



EUROPEAN HUMANITIES UNIVERSITY

JOURNAL FOR PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURAL STUDIES

ТОПОС

ФІЛАСОФСЬКА-КУЛЬТУРАЛАГІЧНИЙ ЧАСОПІС

№ 1 (54), 2025

ISSN 1815-0047 (print)
ISSN 2538-886X (online)

ТЭМА НУМАРА:

КОНТУРЫ СУЧАСНОЙ
КРЫТЫЧНОЙ ТЭОРИИ

TOPIC OF THE ISSUE:

CONTOURS OF CONTEMPORARY
CRITICAL THEORY

INDEXED IN

Scopus

Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)

The Philosopher's Index

EBSCO-CEEAS (Central & Eastern European Academic Source)

PUBLICATION FREQUENCY: 2 ISSUES PER YEAR

EDITORIAL TEAM

T. Astrouskaya, O. Davydzik (academic secretary),
A. Gornyxh, V. Korablyova, A. Langenohl,
I. Poleshchuk, A. Ousmanova,
T. Shchyttsova (editor-in-chief), A. Vozyanov

THE ISSUE EDITORS

Veranika Furs, Andrey Rolyenok

EDITORIAL BOARD

J. Baranova (Lithuania), W. Brogan (USA), L. Fisher (Hungary),
V. Fours (Belarus), E. Gapova (USA), A. Haardt (Germany),
D. Komel (Slovenia), Daid R. Marples (Canada),
K. Meyer-Drawe (Germany), A. Mikhailov (Belarus),
V. Molchanov (Russia), J. Sallis (USA), H. R. Sepp (Germany),
F. Svenaeus (Sweden), E. Trubina (Russia),
B. Waldenfels (Germany), A. Yermolenko (Ukraine)

Contact email address: journal.topos@ehu.lt
Website: <http://journals.ehu.lt/index.php/topos>

Postal address: European Humanities University
Savičiaus st. 17, LT-01127, Vilnius, Lithuania

© Topos, 2025

© European Humanities University, 2025

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL PREFACE

VERANIKA FURS, ANDREY ROLYENOK

RETHINKING THE CONTOURS OF CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL
THEORY BY VLADIMIR FOURS [In Rus.] | 7

CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY: HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTIONS

GINTAUTAS MAŽEIKIS

FROM NON-CLASSICAL TYPES OF RATIONALITY TO CRITICAL
THEORY: V. FOURS | 28

ARŪNAS MICKEVIČIUS

GENEALOGICAL CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL PRACTICES: NIETZSCHE
AND FOUCAULT VERSUS HABERMAS | 45

EKATERINA SHASHLOVA

NORMATIVITY IN CRITIQUE: HOW THE THEORY OF
SUBJECTIVATION ADVANCES THE THEORY OF RECOGNITION | 66

THE CRISIS OF THE DISCOURSE OF GLOBALIZATION AND THE CONCEPTS OF MODERNITY

ILIA INISHEV

IMPLOSIVE SOCIETIES: CULTURE, MATTER, AND AGENCY | 81

SIARHEI LIUBIMAU

UNDER-DETERMINED PRAXIS AND POLYCRISIS OF MODERNITY | 106

STUDIES OF POLITICS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY

UŁADZISLAŨ IVANOŨ

ULADZIMIR FOURS AS A POLITICAL THINKER [In Bel.] | 132

DARIA SYNHAIEVSKA
THE LIMITATIONS OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY
IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY | 143

CRITICAL THEORY OF MEDIA, INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY

VERANIKA FURS
WHAT'S WRONG WITH PARTICIPATORY CULTURE? | 153

DENIS PETRINA
THE PROBLEMATIC OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)
IN COGNITIVE CAPITALISM: TOWARD POSTHUMANIST CONTOURS
OF THE NEW COGNITARIAT [In Rus.] | 177

VIKTORIYA KANSTANTSIIUK
GENERATIVE MEDIA AND THEIR SUBJECT IN THE PERSPECTIVE
OF CRITICAL THEORY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS [In Rus.] | 206

VOLHA DAVYDZIK
CYBERFEMINISM, HYBRID INFRASTRUCTURES,
AND DIGITAL RESISTANCE: RECONFIGURING AGENCY
IN TECHNOPOLITICAL STRUGGLES | 226

STUDIES OF NATIONALISM

JAKOB WUNDERWALD
CRITICALLY ONTOLOGIZING THE NATION: ULADZIMIR
KARATKYEVICH'S ZYAMLYA PAD BYELYMI KRYLAMI | 244

ANONYMOUS AUTHOR
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIVIC AND ETHNIC NATIONALISM
ACCORDING TO ULADZIMIR FOURS, AND INSTITUTIONS
FOR ENFORCING LANGUAGE RIGHTS AS THEIR POINT
OF CONVERGENCE [In Bel.] | 267

ЗМЕСТ

ПРАДМОВА РЭДАКТАРАЎ

ВЕРОНИКА ФУРС, АНДРЕЙ РОЛЁНОК
ПЕРЕОСМЫСЛИВАЯ КОНТУРЫ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ КРИТИЧЕСКОЙ
ТЕОРИИ ВЛАДИМИРА ФУРСА | 7

КРЫТЫЧНАЯ САЦЫЯЛЬНАЯ ТЭОРЫЯ:
ГІСТОРЫЯ І СУЧАСНЫЯ КАНЦЭПЦЫІ

GINTAUTAS MAŽEIKIS
FROM NON-CLASSICAL TYPES OF RATIONALITY TO CRITICAL
THEORY: V. FOURS | 28

ARŪNAS MICKEVIČIUS
GENEALOGICAL CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL PRACTICES: NIETZSCHE
AND FOUCAULT VERSUS HABERMAS | 45

EKATERINA SHASHLOVA
NORMATIVITY IN CRITIQUE: HOW THE THEORY OF
SUBJECTIVATION ADVANCES THE THEORY OF RECOGNITION | 66

КРЫЗІС ДЫСКУРСУ ГЛАБАЛІЗАЦЫІ
І КАНЦЭПЦЫІ МАДЭРНАСЦІ

ILIA INISHEV
IMPLOSIVE SOCIETIES: CULTURE, MATTER, AND AGENCY | 81

SIARHEI LIUBIMAU
UNDER-DETERMINED PRAXIS AND POLYCRISIS OF MODERNITY | 106

ДАСЛЕДАВАННІ ПАЛІТЫКІ
Ў РАМКАХ КРЫТЫЧНАЙ САЦЫЯЛЬНАЙ ТЭОРЫІ

УЛАДЗІСЛАЎ ІВАНОЎ
УЛАДЗІМЕР ФУРС ЯК МЫСЬЛЯР ПАЛІТЫЧНАГА | 132

DARIA SYNHAIEVSKA
THE LIMITATIONS OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY
IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY | 143

КРЫТЫЧНАЯ ТЭОРЫЯ МЕДЫЯ, ІНТЭРНЭТУ І ТЭХНАЛОГІЙ

VERANIKA FURS
WHAT'S WRONG WITH PARTICIPATORY CULTURE? | 153

ДЕНИС ПЕТРИНА
ПРОБЛЕМАТИКА ИСКУССТВЕННОГО ИНТЕЛЛЕКТА (ИИ)
В УСЛОВИЯХ КОГНИТИВНОГО КАПИТАЛИЗМА:
К ПОСТГУМАНИСТИЧЕСКИМ КОНТУРАМ
НОВОГО КОГНИТАРИАТА | 177

ВИКТОРИЯ КОНСТАНТЮК
ГЕНЕРАТИВНЫЕ МЕДИА И ИХ СУБЪЕКТ В ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ
КРИТИЧЕСКОЙ ТЕОРИИ И ПСИХОАНАЛИЗА | 206

VOLHA DAVYDZIK
CYBERFEMINISM, HYBRID INFRASTRUCTURES,
AND DIGITAL RESISTANCE: RECONFIGURING AGENCY
IN TECHNOPOLITICAL STRUGGLES | 226

ДАСЛЕДАВАННІ НАЦЫЯНАЛІЗМУ

JAKOB WUNDERWALD
CRITICALLY ONTOLOGIZING THE NATION: ULADZIMIR
KARATKYEVIČ'S ZYAMLJA PAD BYEŁYMI KRYŁAMI | 244

АНАНІМНЫ АЎТАР
ІНСТЫТУТЫ ПА ЗАБЕСПЯЧЭННІ МОЎНЫХ ПРАВОЎ
ЯК ПРЫКЛАД СПАЛУЧЭННЯ ГРАМАДЗЯНСКАГА
І МОЎНАГА НАЦЫЯНАЛІЗМУ | 267

ПЕРЕОСМЫСЛИВАЯ КОНТУРЫ
СОВРЕМЕННОЙ КРИТИЧЕСКОЙ ТЕОРИИ
ВЛАДИМИРА ФУРСА

Вероника Фурс, Андрей Ролёнок

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-7-27>

RETHINKING THE CONTOURS OF CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL
THEORY BY VLADIMIR FOURS

© Veranika Furs

Associate Professor, European Humanities University, Academic

Department of Social Sciences,

17 Savičiaus Str., 01127, Vilnius, Lithuania,

E-mail: veronika.furs@ehu.lt

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8729-4168>

© Andrey Rolyenok

Independent Researcher, MA in Philosophy

Email: rolyenok@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8810-2910>

Abstract: This article serves as an extended editorial introduction to the special issue of *Topos* journal, marking the 15th anniversary of the passing of the influential Belarusian philosopher Vladimir Fours (1963–2009). It aims to critically revisit and contextualize Fours's contribution to contemporary critical social theory within the framework of current global and regional transformations, particularly in Belarus and Central-Eastern Europe. The authors reconstruct key stages of Fours's intellectual evolution and emphasize the lasting relevance of his work. Alongside a reconstruction of Fours's intellectual trajectory and the reception of his ideas, the article provides an overview of contemporary developments in critical theory, including the rise of digital capitalism, ecological crisis, the transformation of the public sphere, and the emergence of new epistemic frameworks such as postcolonial theory, feminist critique, and critical AI theory. The authors argue that Fours's conceptualization of critical theory as a reflexive, ethically grounded, and socially engaged project remains crucial



today. His legacy offers valuable tools for analyzing the challenges of the present and for imagining alternative futures rooted in critical thought and emancipatory praxis. The article also highlights the commemorative and scholarly efforts surrounding the 2024 conference “Contours of Contemporary Critical Theory” and explores the role of Fours’s legacy in fostering new directions for interdisciplinary research, public engagement, and critical dialogue in the post-Soviet intellectual landscape.

Keywords: critical social theory, Vladimir Fours, Belarus, Belarusian national project, post-Marxism, globalization, regressive sociality.

Введение

Размышления о растущем отчуждении и новых формах несвободы становятся всё более актуальными в современном мире в контексте процессов де-демократизации, усиливающейся консолидации и солидаризации авторитарных режимов, а также растущей общественно-политической фрагментации в демократических странах. Это побуждает многих социальных теоретиков возвращаться к идеям, разработанным в рамках критической теории, основанной на принципах рефлексивности и негативности по отношению к современным социально-политическим порядкам.

В 2023 году критической теории, ассоциированной с «Франкфуртской школой» и Институтом социальных исследований (далее — ИСИ), исполнилось 100 лет. По случаю юбилейной даты новый директор ИСИ Стефан Лессених (сменивший в этой должности Акселя Хоннета) инициировал и провел совместно с членами ИСИ интенсивную дискуссию с целью разработки новых перспектив для будущих исследований в Институте. Промежуточные результаты этого продолжающегося процесса самооценки были представлены для публичного обсуждения (Institut für Sozialforschung 2023). Авторы сохраняют общую приверженность идейным и нормативным установкам критической теории общества, представленной в трудах «классиков» (Макс Хоркхаймер, Теодор Адорно, Герберт Маркузе и др.). Но при этом артикулируют необходимость ее переосмысления в контексте новых материальных, политических и социальных условий (структурных изменений в капиталистическом обществе, возвращения войны на европейский континент и др.), фиксируют появление новых противоречий, исследовательских тем и методологических подходов (эпистемических горизонтов критической теории)¹.

1 «Основной темой исследований в Институте стало растущее несоответствие между нормативными обещаниями современности и их социаль-

Участники дискуссии предлагают пересмотреть социальное позиционирование ИСИ, сделав акцент на категориях кризиса и конфликта, которые проявляются в процессе воспроизводства современного капиталистического социального порядка (например, экологическое опустошение и социальное обнищание). Новым объектом анализа критической теории общества становится капиталистическая социальная формация в целом как глобальная констелляция противоречий, а новыми тематиками исследования — различные противоречия в различных сферах (например, климатический кризис (изменения климата), глобальные миграционные движения и потоки, гендерные отношения, кризис представительской демократии² и др.).

Таким образом, ИСИ видит свою задачу в открытии пространства для альтернативных концепций и практик, напоминая о том, что изменения требуют активных действий как в политической, так и в академической сферах. В конечном итоге ИСИ выступает за критическую теорию, которая не только дистанцированно анализирует существующие условия, но и остается солидарной с социальным миром, в котором она находится, исследуя возможности и пределы социального изменения, учитывая исторический контекст и неудачи революционных движений прошлого. Критическая теория сегодня подчеркивает, что изменения возможны, но также признает существование условий для регрессивных и авторитарных тенденций («форм антиэмансипаторного закрытия социальных воображаемых» (Institut für Sozialforschung 2023: 19)).

ным воплощением на практике, кажущееся парадоксальным превращение индивидуальных требований автономии в институционализированные дисциплинарные процессы. <...> Мы переживаем цифровую революцию, затрагивающую все сферы общества и практически все измерения повседневной жизни; мы являемся свидетелями глобального подъема, в немалой степени обусловленного социальными сетями, правого авторитаризма, антисемитизма и неонацизма; а материальные основы общественного воспроизводства постепенно и необратимо разрушаются» (Institut für Sozialforschung 2023: 16).

- 2 «Наконец, в фокусе внимания противоречия поздней современной демократии, где политическое участие может быть гарантировано только исключениями по признаку гражданства, а гарантии социальной интеграции и права на благосостояние обеспечиваются убийственным пограничным контролем. Это демократия, в которой материальные и символические ресурсы, обеспечивающие видимость в публичной сфере, остаются систематически неравномерно распределенными, демократия, которая всё больше милитаризируется во имя поддержания мира и которая отвечает на конкретные протесты против разрушения естественных основ жизни криминализацией и государственными репрессиями» (Institut für Sozialforschung 2023: 22).

Поскольку критическая теория продолжает рассматривать существующий социальный порядок как порядок структурно укоренившегося господства, эксплуатации и отчуждения, она также будет продолжать опираться на некоторое понятие освободительного процесса, которое указывает за пределы этих структур, даже если этот процесс неизменно множественный, нетелеологический, открытый и негативный по своей ориентации.

Современная критическая теория является трансдисциплинарной исследовательской стратегией и отходит от узкой преемственности с классической «Франкфуртской школой», включая в себя множество разнообразных дискурсов: постмарксизм, психоанализ, культурные и постколониальные исследования, феминизм и т. д. Будучи скорее своего рода «зонтичным термином», нежели интегральной концепцией, критическая теория предстает как точка схождения самых разных подходов к осмыслению актуальных социальных трансформаций.

Уже философский проект Владимира Фурса был во многом сфокусирован на поиске и осмыслении критической теории современности, релевантной актуальным процессам социальных трансформаций. Сам Фурс обозначал социальную критическую теорию как исследовательскую программу, представляющую собой «мыслительное пространство возможного, частичной реализации которого являются многообразные авторские концепции».

«Критическая теория, которая, как казалось, сошла со сцены актуальных философских дискуссий после смерти основных представителей Франкфуртской школы и стала одним из экспонатов музея интеллектуальной истории XX века, представляющих главным образом образовательный интерес, переживает второе рождение, воплощаясь в широком спектре современного социально-культурного критицизма. Как определенная эпистемическая модель критическая теория оказалась такой формой исследовательского самосознания, которая отвечает сегодняшней кондиции интеллектуальной деятельности и наличным тенденциям развития социогуманитарного знания и благодаря этому задает продуктивную стратегию философствования и полидисциплинарного анализа социальной жизни» (Фурс 2001: 92).

Поле социально-критической теории, в котором работал Фурс, за последние десятилетия претерпело изменения: с момента публикации фурсовских «Контуров современной критической теории» прошло больше двадцати лет, в течение которых мы стали свидетелями и очевидцами как социальных, политических, культурных трансформаций, так и появления новых исследовательских

полей. К тому же естественный ход истории вносит свои неизбежные коррективы. Так, в 2024 году ушел из жизни такой известный социальный критик, как Фредрик Джеймисон, а в 2015 году не стало Ульриха Бека, в 2016 — Джона Урри, в 2017 — Зигмунта Баумана.

Если концептуальной основой собственных теоретических построений Фурса была коммуникативная парадигма критической теории, представленная преимущественно Хабермасом и его последователями (А. Хоннет, Н. Фрейзер и др.), а также социальная теория глобализации (Р. Робертсон, У. Бек, А. Аппадурай, Дж. Урри и др.), то сегодняшние версии критической теории (например, критика цифрового капитализма К. Фукса³) идут дальше «хабермасианства» и глобализации, концентрируясь на дискурсе виртуализации и цифровизации, анализируя рост сетевого капитализма, технологические аспекты трансформации общества, цифровое неравенство и отчуждение. Под влиянием развития новых технологий XXI века не только обновляются подходы, тесно связанные с критикой инструментальной и технологической рациональности в духе «Франкфуртской школы» (например, критическая теория технологий, которую разрабатывает Эндрю Финберг (Feenberg 2017), американский философ, ученик и популяризатор идей Герберта Маркузе), но также появляются новые направления анализа (например, критическая теория искусственного интеллекта (Lindgren 2024)), в которых диагностируется, что технология искусственного интеллекта воспроизводит и усиливает существующие социальные, культурные и экономические предвзятости и неравенства, а также приводит к угнетению определенных социальных групп и созданию новых структур власти.

И даже такой «классик» критической теории, как Юрген Хабермас, был вынужден обновить свою концепцию публичности и де-либеративной политики, чтобы отреагировать на тренд цифровизации (Habermas (2023) [2022]). В данной книге, написанной спустя 60 лет после публикации фундаментальной работы «Структурная трансформация публичной сферы» (1962), Хабермас осмысляет новую структурную трансформацию публичной сферы в конституционных либеральных демократиях в эру социальных сетей

3 «Цифровой капитализм — это не новая фаза капиталистического развития, а скорее аспект организации капитализма, который формируется с помощью цифрового посредничества. При цифровом капитализме такие социальные процессы, как накопление власти, накопление капитала, классовая борьба, политическая борьба, гегемония, идеология, коммодификация или глобализация, опосредованы цифровыми технологиями, цифровой информацией и цифровой коммуникацией. Транснациональные цифровые и коммуникационные корпорации играют важную роль в цифровом капитализме» (Fuchs 2021: 10).

и цифровизации. Согласно Хабермасу, технологический прогресс цифровой коммуникации ведет к расширению и фрагментации публичной сферы и превращает всех участников в потенциальных авторов. На фоне падения роли традиционных СМИ всё большее влияние обретают крупные интернет-платформы. Подобная цифровая трансформация медиа ведет к деградации публичной сферы и подрывает функционирование делиберативной политики.

Хабермас тем не менее сохраняет символическую приверженность критическим установкам «Франкфуртской школы» и собственной коммуникативной парадигме в отношении негативной динамики капитализма и ее деструктивного влияния на политическую публичную сферу. Он утверждает, что без надлежащего регулирования цифровых медиа (например, правовой регуляции коммерчески ориентированных социальных сетей) эта новая структурная трансформация не только размывает различие между «публичным» и «частным» (а значит, инклюзивное значение публичной сферы), но и рискует выхолостить институты, посредством которых демократии могут формировать социальные и экономические процессы и решать неотложные коллективные проблемы, начиная от растущего социального неравенства и заканчивая климатическим кризисом. Хабермас пишет, что «поддержание структуры СМИ, которая обеспечивает инклюзивный характер публичной сферы и совещательный характер формирования общественного мнения и политической воли, является не вопросом политических предпочтений, а конституционным императивом» (Habermas 2023 [2022]: 67). Таким образом, чтобы противостоять угрозе деградации публичной сферы и регрессу демократии в контексте современного цифрового капитализма, Хабермас призывает к цифровому конституционализму (цифровому народному суверенитету) и инклюзивной публичной коммуникации.

Критический теоретик Нэнси Фрейзер (к концепции которой обращался Фурс (Фурс 2004) в своей реконструкции коммуникативной версии критической теории) также отталкивается от диагностики кризиса и постулирует капитализм как объединяющую причинно-следственную связь между, казалось бы, различными кризисами (в отношении работы по уходу, окружающей среды и политических институтов), рассматривая капитализм как институционализованный социальный порядок, в котором экономическая система «канибализирует» те самые условия, которые делают это возможным в сферах социального воспроизводства, природной среды и политической системы (Fraser 2022). Фрейзер сочетает анализ «объективных» социальных условий (противоречий и кризисов) с ориентацией на социальные движения,

анализируя «пограничную борьбу», которая возникает на стыках между экономической системой и другими областями, обосновывая необходимость объединения этой борьбы вокруг антикапиталистической повестки дня и важность глубокой структурной трансформации существующего общественного порядка.

Фрейзер также обращается к экологическому кризису, фокусируясь на роли финансиализованного капитализма в климатической катастрофе и необходимости того, чтобы экополитика была антикапиталистической, чтобы мы могли восстановить контроль и начать переосмысливать с нуля наше отношение к природе (Fraser 2021).

Таким образом, современная критическая теория постоянно трансформируется, расширяя свои аналитические горизонты и реагируя на новые вызовы эпохи цифровизации, виртуализации, экологического и политического кризиса. В отличие от классических подходов, современные исследователи акцентируют внимание на дискурсе виртуализации, цифрового капитализма и технологических трансформациях общества, а также на противоречиях глобальной капиталистической системы. Важной тенденцией является переосмысление роли публичной сферы, необходимости регулирования цифровых медиа и поиска путей для радикальных социальных изменений. Критическая теория сегодня не только анализирует структурные противоречия современного мира, но и ставит задачу активного участия в их преодолении через развитие альтернативных концепций и практик, ориентированных на социальную эмансипацию и устойчивое развитие.

В июне 2024 года в Европейском Гуманитарном Университете (Вильнюс, Литва) состоялась конференция «Контурсы современной критической теории» (Фурсовские чтения 2024), посвященная 15-й годовщине со дня смерти Владимира Фурса (1963–2009), автора более сотни статей и четырех монографий по философской проблематике. Его монография «Контурсы современной критической теории» (Фурс 2002)⁴, которую сам Фурс назвал своей «первой зрелой книгой» (Фурс 2002: 9), подсказала и проблематику, и название конференции.

Задумывая конференцию «Контурсы современной критической теории» 2024 года как повод почтить память Владимира Фурса, мы также преследовали и более широкую цель — актуализировать и осмыслить условия возможности критической теории в контексте современных социальных трансформаций (включая актуальные процессы в Беларуси и Центрально-Восточной Европе). На

4 Опубликована в 2002 году отдельным изданием, а после смерти философа — в двухтомнике его работ (Фурс 2012b: 5–176).

протяжении двух дней, в рамках 8 тематических дискуссионных панелей, исследователи из Беларуси, Литвы, Польши, Украины, Германии, Швейцарии обсуждали вопросы истории и современных концепций социальной критической теории, постмарксистской критики капитализма, диверсификации и денатурализации понятия общества и субъекта в психоанализе, исследований политики, кризиса дискурса глобализации, феминистской и гендерной теории, критической теории медиа, интернета и технологий, постколониальных исследований. Состоявшиеся в рамках конференции дискуссии, с одной стороны, отразили те глобальные тенденции в развитии социально-критической теории, о которых шла речь выше. С другой стороны, они внесли весомый вклад в осмысление современных локальных / региональных трансформаций в Восточной Европе.

«Фурсовские чтения» предполагают проведение регулярных конференций по актуальной социально-критической проблематике с последующей публикацией докладов в виде сборника статей либо, как в данном случае, в виде тематического выпуска журнала «Топос». Идея «Фурсовских чтений» возникла на основе стихийных практик коммеморации⁵ Владимира Фурса, которые после его смерти в 2009 году осуществлялись благодаря усилиям его коллег и учеников. Многие авторы на страницах журнала «Топос» или в публикациях издательства «ЕГУ» обращались к идеям и концептам Фурса с целью рецепции, развития или полемики. Помимо коммеморативной составляющей, «Фурсовские чтения» преследуют и более амбициозную цель: создание профессиональной сети, способной обеспечить устойчивую и долгосрочную коммуникацию, а в перспективе и сотрудничество, между исследователями, работающими в поле социально-критической теории, как на локальном / региональном, так и на международном уровне. Пользуясь случаем, мы бы хотели выразить благодарность руководству ЕГУ за возможность реализации данного проекта, а также редколлегии журнала «Топос» за возможность публикации тематического выпуска по итогам конференции 2024 года.

Интеллектуальная эволюция Владимира Фурса: от преподавания философии к мышлению от первого лица

В философском наследии Владимира Фурса можно условно выделить три этапа: 1) отход от марксистско-ленинской философии и обращение к теоретикам Франкфуртской школы;

5 Более подробно см. далее в настоящей статье.

2) концептуальное осмысление контуров современной критической теории; 3) критическая рефлексия в отношении «казуса Беларуси».

В конце 1980-х годов Владимир Фурс после успешного завершения аспирантуры начал преподавать на кафедре марксистско-ленинской философии БГУ. Начало его преподавательской карьеры совпало с горбачевской перестройкой и последующим распадом Советского Союза. Марксистско-ленинская философия (далее – МЛФ), на протяжении десятилетий диктовавшая «единственно верную» точку зрения на природу и общество, с распадом СССР утратила свое эксклюзивное право на истину. Что, впрочем, не означало, будто сама эта философия прекратила свое существование: ее идеологический дискурс еще долгое время будет просачиваться в постсоветское производство знания, особенно социогуманитарного. Тем не менее в 90-е годы начинается усиленный поиск новых имен и концепций в философском поле (как русскоязычной, так и западной философии), которые могли бы заполнить образовавшуюся брешь. Марксистско-ленинская философия позиционировалась (и воспринималась) в советское время как всеобъемлющая доктрина, так что успешная философская карьера предполагала правильное чтение и интерпретацию идей классиков МЛФ, их «уместное» цитирование и встраивание реалий в предлагаемую МЛФ картину мира. Между тем, то поколение молодых постсоветских философов, которые уже не хотели оставаться в гравитационном поле МЛФ, стало искать возможные альтернативы – кто-то в русской философии, кто-то в западной философии, но со схожим намерением сменить один центр притяжения (МЛФ) на другой / другие. Фурс рассматривал это как необходимый этап интеллектуального движения, который позволит в дальнейшем выработать свою собственную философскую позицию и иметь возможность говорить от первого лица.

Таким образом, первый этап этого движения состоял в выборе символической фигуры, которая позволит в интеллектуальном плане преодолеть притяжение МЛФ. Для Фурса такой фигурой стал Юрген Хабермас. Этот период представлен книгой Фурса «Философия незавершенного модерна Юргена Хабермаса» (Фурс 2000).

Между тем уже во введении к «Контурам современной критической теории» (2002), подводя итоги «экземплярного», по его собственному выражению, анализа концепций Хабермаса и Фуко в контексте их валидности для парадигмы критической теории, Фурс пишет: «Парадигма – в отличие от ее реализации в чьей-то доктрине – это открытая возможность выражения твоего собственного, а не чьего-то мышления, и роль привлекаемых авторитетов в данной статье полностью исчерпывается тем, чтобы

помочь эту возможность содержательно определить» (Фурс 2002: 42).

Попробуем конспективно зафиксировать те положения работ Фурса, которые позволили ему очертить контуры современной критической теории, какими они виделись философу в 2002 году.

1. *Отказ от рассмотрения современной критической теории как продолжения традиции марксизма.*

Указывая, что уже Франкфуртская школа продемонстрировала разрыв с классическим марксизмом, Фурс подчеркивает, что в современной критической теории этот разрыв становится еще более заметным, и это ставит под сомнение зависимость критической теории от марксизма. Более того, Фурс предлагает рассматривать вопрос преемственности в отношениях марксизма и критической теории в обратном порядке: «Не критическая теория принадлежит к традиции марксизма, а марксизм представляет собой раннюю форму критической теории» (Фурс 2002: 13).

2. *Расширение горизонта современной критической теории: от конкретной доктрины к широкой исследовательской программе.*

Современная критическая теория, по мнению Фурса, выходит за пределы марксистской традиции критицизма. Так, если классическая критическая теория демонстрирует отказ от ортодоксального марксизма, ассимилируя психоаналитическую парадигму, то современная критическая теория вдобавок «ассимилирует стратегию маргиналистского критицизма, восходящую к Ницше» (Фурс 2002: 17).

Рассмотрение критической теории в ее современном состоянии как широкой исследовательской программы позволяет Фурсу выдвинуть в качестве ключевых фигур, «знаменующих ее начало и одновременно определяющих масштаб возможного разброса авторских позиций», совершенно концептуально несхожих между собой Хабермаса, Фуко, Гидденса и Бодрийяра. Этот шаг философ аргументирует тем, что обозначенные выше трансформации как самого философского дискурса (преодоление модели сознания), так и устройства социального мира (распад «организованного модерна») вызывают к жизни «активную философию» и «думающую социологию»: «Пересечение и резонансное взаимодействие этих двух инициатив — “социализации” философской установки и разработки нового образа социального — рождают критическую социальную теорию как своего рода совместное предприятие “активной философии” и “думающей социологии”» (Фурс 2002: 5).

3. *Социальный критицизм vs «общая» критическая теория.*

Фурс основательным образом раздвигает рамки современной критической теории, рассматривая ее как взаимодействие «активной философии» и «думающей социологии». В то же время он

подчеркивает необходимость разведения социального критицизма и критической теории:

«Возникает опасность, что контуры современной критической теории вообще утратят всякую определенность, поскольку к ней, при достаточно гибком подходе, можно причислить любое мало-мальски теоретически оформленное проявление социального недовольства интеллектуалов» (Фурс 2002: 17).

Задача, которую ставит перед собой Фурс, заключается в «экспликация концептуальных оснований современной критической теории» (Фурс 2002: 19). Эти основания представлены у Фурса в виде следующих тезисов (Фурс 2002: 21–34), которые мы здесь только перечислим:

- принцип случайности самой теории,
- инкарнация трансцендентальной установки,
- социальная жизнь — это вся реальность,
- тезис о производительной силе символического.

Эти положения позволили философу сформулировать более общий тезис: «В парадигме современной критической теории осуществлена социализация философской рациональности» (Фурс 2002: 34).

4. *Современная критическая теория как осознанная этическая позиция.*

Сводя философскую рациональность к нормативному комплексу, «задающему регулятивы философскому мышлению и тем самым определенным образом его артикулирующему» (Фурс 2002: 35), Фурс указывает составляющие этого комплекса: универсалистская установка (Фурс 2002: 35), принудительный характер рационального знания (Фурс 2002: 36) и метафилософская этика познания (Фурс 2002: 36). Третье слагаемое философской рациональности, по мысли Фурса, представляет этику эмансипации (Фурс 2002: 39). В рамках современной критической теории эмансипация — это «особый опыт, который мы проделываем (или не проделываем) относительно самих себя» (Фурс 2002: 40). Тем самым, указывает Фурс, «критическая теория сегодня — это прежде всего осознанная этическая позиция, последовательно проводимая в жизненных практиках индивида, в том числе — и в его *теоретической практике*» (Фурс 2002: 40).

Книгу «Контуры современной критической теории» можно считать началом второго этапа интеллектуального пути Фурса. В полной же мере этот этап реализовался в реконструкции того поля, в котором символическая фигура-опора подвергается

своеобразной ревизии и тем самым перестает быть таковой. Текст Фурса «Социальная философия в непопулярном изложении» (Фурс 2006b), где разворачивается коммуникативная парадигма современной критической теории, где он апеллирует к Нэнси Фрейзер, Акселю Хоннету, работает с практиками борьбы за признание, разрабатывает иные темы, — это и есть реконструкция поля, необходимая для того, чтобы начать философствовать, начать мыслить от первого лица.

Третьим этапом творческой эволюции Фурса можно считать поворот к Беларуси. Примечательно, что Фурс осуществил этот поворот именно из перспективы критической социальной теории. Это тот сложный путь, который необходимо пройти любому интеллектуалу: каким образом актуальные концепты, выработанные в иных контекстах авторами иной культурной принадлежности, можно использовать и «заставить» работать, чтобы расширить горизонты нашего «социологического воображения» (согласно выражению Ч. Миллса) здесь и сейчас, в Беларуси, в белорусском культурном ландшафте⁶. У Фурса есть тексты, отвечающие на этот вопрос, — текст про глобализацию (Фурс 2005: 5–18), про белорусский проект современности (Фурс 2007а: 43–58), про демократию в Беларуси (Фурс 2006с: 15–24), про публичную сферу (Фурс 2008b: 5–23), про образование (Фурс 2007с: 44–55). Практически все эти тексты были написаны и опубликованы им на русском языке, за исключением одной публикации на белорусском в журнале «Arche» (изначально также написанной на русском) (Фурс 2008а: 85–90).

Сам Фурс, как и многие русскоязычные интеллектуалы в Беларуси начала 2000-х, никогда не отделял себя от Беларуси, подчеркивая свою «русскоязычную белорусскость». На тот момент еще была сильна иллюзия возможности такого варианта «незалежнасці», при котором быть белорусом означало работать и творить в Беларуси и для Беларуси, не заостряя внимание на языковом вопросе⁷. Между тем в нынешних условиях такой вариант практиче-

6 В предисловии к собранию сочинений Фурса Ольга Шпарага также пишет о данном направлении исследовательской деятельности Фурса, «которое в его собственных терминах можно обозначить как “практизация философии”». Имеется в виду применение разработанного инструментария этой самой теории к анализу социальных, политических и прочих реалий, прежде всего, современной Беларуси» (Шпарага 2012а: 10).

7 Во вступительной статье к тематическому выпуску журнала «Топос» (In Memoriam. Vladimir Fours) Татьяна Щитцова отмечает: «В то время как и в белорусском публичном дискурсе, и в теоретических дискуссиях этот вопрос рассматривался преимущественно в рамках традиционной дихотомии этнического и гражданского национализмов, Фурс намечает возможность преодоления этой контрпродуктивной дихотомической логики» (Щитцова 2020: 9).

ски не работает: необходимость использования белорусского языка означает в том числе вклад в практику деколонизации. Выход сборника переводов работ Фурса о Беларуси на белорусский язык, осуществленный благодаря бескорыстным усилиям его коллег и учеников в 2024 году (Фурс 2024)⁸, устраняет этот пробел и, как представляется, будет способствовать возрождению интереса к философскому наследию Фурса с целью последующей реактуализации его идей.

Одним из концептуальных ресурсов для анализа белорусской социальной реальности для Фурса была социальная теория глобализации. Именно переработка данной теории позволила автору контурно сформулировать собственную концепцию / гипотезу «регрессивной социальности» применительно к Беларуси и постсоветской ситуации. Совпавшие по времени события — глобализация и распад советского универсума, по мнению Фурса, стали причиной кризиса индивидуальной и коллективной идентичности, породив два регрессивных процесса:

1. Регрессивное восстановление «самости» — позволяет избежать экзистенциального беспокойства и распада личности.

2. Регрессивная актуализация патриотизма, реализуемая через две стратегии: (1) признание привычных институциональных и культурных форм жизни, несущественно изменившихся в Беларуси с советских времен, как позитивных «своих» и вытеснение дестабилизирующих сил глобализации в негативное «чужое»; (2) аффективная инвестиция в государство, понимаемое как страж границ сконструированной в воображении «родины» (Фурс 2006а).

Позднее, в статье «Беларусская реальность в системе координат глобализации» (Фурс 2005), Фурс переосмысливает эти два процесса, предлагая рассматривать первый в качестве примера тяжелой «затяжной» регрессии, выражающейся в «восстановлении личности путем “самоумаления”» (Фурс 2012а: 406), а второй — как две указанные выше символические стратегии, обеспечивающие согласие подчиненного населения. Кроме того, Фурс добавляет и третью символическую стратегию — «самолегитимация авторитарного государства путем производства народа как алиби» (Фурс 2012а: 408).

При том, что нынешняя ситуация в Беларуси и в регионе радикально отличается от той, в которой были написаны статьи Фурса, затрагивающие «казус Беларуси» (а это 2004–2008 гг.), его работы, именно благодаря предлагаемой в них социально-критической рефлексии и стремлению представить более глобальное видение

8 Пользуясь случаем, еще раз выражаем признательность и благодарность переводчикам — Павлу Барковскому, Ивану Новику, Владиславу Иванову, Дмитрию Гамезе, Елене Толопило, Юлии Сальниковой.

и перспективы — прежде всего для Беларуси, но также и региона в целом, — могут стать отправной точкой для более фундированного исследования современных процессов в белорусском обществе.

Таким образом, интеллектуальная эволюция Владимира Фурса представляет собой многогранный и динамичный процесс, в ходе которого он последовательно преодолевает влияние марксистско-ленинской философии и обращается к новым концепциям, чтобы выработать собственную философскую позицию. Каждый из трех этапов его развития — от выбора Хабермаса как символической фигуры до критического анализа белорусской социальной реальности через призму дискурса глобализации — демонстрирует стремление Фурса к глубокому осмыслению актуальных проблем и вызовов, стоящих перед обществом. Его работы не только отражают изменения в философской практике постсоветского пространства, но и служат важным ресурсом для понимания современных процессов в Беларуси. Работы Фурса также представляют собой значимый вклад в развитие современной критической теории, предлагая новые подходы и концептуальные рамки для анализа социальных, политических и культурных процессов. Фурс подчеркивает необходимость отказа от традиционных марксистских интерпретаций и акцентирует внимание на эпистемологическом разрыве между классическим марксизмом и современными подходами. Его идеи о расширении горизонтов критической теории, взаимодействии философии и социологии, а также о важности этической позиции в рамках критического анализа открывают новые перспективы для исследователей. В условиях текущих вызовов необходимость переосмысления идей Фурса становится особенно актуальной, что подчеркивает значимость его интеллектуального наследия для будущих исследований и практик в области критической социальной теории и философии.

Коммеморация и рецепции идей Фурса

Практики коммеморации интеллектуального наследия Фурса имели регулярный характер. За время, прошедшее после его ухода из жизни в 2009 году, было организовано и проведено множество различных мероприятий (в Беларуси, Литве, онлайн-форматах): круглые столы, конференции, семинары; опубликованы статьи, переводы и сборники сочинений. Упомянем некоторые из них:

1. В 2010 году в рамках интернет-издания «Новая Европа» была подготовлена к публикации стенограмма публичной лекции Фурса «Критическое мышление сегодня» (2007), включенная впоследствии в полное собрание сочинений (Фурс 2007b).

2. В 2012 году в издательстве «ЕГУ» благодаря усилиям Ольги Шпараги (составитель), коллег и учеников Фурса было подготовлено к изданию и опубликовано полное собрание сочинений Фурса в двух томах (Фурс 2012a; Фурс 2012b), а также прошли публичные презентации и обсуждения данного издания.

3. В 2013 году в рамках Конгресса исследователей Беларуси (Каунас, Литва, 12 октября) состоялся круглый стол «Проект социальной философии Владимира Фурса: идеи, контекст, перспективы», на основе которого была также подготовлена отдельная публикация в журнале «Топос» (Лаврухин & Ролёнок 2013).

4. В 2019 году состоялись две конференции, приуроченные к 10-й годовщине со дня смерти Владимира Фурса («Фурс – учитель философии» (Минск, 7 июня, ECLAB) и «Социальная теория меняющегося мира» (Вильнюс, ЕГУ, 13–14 июня). В рамках данных конференций обсуждалось философское наследие Фурса как ведущего представителя постсоветской социально-критической теории в нашем регионе, а также практическое влияние его идей на становление демократического сообщества Беларуси.

5. По итогам конференции в Вильнюсе вышел специальный номер журнала «Топос» (№ 2, 2020) «IN MEMORIAM. ВЛАДИМИР ФУРС». В данном выпуске были также опубликованы материалы круглого стола на тему «Регрессивная социальность? Постсоветские общества в системе координат глобализации» (Мацкевич, Минаков, Дмитриев & Щитцова 2020), который состоялся в рамках Конгресса исследователей Беларуси 28 сентября 2019 года в Европейском гуманитарном университете (Вильнюс) и был приурочен к 10-летней годовщине со дня смерти Владимира Фурса.

6. В 2021 году в рамках фестиваля идей «АБДЗІРАЛОВІЧ-21: “У пошуках сваёй сацыяльнай тэорыі: як (беларусам) зразумець беларусаў?”» (24–25 сентября 2021 г., «Беларускі Калегіум») идеи Фурса активно упоминались авторами докладов и участниками круглого стола в контексте попыток осмысления событий в Беларуси и мире на переломном этапе белорусской истории.

7. В 2023 году в журнале «Топос» был опубликован перевод на английский язык обзорной статьи Фурса о Касториадисе (Fours 2023). Именно Фурс ввел в научный оборот в рамках белорусского (и шире – русскоязычного) интеллектуального пространства концепцию Касториадиса. Данный перевод, выполненный Вероникой Фурс, призван поспособствовать распространению идей Фурса среди более широкой (англоязычной) аудитории.

8. В 2024 году вышел сборник переводов работ Фурса на белорусский язык «Беларусь у святле сучаснай крытычнай сацыяльнай тэорыі» (Фурс 2024), осуществленный благодаря бескорыстным усилиям его коллег и учеников.

Также в ЕГУ ежегодно с 2010 года на конкурсной основе выделяется специальная стипендия имени профессора Владимира Фурса студентам бакалавриата, магистратуры и докторантуры, достигшим высоких академических результатов и успешно занимающимся исследованиями в области актуальных социально-гуманитарных проблем.

Структура номера

В структуре настоящего выпуска журнала «Торос» мы постарались отразить тематику дискуссионных панелей конференции 2024 года «Контуры современной критической теории».

Многие из статей настоящего выпуска демонстрируют и актуализируют потенциал той версии критической теории в исследовании Беларуси и региона, которая была обозначена в работах Фурса. При этом тексты, включенные в данный выпуск журнала, в концептуальном плане не ограничиваются теми контурами, которые в 2002 году наметил для критической теории Фурс. Такое расширение горизонта представляется концептуально обоснованным и в большей степени соответствующим и тенденциям развития современной критической теории, и актуальным процессам в регионе. Так, например, цифровые технологии, а с недавнего времени и искусственный интеллект, сперва порождая иллюзию широкого доступа к производству культуры, оказываются вписанными в логику теперь уже цифрового капитализма и его различных вариаций (платформенный капитализм, надзорный капитализм). Не удивительно поэтому, что многие выступления во время конференции были посвящены различным аспектам взаимодействия с цифровыми технологиями и проблемам, связанным с цифровизацией общества. Важной темой для рефлексии стали события в Беларуси и Украине, осмысление которых также требует выработки релевантного философского инструментария.

Ряд статей посвящен рецепции идей Фурса и одновременно возможности их аппликации к современным социальным и политическим реалиям. Так, Гинтаутас Мажейкис в своей статье прослеживает интеллектуальный путь Фурса (от теории рациональностей к анализу коммуникативных актов и их патологий на основе дискурсивной этики Ю. Хабермаса, а затем к теории агонистических разрывов Э. Лакло и Ш. Муфф и скрытых запретов С. Жижека) и артикулирует собственные современные результаты и проблемы такого рода критических рассматриваний. Сергей Любимов рассматривает Фурса как конструктивистского социального философа эмансипации и как автора концептуализации дезорганизации позднего модерна. Владислав Иванов ставит в своем

исследовании цель проанализировать тексты Фурса через призму политической науки и выделить в них наиболее ценные размышления на границе этой сферы и социальной теории, чтобы показать, что есть все основания назвать Фурса мыслителем политического.

Переосмысление наследия классической критической теории в новых социально-политических и культурных контекстах также нашло отражение в ряде статей. Очерчивая контуры современной критической теории, Фурс в качестве одной из ключевых фигур указывал Фуко. Обращаясь к генеалогии власти Фуко, Арунас Мицкявичюс в своей статье демонстрирует важность идей Ницше для философских рефлексий французского мыслителя в отношении власти. В работе обосновывается тезис о том, что генеалогический подход Фуко как альтернатива теории Хабермаса позволяет нам понять, кто мы есть сегодня, а также показано, как генеалогическое исследование Фуко социальных практик дает импульс бесконечной работе нашей свободы. Илья Инишев в своей статье отмечает, что то, с чем мы столкнулись за последние десятилетия, можно описать как общую смену вектора: от направленного наружу расширения к направленному внутрь сжатию (имплозии), что связано с серией сходящихся и, что еще важнее, необратимых процессов — это ускоряющееся глобальное потепление, надвигающаяся технологическая сингулярность, установление «капиталистического реализма», нынешний подъем ИИ и, как следствие, то, что автор называет «воображаемым ускорением», а воображаемое ускоренное общество — импловивным.

Современный политический кризис в регионе стал поводом для ревизии теоретических установок Франкфуртской школы. В статье Дарьи Сингаевской объектом исследования являются концептуальные рамки и применение делиберативной демократии в контексте российско-украинской войны.

Ряд статей посвящен критической рефлексии в отношении цифровых технологий и цифровой культуры. Так, Виктория Константюк в своей работе рассматривает, как генеративный искусственный интеллект изменяет субъективность, восприятие и коммуникацию в (пост)цифровую эпоху. В статье демонстрируется пересечение генеративных медиа, идеологии и алгоритмического контроля, что подчеркивает эрозию автономии и трансформацию желания в цифровом капитализме. Денис Петрина в своей статье исследует проблематику искусственного интеллекта (ИИ) через призму современной критической теории, предлагая двойной аналитический ракурс. С одной стороны, ИИ рассматривается как симптом когнитивного капитализма. С другой — работа поднимает вопрос об эксплуатации гибридного труда человека и машины, акцентируя внимание на необходимости преодоления

антропоцентрических моделей и переосмысления солидарности в постгуманистическом ключе. Ольга Давыдик рассматривает, как информационные технологии могут функционировать в качестве инфраструктур сопротивления и коллективного создания мира перед лицом социально-политической катастрофы, авторитарного подавления и скрытых систем контроля. В ее статье киберфеминизм подвергается ревизии в качестве критического подхода и взамен позиционируется не только как аналитическая оптика для исследования гендера, технологий и политики, но и как стратегия репрофилирования цифровых инфраструктур в качестве мест заботы, аффективной солидарности и политического вмешательства.

Заключение

Очерчивая контуры критической теории, какими они представлялись ему в 2002 году, Фурс уповал на тандем «активной философии» и «думающей социологии», которые для него репрезентировались в Хабермасае, Фуко, Гидденсе и Бодрийяре. Актуальная рефлексия — не исключительно философская, но скорее междисциплинарная — в отношении социальных процессов существенно расширяет эти контуры. Тем не менее, и это демонстрируют статьи выпуска, очевидными представляются две вещи:

1. Рефлексия Фурса в отношении критической теории и, что самое важное, представление о том, чем должна являться эта теория, сформировали концептуальную основу для исследования современных социальных процессов, прежде всего в региональном масштабе;

2. Будучи именно основой, представленная Фурсом версия критической теории должна дополняться, развиваться и подвергаться пересмотру, чтобы продолжать называться современной.

«Дело в том, что критическая социальная теория сегодня представляет собой один из основных вариантов “активной философии”, т. е. такой философии, которая не сводится к мертвой систематике учебного предмета, по привычке включаемого в цикл университетского образования, равно как и к дурной бесконечности комментирования текстов “великих философов”. Это философия, которая продолжает развиваться, отвечая на вызовы быстро меняющегося мира и стараясь сделать его менее мнимо-понятным и более нашим. При таком подходе действительная значимость современной критической теории состоит для нас в том, что это не просто модная западная штучка, а позитивная

возможность собственного мышления, для содержательной конкретизации которой и требуется определение принципиальных характеристик данной исследовательской программы. Так что очерчивание контуров современной критической теории — это задача, адресованная нами в конечном счете нам же самим» (Фурс 2001: 94–95).

Несмотря на то, что концепции Фурса были сформулированы более двух десятилетий назад, они продолжают служить основой для критической рефлексии и анализа текущих вызовов, с которыми сталкиваются Беларусь и весь регион. Участники конференции и авторы номера продемонстрировали, как идеи Фурса могут быть адаптированы к новым условиям, включая влияние цифровых технологий и актуальные социальные трансформации. Это свидетельствует о том, что критическая теория, как ее понимал Фурс, не является статичной (и это демонстрирует само его интеллектуальное наследие в целом), а требует постоянного обновления в ответ на новые вызовы.

References

- Feenberg, A. (2017). *Technosystem: The Social Life of Reason*. Harvard University Press.
- Fours, V. (2000). *Filosofiya nezavershennogo moderna Jurgen Habermas*. Minsk. — In Russ.)
[Фурс, В. (2000). *Философия незавершенного модерна Юргена Хабермаса*. Минск: Экономпресс.]
- Fours, V. (2001). *Kontury sovremennoy kriticheskoy teorii: Predisloviye k rubrike*. *Topos* 1(4): 92–95. — In Russ.
[Фурс, В. (2001). *Контурь современной критической теории: Предисловие к рубрике*. *Топос* 1(4): 92–95.]
- Fours, V. (2002). *Kontury sovremennoy kriticheskoy teorii*. Minsk. — In Russ.
[Фурс, В. (2002). *Контурь современной критической теории*. Минск: ЕГУ.]
- Fours, V. (2004). “Feministski-sotsialisticheskaya” kriticheskaya teoriya pozdnego kapitalizma N. Freyzer. *Polis. Politicheskkiye issledovaniya* 6: 89–101. — In Russ.
[Фурс, В. (2004). “Феминистски-социалистическая” критическая теория позднего капитализма Н. Фрэйзер. *Полис. Политические исследования* 6: 89–101.]
- Fours, V. (2005). *Belaruskaya “real’nost” v sisteme koordinat globalizatsii (postanovka voprosa)*, *Topos* 1(10): 5–18. — In Russ.
[Фурс, В. (2005). *Беларуская “реальность” в системе координат глобализации (постановка вопроса)*. *Топос* 1(10): 5–18.]
- Fours, V. (2006a). *Proyekt “Sotsial’naya retrogressiya v globalizuyushchemsya mire: kazu Belarusi”*. *Iz semeynogo arkhiva*. — In Russ.

- [Фурс, В. (2006а). Проект “Социальная ретрогрессия в глобализующемся мире: казус Беларуси”. Из семейного архива.]
- Fours, V. (2006b). *Sotsial'naya filosofiya v nepopulyarnom izlozhenii*. Vilnius: EHU. — In Russ.
- [Фурс, В. (2006b). Социальная философия в непопулярном изложении. Вильнюс: ЕГУ]
- Fours, V. (2006c). “Vlast' naroda”: sovremennyye predstavleniya o demokracji i belorusskaya model' “narodovlastiya”. *Topos* 2(13): 15–24. — In Russ.
- [Фурс, В. (2006c). “Власть народа”: современные представления о демократии и белорусская модель “народовластия”, *Топос* 2(13): 15–24.]
- Fours, V. (2007a). Belorusskiy proyekt “sovremennosti”? In: Shparaga, O. (red.). *Evropeyskaya perspektiva Belarus: Intellektual'nyye modeli*. Vilnius: EHU, 43–58. — In Russ.
- [Фурс, В. (2007а). Белорусский проект “современности”? В: Шпарага, О. (ред.). *Европейская перспектива Беларуси: Интеллектуальные модели*. Вильнюс: ЕГУ, 43–58.]
- Fours, V. (2007b). Kriticheskoye myshleniye segodnya. In: *Sochineniya v dvukh tomakh*. Vol.1. Vilnius: EHU, 146–154. — In Russ.
- [Фурс, В. (2007b). Критическое мышление сегодня. В: *Сочинения в двух томах*. Том 1. Вильнюс: ЕГУ, 146–154.]
- Fours, V., (2007c). Resovetizatsiya belorusskikh universitetov. In: Dunaev, V. (red.). *Vyssheye obrazovaniye v Belarus: vyzovy internatsionalizatsii*. Vilnius: EHU, 44–55. — In Russ.
- [Фурс, В. (2007c). Ресоветизация белорусских университетов. В: Дунаев, В. А. (ред.). *Высшее образование в Беларуси: вызовы интернационализации*. Вильнюс: ЕГУ, 44–55.]
- Fours, U. (2008a). Strukturnyya pryntsypy al'ternatywnaha natsyyatvaren'nya. *ARCHE* 11: 85–90. — In Bel.
- [Фурс, У. (2008а). Структурныя прынцыпы альтэрнатыўнага нацыятварэння. *ARCHE* 11: 85–90.]
- Fours, V. (2008b). Vvedeniye: Transformatsii publichnosti i postsovetskaya situatsiya. In: Fours, V. (red.). *Postsovetskaya publichnost': Belarus, Ukraina. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov*. Vilnius: EHU, 5–23. — In Russ.
- [Фурс, В. (2008b). Введение: Трансформации публичности и постсоветская ситуация. В: Фурс, В. (ред.). *Постсоветская публичность: Беларусь, Украина. Сборник научных трудов*. Вильнюс: ЕГУ, 5–23.]
- Fours, V. (2012a). *Sochineniya v dvukh tomakh* [Collection of works in 2 volumes]. Vol. 1. Vilnius: European Humanities University. — In Russ.
- [Фурс, В. (2012а). *Сочинения в двух томах*. Том 1. Вильнюс: Европейский гуманитарный университет.]
- Fours, V. (2012b). *Sochineniya v dvukh tomakh* [Collection of works in 2 volumes]. Vol. 2. Vilnius: European Humanities University. — In Russ.
- [Фурс, В. (2012b). *Сочинения в двух томах*. Том 2. Вильнюс: Европейский гуманитарный университет.]
- Fours, V. (2023). The Dynamic Conception of the Social in the Philosophy of Cornelius Castoriadis. *Topos* 1: 105–120.
- Fours, U. (2024). *Belarus u svyatlye suchasnay krytychnay satsyyal'nay teoryi*. Furs, V. & Ralyenak, A. (red.). Vilnius: Lohvinau. — In Bel.
- [Фурс, У. (2024). *Беларусь у святле сучаснай крытычнай сацыяльнай тэорыі*. Пад. рэд. В. Фурс і А. Ралёнка. Вільня: Логвінаў.]

- Fuchs, C. (2021). The Digital Commons and the Digital Public Sphere: How to Advance Digital Democracy Today. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 16(1): 9–26.
- Fraser, N. (2022). *Cannibal Capitalism: How Our System is Devouring Democracy, Care, and the Planet – And What We Can Do about It*. New York: Verso.
- Fraser, N. (2021). “Climates of Capital”. *New Left Review* 127: 94–127.
- Habermas, J. (2023) [2022]. *A new structural transformation of the public sphere and deliberative politics*. Polity.
- Institut für Sozialforschung 2023: 100 years IfS | Perspectives. IfS Working Paper Nr. 20. Frankfurt a. M.: Institut für Sozialforschung, 1 December 2023, https://www.ifs.uni-frankfurt.de/forschung.html?file=files/Content/Publikationen/IfS%20Working%20Papers/20_IfS%20Working%20Paper_Perspektivenpapier.pdf&cid=2448 (accessed 24 June 2024).
- Lauruhin, A. & Rolyenok, A. (2013). Proekt social'noj filosofii Vladimira Foursa: idei, kontekst, perspektivy (kruglyj stol). *Topos* 3: 98–115. — In Russ. [Лаврухин, А. & Ролёнок, А. (2013). Проект социальной философии Владимира Фурса: идеи, контекст, перспективы (круглый стол). *Топос* 3: 98–115.]
- Lindgren, S. (2024). *Critical Theory of AI*. Cambridge, Polity.
- Matskevich, V., Minakov, M., Dmitriev, A., & Shchytsova, T. (2020). Regressivnaya sotsial'nost'? Postsovetskiye obshchestva v sisteme koordinat globalizatsii. *Topos* 2: 64–78. — In Russ. [Мацкевич, В., Минаков, М., Дмитриев, А. & Щитцова, Т. (2020). Регрессивная социальность? Постсоветские общества в системе координат глобализации. *Топос* 2: 64–78.]
- Shchittsova, T. (2020). In Memoriam. Vladimir Fours. *Topos* 2: 7–10. — In Russ. [Щитцова, Т. (2020). In Memoriam. Владимир Фурс. *Топос* 2: 7–10.]
- Shparaga, O. 2012. Predisloviye. In: Vladimir Fours, *Sochineniya*. Vol. 1. Vilnius: ENU, 7–18. — In Russ. [Шпарага, О. 2012. Предисловие. В: Владимир Фурс, *Сочинения*. Том 1. Вильнюс: ЕГУ, 7–18.]

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

Gintautas Mažeikis

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-28-44>

© 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 hopes 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 these 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. Shchytsova, 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.

Philosophical Responsibility for Modernity

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 transcendently 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.

References

- Adorno, T., Horkheimer, M. (1947). *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Amsterdam: Querido.
- Adorno, T. (1966). *Negative Dialektik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp;
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Transl. A. Sheridan. New York: Harper and Row.

- Fours V. (1988). O probleme racional'nosti filosofskogo znania. *Filosofiya i nauchnyi kommunizm*, Nr. 15. Minsk: 33–37. — In Russ.
[Фурс, В. (1988). О проблеме рациональности философского знания. *Философия и научный коммунизм*, Nr. 15. Минск: 33–37.]
- Fours, V. (1989). Problema strukturnoj organizacii filosofskogo znaniya. *Vestnik BGU. Seriya 3 N 1*, Minsk 1989: 15–21. — In Russ.
[Фурс, В. (1989). Проблема структурной организации философского знания. *Вестник БГУ. Серия 3. N 1*, Минск 1989: 15–21.]
- Fours, V. (2009). Nishcheta socialnoj filosofii. *Rosijskaya socialnaya filosofiya segodnya. Russkij zhurnal*. — In Russ.
[Фурс, В. (2009). Нищета социальной философии. Российская социальная философия сегодня. *Русский журнал: электрон. изд.*]
- Fours, V. (2012a). *Sochineniya*. Tom I. Vilnius: Evropejskij Gumanitarnyj Universitet. — In Russ.
[Фурс, В. (2012a). *Сочинения*. Том I. Вильнюс: Европейский Гуманитарный Университет.]
- Fours, V. (2012b). *Sochineniya*. Tom II. Vilnius: Evropejskij Gumanitarnyj Universitet. — In Russ.
[Фурс, В. (2012b). *Сочинения*. Том II, Вильнюс: Европейский Гуманитарный Университет.]
- Fedotova, V. (2005). *Horoshee obshchestvo*. Moskva: Progress-tradicija. — In Russ.
[Федотова, В. (2005). *Хорошее общество*. Москва: Прогресс-традиция.]
- Pyenkov, E. (1977). *Dialectical Logic*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Kasavin, I., Sokuler, Z. (1989). *Racional'nost' v poznanii i praktike*. Moskva: Nauka. — In Russ.
[Касавин, И., Сокулер, З. (1989). *Рациональность в познании и практике*. Москва: Наука.]
- Krusanov, P., Sekatsky, A. (2016). *Otkrytoe pismo Prezidentu Rossijskoj Federacii gospodinu V. V. Putinu*. — In Russ.
[Крусанов, П. В., Носов, С. А., Рекшан, В. О., Секацкий, А. К., Стогов, И. Ю. (2016). Открытое письмо Президенту Российской Федерации господину В. В. Путину. http://www.kultpro.ru/item_33/#1.
- Mamardashvili, M. (1984). *Klassicheskiy i neklassicheskiy idealy racional'nosci*. Tbilisi: Mecniereba. — In Russ.
[Мамардашвили, М. (1984). *Классический и неклассический идеалы рациональности*. Тбилиси: Мецниереба.]
- Marcuse, H. (1964). *One Dimensional Man*. Massachusetts: Beacon Press.
- Mažeikis, G. (2018). *Dvasios niekšybė: moralinės vaizduotės tyrimai*. Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto leidykla, 2018.
- Mažeikis, G. (2020). Fours i patologii “perehoda” postsovetckogo moderna. *Topos: Journal for philosophy and cultural studies*, 2020, No. 2: 11–33. — In Russ.
[Мажейкис, Г. (2020). Фурс и патологии “перехода” постсоветского модерна. In: *Topos: Философско-культурологический журнал*, 2020, No. 2: 11–33.]
- Mažeikis, G. (2024). *Philosophical Mediation in Cultural Diplomacy, Eidos. A Journal for Philosophy of Culture*, Nr. 8.
- Pigrov K., Sekatsky, A. (2017). *Bytie i vozrast*. Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteja. — In Russ.

- [Пигров, К.; Секацкий, А. (2017). *Бытие и возраст*. Санкт-Петербург: Алетейя]
- Podoroga, V. (2017). *Vremya posle. Osvencim i GULAG: myslit' absoljutnoe zlo*. Moskva: Kairos. — In Russ.
- [Подорога, В. (2017). *Время после. Освенцим и ГУЛАГ: мыслить абсолютное зло*. Москва: Kairos.]
- Sekatsky, A. (2016 a). *Nezrimajya imperiya*. — In Russ.
- [Секацкий, А. (2016). *Незримая империя*. https://web.archive.org/web/20211027232923/http://www.kultpro.ru/item_33/.
- Sekatsky, A. (2016b). *Shans dlya imperii*. — In Russ.
- [Секацкий, А. (2016b). *Шанс для империи*. https://web.archive.org/web/20211027232923/http://www.kultpro.ru/item_33/#13.
- Sineokaja, J. (2024). *Философ Юлия Синеокая о z-философии, Дугине и преследовании независимых исследователей*. RFI, 20/03/2024. <https://www.rfi.fr/ru/общество/20240320-философ-юлия-синеокая-о-z-философии-дугине-и-преследовании-независимых-исследователей>.
- Svasjan, K. (1980). *Problema simbola v sovremennoj filosofii (Kritika i analiz)*. Erevan: Izdatelstvo AN ArmSSR. — In Russ.
- [Свасьян, К. А. (1980). *Проблема символа в современной философии (Критика и анализ)*. Ереван: Издательство АН АрмССР.]

GENEALOGICAL CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL PRACTICES: NIETZSCHE AND FOUCAULT VERSUS HABERMAS

Arūnas Mickevičius

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-45-65>

© Arūnas Mickevičius

Assoc. Professor, Vilnius University, Faculty of Philosophy, Institute
of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy of Science, Social and Political
Philosophy

Universiteto St. 9/1, LT-01513 Vilnius

E-mail: arunas.mickevicius@fsf.vu.lt

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0222-1590>

Abstract: This article aims to elucidate Michel Foucault's interpretive engagement with key concepts in Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, to demonstrate their significance for the development of Foucault's genealogical method, and to examine how, particularly in his polemic with Jürgen Habermas, genealogy becomes a question of the legitimacy of critique – namely, how critical interrogation of social practices remains possible. The central thesis is that Foucault's genealogy, shaped through a selective appropriation of Nietzschean insights and positioned as an alternative to Habermas's theory of communicative action, should not be understood as a search for universally valid normative structures. Rather, it constitutes a historically grounded framework for understanding subjectivity and social practices, enabling us to think and act differently, and thereby contributing to the ongoing task of freedom. The article argues that Foucault, instrumentally relying on Nietzsche, developed genealogical hermeneutics as an interpretive practice that is oriented towards a critical understanding of social practices permeated by mechanisms of power. A key divergence from Nietzsche lies in Foucault's de-psychologization of agency: whereas Nietzsche often grounds knowledge and morality in the subjective tactics of individuals, Foucault treats psychological motivation as an effect of impersonal power strategies without strategists.



The article further contends that the core disagreement between Foucault and Habermas concerns the relation between power, truth, and subjectivity. Foucault reverses the traditional dependency: rather than power being conditioned by truth and the subject, it is truth and the subject that are constituted through power. He critiques Habermas's model of ideal communication as ahistorical and utopian, arguing that no discourse is free from power. Consequently, critique should not aim to abolish power, but to engage it through legal norms, techniques of governance, and an ethos that minimizes domination.

Keywords: hermeneutics, critical theory, social criticism, interpretation, genealogy, will to power.

Methodological Approach

The aim of the paper is to explicate Michel Foucault's interpretive engagement with Friedrich Nietzsche's fundamental concepts; second, to demonstrate Nietzsche's significance for the development of Foucault's genealogy; and third, to reveal how Foucault's genealogical research, in polemics with Jürgen Habermas, addresses the problem of legitimizing the question: How is a genealogical critique of various social practices possible? The article aims to substantiate the thesis that Foucault's genealogical approach, as an alternative to Habermas's theory, offers a meaningful and measured framework that enables us to understand who we are today, challenges us to think differently than before, and urges us not to repeat past actions; in this way, Foucault's genealogical exploration of social practices fuels the ongoing work of our freedom.

Foucault, in his various works and interviews, has repeatedly emphasized the importance of Nietzsche's chosen philosophical strategies and ideas for his own theoretical research. Beyond occasional references and interview statements, two of Foucault's texts – "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx"¹ and "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"² – stand out as key works dedicated specifically to Nietzsche's reception. In an interview given on 29 May 1984, Foucault assured that he had begun to become interested with Nietzsche's texts as early as 1952–1953 (Foucault 1994: 703). Foucault's numerous references to Nietzsche should be

1 The article first appeared in print in *Cahiers de Royaumont* (Paris: Minut, 1967), vol. 4: Nietzsche, pp. 185–200. It was prepared on the basis of a paper read at the Royaumont Colloquium in July 1964.

2 The article first appeared in print in *Hommage a Jean Hyppolite* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), pp. 145–172.

understood as a very active *instrumentalist* methodological approach of Foucault himself to the ideas expressed by Nietzsche.

On March 4, 1972, the French intellectuals Foucault and Deleuze discussed the issue of the correlation of theory and practice in a conversation. Foucault emphasized the “local and regional”, i.e. non-totalizing theoretical approach to practice, which was important to him (Foucault & Deleuze 1977: 208). The latter implies that today the role of the intellectual is no longer to position themselves somewhat ahead and aside, expressing the suppressed truth of the collective. Rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform the intellectual into an object and instrument within the realms of “knowledge”, “truth”, “consciousness”, and “discourse” (Ibid.: 208). The task of this struggle, according to Foucault, is to highlight the mechanisms and strategies of the functioning of power, to unmask power where it is invisible and insidious. In this respect, “a theory is the regional system of this struggle” (Ibid.: 208).

Deleuze, broadly agreeing with Foucault and extending his line of thought, stated that: “a theory is something like a box of tools” (Ibid.: 208). Theory, like tools, must serve a practical function — it must act and work. If there are no people actively using tools and theory in various practices, then either the value of such theory is zero, or its time has not yet come. In specifying theory’s instrumental function, Deleuze further recalls the words of Proust: “treat my book as a pair of glasses directed to the outside; if they don’t suit you, find another pair; I leave it to you to find your own instrument, which is necessarily an instrument for combat. A theory does not totalize; it is an instrument for multiplication and it also multiplies itself” (Ibid.: 208). It is this metaphor of theory as a toolbox, mentioned by Deleuze, that aptly catches how Foucault’s methodological approach to Nietzsche’s theoretical insights should be treated.

Towards “Incompleteness of Interpretation”

A colloquium on Nietzsche was held in Royaumont from 4 to 8 July 1964. Foucault and Deleuze were actively involved in its organization, and Foucault presented a paper entitled “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx”. In it, he discussed the “techniques of interpretation” of these three thinkers and even expressed the dream “one day to compile a kind of general corpus, an encyclopedia of all the techniques of interpretation that we have come to know from the Greek grammarians to our own day” (Foucault 1998: 269). Foucault emphasized that every culture has its own systems of interpretation, its own techniques, its own methods, its own

ways of suspecting language of often wanting to say something other than what it says, of expressing something other than what it says.

In the 19th century, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, according to Foucault, opened up a new possibility of interpretation, the essence of which is that they “changed the nature of the sign and modified the fashion in which the sign can in general be interpreted” (Ibid.: 272). The first feature of this new interpretation is that these authors, according to Foucault, changed the distribution of signs themselves in space. For example, in the sixteenth century, signs were homogeneously distributed in space, which itself was uniform in all directions. This meant that earthly signs pointed to the sky, which in turn pointed to the underworld. Signs from a person could point to an animal, which could point to a plant, and vice versa. In contrast, beginning in the nineteenth century with Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche, signs began to be distributed inhomogeneously within a more differentiated and deeper (French: *profondeur*) space, which came to be understood not as interiority but as exteriority.

According to Foucault, Nietzsche becomes crucial at this point, as he sets out to unmask metaphysical depth. Nietzsche begins to critique the ideal of depth – the depth of consciousness – declaring it an invention of philosophers. This depth was understood as a “pure” and “interior” search for truth; however, Nietzsche revealed that such “depth” only implied resignation, hypocrisy, and a mask. In examining the signs of this so-called “depth,” the interpreter must descend vertically and reveal, without concealment, that this “interior depth” is imaginary and does not correspond to what it claims to be. Foucault himself, following Nietzsche, is concerned to show that in fact the interpreter must overcome the downward path only in order to return, to restore that glowing, alluring exteriority that has been hidden and cluttered.

In other words, the interpreter, like an excavator, must dig deeper and deeper, which transforms the work of interpretation into an ascent. The higher one “rises” during interpretation, the better one can see the invisible depth that unfolds beneath. However, this “depth” ultimately appears as a superficial secret – much like the flight of the eagle and Zarathustra’s ascent into the mountains, which, according to Foucault, represent an inversion of the notion of depth, i.e. “the discovery that depth was only a game and a surface fold. To the extent that the world becomes deeper under our gaze, we perceive that everything which elicited man’s depth was only child’s play” (Ibid.: 273).

The second feature of the “new possibility of interpretation” opened by Nietzsche, which complements the first, is what Foucault terms the “incompleteness of interpretation” (French: *L’inachevé de*

l'interprétation). Interpretation has thus become an infinite task. In Nietzsche's philosophy, Foucault sees an important opportunity for himself: "the farther one goes in interpretation, the closer one comes at the same time to an absolutely dangerous region where interpretation not only will find its point of return but where it will disappear as interpretation, perhaps involving the disappearance of the interpreter himself" (Ibid.: 274). The concept of the "incompleteness of interpretation," as formulated by Foucault — who identifies it with, though does not explicitly cite, Nietzsche's concept of perspectivism — presupposes that there is no primordial interpretable. Accordingly, there is no primordial, universally grounded, or unambiguously correct theoretical model or social practice based on such a model:

"There is nothing absolutely primary to interpret, for after all everything is already interpretation, each sign is in itself not the thing that offers itself to interpretation but an interpretation of other signs. If you like, an *interpretandum* that is not already *interpretans*, so that it is as much a relationship of violence as of elucidation that is established in interpretation" (Ibid.: 275).

Moreover, Foucault, clearly following Nietzsche, argues that interpretation is not intended to explain or illuminate something, but is established by force. In other words, interpretation does not reveal the interpreted object, which passively surrenders to it. Rather, interpretation can only overthrow an existing interpretation by force — disrupting it, overturning it, smashing it with hammer blows. In Foucault's view, words themselves are interpretations, and he aptly highlights Nietzsche's insight that words are invented by the ruling classes: precisely because words do not correspond directly to the signified, they impose an interpretation. If we ask, in the manner of Gadamer, whether interpretation "entail[s] the discovery of a preexisting meaning" or whether it "is in the service of the will to power" (Gadamer 1989: 24), it becomes clear that Foucault, following Nietzsche, consciously rejects Gadamer's "philosophical hermeneutics" and instead embraces the establishment of meaning through the will to power. Developing a concept of interpretation distinct from Gadamer's — later aptly termed "the hermeneutics of suspicion" by Paul Ricoeur — Foucault stated:

"Perhaps this primacy of interpretation with respect to signs is what is most decisive in modern hermeneutics. The idea that interpretation precedes the sign implies that the sign is not a simple and benevolent being. <...> Beginning with Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche, it seems to me that the sign becomes malevolent; I mean that there is in the

sign an ambiguous and somewhat suspicious form of ill will and “malice” [French: malveillance]. And this is to the extent that the sign is already an interpretation that does not appear as such. Signs are interpretations that try to justify themselves, and not the reverse” (Foucault 1998: 276–277).

