

## *Convergences And Divergences Of Existential Semiotics*



Institute of Literary and Artistic Communication  
Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra  
Slovakia

## Convergences And Divergences Of Existential Semiotics

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Ed. by Július Fujak



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## CONTENT

Introduction .....	7
Eero Tarasti: <i>An Essay On Appearance Or: The Present Structure And Axistential Digressions Of The Subject</i> .....	11
Lubomír Plesník: <i>Notes To The Existential Sense Of The Art Form</i> ..	33
Klement Mitterpach: <i>Deaf Place</i> .....	45
Branislav Hudec: <i>Otherwise Than Text</i> .....	55
Krzysztof Biliński: <i>Existential Reading Of Yuri Lotman</i> .....	69
Jarmila Doubravová: <i>"I/Other" Oppositions In Music, Aesthetics And Semiotics</i> .....	77
Vladimír Franta: <i>Subjectivity (Depersonalization) In Life And Art Viewed by Existential Semiotics</i> .....	93
Eva Kapsová: <i>Private Existence And Confessing Culture</i> .....	101
Tibor Žilka: <i>The Semiotics Of The Grotesque In The Postmodern Film and Literature</i> .....	113
Ludivine Allegue: <i>Sama: The Video Document As A Way Of Generating Knowledge</i> .....	125
Július Fújak: <i>The Modus Of (Un)Consciousness In Music Perception (In Existential Perspective)</i> .....	139
Photogallery Of The Symposium .....	155



## INTRODUCTION

The book you are reading is a document of not too large but yet very special scientific event which took place in the Hall of Constantine the Philosopher at the Constantine the Philosopher University (CPU) in Nitra, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2007. This event was the international symposium *Convergences And Divergences Of Existential Semiotics*, the exceptionality of which was determined by the following reasons:

- It represented the first initiative scientific colloquium in Slovakia aiming at the confrontation of different conceptions in the research of *existential semiotics*, concerning the actual context of “existential turn” in the semiotics of arts and aesthetics at the break of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.
- It was the most important event in the program of 2007 dedicated to the commemoration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of existence of the Institute of Literary and Artistic Communication at the Faculty of Arts CPU in Nitra. From its very start in the 60's, this top academic institution (originally founded as Cabinet of Literary Communication) has achieved high reputation in Czechoslovakia and abroad for its research in the fields of literary science, reception aesthetics, theory of translation and artistic communication. Traced from the founding and pioneering innovative hermeneutic research of František Miko and Anton Popovič to Lubomír Plesník's conception of pragmatic aesthetics in the 90's – spread by their colleagues also to the theory of other artistic media – “Nitra semiotic school” has become increasingly interested in the research of different often undisclosed aesthetic phenomena and realities described from the point of view of *existentially* oriented discourse.
- The importance of the symposium was underlined by the participation of prominent experts of contemporary semiotics: Eero Tarasti

(Department of Musicology, University of Helsinki), President of the International Association for Semiotic Studies (IASS/AIS), one of the main initiative representatives of existential semiotic research, author of the defining work *Existential Semiotics* (Indiana University press 2000), foreign specialists of semiotics of arts focused on different fields of music such as Jarmila Doubravová (Department of Philosophy, Západočeská Univerzita, Plzeň), Vladimír Franta (Department of Musicology, University of Helsinki), on fine art and dance – Ludivine Allegue (Institut d'Esthétique des Arts et Technologies, Paris) as well as on connection between semiotics and philosophy – Krzysztof Bilinski (Instytut Filologii Polskiej Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego). They could discuss the theme of the symposium with the representatives of Nitra semiotic school Lubomír Plesník, Tibor Žilka, who was one of its co-founder in late 60's, Eva Kapsová, Július Fajak and also with young Slovak philosophers Klement Mitterpach and Branislav Hudec (both from the Faculty of Arts CPU).

The actual confrontation of the parallels of existential semiotic research at the Institute of Literary and Artistic Communication (ILAC), which were initiated primarily by František Miko and followed by the mentioned Lubomír Plesník and other Nitra semioticians, with the theories of the experts from abroad has opened a space for inspiring exchange of research outcomes as well as the development of a meaningful dialogue and mutually stimulating cooperation within the contemporary aesthetic and semiotic research.

We believe that in continuity with the reception-pragmatic research of ILAC as one of the most important institution of linguistics, aesthetics and semiotics in Slovakia, the symposium has contributed to a more distinct accentuation of those reflections which point to the (primary) *living, experientially-existential* dimension of the aesthetic and artistic phenomena understood as inspiring sources of semiotic articulation (K. Mitterpach). We hope that you will agree with the mentioned conviction while reading the studies presented at the symposium which (as its title indicates) did not only want to point at similarities but also underline the valuable diversity of contemporary existential semiotic reflections.



In the frame of the commemoration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ILAC there was a special artistic intermedia event after the symposium in Nitra gallery with the presence of Ambassador of Finland Mr. Rauno Viemerö – performance of duo thEoRy Of Shake, projection of Ludivine Allegue's videodocument *Sama* and solo recital of cellist Jozef Lupták in destroyed Concert Hall of Region house in Nitra (which was another concert of Hermes'Ear in Nitra series to initiate the renovation of this wonderful space).

Editor



# AN ESSAY ON APPEARANCE OR: THE PRESENT STRUCTURE AND EXISTENTIAL DIGRESSIONS OF THE SUBJECT

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Motto:

Die Zeit ist die formale Bedingung  
*a priori* aller Erscheinungen überhaupt.  
(Kant 1787/1986: 98)

**Abstract:** The category of appearance (*paraitre*) has been already discussed in the classical semiotics (Greimas and others) but in the context of existential semiotics it can be given a new broader meaning deepening it to philosophical directions. Such thinkers as Kant, Schiller, Adorno, Souriau articulated it only in the ‘vertical’ direction. For them it meant ‘Schein’, or ‘apparence’, i.e. something in the surface reflecting, in best cases, the truth of being. Greimas’s ‘veridictory’ square was also based on this interpretation. Yet, we can also conceive it in the horizontal manner, as a temporal unfolding, as ‘Erscheinung’. In this sense it will mean a radically new and more profound approach to such a notion as communication, so crucial in semiotics.

Keywords: appearing, being, existential, Schein, Erscheinen, transcendence

One need not know much history of semiotics in order to recognize the background of my title. It is of course an allusion to Umberto Eco’s classic *Struttura assente* from 1968, which turned out to be a major touchstone in the history of European semiotics. At that time, everything about semiotics had become “structural” (Lévi-Strauss had already published his *Anthropologie structurale* in 1962). But why, for Eco, was structure “absent”?

This notion of absence reveals something essential in both the history of structuralism and in the reasoning to which most semiotics has

remained faithful – namely, that “true” reality is not that which can be seen, heard or felt, but the structure behind and causing any manifest phenomenon. As Greimas put it, any surface reality was only an “*effet du sens*”, a meaning-effect. In a word, manifest reality is only *Schein* – appearance, illusion – a notion that may be found as early as in the teachings of Schiller and Kant.

Getting at the structure involves the kind of reductionism described by Mireille Marc-Lipiansky: *réductionnisme qui cherche à ramener le supérieur à l'inférieur* (Marc-Lipiansky 1973: 136). Under the category of “antihumanism”, she distinguished among four different phases of reductionism: the reduction of the individual to the collective; the reduction of the conscious to unconscious categories; the reduction of consciousness to an unconscious regulative agglomeration or “combinatory” (*combinatoire*), which eliminates the creative activity of a subject and of history; and finally, the reduction of freedom to necessity. One cannot think of a better summary of the issue, and to judge from the world around us, this world-view has certainly won out.

Nevertheless, the present essay dares to suggest an alternative, namely, that no phenomenon is reducible to any other, that the individual and the phenomena of consciousness, creativity, historicity, subjectivity and freedom are all possible, at least in theory. To convey the idea in terms of old-fashioned German humanism – which the Germans themselves have tried to forget since Adorno and Benjamin: *Den Sinnen hast Du dann zu trauen, kein falsches lassen sie dich schauen, wenn dein Verständnis dich wach erhält* (Trust, then, in your senses; they do not betray you, when your understanding keeps you awake).

A concern for existentiality has even made its way into what was formerly known as the Paris school of semiotics. The social semiotician Eric Landowski, for example, has recently explored the semiotics of life itself, though such explorations risk leading to intuitive knowledge and a kind of “light” semiotics (see, e.g., Landowski 1997). This line of investigation comes close to phenomenology and to Sartre’s notion of “situation”, which Landowski admits to having used for a long time, and eventually leads to a semiotics of experience and of “being

in the world” (*être au monde*). Essential to this new semiotics are the digressions from programmed behaviour(s). Landowski illustrates:

A bee and a housewife are programmed entities: “Where did you put my apples?” she asks, when arranging things. They must always be in the same place; for instance, atop the piano. It would be senseless to ask why it has to be so. The program titles itself.

By contrast, existential behaviour is irregular; it breaks with the “normal” or routine course. Therefore, we cannot presume that it would follow the same laws as those of the programmed, “natural” world. Existentiality is therefore a deviation from structure.

One need not search far to find artistic representations of this problem. Existentiality is the central theme, for example, in the famous “loser trilogy” by Finnish film-director Aki Kaurismäki: *Drifting Clouds*, *The Man without a Past*, and *Lights of the Outskirts* (2005) – particularly in the last mentioned, where it is presented most cogently, but also in the gloomiest, most austere, and apocalyptic manner. In Kaurismäki’s movies, the social structure is undeniably present, but it is not shown; it exists “somewhere”, but its affirmative pressure has been repressed by cinematic means. Adorno has commented on attempts by art to mute the social structure: “The revolt against appearance, the unsatisfied state of art about itself, has been the recurrent motif in the quest for truth in art... Art has always striven for dissonance ... the affirmative drive of society, with which the aesthetic illusion has allied, has subordinated this aspiration” (Adorno 2006: 226).

In *Lights of the Suburbs*, only the consequences of social structure are shown, appearing on-screen in the existential violence and vicissitudes of subjects. The cinematographic *Schein*, however fascinating in itself, also serves the cause of uncovering “the truth of being”. Accordingly it does not remain mere “shine”, sheer brilliance without foundation; nor is it a “lie”, that is to say, something which appears, but is not. On this cinematic basis, existentiality and structure meet each other. Kaurismäki’s filmic subjects always present a conduct that

deviates from structure, and thus poses a challenge to the latter. When Kaurismäki was asked: “Are you an existentialist?” he responded: “I don’t know. Perhaps not, since then it would prove that Sartre was not ...” (1988; cited in v. Bagh 2006: 74). However, Ernst Bloch’s principle of hope is realized in the closing words of the movie: “Do not go – stay here/ Do not die/ I shall not die of this” (op. cit. 210). It is hard to get rid of the structure-and-appearance dualism.

Sociology teaches that structures are contingent constructs that serve to explain man’s behaviour. In their phenomenology of everyday life, Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann (1994) investigate structures, where they discover three kinds of deviation or transcendence. The first are *minor*, everyday transcendences, such as “I open the cabinet and take the coffee cup from its familiar place”, i.e., I presume that it is there. *Middle* transcendences: I encounter another person whom I suppose to be somewhat similar to myself. *Major* transcendences take place when, in the course of reading a novel or viewing a film, I am shifted to some *absent* time or space; e.g., to ancient Rome or some futuristic metropolis, as the case may be.

The argument has been made that, when the structure is “revealed” or made manifest, it is shown to dominate human actions. Structure manifests in the latter, and is thereby reified as what Yuri Lotman called “a generator of structurality”. If that is the case, then how seriously should we take the concept of *Schein*, or illusion?

Many persons living in the contemporary world – at least, those still kept “awake” by *Verständnis* – have noticed the rapid multiplication of *Schein* in society. Reality has been made into a spectacle; it has been polished and “aestheticised” (Wolfgang Ivers) to the point that we cannot take it seriously even though we live amidst it. The more tailored and flashy the letter that appears in our mail box, the more probable it is that we will classify it as an advertisement and throw it, unopened, into the trash bin. Aware of this tendency, senders have retaliated by imitating “authentic” messages; for example, we now get letters that appear to have been handwritten or that have an “official” look, but when opened turn out to be promotional material offering us cheaper auto insurance, “better” kinds of housing, and the like. On an-

other front: the more visually impressive a power-point presentation is, the more we doubt whether the presenter has anything of substance to say. If the label of a wine bottle is too alluring or ostentatious, we leave that bottle on the shelf and choose one with a more conservative or “old-fashioned” logo. Conversely, we may find the calm reading of a text in a dimly lit room to be more shocking or astounding than on-stage acrobatics, hyper-virtuosic performance, and other such aural and/or visual displays. Even corporeality can be *Schein* in the sense of a betrayal or illusion. When the body is too *gegenständlich* (thing-like), it loses its credibility, such that we are more moved by the ghostly, distorted human figures such as one finds in El Greco’s paintings.

Thus we can distinguish between what I have called “act-sign” and “quasi-sign”. But on what basis? By which quality can we recognize the *Schein* character of a sign in our contemporary world of electronic communication? Doubtless the sign must possess some “supra-” or additional signs which provide us with a hint. What they are? How they can be found? How do we find the right avenue amidst the manifold temptations of *Schein*?

### Vertical appearance

As noted above, the notion of *Schein* is not new, but has a rich heritage in German philosophy. Kant spoke about it in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1787/1968), as did Friedrich Schiller in his *Briefe über ästhetische Erziehung* (1795/2000). In the former, Kant pondered *Schein* in the chapter entitled “Transcendental Aesthetics”. There he argues that space and time determine all of our perceptions – those concerning external objects as well as those related to internal ones, such as our own states of mind.<sup>1</sup> What is involved, then, is how the external and internal worlds appear to our senses. From this perspective, one cannot explain away those manifestations as mere appearance (*ein blosser Schein*). To do so carries the attitude that *Schein* is something less real than objects as such. Nevertheless, it would be to our own detriment, according to Kant, if we should, solely on this basis, begin

to consider all of objective reality as *Schein*, in the sense of an illusion. Kant inquires: what is truth? Is it the coincidence of perception with its object? No, argues Kant, since perception is filtered through a-priori categories. On the other hand, formal logic is not the same as that of these perceptual categories; using formal logic, we cannot say anything about objective reality. One needs a particular logic of *Schein*, which Kant calls “dialectic”, in order to talk about how *Schein*, or illusion, is related to reality.<sup>2</sup>

In any case, with Kant the term *Schein* always appears in the context of *bloss* or *falsch*, i.e., something apparent in the negative sense. Adorno inherited this view directly from Kant, and used it in his declaration that *Schein* was illusion or phantasmagoria, which art, by its own *Schein*, paradoxically had to deny and abolish.

Schiller quickly became familiar with Kant’s thought, and as one result we have his famous letters about aesthetic education. Schiller’s radical difference from Kant lies in his writings about the *joy* of *Schein*. Savages became humans when they could so detach themselves from reality that they started to take the latter as a play – as a *Schein* – and could appreciate it as such. In Schiller’s view, this divestment of interest in reality and investment in the world of *Schein* marked a decisive step in the progress of mankind.

We see through our eyes and hear through our ears. But it is an entirely different thing to *feel* with our eyes, and to experience the rhythm of what we hear. As long as man is savage, he feels his emotions only with his senses; but as soon as he starts to enjoy with his eyes and to furnish what he sees with its own value, he is aesthetically free and the desire of play develops in him. Finally, such a right and sincere *Schein* was, to Schiller’s mind, also moral, insofar as it did not attempt to represent the reality, just as the reality did not use *Schein* as its proper representation. The attainment of an independent *Schein* requires more freedom of heart and greater energy of will in order to dominate the reality.

To continue from Schiller: the sphere of morality, which unquestionably belongs to the universe of *Schein*, includes two world views: either being is intrinsically good and evil is mere *Schein*, or goodness



is apparent and evil real. (In literature we encounter representatives of both perspectives; for instance, the latter is dominant in novels by Celine, Camus, Sartre, and the former, say, in Brontë, Tolstoi, and Gide.)

But how far can our lives be guided by this *ad hoc* hypothesis, if evil is basically the sacred unveiled? How long can the *Schein* of evil persist, before we cease to believe in any kind of goodness of being looming behind it? According to another theory, the evilness of a society falls upon the individual, causing disillusionment and cynicism. Or as Jean Cocteau put it: society is a *machine infernale* that is designed to annihilate the mortal – it is a kind of cruel joke played by the gods. Even this theory certainly has evidence to support it.

Consequently, we have two basic theories of *Schein*, one holding that it is falsity, illusion, betrayal, and the other taking it to be an independent, autonomous reality of its own, a great step forward in the progress of humanity. Let us now see how these theories have fared in later discussions of *Schein*.

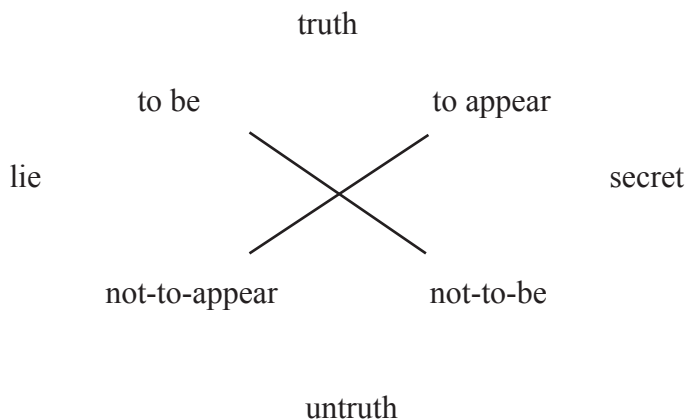
One such discussion may be found in the work of French phenomenologist Etienne Souriau, who also made an impact on early semiotic structuralism (e.g., on Greimas's *Sémantique structurale*). Souriau, whose monumental knowledge of the twentieth century was gathered into a collective work, *Vocabulaire d'esthétique*, gave new meanings to the terms *apparence* and *apparition*.

The term *apparence*, as defined by Souriau, is that aspect whereby an object manifests, insofar as this representation distinguishes itself from the object represented. From this definition, three different nuances follow: 1) the mere appearance of something to our senses, i.e., a phenomenon; 2) illusory appearance or illusion; and 3) that appearance which presupposes some kind of judgement, i.e., what we have come to know as verisimilitude, or *vraisemblance*. We speak, for instance, about the true-to-life illusion in painting or theater.

The "truth" of theater is based on three kinds of illusion: representation of human emotions, the illusion of time and place (diegesis), and the presentation of natural or supernatural phenomena in order to provoke strong emotions in the spectator or so as to increase the

general credibility of the on-stage events. This latter case leads to the term *apparition*, which designates the appearance of something surprising to the spectator. What appears can be a real person, who shows up at just the right moment on stage (for instance, the masked figure that commissioned Mozart's *Requiem*, as depicted in the Milos Forman film, *Amadeus*); or it can also be a real person who is only imagined to be present; or it can be an actual supernatural being, like *Il commandatore* at the end of *Don Giovanni*.

It is evident that *apparence* corresponds to the German notion of *Schein* and *apparition* to that of *Erscheinung*. All these cases cast *Schein* as a profoundly *vertical* phenomenon: it is something, somewhere – which is, so to say, “raised” to the surface of reality and there made manifest. Also Greimas's theory of *paraître* is of this kind. In his well-known veridictory square we act by categories of *être* and *paraître*, being and appearing. When they are negated we get four cases; being, not-being, appearing, not-appearing. When they are situated in the square, we get four meaning effects: truth, untruth, lie and secret always according to the relationship among these categories: truth is what appears and is what it appears; lie is what appears but is not that; secret is something which is but does not appear in any way; and untruth is something which neither is nor appears.:



On this basis alone we can begin to sketch a theory of 'vertical *Schein*'. We notice how many topical problems of culture, art and philosophy find their proper place in this framework. As pertaining to existential semiotics, all this naturally involves a theory of *Dasein*. It has been proposed, somewhat punningly, that *Dasein* is characterized by its particular *Da-signs*.<sup>3</sup> But to what extent are they *Da-SHINE* in the sense of brilliance, bravura, and flair? Here we encounter the same danger as with *Schein*, in that *shine*, under certain conditions, can be a kind of fakery, illusion, or lie. Not all that glitters is gold. Or as it says in the Bible, words not spoken in love are empty, merely "a tinkling cymbal".

