicative possibilities and defines public absurdity as the impossibility of understanding the social and communicative pathologies of modernity. In doing so, he draws on critical theories such as those proposed by Habermas and Axel Honneth, as well as on polemics with the psychoanalytic strand of critical theory. In his late period of activity, he focuses on two thinkers, Cornelius Castoriadis and Slavoj Žižek, who have been important in explaining and extending the problem of pathological public discourses, in discovering mass traumas and forbidden topics, and even changed memory. The psychoanalytic approach is notable for its emphasis on critical theory, acknowledging the role of Western Marxism, post-Kantian analysis, Weberian sociology and Freudian psychoanalysis as the foundational sources and subjects of the theory. Critical theory has historically evolved as an interdisciplinary social and political critique, with a pronounced focus on philosophical perspectives.

The pathologies of communicative action can be categorised into two distinct types: visible and invisible. Visible pathologies are characterised by the presence of authoritarian judgments, a lack of dialogue and tolerance, closed and aggressive mythological discourse, in the instrumentalization of the value of people, manipulative emptiness of philosophical abstractions. Invisible pathologies, in turn,

are characterised by symptoms, including, but not limited to, publicly condemned and repressed memories of traumas of forbidden behavior, such as slavery, fundamental religious or totalitarian ideological beliefs, and the crimes of parents, many of which cause anxiety. A salient pathological symptom is the disability of social philosophy to analyse and criticize current anti-democratic events. Fours' study focuses on the interpretation of Marcuse's analysis of K. Marx's early work, "The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the Philosophy of Poverty by M. Proudhon" (1847). In this work, Marx critiques the metaphasic method, which deviates from the prevailing economic and social structures by prioritising the imaginary logic of ideas over the logic of material reality. The concept of 'poverty of philosophy' demonstrates not inclusion in the process of *Verdinglichung*, which is defined as the transformation into the real product, or reification.

Marcuse (1964) has argued that capitalism seeks to reduce political ideas and protests to a narrow instrumentality, thereby destroying the political character of protest and the actual content of concepts. He considers the importance of both philosophical features: to be actual or hegemonic at the level of ideas and ideologies, and to become embodied — material or productive practice. A similar argument was advanced by A. Gramsci (1971), who interpreted reality as the hegemony of state apparatuses and proposed that ideology could be expressed through such hegemony. Notably, the Soviets, during the Stalinist period in particular, developed hegemonic philosophical conceptions characterised by hyper-aggressive judgement on class struggling, conspiracy and inner enemies.

Marcuse's (1964) argument that capitalism poisons the political horizon and instrumentalizes people's thinking is applicable to the Soviet and post-Soviet authoritarian type of manipulation. Philosophy, on the other hand, opens non-existent horizons, invites people to a non-existent struggle, forces them to think about non-existent political or social problems, falsifies them and thus removes the desire to participate in a political struggle. Consequently, contemporary social and political movements need to develop a new critical apparatus and conceptual framework that is both contemporary and comprehensive. Fours discusses the pathologies (Mažeikis 2020) of social sciences in Russia in his article 'The Poverty of Social Philosophy' (Fours 2009). Now we can call this period 'soft Putinism' in comparison with the growth of repression by the state apparatus from 2022. The title of Fur's article imitates K. Marx's "The Poverty of Philosophy" and discusses the, I would say, irresponsible philosophical bubbles of this period.

He notes that the poverty of social philosophy depends on the behavior of the philosophical faculties and departments of the

universities, which responded both to political needs and to imagined novelties, which became simply a language game without the social need for implementation or the practice of critique. For example, he interprets the book by V. Fedotova (Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences) "A Good Society" (Fedotova 2005) as follows:

> "Valentina Gavrilovna works with theoretical 'elephantism' ('modernization', 'megatrends', 'civilization/types of development') that are analytically elaborated along the lines of the archetypes of 'the West' and 'Russia' — purely mythological-ideological, not scientific or philosophical categories. For example, when Fedotova writes that 'Russia's tasks are interpreted as two-sided: entering the global economy and solving domestic problems through a new type of modernization that does not have a catch-up character', what is actually meant by 'Russia'? The state? The population? A country? What is the 'ontological status' of this 'macro-subject' to which the empirical 'I' and 'we' are mystically linked?" (Fours 2012a: 40)

The term "elephantism" (слонизм), as interpreted by Fours, is a metaphor for empty philosophical gigantomania or imitation of the importance and concern for human beings. Elephantism means operating with very broad concepts without proper justification, without the necessary operationalization and empirical confirmation. Empty concepts such as globalization, the West, the Russian people, the mentality of the people easily change their content, allow all kinds of paralogisms, i.e. are replaced by other concepts such as humanity, world spirit, world mind, global neoliberalism. The empty gigantomania is a philosophical disease of the discourse that gives the impression of being scientific and serves as a pseudo-justification for other broad judgements, thus creating false inferences and allowing mythological, religious and metaphysical narratives to transform philosophy into a state ideology.

Fours points to the non-inclusion of Russian social philosophy in current Western discussions and issues. This tendency began to emerge in the early 1990s. For example, according to Fours, instead of working with critical theory, pragmatism or analytic philosophy, the so-called 'amateur' social philosophy of K. Pigrov of St. Petersburg State University emerged. Fours explains: 'Between 1991 and 1998, Pigrov published a manuscript journal of St Petersburg philosophers, in which he 'willingly published amateur philosophers with the craziest ideas, as long as they were original' (Fours 2012a: 42). This is an example of an irresponsible social philosophy that seeks ideological invitation and institutional recognition as a form of philosophical existence.

From the other side, state apparatuses are also interested in 'university philosophy':

> "The excessive state 'care' for university philosophy, manifested not only in its 'institutionalised excessiveness' but also in its bureaucratic codification, seems to be the main generator of the simulacrum of philosophy as an academic discipline." (Fours 2012a: 31)

The result was full recognition of the authoritarian and later totalitarian regime of the Putin clan with its ultra-conservative Eurasian nationalist ideology.

Today I would add that there is a gradual turn to a militant social mythology of the One (*das Eine, Единое*), the culmination of which can be seen in the philosophy of A. Dugin and the large company associated with him. They speak of religious, global and national myths and try to translate these ideas into political and repressive practices. In other words, they want to become part of the state apparatus. All this is less visible in Belarus, where "state" philosophers prefer "elephantism" and the poverty of philosophy as a less responsible and more invisible behavior. I'm not talking about independent Belarusian philosophers like V. Mackievič, T. Shchyttsova, A. Ousmanova, O. Shparaga and others who are in prison (Mackievič) or in emigration. I think that the concept of poverty or "banality of evil" (H. Arendt) successfully characterises the conformism of Belarusian "state" philosophers, but not hegemonic, aggressive narratives. It is not a question of "banality", but rather a question of "absolute evil" (Podoroga 2017) or "spiritual villainy" (Mažeikis 2018) of separate thinkers.

The Clash of the Social Philosophers

Among Pigrov's followers is his favoured disciple and collaborator, A. Sekatsky (Pigrov, Sekatsky 2017), who established the "St Petersburg Fundamentalists" — a literary and philosophical movement (Sekatsky 2016). Sekatsky, like his later partner and rival Dugin and their circle of associates, talks about the importance of empire-building in an age of diversity, fluidity and uncertainty, and sees Putin's role in it:

> "In any event, the subjects of a potential social contract emerged almost concurrently with Putin's rise to power. It is precisely at this juncture that the 'restoration of the state' is underway, and it is for this reason that it is so important to clarify the nature of the problem." (Sekatsky 2016a).