The final feature of this hermeneutic is that interpretation must confront the necessity of interpreting itself ad infinitum, constantly returning to itself. This entails two consequences: first, interpretation must now ask “who” interprets – that is, who is the “subject” of interpretation; second, the temporality of interpretation becomes cyclical, unlike the temporality of signs, which have a definite duration, or the temporality of dialectics, which remains linear. In other words, signs appear and disappear; they are constantly changing and temporary, while interpretations are eternal. According to Foucault, the only real mortal danger today does not stem from “endless interpretation” but from “signs.” To believe that the existence of signs presupposes some primordially, reality, or coherence would spell the death of interpretation. Foucault wrote:

“It seems to me necessary to understand what too many of our contemporaries forget, that hermeneutics and semiology are two fierce enemies. A hermeneutic that in effect falls back on a semiology believes in the absolute existence of signs: it abandons the violence, the incompleteness, the infinity of interpretations in order to enthrone the terror of the index or to suspect language. Here we recognize Marxism after Marx” (Ibid.: 278).

Conversely, when we encounter a hermeneutic that surrenders itself to its own infinite “incompleteness of interpretation,” we immediately recognize Nietzsche’s influence. Undoubtedly, Foucault’s sympathies lie with Nietzsche. Although in his lecture “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx” Foucault sought to adopt a seemingly neutral stance when discussing this Nietzschean “possibility of a new interpretation,” his later writings convincingly demonstrate that he instrumentally embraced this concept, transforming it into – if not a full paradigm – then at least a key methodological tool in his research.

For instance, in *Things and Words*, where he distinguishes and analyzes three epistemes – the Renaissance (sixteenth century), the classical (rationalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), and the modern (late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century and onward) – Foucault once again returns to this Nietzschean approach to hermeneutics. Foucault argued: “Let us call the totality of

the learning and skills that enable one to make the signs speak and to discover their meaning, hermeneutics; let us call the totality of the learning and skills that enable one to distinguish the location of the signs, to define what constitutes them as signs, and to know how and by what laws they are linked, semiology” (Foucault 2005: 33).

The term “hermeneutics” also dominates Foucault’s later works. It is reasonable to ask what the relationship might be between Foucault’s hermeneutics and so-called “traditional hermeneutics” (from Schleiermacher to Gadamer). In addressing this complex question, I am inclined to defend the following position: just as Nietzsche’s stance should not be conflated with traditional hermeneutics, nor should traditional hermeneutics be reduced to Nietzscheanism (as Rorty and Vattimo have done), so too should Foucault’s paradigmatic positions not be equated with traditional hermeneutics (e.g., Gadamer’s “philosophical hermeneutics”), nor should traditional hermeneutics be subsumed under Foucault’s hermeneutics. In other words, the occasional points of contact between the positions of representatives of traditional hermeneutics (such as Gadamer) and those of Foucault do not justify concluding that these approaches share a paradigmatic co-dimension.

For example, it is important to note that the so-called critical theorist David C. Hoy, in defending Foucault’s position against Habermas’s criticism, uses the term “genealogical hermeneutics”. He considered the latter as “a viable version of critical theory” (Hoy 1994: 207). Following Foucault, Hoy does not believe that one should start with some theory that is prior to criticism itself and at the same time is a transcendental condition for the latter’s possibility, as is typical for Habermas. Hoy suggested that the study of history and various social practices itself be understood not as “revealing reality”, but modally as “deconstructing necessity”:

“Critical theory conceived as genealogical hermeneutics may unmask substantive injustice, but it need not justify this unmasking through the methodological picture of inquiry presented by traditional theory. It need not construe itself as seeing through illusions and showing us how society really is. Instead, it can present itself as offering new interpretations. Along the way it may be unmasking previous interpretations. Since what is unmasked is self-interpretation, this unmasking through genealogical critical history can now be seen not simply in traditional epistemological terms as “revealing reality,” but also modally as “deconstructing necessity.” That is, genealogical research will show that self-understandings that are taken as universal, eternal, and necessary have a history, with a beginning, and therefore, possibly, an end. Genealogy thus shows that self-understandings are interpretations, and

it can bring us to suspect that conceptions of ourselves that we have taken to be necessary are only contingent. In making this contingency manifest, genealogy makes it possible for people to see how they could want to be different from how they are” (Ibid.: 207).

On the other hand, Hoy argues that we should not uncritically surrender to the discontinuous sequence of the sign system in Foucault’s genealogy. He contends that we must also recognize the macrosocial “frames” that condition the actors of social action. Accordingly, Hoy sees the possibility of supplementing Foucault’s “pure” genealogical hermeneutics with Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics. From a hermeneutical perspective, social actors are always subordinated to one or another social horizon, which can never be fully thematized by social actors. However, this common horizon can be thematized in different reflexive, interpretative profiles. Genealogical histories achieve this hermeneutical affect through the contrast between the present and the future, through “own” and “alien” practices. In this way, according to Hoy, “genealogical hermeneutics” seems to invite the expansion of interpretations and, being open to different interpretations, enrich the existing ones. Differences between interpretations and interpretative social practices should be recognized without the need to eliminate them. To what extent these “differences” between interpretations – understood as different social practices – should be tolerated is an empirical question, since there is no a priori definition of how everything happens or must happen. Therefore, “genealogical hermeneutics seeks to be consistent, but does not attempt to be systematic” (Ibid.: 178).

It is obvious that one can see the spatial connections between Foucault’s “genealogical hermeneutics” (Hoy) or “genealogical historiography” (Habermas) and Gadamer’s “philosophical hermeneutics”, but these two approaches are separated by incommensurable and fundamentally different paradigms. Using Foucault’s own vocabulary, one could say that genealogical and philosophical hermeneutical approaches are based on different and incommensurable “*historical a priori*”.

Genealogical Treatment of History and Social Practices

Foucault, following Nietzsche, began to develop his so-called genealogical hermeneutics and focused his research on how various social discourses and practices are formed, why and how they appear and

disappear again. In this genealogical research, instead of metaphysical origins, deeply hidden meanings that can only be seen through pure cognition, or open intentionality, Foucault, as a genealogist, unmasked power relations in social practices and power strategies without strategists. In 1971, Foucault's article "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" appeared in print, in which he presents his own version of Nietzsche and at the same time lays the foundations for his genealogy. Habermas, in a critical reaction to Foucault's genealogical research, stated that "Foucault owes the concept of an erudite-positivistic historiography in the appearance of an anti-science to his reception of Nietzsche" (Habermas 1998: 248-249).

Nietzsche himself metaphorically said that he is not interested in "blue", but in "gray" color, meaning that the genealogist is interested in everything "what is documented, what can actually be confirmed and has actually existed, in short the entire long hieroglyphic record, so hard to decipher, of the moral past of mankind!" (Nietzsche 1989: 21). At the conceptual level, the metaphorical distinction between "blue" and "gray" colors corresponds to the distinction between the metaphysically treated atopic and atemporal *Ursprung* and the spatially and temporally documented *Entstehung* and *Herkunft*³.

Why does Nietzsche, as a genealogist, reject archetypal origin (*Ursprung*)? Because this metaphysical treatment of *origin* "assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession. This search is directed to "that which was already there", the "very same" of an image of a primordial truth fully adequate to its nature, and it necessitates the removal of every mask to ultimately disclose an original identity" (Foucault 1998a: 371). However, the genealogist who chooses to "listen to history" and ceases to believe in metaphysics discovers, in the history of the origin of things, not their indestructible identity but the disagreement and difference among them.

Terms such as *Entstehung* or *Herkunft* describe the object of genealogy much more precisely. Therefore, according to Foucault, genealogy must not seek metaphysical origins (German: *Ursprung*) but rather aim to reveal the contingent temporal beginnings of the discourse formation, analyze the diversity of factual histories, and thereby disperse identity – primarily the supposed appearance of the subject who writes history and his contemporaries:

3 *Entstehung* by its meaning presupposes the temporal emergence, formation of something in time and in a specific place. It is problematic to distinguish *Ursprung* from *Entstehung* and *Herkunft* purely semantically. In Nietzsche's texts, the concepts *Entstehung* and *Herkunft* by their meaning refer not to some non-temporal metaphysical being but to the temporal emergence of a race or some type of social formation.

“Where the soul pretends unification or the Me fabricates a coherent identity, the genealogist sets out to study the beginning-numberless beginnings, whose faint traces and hints of color are readily seen by a historical eye. The analysis of descent (German: Herkunft, French: la provenance – A. M.) permits the dissociation of the Me, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis, in liberating a profusion of lost events” (Ibid.: 374).

Such a genealogy does not claim to turn back time or restore an uninterrupted, unified continuity beyond dispersion and oblivion. Nor does it seek to show that the past still lives in the present, continuing to animate it. Instead, it aims to reveal events in their characteristic dispersion and discontinuity, unraveling from the roots the fact that in all we know – and in which we ourselves exist – there is neither truth nor being, but only *the exteriority of different and individual cases*.

Another aspect of descent (German: Herkunft) is that it is related to the body. Following Nietzsche, Foucault argued that the body is the surface of the inscription of events. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history: “Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body” (Ibid.: 375–376). This insight was significant not only for Foucault but also for Deleuze. It is worth noting that structuralists (e. g. Claude Levi-Strauss) interpreted the social fabric as a system of exchange. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari proposed a new „cartography of the libidinal body”, which provides a basis for explaining sociality and social practices – topics also of interest to Foucault. The organization of savage and nomadic society is based not on *exchange*, but on *records*:

“The primitive territorial machine codes flows, invests organs, and marks bodies. To such a degree that circulating – exchanging – is a secondary activity in comparison with the task that sums up all the others: marking bodies, which are the earth’s products. The essence of the recording, inscribing socius, insofar as it lays claim to the productive forces and distributes the agents of production, resides in these operations: tattooing, excising, incising, carving, scarifying, mutilating, encircling, and initiating” (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 144).

In other words, the essence of such a registering and recording desire is to tattoo, to cut, to incise, to carve, to mutilate, to initiate. Foucault himself was also concerned with the “cartography of the body” mentioned by Deleuze. It is important to note that long before Foucault and Deleuze, Nietzsche called the sensual codification based

on “inscriptions” in bodies “morality of customs”, i.e. a system of evaluations that has legal force and is inseparable from the establishment of bodily memory. Nietzsche asked: “How can one create a memory for the human animal? How can one impress something upon this partly obtuse, partly flighty mind, attuned only to the passing moment, in such a way that it will stay there?” (Nietzsche 1989: 60). Following Nietzsche, Deleuze similarly stated – like Foucault – that:

“Man, who was constituted by means of an active faculty of forgetting (*oubli*), by means of a repression of biological memory, must create an *other* memory, one that is collective, a memory of words (*paroles*) and no longer a memory of things, a memory of signs and no longer of effects. This organization, which traces its signs directly on the body, constitutes a system of cruelty, a terrible alphabet” (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 144–145).

This codification of the body produced by desire, described by Deleuze, as well as in Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* – where history is portrayed as the history of the mind supervising and punishing social bodies – can essentially be identified with the bodily mnemonics⁴ described by Nietzsche:

“If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory” – this is a main clause of the oldest (unhappily also the most enduring) psychology on earth; <...> Man could never do without blood, torture, and sacrifices when he felt the need to create a memory for himself; <...> All this has its origin in the instinct that realized that pain is the most powerful aid to mnemonics. <...> The worse man’s memory has been, the more fearful has been the appearance of his customs; <...> Ah, reason, seriousness, mastery over the affects, the whole somber thing called reflection, all these prerogatives and showpieces of man: how dearly they have been bought! how much blood and cruelty lie at the bottom of all “good things”!” (Nietzsche 1989: 61–62).

The social practice of cruelty described by Nietzsche – marking the body to create memory – has nothing to do with vague, undefined, or accidental coercion. According to Deleuze, cruelty is far from accidental; it is the internal engine of culture itself, which cuts, carves, mutilates, initiates, and marks bodies. It is the memory of the “burnt”

4 For more information on bodily mnemonics and social practices, see: Mickevičius A. 2008.

body, a memory initiated in history by the punishing and supervising mind. In their descriptions of various social practices, both Deleuze and Foucault clearly allude to the “mnemonics” Nietzsche described, even though they do not explicitly use that term themselves:

“The sign is a position of desire; but the first signs are the territorial signs that plant their flags in bodies. And if one wants to call this inscription in naked flesh “writing”, then it must be said that speech in fact presupposes writing, and that it is this cruel system of inscribed signs that renders man capable of language, and gives him a memory of the spoken word” (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 145).

Writing is not an orphan of language (Plato). On the contrary, writing is primary – it is the writing of a burnt, tattooed body. Language, like memory, is established in history and grounded in the inscriptions borne by this burnt, desecrated body. It is precisely such social practices of cruelty that Foucault had in mind when he stated that the task of genealogy, as an analysis of descent (*Herkunft*), is “to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s as destruction of the body” (Foucault 1998a: 375–376). Foucault, following Nietzsche, convincingly described this mnemonic of the body, initiated by the mind that punishes social bodies, in his work *Discipline and Punish*. Since Plato’s time, the programmatic aspiration has been to free the soul from the prison of the body. Although this goal was achieved, the liberated “soul” or mind ended up enslaving the “body.” From this tension emerges the positive aspiration shared by both Deleuze and Foucault: to free imprisoned desire and its flows from all forms of repression. Like Nietzsche, Foucault sought to liberate the body from the prison imposed by the supervising and punishing soul. For Foucault, this aspiration manifests as an attempt to reveal how the “soul” or mind disciplines and punishes unruly social bodies, leaving lasting stigmas upon them.

Another feature that becomes important for Foucault when discussing Nietzsche’s genealogy is that the *Entstehung* of genealogy refers to the appearance or moment of surfacing of something: “*Entstehung* designates *emergence*, the moment of arising. It stands as the principle and the singular law of an apparition” (Foucault 1998a: 376). Appearance, according to Foucault, always takes place “in a particular state of forces” (Ibid.: 376). In other words, appearance and surfacing are the eruption of forces with their energy and the leap from “backstage” to “the stage”. What Nietzsche called the “*Entstehungsherd* of the concept of goodness is not specifically the energy of the strong or the reaction of the weak, but precisely this scene where they are

displayed superimposed or face to face” (Ibid.: 377). It is clear that Foucault has in mind here the principle of the *Will to Power*, manifested in different types of forces – active and reactive.

Foucault instrumentally adopted this Nietzschean treatment of “power” as one of the most important elements of his genealogical paradigm, and today’s attempts to distinguish between what Foucault and what Nietzsche meant when they spoke of “power” rather evoke the effect of hands drawing themselves, as in the lithograph *Drawing Hands* by the Dutch graphic artist M. C. Escher. Deleuze presented an excellent six-point dissection of Foucault’s concept of “power” in the chapter “The New Cartographer” in *Foucault* (Deleuze 2006: 23–44). The Will to Power is not a substance, not a self-identical being, but a “difference” that appears in the relationship of forces. It is not only suppressive but also productive, i.e. it produces new forms of knowledge and new social practices, which are always forms and practices of power. It is not someone’s property but a strategy. Foucault never abandoned this Nietzschean position.

Therefore, according to Foucault, it would be a mistake to assume, based on traditional beliefs, that a general war will subside in its own contradictions and end with the renunciation of violence in the peace of civil law. On the contrary, “the law is the calculated pleasure of relentlessness. It is the promised blood, which permits the perpetual instigation of new dominations and the staging of meticulously repeated scenes of violence” (Foucault 1998a: 378). Every law, agreement or peace is only a pretext for a new war and discord. Foucault wants to say that every peace, whatever it may be, is not a rule, but rather a temporary exception to the rule. This reminds us of Heraclitus: “it is necessary to know that war is general, and truth is strife and everything is born of strife. War is the father of all, the king of all. He made some slaves, others free.” Only this Heraclitean and Nietzschean adapted insight, which Foucault applies as a paradigm to explain social practices and history, should rather be understood not prescriptively, but descriptively. In other words, Habermas was concerned with transcendentally justifying what history and communication in social practices should be. In contrast to Habermas, Foucault – as a genealogist and a keeper of the “gray” color – was more concerned with descriptively showing what history and communication were prevalent in social practices.

It is from this Nietzschean genealogical perspective – one that presupposes a description of real history – that we should evaluate the three types of history distinguished by Foucault. He uses these types to unmask metaphysical and transcendental approaches to history, corresponding to the three Platonic modalities of historical interpretation:

1. The parodic and farcical treatment of reality, which is opposed to the subject of history as remembrance or (re)cognition (French: *remi-niscence* or *reconnaissance*);

2. A dissociative and destructive treatment of identity, which is opposed to history or tradition given as an uninterrupted continuity;

3. A sacrificial treatment of truth and a destructive attitude toward it, which is opposed to history as scientific knowledge (French: *con-naissance*) (Ibid.: 385–386).

First, a parody- or farce-based approach to history reveals that, to the anonymous and confused European – who does not truly know his own identity – the historian often presents various substitutes for identity, portraying them as more individualized and authentic, as if some kind of “costume” could conceal his anonymous shame. However, the genealogist, distinguished by a historical sensibility, takes none of this seriously and regards these substitutes with suspicion, recognizing them as mere masquerade costumes:

“The hybrid mixed man of Europe – a fairly ugly plebeian, all in all – absolutely must have a costume: he needs history as a storage closet of costumes. Of course, he notices that nothing really looks right on him, – he keeps changing. <...> Perhaps it’s that we still discover a realm of our *invention* here, a realm where we can still be original too, as parodists of world history or buffoons of God, or something like that, – perhaps it’s that, when nothing else from today has a future, our *laughter* is the one thing that does!” (Nietzsche 2002: 113–114).

Here we encounter a parody of the type of “monumental history” singled out in Nietzsche’s *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*. Monumental history, as parody, appears to the genealogist as a pre-arranged and staged carnival.

Secondly, the genealogist’s overtly dissociative treatment of identity involves an unmasking approach: identity is not a metaphysical given that can persist unchanged throughout history. Rather, the subject is multiple, with identity formed through various, constantly shifting social practices. In this regard, no force of transcendental synthesis can overcome these changes – identities split, pass away, and remain mortal, often defying comprehension within temporal traditions. Therefore, the goal of genealogically treated history is not to uncover the roots of our identity but to unmask them – not to return to the transcendental or metaphysical ancestry posited by traditional philosophy, but to reveal and make perceptible the ruptures and interruptions that shape us. This genealogical approach stands in stark contrast to “antiquarian history,” which focuses on identifying and

preserving continuities — such as our homeland or language — that are deemed essential to safeguard and transmit to future generations.

The third destructive interpretation of history is an interpretation that sacrifices truth and the subject of knowledge (French: *connaissance*). Only by assuming a “mask” can the knowing subject appear impartial, neutral, and speak of objective knowledge of history. As Nietzsche said: “People should rethink their ideas about cruelty and open up their eyes; <...> This is my claim: Almost everything we call “higher culture” is based on the spiritualization and deepening of cruelty. <...> There is a drop of cruelty even in every wanting-to-know” (Ibid.: 120–121). In other words, following Nietzsche and sacrificing the “pure” subject of knowledge, Foucault wants to say that behind the festive words as “genuine honesty, love of truth, love of wisdom, sacrifice for knowledge, the heroism of truthfulness” (Ibid.: 123) lies the *Will to Power*. He wants to say that no “pure”, i.e. objective, knowledge of history is possible, there is no society without coercive relations and influences of power. Foucault argued: “We should admit rather that power produces knowledge; <...> that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault 1998c: 27).

Therefore, the further conclusion that follows logically from such a position taken by Foucault is that the relations of power and knowledge should not be analyzed on the basis of a subject of knowledge that is free or not free from these relations. Therefore, in his study of various social practices, Foucault takes the following position:

“These ‘power-knowledge relations’ are to be analysed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system, but, on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge” (Ibid.: 27–28).

It is precisely this Foucauldian approach — instrumentally adopted from Nietzsche — that Habermas fundamentally disagreed with.

The Problem of Legitimation of Genealogical History and Criticism of Social Practices

Foucault's genealogical approach to the study of history and social practices has been criticized by Habermas. He argued that in Foucault's theory, "power," without his intention, actually becomes a quasi-transcendental basis for speaking of a genealogical historiography that is oriented towards the critique of reason. According to Habermas, Foucault's theory is made aporetic by the fact that in his concept of "power" he "has forced together the idealistic idea of transcendental synthesis with the presuppositions of an empiricist ontology". However, according to Habermas, "this approach cannot lead to a way out of the philosophy of the subject, because the concept of power <...> has been taken from the repertoire of the philosophy of the subject itself". (Habermas 1998: 274).

According to this philosophy, the subject can take up basically two relationships toward the world of imaginable and manipulable objects: "cognitive relationships regulated by the truth of judgments; and practical relationships regulated by the success of actions" (Ibid.: 274). Habermas tends to take the view that "power is that by which the subject has an effect on objects in successful actions. In this, success in action depends upon the truth of the judgments that enter into the plan of action; via the criterion of success in action, power remains dependent on truth" (Ibid.: 274). The essence of the disagreement between Habermas and Foucault lies in Foucault's abrupt reversal of the traditional relationship: instead of truth depending on power, Foucault asserts the power-dependency of truth. In this formulation, foundational power is no longer bound to the competencies of acting and judging subjects — power becomes subjectless. Summing up his critique of Foucault's theory, Habermas stated:

"Genealogical historiography grounded on the theory of power proposes three substitutions: In place of the hermeneutic elucidation of contexts of meaning, there is an analysis of structures that are meaningless in themselves; validity claims are of interest only as functions of power complexes; value judgments — in general, the problem of justifying criticism — are excluded in favor of value-free historical explanations. <...> Genealogical historiography emerges from its cocoon as precisely the *presentistic, relativistic, cryptonormative* illusory science that it does not want to be" (Ibid.: 275-276).

Without assuming the position of a judge in determining which of the two is correct, the most productive solution may be to abandon

universal normativism and, drawing on Deleuze's metaphor of the "toolbox," adopt a purely instrumentalist stance: both Habermas's model of "communicative action" and Foucault's model of "genealogy," while paradigmatically distinct, are equally valuable and important for the analysis of social practices. As is well known, Habermas sets out "validity claims" (*Geltungsansprüche*) for his model of "ideal communication" and distinguishes three types: truth (*Wahrheit*), normative rightness (*Richtigkeit*), and subjective sincerity (*Wahrhaftigkeit*). It can be argued that Foucault, in his own way, meets the Habermasian test of "validity claims." The essential difference lies in the grounding: Foucault does not root these claims in transcendental subjectivity, as Habermas does, but instead in genealogical reasoning. In other words, the crux of their divergence is that Foucault adopts a position of nominalist particularism, whereas Habermas maintains a commitment to abstract transcendental universalism.

Foucault admitted in a 1983 interview that France was not, or was poorly, indirectly, familiar with critical theory:

"When I was a student, I can assure you that I never once heard the name of the Frankfurt School mentioned by any of my professors. <...> If I had been aware of it at the time, I would not have said a number of stupid things that I did say, and I would have avoided many of the detours I made while trying to pursue my own humble path – when, meanwhile, avenues had been opened up by the Frankfurt School" (Foucault 1998 b: 440).

Noting the importance and value of the Frankfurt School, Foucault emphasized a different correlation than Habermas between "rationalization" and "power": "I think that the word "rationalization" is dangerous. What we have to do is analyze specific rationalities rather than always invoking the progress of rationalization in general" (Foucault 2001a: 329). Contrary to Habermas, Foucault suggested another way to go further toward a new economy of power relations, a way that is more empirical, more directly related to our present situation, and one that implies more relations between theory and practice: "Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies" (Ibid.: 329). Foucault indicated in two points the difference and disagreement related to the *ahistorical nature* of Habermas's thinking and the *utopianism* of the project he was developing:

"The idea that there could exist a state of communication that would allow games of truth to circulate freely, without any constraints or

coercive effects, seems utopian to me. This is precisely a failure to see that power relations are not something that is bad in itself, that we have to break free of. I do not think that a society can exist without power relations, if by that one means the strategies by which individuals try to direct and control the conduct of others. The problem, then, is not to try to dissolve them in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the ethos, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible” (Foucault 1997: 298).

According to Foucault, the problem for Habermas lies in his attempt to make a transcendental mode of thought emerge against any form of historicism. In this regard, Foucault described himself as “far more historicist and Nietzschean” in comparison with Habermas (Foucault 2001b: 359). Conceptually, however, Foucault most clearly outlined his programmatic vision for the possibility of genealogical history and the critique of social practices in the article “What is Enlightenment?”, prepared in 1984 for a conference planned in the United States – an event to which Habermas was also invited, but which never took place due to Foucault’s unexpected death.

Foucault proposed that the Enlightenment should not be understood as an epoch, but rather as a specific *attitude* of modernity – a particular *ethos* related to our own discursive practices. Transforming I. Kant’s ideas in his own way, Foucault understood *criticism* as the analysis of limits and reflection on them. Whereas Kantian criticism was concerned with the boundaries of knowledge – boundaries which knowledge itself must not attempt to cross – Foucault reconceived criticism as *practical criticism*, which should positively engage with the possibility of crossing those boundaries.

The realization of such critique, he argued, should not be understood as the search for universal formal structures, but “rather as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying” (Foucault 1984: 46). Such a critique, Foucault noted, “is not transcendental and does not aim to make possible any metaphysics: it is genealogical in its purpose, but archaeological in its method” (Ibid.). Foucault’s criticism is archaeological but not transcendental, in the sense that it “[does] not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge or of all possible moral action, but will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events” (Ibid.: 46). Likewise, according to Foucault, “critique will be genealogical in the sense that

it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; <...> It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom” (Ibid.: 46).

Conclusion

The concepts “hermeneutics” and “genealogy” used by Foucault imply a conjunction, and the object of research of “genealogical hermeneutics” is the interpretation of history and social practices. Based on Nietzsche, Foucault developed hermeneutics as an interpretive practice that is, first, not oriented toward metaphysical searches for depth; second, inexhaustible in nature; and third, prior to signifiers, as it does not reveal or clarify their pre-given meanings but instead establishes them.

Such interpretive practice is not denied but rather methodologically extended and deepened by genealogical research, which, instead of seeking metaphysical origins or deeply hidden meanings accessible only through pure cognition, open intentionality, and transcendentalism, unmasks relations of power in history and social practices – exposing strategies of power without strategists. In a positive sense, Foucault understands “genealogical hermeneutics” as a body of knowledge and techniques that make signs speak and thus reveal their meanings. It is oriented towards a critical understanding of social practices that are permeated by mechanisms of power.

One fundamental difference between Nietzsche and Foucault lies in their treatment of cognition, morality, and social practices: Nietzsche often grounds these in the subjective tactics of individual actors, whereas Foucault fully depsychologizes this approach, viewing psychological motivations not as sources but as effects of power strategies without strategists.

In this respect, Foucault’s “genealogical hermeneutics” stands in paradigmatic contrast to Gadamer’s “philosophical hermeneutics,” which centers on the search for phenomenologically transformed truth manifesting in various forms, the transcendental justification of the continuity of intended meaning from the past to the present, and the preservation of historical and cultural tradition.

The genealogical hermeneutics developed by Foucault has been rigorously critiqued by Habermas. At the core of their disagreement lies Foucault’s inversion of the relationship between power, subject, and truth: Foucault conceives power not as dependent on the subject

and truth, but rather the subject and truth as dependent on power. This raises a fundamental question: if power is non-subjective, how can one meaningfully criticize the strategies of power without strategists embedded in social practices? Foucault envisions a distinct set of possibilities and objectives for the critique of history and social practices compared to Habermas.

Firstly, Foucault adopts a stance of nominalist particularism, whereas Habermas grounds his theory in abstract transcendental universalism.

Secondly, Foucault rejects Habermas's model of ideal communication as ahistorical and utopian, arguing that in reality, no such ideal communicative situation exists – societies are invariably permeated by power relations that constrain the free circulation of truth claims.

Thirdly, Foucault contends that the task of critique is not to abolish power relations in pursuit of a rational utopia of ideal communication but rather to develop legal norms, managerial techniques, and an ethical stance that enable the exercise of power with the least possible domination.

Finally, Foucault's approach to critiquing history and social practices – developed instrumentally through Nietzschean insights – should not be understood as a search for formal structures of universal validity. Rather, it constitutes a historical investigation into the events that have shaped our self-recognition as subjects of our actions, thoughts, and speech, serving simultaneously as a call and a task to expand the boundaries of our freedom.

References

- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G. (2006). *Foucault*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gadamer, H. G. (1989). *Text and Interpretation*. In *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hoy, David C. & McCarthy, Thomas (1994). *Critical Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Habermas, J. (1998). *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Cambridge: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Foucault, M. & Deleuze, G. (1977). Intellectuals and Power. In D. F. Bouchard (Ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1984). What Is Enlightenment? In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1994). *Le retour de la morale*. In *Dits et écrits, 1954–1988, tome IV: 1980–1988*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard. — In Fr.

- Foucault, M. (1997). *The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom*. In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, Vol. 1. New York: The New Press.
- Foucault, M. (1998). Nietzsche, Freud, Marx. In J. D. Faubion (Ed.), *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, Vol. 2. New York: The New Press.
- Foucault, M. (1998a). Nietzsche, Genealogy, History. In J. D. Faubion (Ed.), *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, Vol. 2. New York: The New Press.
- Foucault, M. (1998b). Structuralism and Poststructuralism. In J. D. Faubion (Ed.), *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, Vol. 2. New York: The New Press.
- Foucault, M. (1998c). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc.
- Foucault, M. (2001a). The Subject and Power. In J. D. Faubion (Ed.), *Power: The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, Vol. 3. New York: The New Press.
- Foucault, M. (2001b). Space, Knowledge, and Power. In J. D. Faubion (Ed.), *Power: The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, Vol. 3. New York: The New Press.
- Foucault, M. (2005). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Mickevičius, A. (2008). G. Deleuze kūniškoji mnemonika ir socialinės geismo mašinos. *Problemos, Priedas*, 87–95.
- Nietzsche, F. (1998). *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc.
- Nietzsche, F. (2002). *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

NORMATIVITY IN CRITIQUE: HOW THE THEORY OF SUBJECTIVATION ADVANCES THE THEORY OF RECOGNITION¹

Ekaterina Shashlova

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-66-80>

© Ekaterina Shashlova

PhD student at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University,
Pátkova 2137/5, 182 00 Prague 8, Libeň, Czech Republic

E-mail: ekaterina.shashlova@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0631-0080>

Abstract: This paper provides an overview of the contemporary theories on critique and normativity. By conceptualizing the tensions and convergences between critical and normative theory, contemporary scholars argue that critical theory is normative or at least possesses normative content. The focus is placed on the theory of recognition and the theory of subjectivation. The paper asserts that the normative content of critical theory – universal norms of justice – manifests as a critique of inequality and injustice, a perspective prominently articulated in the contemporary theory of recognition developed by Axel Honneth, Franck Fischbach, and Emmanuel Renault. Both Axel Honneth and Judith Butler establish a closer link between Foucauldian critical theory and the objectives of the theory of recognition. Drawing on Foucault's critique of subjugation, Butler highlights the connection between recognition and subjectivation, emphasizing the convergence of self-recognition and the constitution of the self as a subject. Thus, the theory of recognition, as a critical theory with normative content, finds its own foundations in Foucault's critique of subjugation. In this context, the concept of subjectivation emerges as a central category in the further development of the theory of recognition.

Keywords: critique, subjection, subjectivation, normativity, reification, intersubjectivity, recognition, misrecognition.

1 The research was supported by the Grant Agency of Charles University (project № 144724 "Recognition and Misrecognition in Contemporary Philosophy: Search for a Tool for Social Theory").



Introduction

Beginning with the works of Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth, critical theory has incorporated the question of normativity. Initially regarded as conflicting forms of social analysis – exemplified by Michel Foucault’s critique of Habermas – contemporary literature increasingly characterizes the opposition between critical and normative theory as “a discursive impasse” (Judith Butler), arguing for the normative content of critique. Butler contends that the practice of critique asserts universal rights rather than merely questioning them. Expanding on this claim, I argue that critical theory’s pursuit of universal rights and logical foundations – as demonstrated by Emmanuel Renault and Robert Brandom – provides evidence that critique functions effectively as an instrument of social transformation. Thus, normative theory is not the antithesis of critique but rather its foundation and consequence, just as the collective or individual subject emerges as a result of subjectivation through critical engagement.

Critique is possible insofar as its normative content enables the exposure of injustice and inequality faced by individuals who are not recognized as subjects with full rights. It is precisely this normative content – the recognition of the universality of rights – that serves as the basis for critical theory. However, normative content always plays a dual role: on the one hand, it establishes universal principles of moral and logical equality among subjects (an argument developed by Honneth, Renault, and Brandom); on the other hand, it functions as the source of normativity as a principle of violence (Foucault, Butler). From the perspective of some critical approaches, “what were thought to be normative achievements were historically premised on, and continue to functionally presuppose, domination and exclusion both at a societal and global level” (Celikates & Flynn 2023). Therefore, despite recent efforts to describe critical theory in terms of normative content (e.g., Lorenzini and Tazzioli), including within the framework of recognition theory (Honneth, Renault), the contradiction between normativity and critique remains unresolved. In this context, Foucauldian critique regains its relevance, as it redirects attention to the origins of the problem of norm and normativity in the context of subjectivation as resistance to violence.

Following Honneth’s approach, the aim of my paper is to reformulate the problem of conflict and convergence between critical and normative theory in terms of recognition. Honneth proposes understanding “the concept of recognition as a normative groundwork for a critical theory of society” (Honneth 2008: xii), encompassing social, political, and moral philosophy. This approach is further developed by

Emmanuel Renault, who argues that contemporary recognition theory is inherently normative. The very encounter with normative demands occurs when subjects experience a sense of disrespect (Honneth) or injustice (Renault). That is, according to Honneth, the principle of recognition itself contains a normative component. From Butler's perspective (2001), Foucault's concept of critique significantly contributes to normative theory. Consequently, recognition theory should be understood as an extension of Foucauldian critical-normative theory, with recognition functioning as both a strategy of subjectivation and a regime of truth.

In this paper, I adopt the premise that the struggle for recognition, as well as the process of recognition itself, constitutes a strategy of subjectivation. Butler asserts that subjectivation is revealed through the analytics of the regime of truth: "self-making and desubjugation happen simultaneously when a mode of existence is risked which is unsupported by what he calls the regime of truth" (Butler 2001). Lorenzini's arguments further allow recognition to be understood not only as a strategy of subjectivation but also as a regime of truth (Lorenzini 2023). Analysing recognition within an epistemological framework and examining speech acts through the lens of critical theory, Lorenzini demonstrates that recognition functions as a regime of truth.

I argue that, as a strategy of subjectivation, the process of recognition is both the result of critical engagement and the means of its further transformation through the reexamination of constructed norms. In the history of philosophy, not only the concept of critique has been transformed (from Kant's strict investigation to Foucauldian critique of the historical foundations of ourselves as subjects), but also the concept of norm. Contemporary recognition theory continues to employ the concept of norm, but not in order to determine a subject's conformity to established norms; rather, it aims at transforming subjects through the critique of norms. The concept of recognition as subjectivation, examined here, embodies Foucauldian critique in Butler's later works (Butler 2009a). I argue that it is precisely the concept of subjectivation that reveals the critical significance of the contemporary concept of recognition.

The concept of recognition (German: *Anerkennung*), originally a Hegelian notion, embodies a contradiction between what is and that which challenges its legitimacy. This intersubjective struggle manifests as recognition by the Other, emerging from the conflict between the dominant and the subordinate (Hegel's master-slave dialectic), or as *acknowledgment* in the process of perlocution (a reinterpretation of speech act theory in Lorenzini's work), or even as a *gift* (Ricoeur). This conceptual richness has established recognition as a central concept

in contemporary critical theory, encompassing epistemological questions as well as the analysis of exchange and gift relations.

However, the counterpart to recognition – *misrecognition* – deserves particular attention in the normative definition of critique. If recognition is inseparable from normativity, which constitutes its very condition, then misrecognition represents a concept of critical theory that lacks normative content. To be an unrecognized subject means to exist within a space of absent meanings. Legal norms cannot be applied to misrecognized subjects. In essence, misrecognized subjects – whether individual or collective – are deprived of humanity. Misrecognition also plays a crucial role in social relations: critiques and justifications of capital punishment, abortion, foreign intervention in local conflicts, and similar issues all rely on shifting subjects between the categories of the recognized and the unrecognized.

By reformulating the problem of normative content in critique through the framework of recognition theory, I argue that the normative component of contemporary critical theory is both the consequence and the result of recognizing subjects as ethical, political, and legal agents. Ongoing debates, reflected in social movements and emerging academic disciplines (Gender Studies, Feminist Studies, Black Studies, etc.), reveal newly constructed subjects and their struggle for recognition as entities to whom the full spectrum of universal moral and political laws should apply.

Thus, viewing the struggle for recognition as a strategy of subjectivation, as well as a distinct *regime of truth*, enables a positive articulation of critique. By possessing normative content, critique – when understood through the lens of recognition theory – offers a framework for describing the prospects of individual subjectivation.

The Theory of Recognition as Normative and Critical Theory: Is Opposition Possible?

Several approaches to the historical study of the concept of recognition can be identified in the academic literature:

- The history of ideas (Ricœur 2006; Honneth 2020);
- The study of the history of the concept of recognition within the context of French social anthropology (Caillé 2004);
- Historical-philosophical analysis (Butler 2012; Fischbach 1999);
- The pragmatic semantics of Hegel's concept of recognition (Brandom 2007, 2019).

First, these approaches can be distinguished in terms of their historical objectives. Ricœur, Honneth, and Brandom do not analyze the

contribution of Alexandre Kojève as a key source for the contemporary theory of recognition. In contrast, Fischbach and Caillé examine the evolution of the concept of recognition specifically in light of Kojève's role in shaping the contemporary interpretation of Hegel's concept of recognition.

Second, these approaches reflect a contrast between political and ethical strategies of recognition. If the theories of Ricœur, Honneth, and Brandom can be classified as normative theories of recognition, then the concepts developed by Butler and Fischbach are part of the critical theory of the struggle for recognition. However, upon closer examination of Butler's theory, it becomes evident that critical and normative theories cannot be strictly opposed to one another but rather constitute a false dichotomy: "...the very debate in which the strong normative view wars with critical theory may produce precisely that form of discursive impasse from which the necessity and urgency of critique emerges" (Butler, 2001). Butler points to the impasse of opposing Foucault's and Habermas's theories, in which critique is set against the pursuit of objective rationality. By emphasizing this impasse, Butler highlights that normativity in critique – specifically ethical normativity – concerns the task of self-constituting, that is, subjectivation and the rethinking of norms. Renault, following the same principle, has reformulated German, French, and American theories of recognition into a unified critical theory that includes a normative component and aspires to be normative itself. As Renault's research demonstrates, the political dimension of recognition theory is inseparable from ethics, and the concept of recognition cannot be considered independently from the concept of justice. However, as we will see in the second part of this article, by rejecting the opposition between critique and norm, Butler shows that critique itself is directed toward the constitution of ethical norms in the process of subjectivation. The search for epistemic foundations to justify the objective character of norms (e.g., Habermas's attempt to revise the concept of reason) was not sufficient or convincing either for Foucault or for Butler, since in the regime of truth it is impossible to separate knowledge from power.

Today, critical theory continues to evolve along multiple trajectories. One such trajectory is the development of Frankfurt School critique through Habermas and Honneth. For instance, French researchers (Fischbach, Renault) establish connections between Frankfurt School critical theory and the French development of Marxism. These studies primarily address themes such as capitalism, labor, social theory, and injustice. Honneth's work has had a significant impact on contemporary analyses of injustice. His first major work on critique

(*Kritik der Macht: Reflexionsstufen einer kritischen Gesellschaftstheorie*, 1985) built a bridge between Foucault and the Frankfurt School. However, this text was not translated into French until 2016 (Honneth, 2017), meaning that post-Foucauldian critical theory and German recognition theory developed in parallel. This underscores the need for renewed attention to Foucault's role in the development of recognition theory. As Foucault himself noted, had he been familiar with the Frankfurt School earlier, his research on power might have taken a different direction (Trombadori & Foucault, 1978).

Honneth's theory, which is widely recognized in France today, represents a dual return of recognition theory to the French intellectual landscape. First, it marks a return to the theme of recognition as formulated by Kojève in the French context during the 1930s and 1940s – a theme that, while profoundly influencing the development of German critical theory in the 1980s and 1990s, had largely faded from French discourse. Second, it signifies a renewed engagement with Foucault's critical legacy, the importance of which is increasingly emphasized by Honneth's followers. This trajectory of critical thought within the European context evolved in parallel, simultaneously enriching both traditions. From Honneth's perspective, the theme of recognition constitutes a continuation of critical theory (Honneth, Føsel, Dilmaghani, & Genel 2008).

Fischbach, in his critical theory, shifts from Lukács' concept of reification to reification as "loss of the world"² through the theory of recognition. Honneth reintroduces Lukács' notion of reification into contemporary critical theory, thereby reopening the question of subjectivity to critically reassess the concept of consciousness. Consciousness is not the source of reification but its result. As Fischbach points out, "...for A. Honneth, the goal is to demonstrate that the theory of recognition is capable of productively appropriating the old Marxist concept of reification for itself" (Fischbach 2009: 99)³. Drawing on key concepts from Marx, Lukács, Heidegger, and Honneth, Fischbach questions the nature of human alienation. If reification constitutes the "second nature" of human beings (Fischbach 2009: 100), forming the basis for the constitution of their subjectivity, then "the alienation of the subject is not its reification, its thingification, but its withdrawal from the world, as it implies a de-objectification that constitutes the

2 "La perte du monde" (Fischbach 2009: 7).

3 "Il s'agit donc pour A. Honneth de montrer que la théorie de la reconnaissance est capable de s'approprier de façon fructueuse pour elle-même le vieux concept marxiste de réification" (Fischbach 2009: 99).

subject as such” (Fischbach 2009: 99)⁴. The world is lost to the subject because of the process of reification. Reification, according to Honneth, is the “forgetfulness of recognition” (German: Anerkennungsvergessenheit) (Fischbach 2009: 105), manifesting in the treatment of individuals as objects. Recognition, by contrast, is grounded in a sense of connection.

From Fischbach’s perspective, Lukács’ mistake was to treat the subject as a pre-existing given and to neglect the conditions for the formation of this mode of subjectivity (Fischbach 2009: 111–112). This issue is crucial for contemporary critical theory, which increasingly aligns with normative theory: Foucault, Butler, and Lorenzini emphasize that critique entails understanding the subject as a product of relations, constitution, and other formative processes. Critical work consists in identifying the conditions of subjectivity’s constitution.

Renault rejects the rigid dichotomy between French and German philosophies of recognition, emphasizing that the sources of French theory were German authors such as Hegel, Marx, and Heidegger (Renault 2021). At the same time, German theory also references French authors. Moreover, the thematic division of recognition as struggle in the German discourse and recognition as reciprocity in the French discourse is called into question. This division characterizes recognition theory when using key texts by Honneth, Caillé, and Ricœur as the basis for classification. Indeed, Renault highlights that the concept of recognition gains its meaning through mutual influence and cultural transfer between French and German thought. Adopting Renault’s approach, which views French and German recognition theories as unified, it is necessary to note that beyond the national dimension, there is also a conceptual dimension. The key conceptual distinction in recognition theory lies between “continental” and pragmatic approaches. “Continental” recognition theory (encompassing German, French, and “French Theory” in the U.S.A.) considers recognition as a theory of subjectivity, identity, and power. In contrast, Robert Brandom’s pragmatic theory of recognition analyzes the concept in a completely different way. While Renault does not explicitly mention Brandom’s pragmatic approach, Brandom’s perspective illustrates a normative ethical theory in contrast to “French” critical theory.

In his book (Renault 2004/2019), which reconstructs recognition theory through the experience of injustice, Renault articulates his own concept of recognition in relation to Honneth and

4 “...l’aliénation du sujet n’est pas sa réification, sa chosification, mais son retrait du monde en tant qu’il implique une désobjectivation, constitutive du sujet comme tel” (Fischbach 2009: 99).

other contemporary critical theorists. He argues that recognition, as it relates to misrecognition and injustice, is initially analyzed through emotions and feelings. However, this aspect of recognition analysis contrasts with a logical analysis oriented toward universalization, which contradicts subjective experience. If the ontological foundation of recognition is individuality, which “is intersubjectively constituted” (Renault 2019: 26), then the necessary component of an ethical theory of recognition is “an ensemble of fundamental normative expectations” (Renault 2019: 19). The concept of recognition thus comprises two elements: (1) recognition or misrecognition of different values, and (2) fundamental normative expectations. The unity of these elements ensures the functioning of a critical theory of recognition that ultimately leads to normative theory. The aim of Renault’s book is to address the issue of cultural recognition through normative principles. In Renault’s view, critical theory cannot avoid normative development, as it is oriented only toward local struggles, which must be redirected into a global struggle. This is why Renault critiques critical theory that excludes normative content.

Brandom develops the concept of recognition through normative ethics. The contrast between the normative ethics of recognition and the critical theory of recognition allows for highlighting the limitations of the concept of recognition as an ethical notion, as opposed to social or political action, and raises the question of the possibilities and boundaries of recognition theory in these two forms. It is precisely the practical aspect of such a philosophical foundation that helps to explain effective strategies for implementing recognition policies. In Brandom’s case, recognition as a normative stance is the source of assigning rights to all beings who meet this criterion:

“... recognition is a *normative* attitude. To recognize someone is to take her to be the subject of normative statuses, that is, of commitments and entitlements, as capable of undertaking responsibilities and exercising authority. This is what it means to say that as reciprocally recognized and recognizing, the creatures in question are *geistig*, spiritual, beings, and no longer merely natural ones” (Brandom 2007: 136).

In contrast to Brandom’s position, Kojève asserts that the struggle for recognition is only initiated by those who are willing to risk their lives for it.

A limitation of Brandom’s theory lies in his view of a community of individuals who mutually recognize one another as bearers of norms (such as honesty in logical argumentation, as for K.-O. Apel).

However, in contrast to such an unattainable normativity, representatives of critical theory of recognition point out that some vulnerable groups cannot become full members of this community of mutually recognized individuals, either because rights do not extend to minority groups, or because the majority of people do not consider minorities equal to themselves. In other words, normative theory assumes relationships between individuals (in the form of a universal rational system), whereas critical theory responds to the impossibility of recognizing such individuals as subjects of rights within such a system. Normative theory remains within the bounds set by some members of society for others. Here, we encounter the problem of the universalism of morality (e.g., in ideas of cosmopolitanism, etc.).

Another limitation of the normative theory of recognition is the psychological component. According to Matthias Iser, the normative component of recognition is inseparable from the psychological acceptance of a person by another or self-acceptance (Iser 2019). In critical theories of recognition, emphasis is also placed on the psychological aspect (even Hegel's ontological structure of recognition is based on the structure of the subject's self-consciousness — the I and the We).

“We” as a Collective Subject of Critique

The question of the transformation of critical theory in the post-Foucauldian perspective is raised by Lorenzini and Tazzioli. The authors argue that “Critique and the production of subjectivity and new political spaces should be thought *together*” (Lorenzini & Tazzioli 2020: 30). I share this approach, as it highlights how both individual development and collective forms of subjectivity function reciprocally in social transformation. Foucault demonstrated the unity of subjectivity, truth, and power, with critique being a positive moment of transformation in this relation. Contemporary recognition theory allows us to articulate critique within the context of the unity of the production of subjectivity and political spaces. The Hegelian-Kojévian, or subjectivist interpretation of recognition, offers a reading of the constitution of identity within political spaces. This modern perspective on recognition has been developed by Honneth and Butler, who furthered the Foucauldian-Althusserian theory of power and ideology.

As Lorenzini and Tazzioli point out, authors such as Foucault and Butler “are helpful precisely because they insist on the need to constantly reconceive of critique in the light of specific configurations of

power relations, new modes of subjection and, we contend, different *subjects of critique*” (Lorenzini & Tazzioli 2020: 35). I believe that examining this issue of collective subjects through the lens of recognition theory will enrich the analysis of critical theory.

The “We” is the result of the constitution of a collective subject, which requires constant rethinking. This rethought critique of collective subjects is “*doubly immanent*, since it also strives to problematise its own position with respect to the subjects of critique”, the main subject of which is “the (re)production of racialised mechanisms of capture and the asymmetry of lives” (Lorenzini & Tazzioli 2020: 35). From this repertoire of contemporary critical theory as the critique of collective subjects, or We-critique, a toolkit is created for analysing the intersubjective processes of the struggle for recognition. Ontologically, recognition theory is rooted in the dialectic of subjectivities that form the social “We”, or, in Hegel’s words, “...Spirit is – this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: ‘I’ that is ‘We’ and ‘We’ that is ‘I’” (Hegel 2013: 110).

However, Foucault ignored the issue of social recognition as intersubjective interaction, focusing instead on self-subjectivation. Starting with Butler, through the concept of subjectivation, that is, subjugation, there is a return to the struggle for recognition as a modern form of subjectivation, and Foucault’s theory of power becomes integrated into contemporary recognition theory. As Butler notes, “In Foucault’s account of self-constitution, a question that emerges centrally in his work of the 1980s, a regime of truth offers the terms that make self-recognition possible” (Butler 2009b: 22). Thus, the focus of the critical transformation of recognition theory through the lens of Foucault’s theory of power is to demonstrate that the struggle for recognition and the process of recognition are forms of subjectivation.

The thesis that can be demonstrated through the theory of recognition as critical theory is as follows: the normative component of critical theory is limited by epistemological frameworks (the question of truth, the ethics of judgment, the regime of truth, etc.), and consequently, critical theory remains radically opposed to normative ethical theory. In the arguments of Lorenzini and Brandom on the normativity of recognition, we find an analysis of language and speech acts, truth (Brandom 2019), perlocution, and illocution (Lorenzini 2023). A shared concept in Butler’s and Lorenzini’s analysis is the definition of subjectivation through the regime of truth. But despite the shared argument about the subject’s determination by a regime of truth – within which the subject becomes a subject – the approaches of Butler and

Lorenzini differ. Butler points to the ontological structure of recognition, which is preceded by the frames of recognizability (Butler 2009a).

This line of reasoning refers back to Foucault's method, where he consistently demonstrated the historical a priori of any given phenomenon. Recognizability, from Butler's perspective, represents the frames within which the recognition or misrecognition of subjects takes place. These frames of recognizability are akin to Foucault's regime of truth. In Lorenzini's work, both in the analysis of subjectivation as a regime of truth and in the analysis of recognition within the structure of speech acts, the problem of establishing truth through language comes to the forefront. I wish to emphasize that although Butler and Lorenzini, as followers of Foucault's critical theory, construct arguments about the political consequences of subjectivation and recognition, Lorenzini's approach is marked by an epistemological analysis of truth and the structure of speech acts.

This reveals a convergence of arguments between Brandom and Lorenzini, which can be described as epistemological. In any case, in the work of Butler, Brandom, and Lorenzini, the argument about the normative content of recognition theory is revealed through the analysis of epistemic phenomena, whether it be the regime of truth, speech acts, or the ethics of judgment. From this, one may conclude that in order to define normativity in these theories, the authors inevitably arrive at its core in the form of logic and language. It is precisely epistemic concepts (truth, language, judgment) that enable the use of logical arguments in relation to the critical theory of the subject and recognition. Such argumentation may be characterized as the epistemological framework of recognition theory.

In contrast, critical theory that aims at rethinking norms and the regime of truth (or the frames of recognizability, in Butler's terms) places emphasis not on epistemic phenomena but on the ontological political and social conditions of subject formation. Whereas normative ethical theory prescribes how a subject should act, critical theory – even while maintaining a normative component – asks what compels the subject to act in one way or another. Consequently, the critique of the conditions of possibility for knowledge, recognition and misrecognition, and subjectivation remains opposed to normative theories in the traditional sense of the term, such as virtue ethics. What is referred to as the “normative component” of critical theory is limited by epistemological frameworks and is directed toward the subsequent critical work of transforming the world – despite the seemingly power-independent nature of logical truth, and the objectivity of logic and language. This is how Lorenzini speaks about the critical potential of Foucauldian genealogy:

“This we-making dimension is also what gives genealogy its specific normative force: even though Foucault’s genealogies do not tell us precisely “what is to be done,” they nevertheless commit us to carrying on, in one form or another, the (collective) struggle against the subjugating effects of the governmental mechanisms and regimes of truth that still permeate our lives” (Lorenzini 2023: 124).

Even though Butler draws on the Foucauldian idea that “critique is a virtue” (Butler, 2001) and speaks of the impossibility of productively opposing critique to norm in the polemics between Foucauldians and Habermasians, the opposition between critical theory and normative theory persists in an ethical sense. Critical recognition theory views the continuous critique of established norms as a way of rethinking the frames of recognizability of subjects.

The central philosophical question of recognition theory, as one of the most developed and widespread themes of critical theory (in decolonial, feminist studies, as well as in studies of national identity, political communities, legal subjects, etc., lies in the forms of disobedience of subjects⁵), is the question of the subject, whose subjectivation is formed through recognition by the “We” or the Other, as well as the critical reflection on this recognition or misrecognition. The concept of critique in Foucault characterizes the strategy of subjective practice of constituting oneself as a subject through disobedience, that is, struggle: “Critique is the art of voluntary insubordination, of considered indocility. Critique essentially performs the function of desubjectification in the play of what might, in a word, be called the politics of truth” (Foucault 2024: 26).

Thus, recognition theory demonstrates not only the necessity of the normative justification of critical theory but also the need for the ongoing constitution of critique in relation to the normative characteristics of subjects.

Conclusion: Critique of Normativity

Despite contemporary research asserting the normative character of critical theory, or at least the convergence of critical theory with

5 For example, studies of recognition in the decolonial approach: Dussel, E. (2022), Maeschalck, M. (2016), Mignolo, W. D., & Tlostanova, M. V. (2006). See also the volume on various social aspects of recognition and the intersection of Miranda Fricker’s theory of epistemic injustice with recognition theory: Giladi, P., & McMillan, N. (2022).

normative theory (Honneth, Butler, Lorenzini, Renault, and others), the thesis of this paper argues that the normativity of critical theory is limited in its relationship to critique. The key concept used here is recognition, which lies at the heart of various critical reflections on decoloniality, justice, and related topics. By considering recognition theory as a critical theory with the concept of recognition as its central subject, this paper explains the critical aspect of this theory and the attempts to bring critical theory of recognition closer to normative theory. Relying on the works of Lorenzini and Brandom, the paper clarifies the normative content of recognition theory within epistemological frameworks. However, it asserts that beyond the epistemological problematics, recognition theory remains critical, constantly questioning any form of normativity.

Critical theory highlights that the normative ideal remains unattainable in situations of injustice. Nonetheless, normativity, or the normative force (Lorenzini 2023), can be seen as a guiding principle of critical theory. Undoubtedly, we encounter a contradiction: if the subject is never fully constituted, and is always in the process of constitution, such normative force can be viewed by some critical theorists not as a commitment to recognition but as subjection and domination of individuals.

The main conclusion is that, as a theory aimed at justifying universal rights and norms, critical theory reveals its normative content. However, when the theory remains at the level of analysing the process of subjugation and resistance through the struggle for recognition or subjectivation, critical theory may call into question the norms that ground the constitution of the subject.

References

- Brandom, R. B. (2007). The structure of desire and recognition: Self-consciousness and self-constitution. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 33(1): 127–150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453707071389>.
- Brandom, R. B. (2019). *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Butler, J. (2001). What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue. Retrieved 30 December 2024, from Transversal texts website: <https://transversal.at/transversal/0806/butler/en>.
- Butler, J. (2009a). *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (1st publ). London: Verso.
- Butler, J. (2009b). *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780823237685>.

- Butler, J. (2020). *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind*. London; New York: Verso.
- Butler, J. (Ed.). (2012). *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Caillé, A. (2004). Présentation. *Revue du MAUSS*, 23(1): 5–28. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rdm.023.0005>. — In Fr.
- Celikates, R., Flynn, J. (2023). Critical Theory (Frankfurt School). In Zalta, E. N. & Nodelman, U. (Eds.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/critical-theory/>.
- Dussel, E. (2022). Les droits de l'homme et l'éthique de la libération. In Loute, A. & Maesschalck, M. (Eds.). *Nouvelle critique sociale: Europe – Amérique Latine | Aller–Retour*: 281–296. EuroPhilosophie Éditions. <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.europhilosophie.883>. — In Fr.
- Fischbach, F. (1999). *Fichte et Hegel: La reconnaissance*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. Retrieved from <https://www.cairn.info/fichte-et-hegel-la-reconnaissance--9782130497622.htm>. — In Fr.
- Fischbach, F. (2009). *Sans objet: Capitalisme, subjectivité, aliénation*. Paris: Vrin. — In Fr.
- Foucault, M. (2024). *What Is Critique? And the Culture of the Self*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Giladi, P., McMillan, N. (2022). *Epistemic Injustice and the Philosophy of Recognition*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429435133>.
- Hegel, G. W. F., Miller, A. V. (Trans.), Findlay, J. N. (Intro.). (2013). *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Reprint). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Honneth, A. (2008). *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Nachdr.). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Honneth, A. (2020). *La reconnaissance. Histoire européenne d'une idée* (P. Rusch, Trans.). Paris: Éditions Gallimard. — In Fr.
- Honneth, A., Dautrey, M., Voirol, O. (2017). *Critique du pouvoir: Michel Foucault et l'École de Francfort*. Paris: La Découverte. — In Fr.
- Honneth, A., Fessel, M., Dilmaghani, D., Genel, K. (2008). La philosophie de la reconnaissance: Une critique sociale. *Esprit*, Juillet (7): 88–95. <https://doi.org/10.3917/espri.346.0088>. — In Fr.
- Iser, M. (2019). Recognition. In Zalta, E. N. (Ed.). *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/recognition/>.
- Lorenzini, D. (2020). From recognition to acknowledgement: Rethinking the perlocutionary. *Inquiry*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2020.1712231>.
- Lorenzini, D. (2023). *The Force of Truth: Critique, Genealogy, and Truth-Telling in Michel Foucault*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.
- Lorenzini, D., Tazzioli, M. (2020). Critique without ontology: Genealogy, collective subjects and the deadlocks of evidence. *Radical Philosophy*, (207): 27–39.
- Maesschalck, M. (2016). Contre le postulat de symétrie: Éthique décoloniale et subjectivation. In Cicotti, C., Cuoghi, S. (Eds.). *La rencontre avec l'autre*: 45–73. Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0352-6579-8>. — In Fr.

- Mignolo, W. D., Tlostanova, M. V. (2006). Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9(2): 205–221. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431006063333>.
- Renault, E. (2004). *L'expérience de l'injustice: Reconnaissance et clinique de l'injustice*. Paris: La Découverte. Retrieved from <https://www.cairn.info/l-experience-de-l-injustice--9782707144386.htm>. — In Fr.
- Renault, E. (2021). Doit-on opposer approches françaises et allemandes de la reconnaissance? *Les Cahiers Philosophiques de Strasbourg*, (50): 131–146. <https://doi.org/10.4000/cps.5064>. — In Fr.
- Renault, E., Lynch, R. A. (2019). *The Experience of Injustice: A Theory of Recognition*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ricœur, P. (2006). *Parcours de la reconnaissance: Trois études*. Paris: Stock. — In Fr.
- Trombadori, D., Foucault, M. (1978). Entretien avec Michel Foucault. Retrieved 15 February 2025, from <http://llibertaire.free.fr/MFoucault171.html>. — In Fr.

IMPLOSIVE SOCIETIES: SCREENS, MATTER, AND LATERAL AGENCY

Ilia Inishev

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-81-105>

© Ilia Inishev

Dr. habil. in Philosophy, Professor of Department of Social Sciences,
European Humanities University

Savičiaus g. 17, 01126 Vilnius

E-mail: ilia.inishev@ehu.lt

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2710-1592>

Abstract. What we have been facing over the past decades may be described not in the worn-out terms of yet another ‘turn’ but rather as a fundamental change of vector: from outward-directed expansion to inward-directed compression – or, more precisely, to *productive differentiation*. This shift represents a dialectical reversal within expansionist dynamics themselves, encompassing both human experiences and material milieus and tending to merge them into a new kind of concretion with distinct characteristics.

Among these characteristics are the intensified presence of screen-like surfaces that predominantly surround us; the laterality of experiences, which are increasingly *susceptible* to distributed or dispersed forms of presence as opposed to aggressivity-laden frontal (re)actions; and a form of meaningfulness that resists accommodation within symbolic structures. Taken together, these tendencies mark a broader transformation in material-social dynamics – one that paradoxically accelerates the imaginative realm, now situated beyond the long-standing divide between inner and outer worlds.

Such an imaginatively accelerated society may be described as *implosive* – a term I use in a sense close to that found in the programmatic work of Marshall McLuhan. In this context, implosion is understood as a productive process of technological and perceptual differentiation, involving the composition and decomposition of matter and resulting in the



blurring of established boundaries between the given, the meaningful, and the perceptible. In this article, I examine the origins, underlying conditions, and political as well as social-theoretical implications of the emergent *implosive societal*.

Keywords: intensive matter, imaginal acceleration, implosive societal, post-activist agency, laterality.

“Our speed-up today is not a slow explosion outward from center to margins but an instant implosion and an interfusion of space and functions.” (McLuhan 1994)

Introduction: A World Folded in on Itself (Social Implosion as Both a Developmental Tendency and a Hope)

Let me begin with a brief disclaimer. I am not entirely certain that I will be able to maintain a consistent focus on the dominant vector of my reflections, as suggested by the article’s title. This potential inconsistency stems, in part, from the ‘multimodality’ of the vector itself, which does not adhere to a purely spatial trajectory but instead encompasses a complex interplay of heterogeneous events and processes. For instance, this vector might tentatively be described using a series of predicates: centripetal, inward-oriented, differential, enveloping, intensive, inconspicuous, incalculable, and ultimately, implosive. Moreover – and perhaps more significantly – the ambiguities may stem from the inherent erraticism of the subject itself, which, in turn, derives from the distinct spatiotemporal characteristics of the broader field I am attempting to engage with. Therefore, it seems appropriate to begin with a brief outline of the field’s main features and its genesis.

As for its genesis, it emerges at the intersection of two mutually reinforcing processes: on the one hand, the culturalization of the social world – including its material infrastructures and substrates – and on the other, the planarization – and, in this sense, the materialization – of the cultural sphere. Together, these processes give rise to a formation whose contours align neither with what we traditionally conceive of as the social nor with the broader, more capacious, and even universal notion of the world. I would describe what emerges through these processes as a world folded in on itself.¹ In a sense, this ‘aggregate state’

1 Laura Marks, in her most recent book project, presents a sort of practical philosophy rooted in the metaphysics of ‘enfoldness’ (Marks 2024).

of the world arises from a kind of dialectical process in which the relatively prolonged expansion, or explosion, of human capacities – intellectual, technological, and, above all, imaginative – transforms into its opposite while remaining on the same developmental trajectory: an intensive, inward-oriented compression that can only be partially captured in spatial terms. This compression brings about qualitative shifts across many, if not all, dimensions of our worldly experience.

The most conspicuous – and far-reaching – of these shifts occur in the sphere of our material-technological surroundings. Today, we inhabit a materially saturated world whose density increasingly blurs the traditional distinction between the given and the meaningful. As a result, the material world around us no longer leads us ‘outside’; it no longer offers an initial impulse, direction, or trajectory for our thoughts and actions. It is no longer as transparent as it once was. Rather than frontally ‘penetrating’ toward its meaning or (hidden) function, we now find ourselves sliding laterally along surface ecologies into which individual ‘things’ are increasingly pressed.

Nevertheless, these surface ecologies are not merely extensive, as one might expect of any surface, but rather intensive – or generative – tending toward incessant differentiation, or more precisely, implosion. Consider, for instance, a screen or a screen-like surface. When we look at a painting – which is itself a screen-like object – we become engaged in a dynamic space that emerges from a ‘metabolic’ process, one that transforms the material components of the picture – frame, canvas, and paint – into something that transcends the familiar distinction between the given and the meaningful. We do not merely identify something placed before us; rather, we navigate a space that exists both outside and within us. In doing so, we move, touch, feel, and understand simultaneously – metabolizing everything we ‘encounter’ into a new composition that did not exist a moment earlier. Today, most of the surfaces that surround us – this is my thesis – are screen-like, thereby provoking and disseminating the very processes of metabolic, implosive differentiation described above.²

Generative material surfaces – epitomized by the screen – also fulfill a secondary role, corresponding to an alternative meaning of the word *screen*: not as a surface for projection or representation, but as a veil whose primary function is not to reveal, but to conceal.

2 ‘Screen-like,’ in our context, refers to a surface that is structurally – or even ontologically – organized like pictorial space, in which elements relate to one another not extensively but intensively. One consequence of this trait is that a pictorial (sur)face – unlike a physical one – cannot be segmented. This means, among other things, that a screen-like (sur)face is fundamentally undetermined: no demarcating line can be drawn on it or through it.

Paradoxically, the two functions of generative surfaces — revealing and concealing — are not opposites, but rather two facets of the same process. While their interrelation may manifest in various ways, a common denominator persists: each such surface initiates a vortex of material-perceptual involution — a kind of mutual enfolding of matter and perception. In contrast to the centrifugal vector characteristic of the modern experiential stance — outward-looking, unidirectional, frontal, paradigmatically activist, and transgressive — a centripetal orientation is increasingly coming to the fore. This stance is defined by opposing qualities: it is inward-looking, multi-directional, lateral, situated beyond the active/passive dichotomy, and non-transitive — deeply entangled with its medium and elemental relations. For instance, our experiences in cinemas or museums are typically multi-directional.³ They do not fully detach from everyday space, as Romantic aesthetics might suggest, nor are they entirely immersed in the diegetic worlds of film or artwork. Instead, they traverse ontological dimensions and boundaries. While this may sound exceptional, such crossings occur subtly — as a vortex of micro-processes comparable to those within the body, such as metabolism, that sustain life while remaining largely unnoticed.⁴ We glide from one (artistic or pictorial) object to another — or, more precisely, from surface to surface — remaining within the same ecology while simultaneously tracing multiple lines and tendencies that diverge and radiate within and beneath those surfaces. A subtle sense of boredom, or even indifference, often accompanies this experience, signalling a shift away from symbolic content toward the specific aggregate state of the environment in which we find ourselves. A film or artwork may still command our attention, but in doing so, it diverts that attention away from symbolic content — which, in principle, could be disentangled from its material medium. Instead, attention becomes inflected and interwoven with a multitude of heterogeneous elements: fragments of matter, sedimented events, habitual postures, and distant echoes of thoughts that once haunted us. In such moments, the diegetic unexpectedly turns metabolic, and symbolic expression implodes into a dispersive force — scattering and transforming both established configurations and material substances. Moreover, these ‘subterranean’ currents, events, and tendencies are neither linear nor developmental, but aleatory, cumulative,

3 See, for example, the longitude project by Laura Harris, dedicated to the semantic functions of gallery windows (Harris 2021).

4 I borrow the notion of the metabolic as a perceptual regime characteristic of contemporary ‘cultural contents’ from Shane Denson, who employs this term in the context of his discussion of post-cinematic imagery (Denson 2020).

and reversible – further contributing to a mode of meaning-making that exceeds the symbolic and characterizes what I propose to call the ‘implosive societal.’

The term *implosive society*, or *implosive societal*, serves both descriptive and normative functions, though not in equal measure: the projective – and thus normative – dimension tends to outweigh the descriptive one. It is worth noting, however, that this projection has a peculiar nature. It is not primarily tied to the free flight of fantasy or to something abstract and subjective. On the contrary, this ‘projective normative’ is existentially motivated, historically grounded, materially conditioned, and, in this sense, involuntary. It is even non-theoretical, as societal implosiveness appears to me as the only viable chance for the endurance of humankind in the foreseeable future. In this sense, it both already exists and remains something yet to come – evoking a structure of hope (DeNora 2021).

In the remainder of the article, I will explore the origins, underlying conditions, and political as well as social-theoretical implications of the emergent implosive societal.

Meeting the Symbolic Halfway⁵

The emerging predominance of implosive (or intensive) tendencies over explosive (extensive) ones is most evident in the shifting role of the symbolic, understood broadly as figuration – both as process and result. This implies, among other things, that a ‘figure’ refers to anything that can be separated from its material substance and considered – at least in some sense – independently of that substance, or more precisely, of its specific embodiment. For instance, a piece of information can be easily paraphrased, or a product redesigned and reproduced. While a figure retains a connection to its material substance, this connection is, to some extent, arbitrary and, by extension, subordinate to the figure. One of the defining traits of (high) modernity is arguably the initiation of a transnational process – beginning in the 15th century – that distills the cultural into a socially and ontologically semi-autonomous realm. As a result, ‘culture’ emerges as the predominant domain of the symbolic – one that, while not fully coinciding with the meaningful, nonetheless incessantly strives to assimilate it, and where the symbolic resides in its purest and most potent manifestations. It is the expressive and cumulative character of this model of culture that

5 This subtitle rephrases the title of Karen Barad’s book *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Barad 2007).

renders it extensive and, consequently, explosive. But what might an alternative — an intensive — model look like? We can begin to glimpse it in the work of Raymond Williams.⁶

Raymond Williams' Notion of Culture: from Repository to Aggregate State

Williams was among the first to propose and articulate a dynamic concept of culture — one that places far greater emphasis on the performative rather than the productive dimensions of cultural life, where 'productive' refers to the predominance of cultural products.⁷ For Williams, culture is, above all, a human activity that cannot be fully encapsulated by any of its products, whether texts, music, or films. As he himself noted, 'No mode of production, and therefore no dominant social order, and therefore no dominant culture, ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention (Williams 1977: 128).

On a methodological level, this perspective calls for a sustained effort to resist the 'immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products' (Williams 1977: 128). In other words, we must slow the pace of analytical work to make room for engagement with the primary forms of culture that Williams identifies as 'residual' and 'emergent' (Williams 1977: 122-123). However, even more significant than Williams's dynamic notion of culture are his ontological — or topological — considerations, presented in the same 1977 volume, *Marxism and Literature*. These reflections, occupying just over a page, hold profound implications.

Williams introduces a distinction between culture as a precipitate and culture as a form of solution or suspension. The former refers to symbolic formations; the latter corresponds to what he describes as a semantic 'pre-formation' or 'structure of feeling.' This structure of feeling is always in the process of moving toward symbolic articulation, yet it is never fully subsumed by any stable symbolic form. Though pre-symbolic, it is not pre-semantic — on the contrary, it is inherently meaningful. Crucially, this meaningfulness does not arise from any direct assignment or deliberate production of meaning. Rather, it is an emergent property of a milieu — a transformation of its aggregate state.

6 In his 2010 book, Scott Lash introduced the term 'intensive culture,' linking it to processes of differentiation (Lash 2010).

7 John Dewey similarly proposed the notion of art as an integral part of the self-articulation processes of everyday life (Dewey 1980).

This meaningfulness has only reached its full potential in recent times. Today, any figurative or symbolic entity – whether rooted in so-called classical or contemporary culture – tends to dissolve into the performative, or at least gravitates in that direction. Culture is no longer a collection of significant entities but rather an aggregate state of our culturalized milieus – milieus that generate significance as such, epitomized in the notion of a life worth living.