Thus one has to distinguish between *pseudo-shine*, which belongs to the category of vanity, and authentic shine or brilliance, which is always based on the "truth of being". The latter may be illustrated by the shine of good things gained through diligence and toil. According to Protestant (Calvinist) ethics, riches are acceptable if they have been obtained by hard work or overwhelming talent; by contrast, *nouveau riches* are viewed with suspicion and doubt. On a symbolic level, we find a corresponding example in music. In a symphony the law of thematic elaboration prevails: the victorious finale of the end has to be "earned" by preceding structural processes, particularly the struggle of thematic-actorial forces which go through different musical "experiences" (*Durchführungen*). Musical shine not achieved by such work gives off a lower-level "shimmer", which betrays the music of mere entertainment. There is also a kind of brilliance which is like a gift of nature, a proof of vitality and overwhelming energy, as found in aboriginal artisanship (e.g., the Australian handicraft studied by semiotician Anne Hénault). The problem remains: by which signs can we distinguish between pseudo-shine and "good", authentic shine?

To do this we need to compare *Schein* to *Sein*. The opposition between appearance and being manifests in many forms and variations in the history of ideas, for instance, in the distinction between *ornament* and *structure*. One thinks of structure as something that really exists – it "is". We accord it the status of something permanent, whereas decoration or ornamentation is considered superfluous, a mere surface quality.

It is required from a good art work that it contain a well-planned structure, which then can be deliberately decorated; without such a structure, it does not have a substantial impact. In music this is evident, for example in the Finale of Ernst Chausson's String Quartet (Op. 30), which projects the true brilliance of real shine. The movement poses a remarkable technical challenge to performers – a task made easier when one distinguishes between the structural musical elements and those comprising mere figuration. In general, this means to distinguish between the important and the less important, between the necessary and the contingent, between foreground and background. In the Chausson example, if performers can look past the brilliant surface figurations, the structure or essential substance of the music comes into view. This cognitive operation articulates the musical text in the performer's mind and thereby enables the latter to make it his/her "own", which in turn leads to right interpretation. For instance, the final pages of the Chausson quartet can strike one as extremely daunting, almost unplayable, if one approaches them with the notion that they all have to be played with equal vigour. The "riddle" of these pages is solved, however, when the player can discern structure from surface: the octaves in the piano left hand duplicate the cello and viola theme – a variant of the "Parsifal" theme from the slow movement, returning at this narrative climax ("the return of the hero"), but now as euphoric and brilliant – whereas the right hand of the pianist and the violinist play mere ornamentation to this structure. What happens here is authentic shine based upon "truth of being", in this case, the return of the theme.

Jean Baudrillard's whole theory of *simulacra* – copies of reality as *Schein* – also belongs to this category, as does Eco's theory of forgery. The problem of a forgery lies not only in comparison of two objects on the same level, but in the shift of levels: in the dialectics of appearance and being, in the Kantian sense.

Likewise, the theory of dreams rests on discourse about the illusory nature of the oneiric reality compared to that of the being to which we always awake. The problem is neatly put in a Chinese anecdote about a man who dreamed he was a butterfly: upon awaking the man won-

dered, “Am I now a Chinaman who dreams of being a butterfly, or am I a butterfly who dreams of being a Chinaman?” A western parallel to this may be found in a comment by director Ingmar Bergman, who spoke about a particular “hour of the wolf” that one experiences in the night, a moment evoking one’s deepest values, when all daylight existence collapses as *Schein*, disclosing the true reality behind it. One no longer needs to do anything; the lack has been liquidated. A corresponding mirror relationship appears between the classical concepts of subject and object. Does the subject represent the “true” being and the objects the world of “appearances”, as Kierkegaard is said to have thought? Or is the world of objects real and the world of subjects *Schein*? The answer naturally depends on one’s epistemology, i.e., whether we adopt the idealist or realist attitude.

As concerns society one can ask if the “I” is the only certain thing, and the Other, or “you”, mere *Schein*, this last being attainable only in a fragmentary and hypothetical way, and only by presuming that what occurs in “you” is somehow similar to what happens in me. This was the basic problem of the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann (1994). In a similar context, Norbert Elias (1939) has spoken about the difference between culture and civilisation; for him, culture is spirit, depth, values – and above all, German – whereas “civilisation” comprehends sensuality, superficiality, matter (i.e., Italian-French culture). On this view, all fashionable trends of modern contemporary culture would belong to the latter category. But behind fashion looms style, or as a classic French saying has it: the style is the man. We may specify further: style is man’s most stable essence, his identity. Style manifests – or appears – in its variability as fashions, and fashion propels style into *shine*. Harri Veivo has analysed the case of t-shirts bearing the name Proust (Veivo 2006: 40-41). This is of course a blasphemy of the authentic style represented by Proust. The t-shirt logo incorporates a photo of Reynaldo Hahn, his “Proustian” body reclining in a chair, its very posture exuding an almost “transcendental” air – style and identity appearing as corporeal signs. From this we may go still further, and infer the dichotomy of mind/matter or spirit/body (even the spirit and body of the earth, as a

Tartu semiotician points out, which manifest in certain ancient woods in Estonia). Ultimately we arrive at the opposition of transcendence/*Dasein*, such that true being is transcendental, and being-there only metaphor – what we described above as *Da-shine*.

The spirit/body dichotomy constitutes its own particular field of semiotic problems, which crystallize in the opposition verbal/non-verbal, this last being carried out by gestures. Addressing this issue, linguist Natalia Sukhova has divided the communication act into two aspects: the prosodic nucleus (structure) of the phrase, and the latter's kinetic, gestural enactment. Gesticulation would thus constitute the "appearance" of communication, its visible side, its *Schein*.

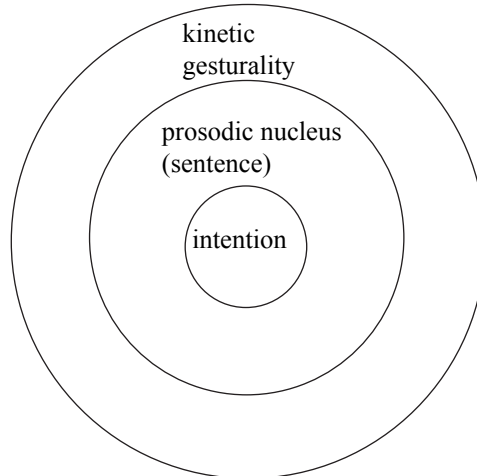
Yet the aforementioned two aspects – the prosodic and the gestural, the verbal and the non-verbal – go hand in hand: we use gestures and mimicry in order to make our speech persuasive. A speech act devoid of gestures or expressions would not guarantee the understanding of the message; the prosodic nucleus alone is not sufficient. In fact, this theory comes close to the semiotic distinction between *signification* (= prosodic nucleus) and *communication* (= kinetic gestures). True, a communication act without gestures, without *Schein*, can be used as an artistic device. We find this in Aki Kaurismäki's movies, where the characters speak with flat-affect, without gestures, and in overly grammatical dialogue, the totality of which serves either as a special, quasi-humorous artistic device or as a sign of social reification. Such dialogue can also signify the total absence of the modalisation that accompanies any "normal" human communication. This lack of modalisation leads to a static, immobile narrativity. For instance:

Man (M):	What about electricity?
Anttila:	It's included in the rent
M:	When I can move?
Anttila:	As soon as I turn my back.
M:	What about the keys?
Anttila:	Do you see a lock anywhere?
M:	I do not.

Anttila: Don't be a "wise ass", or I'll even take the door with me. The rent is to be paid monthly, in cash.  
 M: You will get the money tomorrow, if God allows.  
 Anttila: His paths are unknown to me, but if you do not pay, I shall send my killer dog to bite off your nose.  
 M: Fine ...

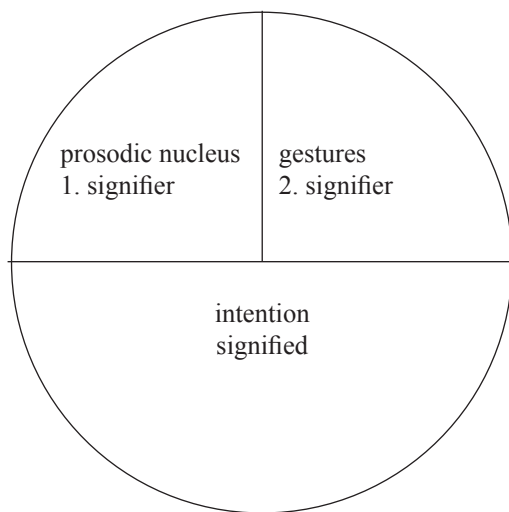
The visual realisation of the scene intensifies the immobility between the two speaking subjects – reminiscent of Saussure's diagram of Mr A and Mr B! – by strongly foregrounding the emptiness of the modal space between them.

Any communication – even one as "lifeless" as that described above – normally starts from the fact that we intend to say something, then realize that intention in both phrase and gesture. Here we are faced with two alternative theories. Either we think that intention is the signified, which has two parallel signifiers – the prosodic nucleus (the phrase) *and* the gestures – which may or may not be mutually compatible:



Or else we think that the core of the communicational act is the intention, which begins as a movement outwards, towards the Other, first as

a phrase – and *then* as gestures. In this case, the gestures serve as the utmost cover, the surface of the fulfilment of the intention, its *Schein*:



Both theories have musical implications. This is because in music, as in general communication, we first have the “prosodic nucleus”, i.e., the musical phrase, which has as a syntactico-morphological structure. Thereafter such a phrase is provided with gestures that serve as “icing on the cake”. Accordingly, gestures in music cannot be conceived apart from a prosodic nucleus. They do not have an autonomous existence, but are totally dependent on the nuclear phrase. As Adorno said: gestures cannot be developed; development is only a quality of the nuclear, musico-syntactic phrase. Nevertheless, the opposite pole remains necessary, even in Adornian theory, for *Schein* or “expression” may be the only guarantor of authentic communication. What is involved here is Husserl’s sign distinction between *Ausdruckszeichen* and *Bedeutungszeichen*, which Alfred Schütz applied to sociology with the concepts of *Anzeichen* and *bedeutsame Zeichen* (Schütz 1974: 166).

All this relates to my own theory of the subject, in which *Moi* and *Soi* struggle with each other. *Moi* is at first mere gesture, then gradually transforms into syntax as it encounters the level of social norms, top-



ics, techniques, and styles of the *Soi*. If this theory holds, does it follow that something like pure gesturality is the origin of music? Gestures and kinetics occupy the sphere of being-in-myself and being-for-myself. But what is the status of gesture as a concept? Is it something like a synapse or “bridge” from an organism to its *Umwelt*? Or are gestures ultimately intentional, that is to say, always directed towards something? If so, then even the being-in-myself would be intentional and would manifest a movement out of me. However one answers those questions, the world of the *Moi* would represent authenticity, and that of *Soi* the *Schein*.

SEIN	SCHEIN	SHINE	SIGN
ETRE BEING	APPARENCE (APPARITION)	BRILLIANCE	
	ERSCHEINUNG PARAÎTRE APPEAR		
		ÉCLAT VIRTUOSITÉ BRAVOURE	
morality:			
GOODNESS EVILNESS	EVILNESS GOODNESS		
	ILLUSION IMAGINATION ORNEMENT		
STRUCTURE	SIMULACRA FAKES/FORGERIES		
	DREAM		
SUBJECT OBJECT CULTURE KULTUR GEIST (MIND)	OBJECT or: SUBJECT (depending on epistemology) CIVILISATION		
	MATERIE (MATTER)		

life style:

IDENTITY  
SPIRIT  
(Earth spirit)

FASHION  
BODY

KITSCH

STYLE

communication:

PHRASE

GESTURE

TRANSCENDENCE  
(distinction)  
PROFOUND

DASEIN  
(being there)  
SUPERFICIAL

DASEIN

TRANSC.

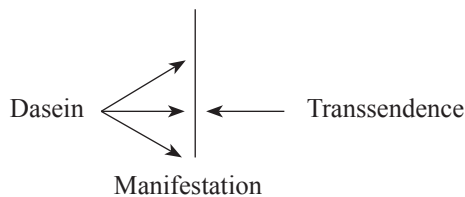
either: PSEUDO-SHINE:  
vanity, illusion  
or: AUTHENTIC SHINE  
referring to the "truth of being"  
SHINE as earned (Protestant ethics)  
SHINE as gift of nature

## Horizontal appearance

Returning to the aforementioned dictionary by Souriau, we find a passage which opens quite a different view in the following definition of the term *appearance*: "Certain art works never appear to the spectator entirely and by all parts simultaneously. The temporal arts, such as music, theater and cinema, are all based upon successive appearance" (Souriau 1990: 140).

Hence, when the idea of temporality – which involves succession, linearity, syntagmatics, ordering, unfolding, developing – is joined to such a static concept as *Schein* or being, we are led to a radically new theory. It is a naive fact is that we can live our lives only one moment at time. Therefore reality always *appears* to us temporally; it has a certain rhythm, which we can attempt to retard or accelerate, but which nevertheless proceeds inexorably. We are constantly moving towards something unknown and unforeseeable, in short, towards *transcendence*. In the process, we are always transgressing one or another boundary. It is just such an idea of borderline that Schutz and Luckmann consider essential to the idea of the transcendence. The thought can

be summed up in a single statement: Appearance (*Erscheinen*) is the becoming of transcendence (*Werden der Transzendenz*). But not just any kind of becoming qualifies as an “existential” revelation or realisation of transcendence, i.e., an existential choice. There is also “blind” becoming, without any chosen direction, the principle of *laisser-aller*, letting things happen as they may, or abandoning oneself to the power of an uncertain future, perhaps on the assumption that the “narrative” trajectory of such a power will lead to the “good”. This situation can be illustrated with the following scheme:



The modalities of existential appearance are Becoming (necessity) and Doing (freedom), as well their alternation or balance.

One might say that existential appearance is directed only by the identity of a subject, the *Ich-Ton* (to borrow a term from von Uexküll’s biosemiotics), but we cannot know in advance how that identity will react in each situation. Therefore, the *Schein* that manifests the “truth of being” as a kind of ornamentation of structure is not yet existential *Schein* in this new sense. Similarly, there is the brilliance of appearance that is a realisation of the structure of being; but one must distinguish it from the *shine* that obtains in choices made at every moment, and that derives from the fact that we are truly free to choose and not pre-programmed by any structural or ontological principle.

Mozart’s music instantiates this idea of continuous appearing and play (*Erscheinung und Spiel*): we can never anticipate which direction it will take. Therefore his music is always maximally informative – and existential.

Moreover, brilliance presupposes one kind of modality, namely, that of *decisiveness*.

Hesitancy cannot lead to brilliance, even though hesitation is an important category leading our subject from one *Dasein* to the other (as Pärttyli Rinne has shown). Hesitation is a sign of the fact that the subject becomes aware of being in a situation of choice and that it can choose. Without such freedom of choice, there would be no hesitation, other than as a resistance to what happens in any given case. Therefore existentiality can only be a digression from the normal “appearance” of a structure. For instance, a musical work that blindly follows a prefabricated narrative scheme, actantial model or generative course, is not existential appearance, since nothing about it is surprising or hesitant. Rather, it seems to unfold “organically”; for example, in the “natural” rise and fall of melodic lines (or at a deeper level, in the Schenkerian *Urlinie* 5-4-3-2-1 of tonal music).

One philosopher who has managed to portray this process very well is Karl Jaspers in his *Die Philosophie* (Jaspers 1948). He first remarks that there is no sense in speaking about appearance in regard to some being or thing in the world. What is involved is not the “mere” appearance of a ready-made object. In the case of appearance, we always face the appearance of something non-existent or transcendent to the consciousness (op. cit.: p. 43). Without transcendence, existence would lose its proper being-in-myself and lose its depth as concerns its orientation to the world. Man is *possible* existence; via consciousness man orients himself to the world and, via the world, establishes a relationship to the transcendent (p. 45). Jaspers refers to von Uexküll’s notion of the *Ich-Ton*, but rejects it with the remark that man is not the same as biological *Dasein*. The mere fact that von Uexküll, as a biologist, investigates life and environment from his own point of view, shows that he is not only his own physical *Dasein* but also that he understands other, different *Daseins*. One may therefore conclude that man is a “transcending” animal. (It seems, however, that Jaspers did not yet realize the essence of Uexküllian doctrine, which is by no means a reductionism that views everything as “biological”; on the contrary, in this theory even biology becomes communication and semiosis.) From the viewpoint of transcendence, this world is not only *Dasein* but appearance. Insofar as man is not only a part of the world but can

freely be himself, he is possible existence. Transcendence opens to him expressly as a possible existence.

If the possible is interpreted as the “virtual”, then the realisation of certain possibilities is necessarily involved (p. 71). Therefore existence and transcendence “are” not as things “are” in the world – a point that John Deely emphasizes in his semiotic philosophy (e.g., in his *Four Ages of Understanding*). They exist also for others. *Dasein*, as being, lives and vanishes. Existence, however, does not see death. *Dasein* is empirically there, whereas existence is only a freedom. *Dasein* is completely temporal; but existence, though in time, is more than time.

It seems appropriate, in this regard, to mention the term “omnitemporality”, coined by the Lithuanian-Russian philosopher Lev Karsavin, a thinker held in great esteem by Greimas (see Greimas 2001). Omnitemporality denotes a multidimensional, virtual time. It is analogous to the concept of plenitude in existential semiotics, whose opposite pole, nothingness, would be characterized by achronicity. Therefore the idea that transcendence is somehow automatically a sphere devoid of time, does not hold true; rather, one has to distinguish therein these two aspects.

World and existence are always in mutual tension, sometimes intersecting, sometimes not. Existence is never general, but always particular. The objective reality of the world and the existential reality both appear in time. Objective reality has its own rules, just as history has the law of cause and consequence. Existential reality also originates in time, in which it appears and is free. In objective reality, substances, which follow their own causal laws, are a factor that obstructs time. The communication between existences, however, is something quite different. The serial or causal necessities of objective reality are opposed by that time which is realized in the moment, in the Now. Time in general is real, measurable and objective, in the sense of valid for all; by contrast, actualized existential time is based upon depth and freedom. In the case of existential appearance, one selects from and assesses some *particular* time. Existence has its own time – which is not that of time in general. Existential temporality and appearance are

characterized by leaps, detours, and transformation (Jaspers, op. cit., p. 309).

The foregoing arguments have immediate and actual consequences, even for theories of semiotics. Namely, if semiotics at all concerns communication, which is the only properly dynamic temporal process in the mediation of the message from destinator to destinee, then we have here found a deeper, completely new epistemic level: appearance.

Appearance – as both the existentiality of subjects and as appearance in general – is an even more fundamental category than that of communication. What kind of semiotics might emerge, should we take this principle of horizontal appearance as our fulcrum? What kinds of theories, methods, and analyses? I have already referred to, among others, the new research program of Eric Landowski, which focuses on “the semiotics of life”, with its departures or breaks from programmed behaviours. His program is analogous to that of existential semiotics, both of which may give rise to yet more new approaches to sign theory.

As such, there are no difficulties in bringing the notion of transcendence into semiotics. Semiotics, as a study of signification and communication, is, when we think of it more closely, a completely transcendental discipline. Communication: Every act of communication is a leap into the unknown. In Saussure’s model, when Mr A says something to Mr B he pursues a transcendental act, he cannot know what will happen, he transgresses a borderline, he encounters the Other – the unknown – about which he can only have assumptions and abductions, but never certain knowledge. Signification: if we take as our basis the oldest medieval definition – *aliquid stat pro aliquo* – then a sign is something which represents something absent. By signs we can talk about the absent, the transcendental. The signified is always transcendental – every word, gesture, and tone fulfils the minor transcendence of Schütz and Luckmann. Moreover, when we take into account that transcendence in fact “is” not, but is always becoming via appearance, then many of our traditional concepts may be viewed in a new light.