The publication of an open letter to Putin by St. Petersburg fundamentalists, inviting him to rebuild an empire, is indicative of a strategic realignment in their ideological orientation. This development is characterised by a recognition of the prevailing geopolitical landscape as one that is in a state of rapid flux, and the open letter serves as a clarion call for the re-establishment of a ideal of global dominance. This strategic realignment follows a period of collaboration with similar movements in Moscow, including Dugin's circle, that commenced in 2014, in the wake of the Crimean occupation and the Donbass conflict with Ukraine. St. Petersburg fundamentalists philosophical movement has revived and updated the Russian diaspora philosopher I. Ilyin, who laid the philosophical foundations of Russian fascism before the Second World War (Krusanov, Sekatsky 2016c). Putin has repeatedly quoted this philosopher and declared that he follows his ideas (Krusanov, Sekatsky 2016c).

A comparison of the social philosophers Fours and Sekatsky is both interesting and worthwhile. Sekatsky is an advocate of a return to the neo-imperial Russian tradition, claiming that the traumatic rupture is characteristic of contemporary post-structuralist Western philosophy, which he contends has lost its roots (Sekatsky, 2020). Sekatsky identifies national and even proletarian-origin philosophy as authentic and not born of trauma and pathology (Sekatsky, 2019). His position merits attention for its attempt to synthesise the Soviet and Russian imperial heritage, diverging from Dugin's emphasis on Russian global and civilizational power and mission, while both advocating a return to the neo-imperial Russian tradition. Sekatsky's position exhibits a partial alignment with Soviet Marxism, incorporating post-structural elements. In contrast, Fours exhibits a shift from a purely Habermasian position to a synthesis of Castoriadis' and Mouffe's ideas, distancing himself from nostalgic class theory, imperial aspirations and strongly criticising authoritarian power and totalitarian sentiments.

So, Critical theory poses the following question: what is the significance of the mythologization of human communication, particularly the political mythologization of philosophy? The mythologization and ideologization of philosophy represents not merely a shift in language through the introduction of novel images and metaphors, encompassing empty concepts and elephantism, but also the articulation of concrete political conclusions and calls to action. For instance, contemporary "Z"-philosophers, including the fundamentalists previously referenced, advocate for the right to engage in warfare, drawing upon the philosophies of former Soviet, and indeed Stalinist, scholars who recognised the importance of class struggle within the context of philosophy. Similar radical concepts is further expanded upon in the

contemporary context of imperial struggles within the realms of the social sciences and humanities. J. Sineokaya's (2024) comprehensive list of "Z-philosophers includes the following individuals: "A. Dugin, V. Varava, A. Sekatsky, F. Girenok, I. Evlampiev, N. Syundyukov, N. Arutyunov and others.

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Philosophical Responsibility
for Modernity

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Fours examines Habermas' "critique of rational ideals of modernity" through the lens of contemporary alternatives and responsibilities. The concept of socially responsible presence, as discussed, differs from that of modernity. The persistence of traditional social structures or creation of new ones do not necessarily align with the principles of classical ideals of rationality and corresponded modernity. Modernity, therefore, can be understood as primarily an institutional and scientific undertaking that requires the utilization of power. It is not a natural phenomenon, but rather exhibits a contradictory relationship with history, employing and negating it. The concept of modernity and the present are not strongly interconnected, this is why by the scientific, ideological and other projects of the state seek to penetrate and transform the present. Modernity and the present are thus constituted of both visible social and technical elements and invisible — psychic — elements and forces:

> "The 'Project of Modernity' is characterised by inherent contradictions and the emergence of pathologies, representing the negative consequences of the progressive rationalization of human life." (Fours 2012a: 210)

The identification of the inherent contradictions and pathologies within contemporary projects, particularly those of an ideological and authoritarian nature, establishes the objectives of critical theory. On the one hand, social philosophy has the capacity to expose and illustrate the detrimental nature of specific elements of a project. On the other hand, theory is capable of formulating alternatives, establishing ethical discourses for solutions, and mediating these solutions through philosophical means (Mažeikis 2024).