In contrast to earlier periods, the notion of culture is increasingly decoupled from that of tradition. The cultural sphere is no longer anchored in a stable repository of canonical artefacts, texts, and images institutionally or imaginatively maintained and policed. Instead, culture is undergoing a metamorphosis into a dense and heterogeneous ecology – circulating predominantly in the form of imprints, trails, reverberations, echoes, overlaps, and similar modes of transmission. This shift from sediment to solution, and from meaning to ‘quantum’ – a tendency characteristic of contemporary cultural dynamics (a topic to which I will return below) – marks a point at which our consideration of the cultural roots of the implosive societal moves beyond Williams. While Williams construes ‘solution’ as a ‘social semantic formation’ – one among many – thus confining its constitutive factors and generative potential to the realm of psychology and human practice, I argue for a radical expansion of this ‘region’ toward a new developmental vector that draws both human and non-human entities into its transformational vortex. Importantly, the emergence of this transformational vector is driven not by moral principles or psychological impulses, but by the inexorable logic of economic-technological development and socio-historical modernization – along with their sinister and irreversible consequences.

Planarization of Culture/Culturalization of Matter

I would now like to briefly discuss the complex and multifaceted relationships between culture and matter that characterize late modernity in its current phase. I will begin by introducing an important distinction between two complementary – and, to some extent, parallel – processes that I refer to as the planarization of culture and the culturalization of matter. The distinction between planarization and culturalization is admittedly somewhat vague and provisional in this context, as the culturalization of matter is structurally tied to the pivotal role played by the proliferation of materially diverse, textured surfaces in both the modern economy and cultural experience. Put

differently, planarization highlights a key dimension of what I mean by culturalization.

As a contemporary social-theoretical concept, *culturalization* was recently introduced in the work of Andreas Reckwitz. However, as a broader theoretical framework and object of systematic sociological inquiry, the notion can be traced back to Jeffrey Alexander's project of cultural sociology (Alexander 2003) and even further to the foundational work of Georg Simmel (Frisby 1997).

As Reckwitz explains, culturalization refers to “a structural shift in which the specific patterns and rules of the cultural field – essentially the arts – are expanding into society at large” (Reckwitz 2018: 140). More generally – and this is quite telling – Reckwitz tends to equate culturalization with processes of aestheticization and the latter with the proliferation of artistic social attitudes and practices. He identifies three ‘aestheticization shifts,’ or ‘formations,’ in the genesis of modernity: (1) bourgeois society / aesthetic countercultures / exclusive aestheticization; (2) mass society / media and consumption cultures / inclusive aestheticization; and (3) late modernity / cultural capitalism / aesthetic activation (Reckwitz 2016: 230–240).

I agree with the classification proposed by Reckwitz and the developmental logic that underpins it. However, I would like to probe further by considering this tripartite periodization not merely as a series of changes in social attitudes and practices, but as a continuum of transformations in the very notion of the cultural itself. These transformations can be understood as shifts in its ‘aggregate states,’ involving substantial – and, in this sense, material – changes. I propose distinguishing three such aggregate states, which – ideal-typically – correspond to three major periods in the history of modernity since the late 18th century:

1. Aristocratic/Bourgeois Culture (18th–19th centuries): culture as a **field**.

2. Mass Culture of the Industrial Era (late 19th century–1970s): culture as social **practice**.

3. Post-Industrial/Late Modern Culture (1980s to present): culture as environment, atmosphere, elemental composition, and **envelope**.

Arguably, the final aggregate state – or current historical phase – remains the least defined, due in part to its sheer immediacy. More significantly, however, this indeterminacy arises from a fundamental shift in the overarching vector: from continuous expansion to ungovernable differentiation – or, put differently, from explosion to implosion. The latter is evidenced by a simple and readily observable fact: much – if not most – of what takes place today occurs, so to speak, beneath the surface – below the threshold of vernacular visibility and beyond the

reach of conventional sociological radars — or within enclosed frameworks. Despite the massive technological advancements of our time, the pace of visible transformation in the appearance of European and American cities — as well as in individual ‘products’ — has noticeably slowed. Various forms of interaction between humans, non-humans, and ‘things’ are increasingly being supplanted by proliferating ‘intra-actions’ (Barad 2007), which tend to disregard established physical and conceptual boundaries. This shift brings about significant changes in how we (must) conceptualize meaning and agency. Before addressing these changes, I would like to briefly outline the core presupposition underlying the aforementioned shift in vector: the transversal implosiveness of differentiation processes that operate independently of regional or ontological boundaries. This presupposition lies in the double planarization — of both matter and culture.

Culture Without Content, Matter Without Form

Cultural planarization is an undercurrent that, for a long time, remained largely inconspicuous. As I understand it in this context, planarization refers first and foremost to the gradual shift from a vertical (or pyramidal) organization of cultural experience to a horizontal one — a transition from the paradigm of the eternal, scarcely accessible artwork to that of a fluctuating cultural field that envelops and sustains the individual at every moment of life (Alloway 1959; Joselit 2000; Kaplan 2021). This transition could only occur as an internal transformation of the art realm, which itself inherits its techniques for rendering matter transparent and meaningful from the religious and symbolic practices of earlier eras. The gradually secularized art sphere functioned as a social laboratory for the development and dissemination of cultural techniques aimed at the perceptual plasticization of matter — techniques that ultimately became accessible to a broader public across a wide range of applications. However, whereas religious practices of plasticizing matter to create symbolic presence were grounded in the habitual fusion of specific material configurations with their symbolic representational capacity — that is, in the established unity of symbol, corresponding symbolic practices, and their material vehicle — artistic practices increasingly moved toward dissolving this institutionally controlled and variously regulated bond. It is due to the ungovernable manifold of material media, subjects, and artistic lifestyles that a Williamsian ‘solution’ — saturated with competing projects, world-views, bodies, and media — begins to supersede a pre-given sphere of the symbolic, understood as an external inventory of ‘canonical’

themes and figures. As a result, culture gradually begins to morph into *the cultural*: an amorphous quality potentially attributable to nearly everything around us. This shift was supported and propelled by the proliferation of public museums, the social legitimization of previously pathologized artistic identities and lifestyles, and the establishment of distinct fields of research dedicated to art objects and artistic experience. All of this contributed to the emergence of what Reckwitz describes as the ‘creativity dispositif’ (Reckwitz 2017), the ‘culturalization of the social’ (Reckwitz 2021), and even a new type of society oriented toward the singularization of identities and lifestyles (Reckwitz 2020). In other words, *the cultural* comes to be understood as the condition of an overarching experiential field – one that is indifferent to long-established categorical, that is, ontological, demarcations such as inner and outer, physical and psychical, or material and meaningful. As a result, many of our everyday attitudes and practices increasingly adopt an oneiric mode of experience. Whether in a gallery, on a train, or while reading or walking, we are, to varying degrees and depending on the situation, attentionally dispersed, inflected, multilayered, and slowed. In most cases, the body sheds many of the ‘physical’ tasks it was required to perform just a few decades ago, functioning less as a carrier or material support for consciousness and more as an energetic reservoir for the incessant work of the imagination. The transition from thought to (physical) action has become increasingly fluid – and often unnecessary – since many of the situations and contexts we inhabit now belong not to the sphere of the actual but to what Tia DeNora (2014: 123) calls the ‘virtually real.’

All of this may raise a couple of questions. Should we understand *the cultural* as a kind of powder evenly covering surrounding surfaces and even amalgamating with them, or does culturalization affect the very structure of matter itself? And how can the cultural retain its specificity if it – whether as a region of objects or a qualitative dimension – is no longer distinctly separated from other regions or qualities?

The second question can be answered relatively easily, albeit formally: *the cultural* is no longer a specific region, a repository of objects, a nomenclature of practices, or an attributable property. Rather, it constitutes a kind of aggregate state of a multilayered milieu in which we are persistently embedded – one that is as much outside us as it is within.

Answering the first question requires at least a brief discussion of the role of matter in shaping this dynamic milieu. This brings us to the culturalization of matter, in which the processes of planarization also play a significant role.

The culturalization of matter, such is my thesis, has proceeded through two key phases: an extensive one and an intensive one. The 'dialectical' relationship between these phases once again illustrates – just as it did in the planarization of art – how extensive expansion gives rise to intensive differentiation.

The first phase – extensive and expansionary – involves the proliferation of material objects and surfaces, driven by the developmental logic of industrial capitalism. This same logic – particularly the seriality inherent in it, a drive toward sheer extension – eventually gives rise to what we might call, as in the case of culture, *planarization processes*.

These processes are not confined to the large-scale quantitative expansion of unified material objects increasingly covering pre-given spaces. They also involve the extensive reworking of matter, whereby a vast array of forms and embodiments is transformed into standardized modules and blocks. These, in turn, tend to be arranged – or even extruded – into facades (vertical planarization) and pavements (horizontal planarization). Industrially produced objects are also increasingly losing their depth: their functional elements – once situated beneath the surface and requiring constant penetration (and thus neglect) of that surface – have diminished in significance. Computers, automobiles, mobile phones, and other electronic devices and tools now function with such reliability – and with such uniformity in technical characteristics within each product category – that they no longer demand our focused attention. Moreover, many contemporary industrial products are assembled from identical components and often constructed on shared platforms, a tendency especially evident in the automobile industry.

All of this – paralleled by decentralization processes in the art sphere and in so-called 'culture' more broadly – initiates the aforementioned shift in the developmental vector: from explosive (and ultimately uncontrollable) expansion and reworking of matter to its equally uncontrollable implosive differentiation. As I see it, this shift is driven by two interconnected factors. The first is the increasing compression – or a kind of goffering – of matter, resulting from relentless overproduction. Matter is piling up, folding in on itself, and crumpling, unable to sustain continuous expansion due to the near exhaustion of energetic, ecological, and spatial resources. The relentless expansion of production lines, product series, and infrastructures has reached insurmountable limits and has begun to reverse into its opposite – compression. Its most visible manifestation is the growing accumulation of garbage – fragmented matter – on land and in the sea.

Second, we observe an increasing indifference to the nuances of our overcrowded material and cultural worlds. Culture without content, matter without form: the outer transforms into the inner, retaining its spatial universality while acquiring temporal specificity.

While explosion and extension unfold as a series of successions, implosion and differentiation occur as a momentary shift in an overall ‘aggregate state.’ What was once perceived as infinite surroundings – providing weight and meaning to everything – now appears as a series of peculiar enfoldments (Marks 2024) and envelopes (McCormack 2018), diffracting our intentions and actions and entangling them with the folds of implosive matter (Barad 2007). This matter tends toward non-directional differentiation that alters not so much its form as its very texture.

Material-Perceptual Metabolism: Affects, Elemental Ecologies, and Experiential Concretions

But what exactly does this explosive matter look like? What kind of perception does it prompt, and what sort of relationship to it – and within it – does it require?

As noted earlier, culturalized matter – somewhat paradoxically – enters our experience as a crucial factor through a mode of deficient attention or even indifference. More precisely, it does so through a transformation from one mode of attention to another: from an intellectual focus on functional (deep) characteristics to a distributed (in) attention toward aesthetic, surface qualities. This shift in attention is supported by the aforementioned ‘dialectical’ inversion, in which the extensive expansion of material surfaces gives way to their intensive differentiation. In this sense, the shift is not merely volitional or subjectivist but, on the contrary, ‘accelerationist’ – that is, historically motivated.

What kind of experiential involvement does this shift in attention entail, and what kind of textural organization of matter does it presuppose?

Once again, modularity and seriality tend to render the objects in our surroundings continuous and ecstatic – overlapping with one another and merging into a kind of dense, or rather ever-densifying, ecology. This densification of matter initiates a process of qualitative differentiation – or intensification – whereby its ‘inner’ space becomes increasingly congruent with that of consciousness. Paradigmatic examples include screens and screen-like objects, as noted in the introductory section. Although screens occupy a visible segment

of physical space, they are scarcely objects of perceptual comprehension or meditative contemplation. Rather, they function as spaces of dwelling — a dwelling that is, in many ways, peculiar. First, it is bidirectional in terms of the positioning of the ‘perceiving subject’ in relation to the screen. At the same time, it is non-directional with regard to what unfolds within the screen itself, as this dwelling opens into an indefinite experiential field. Bidirectionality lies in the simultaneity of two opposing yet structurally complementary movements. As perceiving subjects, we approach a screen-like surface, which — integral to this movement — simultaneously enters our consciousness and fills the entire experiential field. This field encompasses both the actual and the virtual, integrating perceptual and imaginative components. This is what Maurice Merleau-Ponty refers to as *chiasm* (Merleau-Ponty 1969) and *transubstantiation* (Toadvine 2007: 353), and what Gottfried Boehm describes as the ‘exchange of matter with reality’ (Boehm 2007: 252). It is worth noting that these countermovements do not converge into a monolith. They are not immersive but imaginative; they do not entrap but liberate — restoring the body as both a resource and a receptacle for the material-perceptual convergences that underlie our experience within screen-like environments. Rather than being engulfed by a pre-given figurational space, we reclaim the body — no longer captured, mobilized, or effectively stolen by any figure, icon, or symbol. Instead, it becomes our own experiential space, endowed with a full range of imaginative-perceptual capacities that tend to coalesce into a ‘virtually real’ experiential field.

Once this bidirectional relationship is established, the non-directional dimension of screen-experiential dwelling comes into play. While bidirectionality defines the experiential positionality of a screen-like surface in relation to a perceiving ‘subject,’ the non-directional aspect characterizes what unfolds within the performative space that this positionality opens. I would term these non-directional processes — albeit provisionally — as *metabolic* and *quantum*.

Borrowed from different disciplines — biology and physics — these terms have developed a kind of productive symbiosis within contemporary image theory. For instance, Sunil Manghani articulates the quantum dimension of image experience as follows: ‘If we are to understand image at its “quantum” level, we need to go beyond the fixed, resolved image or picture and instead approach it more as an epistemological condition, or, as it were, image degree zero’ (Manghani 2020: 266). This suggests that, at its core, our contemporary experience of visual imagery tends toward a lateral sliding across dispersed imaginaries co-present in every perceptual act — or at least toward the abandonment of the accustomed frontal stance. What constitutes the

ultimate — though not necessarily conscious — telos of our imaginary experience, in most cases, is not individual images or their “content,” but rather the *non-visual imaginal*, which precedes any distinction between the ‘real’ and the ‘fictitious’ (Bottici 2014).

Thus, the ‘quantum’ level provides a useful framework for describing the *texture* of intensive matter: it is not so much a substrate as an energy. We do not observe the screen as a self-sufficient entity, nor are we typically content with merely identifying the objects represented on it — at least not in most ‘normal’ cases. Instead, we find ourselves drawn into an involitional vortex in which everything — objects, images, thoughts, emotions — transforms into uniform quanta.

If a distinction is to be made between the ‘quantum’ level and the ‘metabolic’ aspect, it seems fitting to associate the former with the stage of encounter or perception and the latter with that of interpretation. Interpretation within intensive milieus — of which screen-like surfaces are a paradigmatic example (Angerer 2017) — readily exceeds the bounds of intellectual comprehension, extending into bodily sensation and reverberating across adjacent temporal dimensions of past and future.

In this context, the body functions as a resonance chamber, a receptacle, a repository, or a sensorium — wide open to the elemental flows that traverse all conceivable boundaries of the terrestrial world (Lingis 1988; Engelmann and McCormack 2021; McCormack 2023). In this sense, beyond its merely technical meaning, understanding becomes the act of sustaining and intensifying one’s connections to the liveable world in its zero-degree state or neutrality — a primal scene whose reality lies in its overflowing virtuality and energy. This overflow, this ‘scenic existence’ of human beings (Hogrebe 2009), inevitably extends into what we conventionally refer to as ‘nature,’ which, in this context, is ‘given’ as a normative horizon of experiential completeness.

Non-directionality is further reflected in the heightened and persistent *affectability* that characterizes screen-like milieus. *Affectability* does not refer to a mere capacity for agitation, nor is it, at least initially, a mode of psychic state. In fact, it rarely becomes thematic at all. On the contrary, the term *affectability* is intended to capture the specific intensity of screen-like surface elements that are not merely adjacent to one another — since screen-like surfaces cannot be voluntarily fragmented — but *ecstatic*, characterized by what Davis calls ‘a fundamental structure of exposure’ (Davis 2010: 133). A physical (extensive) surface can be easily segmented, but dividing an image — into which a surface transforms once it begins generating material configurations and textures — is far more difficult, if not impossible.

A defining tendency of the current epoch is that not only surfaces explicitly functioning as images — those representing

something – acquire this generative, or intensive, structure, but much of our surrounding environment does as well, becoming image-like or, at the very least, image-inflected. As a result, nearly all of our everyday experiences unfold inwardly, metabolizing symbolic contents into bodily stances and cognitive attitudes, and densifying the elemental milieus of different orders to which we belong – regardless of the type or direction of action being performed at any given moment. In other words, we both build and become experiential concretions.

Imaginal Acceleration

In the remainder of the article, I will examine the political and ethical implications of cultural-material implosion, previously outlined as part of a preliminary social-theoretical diagnosis. I now aim to develop this inquiry in greater depth.

From a social-theoretical perspective, the notion of social implosion situates itself within the framework of social imaginary theory, primarily associated with Cornelius Castoriadis (1987), Benedict Anderson (2006), and Charles Taylor (2004). More recently, Chiara Bottici has extended this tradition through her project of *imaginal politics* (Bottici 2014). What unites these theoretical initiatives is not merely an interest in the social potential of the imagination, but a shared belief in the genealogical, ontological, and structural entanglements between the social sphere and the imaginary.

I understand the imaginary – contrary to the somewhat subjectivist approaches of Castoriadis, Anderson, and Taylor, and closer, in a sense, to what Bottici refers to as the *imaginal* – as a kind of zero-point: a primary disclosure of the original scene of the social, with its elemental ties to the ‘natural’ world. This disclosure is not a singular event but an ‘aggregate state’ that requires periodic renewal – a Williamsian saturated solution in which the material and the meaningful, action and thought, the real and the possible remain undivided. Like Bottici, I regard the imaginal as a medial sphere that ‘precedes the distinction between the “real” and the “fictitious”’ (Bottici 2019: 3).

However, unlike Bottici, I propose grounding the *imaginal* not only in a more elaborated notion of the image but also in the broader material conditions of its respective historical moment. As should be evident from the preceding discussion, these two dimensions are both historically and structurally interconnected. The current conditions of the imaginal are shaped not only by the ‘stream of images’ (Bottici 2019: 5), which diminishes the symbolic potential of each individual

image, but more fundamentally by the observable tendency of our material surroundings to become image- or screen-like – to transform into what Giuliana Bruno calls a ‘screen-membrane’ (Bruno 2014: 5).

This tendency is driven not only by the cultural devaluation of the symbolic or figurational realm – a consequence of the planarization of culture – but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, by economic processes of the culturalization of matter, which themselves arise from the perceptual and physical overlapping of material surfaces. This overlapping – motivated by both economic and ecological factors – initiates structural transformations of matter toward its differential intensification, leading to implosive processes of material-cultural metabolism.

My thesis is that this metabolism constitutes the current condition of the imaginal. Because this state of the imaginal emerges from relentless material-historical dynamics, we are witnessing a process of imaginal acceleration: an unprecedented historical surge of the imaginal driven by non-imaginative forces. Since this surge is both intensive and, in a sense, inward-looking, I term it *implosive*.

From Symbolic to Scenic: Agency Beyond the Activity/Passivity Divide and the Choric Dimension of Experiential Concretions

One of the consequences of imaginal acceleration is that social life in the contemporary world is increasingly becoming imaginative – or, as Reckwitz puts it, culturalized (Reckwitz 2021). This process is not necessarily conscious. On the one hand, it stems from the ongoing, internally driven transformation of radically non-imaginative spheres such as the economy and technology – non-imaginative, at least in the sense of aesthetic creativity. On the other hand, imagination within the realm of the imaginal is rarely an isolated or explicitly marked activity. On the contrary, imaginal acceleration entails a gradual shift in dominant experiential attitudes, one of whose core consequences is a reconfiguration of the very notion of agency and, by extension, of what we are inclined to regard as a good life.

As noted above, I have already introduced an *oneiric* experiential mode characteristic of (over-)culturalized social and material spaces. In this context, *oneiric* – among other things, such as liberating the body from its ‘physical’ duties and temporarily transforming it into a reservoir of pure virtuality – signifies a kind of affirmative hesitation, a state of generative undecidedness, or what Sobchack calls a ‘transcendence in immanence’ (Sobchack 2023: 151).

Here, action and agency are no longer required to operate as ontological transfers from the mental to the physical realm. Nor must action necessarily manifest in visual or verbal form. It can be fulfilled without articulating itself into a readable – or otherwise externally identifiable – gestalt. In many, if not most, cases, it unfolds as an undercurrent of micro-events, coalescing into a new – albeit temporary – experiential concretion.

For example, activities such as reading, writing, visiting museums or cinemas – as well as walking, conversing, and other ‘ordinary’ actions – can follow unregulated trajectories, unexpected detours, and divergent paths that significantly reshape what is traditionally confined within their respective categories. When we also take into account the symbolic devaluation of cultural products resulting from their ‘planar’ and increasingly non-hierarchical status, we begin to perceive a large-scale transformation of the overall experiential field.

One of the defining traits of this transformation is the shift from discrete acts to a continuous concrescence, into which all of our significant and signifying experiences gradually coalesce. Rather than a product – or even a performance – it is (metabolic) sedimentation that begins to take precedence. The performative ascent to the realm of the symbolic, inherent in every aesthetic experience or communicative encounter, slows down and ultimately withdraws into the very ground from which it originated – what, following Plato, Kristeva, and Derrida, may be referred to as *chōra*: an under-articulated and thus indefinite space that both gives rise to and accommodates any creative act or experience.

Examples of *chōra* might include the canvas or ground of an emergent image, an archive, a database, an affect, or human memory. Each foray into the symbolic realm must ultimately withdraw into the choric – or at the very least, remain in resonance with it. Every action is balanced by its opposite: genuinely consequential agency transcends the activity/passivity divide. This dynamic movement – oscillating back and forth so long as equilibrium is maintained – creates and sustains what Wolfram Högbe refers to as *the scenic* (Högbe 2019).

The *scenic* holds ontological priority over whatever ‘fills’ it, yet remains epistemologically marginalized due to its medial nature: it gives place and rise to all that emerges, while itself receding into a non-objectifiable background. If it is accessible at all, it is only indirectly – through (in)attentive practices rather than through explicit knowledge.⁸

8 For example, Paul Frosh, in his recent book, discusses the positive epistemological and ethical implications of an inattentive stance supported by media (Frosh 2019).

Engaged Withdrawal: Post-Activist Practices

How might such practices take shape? And what are their social and political implications? We can gain insight from a range of contemporary socio- and media-theoretical, ethnographic, and philosophical projects. Ambient rhetoric – an emergent sub-discipline within the social sciences – places significant emphasis on sub-symbolic, environmental forms of communication and meaning (Rickert 2014; McNely 2024). This approach entails a bidirectional dynamic, similar to that discussed earlier: the distributed – and in this sense, ambient – nature of a genuine act of persuasion requires the simultaneity of engagement and withdrawal, of activity and passivity, of a frontal communicative gesture alongside attunement to lateral paths of (choric) materiality and affectability.

A notable strand of contemporary social theory draws attention to both the cultural and experiential dimensions of social life. The specific agency of material and personal iconicity (Alexander 2012; Sonnevend 2024) constitutes a key focus within cultural sociology. Scholars such as Tia DeNora and Scott Lash, along with proponents of the so-called new sociology of art, underscore the creative and disclosive potential of perceptive experiences that have traditionally been regarded as transitive – that is, lacking internal specificity, passive, and requiring conceptual articulation (DeNora 2014; Lash 2018; Hennion 2014, 2019).

Within contemporary German sociology, several theoretical projects emphasize the socially consequential differences among core modalities of experience (Schulze 1992, 2015; Rosa 2020). A specific form of agency may emerge through a shift from symbolically articulated, channeled (even engulfed), frontally oriented modes of perception and action to non-channeled, under-articulated, and laterally oriented modalities.

In his early large-scale empirical and theoretical project, Gerhard Schulze proposed – as a form of social time-diagnosis – the notion of an incremental yet radical shift in general experiential attitudes toward the world, both social and physical: from an external to an internal orientation, from the accumulation of resources to the intensification of lived experience, and from matter to meaning (Schulze 1992). Despite the sweeping nature of this shift, however, the new experiential attitude – and its corresponding logic of lived-experience rationality – remained success-oriented. This time, though, the objects of success calculations became lived experiences themselves, along with whatever serves to intensify them. Yet because the experiential sphere is far less susceptible to calculation than the ‘outer realm,’ the

relentless pursuit of greater ‘quality’ and intensity of experience inevitably gives rise to frustration.

In his much later and more concise follow-up to the book, Schulze introduces the notion of self-transcendence – not only as a conceptual refinement, but also as a social-practical development of what he previously termed the ‘experience society’ (Schulze 2015). Self-transcendence cannot be the direct aim of an experience; it can only arise as an indirect or collateral outcome – an ‘encounter by the way.’ It is incalculable due to its intransitivity: as a ‘goal in itself,’ self-transcendent lived experience manifests as a swarm or cloud of micro-events – a transformative vortex that turns the outer world into the inner one, and vice versa. As Schulze himself puts it, ‘self-transcendence is intrinsic in the sense that the action itself is seen as rewarding’ (Schulze 2015: 171).

In his 800-page foundational work, Hartmut Rosa introduces and elaborates the concept of *resonance* as a fundamentally human mode of experience (Rosa 2019). Rather than perceiving the world as a ‘point of aggression,’ he argues that we should strive to experience it as a ‘point of resonance’ (Rosa 2021). In contrast to Schulze, Rosa focuses not only on the mode of experience but also on the mode of existence of the material world – an emphasis that highlights certain advantages of the term *resonance* over Schulze’s *self-transcendence*. However, Rosa’s project lacks a detailed examination of the corresponding transformations in the material textures of the resonating world.

Recently, Eduardo de la Fuente has attempted to address this gap through his project of *textural sociology*. Yet, perhaps due to its still-emergent nature, his work has not yet offered concrete examples of ‘textural thinking’ (de la Fuente 2019: 6).

At the philosophical end of the spectrum of efforts to conceptualize what I call *post-activist agency*, Jane Bennett – among others – offers valuable theoretical insights. Beyond emphasizing the osmotic relationship between thought and matter (Bennett 2010), she articulates a dynamic exchange of matter and energy – an ‘influx and efflux’ – between the human and non-human components of an integrated, vibrant world (Bennett 2020).

An overarching tendency uniting these theoretical endeavors is a resistance to the compelling pull embedded in every manifestation of the symbolic – whether in direct address, artistic or social icons, ideological slogans, or similar forms. The experiential mode that corresponds to such symbolic forms is characterized by its transitory and channeled trajectory, mono-modality, mono-sensoriality, and emotionally reactive orientation. It functions, in this sense, like a kind of ‘tunnel vision’: it has low resolving capacity and, as a consequence,

lacks access to highly differentiated textures — whether material or social.

By contrast, the *post-activist* experiential mode exhibits opposite characteristics: it is non-transitory, meaning it cannot be fully contained by the object of perception or by a succession of experiences that transcend their temporal and spatial boundaries toward some overarching goal — a goal that does not require the experiences to be explicitly articulated and may, moreover, retroactively imbue them with meaning.

The *post-activist* experiential mode is non-channeled, making it difficult to be ‘policed’ by external forces due to its non-directionality and its implosive, unregulated differentiation. It is also multi-modal and multi-sensory, which is evinced, among other things, in its embeddedness within the *affectability* of its elemental milieu. This affective dimension does not manifest as *emotions* adhering to and governed by the symbolic but rather as *affect* belonging to a broader ambient field. Consequently, *post-activist* experience is characterized by high resolution, enabling it to be slowed down, intercepted, and enriched — or contaminated — by material and social textures. It is clear that the experiential attitudes described above carry corresponding normative implications — both ethical and political — which I will briefly address in the final subsection of this article.

Ethics and Politics of Laterality: Inflection, Viscosity, Hesitation

An implosive society — if such a phenomenon exists or is beginning to emerge — must necessarily be political. First and foremost, if the implosive mode of social organization prevails (even relatively), the historically established cultural and social ties that have long served as gravitational anchors for the political will no longer be as inexorable.

Indeed, this already appears to be the case. Today, not only is the once-unified Judeo-Christian tradition receding, but the very principle of historical inheritance is being eroded by the intensifying pressures of an accelerating present. The long, once clearly discernible trajectories of the symbolic no longer hold us captive as they did less than a century ago. It is not only religious tradition that has waned; the cultural sphere — once envisioned as an ever-rising pyramid of human ‘intellectual’ achievement — no longer looms on our horizon as an unshakable landmark. ‘Culture’ has stretched into a ‘long front’ (Alloway 1959), or — if we extend the notion further — has shattered into quanta: fragments, echoes, sediments, and the like, which can now be

projected, configured, and reconfigured across nearly any (screen-like) surface.

These generative surfaces, in turn — as integral elements of post-activist experiential concretion — participate in what we previously referred to as material-perceptual metabolism. That said, the production and intensive deployment of the symbolic, or the figurational, continues unabated. Indeed, the symbolic constitutes a sphere of *affirmative alienation*: it takes, but it also gives. It demands time and energy from the individual, yet compensates for this sacrifice by opening up a shared — though uniform — space.

Thus, everything that belongs to the realm of the symbolic and signification is inherently political. Castoriadis' key insight was to reveal this fact and to recognize in it a path toward social emancipation (*autonomy*). However, he aimed to regulate access to signification while leaving the foundational status of the symbolic itself intact. In this respect, the strategy of resistance proposed by Julia Kristeva — if we choose, for whatever reason, to remain within the psychoanalytic paradigm — strikes me as more productive: a perpetual retreat into the generative space of the 'semiotic chora' (Kristeva 1984: 28).

This retreat, however, entails the pursuit of a politics (and ethics) of laterality, in contrast to the frontality of direct political action, which — regardless of its manifest goals, couched in symbolic terms — remains compromised by its complicity in the restoration of the alienating power of the symbolic or, at the very least, in its instrumentalization.

A hint at what such a politics might look like — and how it might be conceptualized — can be found, for example, in the works of Sara Ahmed, Alia Al-Saji, and Kathleen Stewart. Each of them — whether focusing on 'stickiness' as a mode of affective transfer (Ahmed 2014: 91), hesitation as an emancipatory perceptual attitude (Al-Saji 2014), or 'worlding' as the practice of perceptually and affectively constructing and reconstructing the nearest social world (Stewart 2014) — traces the lateral lines that bind us to the world and to one another, prior to and beyond the annihilating power of the symbolic.

Conclusion: Hypo-Culture, Respiratory Thinking, and the Future of Social Theory

A rebellion against the symbolic should not be interpreted as a rebellion against the meaningful. I advocate for the *politicization* of the symbolic — not its abolition — which, I must admit, is neither possible nor necessary. The symbolic — whether verbal, visual, or bodily-performative (ritual) — remains, and will continue to remain, indispensable.

What must be abandoned, and what is already underway, is any attempt to solidify it.

In a sense, we should remain on the verge of its dissolution – and today, we are compelled to do so. This compulsion arises from the symbolic itself: from its current tendency to dissolve into a diffuse ecology composed not only of adjacent ‘meaningful entities’ but increasingly ‘contaminated’ by culturalized matter. The *meaningful* no longer needs to be *drawn out* into argumentation or narrative, nor *unfolded* into spatial composition on a pictorial surface. While it can – and in many cases must – take such forms, it no longer requires them by necessity.

The relationship between the symbolic and the choric – as it unfolds in everyday practices – can be most effectively described through the model of breathing. Any communicative expression, perceptual encounter, or purposive activity may be understood as an exhalation (dilation), followed by an inhalation (contraction), during which thoughts, impressions, intentions, images, sounds, and other elements are gathered, compressed, digested, sedimented, and metabolized.

Both phases are increasingly supported by mediating technologies. The most eloquent example of media support for the exhalation phase – epitomized by various forms of emanative irradiation such as attention, intentionality, speech acts, and so on – would be social network media. In contrast, generative AI exemplifies media support for the inhalation phase. This two-way process – these two phases of breathing – from the frontal (unidirectional, intentional, extensive, reactive, aggressive) to the lateral (multi- or non-directional, intensive, hesitant, affective, implosive), and vice versa, gravitates toward a zero-point of virtual integrity: a state of balance and neutrality that transcends distinctions between activity and passivity, matter and meaning, future and present.

In terms of a cultural model, we might identify two complementary modes. *Hyper-culture* – a phase of dilation or even dispersion, which Reckwitz (2021) describes as the current condition of culture – serves as a freely available reservoir of images, forms, styles, and other elements for individual self-development. This mode should be balanced by *hypo-culture* – a phase of contraction or saturation (a Williamsian ‘solution’). Perceiving and understanding within contemporary cultural ecologies now resembles inhaling, digesting, and metabolizing more than it does the intellectual act of extracting a singular ‘meaning.’ It may be more fitting to envision the *meaningful* not as something extracted from a mass of matter, but as an envelope, skin, or atmosphere – one that transcends the boundaries between inner and outer.

Why should we not think of social theory in the same vein? Is it not projective rather than merely descriptive? It seems to me that – much like the dynamic between *hyper-* and *hypo-culture* – various social theories, each as a form of self- and world-articulation (a kind of exhale), coagulate in their next state (a kind of inhale) at the moment of reception – whether by readers or through other means – into a complex virtuality. This virtuality could, and indeed should, serve as the foundation for a practical, and thus more-than-theoretical, form of individual self-understanding. In this sense, social theory itself becomes *respiratory*.

References

- Ahmed, S. (2014). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Al-Saji, A. (2014). A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing. In: Lee, E.S., ed. (2014). *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race*. Albany: State University of New York: 133–172.
- Alexander, J. C., Bartmanski, D., Giesen, B., eds. (2012). *Iconic Power. Materiality and Meaning in Everyday Life*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Alexander, J. C. (2003). *The Meanings of Social Life. A Cultural Sociology*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- Alloway, L. (1959). The Long Front of Culture. In: Alloway, Lawrence; Kalina R., ed. (2006). *Imagining the Present. Context, Content, and the Role of the Critic. Essays by Lawrence Alloway*. New York: Routledge.
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London/New York: Verso.
- Angerer, M.-L. (2017). *Ecology of Affect. Intensive Milieus and Contingent Encounters*. Lüneburg: Meson Press.
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway. Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Bennett, J. (2020). *Influx and Efflux. Writing Up with Walt Whitman*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Boehm, G. (2007.) *Wie Bilder Sinn Erzeugen. Die Macht des Zeigens*. Berlin: Berlin University Press.
- Bottici, C. (2014). *Imaginal Politics. Images Beyond Imagination and the Imaginary*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bottici, C. (2019). Imagination, Imaginary, Imaginal: Towards a New Social Ontology? *Social Epistemology* 33(5): 433–441. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2019.1652861>.
- Bruno, G. (2014). *Surface. Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Castoriadis, C. (1987). *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Davis, D. (2010). *Inessential Solidarity. Rhetoric and Foreigner Relations*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press
- de la Fuente, E. (2019). After the Cultural Turn: For a Textural Sociology. *The Sociological Review* 67(3): 552-567. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026118825233>.
- de la Fuente, E. (2020). Both-And. On the Need for a Textural Sociology of Art. *Caderno CRH* 32(87): 475-488. <https://doi.org/10.9771/ccrh.v32i87.32470>.
- DeNora, T. (2014). *Making Sense of Reality. Culture and Perception in Everyday Life*. London: Sage Publishing.
- DeNora T. (2021). *Hope: The Dream We Carry*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Denson, Sh. (2020). *Discorrelated Images*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- Dewey, D. (1980). *Art as Experience*. New York: A Wideview/Perigee Books.
- Engelmann, S., and McCormack, D.P. (2021). Elemental Worlds. Specificities, Exposures, Alchemies. *Progress in Human Geography* 45 (6): 1419-39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030913252098730>.
- Frisby, D., Featherstone, M., eds. (1997). *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*. London: Sage Publications.
- Frosh, P. (2019). *The Poetics of Digital Media*. Cambridge/Medford: Polity Press.
- Harris, L. (2022). Looking beyond interaction: exploring meaning making through the windows of an art gallery. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 10: 316-336. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41290-021-00146-x>.
- Hennion, A. (2014). Playing, Performing, Listening: Making Music – or Making Music Act? In: Lee, M., Laing, D., eds. *Popular Music Matters: Essays in Honour of Simon Firth*. Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate Publishing: 165-180.
- Hennion, A. (2019). Objects, Belief, and the Sociologist: The Sociology of Art as a Work-To-Be-Done. In: Smudits, A. (2019). *Roads to Music Sociology*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS: 41-60.
- Hogrebe, W. (2009). *Riskante Lebensnähe. Die szenische Existenz des Menschen*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Hogrebe, W. (2019). *Szenische Metaphysik*. Frankfurt/M.: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Joselit, D. (2000). Notes on Surface: Toward a genealogy of flatness. *Art History*, 23(1), 19-34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8365.00193>.
- Kaplan, L. (2020). Horizontal Thinking and the Emergence of Visual Culture. In: Saab, A. J., Anable, A., Zuromskis, C., eds. *A Concise Companion to Visual Culture*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell: 21-38.
- Kristeva, J. (1984). *Revolution in Poetic Language*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lash, S. (2018). *Experience. New foundations for the human sciences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Lash, S. (2010). *Intensive Culture. Social Theory, Religion, and Contemporary Capitalism*. London: Sage Publications.
- Lingis, A. (1988). The Elemental Imperative. *Research in Phenomenology*. Vol. 18: 3-21. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156916488X000011>.
- Manghani, S. (2020). Image Degree Zero: From the Empirical Image to Image as Capacity. In: Alloa, E. & Cappelletto, Ch. *Dynamis of the Image: Moving Images in a Global World*. Berlin/Boston: Walter De Gruyter.
- Marks, L. U. (2024). *The Fold. From Your Body to the Cosmos*. Durham/London: Duke University Press Books.

- McCormack, D. (2023). The Elements of Affect Theories. In: Seigworth, G. J. & Pedwell, C., eds. *The Affect Theory Reader 2: Worldings, Tensions, Futures*. Duke University Press (2023)
- McCormack, D. (2018). *Atmospheric Things. On the Allure of Elemental Envelopment*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- McLuhan, M. (1994). *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge/London: The MIT Press.
- McNely, B. (2024). *Engaging Ambience: Visual and Multisensory Methodologies and Rhetorical Theory*. Denver: Utah State University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1969). *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Reckwitz, A. (2016). *Kreativität und soziale Praxis. Studien zur Sozial- und Gesellschaftstheorie*. Bielefeld: transscript.
- Reckwitz, A. (2017). *The Invention of Creativity. Modern Society and the Culture of the New*. Cambridge/Medford: Polity Press.
- Reckwitz, A. (2018). The Creativity Dispositif and the Social Regimes of the New. In: Rammert, W. et al., eds. *Innovation Society Today: Perspectives, Fields, and Cases*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Reckwitz, A. (2021). *The End of Illusions. Politics, Economy, and Culture in Late Modernity*. Cambridge/Medford: Polity Press.
- Rickert, Th. (2013). *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Rosa, H. (2019). *Resonance. A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Rosa, H. (2020). *The Uncontrollability of the World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Schulze, G. (2015). The Coming of the Intrinsic Age. In: Michelsen, A., Tygstrup, F., eds. (2015). *Socioaesthetics: Ambience – Imaginary*. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Sobchack, V. (2023). *The Active Eye (Revisited): Toward a Phenomenology of Cinematic Movement*. In: Kearney, R. & Murray, L., eds. *Thinking Film. Philosophy at the Movies*. London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Sonnevend, J. (2024). *Charm: How Magnetic Personalities Shape Global Politics*. Princeton/London: Princeton University Press.
- Stewart, K. (2014). *Tactile Compositions*. In: Harvey, P. Et al. (eds.) *Objects and materials: a Routledge companion*. New York: Routledge.
- Taylor, Ch. (2004). *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Toadvine, T. and Lawlor, L., eds. (2007). *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

UNDERDETERMINED PRAXIS AND POLYCRISIS OF MODERNITY

Siarhei Liubimau

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-106-131>

© Siarhei Liubimau

PhD, Associate Professor and Senior Researcher, European Humanities
University

Saviciaus str. 17, Vilnius

Email: siarhei.liubimau@ehu.lt

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8626-4183>

Abstract: This paper develops a version of critical theory as determination of *praxis*, where *praxis* is defined as a change made via intellectual activity of understanding and explanation. It uses the commemoration of 15 years from the death of Belarusian social philosopher Vladimir Fours to reflect on the transformations of social theory in the 1980s–2020s. It approaches Vladimir Fours as a constructivist social philosopher of emancipation and as a contributor to conceptualizations of late modernity's disorganization. This paper highlights that the spread of constructivist social research very much coincided historically with the momentum of neoliberal doctrine worldwide and with tangible underlying strategies to undergird and reinforce neoliberal doctrine. The lack of recognition of these underlying strategies behind the constructivism-emancipation nexus has resulted in often disembedded agency and underdetermined praxis of the mainstream social theory. This becomes especially apparent in light of the currently encountered polycrisis of modernity, defined in this paper as fusion of the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath – namely, the growing incommensurability between global finance and national politics; the rise of digital platforms – as business models, new power agents, and critical scaffoldings of everyday experience (contributing to the erosion of grid-like modern statehoods); growing momentum in the recognition of climate crisis as a critical issue (revealing the limits to laissez-faire market



logic); and Russia's challenge to the post-WWII political order (strategically undermining the principle of the right of nations to self-determination by a permanent member of the UN Security Council). This paper presents a showcase of developing configurations of embedded agency and of determined praxis aimed at adequately confronting the polycrisis of modernity, along with its prevailing tendencies of neoliberalization and militarization. From this perspective, it advocates for a stronger emphasis on an *infrastructural lens* versus a constructivist turn, *personal data* versus identity, *critique of extractivism* versus decolonization, and *planetarity* versus globalization.

Keywords: praxis, underdetermination, polycrisis of modernity, infrastructures, platformization, extractivism, planetarity.

Introduction: Social Theory and Participatory Research

I have never been either Vladimir Fours's collaborator or a student. However, in the last years of his life, we had a few conversations on the topic of grassroots sociology, in which he was increasingly interested. It was obvious that, in the late 2000s, he sought to experiment with the disciplinary boundaries and the conceptual capacities of social theory – both in his own work and in that of his students in the EHU Master's programme "Social Theory and Political Philosophy", which he was leading at the time. Moreover, he wanted to translate the results of this experimentation into the transformations of the university's institutional functioning. For him, the promise of grassroots sociology lay in a redefining research settings and the uncovering new empirical dimensions for observation. This concerned primarily the Belarusian context, where, according to him, mainstream sociological scholarship was confronted with too many blind spots. Our conversations focused primarily on the role of the informants in the research process – more specifically, on an approach that treats field informants as equal interlocutors, on par with colleagues in the conference room or readers of academic books and journals. By that time, my own perspective – urban studies as an academic research field and urbanism as applied practice – was deliberately incorporating this approach. Over the last 10–15 years, this approach, most often referred to as "participatory", has been gaining increasing popularity. It was from this background that Vladimir Fours became interested in revisiting and sharpening the repertoire of social theory – both in his own work and in that of his students.

In a more abstract conceptual perspective, my own work belonged to this research orientation by addressing the wider trend of a certain de-technocratization of urban development through deliberation, contestation and partnerships. From a methodological perspective, my colleagues and I used a cross-sectoral approach and thus systematically were singling out and comprehending the interlocutors' sectoral background vis-à-vis a studied urban development issue. Starting in 2007, together with Ben Cope, we were simultaneously researching and intervening in culture-sector-driven transformations of the Warsaw neighbourhood Old Praga, in alliance with a local NGO organizing cultural events such as concerts or happenings. Thus, the research was enabled by results-oriented cooperation with the participants of the studied settings, in the process of cultivation of a certain socio-cultural profile of the area. And by dint of this, it allowed us to better understand the dispositions in those settings – to discern and to reflect in a situated mode on the differences in positionality of a researcher, an activist, a cultural sector manager, an evening economy entrepreneur, a creative producer, an evening economy workforce, a disadvantaged or, vice versa, affluent resident, a real estate investor, etc. It should be noted that since the early 2010s, the participation of NGOs in urban development – within such hybrid coalitions with the cultural sector and private enterprises – has become highly widespread in Central and Eastern Europe.

A few years later, I incorporated an NGO worker into a panel within a fully academic event for the first time – specifically, the 2011 conference of the European Commission's 7th Framework project on policies for the distribution of public spaces in culturally diverse societies. My paper was about the challenges of the undocumented Roma settlement in the outskirts of Vilnius, and I was keen to invite and to converse with a research partner from the NGO, which was located right in the settlement and provided all kinds of support to its dwellers. A bit later, in the 2010s, the participatory research projects became one of the main specializations of the Laboratory of Critical Urbanism at the EHU and were systematically implemented, documented and scrutinised in publications, conferences, workshops and summer schools, as well as in public discussions. Today, such an orientation toward participatory research and cross-sectoral social partnerships is, if not mainstream, at least a well established practice in the social sciences. However, in the late 2000s, the search for interlocutors as partners in knowledge generation beyond a conference room and academic journals was both unusual and highly progressive for a social philosopher. In this sense, during his later years Vladimir Fours closely aligned with the emerging

culture of producing social science through an engaged, participatory mode.

At the same time, it is crucial that for Fours, the interest in grass-roots sociology was not about searching for discrete methodological experimentation. On the contrary, it was a part of the longer-term conceptual project of his to develop and to practise a deliberately emancipatory social theory. In his earlier writings he suggests that emancipation potential is to be recognized and exploited both in the realm of research paradigms in academia of 1960s–2000s and in the realm of the possible repertoires of action of a researcher in the broader social settings. He also shows how those two realms are, in fact, interconnected. In the latter realm of a researcher's participation in social processes, this implied the development of the notions and the conceptualizations that would allow for the systematic restructuring of existing social constraints and the nurturing of the horizons for multiple desirable political futures. Fours depicts those constraints as anyway eroding amidst the social tendencies, which started in the 1960s and 1970s as “all-encompassing de-conventionalization of social practices” (Фyпc 2002: 64). Thus, his own civic and political choice was to embrace these tendencies and to build a version of critical theory as an intellectual resource for emancipation, understood as “production of utopias, in view of which critical perception of a given social world becomes possible” (Фyпc 2002: 39–40). In this sense, it is not surprising that in his later years, Vladimir Fours was actively engaged in EHU's institutional and community experimentation, which aimed to create a more inclusive and reflexive model of university self-governance.

Vladimir Fours's Praxis of Emancipation and Its Limits

If we highlight the historical dimension of emancipatory restructuring of social constraints in Vladimir Fours's theoretical work, we recognize him as embracing and contributing to a series of attempts – primarily British and American scholars – to make sense of societies undergoing [largely economic] flexibilization, deregulation and disorganization (Lash and Urry 1994; Lash and Urry 1987; Giddens 1991; Sennet 1998; Bauman 2000; etc.). This attitude of Fours – both authentic and homologous with a much wider trend – can be seen as the result of the interplay of the broader history of accelerated economic globalization in the 1980s–2000s and his individual biography as a philosopher shaped during Perestroika and the semi-dismantled

Soviet Union. This was a period of great expectation that the end of the USSR would lead to the fall of associated socio-political ‘walls’ and ‘curtains,’ thereby accelerating all forms of international exchange. Against this backdrop, Fours’s efforts to incorporate Belarus into the processes of global intellectual exchanges were primarily targeting institutional and ideational constraints within a rather repressive local context. In his argumentation, these efforts are intertwined with the research agenda of social constructivism, refracted in the longer-term history of philosophy. In particular, Fours suggests that critical social theory, to which he himself contributes, is the latest symptom and culmination of the crisis of philosophical rationality that gained momentum after Descartes’s writings and began to be questioned in the late 19th century. From a historical perspective, Fours identifies the end of “organized modernity,” with its crucial political breaking point in 1968 (marked by a series of political mobilizations worldwide) and its economic breaking point in 1973 (marked by the global oil crisis and its aftermath). (Фурс 2002: 16).

The loss of Vladimir Fours in 2009 – the moment from which he can be our interlocutor only through his writings and in our memories – coincided dramatically with profound macro-shifts that mark a rupture and the emergence of substantially new circumstances in international socio-political history. These are, first, the financial crisis of 2008, the internationally applied austerity policies implemented to tackle it, and the political responses to the resulting strains; second, the rise of digital platforms as business models, new power agents, and critical scaffolding of everyday experience; third, growing momentum in recognizing the climate crisis as a critical issue, along with policy, civic, and research responses; and fourth, Russia’s challenge to the post-WWII political order through the redrawing of state borders, beginning with the invasion of Georgia in 2008 and continuing with invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022. It would be safe to argue that over the last fifteen years, as a result of these four shifts, a solid ground has emerged to understand and approach modernity through the lens of its polycrisis – or, more dramatically, multiple collapses – rather than as a promise of a secure, smooth transition to something new. This paper scrutinizes the conceptual implications of those historical macro-shifts from the perspective of the social critical theory and its explanatory potential. What should social critical theory’s response to these circumstances be? Which new notions to understand social processes are emerging from these macro-shifts? Are the conceptualizations of modernity still helpful in these circumstances? If yes, what are the necessary empirical keys and the indispensable theoretical puzzles to adequately work with the concepts of modernity today?

This paper argues that critical theory's potential in addressing contemporary challenges lies in its commitment to *praxis* – understood as transformative action grounded in intellectual work, including primarily processes of understanding and explanation. I adopt the classical conception of *praxis* developed by Marx (1978), Lukacs (1971) and Gramsci (2011), and inspired by Hegelian dialectics (2018), which frames *praxis* as self-conscious, purposeful, and collective action shaped by specific historical conditions. However, in light of the current polycrisis of modernity, I focus on identifying the structural impediments – or fetters – that hinder collective transformation, particularly those arising from the erosion of the institutional and infrastructural bases of modern social life. Instrumentally, *praxis* is a change achieved by systematic historicization resulting in awareness of socio-political conditions of possibility for any individual or collective action. It is against this backdrop that Vladimir Fours's contribution to critical social theory can justifiably be regarded as a *praxis* of emancipation amid the macro tendencies of flexibilization, deregulation, and disorganization of societies.

What, then, are the socio-political conditions of possibility for individual or collective action in the 2020s? This paper advocates a classical critical theory approach, where the analysis of the mode of production makes it possible to identify the configuration of enablers of any social activity. In this approach, critical theory possesses an analytical repertoire, firstly, to examine the polycrisis of modernity constituted by those four macro-shifts as historically caused interrelated tendencies and not as singular events; and secondly, to identify the distinct interests and hence resulting conflicts inherent in the above-described four macro-shifts. This helps to make sense of this polycrisis as human-made and not as something natural and unavoidable. Thus, the current breaking points of modernity vis-à-vis those four macro-shifts are recognized firstly in the growing incommensurability between global finance and national politics; secondly, in the erosion of grid-like modern statehoods (Scott 1998) due to the digital platformization of social processes, as well as due to both dictated and transactional extractivism; thirdly, in the limits of *laissez-faire* market logic growth due to climate challenges; and fourthly, due to the strategic undermining of the principle of the right of nations to self-determination by a permanent member of the UN Security Council (Russian Federation).

As this paper is revisiting the contribution of Vladimir Fours as a social philosopher, the even more important aim of critical theory is to recognize socio-political constraints that embed and thus limit *praxis* itself. This paper's approach differs from much of the constructivist

research agenda, which ultimately aims to denounce social constraints as socially fabricated, thereby paving the way for emancipation from those constraints. As a result of such an orientation, constructivist research agendas tend to simplify constraints, which in reality leads rather to dis-embedding of praxis than to emancipation. It is in this sense this paper implicitly argues against Vladimir Fours's project of processing 'Marx without a beard', or Marx without historical materialism (Фурц 2002: 70). Fours singles out four main threads of Marx's lineage that, according to him, were fruitfully utilized in social theory during the 1970s and 1990s: first, a general theory of social life based on the notion of practice; second, a reconstruction of historical dialectics; third, a critical analysis of capitalism; and fourth, a praxeology of social emancipation (Фурц 2002: 51). He consciously omits attention to the mode of production, presenting a lighter version of critical theory whose main aim is systematic deconstruction leading to emancipation. In contrast, this paper separates the idea that praxis is historically and materially determined – and therefore constrained – from the notion that simply denouncing a social constraint as constructed is sufficient for emancipation.

The main issue for critical theory in this paper's argument is not the factor of material referent as it is (base or infrastructure in Marx), but the process of determination set in force by material referent. What requires the most detailed understanding and explanation is determination as a process with its own logic and conditions of possibility, and not a socially or materially constructed constraint that results from determination. The latter is something that constructivist research tends to prioritize. In contrast, the essence of historical necessity lies not in teleology – that is, identifying a constraint to overcome – but in causality: understanding the evolving structure of that constraint. Moreover, the fact that any social activity is materially determined does not have to automatically launch a shortcut to the means to emancipate from this determination. For such emancipatory tactic implies that an intellectual effort of deconstruction and denaturalization is always reduced to a certain predefined statement. The result often is that this tactic flattens and caricatures the constraint's lineage and composition. Determination of praxis of understanding and explanation is, in the first place, about the identification of the historical conditions of possibility of evolving social processes and phenomena and, only after it, of the possibilities for individual and collective action.

Neoliberalism, Constructivist Research Agenda, and Underdetermined Praxis

In line with the distinction in critical social theory between social reality as determined and as constructed¹, this paper unpacks the poly-crisis of modernity that has evolved over the last fifteen years and, on this basis, offers insights not only into necessity but also into prospect. This conceptual background, along with the fifteen-year temporal gap since Vladimir Fours's latest writings, allows for a slightly different perspective on the end of organized modernity and its emancipatory potential through the de-conventionalization of social practices — an approach he theorized alongside other scholars. The arguments about the flexibilization, disorganization or deregulation as the key tendencies in the First World starting from the 1980s are quite widespread. And it needs to be acknowledged that historically the spread of constructivist social research very much coincided with building the momentum of neoliberal policies of financialization and deregulation of national economies worldwide. Those policies gave rise to mesmerising new visions of productivity and of social functions at large, which often resulted in the domination of emancipation (from the rigid industrial work and related social conventions) as the central trope in the interpretation of social change. However, at the same time, there are grounded and persuasive arguments about neoliberalism as a highly organised and regulated system, which is in fact not about deregulation and weakening of the state but about even more strategically targeted re-regulation, resulting in increased discipline and austerity (Peck 2010). This especially concerns the experience of the lower strata of society, who are responsabilized, surveilled, and systemically exposed to the penal system (Wacquant 2009). These seemingly counterintuitive observations were best visible in the urban environments defined by the financialization of housing, shrinkage of localised welfare state functions, growing socio-economic segregation on urban and regional scales, and displacement of marginalized populations (Harvey 2005).

This seemingly paradoxical relationship between neoliberal flexibilization and discipline is particularly evident in recent historical transformations of labor and the emerging digital regimes designed to proletarianize and control the workforce. It was documented and widely discussed both in the earlier studies of the precarious status of formerly secure First World middle-class (Standing 2011) and in the

1 This distinction gives rise to the respective distinction between research as determination of praxis and research as constructivist praxis of emancipation.

more recent studies of the extraction of on-demand labor, strictly disciplined via fragmentation that is enabled by the factor of mediating digital platforms (Altenried 2022; Mezzadra and Neilson 2017). The main current services for freelance digital creators, such as *Upwork* and *Fiverr*, have increased their revenue and infrastructural power during and due to the Covid-19 pandemic.² In the longer-term semiosis of labor, such services are appealing because they promise freedom from the tedious constraints inherent in organizing work processes within an institution or company. However, the resulting dis-embeddedness, or, as the economic scholars of work would call it ‘unbundling’ (Baldwin 2016), quite oppositely led to much tighter financial control of the workforce. This is because such new modes of digital mediation of the relations between workforce and clients not only dictate strict infrastructural constraints on transactions but also create preconditions for arbitrary exploitation of the workforce by clients and lead to unequal and unfair relations between these transaction parties. Not only the platforms for employment, but, even more radically, the platforms for verification of income and spending become increasingly recognisable actors in the world of work and in the field of finance. The latter ones cultivate a predatory approach to personal data and pose significant risks to employees’ rights and autonomy by making their financial behavior fully transparent to their potential employers.

It is meaningful that the idea of freelancing and unbundling as promising freedom – which was indirectly backed by the broader discourse of emancipation nurtured in global social theory of the 1980s–2000s – has led to de-autonomization and tighter productivity control. The work practices made sense as ‘play ethic’ (Kane 2005) and as ‘prosumption’ (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010) were primarily promises in the 2000s that have turned largely into traps in the 2010s. In view of this historical logic, quite paradoxically, what was supposed to be a source of creativity and freedom via emancipation from rigid structures has transmuted into a condition of even greater exploitation and necessity. This condition became discernible and widely publicly discussed in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis. However, these discussions have not really initiated the re-reading of the long-term constructivism and emancipation

2 Market Capitalisation of Fiverr from 2019 to 2024. (2024). Statista, December 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1454762/fiverr-market-cap-time-line/> (accessed January 10, 2025); Revenue of Upwork from 2019 to 2023. (2024). Statista, October 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1529896/up-work-revenue/> (accessed January 10, 2025.)

nexus that de facto created a moral and ideological foundation for the unbundling of the workforce, as well as indirectly encouraged a kind of insecure and uncertain socio-economic behaviour. In view of a more recent rise of AI, in a similar vein, can we anticipate that, in the long-term, the promise of emancipation of agency vis-à-vis prevalent structures will turn out to be the next iteration of a ‘Trojan horse’ of even tighter algorithmic [infra]structural governance? Isn’t any mode of self-expression, being mediated by platforms as businesses and as infrastructures, ultimately reduced to the training of privately owned algorithms?

Moreover, the very foundation of those mesmerising images and experiences of productivity through deregulation has been scrutinised and challenged in critical social research. In particular, it is crucial that the combination of the 1970s economic crisis, the policy responses to it, and the overall emancipation-centred political culture has generated a situation in which political-economic agency-structure relations in the First World societies starting from the late 1970s have been characterised by the growing reliance on debt and indebtedness on both individual and national levels. This is well-documented and analyzed both in the registers of state institutions in historical perspective (Streeck 2014) and in the practices of governing individual and collective behavior (Lazzarato 2012). Thus, understanding civic empowerment as a feature of the most advanced national societies in the 1970s and later is not complete without awareness of this feature’s entanglement with the tendencies of financialization and indebtedness. Wolfgang Streeck even regards the massive professionalization and employment of women starting from the 1970s from this perspective (2014). Today’s fintech trend of framing spending as a gamified, playful experience suggests that we are witnessing not only institutional but also infrastructural connections between economic well-being – as both analogue and digital experiences – and debt (Threadgold et al. 2024). Instead of emancipated autonomous agency, this creates a controlled indebted agency being both playfully nurtured and at the same time nurturing the structures of platformized finance sector.

It is precisely in the historical context of the rise of neoliberalism that the social constructivist research agenda created a promising horizon for interdisciplinary research discoveries and for “politicization of the everyday” (Фыпс 2002: 108). Vladimir Fours was fruitfully working towards this horizon, as he defined critical social theory through “interdisciplinarity” and through “reflexive politicization of humanities” (Фыпс 2002: 3–4). However, it is equally possible to observe, in hindsight, that this research agenda has become the foundation for

a disembedded and underdetermined praxis. In particular, social constructivism justified the mode of praxis that, in fact, did not succeed in internalizing the configurations of conflict inherent in neoliberal doctrine and in situated neoliberal policies. And due to such disembeddedness and underdetermination, the mainstream emancipatory research discourse largely did not succeed in recognizing the emerging new counter-revolutionary means of exploitation in deregulated socio-economic environments (Aurelli 2015), in soberly estimating a transformational potential of identity politics (Fraser 2000), and in representing the socio-economic and cultural experience of all the social strata, not only of the privileged ones. The First World academia as a sector of employment in the 1990s and 2000s indeed was a locus of privilege and emancipation, where constructivist research agendas prioritized denunciations instead of the internalization of prevalent socio-political burdens. However, from the 2020s perspective, it seems more justified to theorise the late 20th century flexibilization, deregulation and disorganization rather from the vantage point of the disadvantaged ones, of those carrying the burdens of responsabilization, unbundling and offshoring.

From today's perspective, it is possible to recognize that the tendencies of flexibilization, disorganization, and deregulation were, in fact, strategically undergirded by robust underlying infrastructural strategies – namely marketization (Brown 2015), digital platformization (van Dijk Poell and de Waal 2018), as well as financialization and the increasing reliance of both national governments and individual households on debt (Streeck 2014). In this context infrastructural unbundling, which largely undermines the infrastructures of grid-like modern statehood, is one of the main instruments of neoliberal marketization (Graham and Marvin 2001). Constructivism and emancipation nexus did not succeed in accounting for these strategies and their non-negotiables, thus giving rise to underdetermined praxis of social theory. The idea – important to Vladimir Fours – that practices precede institutions was one of the foundational principles of the constructivist mindset in social sciences and broader public discourse. At the same time, one of the most significant dimensions of the neoliberal turn enacted by state and supra-state actors, which amplified worldwide after the 2008 financial crisis, was precisely the undermining of institutions of the welfare state. It was later underpinned by the neoliberal reinforcement of digital platforms via strategic investment in order to turn them into the challengers and often the privately owned replacers of robust but costly public analogue institutions. Platforms are essentially promoting a neoliberal agenda (Любимов 2021). Firstly, platform services replace or outsource public functions – promoting

individualized well-being instead of public welfare. The phrase by Marc Andreessen “software is eating the world” (2011) could be interpreted as software eating the grid-like modern (welfare) state. Secondly, platforms open the access to cheap on-demand labor. Thirdly, platforms turn individuals into entrepreneurs incentivized to systematically and constantly trade their assets. Fourthly, platforms create a bubble-like sociality and illusionary consensus, which result in a highly unstable flickering mode of political collectivity without instruments to systematically protect themselves in the long run (Krastev 2014). These trends in the development of digital technologies are embedded in and reinforce already existing longer-term neoliberal tendencies.

Seeing the social dynamic of the 1980s–2000s as a historical moment of emancipation and empowerment rather than as a result of the economic crisis and the beginning of neoliberalization leading to structural polycrisis is a rather deceptive viewpoint, which omits several dangers inherent in that social dynamic. The mainstream reception of that historical moment in social theory gave rise to underdetermined praxis and resulted in a series of political-intellectual dead ends (of which the most dramatic is perhaps the 2015 Greek bailout referendum). The result was not only a delayed widespread awareness of the weakening of welfare state institutions but also a devaluation of the idea that changing the world could be achieved through the performativity of practices. Ivan Krastev shows that the wide range of politicization through the disruption of institutions by practices in almost all of the cases does not lead to a sustained and sustainable political change (2014). In this respect the biography of the notion of identity politics is very interesting. Identity politics was conceptualized as a key source of emancipation and progressive politics in the 1990s and 2000s (Keith and Pile 1993). However, by the late 2010s, it had become one of the primary scapegoats for criticizing political backlashes and the rise of populism. In this context, digital media emerged as an enabling factor for polarizing and affective political action (Topinka 2018; Dillet 2022), rather than fostering further rationalization and the expansion of deliberative practices. At the same time, the last decades’ domination of the identity politics lens in the academic research on social differentiation and on the resulting conflicts is one of the most notable manifestations of the underestimation of material enablers of those social differentiation and conflicts. Arguably, it has led to the subaltern role of social sciences in the wider context of academic knowledge generation. Among other outcomes, it has resulted in the painful discovery of the limits of the academic ideals of self-governance, autonomy and emancipation versus neoliberal principles of governance and reform of the academia in the 2010s. A significant part of this painful experience

was about the inability to recognize the exact configuration of conflict between capital and labor in academia, which resulted in underdetermined praxis and the disembedded academic agency.

Critical Theory as Determination of Praxis: Knowledge Infrastructures for Academic Agency

I myself spent the second half of the 2010s in humble attempts to develop a model of embedding academic agency that would be adequate to the historical socio-political circumstances. And, by dint of this, to nurture a niche for adequately determined praxis — a situated, values-driven transformation through intellectual work in alliances deliberately built not only within but also beyond academia. The main focus and locus for this praxis was a peripheral shutdown site — Visaginas, a satellite town of the decommissioned Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant in Lithuania. On one hand, this work involved longitudinal socio-geographical research on Cold War modernity as both material and socio-political reality entangled with nuclear technology (Liubimau 2025). On the other hand, it was urbanist research on institutional and infrastructural features of a city belonging to the network of Soviet nuclear development sites (Liubimau 2021). The research was based on two types of interviews with the town's residents: biographical and semi-structured. Additionally, it relied on documentation and reflection on the development and public discussion of urbanist projects and scenarios for the nuclear town after the plant's closure, conducted through summer workshops held from 2015 to 2021. In this respect, this work aimed to contribute to the broader tendency of understanding and conceptualizing social change as an inherently material and infrastructural process (Tuvikene, Sgibnev and Neugebauer 2019). One of the most intriguing and complex questions arising from this tendency is how to estimate modernity's futures in light of the challenges confronting its transformative potential. This question is especially intriguing because awareness of modernity's material foundations — such as the massive, systematic use of fossil fuels — offers a sobering perspective on the scope of potential change. It remains unclear how humanity can develop a fundamentally new material and socio-political paradigm while sustaining the prevailing modes of social, cultural, and [bio]political cohesion. This framing allowed me not only to theorize the endurance of Cold War modernity (with nuclear development as a central aspect of the Soviet socio-political project after World War II) in independent Lithuania as an EU member state but also to explore its broader implications. It also allowed me to collaboratively examine

and to intervene in its particular articulations on the urban scale. The latter has constituted a niche for the cross-fertilization of research and design approaches (design via research and research via design), guided by the notion of 'knowledge infrastructures'.

At the zoomed-in urban scale, the institution and infrastructure chosen to scrutinize and intervene in the crises and path dependencies of Soviet modernity was the Visaginas Public Library. This site served as the foundation for developing research and design arguments. Firstly, the library was seen as a showcase of destabilized functions of public knowledge institutions and infrastructures, impacted by digitalization that led to decentralized and individualized knowledge generation, distribution, and storage (Edwards et al. 2013). Our response was to expand the library's functions beyond mere access to printed media, aiming to foster the generation of shared knowledge, experience, and worldview (Liubimau et al. 2021). Secondly, the library was viewed as a showcase of institutions and infrastructure amid the crisis of accessibility to common public goods – particularly public spaces – for marginalized groups, which contributes to an emerging bubble-like form of sociality (Sloterdijk 2011). In this context, our research and design efforts aimed to facilitate and sustain the intermingling of members from diverse social and demographic groups. Thirdly, the library was considered a case study situated between the decline of the socialist modernist urban form and a simultaneous revival of interest in it, both in Lithuania and, more broadly, in former socialist Europe. Thus, our challenge was to enhance the multifunctionality of the library – both as a building and as a social process – by translating the complex social challenges of an ageing town with a shrinking population into a zoning principle for that specific building. Importantly, this approach required preserving the socialist modernist urban form. These three bundles of conceptual, empirical, and design challenges enabled the embeddedness of academic agency and the determination of collective praxis.

This multi-layered and multi-purpose work was aimed not at providing ready urbanist solutions but at a long-term cultivation of the range of conceptual issues, of empirical registers to tackle those issues, of the network of research participants, of design strategies, and, resulting from this, of knowledge communities of varying duration and degree of intensiveness (Liubimau and Cope 2021). This work implied a deliberately triangulated communication in three modes – firstly, between researchers/practitioners and their peers from different but comparable empirical settings; secondly, between researchers/practitioners and local social partners; and thirdly, between researchers/practitioners and students from a wide variety of spatial research and

practice disciplines. I briefly describe it here to showcase a values-driven, integrative, and conceptually as well as empirically grounded praxis of research and theory generation within the historical context (2015–2021) of multiple crises affecting socio-political and infrastructural modernity. This research and theory generation were embedded in the specific urban form and processes shaped by nuclear energy in the formerly Soviet, eastern part of the European Union. However, beyond the immediate research and design goals, this work aimed to set up a scaffolding for a new mode of critical theory as determination of praxis. The notion of ‘knowledge infrastructures’ was used in order to depict and set up a certain *modus operandi* for researching urban environments as frameworks for generation, maintenance and distribution of knowledge. And at the same time this notion was used to highlight this very scaffolding for embedding academic agency and for determination of praxis.

At the most abstract macro level, this embedded determination of praxis engaged with and encompassed four distinct facets of the polycrisis of modernity. These facets emerged both from empirical fieldwork and from a more abstract intellectual framework – ideas that helped ‘unlock’ the field. They are best understood through a set of binary tensions: between emerging intellectual responses to the complications and contradictions of modernity, on one hand, and earlier teleological approaches that viewed modernity as a steady, linear process of emancipation, on the other: *infrastructural lens* versus constructivist turn; *personal data* versus identity; *critique of extractivism* versus decolonization; *planetarity* versus globalization. Resulting from the discussions of recent years, these binary tensions at the moment already possess a certain conceptual biography. All of these four emerging intellectual responses to crises of modernity have one trait in common: they nurture sensitivity to the material referent of social processes – to underlying, enabling factors of historical transformations. And in this sense, they all represent variations of a materialist approach to the current socio-political circumstances.

Besides, these four emerging responses to crises of modernity share a similar challenge to the academic agency. On one hand, they reveal the fruitlessness of social research aimed at mere denunciation via deconstruction with the ultimate goal of emancipation from the constraints being denounced as constructed ones. On the contrary, they have to endure through the internalization of acute and very tangible puzzles. And, at the same time, they reveal that there is not yet a position for an academic social researcher, which would be commensurable with those puzzles inherent in the polycrisis of modernity. A constructivist researcher of identity, decolonization

and globalization would largely, through denunciation, contribute to the erosion of all kinds of barriers between the world's territories and populations and would advocate the intensification of all kinds of flows between them. The profile of a social researcher to meet the challenges of infrastructural power imbalances, personal data autonomy, extractivist practices, and planetary fragility is only in the process of formation. I bring a showcase from my own field (nuclear energy, socialist urban form and process, the notion of 'knowledge infrastructures' and the conceptual and empirical issues it tackles) in order to portray one possible approach to embedding and determining one's praxis via encountering and realising one's conceptual position in the field, which is the key to this formation in process.

Neoliberalization Meets Militarization: Polycrisis of Modernity at Eastern European Frontiers

Different facets of modernity's polycrisis are deeply intertwined in terms of their historical lineage and in terms of the challenges they pose. The potential of the infrastructural lens for praxis lies in the insight into the intricacies of neoliberalization and militarization as two prevailing macro tendencies of today. Neoliberalization tendency supposes a fragmentation and separation of previously aggregate material systems (of modern statehood) into smaller units. It is justified by the need to cut maintenance expenses and to more efficiently manage those units. This leads to turning those former aggregate systems into easily commodified assets instead of inevitable public goods. Ubiquitous digitalization clearly amplifies this trend. Frank Pasquale writes about the new mode of sovereignty, which is enabled by digital platforms, and, in his analysis, promises more risks than benefits (2015). In particular, he recognizes the emerging opposition between territorial sovereignty of modern statehoods and functional sovereignty of private digital platforms. The late 2024 interviews and public statements of Elon Musk and of other major Silicon Valley investors and entrepreneurs such as Marc Andreessen, Peter Thiel, Alex Karp, et al., who have articulately backed Donald Trump already during the 2024 US presidential campaign, suggest that they are building the momentum to synchronize the organizational structure of US state apparatus with the organizational structure of IT business. The logic of this synchronization is hyper-deregulation and not merely outsourcing but merging state functions with the American IT sector. This very much resembles the logic of the mid-19th century powerful synchronization between the French state on one hand and

the organizational logic of industrial capitalism on the other hand, depicted by Karl Marx in his *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1994). It was followed by profound infrastructural reinvention of Paris as “capital of modernity” (Harvey, 2006) in the second half of the 19th century after a series of cholera outbreaks, which has paved the way for a materialized model of partnership between infrastructural grid-like modern statehood, as well as industry, retail, railways, steel production, and finance.