Transcendence, as nothingness, is precisely that “moment” in which appearance has stopped and time has ended; one is in a totally achronic state – it is hard to imagine a more anguishing place for a subject. On the other hand, transcendence as plenitude means the virtuality of innumerable possibilities, of omnitemporality, which only a few artists have been able to conceptualize and simulate – as Wagner has done in his networks of operatic leitmotifs, and Proust by means of the multiple time-dimensions of his novels. These simulacra, these models, are *Schein* that correspond to the “truth of being”, the modus of which is appearance, both linear and horizontal.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For the opposition between internal and external sign-action Greimas later coined the terms interoceptive/exteroceptive. In fact, it is not so difficult to view Kant's ideas in terms of the semiotic framework of the Paris School.
- <sup>2</sup> In other words, Kant's program is the same as the one which Thomas A. Sebeok declared two hundred years later to be the objective of semiotics: to study our illusions about reality, its various alternative models, and not reality as such.
- <sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Otto Lehto for his invention of the concept of “Da-Signs”.

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# NOTES TO THE EXISTENTIAL SENSE OF THE ART FORM

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**Zusammenfassung:** Die Studie konzentriert sich auf das literarische Schaffen, das auf dem planmäßigen Wiederholen eines und desselben Begriffs aufbaut – dem Mantra LAM. Der Autor beschäftigt sich damit als mit einem personifizierten Konzentrat des morphologischen Prinzips, welches man in allen Kulturen und allen Kunstsparten antreffen kann (im literarischen Umfeld findet man es besonders in der lyrischen Poesie). Von der empirischen Basis ausgehend erklärt er, wie dieses Prinzip das menschliche Bewusstsein organisiert: das planmäßige Wiederholen des selben Begriffs löst die syntaktischen Verbindungen im Bewusstsein. Das heißt, dass sich in der Erfahrung das Differentielle mit der Kompaktheit, Ungeteiltheit und Widerspruchslosigkeit überschneidet. Den existentiellen Sinn dieser Wirkung erläutert der Autor an Hand zweier eudämonistischer Strategien: eine davon, die auf dem Differentiellen, dem Veränderlichen, dem „Anderssein“ fußt, ist bestrebt, das Bewusstsein auf einen „besseren Stand“ zu heben; die zweite, die auf dem Prinzip der Einheit, des „Ein-seins“ gegründet ist, und die in der Studie sinnbildlich durch das wiederholte Mantra vertreten ist, stellt so ein Bewusstseinsregime dar, in dem Unterschiede zwischen „positiven“ und „negativen“ Bewusstseinszuständen unterdrückt oder gänzlich aufgehoben werden.

## 1

The Czech theoretician Vladimír Svatoň distinguishes two basic lines in aesthetics: structural and existential. As we know, the domain of the structural interpretation of the art work is its form, structure, morphology, architecture or composition. This aspect of the art work is usually described as its inner immanent arrangement. Even the function of structural components is meant to be immanent here: as a technologically-constructive aim.

This condition represents for us a challenge to clarify the art work structure from a viewpoint of its pragmatic purport, in other words,

from a viewpoint of its perceptive impact on the recipient. We are convinced that this impact justifies the presence of a specific structural element in the work; that it gives it a human sense.

I will support my statement with the exposition of one of the compositional principles.

I will use a story about the Japan tea garden master Rodzi Sen no Rikju as an opening example.

Rikju's arrangement of the garden corresponded to the conception of a tea ceremony as a philosophically-aesthetic act. Poetics of this act was connected with the passing off awareness of the living world through the influence of Buddhism. A distinguished kind of gloom called wabi comes up of it.

The master's intention was to create the scenery which would divert visitor from everyday problems and put him into the contemplative condition. It was intertwined with the gloom wabi on the feeling level:

Rodzi frees a guest walking in a soft coloured kimono and wooden sandals into a tea house from the grip of ordinariness, calms him and leads into deeper concentration. It seems as if on this small place here not seconds but ages pass; as if the past, the present and the future poured into one current of a continuous move with no beginning or end (Hrdlička, Hrdličková 1997: 6).

The contrast division of the garden into the outside part (open to sunshine) and the inside part (submerged in a pleasant shade) should help coordinate mind from outside. The „flying stones“ technique – tobiishi – was used with the same intention in the building of a garden path. The shape and position of stones were meant to give the rhythm to the visitor's walk intended by the master.

There was a small fountain in the garden. Stopping at the fountain was the opening to the tea ceremony. The guest should be relaxed and concentrated, with the feeling of having passed a long journey:

Stopping at the water container is the moment of the cleaning act fulfilment... and also the moment of an aesthetic experience when the guest after washing-out his mouth pours some water from a bamboo container back to the water container and observes the beauty of the concentric circles which are being formed on imperceptible surface (Hrdlička, Hrdličková 1997: 6).

It is said that when Sen no Rikju finished his garden:

(...) and invited his first guests, they were all surprised that the master hid the view of the sea, trees and bushes. Only by the time they leant over the water container and saw the sea surface flashing among trees they understood the mister's intention. Rikju wanted them to realize the close relation between insignificantly little water and the infinite ocean (Hrdlička, Hrdličková: 1997: 6).

Why am I mentioning this story? I mention it because it is a didactically concise proof; as the morphology of the artefact it composes the visitor's consciousness: the contrast composition of the garden perceived in this way corresponds to two opposing moods of the visitor's mind; the "flying stones" technique – tobiishi – determines not only the pace and rhythm of the visitor's walk but it also expresses activity in his bosom through the physical experience of the regularity („Rodzi frees a guest..., calms him and leads into deeper concentration. It seems as if on this small place here not seconds but ages pass... “). The disposal of the fountain, a lamp and vegetation brings a specific meaningful caesura and it determines the knowledge of some specific connections etc. The story of the master Sen no Rikju says how the formative characteristics of the garden induce the condition of consciousness when the guest silently immerses into the contemplative gloom wabi.

The determining in the story has a bigger significance. By this I mean that the arrangement of the sign work shapes recipient's consciousness; it arranges its characteristics and thus determines their quality. In other words: the morphology of the work and the morphology of the perceptive consciousness are corresponding in the pragmatic perspective.

The composition of a sign work organizes the recipient's consciousness. It re(arranges) its characteristics and thus determines their quality (we can distinguish "compositional elements" of the work and their relations only in a dismemberment and correlation between the contents of mind – at least between sensual perceptions).

Close relation between the structure of the work and the recipient's mind is connotatively delicate and thus it may resist precise terminology and maybe – as it is with "technologically-constructive" work analyses – it may abstract from it. However; it is primarily present in each morphological unit. The relation between the organisation of the utterance and the mind does not build only abstract grammar categories (Miko 1962), and metric structures (Rédey 1997) but also the morphology of antique columns or the sujet structure of a classical tragedy.

## 2

In the first part of my exposition I tried to explain the connection between the art form and recipient's experience of its sense. In the second part of the exposition I will try to demonstrate my statement on the specific compositional principle.

This compositional principle is the repeating. The repeating represents one of the basic compositional methods. It displays many morphological phenomena: from a parallel or symmetry, through rhythm and rhyme to epizeuxis, paronomasia, alliteration, etc.

I will concentrate on the repetition in its limited form, which is represented by a mantra.

The mantra is a fully-fledged cultural artefact that has been in communicational circulation for several millennia. The number of its users has reached tens of millions. The mantra is a Sanskrit expression in which "man" means an instrument and "tra" to think. Its meaning could therefore be freely interpreted as "an instrument of thinking" (Góvinda 1994: 18). In *yoga*, *mantras* are the syllables, words or phrases, to which a positive effect is attributed. They are specifically

Sanskrit expressions – often convoluted – not always having a denotative meaning.

The effect of a *mantra* is mainly achieved through constant repeating. The repeating of a mantra is called *mantra-japa* (Mahéšvaránanda 1992: 166):

Mantra-japa has several stages:

1. *likhita* – writing of mantra;
2. *baikhari* – loud repeating of mantra<sup>7</sup>;
3. *upamsu* – whispering of mantra;
4. *mánsik* – repeating of mantra in thought;
5. *adjapa* – automatic repeating of mantra and the automatic identification with it (Mahéšvaránanda 1992: 76).

Through yoga as an inter-religious system, the mantra-japa manifests itself in various spiritual streams, movements, and schools. It especially occurs in the Hinduism and Buddhist *Tantrism*.

The mantra repeating techniques are not bound only to the religious systems that spread from the Indian territory. The mantra repeating techniques were also cultivated within Islam under the name of *wasifas* by the adherents of a spiritual movement called Sufism (the formulas of ZAHIR, BATIN, FAZI, HU, etc.), and even before them by novices in Mesopotamia, by ancient Egyptian priests and by ancient Greek mystics (Góvinda 1994: 26).

The method appears in Christianity as well. In addition to the repeating of prayers such as the rosary or the Kyrie Eleison/Christe Eleison, the hesychastic prayer (the so-called Jesus Prayer) can serve as an example of an intensive repetition (Bořákov 1995). Multiple repeating of various formulas, for example the sacred words or syllables and incantations, was recorded in natural nations of all inhabited continents.

As a verbal compositional principle it appears at each verbal step: from nursery rhymes (Kopál 1997: 209-227), through lyrics, to the texts of folk, so-called artificial, popular and alternative music.

The above-mentioned morphological method is connected with various ideologemes. They will not be taken into account though. My aim is to conceptually introduce, from the aspect of semiotic competencies, that what this compositional method causes is in our consciousness. The „exotic“ mantra should thus help us to conceptually illuminate our own experience.

Our consciousness goes on working in its usual mode of connecting different contents, the chaining of concepts, ideas and other forms of meaning. In this case, consciousness consists of the syntagmas of dissimilar, that is, heterogeneous signs (the connections of dissimilar concepts, notions, feelings, etc.).

However, if we carry out the constant repetition of the same expression, that is, if we experience it, the mode of our consciousness gets changed. The same contents will be repeated in it.

Conscious repeating of the same expression is simply impossible without the repeating of the same meanings (semioses) in consciousness. It may be thus said that the composition of mantra-japa organises the consciousness into a tendency to homogenise its contents.

And this brings us to the heart of the matter – the pragmatic substance of the problem. By the pragmatic substance I mean the human sense of an incessant repeating of the same expression. The sense is directly available to us. For it occurs, as every other sense does, in human experience.

To explain it, I will make use of references to the original historical and cultural context of the mantra. The reason I will do this is because the effect of the repeating of the same expression has become, in the above-mentioned context, an object of an intentional attention, a purposeful cultivation and a long-term empirical verification.

Then what function is mantra-japa given in its maternal environment? Allowing for all ideological variability, the source texts agree with the idea that the repeating of mantra has a certain eudaemonological effect, that is, an impact on the quality of human life. This idea is consistently expressed in the Zen Heart Sutra which sees mantra as a “completed wisdom”, eliminating all hardships (Sútra srdce. Diamantová sútra 1995: 12). It can be said that many other source texts differ

from the quoted formulation only in the fact that the eudaemonological absolutorium is made concrete (descriptions of an ideal quality of knowledge, experience, state, existence, form and meaning of a particular mantra, etc.).

The texts draw on the fact that in human life the modes change, being evaluated once as more positive and once as more negative. In our conditions they are, more often than not, the following contradictions: *delight – hardship, well-being – pain, health – illness, youth – old age, abundance – want, success – failure, development – decline, life – death*, etc.

Many source statements of the context are characterised, allowing for all varieties of their world outlooks, by a certain expressive motive. It is the motive of the joylessness of those “pendulum” shifts from the positive to the negative, that is, the idea that the shifting itself, “alternately to the states of blessedness and suffering”, is what breeds hardship (Kolmaš 1995: 112). To the extent that these changes fulfil the *sansár*, “earthly” existence, this existence is a suffering: “Birth is hard, getting old is hard, illness is hard, death is hard, connection with not nice things is hard, separation from nice things is hard, if one does not acquire what one wishes is also hard” (Budhovy rozpravy 1994: 7).

According to these ideas, suffering is rooted in the fact that “profitable” states to which man clings alternate with the “loss” states which one wants to avoid. One tries “to connect” oneself with one group of states and “separate” from the other one simply because the states acquire the meaning of being either “nice”, better, or “not nice”, worse. Some states acquire the meaning of being better or worse than other ones because one distinguishes them in this fashion. The conclusion of so pointed a balance sheet is then unequivocal: the root reason of a hardship is (such) differentiation. Where there is (such a) differentiating consciousness, there inevitably occurs suffering as well (see the quotation: “Earthly happiness is subject to binary, and so is an inseparable part of the double, happiness – unhappiness” (Mahéšvaránanda 1992: 116).

In the Bhagavad-Gītā, the connection between the above-mentioned axiological differentiation and a hardship is explained as follows: „Pleasures blossom only to wither again. Through a deception of pleasure and pain, goodness and evil, through a deception originating from longing and hatred, all beings are thrown to a driving wheel of birth and death“ (Bhagavadgīta neboli Zpěv vznešeného 1998: 87).

Lao'c expresses the same continuity through a laconic shortcut: „Unhappiness conditions happiness“ (Lao'c 1994: 137).

The solution then lies in the evoking of such a mode of consciousness in which the differences between “profitable”, desirable and “loss”, undesirable states are erased. The Vedānta philosophy characterises this mode by the concept of *advaita*, that is non-binarity, that removes the basic cause of hardship. Where there are no differences, there is nothing to cling to (and suffer if “separated” from it) as well as nothing to refuse (and suffer if “connected” with it): “On the verge of emptiness all problems and difficulties get dissolved – because they originate from the struggle of two possibilities, and the unity of emptiness does not provide binarity with a possibility to exist“ (Mahéśvarānanda 1992: 115).

The transcendence of such difference as a key to an ideal state is then a logical development of the mentioned symptomatic motive. It can be found:

– in the Upanishads: “Awakened life of the highest consciousness is above all differentiating... There is neither any longing or pain here... no binarity...no multiplicity, there is just One...Who sees multiplicity and not unity, travels from a death to a death...He who knows this is neither offended by the evil nor delighted by the good, since he is elevated above both ... differences are mere words.”(Světlo upanišad 1998: 28, 33, 41, 85);

– in the Sūtras: “Universal consciousness...is not affected by the differentiating requirements and hatred.” (Góvinda 1994: 73, quotation from Lankavatara sūtra); “Noble people...must have a mind not limited by a form ...Form is nothing other than the emptiness and the emptiness is nothing other than the form. Equally empty are perceiv-



ing, thinking, images, impulses.“ (Sútra srdce. Diamantová sůtra 1995: 24, 11);

- in Lao 'c: “If we are all One, there is nothing to lean to.” (Lao 'c 1994: 179);

- in Master Čuang: “The state in which That and This do not already stand against each other is called the axis of Tao...The aim is in the reaching of unity, in the movement to unity there are profit and aim...” (Mistr Chuang 1992: 41-43, 45, 87).

In Bhagavad-Gītā the solution acquires almost the status of a leit-motif:

Look at pain in the same way as at pleasure, at profit as at the loss, at the victory as at the loss... at the priest endowed by learning and humility as at the elephant, dog and beggar...in the same way look at the just as at the unjust, at the enemy as at the friend, at the supporter as at the opponent, at the adversary as at the brother...in the same way at pleasure as at pain, in the same way at the stone as at the lump of coal, in the same way at the face of love as at the deserted, in the same way at the praise as at the blame“ (Bhagavadgīta neboli Zpěv vznešeného 1998: 36, 67, 74, 144).

A realistic summary of these variations on the sole eudaemonological theme can be found in the Tibetan Book of the Dead: “To reach the state of ultimate balance in which there is neither good nor bad, neither accepting nor refusing, neither passion nor hatred – this is a real, deep, heart of the matter” (Kolmaš 1995: 130).

In the mentioned texts the bridging of difference in this sense is often illustrated on the oppositions: one's own (I) – foreign (he/she, them, world), the knowing – the known, pleasant – unpleasant, sympathy – hatred, success – failure, joy – pain, passion – fear, delight – indignation, but also vice – virtue, good – bad, body – soul, life – death...

Despite their variability and historical and territorial coverage, these ideologemes practically always refer to one and the same mode of consciousness. That is, they are, “from the grassroots”, supported by certain universal semiotic experience.

Let us consider then the mode from a semiotic aspect as well. It is a common knowledge that there would be no value differences between phenomena or experiences for us if these phenomena and differences did not acquire different meanings for us. It is also accepted that the acquisition of different meanings is possible only through different signs (semioses). To span these value differences then is possible only if that which acquires various meanings in one mode of consciousness will acquire the same meanings in another mode of consciousness. And this is, in turn, possible only if the movement of different semioses (syntagmas of different signs) is substituted by the repeating of the same sign.

[illegible]

Continuous and concentrated repeating of the mantra makes consciousness homogeneous. At least the part that is created as a result of a constant repetition does away with contradictions. It is desygmatised.

The fact of the incessant repetition of the same expression (carried out in an empirical way) can be explained, from a semiotic point of view, by saying that the compositional principle of repetition begins to organise a non-verbalised level of (sub)consciousness. The level which, allowing for all differences of its valuation and naming, can be characterised as escaping the impact of verbally formulated programs, that is, of intellectual or will control, and as such has been a permanent source of problem states of consciousness (world).

## Conclusion

One of possible senses of a continuous repetition of the same expression lies in the initiating of consciousness to a strange mode. It is the mode that deals with the misery of life's problems through the removal of its semiotic conditions: through the suppression of acquired meanings, that is, of tensions between them as well. Constant repetition of an expression makes consciousness homogeneous. It becomes the consciousness of the one and of the same, the experience of wholeness, of uninterrupted uniformity and non-contradiction.

In some Oriental cultural systems, this effect of the organisation of consciousness through repetition has been elevated to the position of an object of purposeful cultivation and a part of the definite alternative to life's style.

In a diffused form, and more or less in a spontaneous way, the effect has reached us as well. Of the forms of verbal art, it holds true especially for the lyric where the repeating can be identified in all levels: prosodic, lexical, morphological, syntactic, thematic, and expression ones (for more details, see Miko 1985, Rédey, 2000).

The founder of Nitra's semiotic school, František Miko, identifies the effect of the regular form as a connotation of the ideal. While the theme of such an utterance denotes some problem existential situations, a regular verse form brings the perspective of the ideal into the problem situations in a connotative, non-verbal, silent way, "in-between" words, "from under" or "behind" words, in a gentle indication of a feeling. It brings the „sound“, a whiff of the ideal, its „flavour“. It may explain the fact that though a poem (or the work of art in general) expresses situations and states which we otherwise perceive as unpleasant, sad, melancholic, depressing, tense or tragic, through embodying in the art form these undesirable situations and states are as if "raised" and connected with the feelings of reverence, sublime, catharsis, frissons of glory.

One of the human senses could be based on the mentioned compositional principle.

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# DEAF PLACE

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**Abstract:** The paper wants to test the conceptual requirements and possibilities of implementing existentiality into semiotics and expose the problem of dealing with existence as a concept within the framework of theoretical discourse. Theoretically operative and schematic articulation reveals itself in dominantly non-significant use of spatio-topological representation *-place*. The requirement to view semiotics existentially follows semiotic *deafness* (to existence) of residence within semiotic articulation of being. Attempts to weaken „deafness“ often intensify discourse on transitivity, which is conceptually conditioned by the concepts of *sign* and *sign-field* represented by the collocation *deaf place*. Double significance of *deafness* and *place* give clues in articulation of the problem of existentiality within semiotics on example of Cicero's academic discourse on *auspices* (On Divination). „Deaf place“ in literal meaning as augural *templum* as well as a pragmatic situation of discourse on para-science which in attempt to undergo explanation in academic fashion exposes divinatory features of any theoretical practice. Further possibilities of developing the conceptual rigidity of „deaf place“ are sought in exposition and testing the meanings of *invocation* in contrast to *evocation*. *Evocative* practice of theoretical thinking (anamnesis, imagination, personification) represents belief in theoretical, topological imposition of conditioned existence. In contrast, *invocation* can be understood as introduction, an entry of the person which conditions transcendence and existence.