Fours's work explores the discursive ethics of critical theory by offering an interpretation of the proposals put forward by Apel, Habermas and Honneth. Apel's approach emphasises immutable values and a strict deontology, expressed and developed through transcendental

analysis. In contrast, Habermas's position is rooted in a communicative ethics of discourse, underpinned by the history and social contract of modernity. Specifically, Apel's conception of the value of the category of happiness as constant is contrasted with Habermas's emphasis on the historical character of the content of understanding, and the meaning of the category. While Apel's position is that of immutable values, Habermas's is that of a constantly evolving complex of values based on rationally founded agreement. The debate thus far has revealed that, while Apel's position ensures the transcendental unity of knowledge by guaranteeing the immutability of the foundations, there is a risk that the very foundation of the categorical imperative may, in fact, encourage religious or other forms of authoritarian power.

In this discussion, Fours adopts a radical approach by drawing on Castoriadis's psychoanalytic "dynamics of social imagination" (Fours 2012a: 380), on Žižek's Lacanian dialectics (Fours 2012a: 87) of the symbolical and the Real, and on Chantal Mouffe's social agonism (Ibid). These elements emphasise the role of contradictory between imagination and social structures, unconscious prohibitions of some discourses, antagonism and agonism in the thinking of modernity and moral and legal agreements. According to Fours, who interpreted the Habermasian project of modernity, the radicalization of the rational communicative position engenders the new model of responsible philosophy that can be applied to the thinking of Belarusian modernity. He considers this radicalization in the context of Žižek's comments on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's publication Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. In this work, Žižek contends that Laclau and Mouffe's project is often perceived as a theoretical undertaking, but in reality, it transposes the fundamental tenets of poststructuralism to the practical political domain. The project encompasses the absence of the transcendentally signified, criticises the construction of 'reality' within discourse, and presents the notion of self-identity (including the identity of social subjects) as a consequence of the dynamic interplay of social and political differences, as a practical clashes. Fours argues:

> "However, such an interpretation fails to acknowledge a crucial element that distinguishes this novel endeavour. The book's true merits lie in its conceptualization of 'social antagonism'. According to Žižek, reality cannot be reduced to 'language games'; instead, the social-symbolic field is understood as structured around a particular traumatic impossibility [травматической невозможности], a rupture that remains unrepresentable." (Fours 2012b: 87).

The conscious and unconscious practical, non-discursive conflicts are characterised by what has been termed 'historical and present ruptures' and 'traumatic impossibilities'. Fours' approach to critical theory diverges from the methodologies employed by Apel and Habermas, instead drawing upon the influence of Castoriadis, Laclau, Mouffe, and Žižek. He engages with the contemporary notion of the traumatic, non-discursive rupture of divergent social rationalities around which discourse, and its ethics, are constructed. The focal point of his research endeavours lies in the meticulous unpacking of the fractures identified and the lacunae in critical reflexivity observed in contemporary society. The three main fractures of rationality that are identified are as follows: firstly, the transformation of the Soviet project; secondly, the concealment and exposure of Stalinist crimes; and thirdly, the revival of Soviet hopes and fears in Lukashenko's Belarus. Contemporary ruptures of social-political reflexivity may also be observed in the context of pre-revolutionary imperial thinking and victorious Bolshevik thinking, and between contemporary neo-imperial thinking in Russia and critical postcolonial thought. Evidence of this phenomenon can be found in contemporary Ukraine, or among supporters of the independence movement in Belarus.

The theory of Castoriadis occupies a distinctive position within the philosophical framework of Fours, offering insights into the significance of the concept of nothingness in the context of social imagination: inspiring, destructive, anxiety-inducing. Conversely, Žižek's conceptualization of the notion of the gap as a dual prohibition signifies the concealed nature of the presence, constrained not only by limitations but also obscured by moral, religious or biological anxieties, and the inherent impossibility of verbal articulation. Conversely, Castoriadis conceptualizes nothingness as a game for the imagination, as the origin of the unconditioned human and it is other than trauma and different than deliberative consent. The emancipation of the unconditioned imagination is identified as the objective of creative modernization of society and humankind. It is proposed that this notion of creative modernization should be endorsed, irrespective of its foundation.

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