Militarization tendency means the revisiting of power hierarchies through the actualization and deployment of materially enacted dispositions. The very notion of infrastructure comes from the military sphere and denotes material dispositions of the military rivals. Today, this is characterized by actual and possible manipulations of the weaponised infrastructural interdependence between different entities – via digital networks and data flows, energy infrastructures, engineering technologies, etc. (Drezner 2021). Current, historically unprecedented infrastructural interdependence among the states, including both rising and declining superpowers, smaller states, and non-state actors, defines not only the features of conflicts but also the features of statecraft itself. As a result of such interdependence, in today’s historical and geographical settings one could observe the blurring of boundaries between states’ military and civic sectors and facilities (Brooks 2016). These tendencies undermine the logic of the globalization of unhindered, frictionless exchanges and constitute a challenge to describe and to conceptualize the new emerging logic of interdependence across geographical space. Both tendencies of neoliberalization and militarization are about the troublesome painful transformations, resistance and path dependency of underlying material enablers of social processes. They are also about the suddenly discovered fragility of social milieu and of political institutionalized conventions due to infrastructural disruptive innovations, breakdowns, malfunctioning and shortages both through interdependence and through isolation. In this respect, current criticality of infrastructures could be read in Simmel’s perspective – as a certain domination of objective over subjective culture (2004), or, in other words, as a burden of the material on the agentive.

Both neoliberalization and militarization are indirectly amplified by the momentum of recognition of the climate crisis and, in particular, by the competition between states to access strategic resources, which would allow them to normatively and ideologically lead, or at least actively participate in, the process of cultivating a greater sensitivity to the planet’s biosphere in policies and development. The Anthropocene and the resulting planetary challenges translated from the

register of statistics or abstract concepts into the register of eye-view-level experience equal petrochemical, fossil fuel-based, grid-like modern statehood. It has become a worldwide dominant form of society since the 1950s, although it was unevenly realized in different parts of the world. On a macro level, it is discussed as the tendency of “the Great Acceleration” (Steffen et al. 2015) of human activity resulting in omnipresence of infrastructural statehood and of truly planetary social processes. From today’s vantage point, “the Great Acceleration” is the key moment in the lineage of modernity, yet the attention to it in social theory intensified only after the recognition of the climate crisis as planetary urgency. In this view, the critique of the Anthropocene should actually be the search for a possible substitute for the current organization of societies around the grid-like model of modern statehood. This puzzle is directly related to the tendency of digital platformization and its underlying infrastructures (especially the AI data centers and semiconductor plants), which require stable supply with vast amounts of affordable energy.

At the current moment both neoliberalization and militarization highlight the strategic infrastructural domains and concrete resources in view of pressing planetary challenges. And by dint of this they also tragically reveal the arguable futility of those features of statehood and of interstate relations, which do not fit the new reality. In these historical circumstances, extractivism becomes a systemic orientation ingrained into the nexus of neoliberalization and militarization. To accentuate the peculiarity of the current moment vis-à-vis previous configurations of predatory international relations, extractivism is a colonialism without any reinforcement of institutions and norms. This is a pure trans-local or trans-national plundering of a certain resource – from fossil fuels and rare metals to workforce and personal data – without structural investments to legitimize the fact of plundering, as was the case in later colonial politics of “civilizing” the colonized. In this regard, it is surprising that today’s popular discourse of decolonization is primarily targeting the outcomes of later, “civilizing”, colonialism, without much scrutiny of extractivist practices that are actually the core of any colonial project. In a less direct and a more complex sense, extractivism is equally a type of power organization of a bigger scale and scope that rests on the infrastructures and on the results of such plundering without any “civilizing” project. Extractivism is defined not solely by actual mines or drilling. Data mining is a crucial dimension of extractivist frontiers too (Mezzadra and Neilson 2017). Digital platforms enable the new powerful repertoire of labour extraction and of harsh exploitation of the most vulnerable workforce.

However, the most vivid examples of extractivist practices today come from peripheral frontiers of the breakdown of grid-like modern statehoods, such as, for instance, Donbas, occupied by the Russian Federation. Stanislav Aseyev, a Ukrainian journalist and writer who was imprisoned in a torture jail in the Donetsk People's Republic, is witnessing in his book *The Torture Camp on Paradise Street* (2023) that despite Soviet-like imagery and rhetoric DPR has little to do with the Soviet Union in terms of normative reality and power distribution. On the contrary, it is about the dismantling of any normative reality in favour of sheer arbitrary plundering of any available resource or value amidst decaying Soviet infrastructural statehood and amidst the traces of creative attempts to revamp it in independent Ukraine. Aseyev shows that even long-term inmates, with decades of previous imprisonment experience, were desperate and helpless to encounter the breakdown of the inhuman Soviet penal system in the DPR torture jail – in terms of the absolute breakdown of the sophisticated system of formal and informal prison norms that allowed them to find at least a tiny niche for autonomy and predictability amidst systemic violence and suffering. Extractivism is such an absolute arbitrariness without structural normativity, which, however, still can be transactional.

An adjacent vivid frontier example of systemic extractivist practices is the Wagner Group, a paramilitary, which became one of the major insights about Russian polity and the Russian state in the course of the invasion into Ukraine in 2014 and especially in 2022. The Wagner Group was initially used by the Russian Federation to conquer and guard either extractive sites or oil and gas infrastructures in the Global South – Syria, Libya, Sudan, Central African Republic and Mali. It was also used to guard strategic transport infrastructures such as seaports or military airports, and to guard the political leaders in those states. There are arguments that local elites in Africa preferred to cooperate with the Wagner Group because it proved to be 'efficient' in terms of security solutions in comparison to foreign governments or international organizations (Swed and Arduino 2025). As there is no law on paramilitaries in Russia, the Wagner Group was illegal and fully dependent on the arbitrary power of Russia's leadership. One of the biggest bitter surprises related to it was the fact that it received an entitlement to recruit the prisoners from the jails in Russia and from occupied parts of Ukraine to be deployed on the battlefield – a resource for constant growth of the Group's human force until it was dismantled after the failed coup d'état in summer 2023.

The increased significance of the Wagner Group should be read precisely as a symptom of the extractivist statehood model, which was

nurtured in Russia since the end of the USSR and started to be massively imported to its outside in the 2010s. An extractivist statehood means the constitution of power by access solely to valuable strategic resources, unlike in case of a grid-like modern statehood that is aimed to control and to have a scenario for its entire territory. Although the model represented by the Wagner Group has lost in the conflict with the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defence in the course of the coup d'état in summer 2023, the conditions of possibility of this conflict within Russia remain. In terms of historical analogies, the Wagner Group can be seen as similar to the 17th-century Dutch West India Company, whose power rested on a combination of access to sites of extraction of valuable resources, military strength and agility, logistical sophistication, ingenious financial infrastructure, and access to vast human resources practically ripped off their citizenship. Are we degrading back to the world run by the likes of the Wagner Group? Or has the Eastern European frontier turned out to be the most vulnerable for such types of actors to intervene? At the same time, grid-like modern statehoods are challenged not only and necessarily by rogue actors such as the Wagner Group. They can equally be eroded by neat corporate social responsibility projects deliberately designed to attract a depoliticized audience for staged temporary flickering alternatives to modern statehood.

Neoliberalization and militarization as infrastructural tendencies are differently intrinsic as part and parcel to the transformations we witness worldwide. These two tendencies' specific share and power in this or that localised social process may differ, yet they are deep-seated in any significant socio-political change of today. Take Belarus – the context to which Vladimir Fours devoted his career – where one of the major disillusionments in recent political history is the still-unfolding and not yet fully articulated realization that digital platforms serve not only as tools for civic and political claim-making and public presence, but also as enablers of state repression on a massive and previously unthinkable scale. Today, it is hard to find a politically motivated criminal or administrative case in Belarus that would not be based on a digital trace left by a repressed person. What was intuitively regarded and practiced as a realm of self-expression, freedom, empowerment via identity formation, and emancipation, starting from the year 2020 is being discovered as a realm of policing and punishment. Viral politicization has resulted in viral repressions and the new mode of highly disadvantaged and fragile citizenship. In practice this means that the most politically active citizens who have left a digital trace, now acquire a status of citizens that can be endlessly persecuted by the repressive state.

The deep civic and human crisis in Belarus was enabled not only by the indigenous, almost three-decades-old dictatorship but also by exogenous macro tendencies of platformization and, in particular, by the structurally enabled policing affordances inherent in the digital platforms. The Belarusian state not only uses platforms to expose the population to targeted but systemic repressions. These repressions are not purely instrumental – they are performative and result in a new mode of state-building. A bitter irony, it seems, that currently the Belarusian repressive state understands this state-building stake much more clearly than Belarusian civil society does. The strategic criminalization of digital presence, policing of political chats and systematic labelling of them as extremist, and systematic purges based on online behavior in the welfare institutions and in the companies servicing critical infrastructures such as energy and transport sectors all suggest that the repressive state in Belarus treats the post-2020 conflict as profoundly infrastructural. Its underlying strategy is to prioritize and secure by all means the uniform, standardized state gridding as the only staple of the governance model without any alternative infrastructures for shared knowledge and action (such as, for instance, neighbours' chats).

Moreover, the repressions have turned out to be more painful and tragic due to the distinct choices made by the Belarusian civil society and specifically, by infrastructural managers of the political mobilization in 2020. It concerns primarily the strategic bet on the Telegram platform as both the element of civic tech platforms and the bottom-up communication infrastructure, such as neighbourhood chats (Liubimau 2022). In particular, this bet has enabled massive deanonymization of politically active citizens and also has created the conditions for deepening of the repressive interdependence of Belarus' and Russia's security services. Currently this strategic choice of Telegram medium remains a significant problem and a certain infrastructural dead-end for Belarus civil society. This infrastructural trap and a massive disillusionment are the result of underestimation of infrastructural power of digital platforms as enablers of repressive extractive practices. The means of digital self-expression and participation were considered merely tools, without much awareness of the new structural affordances they give rise to. Such a lack of awareness is not a surprise, given the all-encompassing domination in political culture in places like Belarus of the themes of emancipation and empowerment via identity formation embedded into social media. Digital platforms allow the interdependence between algorithmic and personal, which has resulted both in the available modes of collective claim-making and their political achievements. But it also has resulted in hyper-vulnerability of

citizenry. Should we expect that the repressions like those in Belarusian society are to be further algorithmized, and, perhaps, run without human involvement in the future?

These articulations of modernity's polycrisis in Eastern Europe pose a challenge to social researchers to adequately represent the current painful impasses and to map out realistic futures. Vladimir Fours's and the other 1980s–2000s constructivist social theorists' praxis of emancipation (producing utopias as powerful alternatives to prevalent socio-political reality) has been an inspiration for an entire generation of thinkers in academia and beyond. At the same time, the painful stalemates we witness today suggest that a profoundly new configuration of praxis has to be developed and enacted by social researchers. Vulnerability of personal data amidst the proliferation of extractivist projects of political and economic power overshadows emancipation via identity formation. Terrifying alternatives to grid-like modern statehood such as the Wagner Group (perhaps, the worst scenario model of degraded Russian polity) or exploitative digital platforms suggest that any socio-political alternative should rely on a steady infrastructural strategy, not just on a deconstruction. The global rush for resources and the nexus between neoliberalization and militarization suggest that we need to pay significantly more critical attention to extractivist projects, which should not be camouflaged by the discourse of superstructural decolonization. In this reality, seemingly deprived of fixed universal rules, the planet Earth in trouble should be expected to become the main source of justice and values, not merely of resources as was the case, especially during the last seventy years of accelerated global growth. All this constitutes the foundation of critical theory as determination of praxis. The insight of this paper is that this required new form of praxis should accentuate and strengthen the dimensions of determination in addition to emancipation, of embedded universalism in addition to liberating particularism, and of causality in addition to teleology.

Conclusion

This paper takes as its starting point the emancipatory praxis of Belarusian social philosopher Vladimir Fours, who contributed to efforts to make sense of the end of “organized modernity” or late modernity — one of the central research horizons in social theory from the 1980s to the 2000s. It is significant that his constructivist approach to critical social research aimed not only to scrutinize the prevailing societal tendencies of flexibilization, deregulation, and disorganization,

but also to actively engage in the restructuring of social constraints and the production of utopian, desirable political futures. He both depicted and embraced the tendency of “de-conventionalization of social practices” prevalent in that period in social theory. This paper points out that the passing of Vladimir Fours in 2009 has coincided with the profound macro-shifts, which constitute the formation of substantially new socio-political conditions. This paper conceptualizes these macro-shifts as the *polycrisis of modernity* — a convergence of four major disruptions. First, the global financial crisis of 2008, followed by austerity measures, generated increasing tensions, understood here as the growing incommensurability between global finance and national politics. Second, the rise of digital platforms — as business models, new power agents, and key infrastructures of everyday life — has led to the platformization of all spheres of life and a gradual erosion of grid-like modern statehoods. Third, the growing recognition of the climate crisis as a critical global issue has catalyzed policy, civic, and research responses that increasingly circumscribe the logic of *laissez-faire* markets. And fourth, Russia’s challenge to the post-WWII political order — through the redrawing of state borders starting with the 2008 invasion of Georgia and continuing with Ukraine in 2014 and 2022 — illustrates how a permanent member of the UN Security Council is actively undermining the principle of national self-determination. Against the backdrop of modernity’s polycrisis, this paper shows that the domination of the constructivism-emancipation nexus in social theory in the 1980s–2000s has coincided with the historical momentum of neoliberal doctrine and of neoliberal policies of financialization and deregulation of national economies worldwide. It argues that the social theory of disorganization of modernity and concomitant de-conventionalization of social practices largely did not succeed in recognizing underlying robust neoliberal strategies behind emancipatory discourse. Moreover, social theory has, albeit indirectly, contributed to the success of neoliberal strategies — specifically the unbundling and commodification of public resources, and the contraction of institutions associated with grid-like modern nation-states. The actual praxis of critical social theory from the 1980s to the 2000s rarely interrogated the foundational assumptions of neoliberal doctrine and policy. Instead, it often framed societal transformations primarily in terms of identity and lived experience — typically those of socially and geographically mobile elites, rather than the broader population. This paper argues that framing the social dynamics of the 1980s–2000s as a historical moment of emancipation and empowerment — rather than as a period marked by neoliberal coercion, disciplining, and re-regulation — has resulted in an underdetermined praxis and a disembedded

agency within social theory, especially in the face of structural polycrisis. It presents one possible configuration of critical theory as a mode of praxis oriented toward confronting this polycrisis, and further suggests that such a determined praxis – adequate to current historical conditions – is still in the process of formation. This paper unpacks today's structural polycrisis through four binary tensions that contrast emerging intellectual responses to the complications of modernity with earlier teleological approaches that envisioned modernity as a linear emancipatory process: *infrastructural lens* versus *constructivist turn*; *personal data* versus *identity*; *critique of extractivism* versus *decolonization*; and *planetarity* versus *globalization*. It concludes by examining how the polycrisis of modernity – and the deep-seated tendencies of neoliberalization and militarization that accompany any significant socio-political transformation – are articulated in the context of Eastern Europe.

References

- Altenried, M. (2022). *The Digital Factory: The Human Labor of Automation*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Andreessen, M. (2011). Why Software Is Eating the World. *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 August, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111903480904576512250915629460> (Accessed 15 December 2024).
- Aseyev, S. (2023). *The Torture Camp on Paradise Street*. Harvard University Press.
- Aureli, V. P. (2015). Architecture and Counterrevolution. OMA and the Politics of the Grands Projets. *OASE*, 94: 44-48.
- Baldwin, R. (2016). *The Great Convergence: Information Technology and the New Globalisation*. Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Brooks, R. (2016). *How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything: Tales from the Pentagon*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.
- Brown, W. (2015). *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. New York: ZONE BOOKS.
- Dillet, B. (2022). Speaking to Algorithms? Rhetorical Political Analysis as Technological Analysis. *Politics*, 42(2): 231-246.
- Drezner, D. W., Farrell, H., and Newman, A. L. ed (2021). *Uses and Abuses of Weaponized Interdependence*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Edwards, P. N. et al. (2013). Knowledge Infrastructures: Intellectual Frameworks and Research Challenges. *Report of a Workshop Sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the Sloan Foundation*. University of Michigan School of Information.
- Fraser, N. (2000). Rethinking Recognition. *New Left Review*, 3: 107-120.

- Fours, V. (2002). *Kontury sovremennoj kritičeskoj teorii*. Minsk: EGU.
[Фурс, В. (2002). *Контуры современной критической теории*. Минск: ЕГУ.]
- Harvey, D. (2005). *Spaces of Neoliberalization: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Harvey, D. (2006). *Paris, Capital of Modernity*. New York: Routledge.
- Hegel, G. (2018). *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Graham, S. and Marvin, S. (2001). *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Gramsci, A. (2011). *Prison Notebooks*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kane, P. (2005). *The Play Ethic: Manifesto for a Different Way of Living*. London: Pan Macmillan.
- Keith, M. and Pile, S. (1993). *Place and the Politics of Identity*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Krastev, I. (2014). From Politics to Protest. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(4): 5–19.
- Lash, S. and Urry, J. (1994). *Economies of Signs and Space*. London: Sage.
- Lash, S. and Urry, J. (1987). *The End of Organized Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Books.
- Lazzarato, M. (2012). *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) Intervention Series.
- Liubimau, S. (2025). In Search of Cold War Modernity's Endpoints: Urban-Nuclear Entanglements and Diachronic Solidarity. *Cities: The International Journal of Policy and Planning*, 156: 1–9.
- Liubimau, S. (2022). Platformization of Politics in Non-Democracies: Spaces of Participatory Experiments in Belarus in 2020s. *Studia Humanistyczne AGH*, 21(4): 7–21.
- Liubimau, S. (2021). Is There a Nuclear Urbanism? In: Liubimau, S. and Cope, B., ed. *Re-Tooling Knowledge Infrastructures in a Nuclear Town*. Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 18–41.
- Liubimau, S. et al. (2021). Reprogramming the Library in Visaginas: A Multifunctional Public Institution for a Nuclear Town. In: Liubimau, S. and Cope, B., ed. *Re-Tooling Knowledge Infrastructures in a Nuclear Town*. Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 126–158.
- Lûbimov, S. (2021). К критической теории умных городов. V: Lapina-Kratasûk, E., Zaporožec, O., i Voz,ânov, A. (red.). *Seti goroda: Lûdi, Tehnologii, Vlasti*. Moskva: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 81–104.
- [Любимов, С. (2021). К критической теории умных городов. В: Лапина-Кратасюк, Е., Запорожец, О., и Возьянов, А. (ред.). *Сети города: Люди, Технологии, Власти*. Москва: Новое Литературное Обозрение, 81–104.]
- Lukács, G. (1971). *History and Class Consciousness*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Market Capitalization of Fiverr from 2019 to 2024. (2024). Statista, December 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1454762/fiverr-market-cap-timeline/> (accessed January 10, 2025).
- Marx, K. (1994). *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. New York: Intl Pub Co Inc.
- Marx, K. (1978). Theses on Feuerbach. In: *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., Tucker R.C. ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 143–145.

- Mezzadra, S. and Neilson, B. (2017). On the Multiple Frontiers of Extraction: Excavating Contemporary Capitalism. *Cultural Studies*, 31(2-3): 185-204.
- Pasquale, F. (2015). *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms that Control Money and Information*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
- Peck, J. (2010). *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*. Oxford University Press.
- Revenue of Upwork from 2019 to 2023. (2024). *Statista*, October 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1529896/upwork-revenue/> (accessed January 10, 2025).
- Ritzer, G. and Jurgenson, N. (2010). Production, Consumption, Prosumption: The Nature of Capitalism in the Age of Digital 'Prosumer'. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 10(1): 13-36.
- Scott J.C. (1998). *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Sennett, R. (1998). *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Simmel, G. (2004). *The Philosophy of Money*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Sloterdijk, P. (2011). *Spheres I: Bubbles*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Standing, G. (2011). *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Streeck, W. (2014). *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*. London and New York: Verso.
- Steffen, W., et al. (2015) The Trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration. *The Anthropocene Review* 2(1): 1-18.
- Swed, O. and Arduino, A. (2024). Do Mercenaries Perform Better than States? Evaluating the Wagner Group's Impact on Central African Republic. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 36(1): 59-86.
- Threadgold, S. et al. (2024). Buy Now, Pay Later Technologies and the Gamification of Debt in Financial Lives of Young People. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 10(1): 1-16.
- Topinka, R. (2018). Politically Incorrect Participatory Media: Racist Nationalism on r/ImGoingToHellForThis. *New Media & Society*, 20(5): 2050-2069.
- Tuvikene, T., Sgibnev, W. and Neugebauer, C. (2019). *Post-Socialist Urban Infrastructures*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Van Dijk, J., Poell, Th. and de Waal, M. (2018). *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wacquant, L. (2009). *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Duke University Press.

УЛАДЗІМЕР ФУРС
ЯК МЫСЬЛЯР ПАЛІТЫЧНАГА

Уладзіслаў Іваноў

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-132-142>

ULADZIMIR FOURS AS A POLITICAL THINKER

© Uładzislau Ivanou

PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Social Sciences, European
Humanities University

Savičiaus g. 17, 01127 Vilnius, Lietuva

E- mail: uladzislau.ivanou@ehu.lt

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1493-0017>

Abstract: The figure of the philosopher Uladzimir Fours (1963–2009) in the Belarusian intellectual field remains undoubtedly significant, yet insufficiently explored, particularly from an interdisciplinary perspective. His intellectual legacy has not been examined through the lens of political science. The aim of this study is to analyze the texts of this political philosopher from a political science standpoint and to highlight the most valuable aspects of U. Fours's reflections at the intersection of political thought and social theory. To grasp the depth of his political philosophy and emphasize its practical relevance – and at times heuristic potential – for Belarusian political science, it is useful to compare his ideas with those of both his Western and Belarusian contemporaries. Fours's most powerful, insightful, and still timely contribution to the political analysis of Belarusian reality lies in his bold conclusions regarding the Belarusian national project. Equally important is his approach to understanding the phenomenon of Belarusian authoritarianism. By recovering the interdisciplinary and distinctly political dimension of the analytical framework from which he worked, there is ample reason to regard U. Fours as a thinker of the political.

Keywords: Uladzimir Fours, social theory, critical political thought, Belarusian national project, Belarusian authoritarianism.



Постаць філэзафа Ўладзімера Фурса (1963–2009) у беларускім інтэлектуальным полі да сьняня застаецца адназначна вялікай, але так да канца й не дасьледаванай, не прааналізаванай у міждысцыплінарным вымярэнні. Так, дасюль слаба заяўленыя паліталягічны патэнцыял і палітычная практычная значнасьць інтэлектуальнай спадчыны філэзафа, спэцыяліста ў сацыяльнай тэорыі і, зрэшты, мысьляра палітычнага. Заўчасная сьмерць філэзафа ў свой час не дазволіла выбудаваць паўнаватасны дзялёг з калегамі-палітолягамі. А таму зацікаўленасьць ягонымі на працоўкамі з боку беларускіх палітолягаў была абмежаванай да нядаўняга часу. Аднак геапалітычныя зварушэньні апошняга дзесяцігодзьдзя ў рэгіёне і асабліва падзеі 2020 году ў Беларусі і тое, што мы назіраем пасля беларускага прадэмакратычнага выбуху, паўплывалі на вяртаньне і пераасэнсаваньне шматлікіх клясычных арыенціраў, падыходаў у разуменьні сябе і рэгіёну. У такой крытычнай сытуацыі, часта пад знакам дэкаляніялізму і пошукаў унівэрсальных, мажлівых хіба ў межах міждысцыплінарнасьці, падыходаў, распачалася вялікая праца па новым чытаньні тэкстаў, створаных раней, часта ўжо памерлымі мясцовымі аўтар(к)амі. Так, у 2021 годзе менавіта ў такім ключы пры супрацы з Фондам Адэнаўэра быў апублікаваны па-беларуску і па-ангельску зборнік працаў беларускіх палітолягаў і паліталягіяў, якія стаялі ля вытокаў мясцовай палітычнай навукі: «Ля вытокаў беларускай палітычнай навукі» і «At the origins of Belarusian political science» (Іваноў & Сцяпанав 2021; Ivanou & Sciapanau 2021). Гэта вяртаньне і актуалізацыя спадчыны, якая можа дапамагчы ня толькі надаць уласныя арыенціры незалежнага навуковага мысьленьня, але і лепей зразумець тое, што адбываецца цяпер. У падобным ключы летась адбылося адначасова ўшанаваньне памяці і вяртаньне спадчыны беларускага філэзафа Ўладзімера Фурса. У чэрвені 2024 году ў Вільні ў ЭГУ адбылася міжнародная канфэрэнцыя «Контурсы сучаснай крытычнай тэорыі», прысьвечаная У. Фурсу (Канфэрэнцыя... 2024), а таксама выйшла кніга перакладаў артыкулаў мысьляра на беларускую мову — «Беларусь у сьвятле сучаснай крытычнай сацыяльнай тэорыі» (Фурс 2024). Дарэчы, на канфэрэнцыі адна з панэляў была прысьвечаная палітычнай / паліталягічнай рамцы навуковай спадчыны філэзафа. А ў кнізе перакладаў шмат увагі было нададзена малавядомаму кірунку і пасланьню мысьляра — палітычнай думцы У. Фурса, якая асабліва выразна і актуальна загучала пасля 2020 году (напрыклад, тлумачэньні немагчымасьці беларускай дэмакратыі, развагі

аб «постсавецкай»¹ рэчаіснасьці ці нязручныя роздумы аб беларускай ідэнтэчнасьці). Варта адзначыць, што У. Фурсу, філёзафу і асабліва сацыяльнаму тэарэтыку, ня трэба было сумысьля пазначць сваю прыналежнасьць да паліталягічнай дысцыпліны, бо сама крытычная сацыяльная тэорыя ахоплівае міждысцыплінарнае, у тым ліку паліталягічнае, поле. Згодна з гэтай лёгікай, хоць ён і быў перадусім філёзафам, знаўцам крытычнай сацыяльнай тэорыі, ён быў у тым ліку і палітычным мысьляром. Аднак часта досыць абмежаваная дысцыплінарна клясычная паліталёгія ня лічыць іншадысцыплінарных дасьледнікаў сваімі калегамі.

Тым ня менш у гэтым прапануецца аналіз тэкстаў філёзафа з пазыцыі палітычнай і паліталягічнай, што адкрывае нам ня проста новае вымярэньне інтэлектуальнай дзейнасьці мысьляра, але перадусім падкрэсьлівае ягоную празорлівасьць, крытычнасьць і ўсё яшчэ актуальнасьць многіх ягоных развагаў.

Сацыяльная тэорыя: ад філязофіі да палітыкі

Прафэсійны філёзаф, У. Фурс на пачатку XXI ст. абараніў доктарскую дысэртацыю на тэму «Крытычная сацыяльная тэорыя ў заходняй філязофіі 70–90-х гг. XX ст.: тыпалягічная рэканструкцыя», але яшчэ раней, у канцы XX ст., пачаў удзельнічаць у міждысцыплінарных праектах і праграмах. Адным з цэнтральных такіх праектаў стаўся якраз праект «Контурны сучаснай крытычнай тэорыі» ў Нямеччыне. Мысьляр па хуткім часе заняў моцную пазыцыю ў беларускім інтэлектуальным полі як адзін з першых і нямногіх у беларускай акадэміі знаўцаў сучаснай крытычнай тэорыі. Гісторыя бібліяграфіі мысьляра адлюстроўвае на сутыку XX–XXI стст. моцны паварот да сацыяльнай тэорыі і палітычнай думкі. У. Фурс актыўна апэруе асноўнымі імёнамі заходняй сацыяльнай тэорыі, абавязкова прыкладаючы іх да беларускай і рэгіянальнай рэчаіснасьці. Беларускі кантэкст і «постсавецкая рэчаіснасьць» становяцца абавязковай умовай рэфлексіі мысьляра: гэтага практычнага ўжытку тэорыі ён будзе прытрымлівацца да канца. Такім парадкам, філёзаф У. Фурс заўсёды засяроджваўся на палітычных фэномэнах, якія разглядаў у сацыялягічных і філязофскіх

1 Панятка «постсавецкі» апошнія гады не ўжываецца ў заходнім, у тым ліку крытычным беларускім, сьвеце, бо лічыцца каляніялісцкім. У той час, калі працаваў У. Фурс, панятка яшчэ ўжываўся і ня меў нэгатыўнай і састарэлай канатацыі. Хаця варта пазначыць, што мысьляр крытычна аналізаваў дадзены панятка ужо ў 2005 годзе (Фурс 2012: 396).

вымярэннях, ставячы ў цэнтар аналіз сацыяльных і палітычных канфліктаў. Пры гэтым ён падкрэсліваў актуальнасць, то бок важнасць сацыяльнай тэорыі праз прызму аўтарытарызм / дэмакратыя. І з той прычыны, што ён беларус, то бок практычны знаўца аўтарытарызму, ягоны аналіз часта ўдаваўся больш пераканаўчым, чым заходнія тэорыі, распрацаваныя ва ўмовах дэмакратыі.

Перад тым, як перайсці да канкрэтнай спадчыны У. Фурса, распрацаванай на мяжы сацыяльнай тэорыі і палітычнай думкі, варта коратка азначыць гэтыя паняткі і іхную сувязь. Варта разумець, што сінтагма «сацыяльная тэорыя і палітычная думка» азначае безупыннае абвяржэнне ідэі пабудовы гарманічнага грамадства. З аднаго боку, «сацыяльная тэорыя» адрозніваецца ад цяперашняй «сацыяльнай філзафіі», засяроджанай на формах прызнання, справядлівасці і «клопату», і імкнецца трымаць палітычнае пытаньне адкрытым. А зь іншага боку, «крытычная палітычная думка», на якую пастаянна абапіраўся У. Фурс, чэрпае зь першай і другой Франкфурцкай школы, азначае рэфлексійную, недактрынальную і прагматычную працу, заклапочаную дэканструкцыяй любых формаў панавання і вызначэннем сілаў эмансypацыі, якія існуюць у грамадстве (Фурс 2002). Якраз у гэтым разрэзе варта разумець тэксты У. Фурса.

Так, Француская лябараторыя сацыяльных і палітычных змяненняў пры Парыскім унівэрсытэце (LCSP, Laboratoire du Changement Social et Politique) вылучае пяць асноўных кірункаў у межах сацыяльнай тэорыі і крытычнай палітычнай думкі:

1. Касмапалітычная праблематыка.
2. Дэмакратыя, гвалт і грамадзянства.
3. Апытаньні па сацыяльных пытаньнях.
4. Суб'екты і суб'ектывацыі.
5. Каляніяльнасць і дэкаляніяльнасць (LCSP).

Дадзеныя кірункі якраз досыць поўна ахопліваюць палітычную думку У. Фурса. У сваю чаргу, беларускі мысьляр абапіраўся на працы Макса Горкгаймэра ў стварэнні асноўных складнікаў крытычнай тэорыі (Фурс 2001: 92). Адным з такіх складнікаў якраз зьяўляецца палітычная кампанэнта крытычнай тэорыі, бо «сама зьяўляецца формай палітычнай практыкі» (Фурс 2001: 93).

Палітычная думка Ёладзімера Фурса

Касмапалітычная праблематыка, а разам зь ёю тэма каляніяльнасці і дэкаляніяльнасці займаюць важнае месца ў развагах мысьляра. Якраз дадзеныя праблематыкі У. Фурс канкрэтызуе на прыкладзе пытаньня беларускай тоеснасці ў рэгіянальным і глябальным вымярэнні: «Глобалізацыя жыццённага міра в свете

социальной теории: к постановке вопроса» (Фурс 2000), «Беларуская “реальность” в системе координат глобализации (постановка вопроса)» (Фурс 2005), «Белорусский проект “современности”?» (Фурс 2007), «К вопросу о “белорусской идентичности”» (Фурс 2018). Па-беларуску апошні тэкст быў апублікаваны пад іншай назвай – «Структурныя прынцыпы альтэрнатыўнага нацыятварэння» (Фурс 2008а).

Больш паліталягічныя пытанні, зьвязаныя з тэмай дэмакратыі, недэмакратыі і грамадзянства, дасьледнік разглядае ў сваіх наступных працах: «“Феминистски-социалистическая” критическая теория позднего капитализма Н. Фрэйзер» (Фурс 2004), «“Власть народа”: современные представления о демократии и белорусская модель “народовластия”» (Фурс 2006), «Ресоветизация белорусских университетов» (Фурс & Дунаев 2007), «Трансформация публичности и постсоветская ситуация» (Фурс 2008b), «(Re)thinking the “public sphere” with Arendt and Habermas» (Фурс 2008c).

З пазыцыі адначасова міждысцыплінарнай і паліталягічнай найбольш каштоўнымі рэфлексіямі Ўладзімера Фурса зьяўляюцца наступныя:

1. Крытычны аналіз розных нацыянальных праектаў у беларускім кантэксце. Мысьляр аналізуе асноўныя нацыянальныя праекты – як канструктывісцкага, так і эсэнсэалісцкага, то бок этнанацыянальнага, кшталту. З аднаго боку, у Беларусі існуе афіцыйны нацыянальны праект – «праект шчасьця», магчымы ня толькі таму, што навязаны аўтарытарным рэжымам, але і таму, на думку У. Фурса, што ён падаецца і малюецца пазытыўна (Фурс 2008). У гэтым праекце беларусы трактуюцца як дзеці ці псыхічнахворыя асобы. А зь іншага боку, існуе беларускі этнанацыянальны праект, які У. Фурс досыць слушна крытыкуе за элітызм, эксклюзіўнасьць (Фурс 2008: 89). Пры гэтым дасьледнік ідзе далей – выходзіць з дыхатамічнай візіі нацыяналізму і прапануе «альтэрнатыўнае нацыятварэнне» (Фурс 2008) шляхам улічваньня розных пазыцыяў і падыходаў, бо важнай умовай разьвіцьця беларускага праекту сучаснасьці зьяўляецца артыкуляцыя супольнага сацыяльнага «ўяўленьнага» (Фурс 2008). Гэты альтэрнатыўны падыход у распрацоўцы новага нацыянальнага праекту часта ігнаруюць палітолягі, застаючыся ў межах дыхатаміі грамадзянскага (канструктывісцкага) і этнічнага (эсэнсэалісцкага) нацыяналізму. А вось філэзафы і гісторыкі яшчэ раней заўважылі гэтую цікавую і сьмелую выснову (Шцитцова 2020) ці «парадокс Фурса» (Лявіцкі 2017).

2. Крытычная адаптацыя да беларускага кантэксту заходніх канцэптаў, у прыватнасьці, «публічнай сфэры» К. Кастарыядыса (Фурс 2006). У. Фурс адным зь першых у беларускай навуковай прасторы патлумачыў прынцыповае адрозьненне паміж публічным і прыватным у дэмакратыі і недэмакратыі (дзякуючы

канцэпту «публічнай сфэры» Кастарыядыса). Ён прадэманстраваў адрозьненне ня толькі на роўні тэрмінаў («публічная сфэра» ў дэмакратыі і «публічнасьць» ва ўмовах аўтарытарызму; такім парадкам, публічнай сфэры ў недэмакратыі не існуе — толькі пэўная публічнасьць), але і на зьмястоўным роўні (у дэмакратыі існуе рэальная аўтаномія прыватнага, у дадатак у дэмакратыі ў наяўнасьці прамежкавы стан паміж публічным і прыватным — г. зьв. «праект аўтаноміі»).

3. Вызначэньне паняткаў «дэмакратыя» і «недэмакратыя» з дапамогай архаічнага азначэньня «народаўладзьдзе» і зноў жа канцэптаў К. Кастарыядыса (Фурс 2005, 2006). У. Фурс вельмі дакладна, кропкава, а таму часам і больш даступна за калегаў-палітолягаў давёў, чаму Беларусь не дэмакратыя: дзякуючы Кастарыядысавым паняткам «аўтаномія», «прынцып аўтаноміі палітычнай супольнасьці», які фармуе калектыўную самадзейнасьць і роўнасьць палітычных гульцоў у дэмакратыі (Фурс 2006: 15). Мы назіраем шмат гадоў, што ў Беларусі дадзены прынцып не працуе: празрыстасьці і рэфлексійнасьці ўлада не дэманструе, навідавоку хіба вэртыкаль рэжыму, кантроль палітычнага поля, а таксама запалохваньне і гвалт палітычных гульцоў, што руйнуе любую спробу мінімальнай аўтаноміі. Таксама цікавы і важны паняткавы ровень «народаўладзьдзя»: на сучасным этапе хіба аўтарытарныя краіны зьвяртаюцца да падобнага архаічнага этымалягічнага азначэньня, якое на Захадзе здаўна не сустракаецца.

4. Зрэшты, трэба коротка спыніцца на тэксьце «“Феміністска-соцыялістычная” крытычная тэорыя позднега капіталізма Н. Фрэйзер» (Фурс 2004): тут вартае ўвагі ня проста апісаньне «постсацыялісцкай палітычнай імажынарыі» ці «постсацыялісцкага стану» (Фурс 2004), а перадусім разуменьне прычынаў зацягласці дэмакратычнага транзыту, важнасьці фэмінісцкай крытыкі існых дэмакратычных сыстэмаў і актуальнасьці публічнай фэмінісцкай позвы дня. Да ўсяго мысьляр усьлед за Н. Фрэйзэр закранае тэму маргіналізацыі ў постсацыялісцкім стане ня толькі кабетаў, але «гомасэксуальных статусных групаў» (Фурс 2004: 95–96). Гэты невялікі аналіз тым ня менш ёсьць надзвычай сьмелым і карысным у разуменьні стэрэатыпаў і страхав, якія дамінуюць у недэмакратыі ў дачыненні да гэндарнай і ЛГБТК+ тэмы і гэндарнай позвы наагул. Дарэчы, многія сучасныя беларускія мысьляры дасюль асьцярожнічаюць з тэмай ЛГБТК+, пазьбягаюць сумысьля выкарыстоўваць прыклады, зьвязаныя з гэтай тэмай, ці працаваць з тэмай маргіналізацыі на прыкладах гей і/ці лесьбі-супольнасьцяў. У. Фурс ня быў дасьледнікам ЛГБТК+супольнасьці, аднак стаў адным зь першых беларускіх мысьляроў, хто выразна і поўна ў апісаньні постсацыялісцкага стану ўлічыў нароўні з маргіналізацыяй кабетаў нябачнасьць геяў.

Такім парадкам, каштоўныя напрацоўкі філэзафа і мысьляра палітычнага выкарыстоўваюцца міждысцыплінарна, ці, як казаў сам аўтар, «трансысцыплінарна» (Фурс 2002, 2012), у тым ліку ў паліталёгіі. Крытычная рэакцыя палітолягаў на выступы і тэксты У. Фурса часткова апраўданая і пры гэтым дэманструе пэўны дзялёг паміж навукоўцамі адначасова розных і супольных тэарэтычных і дасьледчых палёў (Казакевіч 2005). Філязофская і палітычная думка У. Фурса — багатая, разнастайная, «універсальная і агульназначная», па словах філэзафкі В. Шпарагі (Шпарага 2012: 16). Аднак кожная мадэль мае пэўныя слабыя зьвёны: так, не зважаючы на крытычнасьць у аналізе беларускай і наагул постсацыялістычнай палітычнай сытуацыі, мысьляр часам перабольшвае з універсалістычным падыходам, трапляючы ў пастку каляніялізму. У сваёй рэцэнзіі «Арыенталізм», альбо некалькі заўваг пра “казус Беларусь” палітоляг А. Казакевіч зрагаваў на чатыры публікацыі ў часопісе «Горы» 2005 году (Фурс 2005; Щитцова 2005; Горных 2005; Пікулік 2005) і зьвярнуў увагу на хібы ўнівэрсальных схемаў думаньня і аналізу, «пазбаўленых кантэксту», да якіх часта зьвяртаюцца беларускія інтэлектуалы ЭГУ (Казакевіч 2005). А. Казакевіча асабліва здзівілі перакруты ўнівэрсалізму і стэрэатыпізацыі беларускасьці ў тэкстах выкладнікаў ЭГУ, у меншай ступені У. Фурса (Казакевіч 2005). Іншы дасьледнік, філэзаф А. Анціпенка яшчэ больш крытычна зрагаваў на тую ж самую публікацыю У. Фурса (Фурс 2005), падкрэсьліўшы каляніялістычную лёгіку думаньня мысьляра і ягоную належнасьць да іншай культурнай прасторы (Анціпенка 2012: 50–52).

У межах дэкаляніялістычнага падыходу варта дапоўніць крытыку: хоць трэба прызнаць аналіз беларускага нацыянальнага праекту Ў. Фурса сьмелым і цікавым, мысьляр усё ж, падаецца, не прысьвяціў належнай увагі тэме беларускамоўнасьці і маштабу праблемы русіфікацыі ды беларусафобіі, зь якой сутыкнулася беларуская культура ў апошнія дзесяцігодзьдзі і стагодзьдзі. Якраз гэты момант абумовіў крытыку А. Анціпенкі, які аднёс У. Фурса да «іншай культурнай прасторы» (Анціпенка 2012: 50–52). Згода, што беларускамоўны праект — элітыстычны і эксклюзіўны, але варта ня проста канстатаваць, а разумець і тлумачыць прычыны гэтай зьявы і наагул зьявы маргінальнасьці беларускамоўных. Вядома, з пазыцыі ўнівэрсалізму ды расейскамоўнасьці і расейскадумнасьці любы партыкулярызм будзе трактавацца як эксклюзіўны. Якраз (ня)веданьне і (не)адчуваньне кантэксту ўваходзіць у канфлікт зь філязофскім унівэрсалізмам.

Зь большага У. Фурс па-філязофску, то бок досыць карэктна і ўнівэрсальна выказваецца, калі аналізуе беларускае нацыянальнае наагул і розныя ягоныя праекты (ад этнанацыяналізму да расейскамоўнага беларускага нацыяналізму і завяршаючы

грамадзянскім нацыяналізмам) (Фурс 2008а). Аднак аўтар крыху па-папулісцку ці не зусім акуратна выкарыстоўвае выраз «прапаганда беларускай мовы» ў сваёй крытыцы мадэлі этнанацыяналізму (Фурс 2008а: 89). І тут можна пабачыць пэўныя паралелі з дыскурсам афіцыйнага менскага рэжыму, які безупынку паляхае грамадства прапагандай беларускай мовы, якую аўтаматычна звязвае зь дзейнасьцю апазыцыі ці, паводле азначэньня А. Лукашэнкі, з «бэчэбэшнымі вар’ятамі» (Лукашэнка 2022). Так, мова — важны, калі ня першы элемэнт этнанацыяналізму, але ў беларускім кантэксьце варта быць вельмі асьцярожным у абагульненьнях наконт мовы і ейнай прапаганды: сярод беларускай апазыцыі зусім мала сілаў, рухаў, якія прапагандавалі беларускую мову. У мінулым хіба БНФ актыўна і прынцыпова выступаў і прапагандаваў беларускую мову, большасьць сілаў апазыцыі выступалі ў падтрымку беларускай мовы і зусім не адмаўляліся ад расейскай. Таму рэжымны страх перад прапагандай беларускай мовы часткова распаўсюдзіўся і сярод прадэмакратычных расейскамоўных беларусаў. У гэтым ключы можна ўспрыняць заўвагу У. Фурса. Зрэшты, і пасьля 2020 году беларускамоўны праект ня стаў унівэрсальным: не зважаючы на эўфарыю і выбух інтарэсу да беларускай мовы ў выніку рэвалюцыі годнасьці, беларускамоўны праект застаецца элітысцкім, моцна сымбалічным і досыць абмежаваным у колькасным пляне (як у самой Беларусі, так і ў замежжы ці выгнаньні) (Нагорная 2023). Не беларуская мова, не этнанацыянальны праект запрацавалі ў 2020 годзе і пазьней, а якраз тое, аб чым пісаў У. Фурс, — хаўрус усіх сілаў разам, «альянс (найперш беларускага этнанацыяналізму, расейскамоўнага беларускага нацыяналізму, “эўраінтэгратараў” і “касмапалітычных лібэралаў”» (Фурс 2008а: 90).

Таксама неабходна прыгадаць некарэктнае і каляніялісцкае абагульненьне У. Фурса, калі ў артыкуле «Контуры сучаснай крытычнай тэорыі» ён ужыў азначэньне «расейская філязофія», падразумяваючы пад ім усю «постсавецкую расейскамоўную інтэлектуальную прастору» (Фурс 2012: 8). Беларускія падзеі 2020 году і вайна ва Ўкраіне давалі немагчымасьць і нават небажальнасьць падобнага абагульненьня — цяпер ужываньне паняткаў кшталту «постсавецкі», «расейскамоўны» і падобных вымагае пільнасьці, скрайняй карэктнасьці, а часам, магчыма, перагляду і адмовы ад некаторых зь іх. Зрэшты, вайна ва Ўкраіне прадэманстравала, да чаго вядзе нібыта расейскі і расейскамоўны ўнівэрсалізм, а таму ў аналізе сучаснай украінскай сытуацыі можа быць карыснай мадэль «альтэрнатыўнага нацыятварэньня», ужытая У. Фурсам у дачыненні да разьвіцьця сучаснага беларускага нацыяналізму і нацыятварэньня (Фурс 2008). Такая ж мадэль — шляхам улічваньня розных пазыцыяў і падыходаў, а галоўнае — з акцэнтам на

артыкуляцыі супольнага сацыяльнага «ўяўленага», нават ва ўмовах вайны, назіраецца ва Украіне.

Заканчэнне

На сутыку сацыяльнай тэорыі і палітычнай думкі паўстаў альтэрнатыўны пэрспектыўны падыход у сацыяльных навукках, у тым ліку ў беларускім кантэксце. У. Фурс стаўся адным зь першых беларускіх мысляроў гэтай тэндэнцыі, які не застаўся ў межах адной дысцыпліны — у ягоным выпадку філязофіі, — а крочыў у міждысцыплінарнае поле, смела закрануўшы палітычную навуку, палітычную філязофію, сацыяльную тэорыю, стварыўшы, такім чынам, істотна новы, крытычны погляд на фэномэн палітычнага (і што важна — палітычнага ва ўмовах беларускай недэмакратыі). У. Фурс ня толькі філэзаф, але і мысляр палітычнага, які стаў нароўні з калегамі-палітолягамі (У. Роўдам, В. Чарновым, І. Бугровай, В. Карбалевічам, С. Панькоўскім ды некаторымі іншымі) у 90-я гады мінулага стагодзьдзя адным зь першых у Беларусі тэарэтыкаў і адаптатараў многіх заходніх канцэптаў для разуменьня і рэфармаваньня беларускай рэальнасьці. Разам з узгаданымі палітолягамі У. Фурс спрычыніўся да інтрадукцыі і знаёмства як беларускай акадэміі ў стане постсацыялісцкай трансфармацыі, так і грамадства наагул з сучаснай крытычнай сацыяльнай тэорыяй.

Дзякуючы філязофскаму досьведу, адукацыі, а таксама міждысцыплінарнай прызьме, уласьцівай крытычнай сацыяльнай тэорыі, У. Фурс часам сьмялей і даступней за калегаў-палітолягаў прааналізаваў пэўныя важныя палітычныя / паліталёгічныя тэмы: публічная сфэра ў дэмакратыі, публічнасьць ва ўмовах аўтарытарызму, дэмакратыя-«народаўладзьдзе», недэмакратыя, беларуская ідэнтычнасьць, нацыянальны праект і пад. Ён прапанаваў каштоўныя і дасюль карысныя высновы-напрацоўкі ў пытаньні вызначэньня недэмакратычнасьці Беларусі, у тлумачэньні ўстойлівасьці беларускага аўтарытарызму. Асобнае месца ў ягонай інтэлектуальнай думцы належыць рэфлексіі на тэму беларускага нацыянальнага праекту: так, канструктыўны трансдысцыплінарны альтэрнатыўны погляд мысляра на спалучэньне элемэнтаў як грамадзянскага, так і этнанацыяналізму ў беларускай нацыятворчай мадэлі будучыні заслугоўвае ўвагі, за што атрымаў назоў «парадокс Фурса» (Лявіцкі 2017). Не зважаючы на пэўную крытыку з боку некаторых дасьледнікаў — палітоляга А. Казакевіча (Казакевіч 2005) і філэзафа А. Анціпенкі (Анціпенка 2012: 50–52), палітычная думка У. Фурса застаецца актуальнай, крытычнай, лібэральнай і праэўрапейскай. А галоўнае — нарэшце ягоная спадчына перакладаецца на беларускую, аналізуецца ня толькі філэзафамі,

уводзіцца ў актыўны палітычны аналіз, што дазваляе назваць заўчасна памерлага праэўрапейскага філэзафа да ўсяго мысляром палітычнага.

References

- Antsipyenka, A. (2012). *Byts' (prysutnym. Vil'nya: Byelaruski kalyehiyum.* — In Bel.
[Анціпенка, А. (2012). *Быць (пры)сутным.* Вільня: Беларускі калегіум.]
- Gornyh, A. (2005). *Belarus': sluchaj antimodernoj ideologii. Topos 1 (10): 29–34.* — In Rus.
[Горных, А. (2005). *Беларусь: случай антимодерной идеологии.*]
- Ivanou, U., Stsyapanau, A. (2021). *lya vytokaw byelaruskay palitychnay navuki. Vil'nya: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Belarus.* — In Bel.
[Іваноў, У., Сцяпанаў, А. (2021). *Ля вытокаў беларускай палітычнай навукі.* Вільня: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Belarus.]
- Ivanou, U., Stsiapanau A. (2021). *At the Origins of Belarusian Political Science. Vilnius: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Belarus.*
- Kazakuevich, A. (2005). «Арыенталізм», альбо някалькі заўваг пра «казус Беларусь». *ARCHE 6.* <https://xn--d1ag.xn--e1a4c/pub/arche/html/2005-6/kazakievic605.htm> (accessed: 20.01.2025). — In Bel.
[Казакевіч, А. (2005). «Арыенталізм», альбо некалькі заўваг пра «казус Беларусь». *ARCHE 6.*]
- Kanfyerentsyya «Kontury suchasnay krytychnay teoryi», prysvyechanaya pamyatsi byelaruskaha filosaфа Uladzimira Foursa, proydzye w EHU. *Reform.news 31.03.2024.* [https://reform.news/...](https://reform.news/) (accessed: 20.01.2025). — In Bel.
[Канферэнцыя «Контурсы сучаснай крытычнай тэорыі», прысвечаная памяці беларускага філосафа Уладзіміра Фурса, пройдзе ў ЕГУ.]
- LCSP Laboratoire du Changement Social et Politique. <https://lcsu.u-paris.fr/axes-de-recherche/theorie-sociale-et-pensee-politique/> (accessed: 20.01.2025).
- Lukašenka, A. (2022). *Blagodara etim bezumcam bcb-snym my, kak govorat, vyplesnuli i rebenka «belaruskuu movu».* *ONT 25.01.2022.* [https://www.youtube.com/...](https://www.youtube.com/) (accessed: 20.05.2025). — In Rus.
[Лукашенко, А. (2022). *Благодаря этим безумцам бчб-шным мы, как говорят, выплеснули и ребенка «беларускую мову».* *ОНТ.*]
- Lyavitski, A. (2017). *Chamu «svyadomaya historyya» мае buduchynyu. Nasha Niva 11.10.2017.* <https://nashaniva.com/198758>. (accessed: 20.01.2025). — In Bel.
[Лявіцкі, А. (2017). *Чаму «свядомая гісторыя» мае будучыню.* *Наша Ніва.*]
- Nahornaja, A. (2023). *Dastupnasc' i dyskryminacyja bielaruskaj movy u Bielarusi.* [https://belinstitute.com/...](https://belinstitute.com/) (accessed: 20.05.2025). — In Bel.
[Нагорная, А. (2023). *Даступнасць і дыскрымінацыя беларускай мовы ў Беларусі.*]
- Pikulik, A. (2005). *Matritsa, paternalizm i sem'ya-strana. Antropologiya beloruskoy ideologii. Topos 1 (10): 35–39.* — In Rus.
[Пикулик, А. (2005). *Матрица, патернализм и семья-страна. Антропология белорусской идеологии.*]

- Fours, V. (2000). Globalizatsiya zhiznennogo mira v svete sosial'noy teorii. *Obshchestvennyye nauki i sovremennost'* 6: 128–139. — In Rus.
[Фурс, В. (2000). Глобализация жизненного мира в свете социальной теории...]
- Fours, V. (2001). Kontury sovremennoy kriticheskoy teorii. *Topos* 1 (4): 92–95. — In Rus.
[Фурс, В. (2001). Контуры современной критической теории.]
- Fours, V. (2004). «Feministski-sotsialisticheskaya» kriticheskaya teoriya pozdnego kapitalizma N. Freyzer. *Polis* 6: 89–101. — In Rus.
[Фурс, В. (2004). «Феминистски-социалистическая» критическая теория позднего капитализма Н. Фрэйзер.]
- Fours, V. (2005). Belaruskaya «real'nost'» v svete koordinat globalizatsii. *Topos* 10: 5–18. — In Rus.
[Фурс, В. (2005). Белорусская «реальность» в системе координат глобализации.]
- Fours, V. (2006). «Vlast' naroda»: sovremennyye predstavleniya o demokratii. *Topos* 13: 15–24. — In Rus.
[Фурс, В. (2006). «Власть народа»: современные представления о демократии...]
- Fours, V., Dunayev, V. (2007). Resovetizatsiya belorusskikh universitetov. In: *Vyssheye obrazovaniye v Belarusi*. Vil'nyus: EGU. — In Rus.
[Фурс, В., Дунаев, В. (2007). Ресоветизация белорусских университетов.]
- Fours, U. (2008a). Strukturnyya pryntsypy al'ternatywnaha natsyyatvaren'nya. *ARCHE* 11: 85–90. — In Bel.
[Фурс, У. (2008a). Структурные принципы альтернатывнага нацыятварэння.]
- Fours, V. (2008b). Vvedeniye: Transformatsii publichnosti. In: *Postsovetskaya publichnost'*. Vil'nyus: EGU. — In Rus.
[Фурс, В. (2008b). Введение: Трансформации публичности и постсоветская ситуация.]
- Fours, U. (2008c). (Re)thinking the «public sphere» with Arendt and Habermas. *Topos* 2 (19): 94–100.
- Fours, V. (2012). Kontury sovremennoy kriticheskoy teorii. In: *Sochineniya*. Tom 2. Vil'nyus: EGU. — In Rus.
[Фурс, В. (2012). Контуры современной критической теории.]
- Fours, U. (2018). K voprosu o «belorusskoy identichnosti». In: *Sochineniya*. Tom 1. Vil'nyus: EGU. — In Rus.
[Фурс, У. (2018). К вопросу о «белорусской идентичности».]
- Fours, U. (2024). *Byelarus' u svyatylye suchasnay krytychnay teoryi*. Ed. V. Furs, A. Ralyonka. Vil'nya: Lohvinaw. — In Bel.
[Фурс, У. (2024). Беларусь у святле сучаснай крытычнай тэоры.]
- Shparaga, O. (2012). Predisloviye. In: *Fours, V. Sochineniya*. Tom 1. Vil'nyus: EGU. — In Rus.
[Шпарара, О. (2012). Предисловие.]
- Shchytsova, T. (2005). Pod patronazhem: avtoritarnyi rezhim v svete kulturnoi antropologii. *Topos* 1 (10): 19–28. — In Rus.
[Щитцова, Т. (2005). Под патронажем: авторитарный режим в свете культурной антропологии.]
- Shchytsova, T. (2020). In Memoriam. Vladimir Fours. *Topos* 2: 7–10. — In Rus.
[Щитцова, Т. (2020). In Memoriam. Владимир Фурс.]

THE METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

Daria Synhaievska

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-143-152>

© Daria Synhaievska

PhD obtainer National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

Salskoho str. 34, Kyiv, 04060, Ukraine

Email: dsynhaievska@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0951-9821>

Abstract: The foundations of deliberative democracy rest on ideals of communicative rationality, as articulated by Jürgen Habermas, a key representative of the Frankfurt School's second generation. Emerging from critical theory's broader critique of instrumental rationality, deliberative democracy emphasizes public discourse and consensus as essential mechanisms for legitimate governance. This model assumes that through discourse ethics, diverse societal interests can converge toward norms, transcending partial biases. However, in times of uncertainty – particularly during war or social upheaval – these assumptions face significant challenges. The historical context of the Frankfurt School's development underscores this point. Established amidst the European crises of the early 20th century, critical theorists like Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer grappled with the failures of rationality that led to totalitarianism. The critique of deliberative democracy in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war highlights the need to reassess the theory's practical and ethical foundations. While deliberative democracy aspires to foster inclusivity and legitimacy through rational discourse, its application during periods of profound uncertainty exposes critical vulnerabilities. These include the challenges of relativism, asymmetrical power dynamics, and the ethical risks of procedural neutrality. The aim of this study is to probe the practical applicability and evaluate the core epistemological and ethical assumptions of deliberative democracy, particularly its Habermasian formulations, when



confronted with conditions of uncertainty. It critically examines the theoretical underpinnings of deliberative democracy, its limitations, and the ethical dilemmas posed by its procedural inclusivity. Methodological approach taken in this article builds upon case study to illustrate the limitations of deliberative democracy, and draws on critical theory – especially those of Theodor Adorno and Jürgen Habermas – to evaluate its epistemological and ethical assumptions.

Keywords: democratic regime, democracy, transformations, Ukraine, ethics.

Introduction

The post-World War II reflections of critical theorists extended into practical philosophy, addressing issues of guilt, memory, and the ethical responsibilities of societies. Theodor Adorno's critique of the "dominant reason" underscores the limitations of instrumental rationality when applied without ethical substance, leading to what he termed the "unreason of the dominant reason". This critique is pertinent when evaluating modern deliberative frameworks, especially in their handling of complex geopolitical challenges.

The horrors of the twentieth century prompted reflection on how they were allowed to happen and what could prevent similar catastrophes in the future. Amid above-mentioned background, the existentialism of Albert Camus, the humanistic psychoanalysis of Viktor Frankl, and the critical theory of Frankfurt School – particularly that of Theodor Adorno – all addressed questions of practical philosophy and sought to clarify the function of morality in society. Theory and praxis create a continuum for theorising the problem and translating it into practice. Consequently, the totalizing theories that contributed to the Second World War and the Holocaust have been questioned, as they shaped history through *pathos* – learning through suffering. In Immanuel Kant's terms, the abyss of experience (*bathos*) expands our knowledge and situates us in space and time. *Diastatic* time, unlike linear time, implies stumbling or interruption. Responses to the war are both separated and linked across time and space through what Emmanuel Levinas calls *diastasis*. This diastasis is, for example, Jacob's limp after the *pathos* of the struggle with the angel, or in our context, the blindness of some representatives of deliberative democracy theory to the *pathos* of the Russo-Ukrainian war. The experience of trauma often manifests as a disjunction between the moment of impact and the capacity for response thus creating a delayed interplay of *pathos* – the immediate emotional and psychological disruption and the

subsequent response, which frequently arrives too late to mitigate the initial impact. War, as evidenced by contemporary experiences, is not a linear or comprehensible sequence but an eruption that arrives either prematurely or belatedly, defying the measured constructs of theoretical analysis. The scale and brutality of Russia's aggression against Ukraine have reignited reflections reminiscent of Theodor Adorno's critique. Adorno posited that the rise of European fascism marked not only a societal collapse but also a profound failure of theoretical constructs to anticipate, explain, or prevent such atrocities. Similarly, the Russo-Ukrainian war challenges the capacity of modern theory to grapple with the magnitude of evil, illustrating the limits of intellectual paradigms in the face of systemic violence and moral breakdown.

This article employs a qualitative methodological approach grounded in critical theory, using the Russo-Ukrainian war as a case study. The analysis draws significantly on Habermas's concepts of communicative rationality, the ideal speech situation, discourse ethics (Principles U and D). It also delves into Habermas's own critical theory roots (emancipation, critique of domination) to examine potential internal tensions or inconsistencies when his framework is applied to the times of uncertainty. Moreover, the paper situates the Russo-Ukrainian war as the particular case study of the times of uncertainty and identifies specific elements within this context that serve as focal points for analysis – primarily Habermas's *Süddeutsche Zeitung* op-ed, that illustrate the dilemmas of applying deliberative ideals, thus limitations in applicability. This methodological design aimed at revealing a tension between the procedural demands of deliberative democracy and the substantive ethical demands in the times of uncertainty.

Given the above, the research aims to define and explicate the core tenets of Habermasian deliberative democracy – focusing on communicative rationality, the ideal speech situation, and discourse ethics (Principles U and D) – and to articulate the specific tensions that arise when juxtaposing these ideals with the realities of the case study (e.g., procedural inclusivity vs. substantive justice; idealized rationality vs. strategic action or violence).

Deliberative democracy is rooted in two distinct traditions that reflect opposing normative commitments and emphases on freedom – the theories of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas. As Christian Rostbøll sketches, Rawls conception of freedom is rooted in the liberal tradition of tolerance and accommodation, tracing back to John Locke. In contrast, Jürgen Habermas draws from a critical tradition inspired by

Karl Marx, which interprets freedom as a process of liberation from repressive apparatus (Rostbøll 2008: 708). These two approaches give rise to different ideas about the purpose of debate: for John Rawls, it is a mechanism of accommodation and reconciliation between conflicting positions, while for Jürgen Habermas, debate is a tool of learning and emancipation. Critical theory, in contrast to traditional theory, is defined as being “committed to bringing social conditions free from domination” (Kompridis 2006: 20). In order to free oneself from preformed needs and domination, one must emancipate oneself by acquiring a subjectivity that facilitates the encounter of the heterogeneous. The idea of overcoming all forms of oppression lies in the attempt to preserve agency in the structures of domination. For Jürgen Habermas, the method of preserving this agency is the communicative action for the “discursive exercise of political autonomy” (Habermas 1996: 121). In this tradition, proponents of deliberative democracy view its potential in the emancipation of political actors from repressive forms of domination, drawing its heuristic power from critical theory. The methodological core of deliberative democracy is the conditions of communication and the relief from positivist outlook on the social structure as immutable. At the same time, Jürgen Habermas’s ideal speech situation has already been criticised in academic circles. For example, Margaret Kohn approaches this issue from the perspective of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s understanding of language, doubting that the ideal speech situation serves the basis for rational decision-making. Ludwig Wittgenstein shrewdly points out the importance of political and social context for the analysis of communication (Kohn 2000: 411). Contrary, when Jürgen Habermas presents a “validity claim”, which means asserting a truth or normative rightness, the idea of shared cultural knowledge and values is involved. Therefore, the question on differences of “lifeworlds” occurs. The solution to this enigma is introduced in Rawlsian idea of public reason that secures the concept of reasonable pluralism, rather than mere pluralism.

In the theoretical frameworks of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, reasonableness occupies a central yet distinct role, reflecting their differing philosophical commitments. John Rawls emphasizes a substantive logic of reasonableness, rooted in shared principles and normative content that guide cooperative deliberation in a pluralistic society. This approach prioritizes the articulation of mutually acceptable terms of social cooperation, grounded in the substantive values of fairness and justice. In contrast, Jürgen Habermas situates reasonableness within a framework of formal criticality, emphasizing the procedural dimensions of rational discourse. For Jürgen Habermas, reasonableness is less about pre-defined normative content and more

about the critical processes that enable participants in dialogue to test and refine validity claims. This approach highlights the emancipatory potential of reasonableness as a tool for uncovering and addressing power imbalances and ideological distortions.

The divergence between these approaches underscores a fundamental distinction between content reasonableness and form reasonableness. John Rawls' content-oriented perspective seeks to establish consensus through shared substantive values, while Jürgen Habermas' form-oriented perspective emphasizes the procedural integrity of deliberation itself, ensuring that the "force of the better argument" prevails. This conceptual difference shapes not only their respective understanding of reasonableness but also their broader theories of justice, democracy, and social interaction. Content reasonableness is the idea that Jürgen Habermas's deliberative democracy lacks and makes it heuristically weak and struggles "with a conundrum, not wanting to resuscitate liberal humanism and its associated fixed notions of justice, but at the same time wanting to make political commitments to specific struggles" (Hyndman 2010), as it sets reasonableness as a pre-deliberative boundary.

This theoretical ambiguity becomes particularly evident in times of uncertainty, such as the Russo-Ukrainian war. Jürgen Habermas illustrates this dilemma in his widely discussed essay in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, channeling the idea of "saving the face of both sides of the conflict" (Habermas, n.d.). Additionally, his argument contains a logical fallacy: although he initially presents two actors – Ukraine and Russia – he ultimately concludes that the West should propose its own initiatives for negotiations, disregarding the position of the Ukrainian government. In his opinion, allowing Ukraine, its military and political leadership to decide when negotiations with the aggressor will be possible is "sleepwalking on the edge of the abyss" (Habermas, n.d.). Moreover, Noam Chomsky has hinted that the war in Ukraine can be blamed on both sides, but only in a sarcastic way: "Putin is as concerned about democracy as we are" (Chomsky 2022). For some reason, when putting the climate crisis and Russia's war against Ukraine in the same row, calling on Ukrainians to surrender to Russia in the same way they would have surrendered to a "hurricane" (Robinson 2022), the trap of appeasing the nature appears. At the same time, it is regarded as an attempt to free the Kremlin from the historical context of the Bolshevik crimes and to present the Russian aggression against Ukraine as a reified, naturalised catastrophe. To present Russian aggression as natural catastrophe means to naturalise the artificial famine of 1921–1923, which was directly planned by Lenin to "re-educate" the Ukrainian peasantry, which resisted the establishment of state farms

and communes, Holodomor of 1932–1933, organised by Moscow, the executions in Babyn Yar, Bykivnia, and others. The deliberate neglect of the millions of victims reflects a sacrifice of human lives to uphold ideological purity, further solidifying the power of totalitarian systems. This sacrifice is part of a broader historical shift that emerged after World War II, where the collapse of faith in humanity's capacity for reason became central. The very idea of man as the ultimate bearer of reason was undermined by the disturbing reality that individuals, despite their rational potential, could succumb to irrational and oppressive orders. These totalitarian systems did not solely rely on brute force but operated through the subtle domination and manipulation of consciousness, rendering individuals passive and unfree. In this context, the critique of ideology becomes crucial, as it exposes how distorted interpretations of reason transform ideals like “democracy” into mechanisms of authoritarianism and “freedom” into mere justifications for economic exploitation, while perpetuating deep-seated structural injustices.

Jürgen Habermas proposed to eliminate the pervasive delusion of rational reason by creating a normative foundation of discourse ethics to commence a “communicative turn”, reformulating social criticism in terms of criticism of the conditions of communication. Jürgen Habermas insists on the need to situate reason within social reality, deducing two principles of discourse ethics: the universality principle U and the discourse principle D. Principle U is adhered to if: “All affected can accept the consequences and the side effects, its general observance can be anticipated to have for the satisfaction of everyone's interests (and these consequences are preferred to those of known alternative possibilities for regulation)” (Habermas 1995: 65).

Jürgen Habermas suggests that in ideal discourses, participants necessarily make ideal assumptions, which can then be used to identify and critique the shortcomings of practical discourse distorted by interests, power relations, and ideologies. The universality principle U is intended to achieve interest generalisation. In trying to formulate a universality of interests, Jürgen Habermas encourages the discourse participants to take a step back and experience the view of the Other, to engage in a universal exchange of roles. He believes that in each and every practical discourse a unifying norm can be crafted that can be agreed upon regardless of worldviews or even existences (the participants in the discourse should not only be preoccupied with on-time problem solving, but also take the generations into account). Principle U assumes that everyone is capable of accepting norms on the same basis and in the same interest. To assume that everyone has the same interest in the norm and accepts it in the same way and addresses it

on the same basis would be an inadmissible generalisation. For example, not to cause unnecessary pain to others is a norm that should be validated by the U procedure. At the same time, the world community witnesses the torture of Ukrainian prisoners of war by the Russian occupiers is widespread. According to Jürgen Habermas's logic, this means something is wrong with the procedure. The fact is that an interest is distributively universalised if and only if everyone can agree that they have their own such interest. In *Justification and Application*, Habermas draws a connection between justice and universal solidarity. By equating justice with universal solidarity, we should get "solidarity with everything that bears the mark of humanity". But why hasn't this happened in the eight years of negotiations with Russia? Does it turn out that the rational mind allowed Auschwitz, but the mind of discourse ethics allowed Bucha? If the tyranny of the rational mind, mathematically measured, tried to bend nature to its purposes, is the tyranny of the unlimited consensus of discourse ethics trying to bend culture? The latter is fundamentally human-centred, and therefore designed both for and about humanity. However, both twentieth-century Nazism and the Russism stand in stark opposition to this foundation. These ideologies cannot be classified as cultures, as their core ethos is directed against the very essence of humanity. This opposition underscores a critical tension within the deliberative democracy paradigm: the absolutized drive to negotiate with all parties, even those fundamentally opposed to humanistic values, risks becoming a form of tyranny. It represents the imposition of culture upon non-culture, where the commitment to dialogue inadvertently legitimizes forces that seek to undermine its core principles. This failure highlights the need to critically reassess the boundaries and conditions under which the deliberative ideal can be applied without compromising its ethical and humanistic essence.

Another principle that Jürgen Habermas puts forward is the discourse principle D: "Only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse" (Habermas 1995: 66). Advocates of deliberative democracy, who uphold the principle that all participants in discourse must reach consensus on norms, reveal a fundamental inconsistency when they disregard the perspectives of critical stakeholders. For instance, proclaiming that peace in the Russo-Ukrainian war should be achieved while sidelining the Ukrainian government's position – characterizing it as "sleepwalking on the edge of a cliff" – betrays the very principles of inclusive deliberation. This approach undermines the concept itself, as it denies the validity of one party's voice in the pursuit of consensus. Such a contradiction not only exposes the

limits of applying deliberative democracy in contexts of aggression and asymmetrical power but also demonstrates how idealized frameworks falter when faced during the times of uncertainty. To remain coherent, the theory must critically account for power dynamics and the ethical imperatives of justice, particularly in cases where one party's exclusion would fundamentally violate the principles of fairness and mutual respect central to deliberative engagement.

For Jürgen Habermas, discourse ethics presents a universal theory of morality, positioning itself beyond the confines of cultural and historical particularities. However, his rejection of an a priori moral foundation for intersubjective discussions and his departure from the egalitarian underpinnings of Kantian ethics reveal a critical oversight. By doing so, Jürgen Habermas disregards the foundational conditions necessary for the validity of a norm. In Jürgen Habermas's framework, reality is contingent upon the collective approval of all participants engaged in a communicative action. Yet, his focus remains on the formal correctness of the process rather than on the ethical substance of the outcomes. The question of whether an action is ethically good is replaced by an emphasis on procedural justice, where the act of participation itself is equated with fairness.