## 1

I would like to think about an implementation of existentiality into semiotics, semiotic discourse and to use collocation „deaf places“ in order to gain a leading word in articulation of what it could mean to let existence interpose into the discourse which interpretes itself in terms of sign and signification. „Deaf place“ could be an operative and metaphorical reference to existentially interpreted sign-field, in case that

interpretation would be understood here as an *introduction* and not as *translation*. Can the semiotic discourse thematize and model existence only within terms of relations or relational operations such as negation, supplementation, exclusion or transition? Eventually, I tried to consider semiotic conceptuality which starts to operate when semiotics focuses on terms of existence and transcendence.

## 2

Anything can become a sign. Such significant *submissivnes to use* is the basic ontological condition for discourse about semiotic sign systems. When a semiotician opens the question of transcendence of a sign he operatively uses terminology of sign-fields, contexts, isotopy, semiosphere, space. All these, *field*, *topos*, *sphere*, *dimension*, etc... are used to theoretically, semiotically signify or translate the term transcendence. At the same time, in order to incorporate transcendence as permanent feature of signification, it becomes inevitable to weaken the *significant* dominion of spatio-topological terminology by proposing signs as genuinely transitive indications. Therefore, when existence or transcendence is emphasized, transitivity, time, situation are the first mediations to appear. Nevertheless, *sign-field* remains to be a vague relative to a *sign*. It operatively *signates* signs with a topological determination. At first, as an operative field, provisional situational field, it seems to put no emphasis on the secondary semantic spatiality of its terminology. I think, whenever the question of existence and transcendence is raised it is this secondary spatial meaning which becomes *significant*.

I believe, that the title *Deaf place* shows a significant features of the philosophical and generally theoretical thinking or articulation, whenever it is thrown into question with respect to the issue of existence and transcendence, in two ways:

1. *significance of place*: *place* as a grounding term for any theoretical, systematic or methodically controlled description as well as mediation of meaning could be understood as a controlled distribution of places within a structure. *Place* works here as a methodological

concept. Questions concerning the nature of space and place are premediated by its „placement“ in the hierarchy of themes or succession of explication. Could it also mean that the concept of place, the way of its thematic articulation, indicates a corresponding understanding of theoretical language, word, or method of a theory? It would mean, that the insight into theoretician's theory of space would possibly inform us about the pre-metodological image, cipher or pattern followed by an actual explication.

2. *significance of deafness* is to be highlighted in difference to mere absence of sound or to sensual hearing disability. Deafness means a lack of *sound* (significant) *thought*, means being *placed outside communication, out of scope of question or answer, in place out of range of, the place where you can't be addressed*. Why not *silent* but *deaf* places? Because it is not silence which would refer to loss of communication (both ways – impossible because of the lack of meaning or overwhelmed by meanings) – we can disturb silence, try to negotiate it, but we cannot break deafness which is an immanent feature of theoretical inclusion. But foremost it is deafness in the meaning: to be heard and not to hear. This is a very special deafness – its we who are deaf, but not because unable to speak or hear (because we can hear silence or echo of our own voice) but because we have come to a place, which shields off outside, to overwhelm us by resonance of our own voice.

It is a case of topological isolation, when being trapped *in* a place keeps one *out* of the field. Though, such „places“ are essential to „fields“. The logic of deafness says that the place is deaf to the communication with the field because being deaf to the rest of it (other places), but remains within – it still keeps its meaning as the *place* of the field, but it doesn't connect to the outside but singularizes its own placeness, it closes itself pretending to be its own field. It intensifies the meaning of being-in, deserves to replace relational and directional „in“ of the field with the intensified and immersive „in“ of the (deaf) place. Being deaf thus means: being out (of the field) because being always further in (the place). As much as it weakens field it intensifies place. Fields generally tend to appear as places, intensify themselves into places. *Deaf place* is not a particular kind of place but a tendency which becomes evident

in case the topological articulation is taken seriously. It is a tendency to *inhabit* theory which vaguely employs an echo of spatial meaning, whenever it is asked about the non-theoretical. For this reason „field“ always seems to be only a vague and innocent („just provisional and operative“) determination. *Deaf place* is a particular situation of the practice of theoretical discourse which provisionally and vaguely answers to the question of transcendence in terms of topological imagination. It translates the question of transcendence into topological terms and becomes deaf to a voice which transcends topology.

Such place doesn't exclude answers to theoretical requirements, in contrary, it is under the reign of *fascination*, it is in tight bond to its own *distributively topical imagination* or *technical interpretative disposition*. *In-visibility* and the *im-possibility* (cannot be im-posed) of schematic mediation are the features of theoretical language practice, which under existential focus appears as a *silenced personal voice* of a theory.

Eventually, *deaf place* is known as a place where people must visualize their language. Analogous to that, theoretician, philosopher or semiotician must topologize his position and the field of the disposable. The transcendent is thus imposed outside and silenced. Deafness silences voice when it places it outside of the field. It silences voice as it turns topology into operative principle and visualises voice in the most harmless way: neutralizes it into some „somewhere“.

### 3

*Place* is methodologically *significant* concept – it always exposes theory to the *extra-theoretical*. This *extra-*, which theory itself from time to time *longs for*, and not only for reasons of *preserving its own persistence*, is in contrary in a situation of *appealing to existence*. This is not the same as the demand on accuracy, or correspondence with dynamic reality. It's not *per-sistence* as a demand for constant inventive recovery, not even *in-sistence* on certain hypothesis, or model which is testified and evaluated according to its effectivity, but *ek-sistence* as the „extra“ of any possible theoretizing.



This *extra* doesn't mean something supplementary, but something to be *longed for* and therefore is expected to have ontological priority (Lévinas). This priority exposes us to deliberate use of signs, but primarily *ex-poses* us – makes us *being ex-posed*, experience *exposition*. Existential therefore can never become an *aspect*, or a *way* of looking onto a problem. Existential means the primal way of self-exposition, the experience of being *defenceless* to the existential. To be defenseless means not being able, or better, not willing to *posit* the existential.

Existentiality in semiotics – this is not only incorporation of one problem, or concept into semiotics as well as it cannot mean only a new, or more profound grounding of semiosis. *Existence* means *exposition*. Therefore, the question of existence is never methodical, or theoretically-critical question, it simply doesn't exhaust in „problems“, that is: *imposing* themes – *problemata*.

Is there a special class of signs which point to, indicate, stand for the transcendence? Does transcendence mean crossing over the barriers of language and meaning? Anything can become a sign understands sign as the universal instrument. What is transcendent to use?

#### 4

We can understand *deaf place* as the sign of *the marginal* or *occasional weakness*, *superfluous* or *lack of meaning*, *loss of trace* or *abundance of signification*. It is like „*blind spot*“ or „*weak spot*“.<sup>1</sup> Deaf place is thus a sign of nonsignificance or significance of the *conspicuously nonsignificant place*. Despite that, there are practices, like philosophy, which have become to be able to make use of the useless, because it can eventually always use even the non-significant and provides it with particular significance. *Place* can grow in its significance when it is shown what formal presuppositions and schemata become principles of its explanation, which *topoi* orient and shape it. Philosophy can thus be seen conceptually operating with or within „fields“. It can also believe that analysis of the operative use of „field“ shows for example what explication of transcendence is encoded in the ontology of sign.

*Deafplace* is a term which conveys the substantial features, the schemata of the operative theoretical scaffolding to thinking transcendence.

Moreover, *deaf places* have meaning. Not only in philosophy, but also in case of an empty, cliché phrases, gestures, speeches, one usually for the sake of their „uselessness“ asks: what is the meaning, „use“ of it? Let's take an example of someone who is pretending to be someone else – pretending, wearing a mask, exploiting rich registers of cliché signs. It is a case of a playing a *role* – *persona*, where speech, gesture, theme are actually my *advocates*, where language is used in my *advocation*. It is an advocacy of my position, place, status, no matter if it is pretended or not. (Anyway, can a status, position be anything else than pretension?)

Let's take *advocation* as an existential meaning uncovering the character of existential grounding – not a kind of interpretation or one of possible uses – of a sign. Sign is not *essentially*, but *existentially* an *advocation*. To *advocate* means „to stand for“ something, but no more in neutral, formally semiotic fashion. *Advocation* means „to stand for“ in the sense „to defend“, to *protect* and *present reasons*, moreover, to *persuade* about *innocence*, about *doing no harm*, about *not interfering*. It remains to be an advocacy, even when it becomes *provocation*, conflicting disagreement with and appeal to alternative instances, courts judging places or virtues. Speaking through mask, *persona*, means speaking, signifying which is always an advocacy of the role something or someone plays. *Advocation* is not a mode of speech, but an *existential mode of signification*, which is always a self-defence, placing and taking a shelter. The practice of using signs is always existentially an advocacy and sign is always my advocate, whether tricky, ironical or treacherous.

There is one example to demonstrate what I mean existentially by *deafness* as well as *place*. Let's take *auspiciu*m or *auguriu*m – augural divination practice in Greek, Roman, Etruscan and other cultures. It is

a divination, prediction, interpretation of extraordinary appearances in nature, particularly bird-signs or meteorological phenoemena – lightning or thunder were believed to show what is going to happen or what alternative, or decision is confirmed by divine will. It used to be an office which must have taken place in important political or even private decisions. Divination (Cicero, Book I: 42) is an office, a role, to see and interpret signs (*ostents, portents, monsters, prodigies*). They announce that something is going to happen, if we do not interfere. Augur was one, that could interpret decision, confirm it, or say if the chosen alternative is favourable. As the practice of predicting future events, it observed if something is happening or not. It was in fact a question of *existence*, as far as humans are caught in existential situation of *decision* and protection against the accidence of misfortune.

Augurium literally deserves a place, a cut area of ground and skies, a chosen scene, field of observation, where augur resides in state of religious exaltation in order to see and hear only transcendent signs. It is a practice substantially related to marking out the place by imaginary division, which served as the position *whereof* and space *wherein* the observation is going to happen. Augurs delimit *templum*, as the divine place, an *observational* point/place under auspices“, *protection*. *Protected observation* – aren't these two remarkable aspects of theoretical explanation?.

This protection is guarded by augur himself and it is delimited also in another way, by *silentium*, in order to be regarded as plausible and relevant. *Silentium*, means inevitable moment of silencing, the expectation of the spirit completely released, “opened“ (Cicero). Smith's online Dictionary of greek and Roman Antiquities adds: „There should be no interruption of any kind whatsoever, and hence the word *silentium* was used in a more extended sense to signify the absence of every thing that was faulty.“ In this sense it becomes deaf, deaf in order to *protect oneself against hearing*, to exclude any intervention paradoxically to observe, to let enter transcendent divine signs.

Therefore, augurium could be understood as almost literal realisation of *deafplace*. This explanatory divination, decision-making according to signs and their interpretation is an activity which often serves

as an significant and evident example of theoretically unacceptable because random, arbitrary explanation. Cicero objects in *On Divination*, that augurs know nothing about reasoning, they seek for accidental connections and meanings. His brother Quintus to defend divination answers: „But God has not intended me to understand these matters, but only to use them;... “ (Cicero, Book I: 18) We could understand auspices as a practice following the principle of *total submissiveness to use any explanation* (despite certain conventionality) We could understand it as the practise suffering *lack of* or *abundancy of meaning* and signification. Moreover, it was practice which used to be called *science* – *ius augurum* – science with an official status, a support of Roman theocracy, but eventually, the practice of guarded and highly formalised and professionalised observation which had a strong impact on public and even private matters. Is then Cicero’s objection against divination and superstition legitimized differently? Cicero argues, that it has *no place* among the subjects of human knowledge and though it has no place within theoretical discourse he composes the debate, distributing roles and tasks in the style of debate of Academic school. Quintus wants to withstand the demand for sound, reasoned explanation, though his beliefs are not motivated by explanation. He has nothing to support his belief but unintentionally presents what belongs to the role of a theoretical explanation and doesn’t fit him. Quintus believes in a decision though one made without reason. Cicero stands on his belief in balanced argumentation, but in academic fashion eventually doesn’t want to finish the debate with judgement and respites decisions, though he undermines his brother’s para-explanation. Cicero’s formal gesture of postponing the results shows a theory in advocacy of a restraint, operative and provisional epoché. Theoretical academic explanation is ready to spread its field to infinity. Philosophers of the sceptical Academia turn a place into field, they are never going to cut an end to it. Member of Academic school debates even with those who don’t reason as well as have no aspiration to final solution.

To carve a section, to *template*, this meaning resonates within the word *contemplatio*. According to Heidegger (2004: 36-62) it is a word which gives name to a theoretical activity as we still happen to under-

stand it in german *Betrachtung*, as well as to understand the research of the particular subject area highlighted by pattern of coordinates and instrumental method.

6

In accordance with the forementioned we could ask: *Why evoke* as well as *how to invoke* deaf places? I think, these paradoxical questions can help us focus on the dilemma of *semiosis of transcendence*. *In-vocation* as a word of *bringing voice in*, indicates non-theoretical, but philosophically decisive step. What if we understood *invocation* as an *intro-duction*, an *address*. To introduce that means entry of a *person*, and in this sense announces *personification*. We are addressed as persons, so it's not our stepping over to somewhere else but in-vocation as the coming of the person (the Other). Voice is not translated into language, not even personal or private, but enters as voice that thematizes individually, that is in person.

The entry of the person would not mean introduction of someone who has already *taken place* in our language, who has been *anticipated*. *Invocation* is not the translation of the person into *subiectum*, that means, something that carries, holds a scene of virtually accesible places for things. But it is an entry never prepared by us, otherwise it would mean *invitation* to the familiar inhabited and well accomodated theoretical ground. It would be a projected, programmed, forestalled and thus formally arranged meeting. Introduction is not in our disposal.

In theory, places are *personae* of things. Entry of the person is thus not our personification of a thing but entry of the voice of the person, who falls out of the theoretical, *evocative* (anamnesis, imagination) use. *Evocation* is what we do to call out into presence, to stand and meet with something that has already been expected to reside somewhere. Places make things sound, not thanks to their personification, but wearing their masks. Their masks are made of basic ontological concepts and their structural relations, which make us say what they

are. Existence, transcendence or contingency – come out of, step over to and touch – their topological translation hides one important fact – it is not a task for us, but the fact that if read existentially accepts no evocative, imaginative support. Only the voice breaks deafness, while language just inhabits place.

Implementation of *transcendence* and *existence* is conditioned by the break into place, in-vocation. Are theory and existence just different (overlapping?) sign fields? Is it possible to digest terms of existentiality and transcendence semiotically, to place them within relation with and articulate as signs? How to master *field* in a semiotic way and signate it existentially when the field belongs to ontology which tends to absorb existential significance whenever inserted into theoretical discourse? What kind of signs are field-signs, are there any when signification is basically dependent on definition of sign field – a presupposed, schematic circle of possible indications? Finally, this is a question which does not point to *transcendence in semiotics* but to the relevance of *semiotics of transcendence*.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In Slovak language we use not only analogical phrase to *weak spot*, but as well collocation *deaf spot/place* („hluché miesto“).

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# OTHERWISE THAN TEXT

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**Abstract:** The paper will try to outline the challenges posed by the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas to a certain methodological pan-semiotisation of the intelligible sphere as widely applied across the whole spectrum of human sciences based on the semiotic project. We will attempt to clarify the limits of the notions of „sign“ and „text“ in the name of Levinas' attempt to point at an experience, which Levinas identifies as the exposure to the Face of the Other, that precedes and enables any purely cognitive activity of human reason. We will defend the notion of a “book” as certain phenomena ontologically rooted in human conditions per se and therefore not to be (sometimes too hastily) dismissed as an ageing institution trying to artificially preserve and freeze the play of the “text inside”. We will suggest in what ways can the reading of book (as opposed to decoding of text) be viewed as a modality of being for the Other (person).

## 1

As the title of this paper indicates, the ideas which are to be articulated will be embedded in the thoughts (and intentions) of Emmanuel Levinas, a French thinker who spent more than four decades of his intellectual efforts repeatedly pointing at and clarifying various aspects of what he understood to be a one big miraculous realm of the “otherwise”. Realm calling and letting itself be known in a manner which is otherwise than manifestations of being (thus knowledge) and at the same time claiming to echo the very humanity of the human.

As a red thread reoccurring on the following pages I will pose the problems of *language and its possible connections to power and violence and will also interpret the existential as the human quest to evade, break or simply find a place void of the abusive character of violent power.* I believe this problem is a valid link that enables us to see the existen-

tial grounding and dimensions of signs and systems of signification and therefore language in general. *Existential*, that is – *human*. It is precisely the focus on this category why Levinas' name can be found on the following pages "too often to quote".

Talking about the intimate connections between language and violence we inevitably thematize that desire to get *outside* the realm of this connection. Existential can and will be thus approached as the potentially *non-violent*, as the quest for the non-violent encounter. As an example of a very genuine move from within semiotic tradition of thought towards this non-violent place we will briefly follow the pathways of Roland Barthes. It is exactly this thinker who can serve as a very uncompromising example of how urgent and central can this quest for the language breaking the omniscient abusive and violent power be. The shelter that was found by Barthes indeed tells a lot about what and how successfully was expected from the classical ontological models of meaning. Though peculiarly Barthesian shelter in/of the Text is also the result of his many personal decisions and preferences, I believe that the *intentions* of his move beyond the strictly ontological models of semiosis are indeed – well, existential. The route from Barthes to Levinas might seem to be a rather cacophonous step, but it is only a question of variations of the problems posed. It is exactly certain amplification of Levinasian criticism of ontological thought that puts forward the question of existential grounding (and the question of the un-ground-able) of signs into a very clear and dramatic light. The last part of the paper dealing with the notions of book and canon defends the irreducibly existential (not just semiotic) voice echoing in them and is perhaps heuristically the most interesting.

## 2

The specifically understood ethics forms the core of Levinas' thought and is coming to speech no matter what partial aspect of his thought one wants to thematize. Naturally, what is at stake in levinasian articulations of radical and even absolute otherness of this



“otherwise” (which is not even afraid to become “better than”) is way too fundamental to be “copyrighted” by Levinas and for the last decades the irreconcilable motif of this thought has become an important and still more widely acclaimed way of critically approaching the object this “otherwise” refers to, namely the essence of one entire constitutive and dominant Western tradition of thought which is the Greek heritage of theory, theoretical in-sight, articulated rational knowledge and understanding of different manifestations of being, that is the royal discourse of ontology and philosophy.

Before I explicitly specify and step into the very problem of this paper I would like to clarify in advance some possible misunderstandings which might arise in approaching thought with “ambitious aspirations”. Levinas’ influence has certainly moved from theology and phenomenology to a much wider scope of human sciences, but his reception is very often characterized by “taming” or even ignoring the blade of Levinasian key ideas coming from his Hebrew and biblical background. This taming can be carried out by dealing with certain aspects of his thought in an already established and often – regarding the intentions of Levinas- inappropriate methodology. In semiotic circles this kind of reduction can be best seen in treatment of the Levinasian notion of Face as manifestation of signs and in the approach to the meaningfulness of Face in almost phrenological manner! Moreover, Levinasian thought was always nourishing on an encounter of Greek and Hebrew traditions, the encounter in which – according to Levinas – the question of the humanity of man comes to word, the encounter not seen as just another cultural or in other way partial affair in human history and thought. Levinas never understood himself to be a critical thinker in the very contemporary sense of the word in which theory (as original Greek *teoria*) is inevitably viewed and transformed into the so-called critical theory or critical discourse marked often by a confusing and even eclectic interdisciplinarity and most of all fully in service of the understanding and reflections of *contemporary* world, its new orders and its challenges. Levinas (and here is where much misunderstanding or neutralization arises) is just as ancient and medieval and contemporary philosopher because the very core of his

thought – which is usually identified as his peculiar understanding of the “ethical” as not being an enhancement of ontological categories but rather a irreducible optics which captures the exposal to the truly Other – aspires to articulate the crucial part of human conditions per se, that moment in being which gives humans the possibility to be (in the original Hebrew meaning) holy, thus irreplaceably chosen for the Other. Holiness, the ultimate human possibility, not ethics is what counts after all. Holiness, moreover, is possible only when the absolute exteriority of what Levinas identifies as the Face of the Other is not neutralized, not turned into knowledge, not comprehended as yet another manifestation of being, not grasped as a shining of signs, not *placed* in the sphere of intelligibility but still without losing the attribute of meaningfulness at all!