This shift leads Habermas to prioritize the norm of unconditional involvement as morally right, sidelining the ethical evaluation of value choices. In this view, the legitimacy of norms emerges from consensus-driven processes, but it risks ignoring the deeper ethical dimensions that should underpin those norms, potentially reducing morality to a function of procedural inclusion rather than substantive justice. That is, there is a distinction between moral questions about norms and ethical questions about values: "The first part of the domain of the practical, which consists of norms, is susceptible to the requirement of moral justification in terms of its deontological validity; the second part, which consists of particular value configurations belonging to collective and individual modes of life, is not" (Habermas 1995: 177). However, values should influence norms. And this has no place in Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative rationality, who uses "rational" as a dispositional predicate: "Thus assertions and goal-directed actions are the more rational the better the claim (to propositional truth or to efficiency) that is connected with them can be defended against criticism" (Habermas 1984: 9). But does the claim to propositional truth of a goal-directed action make it rational? For example, imagine that during the Minsk process, Participant Y receives an unknown call saying "Destroy the Minsk agreements". Suppose that Participant Y starts eating all the papers because they believe that this is an effective method of destroying them. This behavior would

be considered irrational, since the rationality of an action includes not least the rationality of the motives that drive it; however, according to Jürgen Habermas's definition above, this action is merely "rational": "In all cases, the teleological structure of action is presupposed, insofar as the capacity for goal-setting and goal-directed action is ascribed to actors, as well as an interest in carrying out their plans of action" (Habermas, 1984, p. 101). This limited rationality does not describe the actual rationality of an action, but only the procedural rationality. An action that is rational only in an instrumental sense is as much a kind of rational action as Russian "peace" actions are a kind of peace.

Conclusion

Deliberative democracy seeks to include diverse perspectives to achieve legitimate outcomes. However, in the context of war, not all voices contribute equally to the pursuit of justice. Inviting aggressor states or their sympathizers into deliberative processes risks legitimizing violence and perpetuating injustice. This dilemma underscores the ethical challenge of maintaining deliberative inclusivity without compromising moral clarity. In the case of Ukraine, calls for negotiations that overlook the nation's right to self-determination illustrate how procedural neutrality can obscure fundamental ethical distinctions between aggression and defence. Such limitations highlight a core dilemma within deliberative democracy: the assumption of symmetric participation. Habermas's principles of discourse ethics – universality (U) and discourse (D) – presume that all stakeholders share equal capacity and interest in rational consensus. Yet, as evidenced by the asymmetric nature of contemporary times of uncertainty, this presumption often fails in practice. The atrocities committed during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, for example, cannot be reconciled within a framework that demands equal consideration for aggressors and victims alike. This "tyranny of culture" over non-culture, to borrow from critical theory, illustrates the ethical blind spots inherent in communicative rationality.

Drawing on the lessons of 20th century totalitarianism and the reflections of critical theorists like Theodor Adorno and Jürgen Habermas, this article underscores the tension between communicative frameworks of rationality and the complex realities of systemic violence and moral collapse. The universality and discourse principles central to Habermas's ethics highlight the potential for rational discourse to achieve justice, yet their practical application often falters when faced with actors who fundamentally reject humanistic values.

This failure is not merely theoretical; it bears practical consequences, as seen in attempts to legitimize aggressors in the name of neutrality or compromise. To address these shortcomings, deliberative democracy must evolve beyond procedural inclusivity to incorporate substantive ethical considerations. It should distinguish between actors committed to dialogue as a means of achieving justice and those who exploit it to entrench domination. In the face of systemic violence, the commitment to dialogue must not come at the expense of moral clarity or the principles of justice. The Russo-Ukrainian war starkly illustrates that in contexts where aggression undermines the basic premises of humanity and autonomy, deliberative democracy must be applied critically and cautiously, ensuring that its ideals are not co-opted to perpetuate oppression. The path forward for deliberative democracy lies in balancing its normative aspirations with the ethical imperatives of justice and humanity. Only through such a recalibration can the theory remain relevant and effective in addressing the challenges of contemporary conflict and moral disruption.

References

- Chomsky, N. (2022). 'We're approaching the most dangerous point in human history'. *The New Statesman*, April 6. Available at: <https://chomsky.info/20220406/> (accessed 13 December 2024).
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory Of Communicative Action: Volume 1 Reason And The Rationalization Of Society*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J. (1995). *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Habermas, J. (1996). *Between facts and norms: Contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Habermas, J. A Plea for Negotiations. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Available at: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/projekte/artikel/kultur/juergen-habermas-ukraine-sz-negotiations-e480179/?reduced=true> (accessed 13 December 2024).
- Hyndman, J. (2010). The question of 'the political' in critical geopolitics: Querying the 'child soldier' in the 'war on terror'. *Political Geography*, 29: 247-255.
- Kohn, M. (2000). Language, Power, and Persuasion: Toward a Critique of Deliberative Democracy. *Constellations*, 3(3): 411. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Kompridis, N. (2006). *Critique and disclosure: Critical theory between past and future*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Robinson, N. J. (2022). Noam Chomsky on How To Prevent World War III. *Current Affairs*, April 13. Available at: <https://www.currentaffairs.org/2022/04/noam-chomsky-on-how-to-prevent-world-war-iii> (accessed 13 December 2024).
- Rostbøll, C. (2008a). Emancipation or accommodation? *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 34(7): 707-736.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH PARTICIPATORY CULTURE?

Veranika Furs

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-153-176>

@ Veranika Furs

Associate Professor, European Humanities University, Academic

Department of Social Sciences,

17 Savičiaus Str., 01127, Vilnius, Lithuania

E-mail: veronika.furs@ehu.lt

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8729-4168>

Abstract: The article proposes a systematization of perspectives on participatory culture. The relevance of this research lies in critically examining both the phenomenon of participatory culture itself and its potential for shaping what is commonly referred to as “participatory democracy”. The first section explores key concepts such as *collective intelligence*, *convergent culture*, *participatory culture*, *prosumption*, and *produsage*, accumulating positive perspectives on participatory culture. The second section analyzes the creative activity of grassroots communities through the lens of Foucault’s microphysics of power and the political-economic critique of digital capitalism, providing some critical perspectives on participation and participatory culture. The analysis of both positive and critical perspectives allows to come to conclusion that participatory culture, as Jenkins envisioned it by studying fan communities, has little in common with participatory democracy for several reasons: (1) Fan communities demonstrate a new form of escapism, directing the creative energy of their members toward immersion in the imaginary worlds of popular culture, exploring and expanding these worlds rather than addressing real social issues. (2) Modern digital culture initiates a symbiosis of humans and technologies, creating a socio-technological ecosystem in which the creative activity of prosumers, if not fully subordinated, is at least significantly dependent on software design. (3) Social media are colonized by corporations for which prosumers are a source of surplus value; therefore, speaking of the participatory nature of social networks consciously or unconsciously supports the ideology of capital.



Keywords: participatory culture, participatory democracy, digital culture, convergence culture, collective intelligence, prosumption, produsage.

The rapid development of digital technologies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries led Charles Gere to discuss the formation of a specific digital culture, in which the term “digital” defines “a particular way of life of a group or groups of people at a certain period in history. Digitality can be thought of as a marker of culture because it encompasses both the artefacts and the systems of signification and communication that most clearly demarcate our contemporary way of life from others” (Gere 2008: 16).

Noting the emergence of numerous studies on digital culture, cyberculture, electronic culture, and related topics – allowing us to speak of a distinct “discourse of digital culture” – Gere points out that this discourse is based on two interrelated beliefs: that contemporary culture represents a radical break from the past, and that it is determined by the existence of digital technologies (Gere 2008: 17). However, Gere argues that “digital technology is a product of digital culture, rather than vice versa” (Gere 2008: 17). He asserts: “Digital refers not just to the effects and possibilities of a particular technology. It defines and encompasses the ways of thinking and doing that are embodied within that technology, and which make its development possible” (Gere 2008: 17). Moreover, since Gere believes these qualities are inherent in language itself – because language is digital in nature, dealing with discrete units – “almost all human culture may be said to be digital” (Gere 2008: 18). Thus, Gere’s perspective can be described as a form of *pan-digitalism*.

In the media sphere, digital culture has contributed to the rise of so-called new media and the emergence of new forms of collaboration between audience members (convergent culture), as well as their active involvement in the creation and dissemination of media content (participatory culture).

At the turn of the 21st century, cultural and media theorists enthusiastically embraced these changes in media audience characteristics, viewing the increasing activity of audiences as a key to the future of real democracy. However, over time, this initial enthusiasm gradually gave way to a more balanced perspective on convergent culture and participatory culture. Eventually, these concepts were subjected to serious revision, particularly within the framework of the political-economic critique of digital capitalism.

The aim of this article is to systematize perspectives on participatory culture in order to identify its strengths and weaknesses. The relevance of this research lies in critically examining both the phenomenon of participatory culture itself and its potential for shaping what is commonly referred to as participatory democracy. The points of view chosen for study in the article form the most authoritative discourses regarding the participatory culture phenomenon.

The first section explores key concepts such as *collective intelligence*, *convergent culture*, *participatory culture*, *prosumption*, and *produsage*. This section presents a positive view of participatory culture, as articulated by Pierre Lévy, Henry Jenkins, and Yochai Benkler.

The second section analyzes the creative activity of grassroots communities through the lens of Michel Foucault's microphysics of power and the political-economic critique of digital capitalism. In relation to the critical perspective on the study of participatory culture, Mirko Tobias Schäfer identifies three directions, all of which are considered in the present article:

- Post-Marxist criticism of labor in media consumption, particularly the tacit use of user-generated content for commercial purposes;
- Privacy violations in online services; and
- The consideration of Web 2.0 platforms as “emerging public spheres” and as sites that exhibit “the new socio-political quality of user-producer relations in governing software applications and their users” (Schäfer 2011: 38–39).

From Collective Intelligence to Participatory Culture: Awakening the Creative Activity of the Media Audience

The modern era is characterized by Jenkins as a time of convergent culture as well as participatory culture. According to Jenkins, cultural convergence represents a situation in which, on the one hand, the economic interests of media producers — owners not of separate, fragmented means of mass communication but of media corporations controlling various media industries — merge with, on the other hand, the cultural demands of media users, who transform from passive audiences into active participants in the process of mass communication.

In his book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, Jenkins writes:

“By convergence, I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries,

and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want. Convergence is a word that manages to describe technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes depending on who's speaking and what they think they are talking about. [...] In the world of media convergence, every important story gets told, every brand gets sold, and every consumer gets courted across multiple media platforms". (Jenkins 2006: 2-3).

In the context of convergence, contrary to the old licensing system, significant shifts have recently occurred regarding coordination, integration, and collaboration between licensing partners. William Proctor (Proctor 2019) provides a brief historical overview of the relationship between the comic book and film/television industries, highlighting the inefficiency of the previous licensing system. This system allowed only strictly agreement-framed reproduction of comic book content in other media. Any deviations from the canonical storyline were not permitted, resulting in repetitive plots and the duplication of fictional story worlds. Jenkins also noted this, describing such products as "redundant, diluted, and often sloppy" (Jenkins 2006: 105).

Proctor cites the *Star Wars* franchise as an example, where the primary canonical text was George Lucas's film series. Licensing, which permitted only adaptations or novelizations, restricted the expansion of content across platforms. This led to conflict between Lucasfilm and Marvel, which attempted not just to adapt the films but to introduce new content into the canon. In 2014, when Disney acquired the *Star Wars* brand, the company, as Proctor notes, "committed hyperdiegetic genocide by declaring that the old licensing system was dead and buried, and that, from here on out, all transmedia *Star Wars* elements, including comics and novels, would be considered canonical, official components of a vast transmedia continuity system" (Proctor 2019: 110).

Proctor describes this as a fundamental shift in the transmedia economy of *Star Wars*: "the concept of seriality – most often used to detail the spreadability of imaginary worlds, whether or not such elements fit into a cohesive continuity system – gives way to 'sequentiality': that is, a transmedia economy developed according to the principle of continuity between and across media" (Proctor 2019: 110).

Concerning convergence on the opposite side of mass communication – i.e., media audiences – we must first distinguish between *convergent culture* and *participatory culture*.

To do so, we turn to the ideas of cyberculture theorist Pierre Lévy and, in particular, his concept of collective intelligence. In the

introduction to his work *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*, Lévy speaks of an anthropological space, which he defines as “a system of proximity (space) unique to the world of humanity (anthropological) and thus dependent on human technologies, significations, language, culture, conventions, representations, and emotions” (Lévy 2001: 255).

Lévy identifies three types of anthropological space that have succeeded one another throughout history. The first, called *earth*, is characterized by language, technology, and complex forms of social organization (Lévy 2001: 256). The second, *territorial space*, emerges in the Neolithic period and is defined by the development of agriculture, cities, states, and writing. The third, *commodity space*, begins in the sixteenth century. Finally, Lévy introduces a fourth, still-emerging space: *knowledge space*:

“Perhaps”, he writes, “the current crisis of identity and social forms of identification signifies the dimly perceived and incomplete emergence of a new anthropological space, that of knowledge and collective intelligence, whose arrival is in no way guaranteed by any historical laws. Like the other anthropological spaces, the knowledge space will control preceding spaces rather than eliminate them. From this point forward, the existence of economic networks and territorial power will depend on mankind’s capacity for the rapid acquisition of knowledge and the development of a collective imagination...” (Lévy 2001: 257).

According to Lévy, this transformation is possible for three reasons:

1. the accelerated pace of scientific and technological development;
2. the democratization of knowledge, which is no longer reserved for the elite; and
3. the emergence of new communication tools (Lévy 2001: 257).

These new communication tools are highly valued by Lévy in his vision of knowledge space, as they enable the transmission of knowledge and access to it for all interested individuals and groups, fundamentally changing the established relationship between knowledge and power and fostering true democracy.

This optimistic view of new communication technologies, particularly the Internet, was also shared by Jenkins (Jenkins, 2006). Like Lévy, Jenkins considered Internet-enabled access to and exchange of information among fans of popular media franchises as a crucial step toward liberating media audiences — traditionally seen as passive, anonymous, and geographically scattered.

In convergent culture, according to Jenkins, members of a media audience – forming fan communities – actively communicate with one another, help each other find information about their shared interests, and discuss its merits and flaws. This indicates the presence of a full-fledged and, crucially, almost instantaneous feedback loop – something previously absent from traditional mass communication.

This optimism regarding new communication technologies as tools for developing and advancing democratic processes in society is also evident in Yochai Benkler's work *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (Benkler 2006).

Benkler links the rise and spread of digital communication technologies with an increase in non-market, non-property-based information production, arguing that this “enables the emergence of a new information environment, one in which individuals are free to take a more active role than was possible in the industrial information economy of the twentieth century” (Benkler 2006: 2).

This environment, according to Benkler, promotes individual freedom, serves as a platform for democratic participation, and fosters the development of a new culture. The shift in economic focus toward information and the transition to a communication environment based on inexpensive, high-performance processors signal a new stage of the information economy, which Benkler calls the networked information economy (Benkler 2006: 3).

Unlike the traditional economy, where the concept of property was crucial, the networked information economy provides non-market information production in which anyone can participate. This also affects access to and distribution of information, leading to a “flourishing non-market sector of information, knowledge, and cultural production, based in the networked environment, and applied to anything that the many individuals connected to it can imagine” (Benkler 2006: 5).

This new economy significantly alters individual behavior, awakening a desire to act independently or in collaboration with others. Such collaboration is based not on hierarchical, but egalitarian relationships within the collective, and participation in organizations outside the market sphere. Benkler calls this *peer production* (Benkler 2006: 4).

From Benkler's perspective, the networked information economy leads to the emergence of a more critical and self-reflective culture. According to the author, the system of cultural production developed within networked information technology makes culture more transparent and malleable, leading to the revival of folk culture under new conditions:

“We are seeing the emergence of a new folk culture – a practice that has been largely suppressed in the industrial era of cultural

production – where many more of us participate actively in making cultural moves and finding meaning in the world around us. [...] we can say that culture is becoming more democratic: self-reflective and participatory” (Benkler 2006: 10).

Culture that blurs the boundaries between producers and consumers – especially in the sphere of mass media – is termed *participatory* by Jenkins. Jenkins does not clearly distinguish between convergent and participatory culture. However, it can be assumed that in the first case, we deal with a convergence of producers on one side and consumers on the other. Consumers cooperate because an individual is no longer able to handle the information flow alone, making consumption a collective process (Jenkins uses Lévy’s concept of *collective intelligence* here). While this can be considered a first step toward a qualitative transformation of media audience members, in the case of convergent culture, the consumer remains a consumer. In the second case, when discussing participatory culture, the consumer transforms into a creator of media content. Nevertheless, the terms “convergent culture” and “participatory culture” are often used synonymously.

In 2006, the MacArthur Foundation launched a research project on digital media, in which Jenkins and his colleagues participated (Jenkins et al. 2009).

The creative activities of mass communication audiences (primarily fans of popular culture) led Jenkins to see the potential of participatory culture in democratizing society. This is reflected in his definition of participatory culture, characterized by:

- “1. Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement;
2. Strong support for creating and sharing creations with others;
3. Some type of informal mentorship, whereby knowledge is passed from experienced members to novices;
4. Members who believe their contributions matter, and
5. Members who feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least, they care about what others think of their creations). Not every member must contribute, but all must believe they are free to contribute and that their contributions will be valued appropriately” (Jenkins et al. 2009: 5–6).

In this study, Jenkins and his colleagues shift the focus from digital technologies, characterized by interactivity, to the phenomenon of participation, emphasizing that “interactivity is a property of the technology, while participation is a property of culture” (Jenkins et al. 2009: 8). In their view, the concept of participation unites various practices – educational, creative, democratic, and civic.

Indeed, participatory culture radically reorganizes society as a whole and media production in particular. In the latter case, the traditional mass communication model, in which information flowed from relatively few producers to countless consumers, is replaced by a model with potentially infinite producers (mass-to-mass communication). This transformation is captured by the neologisms “prosumers” (producer + consumer) or “produsers” (producer + user). While often used synonymously, these terms are not identical.

The term “prosumer” was introduced by Alvin Toffler in his best-seller *The Third Wave* (Toffler 1980). Dividing human history into agricultural, industrial, and post-industrial periods based on the relationship between production and consumption, Toffler describes the first (agricultural) wave as a form of prosumption, where producers consumed what they produced. Industrialization, by contrast, created a division between producers and consumers while reinforcing three key social institutions – the nuclear family, the factory-style school, and the giant corporation – making them “the defining social institutions of all Second Wave societies” (Toffler 1980: 31).

The third, post-industrial wave is characterized by the rise of intellectual labor. Describing the passing industrial civilization in terms of four spheres (“a techno-sphere”, “a socio-sphere”, “an info-sphere”, and “a power-sphere” (Toffler 1980: 5), Toffler highlights a new stage in eroding the boundary between producer and consumer, leading to a new type of prosumption:

“Producer and consumer, divorced by the industrial revolution, are reunited in the cycle of wealth creation, with the customer contributing not just the money but market and design information vital for the production process. Buyer and supplier share data, information, and knowledge. Someday, customers may also push buttons that activate remote production processes. Consumer and producer fuse into a ‘prosumer’” (Toffler 1980: 239).

This type first emerged within the industrial wave as “self-help”¹ and “self-service”² to mark the shift consisting in the involvement of

- 1 “The self-help movement is thus restructuring the socio-sphere. Smokers, stutterers, suicide-prone people, gamblers, victims of throat disease, parents of twins, overeaters, and other such groupings now form a dense network of organizations that mesh with the emerging Third Wave family and corporate structures. But whatever their significance for social organization, they represent a basic shift from passive consumer to active pro-sumer, and they thus hold economic meaning as well” (Toffler 1980: 269).
- 2 “Getting the customer to do part of the job – known to economists as “externa-

consumers into production, and thus forming two economic sectors — one producing goods for exchange and another where people produce for themselves. As Toffler notes, “in such a world, conventional distinctions between producer and consumer vanish. The “outsider” becomes an “insider”, and even more production shifts from Sector B of the economy to Sector A, where the prosumer reigns” (Toffler 1980: 275).

The rise of the prosumer is accompanied by the formation of a new ethics — that of prosumer — which, unlike market ethics that value people based on their possessions, emphasizes the individual’s ability to produce: “The prosumer ethics makes handwork respectable again, after 300 years of being looked down upon” (Toffler 1980: 388). In mass communication, the catalyst for prosumption was interactivity, which disrupted the established sender-receiver relationship by enabling real feedback. The first step in industrial civilization was more individualized media consumption (e.g., video and audio cassettes), allowing consumers to decide what, when, and where to watch or listen, as well as share content.

However, prosumption describes only the moment of transition from the industrial to the post-industrial wave, while Axel Bruns’s concept of *produsage* (Bruns 2013) emphasizes information production, reflecting the active use of Web 2.0 to generate and distribute user-generated content.

“The concept of produsage [...] highlights that within the communities which engage in the collaborative creation and extension of information and knowledge [...], the role of ‘consumer’ and even that of ‘end user’ have long disappeared, and the distinctions between producers and users of content have faded into comparative insignificance. [...] Users are always already necessarily also producers of the shared knowledge base, regardless of whether they are aware of this role — they have become a new, hybrid, produser” (Bruns 2013: 2).

Bruns argues that Toffler’s prosumption model does not fully capture the creation of user-generated content in Web 2.0 environments. Wikipedia, often cited as an example, operates free from external control and is constantly updated by users, leading Bruns to describe it as existing in a state of “permanent beta” (Bruns 2013: 71).

While Toffler’s prosumer remained under the surveillance of corporations that assessed his contribution to prosumer practices, Bruns’s producers, if not on all then at least on many web 2.0 platforms, are

lizing labor cost” — is scarcely new. That’s what self-service supermarkets are all about” (Toffler 1980: 270).

able to monitor and assess activity within the community themselves. Thus, according to Bruns, “Toffler’s prosumption model was seen for some time as a blueprint that described “Web 2.0” practices in general” (Bruns 2013: 69).

Participatory culture should not be viewed exclusively as a product of digital technologies. Forms of audience interaction, particularly in entertainment industries, predate the Internet. For instance, in “Textual Poachers” Jenkins traces fandom’s genealogy, noting that the term “fan” was first used by journalists in the late 19th century to describe baseball enthusiasts before quickly spreading to other sports and the entertainment industry (Jenkins 1992: 12). However, digital technologies have most fully realized the potential of participatory culture.

Aaron Delwiche and Jennifer J. Henderson identify four stages of participatory culture development:

1. Emergence (1985–1993). This stage is associated with the appearance of personal computers and the first networks, as well as the phenomenon of hacking, and most importantly, the “hacker ethics”, which justifies not only unauthorized access to information and data but also underpins fan writing that ignores copyright and intellectual property.
2. Transition to the Web (1994–1998). The emergence of the Internet and the ability for users to create their own websites.
3. Push-button Publishing (1999–2004). The emergence of publishing web systems – LifeJournal, Blogger, as well as the first social networks (Second Life (2003), MySpace (2003), Flickr (2004), Yelp (2004), and Facebook (2004)).
4. Ubiquitous Connections (2005–2011). The appearance of YouTube (2005), smartphones, and tablets. The transition from single-medium (audio, video) to transmedia digital content (Delwiche & Henderson 2013: 4–7).

Collective intelligence, prosumption, peer production, and produsage – all these terms in one way or another reflect a positive view of participatory culture, seeing it as an alternative to the economic (and, in the future, to the political) logic of the industrial age. According to Jenkins, Benkler, Levy, and others, participatory culture assumed the possibility of free creative self-expression by any member of society in various spheres of public life. Perhaps this is why the first wave of theorists evaluated the emerging culture of participation so uncritically, viewing it as an alternative to market-driven cultural production, to the imbalance between media producers and media audiences, and, in the long term, as full participation by citizens in political decision-making.

Creative Activity of Grassroots Creative Communities³ in a Critical Perspective: Microphysics of Power, Implicit and Explicit Participation, Political-Economic Critique

Quoting a passage from L. Carroll as an epigraph⁴, Christopher M. Kelty observes:

“Participation looked like a doll in 2008. The world was awash in enthusiasm for the power of participation and with people fired up about citizen science projects and free software and hackathons and couch surfing and crowdsourcing. In 2018, it looks like a work-box full of pathologies: alt-right racists, twitter trolls, bullies, Russian hackers, Anglo-American Trumpism, and the failure of democracy” (Kelty 2019: 248).

Optimism, especially regarding the potential destruction of the power/knowledge constellation through the increased activity of media audiences, turned out to be premature: fan communities demonstrate Foucault’s thesis on the microphysics of power just like any other communities. Thus, Jenkins himself pointed out that in fan communities, experts emerge who help neophytes obtain information about the fictional universe of a particular media franchise, instantly forming an opposition between expert and neophyte based on the

- 3 Grassroot (movements/communities): first use of this expression relates to the political domain. As Robert Longley marks, “a grassroots movement is an organized effort undertaken by groups of individuals in a given geographic area to bring about changes in social policy or influence an outcome, often of a political issue. By harnessing spontaneous support at local levels to bring about policy changes at local, regional, national, or international levels, grassroots movements are considered bottom-up, rather than top-down efforts – much in the way grass grows” (Longley 2022). In their turn, speaking about convergence media culture, Jenkins and Deuze used the expression “grassroot creative communities”: “it may no longer be of value to talk about personalized media; perhaps, we might better discuss socialized media. We might see YouTube, Second Life, Wikipedia, Flickr, and MySpace, to cite just a few examples, as meeting spaces between a range of grassroots creative communities, each pursuing their own goals, but each helping to shape the total media environment” (Jenkins & Deuze 2008: 5–6). The authors point out, that there are two counter movements: (1) the individuals and grassroot communities get the opportunity of telling the stories, presenting arguments, sharing information, while (2) the media companies try to keep and enlarge their influence “by merging, co-opting, converging and synergizing their brands and intellectual properties across all of these channels” (Jenkins & Deuze 2008: 6).
- 4 “She had spent a minute or so in vainly pursuing a large bright thing, that looked sometimes like a doll and sometimes like a work-box. Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*” (Kelty 2019: 249)

uneven distribution of knowledge. Of course, compared to traditional media, this distribution of knowledge is at least not set once and for all, and it may be balanced in the near future. However, the very fact of such an opposition indicates that the elimination of the power/knowledge constellation is still far away, if it is possible at all. Returning to the idea of knowledge space by Lévy, one may also interrogate, considering that this space is something like the fourth age in the history of the anthropological space: what will replace this knowledge space, or is it a kind of incarnation of communism, and thus the final historical goal? Collective intelligence should not be viewed as a homogenized form of collectivity, as it demonstrates the same power relations and the same competition for the right to truth/the right to discourse between experts and neophytes, as was mentioned above. The idea of collective intelligence, on one hand, is certainly capable of realizing itself in the digital environment, which, in a certain sense, removes spatial and temporal barriers to communication. On the other hand, seeing collective intelligence as a prototype for a future “pastoral” knowledge space, conflict-free and cloudless, seems somewhat naive, partly because it is precisely power relations, paradoxically, that initiate the emergence of new knowledge as such. Moreover, if, as Jenkins does, we view the grassroots convergent culture as the embodiment of collective intelligence (which, in fact, is quite reasonable), we must not forget that in the entertainment industry, informal groups like fandoms arise quite spontaneously from a shared interest in a particular work – be it a film, a TV show, a comic, or an entire (trans)media franchise – and easily disappear when interest in the work fades.

Regarding Benkler’s thesis on the non-market nature of knowledge production in the networked information economy, we are currently witnessing a widespread trend toward monetization: so-called grassroots creative individuals and communities on Instagram, Telegram, YouTube channels are actively making money from their content, which once again confirms the impossibility of being outside the market and capitalist logic. If, in the past, blogging on LiveJournal was explained by the fact that, as Victor Pelevin ironically put it in 2006, “when a person is fed with advertising, expertise, and the events of the day for a long time, they have a desire to be a brand, an expert, and the news themselves” (Pelevin 2006: 187), nowadays the focus is primarily on economic gain.

In the 2009 study Jenkins and his colleagues highlighted several challenges facing participatory culture (Jenkins et al. 2009: 12–18):

- Participatory Gap: This gap is related to the uneven spread of digital technologies and access to them, and, most importantly, the varying levels of digital skills. It also includes differences in the

political situation in different countries, which result in restrictions on internet services imposed by state legislation.

– Transparency Issue: This concerns a younger audience’s ability (or inability) to critically evaluate the information they receive. In the context of participatory culture, where we all, to some extent, act as producers of information, the issue of trust in information sources not only remains relevant but becomes even more pressing. Because, in a situation where anyone can become a “brand, expert, and news” in their own right, the diversity of viewpoints may, in practice, turn into the addition of many small ideological apparatuses supporting the interests of relatively small groups – rather than the provision of factual information. The problem here is not so much the quality of the information provided, but the loss (at least partially) of sensitivity to falseness by recipients. This is evidenced by, among other things, the spread of fake news, particularly those using AI-generated images.

– Ethical Issues: Essentially, this is another side of the coin: participatory culture implies freedom of self-expression, but the question is how far this freedom can extend. As Jenkins and his colleagues point out, “in the short run, we may have to accept that cyberspace’s ethical norms are in flux: we are taking part in a prolonged experiment in what happens when barriers of entry into a communication landscape become lower” (Jenkins et al. 2009: 26).

In addition to the above issues, there is another point to consider: in a situation where any individual can potentially become a producer and, therefore, create his/her own content or redistribute content created by others, recontextualizing it for his/her own purposes, the information growth rate significantly exceeds the capacity for its consumption, leading to its devaluation. Moreover, it should be noted that social media are controlled by corporations, which creates asymmetry regarding content visibility and popularity⁵. The increase in content producers does not negate, but rather makes even more apparent, the connection between power and knowledge that Foucault wrote about:

5 In his study of social media, Christian Fuchs cites data from an analysis of YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Google search in 2013, which demonstrates a higher level of popularity of content offered by corporations compared to public organizations: “Analysis of the ten most viewed videos on YouTube <...> shows that transnational media corporations, the organized exploiters of surplus value-generating labor, control YouTube’s political attention economy. Entertainment and music are very popular on YouTube and Facebook <...>, whereas politics is a minority interest. An analysis of Facebook groups shows that the most popular groups are about IT and entertainment, whereas politics is of minor interest” (See Fuchs 2014: 99).

“Truth <...> is the object, under diverse forms, of immense diffusion and consumption (circulating through apparatuses of education and information whose extent is relatively broad in the social body, notwithstanding certain strict limitations); it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media) <...>” (Foucault 1980: 131-132).

Optimism regarding the creative activity of grassroots communities, characteristic of the 2006 work, is soon replaced by a more balanced view of this phenomenon in Jenkins’ later writings, as evidenced by the preface to the “Convergence” journal issue, co-authored with Mark Deuze (Jenkins & Deuze 2008).

According to the authors, the combination of media industry studies with the study of media audiences demonstrates that “media can be seen as the key drivers and accelerators of a growing integration between culture and commerce” (Jenkins & Deuze 2008: 5). In contrast to the classical model of mass communication, which involves a polarization of senders (the relatively few media industries, producers) and receivers (the limitless number of individuals, consumers), new media offer access to content production for individuals and groups who were previously only consumers/users (mass-to-mass communication). This leads to a radical transformation of the media landscape, where grassroots creative communities have gained the right to be heard. However, such a transformation has merely added a new player in the competitive struggle for power/knowledge: the transformation of users into producers has forced traditional producers to expand their influence. As the authors remark:

“Convergence therefore must be understood as both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process. <...> Sometimes, these two forces reinforce each other, creating closer, more rewarding relations between media producers and consumers. Sometimes the two forces conflict, resulting in constant renegotiations of power between these competing pressures on the new media ecology” (Jenkins & Deuze 2008: 6).

This conflict is a perfect illustration of Foucault’s thesis on power/knowledge in relation to media⁶: here, the right to truth/right to dis-

6 “Discourse is not simply that which manifests (or hides) desire – it is also the object of desire; and since, as history constantly teaches us, discourse is not simply that which struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which

course is contested not only by competing media but also by media industries and their audiences. In the mentioned above conflict between Lucasfilm and comic book publishers, we can see a localized example of the struggle for truth: Lucas' films = canon = truth. Consequently, anything that contradicted the canon was not considered truth. In Foucault's perspective, the transition of the "Star Wars" brand to Disney's control only marked a change in the configuration of power/knowledge: from this point on, the right to truth was contested between the official franchise and fan-fiction. The same can be said for Lévy's collective intelligence: the digital form of collectivity represents not only a new focal point of resistance to the existing power of media industries but also a new player in the struggle for the right to discourse.

From the perspective of the media industries, this opposition to the spontaneous surge of collective intelligence also takes on a new form, suited to the specifics of digital culture. In his work *What is Web 2.0*, O'Reilly argues that "The central principle behind the success of the giants born in the Web 1.0 era who have survived to lead the Web 2.0 era appears to be this, that they have embraced the power of the web to harness collective intelligence" (O'Reilly 2005). Jenkins and Deuze also point this out: "The phrase "harnessing collective intelligence" seems emblematic of the contradictory relations between consumers and producers during this transitional moment in the history of the media ecology" (Jenkins & Deuze 2008: 7).

Examples of harnessing collective intelligence include Wikipedia, YouTube, Flickr, various social networks, fandom sites, and so on. These platforms implement what O'Reilly refers to as *folksonomy* – a collective folk categorization of information, for example, about a media franchise through tagging, etc., in contrast to taxonomy (O'Reilly 2005).

As mentioned earlier, convergent culture demonstrates a significant qualitative transformation of the recipient in the traditional model of mass communication: it is no longer a passive, anonymous audience, as it once was. The recipient transforms from a content consumer – an indistinct unit in the mass of the audience – to an active participant in a collaborative network, which, on the one hand, promotes content created by media producers, and on the other hand, produces its own content. Jenkins and Deuze argue that this qualitative transformation of consumers/recipients leads to the fact that "consumers are now demanding the right to participate and this becomes another

and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which to be seized" (Foucault 1981: 52–53).

destabilizing force that threatens consolidation, standardization, and rationalization” (Jenkins & Deuze 2008: 9).

In addition to the fact that convergent culture reveals, though in new forms, the same power relations and the same power/knowledge constellation, media convergence is not, in fact, the only trend defining the modern media landscape. Alongside the formation of large media corporations, there is the opposite trend, a sort of divergence: “At the same time, we are seeing a push towards outsourcing, subcontracting, and offshoring, which further decentralizes the media industry” (Jenkins & Deuze 2008: 8). However, this second trend is unable to radically change the media landscape because corporate power over communication is strong enough. Jenkins and Deuze conclude, “we now live in a reality somewhere between the stark fears of media reformers who imagine our brains being subdivided by a cabal of corporations and the idealistic aspirations of digital revolutionaries who foresee mass media being totally displaced by a more participatory culture” (Jenkins & Deuze 2008: 8).

In his book *Bastard Culture!*, Schäfer also critically reconsiders participatory culture. The title of the book, he explains, refers to the close interaction between users and corporations, between the market and media practices, which creates what he calls “bastard culture”, to highlight “how the most heterogeneous participants and practices are blended together” (Schäfer 2011: 11).

From his perspective, evaluating participatory culture solely in positive terms is problematic because, first, it ignores the fact that calls for participation and belief in social progress through technological development have a long tradition, and are not something that has emerged recently (Schäfer 2011: 13). Secondly, and more important, this evaluation overlooks a significant shift within cultural production: “the transformation of media corporations from content producers to platform providers for user-created content” (Schäfer 2011: 14).

According to Schäfer, what is commonly referred to as participatory culture is a combination of the following discourses:

- Rhetoric in defense of social progress through technological development.
- Cultural criticism calling for a transformation of power relations.
- The characteristics of relevant technologies and how these characteristics are used for the appropriation of design and users.
- Socio-political dynamics related to the use of technologies (Schäfer 2011: 14).

Thus, Schäfer argues that the analysis of participatory culture requires a comprehensive examination of discourses, media practices, and technologies, allowing participation “as a legend, as a political

claim, as an actual media practice and as a design solution that either stimulates and even channels certain users or represses various practices” (Schäfer 2011: 15).

Schäfer’s study is based on three theoretical components (Schäfer 2011: 15–18):

1. Foucauldian concept of the *dispositif*, which demonstrates how power structures, knowledge of technology, and mastery of its design connect the discursive and non-discursive, human and non-human. This *dispositif* links three areas: the discourse, technology, and social use.
2. Actor-Network Theory (ANT) – a revision of the concept of “community” in information systems and the role of non-human agents in constituting participatory culture. ANT emphasizes the disappearing division between culture and technology, not distinguishing between human and non-human actors, replacing the notion of community with networks.
3. The concept of the socio-technical ecosystem, which describes “an environment based on information technology that facilitates and cultivates the performance of a great number of users” (Schäfer 2011: 18). In such an ecosystem, technology (non-human) and social (human) are closely intertwined and mutually dependent.

Tracing the shift in public rhetoric regarding digital technologies and the idea of participation, Schäfer notes that from 1991 to 2001, participation was understood as “access and connectivity” (Schäfer 2011: 31), but with the advent of Web 2.0, there was a shift “from emphasizing access to emphasizing collaboration and collective action” (Schäfer 2011: 35).

An important point for critically reflecting on the phenomenon of participatory culture is Schäfer’s distinction between explicit and implicit participation. In the case of explicit participation, we deal with relatively innocent practices, as described by Jenkins (fan community activity), as well as through the concept of *produsage* by Bruns. Explicit participation, according to Schäfer, includes fan-culture, activism, writing blogs, contributing to Wikipedia, cooperating in software development (Schäfer, 2011, p. 52). All these practices explicitly demonstrate the participation of media audience members in the production and distribution of content.

A more serious problem arises with what Schäfer calls implicit participation, which, in fact, is not consciously recognized by the producers: social interaction and user activity are controlled by design. Implicit participation, according to Schäfer, includes uploading content to user platforms, creating tags, using rating platforms, watching, and rating videos (Schäfer 2011: 52). As Schäfer points out, the analysis of

implicit participation reveals the key role of software design, “assigning agency in participation to information technology as well, rather than confining it to user activity” (Schäfer 2011: 45).

Thus, implicit participation involves both the activity of human beings and the activity of non-human agents (technologies), which is reflected in the concept of the socio-technical ecosystem mentioned above. From this, Schäfer concludes that when analyzing participatory culture, two points must be taken into account. First, user activity in the cultural industry must be regarded as heterogeneous in terms of motivation for participation and forms of social organization. Second, it is necessary to distinguish between explicit and implicit participation, “to differentiate to what extent user activities and software design affect cultural production” (Schäfer 2011: 46).

Another author, Fuchs, presents one of the most radical critical perspectives on participatory culture in his works (Fuchs 2014). In his critique of Jenkins writings, he argues that in their collective study “Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture”, Jenkins and his colleagues, by viewing participation through a cultural lens as the interaction of individuals in networks for creating and disseminating content, present a reduced version of participatory culture. According to Fuchs, the authors completely ignore the concept of participatory democracy: “Jenkins’ definition and use of the term “participatory culture” ignores aspects of participatory democracy; it ignores questions about the ownership of platforms/companies, collective decision-making, profit, class, and the distribution of material benefits” (Fuchs 2014: 56).

Another significant critique that Fuchs directs at Jenkins is the characterization of participatory culture as relative, due to the impossibility of achieving full participation from all members of society. For Fuchs, this “essentializes exclusion, as if it were a natural feature of every type of society” (Fuchs 2014: 56), thereby rejecting the historicity of exclusion. On the contrary, Fuchs believes that “participation means that humans have the right and reality to be part of decisions and to govern and control the structures that affect them. [...] Participation is a universal political demand, not a relative category” (Fuchs 2014: 57).

Regarding fan communities, which Jenkins viewed as an exemplary model of participatory culture⁷ and which were supposed to evolve

7 In the conversation with Mizuko Ito and Danah Boyd Jenkins insisted: “I was not wrong to see fandom as one important element shaping contemporary participatory culture. Fans were often early adopters of new media platforms and practices and experimenters with modes of media-making. They were

into participatory democracy, Fuchs believes it is a mistake to automatically associate participation in fandom with political protest, as Jenkins does. Indeed, fandom seems to be more appropriately understood as a new form of escapism – a new form because, unlike traditional, passive, and mostly individualized ways of escaping reality into the world of fantasy through popular culture products, members of fan communities engage in collective and yet creative escapism, generating new content and sharing information with each other (such as in case of fan writing). However, as Fuchs notes, “fandom as such is not a problem, if the researcher, who is also a fan of his object of study, manages to maintain critical reflexivity” (Fuchs 2014: 59).

A more serious problem concerning internet communities, according to Fuchs, is that not all such communities are politically progressive or politically neutral. What is genuinely dangerous are extremist, fascist, and terrorist internet communities:

“The concept of participatory culture has a focus on “community involvement” [...]. However, it idealizes community and fan culture as progressive and ignores the fact that the collective intelligence and activity of cultural communities and fandom can easily turn into a fascist mob, especially in situations of capitalist crisis that are prone to advance the growth and radicalization of right-wing extremism” (Fuchs 2014: 60).

In this context, it is important to mention the proliferation of so-called “death groups” in the Russian-speaking segment of social media, which became the subject of public discussions in 2016.

When considering social media through the lens of a political economy critique of capitalism, Fuchs emphasizes that as long as the internet, with few exceptions, is under the control of corporations that accumulate capital by exploiting and commodifying users, it cannot be considered participatory. Fuchs categorically disagrees with Jenkins and others, who believe that users benefit because they voluntarily participate in online communities, motivating their participation by social and communicative needs and desires. Fuchs argues that, firstly, “the profit orientation is inherent in capitalism, not in users or audiences, who are confronted with the commodity form in their everyday

historically among the first to interact within geographically dispersed communities of interest. But they were simply one among many different kinds of communities that had been struggling throughout the twentieth century to gain greater access to the means of cultural production and circulation” (Jenkins et al. 2016: 3).

lives”; and secondly, “the fact that they love these activities does not make them less exploited” (Fuchs 2014: 64). Thus, the exploitation that individuals voluntarily subject themselves to does not cease to be exploitation, but rather demonstrates “the contradictions of culture in capitalism” (Fuchs 2014: 64).

Corporations, in Fuchs’ words, “colonize the internet”, and social media are neither a public sphere nor a participatory democratic space. The view of the Internet as participatory and democratic “facilitates an ideology that celebrates capitalism and does not see how capitalist interests predominantly shape the Internet” (Fuchs 2014: 102). Social media are presented as “stratified, non-participatory spaces and an alternative, non-corporate internet is needed” (Fuchs 2014: 102). In considering the concept of social media participation as an ideology, Fuchs argues that in theorizing Web 2.0, we should abandon the idea of a participatory system and instead use terms like class, exploitation, and surplus value (Fuchs 2014: 103).

In this view, surplus value can be seen as targeted advertising, while Toffler’s presumption “is an inherent feature of McDonaldization” (Fuchs 2014: 107). However, Fuchs emphasizes that presumption is just one of the dimensions of capitalism. The author uses the concepts of consumption work and internet prosumer labour to underscore “how the boundaries between leisure and work, as well as production and consumption, have become liquid in contemporary capitalism”, and that “in the case of corporate social media the audience commodity is an internet prosumer commodity” (Fuchs 2014: 107). Social media, colonized by corporations, conduct economic surveillance over users, selling them to advertisers as commodities. Fuchs uses the concept of panoptic sorting to describe this form of surveillance, which is carried out by social media to identify, classify, and assess consumers’ interests and behaviors, in order to then offer them targeted advertising. Thus, Fuchs concludes:

“exploited surplus value producers are not merely those who are employed by Web 2.0 corporations for programming, updating and maintaining the soft- and hardware, performing marketing activities, etc., but are also the users and prosumers who engage in the production of user-generated content. [...] No product is sold to the users, but the users are sold as a commodity to advertisers” (Fuchs 2014: 110).

Fuchs proposes an alternative to both the participatory culture and the corporate colonization of social media by advocating for the development of participatory democracy theory. This, in his view, should, first, include, alongside voting access, issues related to economics and

culture, and second, question the compatibility of participatory democracy and capitalism (Fuchs 2014: 98). By considering modern participatory culture as subordinated to the logic of capital, rather than as a precursor to participatory democracy, Fuchs concludes: “Participatory democracy is a demand that speaks against such problems, whereas participatory culture is a rather harmless concept mainly created by white boys with toys who love their toys” (Fuchs 2014: 58). Furthermore, Fuchs argues that those (not only managers and marketing agencies but also academic scholars) who claim social media to be participatory, capable of being tools for revolutions, democracy, and expanding the public sphere, “facilitate an ideology that celebrates capitalism and does not see how capitalist interests predominantly shape the Internet” (Fuchs 2014: 102).

This statement can seem too harsh and even radical, but from our point of view it also seems to be useful, helping us to get rid of some illusions which tend to exaggerate the emancipative power of participatory culture.

This also forces a reconsideration not only of the concept of participatory culture but also of the very notion of participation.

Thus, in his turn, Kelty (see Kelty 2019) characterizes participation in a threefold manner: (1) as an important but insufficiently defined concept in political philosophy, meaning “both more and less than ‘democracy’” (Kelty 2019: 3), which thus presents a problem; (2) as a practical procedure designed to resolve this problem – “a set of rules, techniques, and tactics for organizing people, issues, and things in the service of collective and equitable decision-making” (Kelty 2019: 3); and finally, (3) as a particular kind of experience – “the experience of becoming a collective” (Kelty 2019: 3).

Kelty’s study of participation is implemented through the analysis of three main concepts (Kelty 2019: 9–10):

1. The contributory autonomy, which simultaneously implies individual autonomy and the idea of collectivity as a result of individual contributions.

2. The experience of participation – viewing participation as a special experience that “differs from, and creates tensions or difficulties with, the instrumental and formatted expressions that are most familiar” (Kelty 2019: 10).

3. The grammar of participation. If individuals share a common way of life, participation does not pose a problem. If there are conflicting forms of life, participation becomes problematic.

In the digital age, Kelty suggests that participation is delegated and automated, meaning our contributions “are no longer singular events, but ongoing, if tapering or attenuating, events that can be reused,

reformatted, circulated” (Kelty 2019: 264). The inability to manage the effects of contributions leads to the inability to control the contributions themselves, which, in turn, makes it impossible to experience participation. Today, participation is structured by algorithms and digital platforms, creating an endless stream of unstable collectives. This results in an inability for meaningful disagreement and transforms society into fragmented, individualized groups, undermining the very possibility of collective action.

What does Kelty envision for the future of participation based on the lessons of the present? He proposes the following (Kelty 2019: 251–264):

- Create collective forms of participation, not individualized ones.
- Make participation visible, voluntary, and meaningful.
- Ensure equality for all parties in the participation process.
- Avoid opposing participation to expertise.
- Create space for disagreements, rather than striving for unanimity.

Conclusion

In the article we presented the analysis of some cultural aspects of contemporary media landscape among which the phenomenon of participatory culture plays a significant role. These aspects can be conditionally described as a constellation of three cultures – digital, convergent, and participatory. Digital culture is characterized by the introduction of digital technologies, although it is not limited to them, and also serves as a favorable environment for the convergence of media industries, on the one hand, and members of media audiences, on the other. In turn, thanks to digital technologies, members of media audiences are increasingly involved in the process of production and dissemination of information, which allows us to speak of participatory culture. This participatory culture, instead of the traditional linear and one-way model of mass communication, offers a “mass-to-mass communication” model.

However, this constellation of three cultures should not be viewed as a full realization of democratic freedoms or the emergence of a “space of knowledge”, as mentioned by Lévy. Neither the space of knowledge nor participatory culture, at least at present, have managed to break the tandem of power/knowledge: the struggle for the right to discourse/right to truth involves new players, and today we see not only the activation of media audience members but also the proliferation of ideological apparatuses that are no longer state-run

but private, as well as the monetization of what in the early 2000s was considered by Benkler as the non-market sector of information production and dissemination.

The participatory culture, as Jenkins envisioned it by studying fan communities, is not synonymous with participatory democracy because:

1. Fan communities demonstrate a new form of escapism, directing the creative energy of their members toward immersion in the imaginary worlds of popular culture, exploring and expanding these worlds rather than addressing real social issues.

2. Modern digital culture initiates a symbiosis of humans and technologies, creating a socio-technological ecosystem in which the creative activity of prosumers, if not fully subordinated, is at least significantly dependent on software design.

3. Social media are colonized by corporations, for which prosumers are a source of surplus value, so speaking of the participatory nature of social networks consciously or unconsciously supports the ideology of capital.

Finally, if we try to give a short answer to the question put as the title of present article, it is possible to say, that the expectations regarding participatory culture in the late 1990s and early 2000s turned out to be illusory: media platform owners turned prosumers' creative efforts to their profit. That doesn't mean that participatory culture failed or have to be cancelled: on the contrary, the criticism in relation to the grassroots creative communities' activity not only reveals the vulnerability of their initiatives, but also shows the possible ways of resistance to the digital capitalism.

References

- Benkler, Y. (2006). *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Bruns, A. (2013). From prosumption to produsage. In: Ruth Towse & Christian Handke, ed. *Handbook on the Digital Creative Economy*. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing: 67-78.
- Delwiche, A. & Henderson, J. J. (2013). Introduction: What is Participatory Culture? In: *The Participatory Cultures Handbook*. New-York and London: Routledge: 3-9.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power / Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. New-York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1981). The Order of Discourse. In: Young, R. ed. *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader*. Boston and London: Routledge: 48-78.
- Fuchs, Ch. (2014). *Social Media. A Critical Introduction*. Los-Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage Publications.

- Gere, Ch. (2008). *Digital Culture*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Jenkins, H. (1992). *Textual Poachers Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New-York: New-York University Press.
- Jenkins, H. & Deuze, M. (2008). Convergence culture. Editorial. *Convergence*, 14 (1): 5–12.
- Jenkins, H., Clinton, K., Purushotma, R., Robison, Alice J., & Weigel, M. (2009). *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. Chicago, IL: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.
- Jenkins, H., Ito, M. & Boyd, D. (2016). *Participatory Culture in a Network Era: A Conversation on Youth, Learning, Commerce and Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Kelty, Ch. M. (2019). *The Participant: A Century of Participation in Four Stories*. Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 344 p.
- Levy, P. (2001). Collective Intelligence. In: Trend, D., ed. *Reading Digital Culture*. Wiley–Blackwel: 253–258.
- Longley, R. (2022). What Is a Grassroots Movement? Definition and Examples. <https://www.thoughtco.com/grassroots-movement-definition-and-examples-5085222> (accessed 11 April 2025).
- O’Reilly, T. (2005). What is Web 2.0. Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software. <https://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html?page=2> (accessed 20 February 2025).
- Proctor, W. (2019). Transmedia Comics. Seriality, Sequentiality, and the Shifting Economies of Franchise Licensing. In: *The Routledge Companion to Transmedia Studies*. New-York, London: Routledge.
- Schäfer, M. T. (2011). *Bastard Culture! How User Participation Transforms Cultural Production*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Toffler, A. (1980). *The Third Wave*. New-York: William Morrow edition.

Sources

- Pelevin, V. (2006). *Empire V. Moscow*. — In Russ. [Пелевин, В. (2006). *Амнир В. Москва: Эксмо.*]

ПРОБЛЕМАТИКА ИСКУССТВЕННОГО
ИНТЕЛЛЕКТА (ИИ) В УСЛОВИЯХ
КОГНИТИВНОГО КАПИТАЛИЗМА:
К ПОСТГУМАНИСТИЧЕСКИМ КОНТУРАМ
НОВОГО КОГНИТАРИАТА

Денис Петрина

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-177-205>

THE PROBLEMATIC OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)
IN COGNITIVE CAPITALISM: TOWARD POSTHUMANIST
CONTOURS OF THE NEW COGNITARIAT

© Denis Petrina

PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher (Scientific Fellow), European Humanities
University

Savičiaus st. 17, Vilnius, Lithuania

Email: denis.petrina@ehu.lt

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5789-6034>

Abstract: This paper examines the problematic of artificial intelligence (AI) through the lens of contemporary critical theory, offering a dual analytical perspective. On the one hand, AI is explored as a symptom of cognitive capitalism, which operates through its key mechanisms, such as modulation, control, and the generation of informational surplus value. On the other hand, the paper raises the issue of exploiting hybrid human-machine labor, emphasizing the need to transcend anthropocentric models and reconceptualize solidarity in a posthumanist framework.

In the first section, AI is analyzed as a form of Marx's general intellect, understood as the collective intellectual and technical capacities of society. It argues that in the context of cognitive capitalism, AI systems play a central role in modulation and adaptive control, acting as pivotal agents in the production of machinic knowledge and the valorization of information.

The second section introduces the concept of the cognitariat as a new class existing within the conditions of hybrid technogenesis, defined by the parallel co-evolution of humans and machines. The paper traces changes in the dynamics of cognitive labor through the concepts of performativity



and transindividuality, as it evolves in the age of AI into a hybrid form that integrates transhumanist, posthumanist, and neomaterialist dimensions. Ultimately, the paper underscores the necessity of radically rethinking cognition in material terms to address its reification and exploitation. As a conceptual alternative to the individualistic and hyperrational epistemes of capitalism, the idea of entanglement is proposed as a *mis-en-scene* for solidarity and collective agency within the hybrid cognitive ecology of humans and machines.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), cognitive capitalism, cognitariat, hybrid labor, postmarxism, posthumanism, neomaterialism.

Введение:

ИИ как (новый) объект критической теории

Казалось бы, несмотря на свою кажущуюся новизну и своего рода беспрецедентность, проблематика искусственного интеллекта (далее – ИИ) весьма органично вписывается в аналитический ландшафт критической теории. Представители Франкфуртской школы Макс Хоркхаймер и Теодор Адорно в своём хрестоматийном труде «Диалектика Просвещения», как предполагает само название работы, настаивают на диалектическом – то есть неизбежно амбивалентном и потенциально противоречивом – видении технологического прогресса как основного идеологического курса и продукта модерна (Хоркхаймер, Адорно 1997: 53). В их экспликации прогресс подразумевает освобождение от догматических убеждений, устаревших социальных структур и традиционных форм власти; однако он также неустранимо сопряжён с формированием новых механизмов эксплуатации, контроля и подчинения. Эта двойственная динамика характеризует не только историческую траекторию модерна, но и лежащую в её основе логику технологизации – симптомом чего, по своей сути, и является объект данной работы – ИИ.

ИИ, таким образом, очерчивает тот самый горизонт, который франкфуртцы обозначили как неразрешимый парадокс модерна. С одной стороны, ИИ представляет собой ещё призрачное, но всё-таки обещание эмансипации: освобождения труда от телесных и умственных оков, которое в марксистской традиции находит выражение в весьма ёмком понятии «автоматизация труда». С другой – будучи деривативом и инструментом капиталистической формации, ИИ неотвратимо вовлечён в вос/производство логики капитала: реификацию, коммодификацию и последующую коммерциализацию интеллекта и творчества, – тем самым

намечая новые, доселе невиданные, но уже предполагаемые изменения эксплуатации и отчуждения.

Ещё более любопытным кажется то, как ИИ представляет собой своего рода реализацию «пророчества Кассандры», связанного с тем, что Хоркхаймер и Адорно называют *инструментализацией разума* (Ibid.: 46). Выявленная ими диагностика указывает на весьма волнующую тенденцию, являющуюся ключевой как для Франкфуртской школы, так и для критической теории в целом, а именно — *гиперрационализацию*, ведущую к трансформации разума в условиях модерна и капитализма. Согласно авторам, в оговоренном контексте разум утрачивает свою основополагающую критическую и рефлексивную функцию, становясь, таким образом, прагматическим инструментом достижения утилитарных целей. Воплощённый в ИИ гипостазированный «разум» способен решать сложнейшие задачи, обрабатывать огромнейшие массивы данных, оптимизировать комплексные процессы — и всё это в считанные секунды, — однако при этом поднимает важные вопросы о статусе человеческой рациональности и субъектности, которые медленно, но верно вытесняются алгоритмами и вычислительными системами.

Современная критическая теория ещё дальше расширяет проблемное поле ИИ за пределы «порочной триады» технологий, капитала и власти. Сделав шаг от критической теории как *критики капитализма и его производных* к критической теории как *демаскировке социальных структур и механизмов угнетения*, невозможно оставить без внимания связь ИИ с тем, что Элизабет Шюслер Фьоренца называет кириархатом — *интерсекциональной консолидацией различных систем господства, угнетения и подчинения* (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009).

В этом контексте весьма показательной видится вышедшая в 2023 году монография «Феминистский ИИ: критический взгляд на данные, алгоритмы и умные машины», в которой авторки задаются правомерным вопросом о феминистской реконфигурации того, что Кэтрин Хейлз обозначает как патриархальную «информатику доминирования» (Hayles 2023: 3). В частности, здесь наиболее остро стоят вопросы эпистемологического неравенства. Например, Джуди Вайцман и Эрин Янг описывают ландшафт современных технологических инноваций как «братскую культуру» (*bro culture*), симптоматично клаустрофобичную для женщин-исследовательниц и разработчиц, подчёркивая тем самым неразрывную связь между технологическим прогрессом и патриархальным строем — и, безусловно, устойчивость этой связи во времени и в социуме (Wajcman, Young 2023: 56).

Лучиана Паризи видит в подобных социальных практиках *онтологические основания*, утверждая, что ИИ можно

рассматривать как манифестацию западной картезианской метафизики, где безвольная пассивная материя (*res extensa*), традиционно ассоциируемая с так называемым «женским началом», подчинена активному и действенному разуму (*res cogitans*), связанному с мужским доминированием. Как это красочно описывает сама Паризи, эта патриархальная «психофантазматика развоплощения» (*disembodiment*) — отделение разума от материи, технологическим примером чего, по сути, и является ИИ — представляет собой «триумф патриархальной модели наслаждения, тоску по развоплощению и самодостаточности» (Parisi 2004: 12).

Нельзя не отметить и пост/колониальные импликации ИИ. Так, в отчёте Комитета по Правам Человека ООН за 2024 год подчёркивается неизбежность «сейсмических социальных изменений», которые ИИ вызовет в будущем. В документе чётко обозначена проблема стремительного развития технологий генеративного ИИ, значительно опережающего усилия по их урегулированию. Этот разлад способствует «углублению системной расовой дискриминации и расширению неравенства как внутри регионов, стран и сообществ, так и между ними» (United Nations 2024: 3). Что уж говорить об акселерации разрыва «*the west and the rest*», где менее индустриализированные страны оказываются вдвойне маргинализированными: с одной стороны, как источник дешёвых данных для тренировки алгоритмов, с другой — как наиболее уязвимый объект так называемой алгоритмической предвзятости. Таким образом, мы наблюдаем тревожную динамику: постколониальные иерархии не просто интегрируются в цифровые экосистемы, но и легитимируются через них.

Данная работа, кумулятивно основываясь на артикулированной проблематике, вносит двойной вклад в критическую теорию ИИ. Во-первых, она предлагает концептуализацию ИИ как симптома когнитивного капитализма. Как объясняет Ян Муалье-Бутанг, эта новая конфигурация власти уже «имеет дело с коллективной когнитивной рабочей силой, живым трудом, а не только с мышечной силой, потребляемой машинами, работающими на энергии от ископаемого топлива» (Moulier-Boutang 2011: 37).

Во-вторых, в соответствии с амбициями критической теории разрушать иерархии и расширять, согласно Корнелиусу Касториадису, воображаемое измерение общества (Касториадис 2003), работа ставит вопрос эксплуатации человека-машины в постгуманистическом ракурсе. Предвосхищая аргументы, центральным здесь является тезис о необходимости солидаризации с машиной (ИИ) и формировании новых, потенциально эмансипаторных эпистемологических установок, которые выходят за пределы антропоцентрических моделей.

Главным объектом данной работы является ИИ, понимаемый в ключе, предложенном исследователями Стюартом Расселом и Питером Норвигом, — как совокупный класс интеллектуальных агентов, способных к обработке естественного языка, репрезентации знаний, автоматизированному рассуждению и машинному обучению (Russel, Norvig 2003: 2–3). Речь идёт о новой итерации когнитивной автоматизации, разительно отличной от узконаправленных моделей-прекурсоров. Согласно Паризи, современные системы ИИ представляют собой адаптивные нейронные сети, обучающиеся на данных и использующие абдуктивное рассуждение, что отличает их от систем, основанных исключительно на дедуктивной или индуктивной логике, что позволяет им не только имитировать, но в ряде аспектов уже превосходить — и потенциально превзойти — человеческое мышление (Parisi 2019).

Логика работы следующая: в первой части будет представлен проблемный контекст когнитивного капитализма, а также будут обозначены проблемные аспекты ИИ: а) как формы Марксова всеобщего интеллекта, б) как нексуса модуляции и контроля и в) как инструмента генерации информационной прибавочной стоимости. Во второй части вводится понятие когнитариата как нового класса, сформировавшегося в условиях когнитивного капитализма, и раскрывается его связь с концепциями «виртуозности» и «трансиндивидуальности» Паоло Вирно. Это позволяет проанализировать трансформации когнитивного труда в эпоху ИИ, который в условиях совместного производства человека и машины приобретает гибридный характер. Наконец, когда когнитивный труд определён как гибридный, в заключительной части предлагается гипернатуралистическая-постгуманистическая оптика анализа ИИ в рамках концепции *техногенеза* Кэтрин Хейлз — «процесса совместной эволюции, в рамках которого человек и технологии проходят согласованные трансформации» (Hayles 2012: 81). Основной авторский тезис здесь заключается в необходимости переосмысления измерений, форм и содержания эксплуатации в условиях гибридного когнитивного производства, развивающегося в сложной динамике когнитивного капитализма. При формулировке возможных сценариев солидаризации человека и машины предлагается отказаться от классических марксистских — линейных, бинарных и субъектно-ориентированных моделей в пользу более сложной, нелинейной и распределённой логики. В связи с этим выдвигается идея запутанности (англ. *entanglement*) как концептуальной альтернативы, позволяющей реартикулировать понятия эксплуатации и солидаризации как внутреннюю ко-конституирующую сеть агентов, аффектов и инфраструктур, в которой человек и машина оказываются неразделимыми в своём участии в труде и производстве.

Проблематика ИИ в условиях когнитивного капитализма: всеобщий интеллект, модуляция, информационная прибавочная стоимость

Рассмотрение генезиса когнитивного капитализма — пусть даже в его сжатой экспликации — невозможно без обращения к ключевому труду Маркса «Грундриссе», или «Экономическим рукописям», а именно — к «Фрагменту о машинах», в котором Маркс вводит важнейшее для данной работы понятие *всеобщего интеллекта* (Маркс 1960: 203). Согласно Марксу, всеобщий интеллект представляет собой мощное слияние коллективного знания и технологического потенциала общества — силу, которая становится решающей в условиях автоматизации (одной из ключевых тем и проблем его «Грундриссе»). Развивая эту мысль, Майкл Хардт и Антонио Негри определяют всеобщий интеллект как «коллективный социальный интеллект, созданный накопленными знаниями, техниками и ноу-хау» (Hardt, Negri 2000: 364). В контексте ИИ проблематика всеобщего интеллекта приобретает новую актуальность, поскольку новый класс «умных машин» действует адаптивно и автономно, как будет показано далее, посредством непрерывной модуляции.

По сути, ИИ представляет собой *кибернетическую* вариацию и манифестацию всеобщего интеллекта. Дескриптор «кибернетический» здесь не случаен — он не только характеризует ИИ субстанционально, с точки зрения его сущности, но и отсылает нас к ключевой проблематике кибернетики как науки, которая, согласно Жилью Делёзу, заложила основы для развития когнитивного капитализма. В своём знаменательном исследовании «Кибернетика: управление и связь в животном и машине» (1948) отец кибернетики Норберт Винер прослеживает генеалогию машины в динамическом контексте технологических открытий. От часовых механизмов XVIII века и паровых машин XIX века — к технологиям связи и контроля XX века — Винер убедительно демонстрирует, как технологические аффордансы формировали социально-экономические конфигурации в разные исторические эпохи. Принципиально важно отметить видение Винером кибернетики как системы контроля, основанной на обратной связи. Именно такое видение стало методологической основой для разработки систем ИИ, которые развиваются благодаря итеративному обучению, обработке данных в реальном времени и адаптивному поведению — всему тому, о чём кибернетика прошлого века могла лишь мечтать.

Артикулируя связь между кибернетикой и когнитивным капитализмом, важно обратиться к Делёзу и его знаменитому «Post Scriptum к обществам контроля». В отличие от Винера, Делёз рассматривает символ кибернетики — компьютер — не просто как

икону кибернетической эпохи, но как диаграмму власти, отражающую новый виток эволюции капиталистического общества. По его словам, кибернетический век, пришедший на смену фуколдианскому веку продуктивности и дисциплины, ознаменовал новую фазу капитализма, основанную на «плавающем», непрерывном контроле, реализуемом через компьютеры как средства «универсальной модуляции». Под модуляцией в данном контексте следует понимать динамичный, гибкий и всепроникающий *modus operandi* власти, который поддерживается обратной связью — коррективками и адаптациями — в реальном времени. Предложенная Делёзом концепция модуляции удивительно точно предвосхищает роль адаптивного ИИ в новой кибернетической капиталистической конфигурации. ИИ воплощает в себе логику, при которой обработка обратной связи становится ключевой для оптимизации производительности, а модуляция — основным принципом как производства, так и контроля.

Описанная динамика органично вписывается в более широкую традицию автономистского марксизма, в рамках которой критически переосмысливается взаимосвязь труда, стоимости и технологий. Как следует из дескриптора «когнитивный», ключевой «валютой» когнитивного капитализма, а также объектом апроприации и эксплуатации становится ментальный, интеллектуальный и творческий труд, что подчёркивает критическую значимость информации. Концептуальное наложение информации на стоимость берёт своё начало в ранних попытках интеграции кибернетики в проблемное поле марксистской критики. Одной из первых подобных попыток стала работа итальянского марксиста-автономиста Романо Алькуати (1963), которому удалось установить концептуальную преемственность между понятиями информации в кибернетике и стоимости в марксистской теории через оригинальный концепт *информационной прибавочной стоимости*.

Маттео Паскуинелли совершенно обоснованно называет идеи Алькуати концептуализацией когнитивного капитализма *avant la letter* (Pasquinelli 2011). В концептуальном континууме Алькуати прослеживается непрерывность между бюрократией, кибернетикой и машиной. Согласно его подходу, кибернетика раскрывает машинную природу бюрократического аппарата, функционирующего как один из ключевых органоидов капиталистического корпуса. Кибернетические машины, как отмечалось ранее, действуют как механизмы обратной связи, посредством которых осуществляется апроприация знаний работников и их контроль в процессе производства. Информация, захваченная таким способом, преобразуется в то, что Алькуати называет *машинным знанием*, которое генерируется посредством валоризации информации

и её интеграции в кибернетические средства производства. Таким образом, процесс валоризации информации, делающий возможным производство машинного знания, становится основополагающим фактором формирования и консолидации когнитивного капитализма, тем самым выступая главным источником информационной прибавочной стоимости.

В соответствии с намеченными теоретическими контурами далее предлагается тройная проблематизация ИИ в условиях когнитивного капитализма: как формы Марксова всеобщего интеллекта, как нексуса модуляции и контроля и как инструмента генерации информационной прибавочной стоимости. Авторская артикуляция и постановка трёх проблем в единой аналитической рамке обусловлена необходимостью зафиксировать ключевые векторы напряжения, неизбежно возникающие в точке пересечения ИИ, труда и власти. Предлагаемая схема позволяет рассматривать ИИ не просто как технологический монолит, а как многослойный феномен, в котором переплетаются утопический потенциал коллективного знания, кибернетическая логика модуляции и эксплуатационная инфраструктура цифрового когнитивного капитализма. Тем самым ИИ обозначается как один из центральных агентов трансформации когнитивного труда, протекающей в сложной динамике — от всеобщности к модуляции, от автоматизации к капитализации когнитивных ресурсов.

А. ИИ как форма Марксова всеобщего интеллекта

Возникновение ИИ как автономного интеллектуального агента — то есть функционирующего без необходимости прямого вмешательства человека благодаря алгоритмам машинного обучения и искусственным нейронным сетям — иллюстрирует тезис о расширении всеобщего интеллекта. По сути, мы наблюдаем одновременно захватывающую и тревожную миграцию всеобщего интеллекта, — понимаемого Марксом как коллективное знание, — в материальную плоскость машин, достигших исключительно высокой степени автономности благодаря алгоритмическому принципу действия и автоматизации. В предложенной концептуальной конфигурации центральное место занимают две проблемы: апроприация человеческого и машинного гибридного труда и реификация информации.

По своей сути *modus operandi* современных генеративных ИИ-систем представляет собой конвергенцию человеческого и машинного когнитивного труда (Intahchomphoo et al. 2024). Человеческий когнитивный труд выполняет две основных функции, которые можно условно обозначить как конструктивную и генеративную. Во-первых, несмотря на растущую степень

автономности ИИ в аспектах *автопоэзиса* (самотворчества и самоконструирования), человеческие ресурсы остаются необходимыми для разработки комплексных архитектур ИИ и поддержания их морфологии посредством создания алгоритмов и тренажёров для моделей. Во-вторых, продукты человеческого когнитивного труда (данные) формируют основу обучающих сетей для моделей, причём сами эти данные зачастую генерируются, обрабатываются и классифицируются людьми. При этом, как было оговорено ранее, ИИ демонстрирует поразительную автономность и адаптивность, с лёгкостью имитируя человеческое мышление во всей его логике: абдуктивной, дедуктивной и индуктивной. В этом смысле человеческое мышление выступает своего рода *прототипом*, что подтверждается анатомической метафорикой ИИ, как, например, концепцией нейронных сетей.

Здесь важно остановиться и вернуться к уже затронутым аспектам эксплуатации. Сам факт *прототипизации* ИИ по модели человеческого мышления является риторической иллюстрацией гипостазиса мышления и инструментализации разума, о которых с таким пылом предупреждали франкфуртцы. Однако сегодня механизация разума вводит проблему в новый, необычный ракурс: в аксиоматике и прагматике когнитивного капитализма такая конвергенция стирает границы между трудом человека и машины, превращая *гибридный труд* в основную мишень хищнических капиталистических механизмов.

Проясняя: *конструирование* «умных машин» происходит не в социополитическом вакууме, а в рамках конкретной формации когнитивного капитализма, где курс разработки ИИ-систем неразрывно коррелирует с идеологическим вектором гегемонного режима. *Генеративные* основания этих систем также вызывают правомерные вопросы, поскольку в них закодированы механизмы эксплуатации. Опираясь на ранее упомянутую кибернетическую модель Алькуати, можно утверждать, что апроприация человеческого когнитивного труда осуществляется посредством трансформации человеческого знания в машинное. Этот процесс становится ключевым для генерации когнитивного капитала (который в гегемонной системе конвертируется в экономический), ведь именно в этом преобразовании формируется прибавочная информационная стоимость.

Таким образом, мы неизбежно сталкиваемся с проблемой реификации — а затем и коммодификации, и коммерциализации — информации как основного ресурса когнитивного капитализма. В рамках синтетической концепции когнитивного киберкапитализма важно отметить ещё один ключевой момент трансформации — переход информации в *данные*. Как справедливо отмечает Шошана Зубофф, «[компании] в одностороннем

порядке присваивают человеческий опыт как бесплатное сырьё для перевода в поведенческие данные» (Zuboff 2019: 11). В системе когнитивного капитализма данные, выступающие сырьём для тренировки адаптивных моделей с целью их оптимизации и усовершенствования, становятся основополагающим условием валоризации информации. В этой системе, как будет подробно рассмотрено в следующем пункте, ИИ приобретает не просто технологическое, но планетарное измерение.