Coming to the world of semiotics, the intentions and focus of Levinas’ key thoughts can be also especially fruitful in an environment in which the existential dimensions of signs and semiotic models of meaning are dealt with. Being interested in “existence” and existential features of signs means going beyond semiotics as a purely methodological and rather technical theory full of subtle terms whose task is theoretically modeling the systems and underlying structures which are responsible for the production of meaning. Introducing existence, the sphere of *human* falls in the picture. Suddenly even the Levinasian often openly iconoclastic intentions (underlined by the tragic fates of his own family during the Shoah) and hence his call for not worshipping idols (even if they have an aura of attractive intellectual concepts) cannot be easily dismissed as archaic or unnecessarily pathetic.

### 3

Putting Levinas aside for a moment I would like to follow the problem of the possibilities of connections between language and violence. Naturally, it is a problem far from new and original, even less so in the last half of the previous century. Isn’t the link between language and various – often very subtle – forms of power, or the link between

knowledge and power as embodied in the term of “ideology”, isn’t this social and political aspect of articulated thought arguably one of the key interests (if not the key one!) of contemporary critical theoretical thought? Isn’t this painful but penetrating awareness of the tight connections between speech and violence one of the crucial elements that gave and still gives rise and character to new and new theoretical articulations across a huge scope of disciplines starting from linguistics and semiotics all the way to political theory or even literary criticism and aesthetics in general? How central was the problem of language and violence let’s say for Foucault, Derrida, Habermas, to mention only the absolutely stellar and textbook names of the current intellectual maps?

However, the problem of language and violence cannot be limited to the realm of the social intentions of speech or writing. It cannot be reduced only to the social dimension of human being and its openness to manipulate and be manipulated, to *use* signs in order to – by means of concealment or repetition – establish without questioning as natural certain arbitrariness backed up by subtle channels of power (which is according to Barthes the essence of any mythology). The richness and subtlety of the problem of language and violence is not to be emptied out by Orwell’s 1984 and its Newspeak.

On the other hand, this problem was traditionally urgently felt within thought that methodologically operated with semiotic models of language, communication and society in general. Let us read only few lines of very energetic and noncompromising words from Roland Barthes’ inaugural lecture and we can see what deep distinctions and consequences does the conscious articulation of the omnipresence of power *in* the language bring:

But what if power is plural just like demons? My name is a League, it could say... We see power present even in the most subtle forms of social interaction. Speech is a lawgiver with language being its code. We can’t see the power in the language because we tend to forget that each language is a form of classification and that each classification is a form of oppression. But language, as a performance of each act of speech is not reactionary neither progressive,

but simply fascist. Because fascism does not lie in preventing but in forcing people express themselves in particular way. As soon as language is here – not matter how deep it dwells in the privacy of one's subject, it immediately enters into the service of power. Inevitably two things are always outlined: the authority of proclamation and the dullness of repetition... We enter the general crisis of commentary which is just as important as the crisis, which through relatively same problem caused the shift from middle ages to renaissance. We cannot avoid this crisis once the symbolic nature of language, or in other words a linguistic nature of symbol is revealed. In certain way everything touched and mediated through language is put into doubt: philosophy, human sciences, literature. (Barthes 1994 : 63)

Strong words indeed! It is not our task to present any new contribution to a concrete aspect of Barthesian thought, however, what is for us very important is the following: It would be easy to convincingly show that it is exactly the urge to evade and escape the violence (as modality of power) which is always already present in the language, its forms and its acts, that led Barthes to move from his earlier inquiries (those of scientific/semiotic and strictly methodically grounded aspirations fascinated by the discoveries of the underlying structures enabling the comprehensible<sup>1</sup>) to those areas which are usually identified as typical Barthesian positions, notions and creative contributions. The world in which words are not primarily seen as gates to the light of intelligibility and representation, but rather as irreducible net of the multiple energies of shifting signifiers. The herald of this world is so radical that suddenly nothing is left untouched once we decide to become its inhabitants. The prophets of this world – in their honesty – herald it in no less than bombastic manner. Derridian world of writing aspiring to replace nothing less than what is seen as the entire epoch of the book, Foucaultian division between the prehistoric and contemporary thought which is drawn as a subtle re-appearance of language *itself*<sup>2</sup>. The list continues in length and complexity. Barthesian notion of Text as the disseminated and irreducibly plural non-object and ground (or rather a field/web) for the eruptions of meaning, the erasure of the author as a metaphysical superstition, the denial of truth as the

mediator between language and being, and most of all the notion of textual hedonism, cultivated pleasure, that totally new and radical set of expectations and approaches to text which would at last enable the shining of the truly other and truly new. The new not deformed by constant repetition, not arrested by claims of truth as correspondence and representation of being, not frozen in boredom coming from the long-established old. Barthesian development to the pleasure of the text is not just a theoretical adventure but also a set of personal decision of nothing less than a religious and metaphysical nature. We can ask if that quest and perhaps obsession for language without violence (a quest rather solitary, because -as Barthes himself often repeated- textual hedonists never establish clubs or groups of readers, pleasure is always highly subjective in the Nietzschean affirmative sense of the word and knows only one true authority, namely the Nietzschean call "That is good! That is good for me!") not just a methodological move, but rather the end of a very long personal journey? What Barthes found at the end is a place by which he is detached by a huge chasm from the both founding traditions of the Western world that Levinas so eagerly stays in. Barthesian ironization of theory and theoretical language in general separates him from the Western ideal of *bios theoreticos* and its adult seriousness as understood from Aristotle to Husserl. His peculiar view of *écriture* and erotisation of textual experience lead him to a special (freedom or terrifying cage?) place of acceptance and affirmation regardless of the true and the false. This, on the other side, puts him to a place which has little or nothing in common with the judeo-christian tradition of the Book. Barthes – stepping into life not knowing any form of singular finality, the world of chances and non-violent pleasures in plural numbers. All in the name of the truly new, the surprising coming of the other which for Barthes shows itself in an epiphany of language as Text and Literature<sup>3</sup> and *transcends* and breaks through all the established conventions, closures and finalities. Barthes for us is an outstanding example of a desire growing *from within* the semiotic tradition to find a place of certain "otherwise" than classical/ontological models of semiosis offer. An existential move? Perhaps. But also the non-heroical version of the boldness of Nietzschean subjectivity, the

cultivated and not denied neurosis and fetishism – as Marcelli points at in various places of his Barthesian “biography”.

4

Transcendence is a term not often occurring within semiotic paradigms but the situation definitely changes if we talk about the existential grounding of semiosis. In this case the question of language and power gets a strictly ontological character. Semiotics was perhaps never too afraid to take position of a universal theoretical articulations (claiming to see the entire history of philosophy through the prism of theory of signs) and its need for the notion of transcendence gives rise to the question of how well (and if!) can transcendence be traced, captured or comprehended on the basis of signs and their representative functions?

Ontological relations between language and power are also the core of Levinasian criticism of ontological thought as a form of totality which inevitably transforms any meaningfulness and significance into immanence of knowledge and intelligibility. If Levinas is a thinker in whose thought the problem of otherness, alterity and transcendence play the crucial role then it is the radicalism with which he approaches and translates the problem from the Hebrew and biblical point of view that pose a great obstacle for today's academy in the reception of Levinas. Obstacles which can take form of mere awkwardness and shrugging of shoulders while keeping interest in certain aspects of his work or go all the way up to decisive dismissal of Levinasian *intentions* as too “prehistoric” as far as our vocabulary goes and too “ethical” concerning what is being dealt with in contemporary academy. Beware, history is the best cure against the tyranny of the presently unquestioned!

Indeed, Levinasian articulations of what transcendence means do claim to have a status of a one big idea, no matter how skeptical to big ideas one has become. Most of all, Levinas always maintains and defends the possibility of the nonviolent encounter with the Other, but this encounter can never be a relation of theoretical knowledge (even

though theory claims to let things be themselves and untouched by the panoramic views of reason), this encounter can never take place in the light of manifestations of being, can never be a mode of re-presentation available and giving itself to the intentionality of consciousness, this encounter is not a matter of shining and appearance (even if we give it adjectives of authentic or truthful!). Thematization, comprehension, apprehension, those noble and dignified features of theoretical speech, despite all their seriousness and possibility to bring forth a universal human discourse, none of these can according to Levinas be the bridges to the absolute exteriority and transcendence. What then is this transcendence? How does it signify? Is “what” in fact a meaningful question here?

According to Levinas for transcendence not be an immanent transcendence it must come from the Other, which (and here is when the Hebrew understanding of personal God comes to word and where fundamental decisions take place) can only take form of other human person, its call, its commandment, its Face. Transcendence is not to be “found” somewhere *beyond* humans and their relations, it does not signify as yet another unforeseeable manifestation of being (thus signifies the limits of *any* semiotic projects in mediating the existential!) which points to yet another more fundamental level of ontological grounding, its newness cannot be only that of causing us to re-draw the existing conceptual schemes and maps. Only transcendence as icon can be *placeable*.

For a mind dwelling solely in the neutrum of ontological articulations there is nothing less than a kerygmatic dimension of this Levinasian claim. Only Face is that invasion of transcendence that is not to be reduced to a content, to a sign, a phenomena, it is not thematizable, not even seen and “graspable” by any other visual metaphor that have since Greeks been used as the very metaphors of philosophical rationality and logos. Face is not an aesthetic phenomena experienced as an “expression”, it is always absolutely exterior to any images it leaves. Face does not appear, it talks and calls. It addresses and commands and thus chooses one to respond irreplaceably not as a sovereign “I”, but to respond as “me!”. Face signifies the responsibility. For Levinas it fol-

lows that there is no such thing as the origin of language, there is only an *an-archic miracle* of human language, the miracle of being always already called from beyond any form of immanence, *ethically* bound to listen and obey, bound to care and respond for and to the Other. The call of the Face can certainly be evaded, that miraculous excess of meaning not separable from ethical responsibility can certainly be dissolved, neutralized, but it does not mean it is not always there, prior to my own will and its decisions. It is not the Other that steps into my theoretical in-sight as a concept or a theme, it is the seriousness of theory depends on my necessity to present it to the Other!

Levinasian view of language transformed by this radically understood “first” situation we find ourselves in, namely the act of addressing and being addressed Face to Face by the Other, a relation which does let itself be known to the neutral observations of ontological rationality, this view of language has a lot to say to our problem of metaphysical violence and language. It takes a firm stance to what can be expected from language and its alleged ability to provide the shelter from the powers of violence. Transcendence can never dwell *in* the orders of language itself, because language is always also a content, not a mere form, thus its origin is never separable from the ethical responsibility for the Other. Responsibility which is not the result of my conscious prior decision and responsibility that is not based on the appearance of phenomena for which I decide to be responsible. Morality – in Levinas view – is not a realm of manifestations of being, it is not appearance of values or norms which can be derived from ontological orders, it is that otherwise than being, even that *better than* being, that which finds me in an asymmetrical relation Face to Face with the Other, a relation in which I am always already called to be responsible. For the *Said* ( this being language so richly analyzable as the logical structure of propositions, temporality of narrations, imagery of the poetic language, arguably even the material taste of Barthesian Texts) to be *faithful* to the *call* of transcendence, it can never dispose itself of the trace of the *Saying*, that only true diachrony in the language. Diachrony of the witnessing Face imprinted in the Said. Levinas knows here no excuses. *Placeable* transcendence is no transcendence at all, it is an idol. Something that



can be *used* as yet another sign pointing at the yet another more fundamental level of being. Transcendence cannot be drawn, sketched, does not dwell as yet another deeper mystery in the shining world of signs and significations. Thus Face shows the limits and even dangers of the pan-semiotization of the world. Can there be a more radical voice pointing at the existentiality of signs and yet so much far away from (far which would be otherwise than space!) what semiotics might expect and articulate?

5

Face – the perfectly meaningful call yet signifying otherwise than appearance and being and knowledge, otherwise than text, otherwise than web and net of (potential) signs, otherwise than pleasure. Let me finally and briefly amplify the previous thoughts to an already mentioned issue of writing/text irreversibly pushing itself through the era of the book. This widely discussed and fundamental issue can be seen quite differently once we are willing to understand language not only as a ground of rational visibility and intelligibility, not even as the implicitly worshiped place in which the free play of signifiers takes place, but radically as a trace of the witnessing Face coming from the an-archic (not reducible and traceable) sovereignty of the Other.

To see the book as an ageing institution pointing to the totality of signifiers and thus to the implied and no longer preservable totality of the signified does not provide us with the whole picture. The existence of the first and the last page is not the most important feature that enables to differentiate between texts and books (seen inevitably as artificially frozen texts). We can sure transform the Bible as one of the cornerstones of the West into a Great Code. We do this in order to make the Bible *accessible* for the academy. For this purpose we do *neutralize* it. We proclaim it to have only the authority of the language itself, not the events it represents. This is a religious and metaphysical act, a decision, not evidence and necessity. And yet. Can we proclaim books, and by a book I do not mean a physical restriction of certain

texts, (certainly even a poem or a short story can be a book and certainly not every text – because texts do exist – is a book!), can we really proclaim them *dead*? Books are not tasted in solitude. They do not become fetish objects. Books are shared. They naturally establish communities of readers. Books are stored in libraries (Bible is a library of books), they are inherited through generations as canons that are *not* a form of cultural or any other oppression.

Existential semiotics? Would it necessarily be a step back to the archaic times or would it be the boldest challenge to acknowledge that *some* (many indeed) words were not written to form sentences and become texts and webs, but were and are books witnessing to the call of the Other, the call of the Good imprinted in the Said and signifying otherwise than being, the call not allowing us to let the Other die alone. Existential semiotics? Book as this imprint of the holy human care than knows no calculations. Care that does not give up and can't let go. Book as the mode of being for the Other as Face.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In this place I cannot but to mention the book by Miroslav Marcelli which in a very subtle way approaches not only Barthes' intellectual development, but also his expectations and intentions. All this is done not in a purely "scientific" way which might easily turn into the attitude of theoretical dismissal of Barthes moving to the ground not "on the scientific map", but through the notion of irreversible amplifications in which Marcelli finds a very appropriate tool for honest watching of Barthes' steps without claiming to be an detached observer on one, or a blind follower on the other side.
- <sup>2</sup> A detailed view of the nature and placement of this irreducible shift can be found in the ninth chapter of Foucault's *The Order of Things* titled "Man and his look-alikes".
- <sup>3</sup> Let me just remind that by Literature Barthes does not mean a piece aesthetic writing being in service of thoughts as an ornament, but rather that utterly new mode of non-representational language which he first found in Mallarmé, Proust and other representatives of European modernism.

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## EXISTENTIAL READING OF YURI LOTMAN

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**Abstract:** My report talks about the problem of relation between the Lotman's semiotics and the existentialism. The philosophy of Pascal together with the proposition the School of Tartu demonstrates the new means of interpretation the human culture. The fundamental principle is the semiosphere-the method of description of the world. Obvious, the definition of sign conceives this fragment our real or, otherwise, to must recall to the vision of the world of this semiosphere. He means the division this world –we have the plane of signs and the plane non-signs. My proposition compare the Lotman's conception with the Pascal's existentialism. Essential term is here "Abyss". Exactly we have two forms: "Infinity" and "Nothingness". The Man is hang up between these two forms of existence. He has the consciousness of mutability. His world circulates between the immensity of significances and the values. The aspect of ethical is very important, but we can, also, settle other principle: the union among a lot of many the interpretations the Pascal's philosophy with Lotman's semiotics.

Yuri Lotman is traditionally associated with semiotics and structuralism. However, he can also be analysed in the context of existentialism, although it may seem strange at the first glance. This opinion, which we will endeavor to prove, is based on the book *Culture and Explosion*, published in Moscow in 1992. We should pay special attention to the essay entitled *The Thinking Reed*. It contains a distinct reference to the philosophical ideas of Blaise Pascal, who is widely believed to be the precursor of existentialism. In Pascal's teaching the greatness of God is acknowledged and, at the same time, Man is noticed. This fact is very important. It is Man whom the French teacher calls just a reed in nature, but a *thinking* reed (emphasis by KB).

On this occasion it is worth going back to the earlier reflections of Lotman containing the historical search for the principles of functioning of this empire, where the researcher reached an interesting conclusion. Within it the nature belongs to semiotics and theory of culture

as well, and finally to existentialism, it is the conclusion of an analysis of how religion exists in the Western world and in the East. In the former, the existential universe sphere is divided into three different levels: heaven, hell and purgatory, while in the latter there are only two levels: heaven and hell.

This served Lotman as the basis for the relevant theory about the different mental structures of Christian and Russian cultures. This peculiar bipolarity or tripolarity may of course be a starting point for the analysis of broader regularities. You can see existentialism clearly even at this stage, although it is necessary to make an observation that the described situation can be considered within the broad theory of culture and not on the grounds of sign.

In these reflections the alternative may be an extraordinarily revealing thesis concerning semiosphere. Lotman expresses it as follows:

You can analyze the semiotic universe as the whole of isolated texts and languages which are closed from each other. Then the entire building will look as if it was composed of isolated bricks. However, it seems much more productive to have an opposite approach, treating the whole semiotic space as a single mechanism (or even *organism* – emphasis by KB). With this approach it turns out that the primary phenomenon is not brick or another, but the entire system, called the semiosphere. The semiosphere is the semiotic space, outside of which semiosis cannot exist. You cannot create a calf by sticking isolated beefsteaks together, but you do get beefsteaks by cutting a calf and similarly you cannot obtain the semiotic universe by adding partial semiotic acts. On the contrary, the single act is made real by the existence of such a universe – the semiosphere (Lotman 1984: 5 – 6).

This meaningful reflection allows us, as it seems to take a broader look at the issue of “existence”, what means the participation of human consciousness and self-consciousness in the cognition of the world and of itself. These relations should be narrowed to the functioning of Man, who is “doomed” to coexistence with others and at the same time to constant fixation on himself. In other words, human existence is that kind of determinism which involves us in close interpersonal

relations which are at the same time impersonal. In the world of Lotman's semiosphere you should compare it to the existential universe, to the universe of existence. Of course, maybe a question about the sign character of the philosophical term we are discussing should be asked. If we quietly presume that it can be contained in the expanded formula of culture, it will turn out again that we can treat its symptoms exactly in the continuum of various cultural phenomena. Lotman comes very close to Aristotle and his understanding of the world (*adequatio rei et intellectu*), as he creates a particular border:

The problem of culture cannot be solved unless we define culture's place in extra-cultural space. The issue can be expressed like this: the peculiarity of man as a cultural entity requires putting him into opposition to the world of nature which is defined as extra-cultural space. The border between these two worlds will not only separate man from other – extra-cultural – creatures, but it will be present within the human psyche and human activity as well. In some regards, man belongs to culture, in others he is linked to the extra-cultural world (...). Therefore, the border is blurred and every time we decide on a fact whether it belongs to the cultural or extra-cultural sphere, the decision is highly relative. But although it is relative when you consider a single fact, it is sensible enough when we consider it as an abstract classification (Lotman 1998: 57).

It this case, how can we localize the existential character of human existence – is it semiotic or extra-semiotic in nature? And finally, is there a borderline which can be marked at the moment we are considering the issue in question? It is obvious that existence itself marks human *praxis*. It does not end in the undefined, on the contrary, it functions in Man and for Man. It surpasses the sphere of nature, although its potential representation determines, according to Marxists, the rational, conscious sense of existence. However, we share a different opinion and we will try to indicate that the existential aspect of Lotman's semiotics touches above all the cultural sphere which is inseparably associated with the problem of human existence. Man is restricted to his nature (either monolith or dualistic) and he transcend the "animal" level by

creating artistic artifacts. There is also a major problem: brainwork. This problem gives commencement to the primary knowledge of our existence. However, there is no use in bringing the issue down to the problem of this superior organ's functions. It cannot be concealed that it sets borders to our understanding of ourselves and of others as well. At a certain moment it turns out that the beginning and also the end of conscious existential vision is brainwork. Nonwithstanding, it is trivial to show the specific functions of nerves and the excretion of hormones or to indicate regions which are responsible for particular human skills. Somewhat differently from Lotman's suggestion, we should analyse this problem in a broader range of meanings and conclusions which should clearly surpass the simplest binary system of the perception of proper impulses. In practice, this assumption is unusually difficult to achieve.