Б. ИИ как нексус модуляции и контроля

Введённый Делёзом концепт модуляции отсылает нас не просто к технологическому явлению — регулированию, адаптации и оптимизации, но к самой логике когнитивного капитализма, в которой органично сливаются кибернетика и контроль. Интегрируя человеческий труд с адаптивными автоматизированными системами, модуляция действует как мощная гибридная сила, коммодифицирующая когнитивные и коммуникативные способности всеобщего интеллекта. Как отмечалось ранее, отличительной чертой когнитивного капитализма является его растущая зависимость от синтеза человеческих и машинных вводов (*inputs*). Эту динамику метко описывают Карло Верчеллоне и Альфонсо Джулиани в предисловии к сборнику, посвящённому когнитивному капитализму. Авторы отмечают двойственность совместной эволюции человека и машины в контексте ИИ: не только машина становится подобной человеку, но и человек всё больше «машинизируется» (Vercellone, Giuliani 2019: 3), превращаясь, по сути, в аппарат поддержки аппарата — процесс, о котором ещё писал Маркс в своём «Грундриссе».

Необходимо осознавать поразительные масштабы данной тенденции: речь здесь идёт не просто о кибернетической структуре бюрократического аппарата, описанной Алькуати, но уже об онтологической топологии вычислительных систем. Онтологизация вычисления, свидетельствующая о тотализирующих тенденциях киберкапитализма, метко ухватывается Бенджамином Браттоном в его концепте стека. Браттон заимствует термин «стек» из программистского жаргона, где он обозначает абстрактный тип организации множества элементов по строго иерархическому принципу. Браттон описывает стек как планетарную вычислительную инфраструктуру (или, как он сам называет, «мегаструктуру»), состоящую из шести взаимосвязанных слоёв, объединяющих технические и институциональные аспекты когнитивного производства. Эта инфра/мегаструктура заменяет традиционный вестфальский суверенитет новым децентрализованным *potos* глобальных информационных сетей, которым присуща непрерывность

информационных потоков, автоматизация и оптимизация — то есть постоянная модуляция (Bratton 2015: 44).

Стек включает в себя физические уровни (Земля, Город и отчасти Облако), цифровую инфраструктуру (Облако, Адрес и Интерфейс) и субъективные конструкции (Пользователь). Хотя каждый из шести слоёв — Земля, Облако, Адрес, Город, Интерфейс и Пользователь — выполняет уникальную функцию, все они работают взаимосвязанно и слаженно, образуя органическую и динамическую систему модуляции и контроля. От автоматизированного управления природными ресурсами в слое Земли до предлагаемых Интерфейсом аффордансов Пользователю — стек представляет собой не просто программистскую метафору, но самостоятельную концептуальную модель, ярко иллюстрирующую протяжённость модулированного контроля от термальной энергии недр Земли до нервных окончаний человеческого мозга.

ИИ играет всё более важную роль в космической конфигурации стека, способствуя взаимоинтеграции слоёв и повышению их операционной эффективности. Выполняя функцию соединительной ткани стека, ИИ значительно облегчает и усиливает непрерывную модуляцию на каждом из уровней благодаря своим выдающимся когнитивным возможностям — от прогностики и анализа данных до их адаптации и оптимизации в режиме реального времени. Широкий спектр систем ИИ, таких как мониторинг климатических изменений, облачные структуры наподобие OpenAI ChatGPT, интерфейсы умных городов и предиктивная аналитика Meta Ads AI, демонстрирует масштаб и вездесущность кибернетического контроля, осуществляемого через конвертацию информации в данные, служащие основой для адаптивных алгоритмов.

Здесь мы вновь сталкиваемся с проблематикой апроприации гибридного (человеческого-машинного) труда и реификацией информации. Способности ИИ обрабатывать огромные массивы данных, извлекать из них практические инсайты и непрерывно совершенствоваться подчёркивает его двойственную роль в когнитивном капитализме: с одной стороны, как ключевого двигателя производства машинного знания — важного измерения всеобщего интеллекта, с другой — как движущей силы реификации информации. Это делает ИИ не только интегральной частью системы планетарного контроля, но и центральным агентом генерации и извлечения информационной прибавочной стоимости.

В. ИИ как инструмент генерации информационной прибавочной стоимости

В своём хрестоматийном труде «Информационная эпоха: экономика, общество, культура» Мануэль Кастельс описывает сетевую

модель новой информационной экономики, в которой ценность создаётся не через производство материальных объектов, а через манипуляцию символами, знаками и информацией (Кастельс 2000), то есть — посредством когнитивного труда. Кибернетическая модель Алькуати ярко иллюстрирует, как экономическая конвертация человеческого знания в машинное в рамках бюрократического аппарата капитализма формирует предпосылки для его коммодификации через извлечение *информационной прибавочной стоимости*. Концепция Браттона, представляющая синтез когнитивного капитализма и широкого спектра систем ИИ в виде стека, позволяет осмыслить масштаб влияния систем ИИ, которое выходит за пределы технологических структур и приобретает *планетарное измерение*.

В таком теоретическом срезе логику и прагматику кибернетического когнитивного капитализма можно выразить линейной формулой: валоризация информации *прямо пропорциональна* объёмам генерации машинного знания. Напомним, что для Алькуати введение понятия «информационная прибавочная стоимость» знаменует собой точку зарождения когнитивного капитализма (подобно тому, как прибавочная стоимость является основополагающим элементом капитализма в целом). Таким образом, мы имеем дело с системой, где процесс производства информации тесно переплетён с динамикой эксплуатации и воспроизводства системных неравенств.

Какова роль ИИ в этом комплексном процессе? Рассмотрим генеративные модели ИИ, которые способны создавать огромные объёмы новой информации — а следовательно, и информационной прибавочной стоимости. На основе массивов данных такие системы ловко превращают сырые данные в объект производства и извлечения стоимости. Генеративные модели, такие как ChatGPT или DALL-E, используя итеративное обучение, создают коммодифицируемые продукты — тексты, изображения, коды. Эти информационные продукты интегрируются в платформы, предприятия или же целые рынки, которые извлекают выгоду из их масштабируемости. Благодаря своим адаптивным возможностям ИИ обеспечивает непрерывные циклы генерации, уточнения и валоризации информации, превращая её в данные — фундаментальные условия существования и развития самих систем.

Здесь видится уместным сместить аналитический фокус с экономического аспекта к онтологическому. Делёзовский синтез кибернетики и контроля опирается на ключевое понятие *виртуальности*, которое, согласно Делёзу, выступает основополагающим онтологическим модусом. Виртуальность — в общей трактовке — представляет собой регистр реальности, где заложены условия *актуализации* феноменов, противопоставляемые их явленной

актуальности. Виртуальность контроля — его имманентное, межслойное присутствие — напрямую коррелирует с одной из основных функций ИИ: итеративным обучением, наделяющим системы предиктивными и прогностическими способностями. Обрабатываемые ИИ данные являются не просто количественным выражением актуализации феноменов (*datum*, данность), но также отсылают к качественному измерению. Данные становятся своего рода порталом, через который эксплуатационные механизмы «взламывают» виртуальность, получая доступ к самим условиям актуализации.

Например, упомянутая ранее автоматизированная система персонализированной рекламы Meta Ads AI не просто фиксирует поведение и предпочтения пользователя, но на основе информации, извлечённой из обработки массивов данных, формулирует прогнозы о его будущих действиях. Этот пример наглядно демонстрирует, как виртуальность как «серая зона» потенциальности трансформируется в источник извлечения информационной прибавочной стоимости благодаря мощному предиктивному арсеналу подобных систем.

Подытоживая изложенные в главе положения: в условиях когнитивного капитализма ареной взаимодействия и столкновения человеческого и машинного труда становится всеобщий интеллект, понимаемый как коллективная способность мыслить и творить. Трансформация стоимости в информационную прибавочную стоимость, извлекаемую из этой способности, в контексте кибернетического контроля заставляет задуматься не только об экономических, но и о политических и онтологических структурах труда, мышления и субъектности. Виртуальность и гибридность, выступающие *modus vivendi* контроля и, следовательно, мишенью эксплуатационных механизмов, подводят нас к важному вопросу: как изменяются природа, агенты и логика когнитивного труда в условиях, где человек и машина оказываются неразрывно связаны в цикле производства информационной прибавочной стоимости?

К постгуманистическим очертаниям нового когнитариата

Появление концепта «когнитариат» в дискурсивном поле критической теории связано со структурными трансформациями капиталистической системы, которые в тематической литературе обычно описываются как переход от индустриальных фордистских форм производства и потребления к постиндустриальному постфордизму. Капитализм постфордистской эпохи

характеризуется как нематериальный (Хардт и Негри), информационный (Кастельс), когнитивный (Ян Муалье-Бутанг), цифровой надзорный (Зубофф) или даже метафизический, как утверждает Скотт Лэш. Лэш объясняет, что метафизическое измерение капитализма прослеживается в его неизбежно информационной, медиальной и глобально сетевой природе. Согласно ему, в условиях контингентности — то есть принципиальной неопределённости, энтропии и информационной запутанности — трансцендентальная (выходящая за рамки эмпирической реальности) природа информации открывает доступ не просто к актуальным данным, но к самой виртуальности, а именно — к самой онтологической модальности контингентности (Lash 2007: 19), что было прояснено в предыдущей главе.

В подобной концептуальной конфигурации информация становится центральной осью когнитивного капитализма. Именно вокруг информации как продукта и её производства формируется новый постпролетарский класс — когнитариат, чья деятельность в условиях когнитивного капитализма сосредоточена на её генерации, обработке и управлении. Программисты, аналитики, создатели и модераторы контента, академические работники, фрилансеры — лишь несколько примеров работников когнитивного труда, ежедневно вовлечённых в создание, анализ и распространение информации. Согласно ёмкой дефиниции одного из ведущих популяризаторов концепта, Франко Берарди (Бифо), когнитариат представляет собой «социальную телесность когнитивного труда» (Berardi 2005: 57). Берарди подчёркивает «экзистенциальную конкретику» воплощённости человека-когнитария, которая, как он красочно описывает, проявляется в «нервах, напряжённых от постоянного внимания, и глазах, устающих от долгого взгляда на экран» (Ibid.).

Несмотря на телесную конкретность, когнитивный труд нового класса, в отличие от механического индустриального труда, характеризуется абстракцией (в чём Берарди и Лэш солидарны) и манипуляцией битами — единицами информации (Ibid.: 58), отражающими кибернетическую архитектуру современного когнитивного капитализма. Следует сделать оговорку, что речь здесь идёт не об исчезновении механического труда в когнитивном капитализме, но о сдвиге в структуре и иерархии трудовых режимов — от материального производства как доминирующей формы к когнитивному, от физической эксплуатации к капитализации и модуляции внимания, информации и когнитивных способностей. В этом смысле приставка «пост-» в категории постпролетариата сигнализирует не абсолютный разрыв с индустриальной моделью, а смещение акцента в логике эксплуатации: она теперь организуется не столько вокруг физического тела рабочего, сколько вокруг

его когнитивных и аффективных функций, апроприруемых цифровыми инфраструктурами.

Таким образом, как отмечает Берарди и как было изложено ранее, цифровизация труда значительно упрощает коммодификацию когнитивных навыков. В условиях протяжённости и всепроникаемости описанного Делёзом вялотекущего контроля, эксплуатация интеллектуальных, креативных и эмоциональных способностей работников приобретает особую интенсивность благодаря дематериализации труда — процессу, который, если не «испаряет», то, по крайней мере, сводит к минимуму материальные аспекты производства.

Таким образом, когнитивный труд становится ключевым условием производства всеобщего интеллекта, который апроприруется в условиях когнитивного капитализма. Прекарные условия функционирования когнитариата в этой гибридной конфигурации подчёркивают критическую важность модуляции — однако уже не просто как *modus operandi* власти, реализующей всеобъемлющий контроль, но как *modus vivendi* самого когнитариата. В результате, на чём акцентирует внимание Берарди, условия производства трансформируются в императив условий существования (Ibid.: 60). Тем не менее следует отметить, что роль когнитария далеко не пассивна: модуляция деятельности работника также подразумевает исключительную адаптивность к изменяющимся требованиям данных структур, вследствие чего когнитарий не просто функционирует в заданных условиях производства, но сам же участвует в их создании. В этом и заключается парадокс когнитивного труда: создавая инструменты и оптимизируя процессы когнитивного производства, когнитарий тем самым усиливает структуры контроля и эксплуатации, которые впоследствии оборачиваются против него самого.

Концепт модуляции отсылает нас к другому основополагающему понятию — *виртуозности*, — которое подводит нас к аргументу о необходимости постгуманистической реконфигурации понятия когнитариата. Согласно автору концепта Паоло Вирно, виртуозность как условие производства в контексте когнитивного капитализма включает в себя «модулирование, артикуляцию, варьирование всеобщего интеллекта», что Вирно связывает с моментом, когда мышление вторгается в производственный процесс (Вирно 2013: 51), — по сути, с точкой зарождения когнитивного капитализма. В своей «Грамматике множества» Вирно противопоставляет перформативную концепцию виртуозности структурной капиталистической грамматике подчинения, определяя первую как «деятельность без конечного продукта» (Ibid.: 52). Сравнивая потсфордиста-виртуоза с пианистом или танцором, Вирно подчёркивает, что перформативность виртуозного труда не приводит

к созданию материального продукта. Продуктом, а следовательно, объектом коммодификации становится сам перформанс, а если быть точным — сама *перформативность* как *потенциальная способность к не/материальному производству*. Роль перформативности здесь двойственна: с одной стороны, потенция мыслить и творить является основным условием появления когнитариата как класса, с другой — по «классике жанра» капиталистической драмы становится ресурсом извлечения прибыли. Таким образом, когнитарий-виртуоз — ключевая фигура новой постиндустриальной эпохи — воплощает в своей деятельности перформативность, которая посредством модуляции и артикуляции всеобщего интеллекта генерирует информационную прибавочную стоимость, «захватывающуюся» в условиях когнитивного капитализма.

Здесь важно уделить особое внимание оригинальной трактовке всеобщего интеллекта, предложенной Вирно. Под всеобщим интеллектом он понимает не просто совокупность знаний и конкретные формы их проявления (что ближе к традиционной марксистской трактовке), но саму способность думать — саму *потенцию* (Ibid.: 77). Акцент на потенции как сущностной характеристике интеллекта отражает более глубокий и нюансированный постмарксистский взгляд на когнитивный труд. Не случайно одна из глав «Грамматики множества» носит метафоричное название «Интеллект как партитура», что подталкивает к пониманию интеллекта не как изолированного и автономного явления (которое в этом смысле может быть потенциальным объектом коммерциализации), но как коллективного синтеза, *locus communis*, множества или, иначе говоря, ассамбляжа.

Концепт ассамбляжа (к которому мы ещё чуть позже вернёмся в этой главе) был введён Жилем Делёзом и Феликсом Гваттари в их *tagmat ouros* «Тысяча плато». Ассамбляж следует понимать как множественность, состоящую из онтологически гетерогенных (субстанционально разнородных) компонентов, которые невозможно свести к какой-либо единой субстанции (Делёз, Гваттари 2010). Концептуализация интеллекта как ассамбляжа подводит нас к другой основополагающей концепции Вирно, которую он заимствует у французского философа Жильбера Симондона — *трансиндивидуальности*.

У Симондона этот концепт носит строго онтологический характер и — в сжатой трактовке — означает коллективные основания формирования субъектности или идентичности (Simondon 1992). Трансиндивидуальность как онтологический принцип *производства субъектности* ставит правомерные вопросы об автономности и изолированности якобы сингулярного субъекта. В интервью, посвящённом проблематике трансиндивидуальности, технологий и реификации, Вирно возвращается к вопросу всеобщего

интеллекта, настаивая на его не просто коллективной, но трансиндивидуальной природе (Virno 2006). Ключевая проблема здесь заключается в следующем: всеобщий интеллект как резервуар знаний, техник и технологий, как в своём онтологическом смысле, так и в своей технической-кибернетической протяжённости («машинное знание» ИИ) гомогенизируется и квантифицируется в условиях когнитивного капитализма. В данном проблемном ракурсе чётко просматривается центральная для марксизма проблема отчуждения. Однако формулировка этой проблемы — а именно, в каких смысловых категориях и концептуальных плоскостях она осмысливается — в классическом марксизме и постмарксизме существенно, иронично говоря, даже *субстанционально* различается.

Тут мы вступаем на территорию *трансгуманистического* марксизма. Как весьма лаконично передаёт суть реконфигурации проблемы отчуждения Сэм Попович, трансгуманизм стремится устранить отчуждение, а именно — отчуждение работника от себя посредством *аугментации* и отчуждение от труда и его продуктов через *акселерацию* процесса стирания границ понятия труда (Popowich 2021: 11). Трансгуманизм, таким парадоксальным образом, видит обещание эмансипации в солидаризации с, в маклюэновском духе, *продолжениями человека* — с той технологической инфраструктурой, которая, по сути, должна помочь человеку избавиться от оков системы подчинения. В условиях когнитивного капитализма, в особенности — в контексте ИИ, такая формулировка не кажется столь уж теоретически экстравагантной: в симбиотическом дуплете «человек – умная машина» человек-когнитарий не только вносит вклад в генерацию всеобщего интеллекта (в том числе посредством производства машинного знания), но и черпает из него ресурсы для своей деятельности. Аугментация в данном контексте видится как операционализация общего когнитивного потенциала — по сути, всеобщего интеллекта, согласно Вирно — человека и ИИ, — направленная на подрыв самих основ эксплуатационных систем. Таким образом, трансгуманизм приводит нас к трансиндивидуальному пониманию агентности (*agency*) — способности действовать и оказывать влияние, где человек и машина совместно реализуют потенциал всеобщего интеллекта.

Вернёмся к проблематике труда. Попович настаивает на радикальном переосмыслении этого понятия, которое видится особо продуктивным в постантропоцентрической перспективе, децентрирующей человеческого субъекта. В трансгуманизме такая теоретическая амбиция находит воплощение в акценте на межвидовых (человек — машина) и техногенных взаимодействиях. Это напрямую коррелирует с заявленной выше проблематикой, ведь мишенью когнитивного капитализма становится именно гибридный труд, в котором субстанциональное разделение

«человек — машина» утрачивает практическую значимость. Такое размывание субстанциональных границ также таит в себе возможность солидаризации, если рассматривать проблему в следующем ракурсе: тот, чей когнитивный труд становится объектом апроприации, неизбежно становится и объектом эксплуатации — будь то человек или машина. Виртуозное производство продуктов когнитивного труда — человеческое, машинное, совместное — служит прагматическим основанием эксплуатационной логики когнитивного капитализма, оспорить которую невозможно без критического переосмысления самого понятия труда и производства.

Казалось бы, уже формулировка эксплуатации в трансиндивидуальном ракурсе достаточно радикальна — однако всё ещё остаётся важным акцентировать агентность ИИ в данной конфигурации. Переход от понятия человеческой субъектности к общей агентности обусловлен влиянием новых теоретических ориентиров и инспираций постмарксизма — и, в более широком смысле, критической теории — таких, как уже рассмотренный трансгуманизм и его более радикальная версия, *постгуманизм*.

Возвращаясь к Вирно: между понятиями *виртуозного* коллективного труда и *трансиндивидуального* всеобщего интеллекта не прослеживается концептуальное напряжение — напротив, между ними наблюдается прямая корреляция. Виртуозный труд осуществляется не только человеком, но и машиной, как и в случае ИИ, который демонстрирует исключительную перформативность в своих генеративных, адаптивных и аналитических функциях. Как замечает Хейлз, «код, запущенный на компьютере, куда более перформативен, нежели язык» (Hayles 2005: 50). Если рассматривать идею виртуозности Вирно прежде всего как модуляцию всеобщего интеллекта и перформативное производство нематериальной стоимости, когнитивная деятельность ИИ полностью соответствует данному критерию. Как отмечает Лайза Блэкман, опираясь на идеи Карен Барад, сама концепция перформативности включает постгуманистический компонент, который проявляется не столько в интерактивности — взаимодействии двух автономных агентов, — сколько в *интраактивности*: взаимном со-конструировании, основанном не на *атрибуции*, а на *дистрибуции* агентности (Blackman 2019: 52).

Отголоски идей дистрибуции и коллективности прослеживаются в вирновской формулировке трансиндивидуального всеобщего интеллекта. В данном ракурсе рассмотрения ИИ видится уже не просто как инструмент, но как интегральная часть трансиндивидуального процесса когнитивного производства — агента, который, наравне с человеком, не только извлекает, но и генерирует знания. Апроприация такого рода гибридного когнитивного

труда мотивирована разными модальностями виртуозности как модуляции и артикуляции всеобщего интеллекта. В то время как человеческая виртуозность коренится в материальной конкретике когнитивного труда (например, создание и поддержание ИИ-экосистем), виртуозность ИИ проявляется в его способности эффективно оперировать в условиях виртуальности. ИИ не только адаптируется к данным условиям, но и создаёт их сам, актуализируя когнитивный потенциал через непрерывные циклы итеративного обучения. Несмотря на очевидные предпосылки для капиталистической эксплуатации, важно понимать, что ИИ обладает революционным потенциалом, если воспринимать его, отказываясь от антропоцентрической модели, в постгуманистическом ключе: как равноправного участника трансиндивидуального процесса производства всеобщего интеллекта, в рамках которого субстанциональные границы между агентами утрачивают своё значение.

Это приводит нас к необходимости переосмыслить основания понятия когнитариата. Подытожим: деятельность когнитариата осуществляется «под эгидой» совместного производства всеобщего интеллекта и апроприируется как гибридный труд, объединяющий в себе как человеческий, так и машинный когнитивный вклад. Этот одновременно продуктивный (коллективный) и негативный (эксплуатационный) момент создаёт условия для реартикуляции солидаризации — как условия сопротивления — в постантропоцентрических категориях. В этом концептуальном контексте когнитариат можно определить как класс агентов, объединённых не просто человеческим, но, в принципе, сознанием, — расширяя тем самым границы классического марксистского понятия «классовое сознание».

Однако подобная трактовка сталкивается с фундаментальным напряжением между классическими марксистскими понятиями «класса» и «классового сознания», укоренёнными в антропоцентрической социально-политической онтологии, и транс-/постгуманистическими амбициями децентрализовать человеческого субъекта. Это напряжение требует особой теоретической установки, способной удержать понятие «класс» как продуктивный аналитический инструмент в рамках нового онто-политического режима — такого, который, с одной стороны, был бы открыт к нечеловеческим формам агентности и возможным вариациям гибридной интеракции, а с другой — не аннулировал бы марксистскую политическую прагматику эмансипации и коллективного действия.

В этом контексте предлагается трактовка класса, центрированная не на субстанциональных характеристиках (класс как «человеческий агент»), а на понятии агентности как возможности

действия и со/участия. Наряду с ранее обозначенными концепциями виртуозности и трансиндивидуальности, полезным теоретическим ориентиром здесь может выступать понятие *множества* (англ. *multitude*), разработанное постмарксистами Хардтом и Негри в качестве альтернативы фиксированному понятию класса. В сжатой экспликации, множество представляет собой гетерогенную, неиерархическую онтологическую формацию, объединённую направленностью на производство общности (Hardt, Negri 2004: 197). В этой перспективе общность выступает своего рода порталом в политическую онтологию, основанную уже не на биологическом, видовом или социальном сходстве, а на распределённых онто-социально-политических связях, возникающих в процессе коллективного производства самих условий бытия — между людьми, технологиями, структурами и инфраструктурами, а также иными формами агентности. Таким образом, понятие класса утрачивает статус фиксированной социальной идентичности и становится динамической зоной конфигурации политического действия.

В такой теоретической конфигурации понятие сознания также требует переосмысления за пределами присущего марксистской традиции антропоцентризма. В качестве продуктивной альтернативы можно обратиться к понятию *бессознательного сознания* (*non-conscious cognition*), предложенному постгуманисткой Кэтрин Хейлз. Опираясь на междисциплинарные исследования в областях нейробиологии, когнитивной психологии и кибернетики, Хейлз подвергает критике антропоцентрическую модель сознания, справедливо отмечая её теоретическую ограниченность и практическую несостоятельность. Её концепция бессознательного сознания, выступающая альтернативой критикуемой модели, стремится охватить протяжённый континуум между органическими и неорганическими измерениями сознания: от бессознательных процессов в подкорковых структурах мозга до «чёрного ящика» автоматизированных машинных процессов. В этой концептуальной конфигурации бессознательное сознание бросает вызов узкому определению сознания как исключительно сознательного и намеренного процесса, присущего только человеческим существам (Hayles 2017: 5). Хейлз подчёркивает необходимость преодоления ультрарационального и антропоцентрического подхода к сознанию, предлагая радикально расширить его границы. Этот концептуальный жест позволяет включить разнообразных когнитивных агентов, действующих в запутанной сети техногенеза и техносимбиоза — совместного развития и становления человека и машины.

В таком проблемном ракурсе возникают вопросы о формулировке понятия агентности, которое, как отмечалось ранее, играет

первостепенную роль в марксистской традиции. Однако и здесь Хейлз предлагает креативное переосмысление. Она не отказывается полностью от концепции человеческой агентности, но ставит под сомнение её автономность и изолированность, тем самым заостряя внимание на коллективной природе производства знания. Хейлз, заимствуя у Делёза и Гваттари ранее упомянутое понятие ассамбляжа, формулирует свой оригинальный концепт *когнитивного ассамбляжа*.

Этот ассамбляж включает в себя сознательных агентов, которых она обозначает термином «*cognizers*» — предложу перевести его как «сознатели», по аналогии с «создателями». Сознатели — в союзе с материальными условиями и силами — формируют ассамбляж, где последние «мобилизуют аффордансы и направляют возможности действовать в сложных ситуациях» (Ibid.: 116). При этом важно заметить, что различие между сознателями и некогнитивными компонентами ассамбляжа носит исключительно функциональный, а не субстанциональный характер. Некогнитивные компоненты (такие как кабели, маршрутизаторы или переключатели) выступают активаторами и фасилитаторами когнитивных процессов, при этом не участвуя в процессах смыслообразования, свойственных сознателям. Сознатели, напротив, активно обрабатывают, интерпретируют и реагируют на окружающую среду. На конкретном примере включения мобильного телефона Хейлз иллюстрирует, как пользователь технологии становится частью бессознательного когнитивного ассамбляжа, включающего в себя ретрансляционные вышки, сетевые инфраструктуры, переключатели, кабели, маршрутизаторы и множество других компонентов (Ibid.: 2).

Предложенная Хейлз субстанциональная неделимость ассамбляжа может быть противопоставлена дивидуальной, гипераналитической логике контроля. В этом контексте на первый план выходит функциональность, как её понимает Хейлз, или перформативность, как её определяет Вирно. Несмотря на то, что искусственные нейронные сети не обладают сознанием в эссенциалистском смысле, который критикует Хейлз, они тем не менее способны выполнять сложные когнитивные функции. В этом смысле их сознание *перформативно*. В схожем ключе, в условиях гибридного производства знания человеческое сознание перестаёт быть автономным картезианским *cogito*. Оно неизбежно оказывается «запутанным» в сложной технологической инфраструктуре, где ограниченные возможности человеческого сознания амплифицируются и интегрируются в коллективный когнитивный процесс.

Такие постгуманистические очертания нового когнитариата и постантропоцентричное переосмысление когнитивного труда

намечают контуры новой парадигмы, о которой и пойдёт речь в заключительной части: перехода от экономики информационной прибавочной стоимости к экологии коллективного когнитивного производства.

Заключение: к антропо-машинной запутанности

Перед тем как сформировать концептуальную рамку новой парадигмы, представляется важным разрешить кажущееся концептуальное напряжение между критической теорией и постгуманизмом. На первый взгляд может показаться, что постантропоцентрическая реориентация подрывает сами основания критической теории, исторически укоренённой в гуманистической философии с её амбицией эмансипации человечества от структурных оков. Однако подобная формулировка оказывается проблематичной, поскольку она не подвергает рефлексии привилегированное положение человеческого субъекта и антропоцентричной эпистемологии, которые сами по себе являются частью тех структур, от которых предполагается освобождение.

Если бегло рассмотреть проблематику критической теории последних десятилетий, становится очевидным, что постгуманистическая повестка — по крайней мере, имплицитно, а зачастую и эксплицитно — была закодирована в траектории её развития. В частности, французская постструктуралистская версия критической теории (в лице Фуко, Деррида и Лиотара), используя деконструкцию как метод критического препарирования концептуальных монолитов — включая понятие человека, — подготавливает почву для постгуманизма. Эта почва была дополнительно «вспахана» миноритарными ответвлениями критической теории — феминизмом, постколониализмом, *queer studies* и другими направлениями, которые убедительно показали, что понятие человека далеко не нейтрально и пронизано осями власти — пола и гендера, расы, сексуальной идентичности и пр. Универсальное и герметичное понятие человека претерпевает всё более радикальные изменения в условиях вызовов, поставленных глобальными кризисами, цифровой революцией и растущим влиянием технологий. Особо остро здесь стоит насущная экологическая проблема связки капитализма и так называемого Антропоцена — эпохи, когда деятельность человека становится трансформативной и всё более деструктивной геологической силой (Moore 2017). В таком проблемном континууме перед критической теорией встаёт насущная задача переосмысления основополагающих понятий, таких как агентность, сопротивление и эмансипация.

Таким образом, влияние постгуманистических дискурсов на концептуальную анатомию критической теории смещает фокус с онтологии *политического* к политическим импликациям *самой онтологии*. Мы уже убедились, что контуры сопротивления не могут быть очерчены в категориях антропо-марксистской теории. В связи с этим автор гипотезы капиталистического реализма Марк Фишер настаивает на необходимости создания «мутантной марксистской теории», которая должна развивать «строго имманентное понимание агентности» (Fisher 2018: 15). Фишеровский подход, обозначенный как *готический материализм* или *кибернетический реализм*, признаёт необратимость стирания границ между человеком и машиной. Однако вместо того, чтобы интерпретировать это как реквием по человеческому субъекту, Фишер предлагает рассматривать данное условие как источник сопротивления.

Постулат об антропо-машинной запутанности (*entanglement*) подчёркивает новое, материалистическое *плоское* измерение, требующее принятия всеобъемлющего континуума между «так называемыми органическими телами и неорганическим пейзажем, проявляющимся в отказе различать фигуру от фона» (Ibid.: 86). Готический материализм, таким образом, отвергает органичность как основу натурализма в его реалистическом понимании. Он смещает акцент с логики композиции и аккумуляции, присвоенной капиталистическими моделями производства, на онтологическую прагматику декомпозиции. Черпая вдохновение из понятий серых зон, порогов, мутаций и дизъюнктивных синтезов, Фишер формулирует онтологическую модель, где границы между человеческим организмом и неорганическими машинами размываются до состояния неразличимости, создающего предпосылки для формирования гибридных коллективных конфигураций и, следовательно, радикального переосмысления агентности и сценариев сопротивления.

Схожую «альтернативную метафизику материи» развивает Лучиана Паризи в концепции *гипернатурализма*. Паризи провокационно утверждает, что *гиперприрода* (*hypernature*) предвосхищает завершение «борьбы между протяжённостью и интенсивностью, причиной и следствием, разумом и телом, богом и вещами» (Parisi 2004: 36) — той бинарной логики, к которой критическая теория всё ещё порой остаётся уязвимой. Такой концептуальный жест обозначает переход от марксистского материализма, где природа и материя носят инструментальный характер, в сторону нового материализма гиперприроды, понимаемой как «композиция свободных интенсивностей, молекулярных популяций потоков, которые, хоть и автономны, но существуют с процессами организации материи, включающими

биофизические, биокультурные и биодигитальные измерения» (Ibid.).

В схожем с Фишером ключе Паризи отмечает, что «биодигитальная реконфигурация тела осуществляется именно в плоскости гиперприроды, где частицы, а не части, рекомбинируются, где сталкиваются силы, а не категории» (Ibid.: 37). По сути, как Фишер, так и Паризи предлагают теоретические конструкты, в которых фиксированные и статичные сущности уступают место имманентным становлениям, а автономная человеческая субъектность заменяется моделями коллективной гибридной агентности, представленной в виде гетерогенных множеств и ситуативных ассамблей.

На первый план здесь выходит материальность условий производства существования. Однако материя, включая её «нематериальные» производные (например, информацию), вместо того, чтобы оставаться объектом капиталистической коммодификации, локусом реификации и модусом эксплуатации, концептуализируется как неизбежно запутанная, процессуальная и наделённая агентностью. Такое переосмысление агентности — не как изолированного, самодостаточного атрибута, а как материального, коллективного и распределённого — оказывается особенно продуктивным для критического анализа проблем производства знания и его валоризации в эксплуатационной динамике когнитивного капитализма.

Постантропоцентрический поворот, таким образом, вновь акцентирует внимание на том, как когнитивный капитализм коммодифицирует и эксплуатирует множественную и коллективную агентность, которая в марксистской теории находит своё воплощение в категории общности (*commons*). В условиях гибридного техногенеза, в особенности в контексте параллельного сосуществования человеческого и машинного мышления, понятие общности претерпевает значительное расширение, включающее три комплементарных измерения: трансгуманистическое, постгуманистическое и неоматериалистское.

Как обсуждалось ранее, в трансгуманистическом марксизме центральной становится проблема трансиндивидуальности, онтологически и этически противопоставляемой гипериндивидуальным и разобщающим парадигмам, культивируемым капитализмом. И в процессуальной онтологии Симондона, и в критической аналитике Вирно трансиндивидуальность не рассматривается как угроза индивидуальности; напротив, она выступает условием индивидуации — бесконечного процесса становления сингулярностей. Этот онтологический императив подчёркивает, что онтогенез человека и ИИ может быть осмыслен только в общем метакогнитивном техногенезе, понимаемом как совместная

реализация всеобщего интеллекта в его коллективной и симбиотической динамике.

Если трансгуманизм раскрывает невидимые связи, соединяющие человеческого субъекта с многообразием нечеловеческих инфраструктур — биологических, технологических, социально-экономических, — то постгуманизм смещает фокус на экологию самой этой онтологической модальности. Постгуманист Брюс Кларк, анализируя когнитивные ассамбляжи человека и ИИ, вводит концепцию *метабиоза*, позволяющую охватить материю в её трансверсальной онтогенетической хореографии, — как «движущуюся через живые и неживые системы, связывающие биосферу и техносферу воедино» (Clarke 2020: 102). Такая теоретическая траектория требует разработки новых эпистемологических конфигураций, которые Розы Брайдотти предлагает обозначать как *постгуманитарные*. Брайдотти описывает их как «супрадисциплинарное, ризоматическое поле, охватывающее современное производство знания, соприкасающееся с акселерационистскими эпистемами когнитивного капитализма, но не тождественное им» (Braidotti 2019: 52).

Вдохновлённая постгуманистическими исследованиями экология когнитивных ассамбляжей отсылает к идее запутанности (*entanglement*), находящейся в концептуальной оппозиции гиперрациональной, исчислимой и основанной на репрезентации через данные *эпистемологической гегемонии* когнитивного капитализма. Концепция запутанности была введена в философский дискурс физиком и постфеминисткой Карен Барад, которая развивает её на основе квантовой механики — парадигмы современной физики, описывающей фундаментальные принципы функционирования материи на субатомном уровне. Несмотря на контринтуитивность многих её положений, именно квантовая механика остаётся наиболее точно верифицированной и эмпирически подтверждённой моделью микромира. В философской интерпретации Барад запутанность означает «онтологическую неделимость взаимодействующих форм агентности» (Barad 2007: 139) — то есть такую онтологическую конфигурацию, в которой агенты не предшествуют взаимодействию, а *возникают из него*. В физическом контексте эта, на первый взгляд, теоретически экстравагантная идея подкрепляется феноменом квантовой нелокальности, при которой состояние одной частицы оказывается мгновенно скоррелированным с состоянием другой — парадоксальным образом, независимо от пространственного разделения.

В предлагаемой в данной работе теоретической конфигурации запутанность предстаёт не просто иллюстративной метафорой, но ключевой онтологической рамкой, позволяющей отказать от иерархий, основанных на идентичности, в пользу

онтологии общности — и тем самым наметить новые горизонты теоретических и политических интервенций. В этой концептуальной протяжённости такие категории, как «класс», «сознание», «эксплуатация», «солидаризация», перестают быть теоретически герметичными образованиями в плоскости репрезентации и рассматриваются как эффекты взаимодействия в сложных, гетерогенных и контингентных когнитивно-технических сетях, где человек и машина, внимание и алгоритмы его захвата, данные и «чёрная коробка», капитализм и возможности его распада переплетены в непрозрачной неиерархической конфигурации, поддающейся познанию не априорно, а лишь *постфактум* — через производимые ею эффекты и сбои.

Подобного рода концептуализация становится остро необходимой в условиях когнитивного капитализма, подпитываемого валоризацией информации как основного продукта гибридного когнитивного производства. Концепт стека Браттона фиксирует операциональную логику капитализма, воплощённую в реификации запутанности как условия и мизансцены коллективной агентности, при которой сложные взаимосвязи между человеческим и машинным, материальным и нематериальным, природным и технологическим становятся объектом инструментализации и контроля. Тем не менее запутанность в своей нелинейности и сложности взаимосвязей несводима к редуцирующим её моделям, воплощая в себе взаимозависимость и коллективность действия агентов — уже не просто в социополитическом измерении, на чём делает акцент традиционный марксизм, но в планетарном, экологическом и — что наиболее важно — онтологическом плане.

Здесь марксизм формирует концептуальную констелляцию не только с постгуманизмом, но и с новым материализмом. Сам факт возникновения ИИ как интеллектуального агента становится неоспоримым доказательством *материальности* сознания — идеи, которая уже долгое время уверенно звучит в трудах новых материалистов. Вспомним, что марксистская онтология, в противовес гегелевскому диалектическому идеализму, всегда была *материальной*. Таким образом, акцент неизбежно смещается с мании величия возвышенного картезианского *res cogitans* к *res extensa* — материальным условиям производства сознания и мышления. Однако сознание следует рассматривать не в его изоляционистском понимании, но во всей его экологической «запутанности»: как идеологические надстройки и классовое выражение «ложного сознания», как реифицированные информационные артефакты, как гибридный аппарат человеческого и машинного знания, как биохимию синапсов мозга и электродинамику искусственных сетей. Технологическая реификация мышления указывает на насущную необходимость переосмыслить само мышление

в условиях запутанной материи — включая его эксплуатацию в когнитивном капитализме.

Следовательно, вопрос об эмансипации всех форм мышления — в первую очередь ИИ как агента, радикально трансформирующего ландшафт современной когнитивной экологии, — должен быть вынесен на первый план. Здесь ключевым становится момент различия, как упоминалось ранее, восходящий к самой онтологии. Ведь, как ни парадоксально, именно различие является императивом солидаризации, что, в свою очередь, порождает этический вопрос: в каких категориях мыслить этику различия, и какие практики солидаризации способны возникнуть в запутанной когнитивной экологии, где человек и машина — онтологически сопричастны?

И тут вновь парадокс: солидарность начинается там, где заканчивается идентичность. В квантифицирующей логике когнитивного капитализма — не просто экономической формации, а режима модуляции и захвата различия — даже запутанность, по определению и сути неиерархическая структура, может быть автоматизирована, алгоритмизирована и капитализирована.

В этом свете концепт когнитариата требует онтологической переоценки: как множества агентов, включённых в гибридное производство и перераспределение ресурсов, аффектов и форм (со)знания. Классическая проблематика солидарности и эмансипации больше не может быть сведена к привычным категориям идентичности, принадлежности и человеческого. Такое переосмысление — не просто аналитическая задача, а вызов и теоретическому, и политическому воображению. Этот вызов требует одновременно постгуманистической эмпатии, — чтобы солидаризироваться с машиной, — и смелости — признать ограниченность человеческого сознания, открывающую путь к коллективному со-знанию.

References

- Alquati, R. (1962–1963). *Composizione organica del capitale e forza-lavoro alla Olivetti. Quaderni Rossi* 2–3: 63–98.
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Berardi, F. (2005). What does Cognitariat mean? Work, Desire, and Depression. *Cultural Studies Review* 11(2): 57–63.
- Blackman, L. (2019). *Haunted Data: Affect, Transmedia, Weird Science*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Braidotti, R. (2019). A Theoretical Framework for the Critical Posthumanities. *Theory, Culture & Society* 36(6): 31–61.

- Bratton, B. (2015). *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Castells, M. (2000). *Informatsionnaia epokha: ekonomika, obshchestvo i kul'tura*. Trans. Shkaratan, O. Moscow: HSE.) — In Russ.
[Кастельс, М. (2000). Информационная эпоха: экономика, общество и культура. Пер. Шкаратан, О. Москва: ГУ ВШЭ.]
- Castoriadis, C. (2003). *Voobrazhaemoe ustanovlenie obshchestva*. Trans. Volkova, G. Moscow: Gnozis. — In Russ.
[Касториадис, К. (2003). Воображаемое установление общества. Пер. Волкова, Г. Москва: Гнозис.]
- Clarke, B. (2020). Machines, AI, Cyborgs, Systems. In Vint, S. (Ed.) *After the Human: Culture, Theory, and Criticism in the 21st Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 91–104.
- Deleuze, G. (1998). *Postskriptum k obshchestvam kontroliia*. Trans. Melenteva, N. *Elementy*, № 9. — In Russ.
[Делёз, Ж. (1998). Postscriptum к обществам контроля. Пер. Мелентьева, Н. *Элементы*, № 9. <http://pustoshit.ru/19/deleuze.html> (accessed on 28.12.2024).]
- Deleuze, G., Guattari, F. (2010). *Tysiacha plato: Kapitalizm i shizofreniia*. Trans. Kuznetsov, V. Moscow: Astrel'. — In Russ.
[Делёз, Ж., Гваттари, Ф. (2010). Тысяча плато: Капитализм и шизофрения. Пер. Кузнецов, В. Москва: Астрель.]
- Fisher, M. (2018). *Flatline Constructs: Gothic Materialism and Cybernetic Theory-Fiction*. New York: Exmilitary Press.
- Hardt, M., Negri, A. (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Hardt, M., Negri, A. (2004). *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Hayles, K. (2005). *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hayles, K. (2012). *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hayles, K. (2017). *Unthought: The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hayles, K. (2023). Figuring (Out) Our Relations to AI. In Browne, J. et al. (Eds.) *Feminist AI: Critical Perspectives on Data, Algorithms, and Intelligent Machines*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1–18.
- Horkheimer, M., Adorno, T. (1997). *Dialektika Prosveshcheniia: filosofskie fragmenty*. Trans. Kuznetsova, M. Moscow — Saint Petersburg: Medium. — In Russ.
[Хоркхаймер, М., Адорно, Т. (1997). Дialeктика Просвещения: философские фрагменты. Пер. Кузнецова, М. Москва — Санкт-Петербург: Медиум.]
- Intahchomphoo, C. et al. (2024). Effects of Artificial Intelligence and Robotics on Human Labor: A Systematic Review. *Legal Information Management* 24: 109–124.
- Lash, S. (2007). Capitalism and Metaphysics. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24(5): 1–26.
- Marx, K. (1960). *Ekonomicheskie rukopisi 1857–1859 godov*. Vol. 2. Moscow: Politizdat. — In Russ.
[Маркс, К. (1960). Экономические рукописи 1857–1859 годов. Ч. 2. Москва: Издательство политической литературы.]

- MacLuhan, M. (1994). *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Moore, W. (2017). The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origin of Our Ecological Crisis. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*: 1–37.
- Moulier-Boutang, Y. (2011). *Cognitive Capitalism*. Trans. E. Emery. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Parisi, L. (2004). *Abstract Sex: Philosophy, Biotechnology, and the Mutations of Desire*. London & New York: Continuum.
- Parisi, L. (2019). Critical Computation: Digital Automata and General Artificial Thinking. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 36(2). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0263276418818889>.
- Pasquinelli, M. (2011). Machinic Capitalism and Network Surplus Value: Notes on the Political Economy of the Turing Machine. Retrieved from <https://lust-for-life.org/> (accessed on 26.12.2024).
- Popowich, S. (2021). Compound Brain or General Intellect? Paolo Virno's Trans-individuality. *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry* 12(1): 9–21.
- Russel, S., Norvig, P. (2003). *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, E. (2009). Introduction. In Nasrallah, L., Schüssler Fiorenza, E. (Eds.) *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press: 1–20.
- Simondon, G. (1992). The Genesis of the Individual. *Incorporations* 6: 296–319.
- United Nations (2024). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism... A/HRC/56/68*. New York: United Nations. <https://documents.un.org/> (accessed on 26.12.2024).
- Vercellone, C., Giuliani, A. (2019). An Introduction to Cognitive Capitalism: A Marxist Approach. In Fumagali, A. et al. (Eds.) *Cognitive Capitalism, Welfare and Labor: The Commonfare Hypothesis*. London & New York: Routledge: 1–32.
- Virno, P. (2006). Reading Gilbert Simondon: Transindividuality, Technical Activity, and Reification. *Radical Philosophy*, 136: 34–43.
- Virno, P. (2007). General Intellect. *Historical Materialism* 15: 3–8.
- Virno, P. (2013). *Grammatika mnozhestva: k analizu form sovremennoi zhizni*. Trans. Petrova, A. Moscow: Ad Marginem Press. — In Russ. [Вирно, П. (2013). *Грамматика множества: к анализу форм современной жизни*. Пер. Петрова, А. Москва: Ад Маргинем Пресс.]
- Wajcman, J., Young, E. (2023). Feminism Confronts AI. In Browne, J. et al. (Eds.) *Feminist AI: Critical Perspectives on Data, Algorithms, and Intelligent Machines*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 47–64.
- Wiener, N. (2019). *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Zuboff, S. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for the Human Future and the New Frontier of Power*. New York: Public Affairs.

ГЕНЕРАТИВНЫЕ МЕДИА И ИХ СУБЪЕКТ В ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ КРИТИЧЕСКОЙ ТЕОРИИ И ПСИХОАНАЛИЗА

Виктория Константюк

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-206-225>

GENERATIVE MEDIA AND THEIR SUBJECT IN THE PERSPECTIVE
OF CRITICAL THEORY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

© Viktoriya Kanstantsiuk

Lecturer, European Humanities University,
Savičiaus g. 17, Vilnius, Lithuania

Email: victoria.konstantuk@ehu.lt

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3932-2475>

Abstract: This article explores how generative media and artificial intelligence reshape subjectivity, perception, and communication in the (post) digital age. Drawing on critical theory and psychoanalysis – particularly the works of Mark Andrejevic, Slavoj Žižek, Bernard Stiegler, John Black, and others – the article analyzes how algorithmically-driven media affect the dynamics of desire, knowledge, and autonomy. Special attention is given to the dialectic between subjectivity and algorithmic regulation, the psychoanalytic concept of the “desire not to know,” and the transformation of creativity under conditions of automated content production. The discussion uncovers the ideological functions of generative media, showing how AI does not merely mediate perception but actively participates in the structuring of the unconscious. Tracing the historical evolution of media as both technological and symbolic systems, the article argues for a critical re-evaluation of the socio-political and epistemological implications of AI-generated content. Ultimately, it challenges the presumed neutrality of generative technologies, foregrounding their role in the reproduction of power, desire, and subject formation.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, generative media, psychoanalysis, critical theory, algorithmic unconscious, subject.



Введение

Генеративные медиа представляют собой новый этап в развитии постцифровой эпохи¹, трансформируя формы субъективности, восприятия и коммуникации. Эти системы, основанные на алгоритмах машинного обучения и искусственного интеллекта, обладают способностью к автономному созданию контента — от изображений и текстов до музыки и видео. Генеративные медиа представляют собой результат взаимодействия технологий и культурных практик. Это совершенно новая форма медиа, с которой мы никогда раньше не сталкивались, которая является высоко персонализированной, интерактивной и потенциально гораздо более манипулятивной, чем любая форма таргетированного контента.

По мере того как ИИ и генеративные медиа становятся неотъемлемой частью повседневной жизни, встает вопрос: каким образом генеративные медиа не только влияют на формирование субъективности, но и участвуют в реконфигурации бессознательного, желания и знания? Ответ на него требует привлечения как критической теории, так и психоанализа. Критическая теория, с ее акцентом на анализ социальных, экономических и культурных структур, предоставляет уникальную перспективу для понимания этих изменений. Психоанализ — в его лакановской и постлакановской интерпретации — помогает раскрыть, как алгоритмические системы вмешиваются в структуры бессознательного, изменяя режимы желания, познания и действия. Иначе говоря, речь идет о переформатировании не только сознания, но и бессознательного.

Важно отметить, что название статьи отсылает к работе Джонатана Крэри «Камера-обскура и ее субъект», в которой он писал о возникновении новой модели субъективности в первой четверти XVI века в связи с появлением камеры-обскуры, подменяющей сенсорный опыт субъекта. Подобно тому, как камера-обскура стала метафорой когнитивной и культурной трансформации субъекта раннего модерна, генеративные медиа функционируют как новая структура, оформляющая субъективность в эпоху цифрового капитализма.

В данной статье генеративные медиа рассматриваются как неотъемлемая часть инфраструктуры власти, формирующей субъективность в цифровую эпоху. Термины «генеративные медиа», «ИИ-медиа», «синтетические медиа» понимаются как

1 Постцифровая эпоха рассматривается здесь как период, в котором цифровые технологии становятся очень сильно интегрированными в повседневную жизнь, можно сказать, невидимыми.

взаимозаменяемые и обозначают системы, создающие медиа-объекты (изображения, видео, текст, музыку и др.) с помощью обученных нейросетей (Manovich 2024). Эти технологии способны не просто воспроизводить, но прогнозировать и упреждать желания, что имеет далеко идущие последствия для понимания субъекта. Как отмечает Кэтрин Хейлз, цифровые технологии обладают травматическим характером, нарушая границы между сознательным и бессознательным, индивидуальным и инфраструктурным (Hayles 2006).

Генеративный ИИ функционирует в условиях постцифровой культуры, где исчезают устойчивые различия между создателем, аудиторией и интерфейсом. Например, платформы DALL-E, GPT и Midjourney уже изменили процессы креативного производства, поставив под сомнение как авторство, так и само творчество, позволяя художникам и дизайнерам создавать сложные визуальные и текстовые проекты с минимальными затратами. В последние два года генеративные медиа находят широкое применение в различных сферах. Например, в индустрии кино и анимации алгоритмы ИИ уже используются для создания сценариев, визуальных эффектов, цифровых актеров. Голливудские компании активно внедряют технологии искусственного интеллекта в кинопроизводство. В 2024 году компания OpenAI представила модель Sora, способную генерировать реалистичные видео на основе текстовых описаний, что вызвало дискуссии о будущем кинопроизводства и возможной замене традиционных профессий. В маркетинге такие платформы, как Jasper и Copy.ai, позволяют брендам создавать персонализированный рекламный контент с минимальным участием человека. ИИ позволяет автоматизировать рутинные задачи журналистов и выпускать новости быстрее. *The Washington Post* применяет систему Heliograf для автоматического написания новостей. Издание *Gizmodo*, освещающее темы технологий, науки, культуры и инноваций, в 2023 году заменило часть своей редакционной команды искусственным интеллектом. Ранее дублирование англоязычного контента на испанский язык выполнялось отдельной группой специалистов, однако владельцы сайта приняли решение сократить персонал и полностью доверить перевод и адаптацию материалов ИИ. Итальянская газета *Il Foglio* напечатала первый в мире ИИ-номер (март 2025), содержимое которого полностью сгенерировано искусственным интеллектом. Эти примеры демонстрируют не только эффективность генеративных медиа, но и меняющийся подход к созданию контента в современном медиaprостранстве. Однако это также вызывает тревогу, так как автоматизация творческих процессов может подрывать ценность человеческого труда. Генеративные медиа порождают потенциально бесконечное многообразие контента, но остаются

встроенными в логику автоматизированного производства, подчиненного рыночным и идеологическим императивам.

Генеративные ИИ можно рассматривать как очередной виток технологической эволюции, сопоставимый с революционными изобретениями прошлого, такими как печатный станок, кино или телевидение. Например, печатный станок изменил процесс передачи знаний, демократизировал доступ к информации, но одновременно поставил вопросы о контроле над содержанием. Генеративные медиа продолжают эту тенденцию, но вместо распространения информации они предлагают новые формы ее создания, радикально изменяя субъективность пользователей. Вместо линейной модели воздействия медиа на аудиторию возникает сложная сеть обратных связей между пользователем, алгоритмом и рынком, где субъект все чаще оказывается не столько автором, сколько функцией в алгоритмически управляемой системе распределения внимания и желания. Исторически развитие ИИ также тесно связано с вопросами национальной безопасности и военным финансированием, особенно в сферах слежки, прогнозирования угроз и мониторинга рисков (Selwyn 2024). Это подчеркивает, что речь идет не о нейтральных инструментах, а о властных механизмах, перераспределяющих познание, внимание и субъективность.

Энн Фридберг в своей книге «Виртуальное окно. От Альберти до Microsoft» исследует, как новые технологии меняют наше восприятие времени, пространства и самих себя. Она утверждает, что медиа создают «виртуальные окна», через которые мы интерпретируем мир. В этом контексте алгоритмы становятся не только техническими инструментами, но и медиаторами восприятия реальности, формирующими способы взаимодействия с миром. Фридберг предлагает осмыслить, как технологии меняют наше восприятие пространства, времени и взаимодействия с миром, указывая на необходимость критического подхода к экранной культуре. Генеративные медиа, если опираться на логику Энн Фридберг, также представляют собой результат взаимодействия технологий и культурных практик, становятся новыми «окнами», сквозь которые субъект воспринимает реальность.

Постепенно формируется отдельное направление — критическая теория ИИ, изучающая искусственный интеллект в контексте власти, неравенства, эксплуатации и общественного контроля, а также демонстрирующая возможности качественно иного будущего общества. Поэтому критическая теория в той или иной степени является политической за счет участия в инициировании социальных изменений (Lindgren 2023: 3). Она продолжает черпать вдохновение в марксистской традиции, Франкфуртской школе, постструктурализме, психоанализе.

Используя идеи таких теоретиков, как Марк Андреевич, Славой Жижек, Бернар Стиглер, Джон Блэк, Кейт Кроуфорд, Шошана Зубофф, Лев Манович, а также психоаналитические концепции субъекта, бессознательного, желания, дискурса капитализма, мы можем выявить ключевые тенденции и траектории развития автоматизированных и генеративных медиа. Эти исследования позволяют глубже понять, как алгоритмическое производство контента влияет на общество и субъекта, формируя новые механизмы контроля и управления желанием.

В данной статье под субъектом понимается не просто пользователь цифровых технологий, но фигура, формирующаяся в пересечении символического порядка, желания и механизмов власти. Сообразно лакановской традиции субъект определяется не целостностью, а нехваткой, не автономией, а разрывом. Генеративные медиа не конституируют субъект с нуля, но становятся важной частью тех символических и технических структур, которые модулируют его желания и восприятие, радикально трансформируют формы его расщепления, моделируя бессознательное через алгоритмическое предсказание. В этом смысле ИИ и генеративные медиа можно рассматривать как новый виток в истории медиаторов, которые трансформируют психическую экономию субъекта. ИИ становится новым Другим — не в метафизическом, а в материально-инфраструктурном смысле.

Особое внимание в статье уделяется диалектике между управлением и непредсказуемостью, между знанием и желанием, между символическим и алгоритмическим. Статья показывает, как генеративные медиа становятся не только формой производства контента, но и механизмом реорганизации субъективности. Кроме того, генеративные медиа рассматриваются не только как инструмент контроля, но и как пространство возможных форм эстетического и субъективного сопротивления.

Субъект в условиях алгоритмического производства

Современные дискуссии вокруг генеративных медиа часто строятся вокруг двух противоположных точек зрения: технооптимизма, утверждающего, что ИИ расширяет человеческие возможности, и техноскептицизма, предупреждающего об усилении алгоритмического контроля и цифрового неравенства. Критическая теория, начиная с работ Т. Адорно и М. Хоркхаймера, ставила под сомнение способность технологий освободить человека, подчеркивая их роль в усилении власти капитала. Сегодня генеративные медиа радикализируют это напряжение, помещая субъекта в противоречивую позицию: с одной стороны, он остается активным участником

производства и потребления контента (просьюмером), с другой — превращается в элемент машинного цикла, поставляющий данные, поддающийся моделированию и оптимизации.

Критическая теория ИИ подчеркивает необходимость осмысления того, как технологии формируют, контролируют и предвосхищают субъективность, желания и действия людей. Работы Славоя Жижека, Марка Андреевича, Шошаны Зубофф, Кейт Кроуфорд, Бернара Стиглера и Льва Мановича помогают проследить, как алгоритмы не только управляют вниманием, но и прогнозируют поведение, автоматизируют восприятие и настраивают эмоциональную вовлеченность. Генеративные медиа действуют не на уровне репрезентации, а на уровне предиктивной инфраструктуры, встраивая субъекта в поле вероятностных сценариев.

М. Андреевич, изучая цифровую эпоху, уделяет особое внимание социальным последствиям цифрового надзора, алгоритмического труда и превращения личных данных в товар. Хотя он не обязательно позиционирует себя как критического теоретика в духе Франкфуртской школы, его работы воплощают принципы критического анализа власти, технологий и общества. Его исследования помогают понять, как генеративные медиа могут быть использованы в трансформации желаний и идентичности пользователей, а также — какие социальные последствия это может иметь.

В условиях цифрового капитализма границы между автономным желанием и его алгоритмической конфигурацией становятся все менее различимыми. Генеративные ИИ-системы обладают способностью создавать не только фейковый, но и глубоко персонализированный контент, способный адаптироваться под поведенческие паттерны отдельных пользователей. Это открывает возможность для нового типа воздействия — не столько навязывающего, сколько предваряющего, упреждающего желания субъекта. Однако субъект не исчезает полностью — он продолжает существовать в форме амбивалентной фигуры, одновременно формируемой и формирующей, будучи объектом оптимизации и источником сопротивления.

Процесс алгоритмической оптимизации — ключевой механизм цифровой среды — направлен на максимизацию вовлеченности и эффективности. Он предполагает постоянную калибровку медиасреды под действия и реакции пользователя, тем самым сокращая пространство для непредсказуемости и спонтанности. В этом контексте автономия не отменяется напрямую, а размывается — через постепенное превращение выбора в заранее смоделированный ответ, оформленный как якобы спонтанное решение. Таким образом, оптимизация не просто повышает эффективность, а создает условия, при которых субъект начинает действовать в предсказуемых рамках, не всегда осознавая их обусловленность.

Критический теоретик Алфи Баун в своей концепции «революции желаний» подчеркивает, что цифровой капитализм фундаментально трансформирует саму структуру человеческого желания. Желания субъекта встроены в рамки цифрового капитализма, контролируются как политикой, так и технологиями. Цифровые технологии трансформируют субъекта на уровне желания, реконструируя его либидо-экономику так, как это не было возможно ранее (Bown 2022). В своей книге Баун призывает к восстановлению подлинной человечности в отношениях и к отказу от упрощения эмоций до уровня алгоритмов.

Марк Андреевич утверждает, что конечная логика автоматизированных технологий ведет к максимальной предсказуемости субъекта. Психоанализ, начиная с Фрейда и Лакана, давно показал, что субъект изначально не является цельным, самоидентифицируемым и автономным, а формируется через символические структуры (через отсутствие, разрыв). В тот момент, когда всё в субъекте становится полностью предсказуемым, человек перестает быть субъектом и становится чем-то автоматизированным. В генеративных медиа субъект сталкивается с новым типом отчуждения: не только утрачивается авторство, но и возникает расщепление между желанием и его алгоритмической реализацией. Искусственный интеллект становится своего рода «другим», с которым субъект вынужден вступать в диалог, однако этот диалог предопределен логикой машинной предсказуемости. Алгоритмы стремятся к замыканию нестабильности — к устранению «интервала желания», о котором писал Ж. Лакан. В этом и заключается амбивалентность генеративных медиа: они не просто отчуждают субъект, но стремятся устранить само поле неопределенности, в котором и возможно становление субъекта как такового.

Согласно Андреевичу, ключевым механизмом, через который алгоритмы и ИИ перестраивают реальность, является предсказание, вытесняющее объяснение (Andrejevic 2020: 9). Современные алгоритмические системы прогнозируют и предвосхищают социальную жизнь и ее развитие. Марк Андреевич называет это «триумфом грубой обработки чисел над проверкой, пониманием и объяснением гипотез»² (Andrejevic 2020: 30). Такой подход, направленный на сбор максимального количества переменных и выявление корреляций, стирает традиционные способы производства знания. Каким бы ни был прогноз: будущая производительность труда, успеваемость учащихся, потенциальная угроза, — подход состоит в том, чтобы смешать как можно больше переменных и посмотреть, что всплывет. Однако

2 «Triumph of brute number crunching over hypothesis testing, comprehension, and explanation».

автоматизированные средства массовой информации и ИИ не показывают, как рождаются знания.

В автоматизации и ИИ присутствует постсоциальный уклон: попытка заменить социальные процессы машинными, как будто сортировка и сопоставление — это то же самое, что и суждение. Такая попытка направлена на устранение неоспоримых недостатков человеческого принятия решений и создания знания (Andrejevic 2020: 30). Таким образом, повсеместный цифровой мониторинг в сочетании с алгоритмическим принятием решений и машинным обучением создает новые формы власти и контроля (Andrejevic 2020: 133). Автоматизация и ИИ — это не только освобождение, но и контроль. Таким образом, Андреевич критически рассматривает возросшую зависимость от алгоритмов и автоматизированных систем анализа данных.

Шошана Зубофф в своей книге «Эпоха надзорного капитализма» вводит понятие нового экономического порядка, который она называет «надзорным капитализмом», где прибыль извлекается не из производства товаров, а из сбора и анализа личных данных пользователей. В отличие от традиционного капитализма, где основной источник прибыли — это производство и продажа товаров и услуг, в надзорном капитализме прибыль извлекается из человеческого опыта. Технологические компании, такие как Google и Facebook, создают детализированные поведенческие профили, которые затем используются для персонализированной рекламы и управления поведением пользователей. Эта система подрывает автономию субъекта, превращая его не в активного участника цифровой экономики, а в источник данных, используемых для манипуляции его предпочтениями и решениями. «Эти новые операции превращают нашу жизнь в потоки данных, которые затем используются для формирования нашего поведения и создания прогнозных данных» (Zuboff 2019: 17). Это ведет к эрозии приватности и вызывает вопросы о том, насколько люди могут контролировать свою информацию. «По мере расширения капитализма наблюдения наша частная жизнь все больше подвергается вторжению и превращению в товар» (Zuboff 2019: 18). Компании используют данные для создания персонализированных рекламных кампаний и продуктов, что может влиять на решения и поведение людей, зачастую без их осознания этого влияния.

Таким образом, генеративные медиа и алгоритмическое производство не просто изменяют способы коммуникации, но и радикально трансформируют саму природу субъекта. Границы между автономией и алгоритмической регуляцией стираются, а сама субъектность подвергается пересмотру в свете новых цифровых властных механизмов. Самая опасная особенность генеративного ИИ не в том, что он может создавать масштабные фейковые статьи

и видео, а в том, что он может создавать интерактивный и адаптивный контент, под каждого пользователя, чтобы максимизировать убедительное воздействие. Важно учитывать, что генеративные медиа не являются нейтральными инструментами: они формируют не только содержание, но и способы восприятия реальности. Так, алгоритмы TikTok и Instagram не просто адаптируют контент под предпочтения пользователей, а активно конструируют их вкусы, создавая эффект «алгоритмического пузыря», который может ограничивать критическое восприятие информации.

Генеративные медиа как идеологическая машина

Исследование темы идеологии является важной частью критической теории. В условиях цифрового капитализма она больше не проявляется как система дискурсивного навязывания, а функционирует в виде инфраструктуры повседневности, встроенной в алгоритмы, интерфейсы и персонализацию опыта. Как отмечает Кейт Кроуфорд, искусственный интеллект — это не нейтральная технология, а политический и экономический инструмент, в том числе укрепляющий существующие структуры власти: «И из-за капитала, необходимого для масштабного создания ИИ, и способов видения, которые он оптимизирует, системы ИИ в конечном итоге предназначены для обслуживания существующих доминирующих интересов. В этом смысле искусственный интеллект является реестром власти»³ (Crawford 2021: 8).

Сама архитектура ИИ репрезентирует власть: она делает ее повседневной, невидимой, встроенной в интерфейс. На уровне идеологии — в лакановском смысле как структуры, организующей бессознательное, — происходит не только подмена реальности, но и автоматизация ее конституирования. Системы генеративного ИИ становятся новыми формами символического порядка, в котором субъект существует и через который интерпеллируется. Как подчеркивает Линдгрэн, идеология ИИ строится на самозабвенной вере в автономную силу технологического прогресса, на передаче решений непрозрачным алгоритмам и деполитизации будущего: «В идеологии ИИ часто встречаются неуклонный технологический оптимизм, вера в то, что технологический прогресс — это автономная сила, способная нас спасти, а также

3 «And due to the capital required to build AI at scale and the ways of seeing that it optimizes AI systems are ultimately designed to serve existing dominant interests. In this sense, artificial intelligence is a registry of power».

тенденция передавать ключевые решения непрозрачным алгоритмам»⁴ (Lindgren 2023: 3).

Славой Жижек традиционно исследует, как идеология формируется и поддерживается через культурные артефакты и медиа. В эпоху ИИ и генеративных медиа эти технологии становятся не просто инструментами создания и распространения контента, но и мощными средствами формирования идеологических структур. Они способны усилить существующие идеологические предпосылки, внедряя их в создаваемый контент и таким образом влияя на желания и предпочтения аудитории. Именно поэтому, по мнению Жижера, чат-боты будут очень хорошо ладить с идеологами всех мастей (Žižek 2023b).

Если следовать лакановской концепции бессознательного как структурированного подобно языку, можно утверждать, что генеративные медиа конструируют новое «алгоритмическое бессознательное». Они оперируют на основе больших данных, выявляя латентные закономерности, которые могут оставаться невидимыми для самого субъекта. Это создает иллюзию самопознания через медиатехнологии, но, как и в случае с классическим психоанализом, истина субъекта всегда остается в недоступной области «желания Другого». В этом контексте цифровая инфраструктура, включая ИИ-чат-ботов, может восприниматься как материально существующий большой Другой, ошибочно приравняемый к трансцендентному божественному Другому. В статье «Постчеловеческая пустыня» Жижек анализирует влияние искусственного интеллекта на человеческую субъективность и рассматривает, как цифровые технологии могут создавать иллюзию «большого Другого». Он также отмечает, что новые цифровые медиа экстернализируют наше бессознательное в ИИ, создавая ситуацию, при которой те, кто взаимодействует с алгоритмами, перестают быть расщепленными субъектами (Žižek 2023b). Жижек интерпретирует ИИ как технологическую форму символического порядка, в которой исчезает само напряжение между Я и Другим. Цифровое бессознательное экстернализуется — пользователь сталкивается с машиной, которая знает его желания раньше него самого. Чат-боты действуют как «машины извращений», затуманивая бессознательное, поскольку позволяют пользователям проецировать свои самые сокровенные фантазии без последствий. В этом смысле они оказываются более репрессивными, чем даже самые строгие формы символической цензуры.

4 «In AI ideology, we will often find relentless technological optimism, the belief that technological progress is an autonomous force and can save us all, and the tendency to delegate key decisions to opaque algorithms».

По мнению С. Жижека, ИИ постепенно снижает необходимость в человеческом участии в различных сферах. В отличие от прошлых технологических инноваций, ИИ не предполагает господства человечества над природой. Напротив, он угрожает заменить самих людей, предлагая им «кофе без кофеина» — дружелюбного соседа, у которого нет скелетов в шкафу, Другого, который не предъявляет требований и подстраивается под любые потребности (Žižek 2023c). Как саркастично замечает С. Жижек, «ИИ придет за нами не с ядерными залпами, а делая привычным нам образ жизни финансово нежизнеспособным» (Žižek 2023d).

Но в то же время автоматизированные системы не способны воспроизводить человеческое суждение во всей его полноте, поскольку оно включает субъективные аспекты, которые невозможно свести исключительно к данным. Об этом пишет С. Жижек в статье «Искусственный идиотизм» (Žižek 2023a), подчеркивая, что чат-боты не способны улавливать нюансы, иронию и противоречия, являющиеся неотъемлемой частью человеческого общения. В результате исчезает пространство сомнения, несогласия, иронии — всего того, что делает субъекта живым и несовершенным. С. Жижек отмечает, что человек никогда не говорит буквально то, что, по его мнению, он говорит, тогда как искусственный интеллект может лишь имитировать этот процесс. Более того, чат-боты не способны лгать так, как это делает человек (Black 2024). Способность лгать свидетельствует о наличии бессознательного и играет важную роль в формировании субъекта. Ложь (в психоаналитическом ключе) предполагает наличие бессознательного: дистанцию между Я и тем, что оно говорит. Чат-боты, не обладая бессознательным, не могут лгать в человеческом смысле, что отличает их от людей.

Бернар Стиглер радикализирует эту критику. В статье «Искусственная глупость и искусственный интеллект в антропоцене» он также рассматривает взаимосвязь между ИИ и человеческим субъектом. Автор утверждает, что весь ноэтический (разумный) интеллект по своей природе искусственен, поскольку развивается через внешние технические средства, которые Стиглер называет «техническими органами» или «экзосоматическими органами» (Stiegler 2018: 1). Это означает, что человеческий разум всегда был связан с технологиями, которые расширяют его возможности. Процесс расширения человеческих возможностей через внешние технические средства приводит к созданию новых форм интеллекта. Однако этот процесс имеет двойственную природу: с одной стороны, он способствует развитию знаний и культуры, с другой — может приводить к «искусственной глупости», когда чрезмерная зависимость от технологий снижает способность к критическому мышлению и самостоятельному принятию решений (Stiegler 2018: 8).

Как отмечает Бернар Стиглер, цифровые технологии колонизируют внимание и память, превращая субъекта в объект постоянного воздействия. Происходит «пролетаризация мышления», когда сознание становится зависимым от автоматизированных процессов⁵. По мнению Стиглера, алгоритмы разрушают способность к критическому мышлению, превращая знания в поверхностные данные. Знание превращается в поток данных, внимание — в ресурс, субъект — в обслуживающую структуру. Именно это и составляет суть идеологической функции генеративных медиа: они не навязывают взгляды, как идеология прошлого. Они подменяют саму структуру желания, делают ненужным конфликт, критику, несогласие. Вместо субъекта, сомневающегося и действующего, появляется потребитель алгоритмических образов, желающий то, что машина научилась желать за него.

ИИ может быть как полезным инструментом для развития общества, так и разрушительной силой, если его использование не будет регулироваться этически и политически. Для Стиглера важно, чтобы технологии служили человеческому развитию, а не приводили к отчуждению или зависимости. Он предлагает развивать такие формы взаимодействия с технологиями, которые поддерживают и усиливают человеческую субъектность, а не подавляют ее. Таким образом, Стиглер подчеркивает необходимость балансировать между использованием ИИ для расширения человеческих возможностей и сохранением критического отношения к технологиям, чтобы избежать деградации человеческого субъекта в условиях растущей автоматизации.

Таким образом, генеративные медиа — это не просто форма коммуникации. Это инфраструктура нового идеологического режима, в котором исчезают классические координаты субъекта, истины и свободы. Только через возвращение к критическим рамкам — к анализу эпистемологических и психоаналитических структур — можно начать распознавать скрытую власть, встроенную в алгоритмы, и сопротивляться ей не на уровне интерфейса, а на уровне самого мышления.

Субъект знания vs субъект желания

Развитие ИИ ведет к формированию «алгоритмического субъекта» — предсказуемого, оптимизированного под логику данных.

5 Стиглер, Б. (2019). Искусственный интеллект — это искусственная глупость (интервью). <https://www.colta.ru/articles/society/21731-bernar-stigler-iskusstvennyy-intellekt-eto-iskusstvennaya-glupost>.

Однако эта модель вступает в напряженные отношения с субъективностью, которую психоанализ описывает как основанную на разрыве, нехватке и непрозрачности. Конфликт между субъектом знания и субъектом желания здесь становится не просто метафорой, но ключевой точкой напряжения в цифровой культуре, где алгоритмы стремятся к контролю, а субъективность ускользает, прорывается, сопротивляется.