It is undoubtedly better to speak of the mentioned semiosphere along with points of sign reference, which is as arbitrary as possible. Pascal's principle of defining both the world and Man can be extraordinarily helpful. Of course, there is no simple rule governing choice between axiological canons. There seems to be a convenient tool that can be used for the interpretation: undefined, understated, and equivocal "Abyss" which is semantically or – more broadly – semiotically limited. According to the French philosopher's idea, we will try to divide this "Abyss". We are therefore in two extreme spaces: *the Infinity* and *the Nothingness*, which accompany human loneliness together with the feeling of powerlessness and terror. The interpretation of such an extreme comparison goes further than the simplest connotation: God and Man, because it turns also toward the inside of the latter. The imposed system of signs has to fluctuate incessantly, it has to experience constant disturbances, acuity or lack of it, the specific and the general, and this inevitably leads to ambiguity. Pascal wrote the important words:

We sail within a vast sphere, ever drifting in uncertainty, driven from end to end. When we think to attach ourselves to any point and to fasten to it, it wavers and leaves us; and if we follow it, it eludes our grasp, slips past us, and vanishes for ever. Nothing



stays for us. This is our natural condition, and yet most contrary to our inclination; we burn with desire to find solid ground and an ultimate sure foundation whereon to build a tower reaching to the Infinite. But our whole groundwork cracks, and the earth opens to abysses (Pascal 1962: 67, 68, 174, 175).

The quoted fragment shows that Pascal was perfectly aware of the uncertainty and dilemma. Can we rely on this to reconstruct the sign-image of existential semiosphere? This question broadens Lotman's reflections and it seems valid and necessary. You can probably ask it in a different way: can you divide the semiosphere into sub-semiospheres, which will at a certain point become independent from their original foundation? In the latter case, the answer is yes if you consider the set-theory Banach-Tarski paradox concerning the decomposition of a sphere and von Neumann's statement and if you use their conclusions. It allows us to formulate a broader point of view which shows that part of information can in its meaning be logically assigned to the whole and thus to find those two spheres equivalent. Practically, it means reduction of the semiotic reflections of the theory of culture to the simpler representations, the existential ones also. This seeming reductionism tells us that limiting oneself to a specific and given sub-semiosphere disturbs the relation me-world and me-me. They become, as Pascal puts it, constant movement, dynamic change, permanent search.

The existential sub-semiosphere strikes, requires reflection, constant coping with the intangible and is difficult to interpret: with human fate. However, you can say wholeheartedly that existence comes before cognition of the world: first, we realize who we are and where we are heading (existential status), and only later do we perceive and interpret the world and its regularities that surround us. Another problem which should be analyzed is the division of human activities into convergence (*integration*) and divergence (*disintegration*) or else their periodicity, which can be proved as well. Lotman consciously writes:

(...) a man, involved in disharmonious or asymmetrical movement. We are getting close to the key issue: the conflict between limited movement, which repeats regularly, and linear move-

ment. In the world of animals we can find movement limited to a circle: changes of calendar, age of other which appear in this world are subject to rules of periodicity. In this regard there is a characteristic difference between the way people and animals learn (...), in spite of the parallelism of the processes, stressed so often by researchers (Lotman 1998: 58 – 59).

Of course, Lotman's reasoning is original because it refers to the conclusions of biosemiotics (zoosemiotics). Thus, the scholar from Tartu crosses the borders of classical structuralism and logical semiotics. He associates the feeling of sign with movement and its shape, as has been shown. You cannot prove that convergence and divergence are superior to periodicity. Man is somehow involved in all these processes. On one hand, man is open to the world and to others, on the other hand, he backs away from them. Openness and limitation dictate the internal life rhythm as well, and more importantly for us, finally shape the course and variances of existence. It doesn't change the fact that, just like animals and particularly just like other mammals, Man as well is entrapped by "animalness". This characteristic ritualization of human life along with basic needs is cyclical or repeated in nature.

Pascal indicates another solution: all and nothing, the Absolute and the Meaninglessness and, as a result, awareness of greatness and awareness of nothingness. The former would belong to the sphere of convergence, occupation, synthesis and finally metaphysical values; the latter would be assigned to divergence, limitations and, as a result, to values which are axiologically negative. In this comparison you cannot speak of periodicity just as you cannot describe the course or existence of a human being.

The existential background of Lotman semiotics can be therefore read in the context of Pascal's existential philosophy. It means that the term "semiosphere" does not necessarily exclude broader semiotical reflection which would allow us to indicate the appropriate sign sub-spheres. We can oppose the ambiguity and the non-classical logic systems or fuzzy sets or finally the calculus of probability to Aristotele's binary approach. We should address periodicity and its opposition somewhat differently. Lotman is right when he writes:

Periodical repeating is rule of biological existence. The world of animals is subject to it and so is man as part of this world. But not the whole man belongs to this world; being the thinking reed, man remains in everlasting contraction with the fundamental laws of the surrounding reality (Lotman 1998: 60 – 61).

Based on the above reflections we should determine that Man made a vital step further than other animals, including mammals. Thinking or, to be more precise, abstract thinking enabled him not only to survive but also to make existential reflection. It gives him the advantage of conscious existence and at the same time it constructs an important psychical foundation. This track leads us further to the realization that awareness of existence in the world is coupled by existential self-awareness. The letter has many gaps, breaks and it is not continuous (Lotman 1998: 41 – 48). It is directed both to the outside and to the inside. It directs Man, pushing him to noble deeds, but to shameful ones as well. It often establishes the hierarchy of meanings, sign substitutes and the range of vital principles. Man is involved in or even determined by his desire to survive biologically and psychically. Occasionally, he does not endure the pressure of existence and he willfully takes his own life. And this is the essence of suspension between Greatness and Nothingness and sometimes the divide of being unable to stand on any side. Therefore, you can Last, but you can also choose the opposite: Not-Lasting.

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# “I/OTHER” OPPOSITIONS IN MUSIC, AESTHETICS AND SEMIOTICS

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**Abstract:** „I“ AND „THE OTHER“ IN SEMIOTICS OF ART. The s.c.interpersonal hypothesis was formulated by the Czech psychiatrist Ferdinand Knobloch in 60's. It was based on the group theory of personality and research of interpersonal processes. The hypothesis was subjected to the experimental research in musicology and aesthetics from the 70's up to now. The phases of it were published in the Czech, Slovak and international journals, as well as in the proceedings *Semiotics in Growth* (Imatra-Bloomington 1996). Even if the scheme of interpersonal tendencies seems to be simple, using of it intensifies experience, cultivates the differentiation between „I“ and „the Other“ and develops empathy. – The method and results are possible to use in musicology, aesthetics and semiotics, as well as in tuition and musicotherapy.

## 1. What is it about?

It is about the results of an experimental study that started in the 1960s and continued until the end of the century and beyond 2000. In the beginning, i.e. in the 1960s, it meant introducing and formulating the so-called interpersonal hypothesis of musical semantics which was done by a team led by psychiatrist and psycho-therapist Prof. Ferdinand Knobloch. (The results were then published in the Czech journals *Hudební věda* (*Musicology*) and *Kybernetika* (*Cybernetics*) in 1965 and 1968 respectively, and also in the specialist journal *Psychiatry: Journal for the study of interpersonal processes* in 1964.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1. What is the basis of this hypothesis?

It is based on a proposition stating that musical compositions from various periods express interpersonal tendencies that are identifiable by independent observers to a degree that is beyond coincidence.

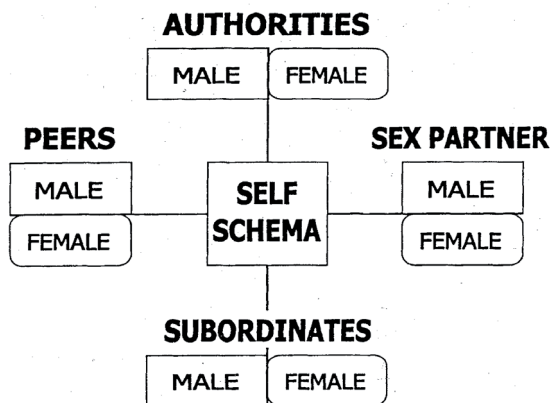
#### 1.1.1. What are these “interpersonal tendencies”?

Interpersonal tendencies are intentions, tendencies or directions in a movement of an individual person within a “small social group”.

#### 1.1.2. What is a “small social group”?

A small social group is a group of 5–7 people, most commonly the family, in which human personality is formed. In this group an individual learns to distinguish social roles (such as authorities, peers, subordinated individuals, etc.) and furthermore learns to interact with actual persons acting out these roles (i.e. mother, father, an older/younger sibling). The experience gathered in this way is generalised into a group scheme, at first subconsciously and, later, consciously. This scheme is then transferred and applied to other social groups (e.g. in school, at work, etc.).<sup>2</sup>

Fig. 1 Group scheme (see Knobloch 2001: 347)



This group scheme permeates both the individual's conscious behaviour and his/her dreams and daydreams or fantasies. According to the interpersonal hypothesis, an artist expresses or manipulates the group scheme in his/her artistic work. In terms of music composition this means that music can “iconically signify interpersonal tendencies of a subject” (i.e. a person) and the imagined generalised “Other” “as mentioned by Knobloch (Knobloch 1968:381)”.

#### *1.1.3. Intrapsychic-interpersonal dichotomy*

To put it briefly, the interpersonal hypothesis annuls the intrapsychic–interpersonal dichotomy; that is to say, intrapsychic processes are understood to be interpersonal processes and vice versa.

#### *1.1.4. Conducting experimental studies*

The independent observers in Knobloch's study group (a team consisting of psychiatrists, psychologists and a musicologist) took part in two tests assessing 24 and then 17 fragments of European music from three centuries, from the Baroque music of the seventeenth century to the present. The results of the statistical evaluation proved to be significant – on 5% level of confidence; in other words, the interpersonal hypothesis was verified.

#### *1.1.5. Initial result*

It was also shown that observers/assessors can adopt two approaches to the interpersonal effect of music – they either identify with recognised tendencies or they take a complementary approach; i.e. they perceive the music as a product of another person – (in the category of aesthetic distance, for example, an interpersonal aspect can be recognised in both approaches). Within the terms of the hypothesis, it was then possible to formulate a statement that music can signify social interaction.

## 1.2. How did musicology take up the interpersonal hypothesis?

It happened with the publication of the study results in the journal *Hudební věda (Musicology)*. A welcome opportunity for its development was given by the social and political climate at the time. In the 1970s it was practically impossible to publish studies concerned with contemporary or 20th century music without reflecting the ideological aspects of a totalitarian regime; i.e. stressing the level of political conformity rather than the artistic quality of the music. The interpersonal hypothesis provided an opportunity to discuss contemporary or 20th century music, and authors/composers who were then on the index, without any ideological barriers.

## 2. Actual experimental study

It was in the study of Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto* that the author of this paper became involved. This study was part of a group analysis project instigated by a leading dissenter at that time, the Czech musicologist Vladimír Lébl (1928–1988). The study provided an opportunity to analyse the responses of Czech, Russian and German musicologists, with the analytical results being discussed in the pages of the journal *Hudební věda (Musicology)* the end of the 70<sup>th</sup>.. The subject of the study, which could be described as Berg's "swan song" written in the peculiar atmosphere of Dollfuss's post-Anschluss Austria, was carried out in the analogously peculiar atmosphere of the then occupied and "normalised" Czechoslovakia – many participants were aware of this and just as many were not. What is important is that at this stage it was possible to confirm and demonstrate that the interpersonal hypothesis could provide a basis for this type of analysis.

### 2.1. First experimental material

It was on this analytical basis that the material for the first experimental study was selected – namely, 12 excerpts from the compositions



of Béla Bartók. The aim of the study was to verify whether certain interpersonal tendencies in their specific categories can be identified in the works of this composer in the course of his development. The material was tested in three groups of respondents – students and teachers of VŠMU in Bratislava (in 1990), students and teachers of a postgraduate course in Helsinki (1991) and psychologists and psychiatrists taking a course in integrated psychotherapy in Kroměříž (1992).

### *2.1.2. Second experimental material*

The material for the second experimental study was 12 excerpts from Czech music from the 2nd half of the 20th century. The aim was to concentrate specifically on the 1950s, i.e. the period of strongest ideological pressure on the arts by the totalitarian regime. The selected excerpts included samples of both music which was typical of the period and the so-called “shadow” music. The excerpts were presented in a series where either very different or very similar types of music followed one another in order to demonstrate sharp distinctions. This series of samples was presented to several groups of assessors which included psychologists and psychiatrists (in 1993), mathematicians (1994), musicologists at the international semiotic congress in Tübingen (1994) and students from the Philosophical Faculty of Prague University (1996). Both types of experimental material were also tested during the 1990s by the author of the hypothesis, Prof. Knobloch, after his return from exile.

### *2.1.3. GUHA (General Unary Hypothesis Automation)*

The results of the above experimental studies were evaluated by the GUHA method, using computer processing, in cooperation with the Institute of Informatics and Computer Technology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and, in particular, the inventor of the GUHA method, Prof. Dr. Petr Hájek, DrSc. The results were published in the magazine *Čs.psychologie* (Czechoslovak Psychology) in 1994 and 1998, the collection *Musical Semiotics in Growth*, Imatra-Bloomington 1996 (type of analysis) and *Estetika* (Aesthetics) in 1997 (evaluation); the results

are also going to be published in MINT, German magazine for artificial intelligence (full summary).<sup>3</sup>

## 2.2. Summary of results

All the stages of testing and application of the interpersonal hypothesis in musicology are described in the book *Dialogue and Imagination: Interpersonal diagnosing of art and through art* published in 1998.

### 2.2.1. The latest experimental study

The latest experimental study was conducted in 2004 at the conference commemorating Prof. Otakar Zich. The respondents were in a professional sense a relatively uniform group of professional aestheticians and students of various age categories (from young students to senior persons over 60 years of age).

Given the specialisation and professional status of the respondents, it was possible to expect interesting results that could easily be compared with the results of previous experimental studies. This assumption proved to be correct, although the degree of scepticism about the use of this method in general and, from a professional point of view, about the variations of interpersonal tendencies in particular, was much higher in this group of respondents.<sup>4</sup>

## 2.3. Brief description of the testing process

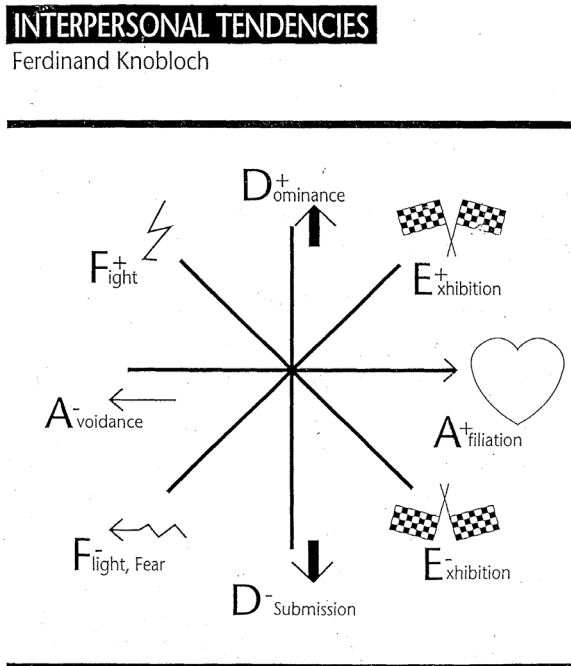
The respondents were introduced to the testing scheme as well as the theoretical background for testing of the hypothesis. Interpersonal behaviour is described by interpersonal tendencies. The system of interpersonal tendencies, which is given in the reference work quoted (Knobloch, 1968), can be described in the following way:

- +A Affiliation: approach, seeking cooperation, closeness, friendship, attachment, love
- A Distance: avoiding contact, seeking isolation, distance, detachment

- +F Fight [Aggression]: attacks, showing anger, destructiveness
- F Flight: fear, terror, escape from danger, fright
- +D Dominance: directing, dictating, controlling, advising, managing
- D Submission: asking for or accepting direction, advice, management
- +E Exhibition plus: displaying a supposedly positive qualities such as attractiveness, power, intelligence, status
- E Exhibition minus: displaying a lack of supposedly positive qualities, representation of weakness, suffering, unhappiness, sadness, miserableness

The scheme of interpersonal tendencies is generally provided in a circle with several axes.

Fig. 2 The scheme of interpersonal tendencies (see Knobloch 1996: 302)



### 3. What does this mean and what is the interpersonal hypothesis?

*A work of art represents, among other things, a fictive manipulation of the group scheme of the author creating an interpersonal space for similar fictive manipulation on the part of a listener.*

This assumption also provides a basis for a group scheme. The listener may (or, of course, may not) identify with an author's group scheme but may also have more complex requirements (e.g. a need to define an additional scheme to find a solution to his/her own unsatisfied interpersonal needs) or, in a more extreme case, may have further needs to experiment. The external manifestation of these requirements are attitudes such as I like / do not like, I love / do not love, I think this nice / not nice, I must listen / must not listen, etc. And, as I said before, the interpersonal hypothesis is based on the equality of intrapsychic and interpersonal processes (cf. the relevant references and bibliography below).

#### 3.1. Identification and distance

Both are clearly in the background. A very interesting aspect here is finding a complementary scheme. This can be manifested, for example, in an individual responding to aggression by flight, to dominance by submission, but also to an expression of love by distance. These types of responses are then reflected by indicating or "distinguishing" precisely the opposite interpersonal tendencies from those originally felt. However, with repeated and focused listening this may also open the way to self-recognition.

##### 3.1.2. Complementary attitudes

These are generally reflected in developing the fictitious model of "the Other"; for example, a temporarily or permanently absent social role in a group scheme (e.g. a sex object) or a model of oppressive authority (this could be a person, an illness or a political situation).

### 3.1.3. *Need for developing experience*

This type of listening to or perceiving works of art, i.e. distinguishing I/Other oppositions, however, needs training and also some experience, including experience in analysing either works of art or other works or non-artistic activities.

A group scheme can be identified in works of art and, as has been shown, plays an important part in perception of them.

### 3.1.4. *Notes on specific experimental study*

For the purpose of experimental study it is always interesting to see to what degree individual respondents are prepared to *identify with a new research frame*, i.e. testing interpersonal tendencies. Of all the professional groups involved (apart from psychologists and psychotherapists) the most adaptable in this respect proved to be mathematicians. The most complex responses evaluating tendencies, particularly those not specifically expressed but implied, came from groups of musicians (i.e. composers and musicologists) – especially those with a good deal of long-term experience. Also, quite remarkable and surprisingly mature responses, especially when making distinctions between content and personal response or reactions, came from some in the student groups.

In the group of aestheticians (and students, the next generation of aestheticians), the summary provided an insight into the value of anonymous testing, clearly indicating that the respondents largely adopted the interpersonal tendencies scale. Negative responses to this type of testing ranged from “sophisticated” answers (e.g. “reality can’t be described using this scale, it refers to elementary perceptions”) which included very complex examples considering interpersonal tendencies in all possible combinations, to “cautious” answers providing sometimes realistic but also confused descriptions which, nonetheless, were quite valuable in many respects.

## 3.2. Czech music of the 1st half of the 20th century

The study confirmed that Czech music of the 1st half of the 20th century is largely unknown – this applies to professional as well as gen-

eral groups of respondents. The 12 samples tested did not, of course, include only samples of “shadow” music (i.e. music which was forbidden for ideological reasons under the totalitarian regime and today is not played or listened to for other reasons), the selection was to provide a general overview of Czech music composed in the period between 1945 and the early 1960s. Identifications of the composers, if there were any, were mostly incorrect, but the general response to the music was quite informed although obscure expressions often led to an association with more familiar tendencies.