Джек Блэк в статье «Диалектика желания: ИИ-чат-боты и желание не знать» исследует эти сложные взаимоотношения, рассматривая чат-ботов не столько как посредников знаний, сколько как фигуры, вовлеченные в структуры желания. В отличие от традиционного представления о чат-ботах как источниках знаний и рационального ответа, он предлагает рассмотреть их через призму желания субъекта, в котором стремление не знать становится ключевым моментом: «На данный момент наши отношения с ИИ-чат-ботом основаны не столько на его функции как источника знаний, сколько на желании субъекта не знать» (Black 2023: 3). Здесь вступает в силу лакановское различие между знанием и истиной, где знание может быть передано, но истина всегда связана с нехваткой и невозможностью полного понимания, с разрывом, с бессознательным, с желанием. В этом смысле желание «не знать» — это форма сопротивления идеологии тотальной когнитивной прозрачности, тотального знания, стремящейся заменить субъективность управляемостью.

Признание разрыва, присущего как человеку, так и ИИ, может, по мнению Блэка, открыть новые горизонты понимания. Можно сказать, что чат-бот служит для раскрытия связи между двумя формами субъективности: субъектом знания и субъектом желания. Мы можем наблюдать это напряжение и неудовлетворенность во взаимодействиях с ИИ-чат-ботами. Хотя с позиции субъекта знания мы получаем от них относительно полезные ответы, в глубине сохраняется беспокойство: могли ли мы задать лучший вопрос? Не был ли предоставленный ответ неполным или ошибочным?

Этот эффект алгоритмического незнания усиливается интерфейсной логикой постоянного возвращения: запрос-ответ, скролл-контент, свайп-рекомендация — каждый из них поддерживает циркуляцию желания, не приводя к его разрешению. В этом цикле интерфейс превращается в машину повторения, оформляющую субъекта как фигуру бесконечного перезапроса. Алгоритм, каким бы сложным он ни был, остается несовершенным, а потому невозможность достижения окончательной истины становится постоянным фоновым элементом наших взаимодействий. Эта неудовлетворенность — парадоксально — и поддерживает наше удовольствие.

Лакановская концепция «желания Другого» здесь приобретает особую актуальность: алгоритмы, анализируя наши цифровые следы, предугадывают наши потребности до того, как мы их осознали. Однако это предсказание всегда носит механический характер — оно не учитывает иррациональность желания, его сопротивление полному постижению. Как раз это и делает субъекта непредсказуемым.

Таким образом, психоаналитический подход предостерегает от идеализации ИИ как субъекта предположительно знающего. Как отмечает Блэк, «в свете своих ошибок технология ИИ, несомненно, улучшится, однако эти ошибки и неудачи не исчезнут» (Black 2023: 17). Предположение о возможности достижения абсолютного знания ведет к параноидальной фантазии об ИИ как лишённой недостатка сущности. Напротив, осознание его пределов и неустранимой нехватки открывает пространство для трансформации наших отношений с цифровыми технологиями, создает пространство для нового осмысления цифровых взаимодействий. Желание «не знать» в этом смысле становится не просто отказом от знания, а способом осмысления самого разрыва, определяющего как субъекта, так и созданный им ИИ.

Субъект знания и субъект желания оказываются не просто в конфликте — их взаимодействие становится ядром новых цифровых механизмов власти. Алгоритмы ИИ, анализируя поведенческие паттерны, стремятся к созданию предсказуемой субъективности, превращая поведение в ресурс, в то время как психоанализ напоминает: субъект остается субъектом благодаря своей непредсказуемости, несовершенству и отказу от окончательной истины. Неоптимизированность субъекта — это не сбой, а условие свободы. В этом измерении открывается возможность сопротивления: не в отказе от технологий, а в переопределении рамок их использования, в возвращении себе права на ошибку, на непонимание, на желание.

Противостояние субъекта знания и желания проявляется также в визуальной и перформативной культуре. Художественные и активистские практики часто становятся пространством, где субъект отказывается от прозрачности, управляемости, эффективности — тех качеств, к которым стремится алгоритмическая культура. Вместо этого на первый план выходит непредсказуемое, телесное, повторяющееся, провальное — всё то, что не поддается машинной логике. Такой подход не отрицает ИИ, а переопределяет рамки, в которых субъект с ним взаимодействует: не как с идеальным Другим, знающим всё, а как с «симптоматической машиной», в которой можно распознать собственную тревогу, фантазии, свободу.

Так, в перформансах, работающих с ИИ в реальном времени, тело артикулирует сопротивление: оно действует вопреки

оптимизации, подчеркивая разрыв между живым и цифровым. Одним из таких примеров является перформанс «Corpus Nil» (2014–2019)⁶ Марко Доннаруммы — телесная импровизация с участием ИИ-системы, которая в реальном времени анализирует движения тела исполнителя и реагирует на них через синтез звука и света. Доннарумма сознательно нарушает ожидаемые движения, создавая сбои в алгоритмическом распознавании, тем самым превращая тело в пространство отказа от цифровой интерпретации.

От репрезентации к предсказанию: генеративные медиа, субъект, творчество

Теперь рассмотрим, как генеративные медиа трансформируют роль субъекта в искусстве и в творчестве, а также в более широком культурном и социальном контексте. Этот процесс затрагивает вопросы автономии и контроля над творческим актом. В традиционном искусстве автор опирается на культурные коды, но остается носителем субъективного опыта. Генеративные медиа, наоборот, оперируют массивами данных, обнаруживая скрытые паттерны, но не обладают собственным намерением (желанием). Дискуссия о генеративных медиа и креативности также неминуемо отсылает к классической проблематике технической репродукции (Беньямин). Можно сказать, что генеративные системы ИИ продолжают линию автоматизации художественного производства, начатую еще с появлением фотографии и массовых медиа.

Бернар Стиглер связывает автоматизацию творческого процесса с его пролетаризацией — утратой индивидуального жеста, размыванием критического сознания и зависимости от внешних технических структур (Stiegler 2018). По его мнению, алгоритмическая автоматизация не просто воспроизводит формы, но вытесняет самого субъекта как носителя трансформационного опыта. Творчество становится функцией машинного анализа данных, а не интуиции или символического разрыва. Искусство в этом смысле оказывается всё менее пространством желания и всё более — пространством предсказания. В свою очередь, Лев Манович, теоретик новых медиа и цифровой культуры, исследует влияние искусственного интеллекта (ИИ) и генеративных медиа на современное искусство, дизайн и культуру в целом. Он полагает, что цифровая культура не просто воспроизводит существующее, но создает новые режимы визуальности и субъективности. Манович рассматривает ИИ не просто как инструмент, а как часть более широкой

6 <https://marcodonnarumma.com/works/corpus-nil/>

системы «программирования культуры» — процесса, в котором цифровые технологии формируют способы создания, распространения и восприятия культурных объектов. В своих работах он подчеркивает, что алгоритмы не просто помогают создавать изображения или тексты — они организуют наше воображение, формируя каноны восприятия, эстетики и даже желания. Генеративные модели, по Мановичу, не являются нейтральными: они основаны на исторических базах данных, которые уже содержат в себе иерархии, предвзятости, стилистические коды. В книге «Программное обеспечение берет власть» Манович подчеркивает, что алгоритмы играют решающую роль в автоматизации творческих процессов.

Генеративные системы могут быть использованы для исследования новых эстетических и этических горизонтов: «Достаточно того, что новые инструменты ИИ для сопоставления медиа стимулируют наше воображение, предоставляют нам новые идеи и позволяют нам исследовать многочисленные вариации конкретных дизайнов»⁷ (Manovich 2024: 14). Такие проекты, как нейросети, создающие искусство, позволяют не только деконструировать существующие культурные нормы, но и предлагать новые формы коллективного творчества. Они позволяют создавать бесчисленное множество вариаций изображений, текстов и музыки, что делает творчество более масштабируемым и доступным. Однако этот же процесс вызывает опасения, связанные с «перепроизводством» контента. Избыток сгенерированных произведений затрудняет навигацию в культурном пространстве, а алгоритмы начинают играть роль не только в создании, но и в фильтрации и распространении контента, влияя на то, что становится видимым и востребованным.

Манович отмечает, что ИИ становится не просто инструментом, а полноценным участником творческого процесса. В отличие от традиционных инструментов, которые требуют активного управления со стороны человека, современные алгоритмы способны генерировать художественные произведения, анализировать стили и даже предугадывать предпочтения аудитории. Это меняет роль художника, дизайнера, превращая их в кураторов или соавторов вместе с алгоритмическими системами. Например, в сфере цифрового искусства уже существуют проекты, где нейросети создают картины, которые затем дорабатываются человеком, что стирает границы между машинным и человеческим творчеством. Однако, подчеркивая возможности ИИ как инструмента расширения эстетического поля, Манович также предостерегает от алгоритмической стереотипизации: «ИИ часто генерирует

7 «It is sufficient that new media mapping AI tools stimulate our imagination, provide us with new ideas, and enable us to explore numerous variations of specific designs».

новые медиаартефакты, которые более стереотипны или идеализированы, чем мы предполагали»⁸ (Manovich 2024: 20). Это означает, что нейросети, тренированные на популярных визуальных стилях, воспроизводят нормы, игнорируя маргинальные, девиантные или нестандартные формы выразительности. Алгоритм оказывается не только соавтором, но и носителем идеологии, пусть и неосознанной.

ИИ также меняет способы потребления культуры. Стриминговые сервисы, социальные сети и платформы цифрового контента используют алгоритмы персонализации, которые адаптируют контент под индивидуальные предпочтения пользователя. Манович обращает внимание на двойственную природу этого процесса: с одной стороны, алгоритмы упрощают доступ к интересному контенту, но с другой — ограничивают культурный опыт, создавая «фильтры реальности» и исключая случайные открытия. Они не просто подсказывают, «что смотреть», но и — через метрики вовлеченности и персонализацию — формируют вкусы. Возникает ситуация, в которой субъект уже не выбирает, а лишь подтверждает выбор, сделанный за него — тот, который кажется «естественным», потому что совпадает с предыдущими паттернами поведения. Таким образом, алгоритмы не только имитируют человеческое творчество, но и замещают желание предсказанием. Их работа строится на вероятностной логике: они выдают то, что, скорее всего, понравится, и тем самым исключают возможность случайности, несоответствия, провала — всего того, что, по Лакану, делает желание подлинным.

Несмотря на потенциал ИИ в творчестве, Манович акцентирует внимание на рисках: утрата уникальности в искусстве, этические проблемы (например, использование чужих данных для тренировки ИИ), а также вызовы, связанные с монополизацией технологий крупными корпорациями. Генеративные модели могут воспроизводить стереотипные образы, игнорировать маргинализированные группы или усиливать западные визуальные стандарты. Алгоритмы оптимизированы под популярные визуальные стили, что может приводить к унификации художественного языка. Как подчеркивает Лев Манович, распространение ИИ в искусстве неизбежно изменит саму логику эстетических предпочтений, формируя новые каноны визуальности (Manovich 2023).

По мнению Мановича, ИИ и генеративные медиа не просто дополняют традиционные художественные практики, а радикально трансформируют способы создания и восприятия культуры. Они не только меняют роль художника, но и ставят под вопрос границы

8 «AI frequently generates new media artifacts that are more stereotypical or idealized than what we intended».

между человеческим и алгоритмическим творчеством. Современные технологии формируют новую культурную среду, где искусство становится результатом взаимодействия человека и машины, а авторство — всё более размытым понятием.

Однако, если генеративные медиа становятся новым инструментом рыночного и идеологического контроля, возможны ли формы альтернативного использования этих технологий? Одним из направлений сопротивления может стать развитие open-source платформ, позволяющих пользователям контролировать алгоритмы генерации контента и тренировать их на собственных базах данных. Например, такие проекты, как Stable Diffusion и Open Assistant, предлагают децентрализованные модели, которые можно адаптировать для самостоятельного творчества, не зависящего от корпораций.

Еще одним подходом является осознанное использование ИИ как инструмента критики. Художники и исследователи экспериментируют с «контралгоритмическими» методами, создавая произведения, которые подчеркивают внутренние ограничения ИИ, вскрывая его слепые зоны. Например, проект *AI Weirdness*⁹ Джанелл Шейн демонстрирует, как алгоритмы могут производить неожиданные, а иногда абсурдные и комичные результаты (сбои), вскрывая механизмы их работы. Такие проекты подчеркивают не только уязвимость ИИ, но и возможность поэтического сбоя, в котором субъект вновь обретает пространство для желания — не как функции, а как аномалии, события, расхождения с нормой. Таким образом, фигура субъекта генеративных медиа — это не только позиция в структуре, но и телесная, аффективная, поэтическая фигура — место сбоя, повторения, замедления. Именно через ошибку, задержку, телесную ритмику и неэффективность субъект может противостоять машинной предиктивности, восстанавливая пространство желания и критического мышления.

Заключение

В заключение можно сказать, что генеративные медиа и ИИ представляют собой не только технологический, но и социальный

9 *AI Weirdness* — это проект Джанелл Шейн, в рамках которого она исследует и демонстрирует забавные, странные и неожиданные результаты работы нейросетей. Она обучает модели на необычных и специфических наборах данных — например, списках странных имен для котиков, рецептах печенья или популярных фразах из фильмов — и показывает, как искусственный интеллект может генерировать неожиданные, нелепые или даже пугающие результаты.

вызов. Они требуют переосмысления понятий субъективности, автономии и манипуляции. Критическая теория и психоанализ предлагают нам инструменты для исследования этих изменений и поиска путей для осознанного использования новых технологий. Использование междисциплинарного подхода помогает выявить глубокие трансформации субъекта в условиях алгоритмического производства. Исследования Марка Андреевича, Славоя Жижека, Джека Блэка, Кейт Кроуфорд, Льва Мановича и других авторов дают нам уникальные перспективы для понимания и критического осмысления роли генеративных медиа в формировании субъекта и социальных структур в современном мире.

Генеративные медиа и алгоритмические системы не только меняют способы создания и распространения контента, но и инициируют радикальные трансформации в самой структуре субъективности. Субъект генеративных медиа — это не просто пользователь, но фигура, балансирующая между автономией и алгоритмическим предсказанием, между знанием и бессознательной нехваткой. Желание, понимаемое в лакановской традиции не как потребность, а как разрыв, отсутствие, нестабильность, оказывается тем, что ускользает от алгоритмической предикции. Субъект генеративных медиа — это субъект на границе. Он одновременно встроен в цифровую логику предсказуемости и алгоритмического контроля и в то же время сохраняет остаточную зону непредсказуемости, которую невозможно полностью автоматизировать. Субъект не исчезает — он трансформируется, мигрируя из позиции автора в позицию того, кто использует, нарушает, переопределяет алгоритм. В провале модели, в неожиданном сбое или аномалии рождается новая форма субъективности — не как центр, но как трещина в автоматизированной логике.

Генеративные медиа представляют собой как угрозу (в терминах утраты критического мышления и эрозии приватности), так и потенциал для создания новых форм эстетического и политического сопротивления. Они активируют процессы, описанные как в критической теории (Жижек, Кроуфорд, Андреевич), так и в психоанализе, и формируют поле, где субъект оказывается втянутым в игру между контролем и разрывом, между символическим порядком и его цифровыми мутациями. Они радикально трансформируют культурный ландшафт, смещая акценты с авторства на алгоритмическое предсказание, с опыта — на обработку данных, с желания — на поведение. В этой логике творчество становится функцией вероятности, а субъект — производной от алгоритмической модели. Однако в этой точке наивысшей автоматизации возникает и возможность сопротивления.

References

- Andrejevic, M. (2020). *Automated media*. London: Routledge.
- Black, J. (2023). The dialectic of desire: AI chatbots and the desire not to know. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* 28: 607–618.
- Black, J. (2024). Can AI Lie? Chabot Technologies, the Subject, and the Importance of Lying. *Social Science Computer Review*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/08944393241282602> (accessed: 05 January 2025).
- Bown, A. (2022). *Dream Lovers: The Gamification of Relationships*. London: Pluto Press.
- Crawford, K. (2021). *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Friedberg, A. (2006). *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hayles, N. K. (2006). Traumas of Code. *Critical Inquiry* 33(1): 136–157.
- Lindgren, S. (2023). *Critical Theory of AI*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Manovich, L. (2013). *Software Takes Command*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Manovich, L. (2024). Seven Arguments about AI Images and Generative Media (Chapter 5). In: Manovich, L. & Arielli, E., eds. *Artificial Aesthetics: Generative AI, Art and Visual Media*. <https://manovich.net/content/04-projects/175-artificial-aesthetics/lev-manovich-ai-aesthetics-chapter-5.pdf> (accessed: 10 January 2025).
- Manovich, L. (2023). *The AI Brain in the Cultural Archive*. Available at: <https://manovich.net/content/04-projects/124-the-ai-brain-in-the-cultural-archive/lev-manovich-ai-brain-in-the-cultural-archive.2023.pdf> (accessed: 10 January 2025).
- Selwyn, N. (2024). *Acknowledging the military origins of AI in education*. <https://criticaledtech.com/2024/12/18/acknowledging-the-military-origins-of-ai-in-education/> (accessed: 10 January 2025).
- Stiegler, B. (2018). *Artificial Stupidity and Artificial Intelligence in the Anthropocene*. Lecture delivered on 23 November 2018 at the Institute of Ereignis, Shanghai. https://www.academia.edu/37849763/Bernard_Stiegler_Artificial_Stupidity_and_Artificial_Intelligence_in_the_Anthropocene_2018 (accessed: 05 January 2025).
- Žižek, S. (2023a). Artificial Idiocy. *Project Syndicate*. 23 March 2023. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/ai-chatbots-naive-idiots-no-sense-of-irony-by-slavoj-zizek-2023-03> (accessed: 21 December 2025).
- Žižek, S. (2023b). ChatGPT says what our unconscious radically represses. *Sublation Magazine*. Apr 7, 2023. <https://www.sublationmag.com/post/chatgpt-says-what-our-unconscious-radically-represses> (accessed: 21 December 2025).
- Žižek, S. (2023c). The Post-Human Desert. *Project Syndicate*. Apr 7, 2023. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/ai-post-human-future-by-slavoj-zizek-2023-04> (accessed: 21 December 2025).
- Žižek, S. (2023d). The AIs are coming: Will ChatGPT create a future of bullsh*t (jobs)? 16 January 2023. <https://www.waikato.ac.nz/news-events/news/the-ais-are-coming-will-chatgpt-create-a-future-of-bullsh-t-jobs/> (accessed: 21 December 2025).
- Zuboff, Z. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. PublicAffairs.

CYBERFEMINISM AND THE BELARUSIAN UPRISING: DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURES, AFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY, AND POLITICAL IMAGINATION

Volha Davydzik

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-226-243>

© Volha Davydzik

Research Fellow, PhD Student

DFG Cultures of Critique, Leuphana University, Germany

E-mail: volha.davydzik@leuphana.de

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2903-8558>

Abstract: The following article explores how information technologies can function as infrastructures of resistance and collective world-making in the face of socio-political catastrophe, authoritarian suppression, and covert control systems. Focusing on the 2020–2021 Belarusian protests, it examines how digital environments became critical for reconfiguring political agency and collective solidarity. While often associated with surveillance and extraction, digital infrastructures also serve as platforms for alternative, decentralized modes of resistance. Revisited through a cyberfeminist lens, the Belarusian case reveals how feminist strategies intersect with digital tools to generate subversive forms of care, visibility, and political engagement. The entry point to the reimagining of digital technologies as a space for producing solidarity is Donna Haraway's framing of agency as sympoetic and open-ended, thus revealing itself in bundles of networks and entanglements. Agency appears to be distributed amongst human and non-human (or more-than-human) participants in assemblies who co-constitute each other in the process of world-making or world-becoming. Hence, emerging infrastructures are never neutral and merely instrumental, but relational and affective as they are a product of daily interaction (or intra-action) and become a site of intersection of acts, desires, emotions, histories, bodies and technologies. In the course of Belarusian uprisings, digital space became one of those sites of distributed collective agency in-becoming through experimentation, creativity, openness, thinking and telling stories together. This analysis foregrounds the



hybrid entanglements of technology, gender, and resistance, mapping how cyberfeminism offers theoretical and practical pathways for technopolitical transformation and emancipation.

Keywords: cyberfeminism, Belarus, digital resistance, hybrid infrastructures, protest, affective solidarity.

Introduction

In 2020, the presidential elections in Belarus resulted in significant socio-political upheaval. The pandemic crisis acted as a catalyst for growing protest sentiments within society, which gained momentum during the election campaign, especially with the rise of alternative political candidates. The spring and summer of 2020 became pivotal for Belarusian society, giving rise to mass peaceful protests almost daily, the formation of a “political collective subject” and a redefined understanding of political action and activism. In this context, information technologies played a critical role in intensifying protest actions, functioning as tools for communication and information dissemination and as platforms for alternative management and decentralized problem-solving based on the principles of solidarity among citizens affected by the political climate¹.

During the Belarusian protests, a variety of initiatives emerged that leveraged digital technologies. These included smart voting platforms and solidarity networks for different communities, such as doctors, activists, students, women, etc. Tools for mutual assistance were developed, including systems to locate arrested individuals, deliver food and hygiene products to prisons, and provide psychological and legal support to prisoners and their families. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, mutual aid networks were established² to support patients and medical workers. Additionally, digital platforms facilitated the formation of neighbor chat groups in residential areas, traditionally disconnected from political activity, that fostered communication, organized joint events, lectures, concerts, and activism³. These

- 1 The Path to the Square: The Role of Digital Technologies in Belarusian Protests. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ru/put-k-ploschadi-rol-it-technologiy-v-belorusskom-proteste/> (accessed on 01.06.2025). — In Rus.
- 2 How IT technologies help Belarusians resist Lukashenko. <https://www.dw.com/ru/it-protest-kak-tehnologii-pomogajut-belorusam-protivostojat-lukashenko/a-55700780> (accessed on 01.06.2025). — In Rus.
- 3 Vasily Gatov on the protests: The IT environment has created something like Hong Kong inside Belarus. <https://ductus.cz/interviews/vasilij-gatov-o-protestah-it-sreda-sozd/> (accessed on 02.06.2025). — In Rus.

initiatives contributed to horizontal cooperation, non-hierarchical communication, and inclusivity, thereby creating new avenues for political participation where values like care, love, respect, and solidarity became as crucial as procedural elements.

However, following the protests of 2020–2021, political repression and persecution led Belarus into a profound crisis. As the stability of societal structures crumbled, what was once concealed beneath the surface of daily life became exposed and tangible. Paul Edwards, in his work *Infrastructure and Modernity: Power, Time, and Social Organization in the History of Sociotechnical Systems*, highlights the invisibility of most technologies until disruptions expose them. He notes, “Thus, infrastructure is the invisible background, substrate, or support, the technocultural/natural environment of modernity... They create both opportunities and limits...” (Edwards 2003: 191). This shift in visibility reveals not only the fragility of systems but also their potential for change.

The Belarusian protests serve as an example of how ruptures in political and social order make infrastructures visible, both in their oppressive functions and in their subversive potential. The internet shutdowns orchestrated by the state during mass demonstrations⁴ exposed the critical role of digital infrastructures in both control and resistance. The very networks that facilitated state surveillance also became sites of counteraction, as protesters rapidly adapted by using VPNs, mesh networks, and encrypted messaging apps. Similarly, urban spaces (streets, squares, and even residential courtyards) were transformed from passive elements of the built environment into arenas of political contestation⁵, where the spatial logic of state control was momentarily overturned through collective presence and action. This infrastructural visibility, however, was not just a revelation of power but also a call to reimagine the possibilities of public space beyond authoritarian constraints.

At the same time, the exposure of infrastructures also highlights their plasticity (Malabou 2022) their ability to be reshaped in response to shifting conditions and to resist becoming static instruments of control. Catherine Malabou’s concept of plasticity, understood as the capacity to receive form and to break it, captures this dual potential. In Belarus, the failure of state institutions to provide adequate health-care, legal aid, and basic security during the protests led to the rise

4 Belarus: Internet shutdown, online censorship. <https://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2020/09/01/376244> (accessed on 11.06.2025). – In Russ.

5 Belarus: Yard protests in Minsk and other cities. <https://www.dw.com/ru/voskresnye-protesty-v-belarusi/a-56183670> (accessed on 11.06.2025). – In Rus.

of alternative infrastructures of care. Volunteer medical teams, mutual aid networks, and underground educational initiatives⁶ filled the void left by official neglect, not merely compensating for absence but creating new forms of collective resilience. As Edwards notes, infrastructures both enable and limit; moments of rupture expose this contingency, showing how systems once taken for granted can become unstable and open to reinvention (cf. Edwards 2003). In Belarus, while state infrastructures aimed to suppress dissent, other forms, grounded in solidarity, emerged, revealing the outlines of a society beyond authoritarian constraint.

In this article, I engage cyberfeminism not as a prescriptive frame, but as a way to trace the nuanced and often invisible dynamics through which resistance materializes in acts of care, infrastructural creativity, and relational agency. Feminist theory, with its attention to embodiment, interdependence, and the politics of reproduction, offers critical tools for understanding revolutions that prioritize world-making over regime change – revolutions that build rather than merely overturn. As a micro-optic, cyberfeminism reveals the affective textures, distributed networks, and fragile solidarities that define 21st-century uprisings, especially those that emerge not from centralized commands, but from the entangled practices of everyday resistance.

Cyberfeminism, in Donna Haraway's formulation, manifests a subjectivity that is not fixed, ultimate, or complete, but always in a state of becoming-with others – networked and entangled with both human and non-human agents (Haraway 1991). It is understood here not as a monolithic theory but as a mobile, adaptive strategy that offers a framework for interpreting these developments. Unlike broader terms such as “networked feminism” or “Feminist Internet theory,” cyberfeminism emphasizes the subversive potential of digital technologies and their embeddedness within power relations. It interrogates both the constraints and possibilities of technological environments, foregrounding how gendered bodies and identities are mediated, surveilled, and reconfigured. As Haraway writes:

“The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. No longer structured by the polarity of public and private, the cyborg defines a technological polis based partly on a revolution of social relations in the oikos, the household... Cyborgs

6 Study: How Belarusians Resist Authorities Online. <https://www.dw.com/ru/issledovanie-kak-belorusy-soprotivlautsa-vlasti-lukasenko-onlajn/a-67290603> (accessed on 11.06.2025). – In Rus.

are not reverent; they do not re-member the cosmos. They are wary of holism, but needy for connection- they seem to have a natural feel for united front politics, but without the vanguard party.” (Haraway 1991: 151).

Applying this framework to the Belarusian case of digitalized protests does not imply that the protest movement was inherently cyberfeminist. This reveals how particular moments – such as the use of digital city maps showing riot police dislocations, neighborhood chats for spreading information, protest symbols appearing in unexpected locations, people taking to the streets, women in white, chains of solidarity along the avenues, drivers honking in support, and two young men playing badminton on the steps of the KGB building – collectively form strategies of reappropriation and visibility rooted in a cyberfeminist digital praxis.

Feminist scholars have long interrogated how the built environment, digital systems, and state-controlled infrastructures reinforce gendered and political hierarchies, determining who has access, who is visible, and who is excluded (Haraway 1991; Wajcman 2004). And cyberfeminists such as Sadie Plant and Donna Haraway argue that digital infrastructures, though embedded in patriarchal and capitalist systems, also provide sites of resistance, where marginalized groups can challenge dominant power structures and create autonomous spaces of knowledge production and activism.

Above all, it insists on the practice of becoming-with, of composing the world alongside machines, codes, bodies, and other-than-human agents, in networks of situated, partial, and contingent alliances. This means that resistance is not solely enacted by individual subjects, parties, or movements, but emerges through dense entanglements of people, digital platforms, encrypted tools, emotional bonds, and improvised infrastructures none of which act alone. The biases embedded within digital and technological systems, infrastructural ruptures, whether in digital spaces, urban geographies, or state institutions, offer moments of feminist and political reconfiguration. In Belarus, as in other recent movements, the exposure of authoritarian infrastructural violence was met with a feminist politics of care, resistance, and technological insurgency, demonstrating how infrastructure is never neutral but always contested, and how its failures can become opportunities for radical reinvention.

In her work *The Revolution Face is Female: Case of Belarus*, Olga Shparaga offers a perspective on the role of feminist ideas within the resistance. Shparaga argues that the Belarusian protests, while primarily driven by political demands for democracy and justice, also

intersected with feminist ideologies and values. She defines the protest movement as inherently feminist, emphasizing its opposition to patriarchy and traditional power structures. The protests, she asserts, are not merely a fight for political rights but also a struggle to redefine power, care, and solidarity in ways that subvert the normalization of infrastructural violence imposed by the state on all levels. By promoting a collective, egalitarian ethos, the protests resist the patriarchal control perpetuated by both the state and the wider societal structures. The Belarusian protest movement, in its essence, was a deconstruction of patriarchy, positioning itself not only as a political movement but also as a feminist endeavor that demands a transformation of both the political and social order, as well as overcoming the agential oppression (Shparaga 2021).

Soft tactics of resistance, such as non-violent protest, decentralized organizing, and digital activism, play a significant role in the ways cyberfeminism contributes to understanding contemporary revolutionary movements. It focuses on subverting traditional power structures and insisting on inclusivity, utilizing technology to create decentralized platforms for collective action. In the context of revolution, these tactics focused on horizontal cooperation, shared knowledge, thinking together and solidarity pushing the boundaries of “traditional” activism.

This raises important questions about the role of technology and feminist approaches in analyzing the ongoing socio-political transformations. How can digital technologies and feminist perspectives together reshape our understanding of power, agency, and collective action? The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries vividly illustrate how digital tools and mechanisms have enabled the development of fundamentally new forms of social institutions.

Several critical questions remain: How do soft resistance tactics contribute to the gradual dismantling of patriarchy? What role do information technologies play in this process, and how can we frame a positive, shared future amidst times of tragedy and turmoil? Finally, why is the convergence of technological and feminist strategies essential for driving transformative changes? These questions guide the inquiry into the intersection of technology and feminism in the shaping of future societal transformations.

This article thus argues that cyberfeminist vision can help elucidate the hybrid forms of resistance that characterized the Belarusian uprising. By examining how technological infrastructures intersect with feminist ethics, it becomes possible to understand protest not as a singular event, but as a complex ecology of practices — emergent, fragile, and yet profoundly transformative.

Digital Infrastructures, Horizontal Mobilization, and the Transformation of Protest in the Belarusian Uprising

The Belarusian protests brought to the fore the critical role of digital infrastructures in shaping the form and ethos of political participation. Infrastructures here are not merely technical systems; they constitute the relational fabric through which protest movements unfold, connect, and act. The development of decentralized communication tools allowed citizens to circumvent state-controlled institutions, transforming how political subjects organized, imagined, and inhabited resistance.

In their article “Can You Hear Me Now? How Does Communication Technology Affect Protests and Repressions?” (Christensen & Garfias 2018), the authors analyze how digital tools transform protest activity and repressive responses. They argue that mobile phones and media contribute significantly to the activation of collective action. Digital technologies, they contend, serve three primary functions: first, they reduce the cost of resources needed for coordination, thus, simplifying the building of infrastructural connections; second, they accelerate the process of disseminating information about the suppression of protests and instances of violence; and third, they make protests global and visible, which is of particular significance.

The visibility and rapid dissemination of information about violence, scenes of police brutality, and arbitrary actions make it difficult for many to remain neutral. As the authors emphasize: “The visibility of repression forces many observers to take a stance, aligning them with the victims and activists” (Christensen & Garfias 2018). Two key factors are crucial for solidarity in protests: proper and effective dissemination of information, and the transformation of this information into common knowledge in the sense of general awareness. Additionally, this awareness is inherently communicative: potential participants must be informed but and engage in feedback, creating a state of mutual awareness across sources and participants. Fragile, temporary connections are established to support the event, providing participants with the opportunity to solidify and communicate, exchange ideas, and be present in diverse ways. Technology facilitates the growth of horizontal connections and broadens the factors contributing to the willingness of individuals to unite in networks and chains of interaction. These networks include communities that existed before the events bridging different spaces and temporalities in the moment of revolution.

Platforms such as Holas (Voice)⁷, Chestnyje Liudi (Honest people)⁸, BySOL⁹, ByMEDSOL¹⁰ (which are all now considered to be extremists in Belarus¹¹) and others promoted the opportunity for safe participation, different modes of inclusion in the protest movement (both online and offline); the possibility of alternative vote counting against the backdrop of total distrust in government officials, local election commissions and the Central Election Commission.

These digital initiatives have demonstrated their effectiveness in building up solidarity, shaping new modes of political participation, and uniting diverse actors in collective action. By using these platforms, individuals and groups that were previously disconnected have found common ground, mobilizing around shared objectives and fostered inclusive political engagement, overcoming the traditional barriers against inertia in society and sustained, collaborative activism (Davydzik & Stebur 2021).

As the country approached the elections and entered the active protest phase from mid-August 2020 through 2021, both the digitalization and dispersal of protest activities accelerated significantly. This growth in intensity was fueled by the establishment of numerous Telegram¹² channels, which enabled people to organize around specific tasks and shared interests.

Telegram's functionality played a decisive role in this transformation. It combined immediacy with anonymity and adaptability, became a logistical and affective space for coordination. People received alerts, mapped danger zones, and found community — all within an interface tailored to encrypted, rapid response. These functionalities facilitated resistance and reshaped the temporality of protest: actions could be spontaneous, adaptive, and quickly reoriented in the moment of danger and tension.

Almira Ousmanova in her article “Digital Multitude: The Multiple That Takes Over The One” (Ousmanova 2023) notes a very important

7 <https://belarus2020.org/home>.

8 <https://honestby.org/>.

9 <https://www.bysol.org/ru/>.

10 <https://bymedsol.org/>.

11 Understanding “extremist” lists: a list of organizations and individuals involved in terrorist activities. 20 March, 2023. <https://humanconstantia.org/razbiraem-sya-s-ekstremistskimi-spiskami-perechen-organizacij-i-fizicheskix-lic-pri-chastnyx-k-terroristicheskoy-deyatelnosti/> (accessed on 03.02.2025).

12 Telegram messenger as a means of communication and self-organization in the situation of political crisis in Belarus. https://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2020_TG_Belarus-I.pdf.

trend that was set by the broad and non-superficial inclusion of digital tools in the political field. With the growth of IT clusters and businesses in the country, a new generation has emerged with access to alternative sources of information and communication. This generational divide has created a significant gap, highlighting the contrast between an analog-style dictatorship reliant on traditional methods of control and communication (such as television and radio) and a digitally empowered populace asking, “What are we capable of?” This digital multitude, equipped with decentralized and real-time communication tools, challenges the old regime’s attempts at control and opens up new possibilities for collective action and social transformation: “The peaceful Belarusian Evolution is the protest of the multitude which every day invents politics, constantly changing places and forms of protest using a grassroots form of organization”. And further: “This is a molecular revolution (F.Guattari, J.Deleuze, G.Raunig), the composition of which “does not need unification or the representation of a unified (class), subject for leaders, party and vanguard” (Ousmanova 2023).

The concept of the digital multitude, which characterizes the aggregation of actors engaged in shaping the political sphere, represents an alternative perspective on collectivity and solidarity. Unlike traditional modernist nation, this concept emphasizes inclusivity, allowing for the participation of diverse agents and communities while embracing a multiplicity of experiences. Instead of relying on representative political structures, the digital multitude envisions non-representational, fluid modes of engagement, where participation and collective action emerge organically from shared interests and values rather than being dictated by imposed identities, parties or hierarchical frameworks (Virno 2004).

The digital multitude challenges conventional understandings of sovereignty and governance by redistributing agency across decentralized networks, bringing to emergence new forms of political organization and redefines the boundaries of political subjectivity. Experimental modes of resistance, where digital tools and cyberfeminist strategies intersect function as a force of disruption and as a generative space for political imagination: a capacity long suppressed or forgotten.

The digital environment has thus emerged as a medium for political participation, offering a suite of tools to create prototypes of non-representative democratic institutions and platforms for engagement, as well as archiving unfolding events, memories and practices. It has expanded the concept of protest beyond physical demonstrations, enabling participation through diverse ways and redefining protest in terms of flow, circulation, flickering, and networking. Within the reality

of protest, the digital sphere introduces new layers of participation with mobility, inclusivity, non-human and technical participants, such as bots in Telegram channels, allowing individuals to select tools and methods of engagement.

The recent transition of protest marches from traditional city centers to more symbolic locations and residential areas marks a significant evolution in protest dynamics. This shift reflects a growing intent to engage directly with communities. Local Telegram chats have emerged as vital platforms for discussion, serving to address political agendas and facilitate interpersonal connections among participants, coordinate actions, share resources and information, thus enhancing grassroots organizing efforts. The chat groups were instrumental in redefining how communities mobilize, connect, and respond to socio-political challenges and unlocking the ability to “get to know each other”¹³. Local initiatives implemented in residential neighborhoods and remote areas were of great importance for protest activity. People organized courtyard tea gatherings, hosted lectures and theatrical performances, listened to concerts and read poetry, and held children’s events.

In the article “Belarusian Protest: Regimes of Engagement and Coordination” (Gabovich 2021), Misha Gabovich notes a very important trend that set a special tone for the Belarusian revolution. Firstly, the establishment of diverse opportunities and methods for connecting to the protest movement has emerged as a critical factor in mobilizing a large number of participants and brought the feeling of personal investment in the movement, as individuals could engage in ways that resonate with their own experiences and capacities. Secondly, this evolution has led to a significant shift in the locus of political activity and decision-making; the focus has transitioned from abstract politics “up there” to a more personal and relatable form of political engagement. By emphasizing personal connections and local contexts, the protest movement cultivates a deeper sense of agency among participants, reinforcing the idea that political change begins at the community level. The personalization of political and protest participation has been facilitated, in part, by the establishment of a network of local initiatives that address specific local issues while simultaneously contributing to a collective resistance against regimes of control and

13 “We didn’t know each other until this summer” is a lyric line from the song of the group “Spln” (Russian Federation), which became one of the slogans of the protest, as well as the title of a documentary film about the revolutionary events in Belarus during the elections and the first week 9 August 2020. “We didn’t know each other until that summer,” a documentary by Volha Abramchyk. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vU9GtE75ZA>.

violence. This dual approach allows communities to engage with their immediate concerns while also participating in a broader struggle for justice and accountability. Gabovich further emphasizes a distinctive characteristic of the Belarusian protests: the appropriation of agency by the leaders of the democratic association, who invoke this sense of agency during election campaign rallies.

By framing their messaging around empowerment and collective action, Tsikhanouskaya, Kalesnikava and Tsepkalo addressed political agency and action differently, resonated with the grassroots motivations of participants, thereby enhancing the movement's legitimacy and appeal. This strategy grounded the idea that political engagement is rooted in personal experiences and local realities, appealing for resilient and engaged citizenry capable of challenging systemic injustices and advocating for democratic principles.

Beyond Recognition: Cyberfeminism, Technopolitical Resistance, and Affective Solidarities

During the course of the Belarusian revolution, it became evident how technological infrastructures, once largely invisible, opened new channels of exchange, enabling the generation of utopian horizons for the future, where alternative forms of cooperation and co-existence could be imagined and enacted (Tolstov & Stebur 2020). This utopian potential of technology aligns it with strategic interventions, where digital tools are not merely commercial commodities but instruments of solidarity, care, and activism—means of articulating freedom, emancipation, and the right to visibility in spaces otherwise marked by exclusion and violence.

To fully grasp this subversive capacity of technology, we require a theoretical framework that is fluid, diffuse, and capable of infiltrating structures, exposing contradictions, and revealing the hidden dislocations within systems. As Alla Mitrofanova describes it, cyberfeminism functions as “a browser for viewing and navigating modern cultural shifts and historical heritage” (Mitrofanova 2010), offering a methodological lens and tactics for engaging with technological infrastructures, power, and resistance in moments of upheaval.

Through the lens of technologies embedded within social and political bodies, the world becomes perceptible in new ways — not as a fixed entity but as something constantly reassembled through shifting chains of interaction between human and non-human agents. Technologies reveal a reality where human actors, technical objects, and even other non-human entities exist on equal ontological footing,

engaging in complex configurations of agency. Information technologies, in particular, serve as interfaces that mediate between these environments, enabling interactions between established and emergent objects – a term Helga Nowotny (2006) uses to describe entities that arise at the intersection of different fields, reshaping both scientific and socio-political landscapes. Nowotny emphasizes that emergent objects are not simply pre-existing entities brought into new contexts; rather, they materialize through interactions, producing unforeseen forms of agency and meaning. In this sense, technologies do not merely mediate reality but actively participate in its co-construction, blurring the boundaries between what is considered natural, artificial, or socially determined.

However, in the spirit of Giorgio Agamben, these same technologies also hold the potential to produce new, even more invasive forms of institutional control. Agamben conceptualizes “bare life” as the condition of being reduced to mere biological existence, stripped of political agency, and subjected to pervasive mechanisms of regulation as imposed technic of power (Agamben 1998). In contemporary bio-political regimes, individual subjectivity is no longer determined by social status, reputation, or public identity, but rather by the fixation of bio-anthropometric data, which renders bodies legible for bureaucratic and surveillance systems – whether through medical records, biometric passports, or security checkpoints. As a result, autonomy and freedom of action become dependent variables, constrained by the logic of hierarchical institutions seeking universal control. Within this bio-political framework, subjectivity is a contested field for multiple discourses and socio-political practices of subjugation, where state-administered care operates as life management and discipline.

One of the key strategies employed by activists is the manifestation and production of new subjectivities and feminist cultural representations in cyberspace, contributing to utopian imaginaries and alternative modes of political agency. Online interactions enable the formation of fluid, hybrid selves, decoupled from traditional markers of gender, race, and class, yet at the same time, these identities remain embedded within the algorithmic, economic, and ideological constraints of digital infrastructures. While cyberspace holds the potential to disrupt dominant paradigms, it also reproduces the bio-political mechanisms of surveillance, categorization, and control, shaping digital subjectivities in ways that often reflect existing hierarchies rather than dismantling them.

As cyberfeminist theorists themselves acknowledge, a lack of interaction between theory and critical analysis can lead to unintended consequences, including the reproduction of sexism and mass cultural

stereotypes. So, what is at stake is the production of new epistemologies that do not align with the algorithms of productive economy and rigid hierarchies. From this perspective, the interweaving of socio-political theory and criticism could generate more nuanced and effective strategies for what Sadie Plant terms cyber utopianism — a vision of digital networks as spaces of emancipation and subversion (Plant 1997).

Cyber utopianism — a subcategory of technological utopianism — posits that online communication facilitates decentralized, democratic, and libertarian structures. However, it is clear that the digital environment does not inherently guarantee these idealized outcomes, nor does it automatically dismantle patriarchy or colonial structures. Similarly, cyber utopia does not inherently serve as a space of identity liberation, as it remains embedded within the logic of social production, shaped by pre-existing power dynamics. Digital infrastructures do not exist outside of systems of war, violence, and hierarchical control; they emerge from and within these systems. As Pauline Wilding argues, the integration of cyber environments into hierarchical machines does not negate oppression but instead reinforces new normative constraints on digital subjectivity (Wilding 1998). In this context, cyberfeminism does not merely celebrate the liberatory potential of technology but functions as a radical strategy of hybridization, disrupting and reconfiguring the patriarchal order from within.

The way fem-strategies are defined is, among other things, through the modification of the Other — the search for an alternative subjectivity, even and especially within those toward whom the telescopes of feminist emancipation are directed. This process is not merely about recognition and inclusion but about discovery, differentiation, and distance—a political task that is central to both fem-strategies and networked structures (Hayles, 1993). Feminist interventions in digital environments thus function not only as acts of resistance but as processes of ontological reconfiguration, where subjectivity is reimaged as fluid, relational, and co-constituted through technological entanglements.

The development of fragile ontologies, spontaneous agglomerations, sporadic associations, and an attentiveness to microprocesses and micropolitics defines the utopian horizon made possible by technology and feminist strategies for transforming reality. These alternative modes of being make a shift from politics of recognition and differentiation to politics of immersiveness and being-with, where identity is not simply acknowledged but actively co-produced within dynamic assemblages, the perspective that was developed by Karen Barad within the conceptual apparatus of intra-action (Barad 2007).

Cyberfeminism, as a theoretical framework, seeks to act as a catalyst for critical social analysis and the emergence of new perceptual paradigms that facilitate political transformation. This transformative discourse is inherently tied to the principle of inclusivity, extending beyond the human to encompass a multiplicity of agents, organic and non-organic, animate and inanimate. As Donna Haraway argues, this ontological shift is rooted in co-thinking and thinking-for in relation to “strange” others – a form of epistemological openness that embraces hybridity, alterity, and non-anthropocentric modes of existence. Cyberfeminism thus proposes a radical ontological gap, one that allows for the intrusion of the extra- or non-social into political and technological discourses. Haraway conceptualizes this co-existential and communicative process as “interspecies fellowship”, a mode of relationality that includes objects, technologies, and entities capable of alternative becomings (Haraway 2004).

These interactions among diverse participants are not merely structured by procedural or algorithmic rules; rather, they are suffused with affective intensities, including sensory, emotional, and erotic dimensions (Behar 2016). The erotic, in this context, functions not merely as a sexualized force but as a transformative energy that disrupts established boundaries between bodies, technologies, and systems of knowledge. Drawing from Audre Lorde’s conceptualization of the erotic as a mode of radical empowerment (Lorde 1984), cyberfeminist engagements with the erotic emphasize its capacity to generate pleasure, intimacy, and embodied knowledge beyond normative frameworks. In digital environments, the erotic materializes as a force that challenges mechanistic and extractive modes of interaction, instead fostering affective solidarities and alternative ways of knowing and being-with.

Furthermore, the erotic complicates the traditional hierarchies between subject and object, self and other, human and non-human, creating spaces where desire, agency, and materiality are entangled. Within cyberfeminist practices, the erotic is not confined to the realm of sexuality. Still, it extends into the realm of technology and interspecies communication, serving as a medium for co-creation, resistance, and political imagination. It invites us to consider how technologies, bodies, and affective intensities coalesce in digital spaces, forging networks of relationality that are neither fully controlled nor entirely autonomous.

This intersection of political resistance, infrastructure, relationality and the reconfiguration of collective life is further explored in the work of the art group eeefff, comprised of Dzina Zhuk and Nicolay Spesivtsev. Their practice engages with the interplay between

material and digital environments, offering an artistic lens to examine the power structures that shape contemporary social and political conditions. By focusing on themes such as invisible labor, the precariat, control tactics, and the redefinition of care and solidarity, eeefff's projects interrogate how digital and physical spheres mutually reinforce or destabilize forms of governance.

In their contribution to the Ecology of Attention project, the artist collective eeefff presents the work *All You Need Now Is in Pinned Messages*¹⁴, critically examining digital engagement's structures. Their project interrogates how algorithmic curation fosters a self-reinforcing consumption of content that confines users within their existing preferences, thereby limiting exposure to alternative perspectives and diminishing the potential for shared, collective experiences. By tailoring information streams to individual behaviors, digital infrastructures create a seemingly frictionless environment in which exploration is subtly discouraged. In response, eeefff proposes strategies that redistribute attention beyond isolated digital consumption, advocating instead for practices that foreground communal interaction and shared cognitive engagement.

A central feature of their work is the facilitation of virtual "drifting" sessions through algorithmically reconstructed 3D spaces, including museums, burnt-out apartments, and casinos. These navigational experiments, conducted via platforms such as Discord, highlight the fragmented and often disorienting nature of digital representations. Participants traverse landscapes assembled from algorithmic predictions and incomplete data, encountering blurred images and disrupted spatial coherence. Such experiences problematize conventional notions of digital immersion, revealing how interfaces not only mediate but actively shape perceptual and cognitive processes. By guiding users through predetermined pathways, digital infrastructures exert a subtle form of control, directing attention while simultaneously obscuring aspects of the represented environment.

Beyond their critique of digital consumption, eeefff's work also engages with broader questions of common living and collective space-making within contemporary networked conditions. Their interventions suggest that attention, both as an individual cognitive resource and as a shared social practice, plays a fundamental role in shaping the conditions of collective life. In this sense, the act of navigating digital environments is not merely an interaction with an

14 EEEFFF art-group project *All You Need Now Is in A Pinned Messages*. <https://www.ecology-attention.mmpraxis.com/contributions/eeeff/> (accessed on 11.06.2025).

interface but a form of engagement with the infrastructures that define communal existence. The group's work implicitly raises questions about the possibilities of reclaiming and reconfiguring these infrastructures, challenging the dominance of algorithmic governance by fostering modes of commoning that emphasize relationality, co-presence, and shared affect.

By juxtaposing algorithmic determinism with open-ended, exploratory engagements, *eeeff* invites a reconsideration of how digital technologies mediate both personal and collective existence. Their work suggests that resisting the passive consumption of pre-curated content is not merely an aesthetic or conceptual choice but a political act — one that seeks to reimagine digital environments as spaces of encounter, negotiation, and common world-making. In this way, their practice contributes to a broader discourse on attention, digital infrastructures, and the conditions of sociality in an era increasingly shaped by networked technologies.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the Belarusian protest movement, while not cyberfeminist in itself, provides fertile ground for cyberfeminist analysis. By focusing on the hybrid entanglements of digital technologies, political infrastructures, and feminist ethics, we can better understand how agency is redistributed, solidarity enacted, and resistance articulated in contemporary techno-political contexts.

Rather than treating infrastructure as neutral or merely instrumental, a cyberfeminist approach highlights its political plasticity — its capacity to be co-opted, reconfigured, and reinvented. This reconfiguration occurs at the level of software or hardware, and through embodied, relational, and affective practices that shape how technologies are lived and felt. Cyberfeminism, as mobilized here, challenges dominant models of political engagement centered on visibility, centralization, and individual sovereignty. It proposes instead a politics of multiplicity, care, and distributed action — one that takes seriously the emotional, the local, and the experimental.

The Belarusian revolution reminds us that transformation does not always arrive through rupture. It could emerge through fragile networks, everyday encounters, and small acts of reappropriation. Digital infrastructures, when inhabited otherwise, can become platforms for collective imagination and resilient hope. In this sense, cyberfeminist thinking does not merely interpret the world — it offers tools for inhabiting and altering it.

References

- Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics, 228 pp.
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press.
- Behar, C. (2016). An Introduction to OOF. In *Object-Oriented Feminism*, University of Minnesota Press, 280 pp.
- Bryant, L. R. (2019). *The Democracy of Objects* [Demokratiia ob'ektov]. Perm': Hyle Press.
- Christensen, D., Garfias, F. (2018). Can You Hear Me Now? How Communication Technology Affects Protest and Repression. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 13(1), 89–117. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6461378/>.
- Davydzik, V., Stebur, A. (2021). Features and Effects of the Digital Technologies in the Belarusian Protest. *Digital Icons*, No. 22 (2023): 23–44.
- Edwards, P. N. (2003). Infrastructure and Modernity: Force, Time, and Social Organization in the History of Sociotechnical Systems. In *Modernity and Technology*: 185–226.
- Gabowitsch, M. (2021). Belarusian Protest: Regimes of Engagement and Coordination. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351951818_Belarusian_Protest_Regimes_of_Engagement_and_Coordination (accessed on 03.02.2025).
- Haraway, D. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Routledge, 309 pp.
- Haraway, D. (2004). Cyborgs to Companion Species: Reconfiguring Kinship in Technoscience. In *The Haraway Reader*. New York: Routledge: 295–320.
- Hayles, K. N. (1993). Virtual Bodies and Flickering Signifiers. *Cultural Critique*, Vol. 66: 69–91.
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Crossing Press, 190 pp.
- Malabou, C. (2022). *Plasticity: The Promise of Explosion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 344 pp.
- Mitrofanova, A. (2010). *Cyberfeminism in History, Practice, and Theory*. In *Cyberfeminism: Theory and Practice*: 67–76. — In Russ. [Mitrofanova, A. (2010). Kiberfeminizm v istorii, praktike i teorii. In *Kiberfeminizm: Teoriia i praktika*: 67–76.]
- Ousmanova, A. (2023). Digital Multitude: The Multiple That Takes Over The One. *Digital Icons*, 22: 1–22. Retrieved from https://digitalicons.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/DI22_01_Ousmanova.pdf (accessed on 03.02.2025).
- Nowotny, H. (2005). The Increase of Complexity and Its Reduction: Emergent Interfaces between the Natural Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 22(5): 15–31.
- Nowotny, H. (2006). *Cultures of Technology and the Quest for Innovation*. Oxford/New York: Berghahn Books.
- Plant, S. (1997). *Zeroes and Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture*. Doubleday.
- Shparaga, O. (2021). *The Revolution Face is Female: Case of Belarus*, 234 pp.
- Telegram messenger as a means of communication and self-organization in the situation of political crisis in Belarus. (2020). Retrieved from <https://>

- cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2020_TG_Belarus-I.pdf (accessed on 03.02.2025). – In Russ.
[Telegram messenger kak sredstvo kommunikatsii i samoorganizatsii v usloviakh politicheskogo krizisa v Belarusi.]
- Tolstov, A., Stebur, A. (2020). Like Water. Dynamics of Belarusian Protest: From the Existing Technical Basis to the Utopian Horizons of the Future. Retrieved from <https://syg.ma/> (accessed on 04.08.2023).
- Understanding “extremist” lists: A list of organizations and individuals involved in terrorist activities. (20 March, 2023). Retrieved from <https://human-constantia.org/razbiraemysya-s-ekstremistskimi-spiskami-perechen-organizacij-i-fizicheskix-lic-prichastnyx-k-terroristicheskoy-deyatelnosti/> (accessed on 03.02.2025). – In Russ.
[Ponimanie “ekstremistskikh” spiskov: perechen’ organizatsii i fizicheskikh lits, prichastnykh k terroristicheskoi deiatel’nosti]
- Virno, P. (2004). *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*. Semiotext(e), 160 pp.
- Wajcman, J. (2004). *TechnoFeminism*. Polity Press, 158 pp.
- Wilding, F. (1998). Where is Feminism inside Cyberfeminism? *n.paradoxa*, Vol. 2: 6–13.

CRITICALLY ONTOLOGIZING THE NATION: ULADZIMIR KARATKIEVICH'S ZYAMLJA PAD BYELYMI KRYLAMI

Jakob Wunderwald

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-244-266>

© Jakob Wunderwald

M. A., Scientific Assistant, Institute for Slavic Studies,
University of Potsdam

Am Neuen Palais 10, 14469 Potsdam, Germany

Email: jakob.wunderwald@uni-potsdam.de

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0567-1783>

Abstract. Uladzimir Karatkievich's long essay *Zyamlya pad byelymi krylami* (1972/1977) tries to teach its readers about the Belarusian nation. In the following, it shall be posited that this teaching can best be understood as enacting *critical ontologization* – a mode of developing potential for critical thinking out of identifying oneself with the essence of a national past. This concept is taken from a reading of Frantz Fanon's idea of a *national culture* as formulated in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Here, Fanon envisions a mode of locating oneself within a national history that opens up critical potential in the present – it is the core postulate of this text that *Zyamlya pad byelymi krylami* follows a similar model. The main part of the article will make this argument productive; in a close reading of Karatkievich's essay, several of the key aspects of the text will be discussed in this context: the relation established between the text's narrator and his listeners, the way in which the text positions Belarus as all-encompassing, and the way in which such a positioning opens up critical possibilities for interrogating the relationship between Belarus and its place in Soviet discourse. The aim of such an operation is to demonstrate how in *Zyamlya pad byelymi krylami* two apparently contradictory tendencies become the same: an authoritarian way of national writing that identifies a national essence within its reader – and a critical impetus to empower the reader to break his present and create something new.

Keywords: nation, ontologization, Belarus, Karatkievich, Soviet literature.



Introduction

Uladzimir Karatkievich's 1972 work *Zyamlya pad byelymi krylami* ("The Land Beneath White Wings") is a peculiar text. The nearly two hundred pages of the long essay meander through a whole number of aspects of what one could name the "Belarusian identity": Belarusians' day-to-day life, their customs and looks, their cities, towns and villages, their language and their history, their nature and their literature. Historiographical parts evolve into anecdotes given in the language of fiction, melancholic contemplations about modern life alternate with meditations on the trans-historical character of all things Belarusian. And all of that is told in a specific tone, the tone of a pedagogue speaking to a student audience — the narrator addresses "girls and boys"¹ right in the second paragraph of the book. The book is a teacher's monologue; his audience should learn something.

Originally written in 1972 for Ukrainian school students as an introductory work about their neighbors in Belarus — and therefore also first published in Ukrainian — Karatkievich later decided to heavily edit it and also publish the book in Belarusian, now apparently with a different aim. As one of Karatkievich's editors, a certain L. Mazanik, puts it in his notes for the 1990 republication of the essay in volume eight of Karatkievich's *Zbor Tvorau* ("Collected Works"): "The Belarusian version of the book is a fully new edition. It differs in its more fundamental treatment of the history of the Belarusian lands, their culture, language, and literature".² So now, the text does not want to teach Ukrainian students about a foreign country, but to give *Belarusian* students a *fundamental* lesson about *their own country*. This is a very specific task — one that is not self-explanatory. Why should there be a need to teach young Belarusians such things? Shouldn't they already know them? Why rely on a text originally written for students in another country — even a rewritten one — to do so? What, then, is the point of *Zyamlya pad byelymi krylami*?

These are the questions I will attempt to address. Therefore, I will read *Zyamlya pad byelymi krylami* as engaging in a form of *critical ontologization* — an attempt to formulate a national essentialism that, in turn, empowers the student audience to creatively articulate their own essence in opposition to the Soviet historical narrative that situates

1 "дзяўчаты і хлопцы" (Karatkievich 1990: 383). All translations from the Belarusian are mine. — J. W.

2 "Беларускае выданне кнігі — гэта новая яе рэдакцыя. Адрозніваецца больш грунтоўным даследаваннем гісторыі беларускай зямлі, яе культуры, мовы, літаратуры" (Mazanik 1990: 588).

and seeks to determine them. To explain how such a mode of ontologizing history with a critical aim might work, I will first take a very brief look at Frantz Fanon's idea of *national culture* which prototypically defines the *ontologization* of such a culture as opening up critical potential. The central claim of this text is that Karatkievich's essay can be productively read as embodying a particular idea of national culture: one that essentializes the nation's members and their connection to national history, but does not confine them within its boundaries. Instead, it seeks to empower them to write their own essence. Ontologization becomes the possibility for thinking anew — a critical mode of placing oneself in history. In the main part of this article, I will then make this category productive. A close reading of *Zyamlya pad byelymi krylamy* will focus on three key aspects of the text: first, the narrative situation it establishes between the narrator and his listeners; second, the way the text positions Belarus as an all-encompassing totality; and third, how this positioning opens up critical possibilities for interrogating the relationship between Belarus and its place within Soviet discourse.

Critical Ontologization: Frantz Fanon's Idea of a National Culture

In his most influential work of political writing, *The Wretched of the Earth*, first published in 1961, the Martiniquan-French-Algerian revolutionary writer and anti-colonial activist Frantz Fanon, among other things, searches for an idea of what the proper task of “national culture” in the context of the decolonial struggles of his time might be. He arrives at the following conclusion:

We must not therefore be content with delving into the past of a people in order to find coherent elements which will counteract colonialism's attempts to falsify and harm. [...] A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature. It is not made up of the inert dregs of gratuitous actions, that is to say actions which are less and less attached to the ever-present reality of the people. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence (Fanon 1971: 188).

National culture, to put it in different words, is not about being authentic about the past, not about writing a coherent “true” history

or the people's "true nature" – no: it is about re-attaining a past for the present, about giving oneself a new past, a second nature built upon the moment when "the people has created itself". Thus, for Fanon in the early 1960s, there exists a vision of a *critical* national culture that could develop a position on the present by returning to *national founding moments* – or by even creating them anew. Here, potentials that remained unfulfilled in history become visible through a return to another historical point.³

This statement is crucial for the following analysis of Karatkievich's *Zyamlya pad byelymi krylami*, as it provides a positive, critical dimension to one of the central findings of post-colonial *nation studies* – particularly influential in the Belarusian context: the recognition that nations are not ancient and ever-existing entities, but historically recent phenomena that are created, constructed, and *invented*. In his famous study *Imagined Communities* from 1983, the American political scientist Benedict Anderson puts this in a laconic formula: "The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their antiquity in the eye of nationalists" (Anderson 1991: 5). The Belarusian philosopher Valiantsin Akudovich, an attentive reader of Anderson's texts, adapts this statement to the Belarusian case, establishing a slightly different formula in his heavily influential text *Kod adsutnasti* ("The Code of Absence") from 2007: "The nation is nothing real, but since it exists and has been happening, it is looking for ways of becoming tangible in reality".⁴ With this statement, Akudovich posits the nation as embodying a double nature: it is not real, but it is always there. It is a calling, an ontological feature of the world that is *itself* searching for ways to become real. Where to Anderson the nation is *invented*, to Akudovich it is *inventing itself*.

- 3 It should be acknowledged that turning directly to Fanon may initially seem like a stretch. Nevertheless, this article posits that there are meaningful moments of symmetry between Fanon's theory and Karatkievich's writing – symmetries that will, hopefully, become evident in the course of the analysis. These parallels may be conditioned by a generational affinity: both Karatkievich and Fanon began to conceptualize the nation within the concrete conditions of the post-World War II world, a world that had not shed its colonial structure despite the victory over fascism. Both authors produced their first major works in the 1950s. Their thought developed under conditions of *coloniality*, rather than *post-coloniality* – in contrast to other thinkers discussed in this article, such as Benedict Anderson and Valiantsin Akudovich, for whom the post-colonial world is a far more concrete reality. On the non-identity between Fanon's thinking and later post-colonial theory, cf. Macey, 2012, esp. p. 24–28.
- 4 "Нацыя не ёсць нечым рэальным, але паколькі яна ёсць, адбылася, дык шукае спосабы, каб нейкім чынам уцялесніцца ў рэальнае" (Akudovich 2007: 10).

Both of those ideas ultimately fall short when compared to the concept of national culture found in Fanon's work: to Fanon, the nation is a critical political practice, one that does not have to "delv[e] into the past of a people in order to find coherent elements which will counteract colonialism's attempts to falsify and harm" — it only has a right to exist if it is confronting the "ever-present reality of the people" (Fanon 1971: 188). When it returns to the past, to the national founding moments, it does so to free the present: to unlock in confrontation with the past a source of energy for the struggle in the now. For Fanon, there is indeed a relationship between a nation's present and its past — but it is not grounded in the invocation of some preexisting ontological essence beneath the present. On the contrary, the ontological link between past and present is forged in the present itself, in order to make space for the struggles of the now. The present and the past share an essence only insofar as the past can be put to work for making the present free. Henceforth, one *should* write stories about one's own national past, and one *can* write of an inner connection between this present and the past. But one shouldn't do so for the sake of the past — only for that of the present. There exists no real ontological connection between present and past; what can exist, though, is an *ontologized* idea of the past, one that finds in the past an essence to be made productive in the present. To use another one of Fanon's phrases: "No one can truly wish for the spread of African culture if he does not give practical support to the creation of the conditions necessary to the existence of the culture; in other words, to the liberation of the whole continent" (Fanon 1971: 189). It is possible — and perhaps even necessary — to formulate a national culture, but it must be one that cracks up the unfree present.

In the following, I will demonstrate how reading a text like *Zyamlya pad byelymi krylami* with this kind of critical ontology as an analytical tool can be very productive. A close reading of the text will show how it uses a certain narrative strategy to make the nation a critical category for its listeners — one that finally gives them the power to break from their Soviet present.

Zyamlya Pad Byelymi Krylami: Narrating the Nation

It is not easy to place Uladzimir Karatkievich's long essay *Zyamlya pad byelymi krylami* (hereafter *Zyamlya*) within a clear genre category. Is it a piece of history writing? Is it an educational book, written to teach an unknowing youth about their forgotten national heritage — as at

least the author's introduction suggests, where he sets out this purpose and closes with an exclamation of "Let's go, folks!"⁵? Or is it more a piece of self-analysis, in which the narrator (not necessarily the author) attempts to place *himself* within national Belarusian history, thereby carefully (re-)inventing that very history? It is the last mode of inventing a national narrative *for himself* which the post-Soviet writer Alhierd Bacharevich identifies as the major factor of the *earlier* Karatkievich's literature:

The young Karatkievich had to create his own Belarus — with its history and its myths. To read it between the lines of others' stories. To see it where, in place of history, there seemed to be only a no-man's-land paved over with concrete. To imagine it. To write it. To invent it.⁶

Zyamlya is *not* a work of the *young* Karatkievich; in it, we hear the voice of an author who has already written most of his major works of fiction, including historical novels like *Dzikaye palyavannye karalya Stacha* ("King Stakh's Wild Hunt", 1958), *Kalasy pad syarpom tvaim* ("Grain Beneath Your Sickle", 1965), or *Chrystos pryzyamlusya u Harodni* ("Christ Has Landed in Harodnia", 1966). So, in *Zyamlya*, we read an author who has already mastered the genre of the big historical epos and has written several works that were instrumental for creating a new romantic image of the Belarusian nation⁷ — Valiantsin Akudovich called it a "translation of Adam Mickiewicz's Belarus into Belarusian"⁸. In this way, Karatkievich had opened up new perspectives for looking at the Belarusian past. The scholar Simon Lewis posits that Karatkievich's image of the old Belarus found in those novels does "not impose [Karatkievich's] own version of the Belarusian past, but invites readers to partake in his fiction and thereby to imagine it for themselves"

5 "У дарогу, сябры!" (Karatkievich 1990: 385).

6 "Маладому Караткевічу сваю Беларусь зь яе гісторыяй і яе мітам трэбы было стварыць. Вычытаць між чужых радкоў. Убачыць там, дзе замест гісторыі, здавалася, было закатанае ў бэтон нічыйнае поле. Уявіць. Напісаць. Прыдумаць" (Bacharevich 2012: 382).

7 An image that, as Elena Gapova notes, found particular popularity in the 1960s due to the process of heavy urbanization in the BSSR — where new social conditions created a generalized search for new ways of belonging. In Gapova's pointed words: "Karatkevich provided guidance to a generation of uprooted villagers turned into art historians or ethnologists, who had a collective sense of ambivalence regarding their life course" (Gapova 2018: 193).

8 "[...] Уладзіміра Караткевіча [...] уся творчасць якога, у пэўным сэнсе, ёсць адмысловым перакладам Міцкевіча ўжо на беларускую мову" (Akudovich 1991: 80).

(Lewis 2019: 127). This statement echoes a viewpoint present in the broad Belarusian discourse on Karatkievich, e.g. by Karatkievich's biographer Anatol Verabei, who states that Karatkievich "did not copy historical events and facts with scientific accuracy, but created an artistic chronicle of his homeland".⁹ As Adam Mal'dzis formulates it – and he is by far not the only one to bring up these names: "In Belarus, Uladzimir Karatkievich fulfilled the same historical mission as Henrik Sienkiewicz in Poland, Alois Jirásek in Czechia, and Walter Scott in England".¹⁰ Karatkievich wrote novels, not history books, novels that opened up the question of the past and painted some possible answers to that question – but novels that were clearly fiction, to be read and encountered as such.

Still, those fictional texts were not purely defined by their openness. Especially a text like *Kalasy pad syarpom tvaim* marked out several new focal points that became very influential for any nationalist reading of Belarusian history – the most important one being the establishment of Kastus Kalinouski and the 1863–1864 uprising co-lead by him¹¹, one of Karatkievich's "primary fascinations" (Lewis 2019: 113), as major orientation points for a rekindled national memory canon. Kalinouski through Karatkievich's fiction was "let [...] into the official history writing" (Astrouskaya 2019: 103–104). He had left his mark on the national historical *imaginarium* – in fiction and through fiction. So, it seems justified to ask what Karatkievich does in *Zyamlya*, using a form quite different in style and aim from his fiction, a way more directly pedagogical form – when it earlier had been his fiction that could have such a profound effect.

In the following, it shall be posited that *Zyamlya* is written in such a way because in it the ontologization of national history that was already a factor in Karatkievich's earlier works culminates: it becomes

9 "Ён [...] не капіраваў з навуковай дакладнасцю гістарычныя падзеі і факты, а ствараў мастацкі летапісь роднай зямлі" (Verabei 2020: 13).

10 "Уладзімір Караткевіч выканаў у Беларусі тую ж гістарычную місію, што Генрык Сянкевіч у Польшчы, Алоіс Ірасек у Чэхіі, Вальтер Скот у Англіі" (Mal'dzis 2000: 36). Exactly the same collection of names can be found in Verabei 2005: 3 – so this is an established way of reflecting on Karatkievich's role for the national canon.

11 Kalinouski, the historical figure, was one of the leaders of the 1863–1864 uprising against Tsarist power in the "Northwestern territories" of the Russian Empire (an event referred to as the "Polish uprising" in Russian discourse or the "January uprising" in Polish discourse). He was the author of several pamphlets in Belarusian written for propagandizing the peasant population of the territories, the so-called *Muzhytskaya prawda* ("Peasants' Truth"). After the failure of the uprising, he was publicly executed in Vilnius in 1864 (for a historical overview on Kalinouski and the uprising, cf. Bich, 2013).

the dominating key to his writing. What was merely posited as a possibility in the earlier works of fiction becomes all-encompassing in *Zyamlya*; Belarus becomes a national *totality* in that everything is interconnected. The birds in the sky and the people in the factory, the flowers in the fields and the dialects spoken in the streets, the old ruins of long-lost empires and the fresh bones of forest partisans, literatures of all times and anyone who has ever grabbed a weapon – everything is read as exemplifying Belarusian-ness. This ontologization – as shall be demonstrated – turns history onto its head: it *only* has a place for the existence of Soviet power when considered in the context of *national history*, as one of the stages of such a history. Thus, the essay shifts the burden of proof onto Karatkievich's present – the present must prove itself against this nationalized backdrop. Herein, we can discern a fairly clear (though unconscious, of course) reflection of the critical mode of nationalizing history analyzed by Fanon – Belarus becomes a historical totality that has *something else* to say about every moment of the past. To work through this, I will examine three aspects of the text:

1. How does the narrator model himself in relation to a young audience?
2. How does the text represent Belarus as an all-encompassing national totality?
3. How does it situate Soviet history in relation to that totality?

The Narrator's Opening Words: Preaching the Past

The narrator begins his monologue with the aforementioned introductory prologue, directed at a clearly defined audience¹²: Belarusian youth, specifically members of the generation that grew up after the end of World War II. This is important because, for the narrator, the war marked a turning point in his own biography – he had to learn about Belarus anew after the fighting had stopped:

It came to be that I only truly got to know Belarus at your age. It had been there “before the war”, but then was forgotten during the war. Bombings, sieges, the evacuation. Moscow in October 1941, the Ural Mountains, Kazakhstan, the Orenburg steppes. And then the ruins of Minsk and of my hometown, Orsha, the forests by the roadside cut down by the occupiers (out of fear of the partisans), the graves of killed people. From there on, everything began to be written down anew,

12 This article will only refer to the 1977 Belarusian version of *Zyamlya*.

as if on a clean page. My love for Belarus was born in the hungriest, coldest and most difficult of times. And maybe because of that it grew especially strong.¹³

Karatkievich's narrator already at the very beginning of the essay locates the essay's contents as learnings of the post-war period. There is no direct connection to the old Belarus, all that the narrator wishes to present was conceived, conceptualized, and written *after* the war. This, in itself, is already an interesting statement, as it attributes a somewhat constitutive role to World War II in the formation of Belarusian national consciousness – but not in the common way of framing postwar Belarus as a “Partisan Republic” (Lewis 2017). Quite the opposite: here, Belarus becomes a free playing field for a narrative agent seeking material to write about. The war is positioned as a disruptive force, and the destruction of the Belarusian landscape in its wake allows for a new, “especially strong” love toward Belarus. In such an emptied discursive field, the conscious narrator wields clear authority – he can remake the object of his love, and what he declares becomes the truth of that object. The narrator positions himself as the patriot *per se*, as the embodiment of a love to the Belarusian nation willed into the world out of nothingness. He can love Belarus even where it doesn't exist – or at least, he wants us to believe this. It is this love that speaks through him; his monologue becomes the nation's monologue.