### *3.2.1. Specific reactions of Czech respondents*

A significant, although expected, finding of the study was that the reactions of Czech respondents to music typical of the 1950s were generally quite distinct – specifically, in assessing the interpersonal tendencies using primarily complementary tendencies; e.g. +A (closeness, friendship, attachment, love), –A (distance) or –F (flight).

Further details concerning the testing procedure and any possible correlations with the respondents’ age, sex, occupation, etc. were recorded during the second experimental study in a *personality questionnaire* and the results, subsequently processed using the GUHA method, were then published in the references and literature quoted below. (cf. Note)

## **4. General summary**

In general, it can be said that all experimental studies confirmed the hypothesis as functioning. However, evaluation of the results also generated additional gains or “insights” concerning both the music and the study groups. One of these “insights”. i.e. the effect of testing interpersonal tendencies on creating a more cohesive atmosphere and differentiating certain roles (distinction between cooperating and emphatic individuals and the others) within a social group, has become very useful to the author of this contribution particularly at the start of the courses teaching students who do not yet know one another.

4.1. The study provided relevant results for musicology, aesthetics and semiotics

Specifically:

1) The study results provided a varied view of the perception and knowledge of Czech music of the 1st half of the 20th century in professional and other groups in the population.

2) The differentiation of I/Other opposites provides an ethological basis for both the interpersonal and intrapsychic nature/description of distance: the reason for an ‘alienated’ response is the interpersonal and intrapsychic mindset, the attitude and also the acculturation/cultural values of the subject/respondent. This may find outlet in varied judgments, from *like* / *do not like* to *beautiful* / *not beautiful* (in the sense of “valuable”).

This differentiation may also provide a deeper insight into the establishment of certain ideals of the period, i.e. in the sense of fixing artificial stimuli for social intercourse.

3) In the semiotics of art it is possible to formulate a question to help identify the ethological basis of an artistic sign: not only the semantics and syntax of the artistic sign but also its pragmatic aspects are and continue to be of primary importance to art and its development.

This is also confirmed by current biological studies on the effect of music in improving cooperation, developing cerebral activities and increasing chances of survival within social groups.

The development of *empathy* as an important part of increasing cohesion and improving management within social groups is valuable for working with the interpersonal hypothesis as well as in practical applications (e.g. in teaching).

#### Note:

A personality questionnaire was used in certain stages of the experimental studies which were processed using the GUHA method. The questionnaire was very valuable for further assessment of the results; e.g. married people showed a greater degree of recognition [of inter-

personal tendencies] than single or unattached people. In contrast, in the respondent group of psychologists and psychotherapists complementary attitudes in recognising interpersonal tendencies were used much more.

It should also be noted that the interpersonal hypothesis continued to be developed over the years and in the inventor's work it led to the formulation of propositions concerning ethology and, specifically, identification or presentation of art or artistic creation as one of the artificial stimuli [for social intercourse].

The author has concentrated on the formal aspect in order to confirm and subsequently apply certain propositions of Chomsky's generative grammar in musicology (cf. the relevant references and literature).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> F. Knobloch, M. Poštolka, J. Srnec (1965): *Hudební sémantika z interpersonálního hlediska*, *Hudební věda* [Musical semantics from the interpersonal viewpoint, Musicology]; also F. Knobloch, H. Junová, X. Juna, I. Koutský (1968): *On an Interpersonal Hypothesis of the Semiotics of Music*, *Kybernetika* (Cybernetics).

These references provide further details about the scheme and schematic development of interpersonal tendencies. Interpersonal tendencies can, however, be described in more detail indicating what each particular tendency may express, what emotions may be involved, etc. With longer use, these descriptions will become a necessary part of the assessment or response.

- <sup>2</sup> F. Knobloch (1963): *Osobnost a malá sociální skupina* [Personality and the small social group] *Čs. psychologie* 5, 329-337. See also: F. Knobloch, J. Knoblochová, J. (1994): *Integrovaná psychoterapie v akci* (Integrated psychotherapy in action). Praha: Grada (in particular the Chapter V, *Group Scheme*, p. 75 ff.).

- <sup>3</sup> GUHA (General Unary Hypotheses Automation) is a general method for the explorative analysis of data and its main aim is to bring out, in a general sense, *everything that may be of interest* in a given sample of data. The method provides means for developing hypotheses about the relationships between values and variables on the basis of collected data. For a complete specialist bibliography, see J. Doubravová (1998) *Dialog a imaginace* [Dialogue and Imagination: Interpersonal diagnosing of art and through art]. Praha: Supraphon; (see especially P. Hájek, A. Sochorová, J. Zvářová (1995): *GUHA for personal computers*. *Computational Statistics and Data Analysis* 19, pp. 149-153).



- <sup>4</sup> See the collection *Kybernetika a společnost na prahu XXI.století* [Cybernetics and society at the start of the 21st century], Brno Technical University, 2005; specifically, J. Doubravová: *Mezi kybernetikou, estetikou a sémiotikou* [Between Cybernetics, Aesthetics and Semiotics], pp. 27–34.

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# SUBJECTIVITY (DEPERSONALIZATION) IN LIFE AND ART VIEWED BY EXISTENTIAL SEMIOTICS

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**Abstract:** The paper opens intriguing thoughts concerning problematic questions on life, art, health, madness and death in the semiotic interpretation light. To make the picture clearer, some particular examples of artistic masterpieces will be presented, analysed and put into the framework of the presentation. The whole work is being made with the respect to Eero Tarasti's theories that have been developed with the strong stress on existential notion. The main goal is to pursue the importance of good human self-mirroring interpretation, which might enable better life (especially in its spiritual qualities) of individuals. When thinking of "better" life, it is the life without social or personal pathologies that should be considered here in the first place. The good tool on the transcendental path seems to be Tarasti's existential semiotics. This paper demonstrates possible applications of such theories.

## Background

This paper is touching some intriguing ideas on life, art, health, madness in the semiotic interpretation light. Some particular examples of artistic masterpieces are being thought of to illustrate the thing. The whole approach, too, cares about Eero Tarasti's theories that have been developed with the strong stress on existential matter. The main goal of this article is to underline the importance of good human self-mirroring interpretation, which might enable spiritually better life of individuals. When pondering the "better" life, what is most of all meant here is the life without social or personal pathology.

## Depersonalization and Transcendence of an Individual

There is an interesting phenomenon that goes far beyond the realm of psychology. It is traditionally presented as the so-called *depersonalization* (or *alienation* in perception of an individual). Though it has been bothering the scientific community for a century, it is still considered as some sort of mystery. There are quite many materials on this subject to read, but with the exception of good statistics and neurobiological research, they have not come up with anything really applicable yet. Therefore real “sufferers” cannot be helped very effectively. Then, perhaps, one should approach the problem from a different direction.

What really amazes further is that a lot of specialists trained in classical approaches would find depersonalization an apparent disease of *psyche*. And this probably could be the stumbling stone misleading many, including real authorities. It seems that for the problem to be grasped in a broader way, that is with the respect to culture and human character generally, the solution might be surprisingly simple.

The ones with developed depersonalization often report their sensation of self-strangeness. Moreover, every item all around (including the awareness of oneself) seems unreal. The situation gets worse due to feelings as if the world changed and was observed by person for the first time. Out-of-body experience may occur, too. Due to the fact that there is practically no direct pharmacological remedy, quite many affected start to suffer from depression.

At this point let us slightly depart from the conclusions coming from natural science research. It is because tracing the symptoms only seems to be an incomplete satisfaction. We would rather become *existential* instead of getting stacked on positivistic position without usable answers. Our principal thoughts are therefore as following:

Depersonalization might stand for one's difficulty to accept the personal complexity that by far transcends the social system of people labeling. As long as somebody conceives the idea of *I am not only that what other say*, he either becomes “existentially adult”, or depersonalized. *I know what other people say about me. That is my image...But*

*I must ask, what more do I represent, what was not verbally expressed by my extrinsic "image makers"?*

Sufferers from depersonalization are overloaded, dazzled. They suddenly perceive too much to be able to ground all of it well verbally. There is usually nobody to ask for any information. Consequently, there is no understanding. Thus the glimpse into wholeness looks erroneously as pure emptiness without any meaning at all. On such a base the subject starts to be depersonalized... Simply speaking, one sees his/her life as if from a seat in a movie-theatre without having any possibility to influence what is passing on the screen. Finally, there are those affected who lose their motivation correspondingly to what was said above. They can fail even in their jobs and families because of their chronic deprivation. But such a negative impact on one's *Soul* does not have to happen at all. This is precisely what we would like to stress. If questioned, whether depersonalization<sup>1</sup> should be understood as a disease or rather as a unique self-mirroring, we would argue for the later!

People may get depersonalized if they cannot identify themselves with their personal or other socially constructed images.

Professor Tarasti calls the common social world [the realm of understandable (Self-) -images which we have grown accustomed to] as *Dasein*. In his Existential Semiotics he describes the journey of an existential subject approximately like this: Via negation of *Dasein* (a social world) a subject enters the world of "*D a s e i n*" [nothingness (?)]. Next step lies in subject's affirming the plenitude of phenomenon. This is a right way how to complete the voyage by entering the world of *X*. This *X* up to a degree equals to the previous world of *Dasein*. Let us apply next model: The difference between *Dasein* and *X* is in person's unwillingness to agree with everything what others try make him to believe (*X*). To make it clearer: If one negates what he knows of the world (*Dasein*) by stepping out of it, he has to make some inevitable interpretations. Provided that interpretations are reached, one, having been enriched by transcendental experience, can return the world of *Dasein* as a "new" person.

Those with depersonalizations do not want to make interpretations. It seems to them as if everything was empty. What is important: to provide words with new meanings by in addition keeping in memory their original signified. The sufferers must be encouraged to be prepared to make such an effort. The transcendental voyage would consequently appear as a successful one.

### **Alienation in Art as a Cultural Phenomenon**

The matter in Universe is only one. There is a question of what all the fragmentation and human individual self-awareness mean; how far is the subject-object correlation relevant at all. The one thing we can be well sure with is as follows: Although our society is based on the precise distinction between subject and object, we must nevertheless bear in mind that this is probably only half of the story... If we do not accept this, then one can incidentally get depersonalized. Besides the fact that Victor Shklovsky welcomed some defamiliarization in his thoughts on art, it is quite granted that Art as such can also fall into certain “pathology”, which does not bring the aesthetical benefit, but a social disease. Let it be seen on the following examples. Some of them could be perceived as a problem by different group of spectators.

### **Determinants**

A] A piece of art is perceived under unusual circumstances. This could be well demonstrated either by Stanley Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange* (the remarkable moment of alienation in the film comes along with Beethoven's music, which emphasizes here the sequences of ultra violence), – or by Taiwanese garbage trucks. In order to make people throw their waste away, Mozart's or Beethoven's music is played from cars' loudspeakers<sup>2</sup>.



B] A piece of art happens to be out of its diachronic context. This is the case of Russian *contrafactum* of Soviet anthem. An old music is accompanied by brand-new lyrics<sup>3</sup>. For some it could be quite a controversy.

C] The roles and functions are changed. Let us see *Muzak* (*elevator music*). Buyers are doing their shopping by listening to the sweet music coming from the background. But the music per sé is not an ultimate object of perception here.

D] A piece of art cannot be perceived. It occurs especially when an artifact is rather unacceptable and even inaccessible. Czechoslovak Art that was indexed reminds us about the so-called forbidden films.

E] The piece of art cannot transmit any information. This is in power especially when the particular Art is really out of date and thus incomprehensible. Examples could be some very old Art or Art oriented on an extremely narrow group in population.

F] A piece of art has lost its previous values like the ideological Art and so on. Such Art often represents the values that are not timeless enough.

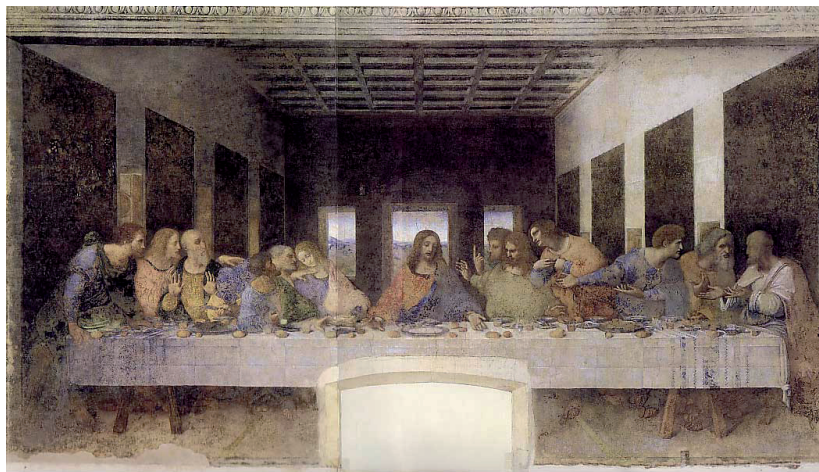
## Two Specific Examples

In the first picture there is a famous fresco (The Last Supper) by Leonardo da Vinci presented. The Christian legend of this theme is well known. The second picture shows a fashion billboard recently made by Girbaud. It is, so to speak, an interesting allusion to Leonardo's work. A group of models is posing by pretending to be the apostles. A female in the centre with her hands up resembles the body of Jesus Christ. The semantics of such a billboard might be read like this: *You, who do not buy the Girbaud products, you do betray*. A problem appeared immediately in Christian Italy. The incident afterwards got even before the court. This is a good illustration of the case, when Art (billboard-Art) stopped playing its fundamental function and started to cause harm to the feelings of the recipients of the message. An acute Art alienation is necessary to be sought in the affair initiated by French billboard. There are plenty of other cases to quote. Some of them remain however on an

unconscious level. The bigger amount of them exists at one time, the more depersonalization we risk.

The third given picture covers the bear, specifically the mascot of the Olympic Games in Moscow in 1980. The outfit of the original bear is promoted by Kalashnikov's submachine gun. This billboard is designed in order to attract visitors to the Museum of communism in Prague. Some tourists snap, of course, at pictures of the armoured bear. Nevertheless, the picture can make some others feel offended. At least those sportsmen from all over the world who were competing in Moscow (not necessarily on the behalf of soviet communism) might feel abused in a way. They all could feel to have been discredited by such modern billboard propaganda. Strictly speaking, is it still possible to treat this affair as an example of democratic Art? Or would it rather be a case of another Art abusing and provoking alienation...? After all, it is not bad to be critical towards Christian or communist dogmas whatsoever, but what is definitely wrong is the tendency to a very cheap show. The real progress, human dignity, self-understanding... all these are moving in different direction following the elementary happiness and peace without *depersonalization*.

Picture №.I: Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci



Picture № II: Girbaud's poster. See determinant A], B], C]



Picture № III. Original bear vs. parody on communism



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> We mind only that type of depersonalization that sometimes occur to normal and which incidentally can put private life (or happiness) into ruins.
- <sup>2</sup> "...as mentioned by Tylová"
- <sup>3</sup> The two "different" lyrics (old/modern) wrote the same person – Sergey V. Mihalkov (\*1913).

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# PRIVATE EXISTENCE AND CONFESSING CULTURE

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**Abstract:** Media inform us not only about important social events and phenomena. In order to keep constant rates of watchers they show the privacy and intimacy of both celebrities and ordinary people. In a parallel way this shows itself in art via the strategies of the so-called “confessing culture”. Artists wish to be authentic, they wish to grasp the true essence of the existence and that is why they focus on their own experience as for the private and intimate sphere. In order to express themselves, they often use real objects, “ready-mades”, various props that have to do with their private milieu and also their own body. This leads to a special type of communication where the artist confesses his own traumas, misconduct and misdeeds to the spectator by means of intimate language. In this way the artist comes to terms with his/her identity and defines some topical problems of the society. On the part of the spectator, this asks for some degree of empathy and goodwill in order to understand the artist. The author of this study gives examples of Slovak fine art in which similar strategies are employed.

## 1

Private existence has never been out of the artist's scope. In times when art was fulfilling social or ritual purposes, private existence was being suppressed and one could detect it only through the authorial gestures and handwriting. It started to penetrate themes and topics only in a very gradual way. The artists of middle-age paintings used to represent themselves in form of servants and inconspicuous extras. However, with the change of their social status (i.e. when artists became so to say companions of kings) artists themselves became more interesting for the spectator. One could even go further and claim that, though in a very refined way, artists attracted the attention of the

spectator in form of principal figures in the paintings of their time (e.g. Diego Velasquez: *Las Meninas*).

Modern art extended its topics and got enriched via adding figures of lower-social-class people. In this way, figures like artist's friends got in the paintings (realism, impressionism). Self-esteem, self-respect, but at the same time also rebukes and reproaches became apparent and evident in authorial portraits. Such particular genre started to develop itself especially in the times of renaissance and persisted.

Psychological and sociological approaches to the interpretation of artworks pointed out that within the complex artistic activity the objectifying of artist's ego plays an important role. The personal and the unique together with the private meet together the need of the utterance to transgress the concrete and the particular. This happens in a way that leads towards the general image. It is again in times of postmodernism that the individual and particular start to occupy a clear stance towards the depicted problems. At the same time, the enhancement of the image of one's own "I" becomes stronger. In authorial paintings, the level of stylization gets to the level of the ideal that expresses the involvement of the individual "I" in the social expectations and norms. The postmodern artist, even at the cost of being misunderstood or being exclusive, brings into his own paintings the motifs of the most intimate zones from his/her experience, the props of everyday use and very often, both means and objective at the same time, also elements of metaphor and metonymy in one whole: the figural motif of his own body. In the unique composition of these elements, the artist creates the image of the unalterable. Postmodern theory mentions the strategy of the so-called individual mythology. Such use of one's own body, face or one's private surroundings appears to be a practical solution of getting a model (I can serve as a model to myself). Self-portraits occupy the attention of artists both as means of studying themselves as well as means of studying the image of head as such. One could put it in a very simplified way like this: when there is no model at hand we can always, thanks to a mirror, use our own face and our own experience likewise. In American and nowadays also in European schools, the subject *creative writing* is very popular. From

the very first lessons it is based on the theme of one's own experience. The transgression from the private to the interpersonal is already a higher level of writing that is connected with a higher level of stylization of autobiographical motifs. This again depends on the degree of gift and experience. In Hollywood, the scriptwriters are more or less humorously said to be convinced that for one's debut script it is enough to turn one's own CV into a film and that it is a good guarantee for success. On the other hand, it is true that the best scripts ever written are really based on one's own experience.

Private and autobiographic elements are the constituents of art. The question is whether or not, and how much (if at all) they are changed; what is achieved through their stylization, and what type of stylization is applied—to what degree the principal method of private existence is viable in the given artwork. Listening to personal stories is rather demanding in terms of the needed degree of empathy, identification with the position of the speaker, transposition into his/her situation that in a mirrored way can become our own. At the same time, knowing that similar things happen at many places concurrently, we can get bored or unable to find any interest in listening to these stories. This means that the private and personal must contain some interesting and unique elements that would address us and could exceed everyday life and banality. The quality must therefore be guaranteed by the authorial choice and the composition of elements—even via elements belonging to the repertoire of everyday life props. The creative way of dealing with these props of everyday reality (corporeality of things) fulfills the purpose of art and thus makes it an apt and imaginative designation of the problem. In order to be poignant and apt, the authorial composition reigns over a broad current of images, time and thoughts. Examples of art that sought to paint reality in a scanning, documentary, and non-distorted way prove that there is always the presence of selection and composition (even in a seemingly disorganized current of images). Distinguishing within the information sphere (increase in extent and form of information, starting with records of reality on a broad scale—from the non-stylized one up to the affected image where the world of information changes into the world of disinformation and



manipulation) depends on the accessibility of technological instruments and media.