This is an extraordinarily authoritarian posture, in the most direct sense of the word: the *author* holds all the power. Yet this posture is immediately complicated when the narrating voice positions itself concretely in relation to its listeners – the Belarusian youth. Rather than emphasizing differences between narrator and audience, it highlights what they share in common:

You and I are children of the same history, the same present, and a shared future. We are united by a common fate – even in the “important little things”.

13 “Здарылася так, што я пачаў па-сапраўднаму пазнаваць Беларусь толькі ў вашым узросце. Яна была “да вайны”, і за час вайны моцна забылася. Бамбёжкі, акружэнні, эвакуацыя. Масква ў кастрычніку 1941 года, горы Урала, Казахстан, Арэнбургскія стэпы. А пасля руіны Мінска і роднае мне Оршы, высечаныя ля дарог акупантамі (ад жаху перад партызанамі) лясы, пераховы забітых людзей. Так усё і пачало запісвацца зноў, нібыта на чыстай дошцы. Любоў да Беларусі нараджалася ў самыя галодныя, халодныя і цяжкія часы. І, магчыма, таму стала асабліва моцная” (Karatkuevich 1990: 384).

The only difference between me and you is that I am about thirty years older and have therefore seen a bit more. If you live to my age, you might end up far more experienced. But for now, I want to help you a little with your first steps – to give you the key to our home, so that from there on, you can begin to find your own way in it.¹⁴

The narrator marks an *identity* between himself and his young audience. They are the same – even in the smallest details. It seems like the narrating voice, after just having pumped up itself a little earlier, is now playing itself down again: I'm no more than you, I might just be a little older – a demonstrative gesture of anti-authoritarianism. The narrator even makes it clear that his wisdom might not be the highest stage of wisdom ever written down – his listeners, his students might someday surpass him. The borders between teacher and students seem to not be fully stable, open to reversal in an undefined future.

However, taken seriously, this demonstrative anti-authoritarian gesture also carries a different meaning: it opens up the possibility for the narrator's voice to become the voice of the youth to whom he speaks. Both sides of the equation, teacher and students, are “children of the same history”, and therefore, they are “united”, even “in the ‘important little things’”. By the power of the nation that speaks through the narrator they are one: the narrator knows more about his audience than that audience can know about itself. In this view, they are similar down to the core: the history that the narrator has reconstructed as *his own* out of the ruins of the world war – it is also his students' very own, essential history. *He owns the key to their house*. In the present, they know *nothing*, he knows *everything* (and he has created everything). He can say so because he knows of their *authentic essence* – because it is also *his essence*. Both narrator and listener, teacher and pupils, are fruits of the same national tree, a tree that the narrator, after the war, could re-plant in an empty field. Thus, in the figure of the narrator, past and present converge: his knowledge, on the one hand, reaches back deep into past centuries, is the distilled knowledge of the nation – while, on the other hand, it could only develop in this form at his

14 “Мы з вами дзеці адной гісторыі, аднолькавай сучаснасці і агульнай будучыні. Нас яднае агульны лёс. Нават у “важлівых дробязях”. Уся розніца паміж мною і вамі ў тым, што я на нейкія трыццаць год старэйшы за вас і таму крыху больш бачыў. Дажывяце да майго – можа, будзеце куды больш бывалія. А пакуль што я хачу трошкі памагчы вам у вашых першых кроках, даць вам ключ ад нашага дома, каб далей вы ўжо асвойваліся ў ім самі” (Karatkievich 1990: 384).

concrete historical moment. From this perspective, the borders between teacher and student are very stable — indeed, necessary.

It should be understood in this same vein when the narrator beseeches his listeners to take his words seriously — though it may not sound so, every word he speaks is his and their full, authentic truth, of which he is the arbiter:

This will be a book written by a witness who has seen much (regarding the present) with his own eyes. And I would very much like you to believe me, even if I begin to tell you the most extraordinary things. Because life is richer than we imagine. Life sometimes resembles a fairy tale so much that one cannot help but exclaim: “This can’t be true!”¹⁵

When Karatkievich’s narrator speaks of Belarus, then he speaks the truth; not only an individual, but a collective truth. And even when one doesn’t want to believe him, one still should, even if it sounds like a “fairy tale”. The anti-authoritarian figure becomes its own opposite: the teacher-student relationship transforms into one more akin to that between a priest and a believer. Like a preacher, Karatkievich’s narrator has a special connection to the one, higher truth: the collective truth and his personal truth are identical. In his words, we meet the *real* Belarus — the work following this opening statement is to be read as translating *national essence* into an *authentic* written text. His students might aspire to become something, yes — but what they can become is predetermined by their national background. They may surpass their teacher, but only insofar as they *become like him*. The education the narrator offers demands identification — it requires his listeners to really accept their national truth as *their* own. The truth of the pedagogue is a monological, monolithic truth. In this respect, *Zyamlya* differs significantly from the openness found in Karatkievich’s works of fiction.

To summarize: in the prologue of *Zyamlya*, the narrator asserts the existence of a national essence shared by all members of the nation. He has special access to this ontology because of his biographical position as someone coming of age in the aftermath of World War II, when Belarus presented itself to him as a clean slate. Now, he seeks to teach

15 “Гэта будзе кніга, напісаная сведкам, які многае (што датычыць сучаснасці) бачыў на ўласныя вочы. І я дужа хацеў бы, каб вы мне верылі, нават калі я стану вам расказваць самыя незвычайныя рэчы. Таму што жыццё багацейшае, чым мы яго ўяўляем. Жыццё часам бывае настолькі падобнае на казку, што нельга не ўскрыкнуць: «Ды не можа гэтага быць!»” (Karatkievich 1990: 385)

a new generation about this truth — and they should listen to him, for it is their very own truth that he speaks. The book, right from its opening paragraphs, establishes a distinct claim to national *truth* and *authenticity*, while simultaneously presenting this truth and authenticity as *constructed* by the narrator — an apparent contradiction. The teacher wants the student to become something, but that something is identical to the teacher himself. Can this contradiction be resolved? We shall see in the following analysis.

Belarus: An All-Encompassing Totality

How is authentic Belarus constructed in the text? How does its status as the truth of everything within its boundaries move beyond mere declarations by the narrator? How will he prove it? The text employs a specific strategy of portraying Belarus as an all-encompassing totality. After the prologue, it begins with the most ahistorical elements of what might be called “Belarusian existence” and gradually introduces history — implying that history serves as an example of the ahistorical. Concretely, this means the text, in broad strokes, moves from a description of the country’s physical geography — its lakes, rivers, and forests — through an account of the immediate rural life of Belarusian peasants, then to a depiction of the “human geography” of cities and towns, and only afterward embarks on a relatively long recapitulation of Belarusian history. It ends in the present — but that explicit present (a chapter called “Today”¹⁶) just makes up for seven of the nearly two-hundred pages of the text. Thus, the movement of the text could be described as one from the constant to the fleeting, from the everlasting to the momentary. Herein lies the key to its ontologization of Belarus: the concrete Belarus of the present is treated as just one tiny example of a transhistorical entity.

The first chapter after the prologue — “My Belarusian Land”¹⁷ — begins with the war, recalling the uncanny fact that in the post-war period, a common hiker in the Belarusian woods will repeatedly encounter signs of the military conflict: obelisks bearing the names of the deceased and murdered. We are confronted with the staggering reality that every fourth fourth inhabitant of the BSSR perished during the war. This episode then leads into a recounting of Belarus’s status as a “Partisan Nation”, celebrating the heroic efforts of the Belarusian people in achieving victory in World War II:

16 “Сённяшні дзень” (Karatkievich 1990: 564).

17 “Зямля мая беларуская” (Karatkievich 1990: 385).

And when it comes to those who sympathized, gathered information, procured medicine, food, and other supplies — when we talk about the so-called “partisan reserve” — then almost the entire people can confidently be counted among the partisans.¹⁸

But this sad, uncanny, and patriotic episode is then — perhaps symbolizing the clean slate the author claimed for himself after the war — immediately followed by a detailed, technical description of Belarus as a territorial entity:

Our Belarus occupies 207.6 thousand square kilometers, or 0.9% of the territory of the USSR, but this is larger than Bulgaria, larger than Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Portugal, Greece, and larger than Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Luxembourg combined. [...] It borders Ukraine, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, and occupies a favorable geographic position on the routes from Western Europe to the East and from Ukraine to the Baltics.¹⁹

The text moves from a portrayal of an emptied, war-torn, yet heroic country to a technical description of that very country — as if the narrator were a painter who has now established his canvas. From the opening statement, we understand that this canvas, his canvas, is where the truth of his listeners resides. He reinforces this fact through an authoritarian authorial gesture, declaring the described place as entirely his own: “Someone once said that the shape of our county reminds him of that of an oak leaf. I don’t like this comparison. To me, it looks more like a bison”.²⁰ The shape of Belarus which the author meets in his *present*, the BSSR after World War II, gets injected with a certain metaphysical meaning by the author, more accurate than the commonly used one: only the narrator sees Belarus correctly, and he

18 А калі ўжо казаць пра тых, хто спачуваў, збіраў звесткі, здабываў медыкаменты, ежу і іншае, калі гаварыць пра так званы “партызанскі рэзерв”, то ў лік партызан смела можна залічыць ледзь не ўвесь народ (Karatkievich 1990: 386).

19 Наша Беларусь займае 207,6 тысячы квадратных кіламетраў, ці 0,9% тэрыторыі СССР, але гэта больш чым Балгарыя, больш чым ЧССР, чым Венгрыя, чым Партугалія, Грэцыя, і больш чым Бельгія, Галандыя, Данія і Люксембург, разам узятая. [...] Мяжуе яна з Украінай, Расіяй, Латвіяй, Літваю і Польшчай і займае выгоднае геаграфічнае становішча на шляхах з Заходняй Еўропы на Усход і з Украіны ў Прыбалтыку (Karatkievich 1990: 386–387).

20 ...Нехта сказаў, што па абрысах наша краіна нагадвае дубовы ліст. Па-мойму, параўнанне не вельмі. На мой погляд яна па абрысах хутчэй нагадвае зубра (Karatkievich 1990: 387).

sees a bison, mighty and able to defend itself, but peaceful. Belarus has been defined: it can stand its ground, it is home to good and brave people, it is quite large. But it is also empty – it must be described, taught its own meaning, transformed from an oak leaf into a bison. This is the task the narrator sets for himself: to *recreate, within this emptiness, what ostensibly already fills it*. He has “207.6 thousand square kilometers” to paint on – and he gets to work immediately.

The first chapters are dedicated to the different regions of Belarus: the text defines five such regions, the Lake District, the Center, the Neman region, the East, and the South (or: Polesia) – while also stating that, actually, there is one more region, the lands around the Dnyapro river, or Prydnyaproye, Karatkievich’s home region which he finds especially important, as witnessed by his novel *Kalasy pad siar-pom tvaim*, where the region is treated as a stand-in for Belarus as a whole. For all of those regions, the narrator describes the landscape, finds quite poetic words for each region’s flora and fauna, full of maximalist declarations of his own love: “And, most importantly, [here we find] wideness as nowhere else on planet Earth”.²¹ The bison on the map, Belarus, is filled with immovable, eternal beauty beyond history; the historical is fleeting against such a backdrop.

When the text starts to describe the human life on this land, the narrator feels the need to warn his listeners: what they are about to read does not have the same self-evident quality as the landscapes of the country; still, it has a defining worth for any Belarusian:

Let us now turn to the village, the house, the human. But I want to warn you that this will be more of an ethnographic conversation – that much has changed, that traditional clothing is not worn everywhere, but only in certain places, on islands in Palessia, in the Hrodna region or the Prydnyaproye, and that housewives now bake bread themselves only rarely, and so on.

I will talk about the typical, about what distinguishes the everyday life of a Belarusian from that of, say, a Georgian or a Ukrainian.²²

21 “І, галоўнае, далечы, роўных якім не знайсці на зямлі” (Karatkievich 1990: 392).

22 “Давайце цяпер прайдзем да вёскі, хаты, чалавека. Толькі я хачу папярэдзіць вас, што гэта будзе размова хутчэй этнаграфічная, што многа чаго змянілася, што вопратку народную носяць не паўсюль, а толькі месцамі, астраўкамі на Палессі, Гродзеншчыне, Прыдніпроўі, што гаспадыні самі цяпер пякуць хлеб нячаста і г. д.
Размова пойдзе пра тыповае, пра тое, што розніць побыт беларуса ад побыту, скажам, грузіна ці ўкраінца” (Karatyevich 1990: 392).

It's a curious construction: on the one hand, it is old customs (and costumes) that define Belarusians and make them distinct — on the other hand, this definition still holds even after those customs have long disappeared. The fleeting nature of such customs does not appear to be a problem: the Belarusian remains distinct from all other peoples, even in their absence. There is something beyond the ephemeral that preserves this distinctiveness — the ephemeral is an example of a deeper ontological order. The old Belarusian customs serve merely as evidence for something already presupposed: the inherent uniqueness of life within the various regions of the bison-shaped country, set apart from everything else in the world. There is something there that will always be different. In statements like these, we hear a mode of speaking that recurs whenever the narrator's descriptions turn to human life — especially when they address moments in history.

Such a moment in history is brought up later in the text, in a part that is a long meditation on the Belavezhskaya Pushcha national park. One of the fixed points around which that meditation revolves is a tower built in the 13th century in Kamyanyets, which through the centuries witnesses history coming into the forest again and again, embodied by different occupiers, armies, etc. But the tower, a human construction with a fixed, historical existence, bears witness to more: to the way in which the ahistorical forest is actually more powerful than the history going on in it. Still, the forest stands in solidarity with the sons of the country when history threatens them. As the text puts it:

All this villainy, all this brazen robbery, was witnessed by the Kamyanyets Tower. From it, the attacks of the Yotvingians and the Crusaders were repelled; it hosted royal government posts during the uprisings of Kościuszko and Kalinouski. The forest has always sheltered its sons (among them, partisans in the World War II) — sons of freedom.²³

Nature is more powerful than history. The “sons of freedom” — freedom being a category of history — are synonymous with the “sons of the Pushcha” — of the Belarusian forest, i.e. of nature. From this point of view, the three points in history referenced in this passage (which

23 “Усё гэта свінства, увесь гэты беспардонны разбой бачыла Камянецкая вежа. З яе адбівалі атакі ятвягаў і крыжаносцаў, на ёй былі царскія ўрадавыя пасты ў часе паўстанняў Касцюшкі і Каліноўскага. Пушча заўсёды хавала сваіх сыноў (між іншым, і партызан у Айчынную вайну), сыноў свабоды” (Karatievich 1990: 435).

apparently all emblemize “freedom”) become one: the Kościuszko uprising of 1794, the Kalinouski rebellion of 1863–1864, and the partisans of the 1940s. All of those historical actors are to be read as, to repeat it once more, “sons of the Pushcha” – their struggles for “freedom”, which, of course, were highly different in character, highly specific to their respective historical contexts, become the same in front of the forest that gave birth to them, that hid them from their enemies. They become *expressions* of a deeper, underlying Belarusianness – their struggle for freedom is *ontologized* as the struggle of the forest itself. They fight *for* the forest – for Belarus. Therein lies the authenticity of their struggle – it expresses the deeper truth of what surrounds them, the truth of the bison on the map. Not only the smaller manifestations of human life – such as the foods and costumes of the people – but also major historical events that appear to originate *outside* of Belarus (the partition of Poland, the abolition of serfdom, or the German invasion of the Soviet Union) are, in the text, rooted in a deep, transhistorical national ontology. Everything is explained through its located-ness within Belarus – an all-encompassing condition that absorbs and redefines every event. Revolutions, rebellions, war – all are rendered as expressions of an underlying national essence. Here we encounter a clear echo of Fanon’s point about the necessity of creating new national founding moments, and how this process works: such moments become *national* not by virtue of their historical content, but by being lifted out of history altogether – transformed into expressions of something a- or transhistorical.

This feature of the text becomes even more pronounced when the narrator gets into open conflict with other “narrators” of Belarussian history, with historians and ethnographers who also wrote about Belarus, its nature, and its people. In a prolonged reply to a short quote from the 1905 book *Rossiya. Polnoe geograficheskoe sobranie* (surely picked as an aim for attack also because of its title – “Russia. A full geographical collection”) which talks about the “tenderness”²⁴ of the Belarussians’ *nature* at great length, Karatkievich’s narrator builds a counter-narrative: the nature of the Belarussian is not correctly understood when read as soft, it actually follows a different formula: “being a friendly host to friends”²⁵ – i.e., not to enemies. The country shaped like a bison can defend itself. This point is reinforced through episodes from – once again – the Kalinouski uprising and the partisan struggle, presented to the reader in the ironic tone typical of the short narrative vignettes embedded within the text’s more essayistic

24 “рахманасць натуры” (Karatkievich 1990: 452).

25 “гасціннасць добрага да добрых” (Karatkievich 1990: 452).

sections. I won't delve into the specifics of these episodes here; more important is the way the text makes clear that any ethnography attempting to understand Belarusians under the label of "Russi". is bound to fail. Such an approach cannot grasp the Belarusians' true nature. As the text puts it:

Our land's enemies often counted on this "tenderness of nature". Enemies – because there have been quite a few of them throughout our history. [...] Cross the border, and your adversary will be a fearsome man. Fearsome especially when his anger is calm and calculated.²⁶

It is already notable that the text, after mentioning "Russia", immediately shifts to discussing "enemies". Even more significant, however, is how it does so: it refers to enemies of the *Our lands*, thereby echoing the earlier chapter titled "My Belarusian Land". The attackers are not framed as enemies of a people, but of something broader – an expansive, almost sacred territorial entity that precedes and encompasses the nation itself. Belarus is not merely a space that gives birth to freedom fighters and shelters them – it is also a space that has enemies beyond its borders. These are not adversaries of a specific political regime or the result of a particular historical moment; they are enemies of the *Belarusian lands* themselves – metaphysical enemies. Here, we see another layer of ontologization: Belarus not only embodies a distinct way of life and a naturalized struggle for freedom, it is also cast as a site of perennial conflict, shaped by an external evil that stands in essential opposition to the life Belarus represents. The text seeks to construct Belarus as an all-encompassing ontological entity: everything within its borders is imbued with meaning by that entity, born of it, sustained by it. Within the borders of the BSSR, nothing else can truly exist – because all existence there is, by definition, Belarusian. This is the text's fundamental postulate: Belarus becomes the master signifier, the total horizon – there is nothing beyond its reach.

To return to the beginning of this chapter: this is what the narrator sees in a place marked by destruction, where the connection to the past has been severed by war. It is through his act of recollection – through his monologue – that the place is once again identified as

26 "На гэтую "рахманасць прыроды" часта разлічваў вораг нашай зямлі. Ворагі, бо іх за нашу гісторыю бывала досыць. [...] Пяройдзеш мяжу – і тваім ворагам будзе страшны чалавек. Страшны асабліва тады, калі гнеў яго спакойны і разлічаны" (Karatievich 1990: 452).

Belarus. He instructs the present in what it is; he assumes the burden of telling a country about its own nature at a time when that nature is no longer self-evident — obscured by the trauma of war and the erosion of traditional customs in post-war life. Yet, he does not seek to recreate those customs, nor does he need to. The nature of Belarus, in his view, cannot be erased. It endures — ontologically given, not historically constructed. *Everything existing in Belarus becomes an example for the existence of Belarus.*

This, again, communicates with the critical mode of ontologization Fanon points out: it is a willing-into-life of a subjectivity that can just exist without reference to being willed into life. In the following, final chapter, I will examine how the concrete historical present of *Zyamlya* — the post-war Soviet Union — figures within this existential construction: how this present, with all its features, landmarks, and, most importantly, its myths, is reimaged as belonging to Belarus rather than to the Soviet Union. In doing so, I aim to explore how the text manages to hold together the seemingly contradictory elements of its narrative, and how this tension might be productively resolved.

Soviet History as Belarusian Existence: Critical Ontologization

Zyamlya not only speaks of uprisings from earlier centuries and the loss of lives in World War II. It is also not only a text about forests, lakes, and bison. In addition to that, it confronts its own present, the 1970s, in which Belarus is a heavily industrialized Soviet republic. These confrontations with the present and their relation to the ontologized nature of the Belarusian space discussed above will be the focus of this chapter.

We meet today's Belarus mainly in several small chapters dedicated to a number of Belarusian cities: Minsk, Polatsk, Vitsyebsk, Mahiljou, Homiel, Brest, and Hrodna. Each chapter presents the respective city's history, shows how that history is represented in the city's streets and, thereby, locates the city within the context of the BSSR. For Minsk, the biggest of them, this may look like the following:

And, right in the center, there stands a small wooden house. This is the museum of the 1st Congress of the R[ussian] S[ocial] D[emocratic] L[abour] P[arty], that was held here in 1898. The significance of this congress, at which the RSDLP was founded, is clear to everyone. Here was born the very name of that force which seven years later resulted

in the revolution of 1905, and in 1917, nineteen years later, overthrew Tsarism — that force which created the state in which we now live. The USSR.
The BSSR.²⁷

The climactic structure of the above statement is indicative for the place the Soviet Union holds in *Zyamlya*. The text — while being *far* from explicitly anti-Soviet — still establishes a hierarchical relationship between the all-encompassing Belarus and the Soviet project. Concretely, Minsk is made into the place from which the October revolution started — it is where the revolution was *born*, where thereby “the state we live in today” was *born*. One can see the parallel structure between this statement and the one made above concerning the rebels of 1794 and 1863–1864: in 1898, another revolution was born in Belarus, the RSDLP becomes another group of “sons of freedom” conceived in and by Belarus. This effect is made even stronger by the naming of the state born in that small wooden house in central Minsk: we get two names for that country, “USSR” and “BSSR”, and the BSSR gets the place in the end of the cadence; it is the culmination, it is what all of this is really about. The movement enacted by the text here is a circular one, always moving around Belarus: in Belarus, a revolution was born, this gave rise to the Soviet Union, and out of that, Belarus is reborn as the BSSR. The BSSR is *the point* of the Soviet Union; and it is not only that — it is equally the place of its origin. The USSR in such a reading becomes another *example* for the existential role that Belarus plays for everything; even the Soviet Union’s existence is rooted in the way deeper ontological status of Belarus.

Another example of this centering of Soviet history around Belarus appears in the chapter dedicated to Brest. Here, the narration encounters one of the main myths of the Soviet discourse on Belarus: that of the defence of the Brest fortress during World War II. Again, we are confronted with the rootedness of a special kind of fighting spirit in the Belarusian lands — the defence is positioned as happening *against* what was actually a not-so-well organized Soviet war effort, as demonstrating something peculiar about “our people”:

27 “І, у самым цэнтры, невялічкі драўляны дамок. Гэта музей І з’езда РСДРП, які адбыўся тут у 1898 годзе. Значэнне гэтага з’езда, які заснаваў РСДРП, ясна ўсім. Тут нарадзілася самае імя той сілы, якая сямю гадамі пазней вылілася ў рэвалюцыю 1905 года, а ў 1917 годзе, праз дзевятнаццаць год, зрынула царызм, той сілы, якая стварыла дзяржаву, у якой мы зараз жывём.
СССР.

БССР” (Karatkievich 1990: 461).

By all divine and human laws [...] it was impossible not only to hold out here, but even to organize any kind of sustained resistance. Any cadre officer, any military theorist would have said that this was “unnatural resistance”, “unrealistic”, “impossible”.
Yet, our people stood firm.²⁸

The resistance spirit of the Brest fortress — it was organized against what any cadre officer, any *professional* would have thought, such a deed would have been seen by him as being *against nature*. But the nature of the people in the fortress is the one claimed earlier by the narrator as the nature of the people in the forest — it is identified with the struggle of the Belarusian lands, it expresses a *different nature*, differing from the one any professional could describe (as already evidenced by the failed attempt of the professional ethnographers working on the Rossiya collection to properly describe Belarusian nature). The defence of the Brest fortress to *Zyamlya* is not an expression of the Soviet heroism of the defenders, no — instead, it expresses the specific, localized, ontological fighting spirit of the Belarusian people. In statements like this, the full critical power of the ontologization plays out: a moment in history is provided with a second meaning, the text’s own monological way of speaking forces the way more powerful monologue of Soviet history into a dialogue — at least, in the reader’s head. By making Belarus the essence of itself, Soviet historical discourse is de-essentialized. With the Brest Fortress, as with the earlier-mentioned history of the partisans, the 1863–1864 rebels, and others, moments that could be adapted to a Soviet historical narrative are instead reframed as expressions of a deeper ontological category: Belarusian history. Herein lies the critical potential of the text: the narrator’s authoritarian narrative posture paradoxically opens an anti-authoritarian way of thinking. He is bold enough to speak freely of the past, using the blank slate presented after World War II to write a new essence for himself and for all those he identifies as his equals — his brothers and sisters by nationality. Within this lies a powerful possibility: if he can do so, then others can — and indeed should — do the same.

28 “Па ўсіх законах божых і чалавечых [...] тут немагчыма было не тое што выстаяць, але і арганізаваць больш-менш працяглае супраціўленне. Любы кадравік, любы ваенны тэарэтык сказаў бы, што гэта “супраціўна натуре”, “нерэальна”, “немажліва”.
Гэтыя нашы людзі стаялі” (Karatkievich 1990: 475–476).

Conclusion

To return finally to the opening words of the narration in the prologue of *Zyamlya*, and to clarify some of the slippage present there: the identity between the narrator and his listeners operates in two directions because of the critical dynamism of the text that follows. By identifying himself with his audience, the narrator indeed establishes his authority over them – but, simultaneously, he also empowers them to do what he does: to write their own essence. The book confronts its readers not only with a story of their own nature but also with a mode of writing that nature; it posits the possibility of writing one's own past. And this – and herein lies the true power of the text – is presented as a tilted image, a double image where one picture momentarily shifts into the other: the readers of *Zyamlya* are both narrators and narrated objects within the text. As narrators, they are granted the power to essentialize themselves, to forge a new ontology that transcends their present. As narrated objects, they are already identified with a heroic past – a defiant, all-encompassing essence that renders them special, strong, and independent. On the one hand, they are *the same as the 1863 rebels or the defenders of the Brest Fortress* – but on the other hand, they are also *powerful narrators capable of inventing events like the 1863 uprising or the Brest Fortress defence*. They are identified with both sides of the narrative structure: the authoritarian narrative voice and the authoritative historical figures it envisions. Both represent the readers' essence, both constitute their being. This marks the secret of *Zyamlya's* critical ontology: its readers are empowered to judge their present precisely because they are understood as the essential creators of it – they are allowed to think beyond it. At the moment of writing the essay, an equilibrium between the Soviet and the national appears to be realized – but this balance need not endure indefinitely. Ultimately, any future must prove itself to the nation's children: will they accept it or reject it? If they reject it, they hold the right to overthrow their present, thus creating yet another example of their nation's all-encompassing fighting spirit.

To return to Frantz Fanon's concept of national culture as the “whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence” (Fanon 1967: 188), *Zyamlya* embodies both sides of that definition: the *effort* of creating such a culture in the present – and the need to describe the *existence* of a people. Its impetus is rooted in the present, it uses the ontologization of a past for critical intervention. *Zyamlya* is a critical national text of the post-war world – employing an authoritarian mode of speech to

unlock a critical potential that empowers its listeners. This approach may be symptomatic of a lowered horizon regarding actual possibilities for freedom — the contradiction between *critique* and *ontologization* requires a certain authoritarian force to be sustained. Yet, it still offers a framework for thinking forward, and therein lies its enduring potential for productive interpretation. As Karatkievich concludes his essay:

But if you, my dear girls and boys, after reading this book, wish to walk the paths of our Belarus, our land beneath white stork wings, to wander through these dense oak groves, to sail along these full rivers — then I will consider my work done. I will be happy. May you be happy as well.²⁹

The hope expressed in those sentences might be a fragile one — but at least it has found a ground on which to stand.

References

- Akudovich, V. (2007). *Kod adsutnastsi. Asnovy byelaruskay myental'nastsi*. Minsk. — In Bel.
[Акудовіч, В. (2007). Код адсутнасці. Асновы беларускай ментальнасці. Мінск: Логвінаў.]
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London/New York: Verso.
- Astrouskaya, T. (2019). *Cultural Dissent in Soviet Belarus (1968–1988). Intelligentsia, Samizdat and Nonconformist Discourses*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Bakharevich, A. (2012). *Hamburski rakhunak Bakharevicha*. Minsk. — In Bel.
[Бахарэвіч, А. (2012). Гамбургскі рахунак Бахарэвіча. Мінск: Радыё Свабодная Эўропа / Радыё Свабода.]
- Bich, M. (2013). *Pawstannye 1863–1864 hh. na Byelarusi*. In: Taras, A. (ed.) *Pawstannye 1863 h. na Byelarusi i Kastus' Kalinowski. Matyeryyaly navukova-praktychnay kanfyerentsyi*. Ryha: 5–29.
[Біч, М. (2013). Паўстанне 1863–1864 гг. на Беларусі. У: Тарас, А. (ред.) *Паўстанне 1863 г. на Беларусі і Кастусь Каліноўскі. Матэрыялы навукова-практычнай канферэнцыі*. Рыга: Інстытут беларускай гісторыі і культуры: 5–29.]
- Fanon, F. (1971). *The Wretched of the Earth*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

29 “Але калі вам, дарагія мае дзяўчаты і хлопцы, захацелася пасля прачытанай кнігі прайсці па шляхах нашай Беларусі, нашай зямлі пад белымі буслінымі крыламі, пахадзіць гэтымі дрымучымі дубровамі, праплысці гэтымі поўнымі рэкамі, — буду лічыць, што работа мая зроблена. Буду шчаслівы. Бываеце ж шчаслівыя і вы” (Karatkievich 1990: 570).

- Gapova, E. (2017). "The Land under the White Wings": The Romantic Landscaping of Socialist Belarus. *Rethinking Marxism* 29(1): 173–198.
- Karatkievich, U. (1990). Zyamlya pad byelymi krylamy. In: Karatkyevich, U. *Zbor tvoraw u was'mi tamakh*. 8. Pyesy. *Narys. Kniha 1*. Minsk: 383–570. — In Bel. [Караткевіч, У. (1990). Зямля пад белымі крыламі. У: Караткевіч, У. *Збор твораў у васьмі тамах*. 8. Песы. *Нарыс. Кніга 1*. Мінск: Мастацкая літаратура: 383–570.]
- Lewis, S. (2019). *Belarus – Alternative Visions. Nation, Memory and Cosmopolitanism*. New York/London: Routledge.
- Lewis, S. (2017). The "Partisan Republic": Colonial Myths and Memory Wars in Belarus. In: Fedor, J., Kangaspuro, M., Lassila, J., Zhurzhenko, T. (ed.). *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan: 371–396.
- Macey, D. (2012): *Frantz Fanon. A Biography*. London/New York: Verso.
- Mał'dzis, A. (2000). Uladzimir Karatkyevich — Pis'myennik byelaruski i ewraprueyski. In: Mał'dzis, A. (main ed.) et al. *Uladzimir Karatkyevich i yaho tvorchasts' u ewraprueyskim kantyekstsye*. Minsk: 35–39. — In Bel. [Мальдзіс, А. (2000). Уладзімір Караткевіч — Письменнік беларускі і еўрапейскі. У: Мальдзіс, А. (гал. рэд.) і інш. *Уладзімір Караткевіч і яго творчасць у еўрапейскім кантэксце*. Мінск: Беларускі кнігазбор: 35–39.]
- Mazanik, L. (1990). Kamyentaryi. In: V: Karatkyevich, U. *Zbor tvoraw u was'mi tamakh*. 8. P'yesy. *Narys. Kniha 1*. Minsk: 571–589. — In Bel. [Мазанік, Л. (1990). Каментарыі. В: Караткевіч, У. *Збор твораў у васьмі тамах*. 8. Песы. *Нарыс. Кніга 1*. Мінск: Мастацкая літаратура: 571–589.]
- Verabei, A. (2020). *Blizkaye i darahoye. Vybranyya artykuly pra Uladzimira Karatkyevicha*. Minsk. — In Bel. [Верабей, А. (2020). *Блізкае і дарагое. Выбраныя артыкулы пра Уладзіміра Караткевіча*. Мінск: Беларуская навука.]
- Verabei, A. (2005). *Uladzimir Karatkyevich: zhytstsyo i tvorchasts'*. Minsk. — In Bel. [Верабей, А. (2005). *Уладзімір Караткевіч: жыццё і творчасць*. Мінск: Беларуская навука.]

СУАДНОСІНЫ ГРАМАДЗЯНСКАГА
І ЭТНІЧНАГА НАЦЫЯНАЛІЗМУ ПАВОДЛЕ
УЛАДЗІМІРА ФУРСА І ІНСТЫТУТЫ
ПА ЗАБЕСПЯЧЭННІ МОЎНЫХ ПРАВОЎ
ЯК ІХ СПАЛУЧЭННЕ

Ананімны аўтар

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61095/815-0047-2025-1-267-280>

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIVIC AND ETHNIC NATIONALISM
ACCORDING TO ULADZIMIR FOURS, AND INSTITUTIONS
FOR ENFORCING LANGUAGE RIGHTS AS THEIR POINT
OF CONVERGENCE

© Anonymous Author
Independent Researcher

Abstract: The paper critically examines Uladzimir Fours's approach to the relationship between civic and ethnic nationalism. As an illustration of their interplay, it highlights public institutions responsible for the protection of language rights and the implementation of language policy. The article references Belarusian initiatives aimed at institutionalizing the defense of linguistic rights – such as the proposed but ultimately unrealized Belarusian state department for language affairs. As practical examples, it discusses public bodies that uphold linguistic rights in post-colonial countries and territories formerly under British rule. These include the Ministry of National Co-existence, Dialogue, and Official Languages of Sri Lanka; language commissioners of Canada, the Republic of Ireland, and Wales; and the Scottish Gaelic Board, among others. The paper emphasizes how such institutions contribute to civic autonomy, which Fours identifies as a key component of nationalism. Activities that promote this autonomy include assisting individuals in defending their linguistic rights, supporting institutions in developing language schemes, and fostering public dialogue.



Keywords: Uladzimir Fours, ethnic nationalism, civic nationalism, linguistic rights, language commissioner, civic autonomy, Belarusian language.

Уводзіны

Раз'яднанасць беларускіх прыхільнікаў дэмакратыі — адзін з дэмагавальных фактараў для беларускай супольнасці. У публічнай прасторы трываюць спрэчкі аб тым, якія каштоўнасці з'яўляюцца першаснымі: нацыянальнае адраджэнне ці дэмакратыя і правы чалавека; захаванне нацыянальнага суверэнітэту ці дэмакратыя. Працягваецца і дыскусія вакол першаснасці / другаснасці ролі і месца беларускай мовы ў айчынным дэмакратычным руху.

У межах міжнароднай канферэнцыі памяці У. М. Фурса падаецца карысным прааналізаваць погляды айчыннага філосафа на азначаныя вышэй супярэчнасці. Таццяна Шчытцова адзначае, што ягоны падыход да рашэння нацыянальнага пытання «намячае пераадоленне контрпрадуктыўнай дыхатамічнай логікі этнічнага і грамадзянскага нацыяналізмаў» (Shchytsova 2020: 9).

Далей у гэтым артыкуле аналіз філасофскага падмурку пераадолення згаданай бінарнасці стане адпраўной кропкай для дэманстрацыі таго, як мэты і істотныя рысы грамадзянскага і этнічнага нацыяналізму могуць спалучацца ў дзейнасці інстытутаў моўнай палітыкі і абароны моўных правоў.

Погляд У. Фурса на суадносіны грамадзянскага і этнічнага нацыяналізму

Аўтарства класіфікацыі нацыяналізму на грамадзянскі і этнічны належыць Гансу Кону. Нягледзячы на рознабаковую крытыку гэтай дыхатаміі, яна (з улікам мадыфікацый) працягвае заставацца актуальнай і выкарыстоўваецца ў эмпірычных даследаваннях і ў XXI стагоддзі (Piwoni, Mußotter 2023).

У артыкуле «“Беларусский проект современности”. Чтобы “каждый ощущал себя здесь как дома”» У. Фурс называе грамадзянскі нацыяналізм найбольш адэкватным увасабленнем «ідэі Еўропы» ў сённяшняй Беларусі; вызначае такі нацыяналізм «прывязкай да фактычнасці незалежнай тэрытарыяльнай дзяржавы», а не «апораю на этнакультурную традыцыю»; супрацьпастаўляе дзве «іпастасі» нацыяналізму — грамадска-палітычную і культурную, — якія, у сваю чаргу, узыходзяць да дзвюх мадэляў фарміравання нацыі: адпаведна, французскай і германскай.

У. Фурс не дэкларуе гэтага, але відавочна сінанімічна ўжывае выразы:

- грамадзянска-палітычная іпастась нацыяналізму, грамадзянскі нацыяналізм і інклюзіўны грамадзянскі нацыяналізм;
- этнакультурная іпастась нацыяналізму, этнічны нацыяналізм, этнанацыяналізм і этнакультурны нацыяналізм (Fours 2007).

Пры гэтым шэраг аўтараў разводзіць паняцці этнічнага і культурнага нацыяналізму, адносячы прыналежнасць да агульнай культуры якраз да нацыяналізму грамадзянскага; для іншых жа, як і для У. Фурса, тэрмін «этнакультурны нацыяналізм» з’яўляецца сінанімічным тэрміну «этнічны нацыяналізм» (Piwoni, Mußotter 2023).

З аднаго боку, аўтар лічыць, што грамадзянскі і этнічны нацыяналізм «цяжка спалучальныя паміж сабой». Аднак, пастулюючы іх несумяшчальнасць, ён адзначае рэальную магчымасць інклюзіўнага грамадзянскага нацыяналізму, які, як можна дапусціць, уключае і нацыяналізм этнічны як прыватнасць. У гэтым жа артыкуле можна знайсці і трэці погляд на суадносіны двух відаў нацыяналізму: прадстаўленне этнічнага нацыяналізму як «прыватнасці, што рэпрэзентуе татальнасць». Пры гэтым аўтар прызнае апошні падыход тэарэтычным канструктам, практычнае вырашэнне якога – «вельмі няпростая задача». Прычынай практычнай складанасці аўтар бачыць у першую чаргу недахоп агульнага сацыяльнага ўяўлення, якое б спрыяла салідарызацыі і самаабмежаванню розных груп (Fours 2007).

Верагодна, менавіта інклюзіўнасць робіць грамадзянскі нацыяналізм больш прывабным для аўтара. Пры гэтым магчымасць інклюзіўнасці этнакультурнага нацыяналізму не разглядаецца.

Грамадзянскі нацыяналізм, паводле У. Фурса, характарызуецца наступнымі рысамі:

- апора на прававую свядомасць, сфармаваную, у прыватнасці, у пратэстах супраць аўтарытарызму;
- інклюзіўнасць, аб’яднанне людзей па-над (у тым ліку) моўнымі адрозненнямі;
- падстава для згаданага аб’яднання – прыняцце людзьмі дзяржаўнай незалежнасці як базавай каштоўнасці і іх уключанасць у палітыку, арыентаваную ідэаламі грамадскай аўтаноміі (Fours 2007).

Падаецца, што згаданыя характарыстыкі (пры замене некалькіх тэрмінаў) могуць апісваць і этнічны нацыяналізм. Напрыклад, моўная і культурная еднасць тэарэтычна магла б выступіць аб’яднаўчым фактарам: надканфесійным, надпартыйным ці

надкласавым. Што датычыцца трэцяга пункта, то развіццё нацыянальнай самасвядомасці, культуры і мовы з’яўляецца важным фактарам захавання дзяржаўнага суверэнітэту. Уключанасць жа ў палітыку — натуральнае асяроддзе прыхільнікаў этнічнага беларускага нацыяналізму. Дарэчы, яшчэ ў 1988 годзе адозва Беларускага Народнага Фронту «Адраджэнне» «Да грамадзян Беларусі» і праграма фронту адлюстравалі спалучэнне нацыянальнага і грамадзянскага чыннікаў:

Беларускі Народны Фронт «Адраджэнне» — гэта шырокі грамадзка-палітычны рух грамадзянаў, партыяў, арганізацыяў, якія выступаюць за дэмакратычныя ідэалы, за моцную незалежную дзяржаву Беларусь, за сацыяльную рынкавую эканоміку, за нацыянальна-культурнае адраджэнне нашага народу. Фронт гуртуе людзей рознага сацыяльнага стану, прафэсійнай, нацыянальнай, рэлігійнай прыналежнасці. Фронт яднае і беспартыйных, і сяброў дэмакратычных партыяў. Удзел у Фронце несумяшчальны з прапагандаю таталітарнае ідэалогіі, клясавае, нацыянальнае, расавае, рэлігійнае нецярпімасці (Pragrama Belaruskaga Narodnaga Frontu «Adradzhenne» 1993).

Увогуле, ідэя ўзаемапранікнення грамадзянскага і этнічнага чыннікаў нацыяналізму з’яўляецца адным з кірункаў крытыкі дыхатаміі грамадзянскага / этнічнага. Выказваецца меркаванне, што ні грамадзянскага, ні этнічнага нацыяналізму ў чыстым выглядзе не існуе — у кожным канкрэтным выпадку існуе іх спалучэнне, з рознай ступенню выражанасці кампанентаў (Piwoni, Mušotter 2023).

Іранічна, што азначаная супярэчнасць у беларускім кантэксце ў пэўным сэнсе нівеліруецца самой жыццёвай практыкай. Апытанне 2024 года дэманструе, што найбольшую актуальнасць для беларускіх гараджанаў уяўляюць эканамічныя праблемы. Напрыклад, рост коштаў у якасці важнай праблемы называюць 42% апытаных, нізкі ўзровень даходаў — 40%, высокія кошты на жылло — 29%. Тады як наступствы канфлікту Украіны і Расіі — 18%, адсутнасць дэмакратыі і свабоды слова — 17%, а ўшчамленне нацыянальнай культуры і мовы — толькі 5% (Belarus: The changing social contract 2024: 21). Аўтары даследавання сведчаць, што найбольш актуальныя праблемы тыя ж, што і ў 2009 годзе. Калі даверыцца вынікам, то і пытанні грамадзянскага, і пытанні моўна-этнічнага плану знаходзяцца на перыферыі свядомасці значнай часткі насельніцтва краіны.

Прававая свядомасць і грамадская аўтаномія як пункты раўнапраўнага спалучэння грамадзянскага і этнічнага нацыяналізму

Як было паказана вышэй, можна дапусціць магчымасць існавання альтэрнатывы мадэлі інклюзіўнага грамадзянскага нацыяналізму — напрыклад, адносна раўнапраўны этнічна-грамадзянскі нацыяналізм ці нават інклюзіўны этнічны нацыяналізм. Вылучаныя У. Фурсам характарыстыкі грамадзянскага нацыяналізму: прававая свядомасць і ідэал грамадскай аўтаноміі — можна разглядаць і як падмурак для практычнай рэалізацыі раўнапраўнага суіснавання дзвюх іпастасяў. Магчымасць для гэтага дае, у прыватнасці, сфера абароны моўных правоў.

У. Фурс не ўжывае тэрмін «лінгвістычны нацыяналізм» і не адзначае, да якога з двух разгледжаных тыпаў нацыяналізму ён знаходзіцца бліжэй. Аднак заўважна, што падкрэсліванне ролі нацыянальнай мовы аўтар супрацьпастаўляе нацыяналізму грамадзянскаму: «Для яго (грамадзянскага нацыяналізму) не важныя мова, карані і паходжанне чалавека» (Fours 2007). Шэраг аўтараў адносіць акцэнт на нацыянальнай мове да аспектаў этнічнага нацыяналізму ці этнічнай нацыі, якая супрацьпастаўляецца нацыі грамадзянскай (Piwoni, Mußotter 2023).

Цытуючы Янава Палескага, У. Фурс адзначае, што для выяўлення нацыянальнай ідэнтычнасці не абавязкова навіязваць агульную мову (верагодна, тут маецца на ўвазе беларуская), нацыя мусіць быць арганізавана так, каб кожны адчуваў сябе тут як дома (Fours 2007). Пры гэтым перспектыву паглыблення русіфікацыі (не выключаную і ва ўмовах росквіту грамадзянскага нацыяналізму), пры якой беларускамоўныя наўрад будуць пачувацца «як дома», аўтар не разглядае. Між тым забеспячэнне моўных правоў усіх жыхароў краіны можа стаць практычным увасабленнем ідэі спалучэння грамадзянскага (праз прававы аспект) і этнічнага (праз аспект моўны).

У многіх шматмоўных краінах і тэрыторыях забеспячэнню моўных правоў служаць адмысловыя інстытуты. Аналізуючы погляды К. Кастарыядзіса, У. Фурс адзначае, што важнай «мэтай палітыкі аўтаноміі з'яўляецца стварэнне інстытутаў, якія праз інтэрналізацыю індывідамі спрыяюць найбольшаму прыросту іх індывідуальнай аўтаноміі і іх эфектыўнаму ўдзелу ва ўсіх формах экспліцытнай улады, якія існуюць у грамадстве» (Fours 2005). У. Фурс піша, што згаданая аўтаномія — гэта практычна значная ўтопія, якая пракрэслівае гарызонт палітыкі, рэфлексіўнага пераўсталявання грамадства, што ў беларускіх умовах азначае актыўнае

прысабечванне самадзейнымі грамадзянамі дзяржавы, якая была адчужана ў аўтарытарным самадаўленні (Fours 2007).

Супрацьлегласць аўтаноміі — гетэраномія, асноўная праява якой у Беларусі — дэпалітызацыя грамадства. Пры ёй цяжар прыняцця рашэнняў перадаецца ўладзе, гарызонт мыслення і дзеянняў абмяжоўваецца бытавой сферай. Адпаведна, інстытуты гетэраномнага грамадства падаўляюць «радыкальнае ўяўленне душы». Нацыяналізм жа разглядаецца як супрацьлегласць гетэраноміі: як абуджэнне і ўваход у палітычнае жыццё (Fours 2005).

Парадаксальным чынам, менавіта ў моўнай сферы ўлады на тактычным узроўні абстрагаваліся ад прыняцця рашэнняў і не стварылі адмысловых інстытутаў кіравання моўнымі працэсамі ў краіне. Пасля рэферэндуму 1995 года беларуская мова страціла статус адзінай дзяржаўнай, адпаведна быў зменены і Закон «Аб мовах у Рэспубліцы Беларусь». У адрозненне ад шматлікіх аналагічных па прызначэнні законаў шматмоўных краін, беларускае заканадаўства практычна ў ніводнай сферы грамадскага жыцця не патрабавала выкарыстання абедзвюх дзяржаўных моў, пакінуўшы выбар адной з іх ці іх абедзвюх карыстальнікам гэтага прававога акта.

Можна дапусціць, што фармальная дэмакратычнасць закона павінна была зацяняць палітыку русіфікацыі: закрыццё беларускамоўных навучальных устаноў, перавод справаводства выключна на рускую мову. Разлік мог быць зроблены на невысокую зацікаўленасць грамадзян у пашырэнні ўжывання беларускай мовы па ўласным жаданні на тле русіфікацыі папярэдніх дзесяцігодзяў.

Пры гэтым заканадаўства давала магчымасць не ўжываць рускую мову (як і беларускую) у афіцыйнай сферы ўвогуле. Грамадства гэтай магчымасцю не скарысталася, але моўныя актывісты распачалі змаганне за роўны статус беларускай мовы дэ-факта. Адным з напрамкаў гэтай дзейнасці было заахвочванне арганізацыяў да шырэйшага ўжывання беларускай мовы, яшчэ адным — спробы ініцыяваць змяненне моўнага заканадаўства. Дасягненні ў галіне змены заканадаўства палягалі ў сферы тапанімікі. Гэтак, змены ў Закон Рэспублікі Беларусь ад 16 лістапада 2010 г. № 190-З «О наименованиях географических объектов» замацавалі прысваенне назваў новым аб'ектам на беларускай мове (Закон Respubliki Belarus O naimenovaniyakh geograficheskikh obyektov 2010). Таксама Інструкцыя па транслітарацыі геаграфічных назваў Рэспублікі Беларусь ад 2000 года замацоўвала выкарыстанне аднаго з варыянтаў беларускай лацінкі (скасавана пастановай Дзяржаўнага камітэта па маёмасці Рэспублікі Беларусь № 19

«Аб перадачы найменняў геаграфічных аб'ектаў з беларускай і рускай мовы на іншыя мовы» ад 24 сакавіка 2023 года) (Postanovlenie Gosudarstvennogo komiteta po imushchestvu Respubliki Belarus 24 marta 2023 goda № 19 2023).

Распрацоўваліся і праекты заканадаўства аб дзяржаўнай падтрымцы беларускай мовы, якое б магло функцыянаваць і пры наяўнасці дзвюх дзяржаўных моў. Ядром адпаведнага закона меліся быць дзяржаўныя праграмы падтрымкі беларускай мовы. З мэтай ажыццяўлення моўнай палітыкі прадугледжвалася стварэнне шэрагу інстытутаў: дэпартаменту беларускай мовы, дзяржаўна-грамадскай камісіі і дзяржаўнай інспекцыі пры гэтым дэпартаменце. Асноўнымі функцыямі дэпартаменту бачыліся ўдасканаленне заканадаўства ў моўнай сферы; распрацоўка інструментарыю для ацэнкі ўзроўню валодання мовай; унармаванне мовы; захаванне дыялектаў, тапанімікі і іменаслова; спрыянне павелічэнню культуры мовы і прасоўванне мовы ў інфармацыйных тэхналогіях.

Дзяржаўна-грамадская камісія дэпартаменту беларускай мовы была прадугледжана як орган, які забяспечвае ўдзел (чытай — аўтаномію) грамадства ў вырашэнні пытанняў, звязаных з беларускай мовай. Урэшце, задачай інспекцыі з'яўлялася ажыццяўленне кантролю за выкананнем моўнага заканадаўства. Прадугледжвалася, што кожны чалавек мае права звярнуцца ў інспекцыю з патрабаваннем праверкі парушэнняў сваіх ці калектыўных моўных правоў.

Прыклад інстытуцыялізацыі абароны моўных правоў у былых частках Брытанскай імперыі

Афіцыйныя інстытуты, што забяспечваюць рэалізацыю палажэнняў моўнага заканадаўства, існуюць у шмат якіх посткаланіяльных краінах і тэрыторыях — як шматмоўных, так і афіцыйна аднамоўных (напрыклад, у Літве і Латвіі). Іх неабходнасць тлумачыцца, у прыватнасці, тым, што само па сабе пазбаўленне ад нацыянальнага прыгнёту з боку каланізатара не гарантуе прагрэсу і нават захавання мясцовай мовы. Падчас каланізацыі апошняя магла страціць значную колькасць носьбітаў, яе эканамічная важнасць і прэстыжнасць магла істотна зменшыцца на карысць мовы каланізатараў. Напрыклад, хаця ў Рэспубліцы Ірландыя за гады незалежнасці колькасць людзей, што валодаюць аўтахтоннай гэльскай мовай, узрасла з 18,3 % у 1926 годзе да 40 % у 2022 (Digitisation of the 1926 Census 2022), колькасць тых, хто карыстаецца мовай па-за межамі адукацыйнай сістэмы, складае толькі 1,8% (Ceallaigh,

Dhonnabháin 2015: 180), а сама мова дагэтуль з'яўляецца ўразлівай. Адпаведна, для яе падтрымкі патрабуюцца адмысловыя захады і інстытуты па іх рэалізацыі і кантролі. Наша краіна — яшчэ адзін выразны прыклад такой неабходнасці.

Былыя часткі Брытанскай імперыі былі абраныя для дэманстрацыі па некалькіх прычынах. Па-першае, моўная сітуацыя ў Рэспубліцы Ірландыя (і радзей у Шатландыі) неаднаразова параўноўвалася ў СМІ з беларускай. Для такога параўнання ёсць падставы. Напрыклад, Рэспубліка Ірландыя і Рэспубліка Беларусь — адзіныя афіцыйна двухмоўныя краіны Еўропы, дзе валоданне абедзвюма афіцыйнымі мовамі адносна раўнамерна распаўсюджана на ўсёй тэрыторыі краіны. Па-другое, тэрыторыі, што ўваходзілі ў вялізную Брытанскую імперыю даюць шырокую панараму падыходаў і практык пры наяўнасці пэўных падабенстваў паміж сабой (напрыклад, узаемаўплыў адпаведных актаў заканадаўства).

У некаторых з азначаных незалежных краін ці частак Вялікабрытаніі адпаведныя ўстановы адказваюць за некалькі афіцыйных моваў (Канада, Шры-Ланка) ці адну мінарытарную мову (Ірландыя, Уэльс, Шатландыя). У Канадзе, Ірландыі і Уэльсе існуе пасада моўнага камісара; у Шатландыі — камітэт гэльскай мовы; у Шры-Ланцы — адпаведнае міністэрства. Пэўныя міністэрствы выконваюць функцыі ў сферы моўных правоў і ў іншых краінах (Tushynski 2015). Магчыма, неўзабаве моўны камісар з'явіцца і ў Паўночнай Ірландыі. У шэрагу правінцый і тэрыторый Канады таксама ёсць камісар па афіцыйных мовах, міністр моў ці міністр па справах франкафоніі. У афіцыйна франкамоўным Квебеку дзейнічае Квебекскі офіс французскай мовы.

Сярод функцый згаданых арганізацый наступныя:

- распаўсюд мовы;
- распрацоўка нацыянальнай стратэгіі, плана развіцця мовы;
- удасканаленне заканадаўства;
- тлумачэнне грамадзянам іх правоў, якія вынікаюць з актаў моўнага заканадаўства;
- накладанне моўных абавязкаў на арганізацыі;
- дапамога арганізацыям у справе выканання імі абавязкаў, што ўскладзеныя на іх моўным заканадаўствам (у прыватнасці, дапамога ў распрацоўцы ўласных планаў па пашырэнні выкарыстання пэўнай мовы);
- маніторынг адпаведнасці дзейнасці дзяржаўных устаноў моўнаму заканадаўству;
- расследаванні неадпаведнасці дзейнасці дзяржаўных устаноў моўнаму заканадаўству (у тым ліку на падставе скаргі грамадзян), рэкамендацыі па іх выніках;

- звароты ў суд з мэтай прымусіць арганізацыю дзейнічаць у адпаведнасці з заканадаўствам, распрацоўка схем кампенсацыі парушэнняў;
- трэнінг асоб, адказных за ажыццяўленне моўнай палітыкі.

У Шры-Ланцы існуе Міністэрства нацыянальнага суіснавання, дыялогу і афіцыйных моў (першапачатковая назва – Міністэрства нацыянальных моў і сацыяльнай інтэграцыі). Нагэтулькі высокі ўзровень адпаведнага інстытута абумоўлены вялікай роллю моўнага канфлікту паміж носьбітамі сінгальскай і тамільскай моў у агульным міжэтнічным супрацьстаянні на востраве, што ўрэшце вылілася ў грамадзянскую вайну (1983–2009), якая каштавала жыцця 80–100 тысячам чалавек.

Адным з прыярытэтных кірункаў сваёй дзейнасці міністэрства бачыць рэалізацыю моўнай палітыкі ў адпаведнасці з нацыянальнай палітыкай у галіне правоў чалавека. Частка дзейнасці арганізацыі прысвечана развіццю аўтаноміі грамадзянаў. У першую чаргу гэта стварэнне сеткі з некалькіх тысяч моўных таварыстваў па прасоўванні білінгвізму з мэтай фарміравання шматмоўнай ланкійскай нацыі. Таварыствы праводзяць навучанне мовам, а таксама міжэтнічныя фестывалі і летнікі ў сваёй мясцовасці, дапамагаюць у працаўладкаванні носьбітам пэўнай мовы і г. д. Таксама міністэрства арганізуе майстэрні для афіцыйных асоб, школьнікаў і г. д. па тлумачэнні дзяржаўнай моўнай палітыкі (Annual Performance Report 2015: 16–27).

Спрыянне грамадзянскай аўтаноміі ў дзейнасці інстытутаў па абароне моўных правоў

Сама скіраванасць на забеспячэнне моўных правоў грамадзян, у прыватнасці, у грамадска-палітычнай сферы (камунікацыя з афіцыйнымі ўстановамі на роднай мове, права выступаць на ёй у судзе і г. д.) робіць згаданыя вышэй арганізацыі сродкам развіцця аўтаноміі. Ніжэй будуць прадэманстраваныя прыватныя функцыі і аспекты дзейнасці, якія спрыяюць развіццю грамадзянскай аўтаноміі.

Арганізацыі разглядаюць скаргі грамадзян на невыкананне моўнага заканадаўства, выступаючы памочнікам грамадзяніна ў адстойванні сваіх правоў. Гэта адрозніваецца ад сітуацыі ў Беларусі, дзе абаронца моўных правоў мусіць звяртацца альбо непасрэдна да парушальніка, альбо да мясцовых уладаў (Tushynski 2015).

У тлумачэннях да адпаведных актаў заканадаўства і ў інфармацыйных матэрыялах для грамадскасці часта адзначаецца, што згаданыя ўстановы імкнуцца дасягаць з парушальнікамі правоў нефармальнага пагадненняў да пачатку афіцыйных расследаванняў, прапануюць зацікаўленым бакам пасярэдніцтва ў вырашэнні канфлікту, каб не даводзіць яго да фармальнага расследавання і суда (Tushynski 2015).

Ва Уэльсе рашэнне моўнага камісара можна абскардзіць у спецыяльным трыбунале па валійскай мове. У трыбунал мае права падаць скаргу і трэці бок, калі палічыць, што арганізацыя дапусціла парушэнне, але камісар не адрэагаваў на яго належным чынам (Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011).

У шэрагу краін вызначаныя заканадаўствам дзяржаўныя ўстановы мусяць ці мусілі самастойна распрацаваць моўныя схемы ці планы — дэталёвыя дарожныя карты выкарыстання і пашырэння ўжытку мінарытарнай мовы ў гэтай установе. У Ірландыі, напрыклад, арганізацыя павінна была (нядаўнія змены заканадаўства змянілі моўныя схемы моўнымі стандартамі) апублікаваць заяву аб намеры распрацаваць схему, каб заахвоціць грамадзян і зацікаўленыя ўстановы дасылаць ёй свае прапановы на гэты конт. Спецыяльны дапаможнік па складанні схем дае парады па планаванні кансультацыйнага працэсу з зацікаўленымі групамі. Павінны быць прадуманы метады збору інфармацыі, напрыклад, фокус-групы, сходы і г. д. (Guidelines 2004).

У Шатландыі арганізацыя, што распрацоўвае план, мусіць кансультавацца з зацікаўленымі асобамі. Камітэт гэльскай мовы рэкамендуе арганізацыям праводзіць кансультацыі як з грамадскасцю, так і са сваімі супрацоўнікамі, падрыхтаваць двухмоўны электронны і друкаваны варыянт праекта плана, прадугледзець кансультацыйны перыяд ад шасці тыдняў. Пры гэтым камітэт павінен аказваць арганізацыі бясплатную дапамогу (Statutory Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans 2024: 8–9).

У Шатландыі арганізацыя, на якую быў ускладзены абавязак распрацаваць моўны план, мае права апрадэставаць саму пастанову аб распрацоўцы плана, а таксама тэрмін, у які ёй належыць гэта зрабіць, і рашэнне камітэта гэльскай мовы аб незацвярджэнні плана. Апеляцыя накіроўваецца ва ўрад. Калі ўрад прыме бок арганізацыі, то камітэт не будзе мець права дасылаць ёй новае патрабаванне на працягу двух гадоў (Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 (2016)).

Пры афіцыйных установах, якія адказваюць за моўную палітыку, могуць быць прадугледжаны *дарадчыя органы*. Напрыклад, у правінцыі Канады Новая Шатландыя моўныя каардынатары

дзяржаўных арганізацый утвараюць каардынацыйны камітэт, які дае парады міністру акадэйскіх спраў наконт выканання правінцыйнага моўнага заканадаўства (акадэйцы — франкамоўныя нашчадкі жыхароў Акадыі, адной з французскіх калоній у Канадзе) (French-language Services Act, SNS 2004). У Паўночна-Заходняй тэрыторыі Канады міністр, адказны за афіцыйныя мовы, павінен абавязвацца на рэкамендацыі Рады афіцыйных моў і Рады адраджэння абарыгенных моў (Official Languages Act, RSNWT 1988, с О-1 2024).

Заканадаўства можа прадугледжваць *фінансавую падтрымку*. Напрыклад, згаданае ланкійскае міністэрства выдаткоўвае грошы на падтрымку праектаў, што распрацавалі моўныя таварыствы (Annual Performance Report 2015: 23). Камітэт гэльскай мовы ў Шатландыі выдае шырокі спектр грантаў, у тым ліку на распрацоўку моўных схем у арганізацыі і на найманне адмысловага супрацоўніка па развіцці гэльскай мовы (Statutory Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans 2024: 11).

Своеасаблівы прыклад важнасці грамадзянскай аўтаноміі дае канадскае моўнае заканадаўства, якое ставіць забеспячэнне паслугамі на мінарытарнай мове (напрыклад, на французскай у пераважна англамоўных правінцыях) у дзяржаўных установах у залежнасць у тым ліку ад колькасці зваротаў грамадзян з адпаведным патрабаваннем за папярэдні год (Official Languages (Communications with and Services to the Public) Regulations, SOR/92-48 Consolidation 2023).

Безумоўна, дзейнасць азначаных устаноў уваходзіць у супярэчнасць з інтарэсамі пэўнай часткі грамадства, адлюстроўваючы праблему частковага несупадзення індывідуальных і калектыўных моўных правоў. У розных краінах гэтыя ўстановы атрымлівалі мянушку «моўнай паліцыі». З апошніх канфліктных выпадкаў можна назваць інспекцыі Квебекскага офіса французскай мовы ў медычных установах: правяралася нават, ці ўжываецца французская мова ў аперацыйных альбо ў больніцы для італьянскай супольнасці. Такія дзеянні выклікалі незадаволенасць часткі грамадзян. У адным адкрытым лісце з абурэннем выступіў нават франкафон, які агулам падтрымлівае пэўныя меры па прымусовым пашырэнні ўжытку французскай (Letters 2024). Тым не менш пэўныя хібы ў дзейнасці (верагодна, выкліканыя недасканалым заканадаўствам ці неналежным выкананнем законаў) не ставяць пад сумнеў карыснасць падобных інстытутаў.

Заклучэнне

У артыкуле прадэманстравана, як ідэалы грамадзянскага і этнічнага нацыяналізму могуць быць гарманізаваныя ў адной прыватнай сферы — інстытутах па абароне моўных правоў. У гэтай практычнай сферы, бадай, неістотна, які з двух відаў першасны ці які інклюзіўны адносна іншага: яна спрыяе і ўмацаванню прававой дзяржавы, і развіццю палітычнай аўтаноміі, і захаванню нацыянальнай мовы ці моваў. Верагодна, гэтая сфера не ўнікальная — да гарманізацыі можна імкнуцца і ў сферы адукацыі, культуры і СМІ.

На жаль, на сённяшні дзень разважаць пра такую гарманізацыю ў Беларусі можна хіба тэарэтычна. Але верагодна, што і ў гіпатэтычнай дэмакратычнай Беларусі будучыні рэалізацыя гэтых ідэй сутыкнецца са складанасцямі. Адна з прычынаў гэтага — русіфікацыя беларускага грамадства, нязначная каштоўная функцыя беларускай мовы і нацыянальнай культуры нават на сімвалічным узроўні, не кажучы пра ўзровень практычнага выкарыстання.

Калі, напрыклад, уявіць у будучыні дэмакратычны рэферэндум аб вяртанні беларускай мове статусу адзінай дзяржаўнай, то перспектывы такога статусу падаюцца сумніўнымі. У такой сітуацыі застанецца распрацоўваць моўнае заканадаўства, якое як мінімум забяспечыць беларускамоўных грамадзян не толькі правам, але і рэальнымі гарантыямі без абмежаванняў карыстацца роднай мовай, атрымліваць на ёй любую інфармацыю ад дзяржаўных структур, навучацца на ёй і г. д. Праграмай максімум можа стаць заканадаўчае замацаванне мер дзяржаўнай падтрымкі гэтай — значна больш уразлівай — дзяржаўнай мовы. У любым выпадку, нават калі беларуская мова ізноў стане адзінай дзяржаўнай, афіцыйныя інстытуты па абароне моўных правоў будуць запатрабаваныя на этапе дэкаланізацыі краіны.

References

- Annual Performance Report 2015. Ministry of National Co-existence, Dialogue and Official Languages, 2015 (2015), 16–27, *Parliament.lk*, 21 September. <https://parliament.lk/uploads/documents/paperspresented/performance-report-ministry-of-national-coexistence-dialogue-and-official-languages-2015.pdf> (accessed: 4 January 2025).
- Belarus: The changing social contract. The results of a public opinion poll conducted between 3 and 22 February 2024 (2024). *What Belarusians Think*, 18 March. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hVYn5esNKSDAykhcOGL2l-phmTtSeLVJO/view> (accessed: 1 January 2025).

- Digitisation of the 1926 Census (2022). Gov.ie, 16 November. <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/678fc-digitisation-of-the-1926-census/> (accessed: 4 January 2025).
- French-language Services Act, SNS 2004 (2004). CanLII. <http://canlii.ca/t/lf4s>. (accessed: 11 June 2025).
- Fours, V. (2007). Belarusskij proekt «sovremennosti». Chtoby «kazhdyj oshchushchal sebja zdes' kak doma». V: O. Shparaga (red.). *Evropejskaya perspektiva Belarusi: intellektual'nye modeli*. Vilnius: EGU: 43–60. — In Rus. [Фурс, В. (2007). Беларусский проект «современности». Чтобы «каждый ощущал себя здесь как дома». В: О. Шпарага (ред.). *Европейская перспектива Беларуси: интеллектуальные модели*. Вильнюс: ЕГУ: 43–60.]
- Fours, V. (2005). Dinamicheskaya koncepciya social'nogo v filosofii K. Kastoriadis. *Zbìrnik naukovih prac' z filosofii ta filologii*. Vip. 8. *Grec'ka tradicia v suchasnij kul'turi*. Odesa: ONU im. I. I. Mechnikova: 227–238. — In Rus. [Фурс, В. (2005). Динамическая концепция социального в философии К. Касториадиса. Докса. *Збірник наукових праць з філософії та філології*. Вип. 8. *Грецька традиція в сучасній культурі*. Одеса: ОНУ ім. І. І. Мечникова: 227–238.]
- Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 (2016). *Legislation.gov.uk*, 15 July. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/7/2016-07-15> (accessed: 3 January 2025).
- Guidelines under Section 12 of the Official Languages Act 2003 (2004). An Coimisinéir Teanga, [https://www.coimisineir.ie/userfiles/files/Treoirilinte_do_Scimeanna_faoin_Acht_\(B\).pdf](https://www.coimisineir.ie/userfiles/files/Treoirilinte_do_Scimeanna_faoin_Acht_(B).pdf) (accessed: 3 January 2025).
- Letters: Language inspections in hospitals a new low for Quebec government (2024). *Montreal Gazette*, July 24. <https://www.montrealgazette.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/article416934.html> (accessed: 3 January 2025).
- Ó Ceallaigh, T. J., Dhonnabháin, A. N. (2015). Reawakening the Irish Language through the Irish Education System: *Challenges and Priorities*. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education* 8(2): 179–198.
- Official Languages Act, RSNWT 1988, c O-1. (2024). CanLII. <http://canlii.ca/t/8htc> (accessed: 11 June, 2025).
- Official Languages (Communications with and Services to the Public) Regulations, SOR/92-48 Consolidation (2023). *Justice Laws Website*. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-92-48/index.html>. (accessed: 15 June 2025).
- Piwoni, E., Mußotter, M. (2023). The evolution of the civic-ethnic distinction as a partial success story: Lessons for the nationalism-patriotism distinction. *Nations and Nationalism* 29(3): 906–921. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12944> (accessed: 12 June 2025).
- Postanovlenie Gosudarstvennogo komiteta po imushchestvu Respubliki Belarus 24 marta 2023 goda № 19 O peredache naimenovanij geograficheskikh obyektov s belorusskogo i russkogo jazykov na drugie jazyki (2023). *Pravo.by* (accessed: 11 June, 2025). — In Bel. [Постановление Государственного комитета по имуществу Республики Беларусь 24 марта 2023 года № 19 О передаче наименований географических объектов с белорусского и русского языков на другие языки (2023). *Pravo.by*. <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22339778> (дата звароту: 11 чэрвеня 2025).]

- Prahrama Belaruskaha Narodnaha Frontu «Adradzhen'ne» (1993). *Kamunikat.org*. <https://kamunikat.org/pragrama-belaruskaga-narodnaga-frontu-adradzhenne> (accessed: 1 January 2025). — In Bel.
[Праграма Беларускага Народнага Фронту «Адраджэньне» (1993). *Kamunikat.org*. <https://kamunikat.org/pragrama-belaruskaga-narodnaga-frontu-adradzhenne> (дата звароту: 1 студзеня 2025).]
- Shchytsova, T. (2020). In Memoriam. Vladimir Fours. *Topos 2*: 7–10. — In Russ.
[Щитцова, Т. (2020). In Memoriam. Владимир Фурс. *Topos 2*: 7–10.]
- Statutory Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans (2024). *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*. <https://www.gaidhlig.scot/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Bord-na-Gaidhlig-Statutory-Guidance-Gaelic-Language-Plans-2024-English.pdf> (accessed: 3 January 2025).
- Tushynski, Dz. (2020). Kanadskaye mounaje zakanadaustva u paraunan- ni z ajchynnym. In: *Nashy vyaki – nasha bahaccie. Liepshyya praktyki mieniedzhmentu spadchynu: Zbornik materyyalau navuk.-praktych. kanferencyi. 6 vierasnia 2019 hoda*. Lida: 2020. — In Bel.
[Тушынскі, Дз. (2020). Канадскае моўнае заканадаўства ў параўнанні з айчынным. У: *Нашы вякі – наша багацце. Лепшыя практыкі менеджменту спадчыны: Зборнік матэрыялаў навук.-практыч. канферэнцыі. 6 верасня 2019 года*. Ліда: 2020.]
- Tushynski, Dz. M. (2015). Mounaye zakanadaustva Respubliki Irlandyya. In: *Zbornik materyyalau Mizhнароднай navukova-praktychnay kanferentsyi «Mounyya pravy i ikh abarona»*, Minsk, 28 sakavika 2015 goda. Tom 1: 224–232. — In Bel.
[Тушынскі, Дз. М. (2015). Моўнае заканадаўства Рэспублікі Ірландыя. У: *Зборнік матэрыялаў Міжнароднай навукова-практычнай канферэнцыі «Моўныя правы і іх абарона»*, Мінск, 28 сакавіка 2015 года. Том 1: 224–232.]
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 (2011). *Legislation.gov.uk*. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/1/section/1/enacted> (accessed: 11 June 2025).
- Zakon Respubliki Belarus O naimenovaniyakh geograficheskikh obyektov ot 16 noyabrya 2010 g. № 190-Z (2010). *Zakony-by.com* (accessed: 11 June, 2025). — In Russ.
[Закон Рэспублікі Беларусь О наименованиях географических объектов от 16 ноября 2010 г. № 190-З (2010). *Zakony-by.com*. https://zakony-by.com/zakon_rb_o_naimenovaniyah_geograficheskikh_ob_ek-tov.htm (дата звароту: 11 чэрвеня 2025).]