## 2

This change of the way in which media represent reality (they make it so very common—anyone can record anyone), strengthened the quality of one's experience with media within the private sphere, yet vice-versa it also enabled the institutional media (the state owned ones and the private ones) enter the private sphere. In other words, people got used to posing in front of camcorders and cameras. Becoming bolder in front of the searching eye of media has an impact on the degree of one's self-esteem. People think: "I am able to pose in front of cameras like professionals and this means that I am approaching the world of celebrities". This equalization of form (media modeling) evokes the illusion of equality at the level of contents. This again enhances the impression of the idea of justifiability in terms of the general interest in my *privé*, in my personal sphere.

As for the image of everyday life, we observe the tendency to turn the banal (reality show) into aesthetic art, where art seeks to exceed the banality of props; one can no longer speak of mere "aesthetizing".

What happens under the pretext of private props, i.e. props from private sphere?

The making of private sphere public (people, protagonists, milieu, things) has a flavor of self-confession, i.e. a flavor of what the contemporary theory calls *confessing culture*. In a confession, which in religious and liturgical sphere has a sacred purpose of reconciliation with God, there are elements that illustrate the situation of being sinful (circumstances, site of sin, offending the law (Ten Commandments)). In order to understand and start anew, it is necessary to extend the contextual area of communication (e.g. confessor and the confessing one). Such act of confessing in religion and also in other cases, e.g. therapeutic community, is closely linked with humbleness the act of accepting one's guilt. Both mean and represent some kind of bridg-



ing between the inner and the outer—making public the intimate. The pressure that overcomes such breakthrough comes both from outside and inside. This movement is in a certain sense an exhibition. However, humbleness and exhibition are opposed to each other.

That is why confession is a sad act. Exhibition does not cause any pleasure, only pain. It causes unrest and incertitude—as for the reaction of the listeners. Hedonists' principle was to *live life in a hidden way*. Open and exhibited way of life is too risky. Self-exhibition as the tendency of social life today (e.g. media, reality show, art) makes use of various ways of stylization of the inner, the intimate and the authentic. Through stylization, the culprit washes away the pain caused by the humiliation, and the exhibition shows itself at first as pleasure/catharsis (i.e. a nicely put story or visualized experience from the private sphere). The consequences come only later. A sort-of-comfort that heals the consequences is yet another wave of self-confessing acts, an innovated offer to exhibitions. Media cycles, however, are not of long duration. Cycles/series in art, picture series of one story seek to endure. The value and durability of artistic utterances is set by the recipient—either the laical one, or the informed one or the critical one. Critics' view and opinion are important, especially today, at times marked by the complete presence of media and also by the institutional character of art. The aesthetic experience, an autotelic activity that shows itself as a current of energy, can be characterized as a concord between the cognitive, emotional, and voluntary acts. These acts can be derived from the perception of the non-value. Durability and value become clearer thanks to history and the notion of time. As for value, we might doubt it—as for frankness, we might discuss it. We can trust the author or question his authenticity as being calculated, simulated or simply fawning the receptive expectations. Authenticity is the author's will to answer and tackle problems in the most subjective and responsible way. Contemporary artists usually find a solution for the aforementioned in the sphere of the intimate. As mentioned by slovak teoretician Katarína Rusnáková:

“The frequent and repeated use of intimate language (props from private sphere, corporality of body, corporality of private props) ex-

presses the artist's and spectator's call for authenticity in today's society, in which paintings lost their credibility" (Rusnáková 2001:14). The flash of the real, the essence of the existence, true dealing with the problem: only a prepared spectator can accept this. Spectators should stand in a meaningful context with the artwork and they should benefit from the voluntary moments of the aesthetic relation. Spectators should be emphatic confessors, allies within the interactive relation (communicate) *author – spectator*. A similar situation can be found in a therapeutic community where the notion of being an opponent is only the reversed side of the coin. Its positive pole is represented by helpfulness, kinship—as for the common and mutual effort to find a solution to the problem (finding the neuralgic point).

The publicizing of private and intimate stories in fine art happens at various levels of expression—starting with the hidden metaphorical and symbolical one up to radically open utterances which are sometimes insensible to the needs and experience of the spectator.

One of such artists who manage to distinguish herself by radicalizing the relation *open/closed* (hidden) is also the winner of the Turner prize Tracey Emin. In her famous intermedia project called "*Bed*", she confesses her childhood and teenage traumas, her being misused by her own father and her starting living in a promiscuous way. In a rather ruthless way and without any shyness, she tackles these problems in her videos. These are meant to be a part of the installation room. In the installation room, one can further find her bed (stained with body secretion), used underwear, etc. The verbal description of milieu evokes disgusting ideas, however, the real installation room is not that terrible. Emin's strategies are full of elements aimed at shocking the spectator. Saatchi, the patron and supporter of young British art and at the same time the owner of the gallery in London, manages to benefit from her talents. The installation room, however, can make the impression as if it were a heap of useless props and dull things (especially after some time, after all the initial freshness disappears). Without understanding the context, without listening to Emin's video, the spectator can happen to leave the room untouched, and this in spite of the fact that Emin presented the very core of her intimate experience. We know this

situation since Goya's times – veiled Maja was more erotic than Maja without her veil.

As for Slovak fine art scene, it is *Anna Daučíková* who works with the motifs of feminine intimacy. She deals with these motifs both in a hidden and open way (performance), revealing her own feminist and lesbian orientation.

*Pavína Fichta Čierna* often uses ready made elements (e.g. electrocardiography) through which she creates the authentic expression. She releases her products as artworks from the sphere of science, she uses them in her projects, emphasizes the determinateness of individual paintings (naturally, given the limits of body and health). In the process of self-confession (self-disclosing), P. F. Čierna is not in the position of a culprit, but in the position of an heir; an heir of guilt (in the role of the accused one and this can happen to anyone who is considered to be guilty without having done anything, i.e. a victim). The theme of publicizing the intimate is often present in the requests of the organizers of authorial exhibitions or in the assignments at artistic academies (very popular are topics like “The intimate from the public, the public from the intimate”).

In 2000, *Ilona Németh* won a project at the Soros' Center. In an old and empty house, she installed one part of her household. She offered the spectator one part of her private sphere, which was enhanced by the sounds from her household. Her aim, however, was not only to present her privacy, but to criticize the situation of at the example of a society sample – the family. Families are often attacked by information and other “media smog” that makes it impossible for one to break free (TV sets were installed in every room, even in the bedroom, where there were two of them, copying the number of mattresses). Fragmentation, diversification of interests within family (as a small social unit), the apprehension of the disturbed social bond was the trauma which the author confessed to the spectator. I. Németh enlarged her project at the *Biennial Event of World Art in Venice* Invitation to a visit, 2001. The modeling created a shift from the unique towards the common. Németh found a pattern in which her problem (the overdose of media and information in everyday life) got formalized and defined via

firmer links (reconstruction of the flat) and markedness (model with elements of caricature: TV sets in every room, etc.).

Art is also a platform on which artist come to terms with their identity, be it social one or gender one. A topical example is the performance and production of a young artist *Filip Jurkovič* (IGNUM, 2007).

Filip Jurkovič belongs to those artist who manage to catch the attention as soon as in the pre-selection presentations at the *Academy of Arts*. He attracted by being different, radically open, confessing to being “queer”. All this could have been understood as a provocation. Later he modified his radically expressive positions. He stopped creating paintings that were on the threshold of porn and photography and he started creating in a more acceptable way. He started to create beyond the limits of reception norms, at the level of taboo paintings, again somewhere between pornography and the legitimized utterance, with some elements of exhibition. What at first sight appeared to be pornography appeared at a second glance to be accepted as a painting with the elements, props and stylization of the porn-industry (protagonists’ positions, nakedness, weird and scanty parts of clothing like socks, boots, glasses). The first-sight-reception of the picture changed into a deeper understanding of its exaggeration, but only after some closer inspection. One gradually came to understand that there is an authorial gesture.

His artworks and performances manage to fill academic conferences, yet their primary purpose is to deal with conceptual assignments and to appear like a personal coming-to-terms with difficult personal and existential issues. His art happens to be part of life and the space for realization (= understanding) of basic questions of our existence on the basis of extremely sharpened situations, negating physical regularities. This means that paintings are not created thanks to manipulation via PCs, but thanks to recording (photography) of performances (e.g. “Cemeteries”).

As for the author himself, in his artworks, one can detect his experience with films (scriptwriting), northern literature motifs (Astarsaga),

poetry (Ginsberg) and especially the presence of the inner tension leading to self-confession.

The photography of any performance depends on the degree of the modification via a computer. In this way, one can achieve the expected semantic and expressive moment, but at the same time, the proposition of the performer is being questioned. The performance is recorded in a documentary way, but as for its further development, it is processed by means of a computer in order to strengthen, and emphasize the meaning of the whole event (as a pregnant moment, representation and symbol). Via such computer modifications, the performance changes into a quasi arranged or staged photography. It is the photography that shifts the extreme experience in the direction of staged expression. In this way, one can moderate and dim the brutality of the live performance!!! Afterwards the photography starts its own life. It breaks out of the performance current, out of its liveliness and immediacy that in some cases is prepared and staged (like a staged action).

In the “*Levitations and Cemeteries 2006*” series, there were some pre-prepared performances and body actions in which their author got beyond the possible, thence the impression of the absurd. The absurd paintings have even more general impact because they question our assumptive beliefs as for the functioning of the world, yet they also cast doubt upon the *status quo* of things, faith, the way in which we accept the physical, mental and social world.

The latest series (IGNUM) is so far the most stylized one. Jurkovič creates the image of a figure–IGNU. IGNU means ANYBODY. Anybody is not anybody, but somebody, somebody like us. IGNU started as a performance, i.e. action, when the author wanted to experience the feeling of being incognito, someone without face, without clear face features–this made the head look like a common and abstract ball. *The individual makes him-/herself anonymous*. What is denied is the face, the identification element of species, race and sex. It is hidden, veiled and censored. Censorship is another motif that the author uses in order to pretend that one can come to terms with taboos (TABU= social construct).

Jurkovič deals with the phenomenon of censorship (unacceptable paintings) that is only illusionary because every spectator knows what is to be found under the retouched. The form of censorship (e.g. squares and retouches) gives away what should be hidden. Censorship cannot stop the imagination that is closely linked with the previous experience. Having the opposite effect, this makes it only fictive. In reality, it emphasizes the problem.

As for Jurkovič's authorial poetics, apart from the motif of censorship; the phenomenon of anonymity belongs here as well. It is closely linked with the censorship. Dealing with and applying the motif of anonymity is full of blocking and obstructions, full of the denial of admission. Admission has to do with the feeling of guilt, self-accuse. On one side, there is the element of the concrete and particular, completely unveiled body; on the other side, there is the obstruction in terms of recognizing its singular parts (face, sex). Ascribing enhanced anonymity to what is common and known finally emphasizes and doubles its meaning.

In the *SIGNUM* series, the figure is set into unidentifiable, anonymous and empty premises (halls, subways, bridge sets, empty parks). The *IGNU*-person stands in a frontal position, without any movement, without action, without words—in a so-to-say silent urgency. The depicted person is set in a street (implication of the direction, search for a solution?). In its rounded shape, the notion of a street evokes the notion of dynamism. At the end of the series, *IGNU* finds him/herself in the company of another *IGNU*. This ending changes the initial interpretation of the series as a non-narrative one. The two *IGNU* figures represent an unidentifiable couple: male–male, female–male, female–female. An experienced spectator thinks of Plato's spherical (ball-like, hermaphrodite) person. Jurkovič's artworks can thus be understood as an authentic confession, where the body is not only in the position of a protagonist, but is also one of the constituents. As for their expressive mode, his pictures are very close to the metaphysical painting. As mentioned by Karl Ruhrberg:

The expressive power of empty, silent premises, ... shadows fall on the square and their origin is hidden, ... Manichini/IGNUM set in the empty become anonymous idols. The alienation of intimately known things is perfect. The shift of real things, their placing into places where they do not belong and where we would not expect them creates a shock of disillusion. The observer is made to realize the fantasy-like reality and come to terms with it. Such paradoxical crowding of contradiction was discovered by Nietzsche and Schopenhauer who taught that "there is a profound sense and meaning in the nonsense of life". The Italian painter Chirico in 1919 notes in his text called *We metaphysicians*: "True artists are philosophers who outdid philosophy" (Ruhrberg 2004: 134).

## Conclusion

Methods and strategies of the so-called confessing structure (artistic expression and personal performance=communication via different forms) are relevant both for authors and spectators in today's world of art. It appears that the stylization of the authentic is a part of the creative act and via a creative gesture it can direct its impact on the spectator.

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## THE SEMIOTICS OF THE GROTESQUE IN THE POSTMODERN FILM AND LITERATURE

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**Abstract:** The author re-interprets some theories of the grotesque as an aesthetic category (W. Kayser, M. M. Bakhtin). To the well-known types of the grotesque the author adds another type – the so-called postmodern grotesque. In the author's view, permanent attempts at overcoming alienation and demonism by means of radical irony are characteristic for the period of postmodernism.

In totalitarian states, extravagancy, taking various forms, became the means of the fight against the authoritative powers. Totality itself can be divided as follows:

a) so called "strict" totality (1948-1968)

b) "soft" totality.

In the period of 1956, when the cult of "political authority" had been exposed, the arts came back to life from the shadows of lethargy; namely film art and literature became the media of political commentaries in various forms. Sometimes, the negation of political themes refers to the revolt against the totality. The films made in the second half of 60-s prove this best. In general, the function of the grotesque can be divided into several groups:

- intentional preference of apolitical, grotesque themes and sub-themes
- hidden political involvement, indirect political allusions in literature, film art
- in fragments and sequence
- transparent preference of politically oriented topics, political mockery.

The word *grottesca* or *grottesco* originated in Italian word *grotta* (German: die Grotte), which is used today in the meaning of a cave. Nowadays, grotesca in the fine art is regarded as an aesthetic category, having various forms (Losev – Šestakov 1984: 397-408). From the perceptive point of view, the grotesque might take the following forms:

1. comic- laughable, theoretically introduced by M. M. Bakhtin;
2. based on horror, dread, shape-deformation in the form of hydra, harpy, cyclops or monster-based form (Kayser 1961: 59),
3. constructed

via playfulness – various language puns of Ch. Morgenstern, J. Joyce, E. Jandl.

However, the main feature of the grotesque is penetrating the extreme counterpoints – elements that can be brought together neither in reality nor in everyday communication. Prolonged forms of plants mixed with forms of humans or animals as well as pictures of animals combined with plants' background are the most common releases of the grotesque in fine art (Kayser 1961: 108). If the shape is deformed, the aim is to evoke horror, dread, fear and ugliness. The negative impact is usually being smoothed: dreadful, terrifying, ugly and deformed is neutralised by equilibrating element – a counter part or a counter point. M. M. Bakhtin scrutinized mainly aforementioned type of grotesque (Bachtin 1975: 5-53).

M. M. Bakhtin theoretically processed so – called realistic grotesque, marginally focusing on romantic and modern grotesque. His monography on Rabelais belongs to the classics among literary-theoretical works and aesthetic provenience. It proves to be necessity to explain various modifications, peripety and functions of grotesque in the particular historical period. To the three aforementioned types of grotesque, the fourth type could be added – the postmodern grotesque.

Apparently, the postmodern grotesque issues from modern grotesque; it originates and roots in its subsoil. The period itself reminds of turnout of baroque into rococo or incoming style of Biedermeier replacing Classicism or Romanticism. Everything is being re-evaluated and perceived trough the prism of irony. Definitiveness, finality and, above all, progressiveness are denied by the means of postmodern grotesque. Devil is replaced by another emblem. Postmodern era is the era in which the devil is dismissed and mocked about. Postmodern emblem is an extravagant – weird and bizarre man, man of underground or alternative way of life; his otherness being the stigma. The main effort is to create acceptable living condition in contrary to the predominance of commercial conventions, norms and rules by the means of alternative way of life. Otherness in its purest form is represented by an extravagant and his excesses; trying to prevent the alienation happening – the extravagant refuses the alienation by

playfulness, irony, organizing the group of extravagant people, e.g. punkers, dravers, beatniks. Radical otherness became a fashionable feature. The item was scrutinized by Jean Baudrillard, a French philosopher (Baudrillard 1997: 107-108). In Slovakia, systematic research is provided by Ľubomír Plesník (Plesník 1998: 133-134). To summarize the terms: alienation was replaced by excesses, demon was replaced by extravagant.

Contemporary man, contemporary literary (film) hero attracts attention with his extravagance. The extravagant shall not need to come from a different, alienated world. He must be extravagant, weird (odd) – in literature as well as in life. The more he exceeds the average, the more he succeeds to gain the attention of a mass consumer. Time is exoterically oriented, all the grotesque from the previous periods are being imitated, deconstructed and assessed according to the contemporary grotesque extravagant. Süskind's hero in *Das Parfum* is such an extravagant; Humbert Humbert in Nabokov's *Lolita* as well as Lolita herself are the extravagants of the postmodern type and also Borges' stories are the kinds of excesses rather than anything else (*Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius, Author of Quijote Pierre Menard*). Borges himself had put together if not totally contradictive elements, so only hardly co-operative semantic elements (sentences) to create cohesive utterance unit/s (Borges 2000: 11–30). In general, the Western art had been apolitical, or so to say, was not about to get involved into the process of disclosing the deformations in political and social spheres; while the Middle European art was politically symptomatic: either it became directly involved into politics and ideology of the state or participated on disclosure of direct and indirect mechanisms of political and state powers consciously contradicting such ideology/ies. In such a situation, the grotesque plays a significant role – especially in the art of former Czechoslovakia.

In totalitarian states, extravagancy, taking various forms, became the means of the fight against the authoritative powers. Totality itself can be divided as follows:

- a) so called “strict” totality (1948-1968)
- b) “soft” totality

In the period of 1956, when the cult of “political authority” had been exposed, the arts came back to life from the shadows of lethargy; namely film art and literature became the media of political commentaries in various forms. Sometimes, the negation of political themes refers to the revolt against the totality. The films made in the second half of 60-s prove this best. In general, the function of the grotesque can be divided into several groups:

- Intentional preference of apolitical, grotesque themes and sub-themes
- Hidden political involvement, indirect political allusions in literature, film art – in fragments and sequence
- Transparent preference of politically oriented topics, political mockery

To the first group, Miloš Forman’s films made in Czechoslovakia up to the year of 1968 (*Loves of a Blonde*, *Black Peter*, *The Firemen’s Ball*), Slovak-made films of L. Lahola (*Sladký čas Kalimagdory* – 1968, *Sweet season of Kalimagdora*) and E. Havetta’s *Slávnosť v botanickej záhrade* (1969, *Botanic-Garden Party*). Lahola’s film was based on the book by Czech author Jan Weiss *Spáč ve zvěrokruhu* (*Zodiac sleeper*). In the book, narrative principles of the grotesque are applied: the main character Jonáš Rebenda ignores the real time; he lives his life in-line with natural year cycles. In the Spring, he is child-like; in the Summer, he is adult-like, in the Autumn he prepares himself for the winter-long sleep (just like a bear), then he sleeps all the Winter through at Kalimagdora’s chalet in the woods. Though the topic itself appears to be apolitical, preferring the grotesque features in the years of loosening the political ties refers to diversion from the official ideology. The grotesque is used to ignore the strictness of the era, political authoritativeness, Stalinian mannerism in the culture. An instance could be provided: Rebenda works as a trainer for Lebduch, a factory owner, and so he takes part at a festive dinner. But, being in his child-like phase, all of a sudden he slips under the table together with his lady companion – as it is only the Spring, he wants to play with her. Sitting under the table, they

watch the foot-game of the jet-set. The grotesqueness of the situation lies in not being noticed by the rest of the society.

E. Havetta's film *Slávnost' v botanickej záhrade* (*Botanic-garden party*) applies "film in the film" principle: the film is in the context of Lumière performance *Arrivée d'un train à Perrache*. The stage-management and directing as such became the main object of the work (Habušícký 1992: 49-50). The grotesque-based playfulness was the reason of banning the film after the Russian Invasion to former Czechoslovakia. The director was not allowed to produce any more films and, due to many reprisals, he died soon after. The grotesque, along with parody, irony and other expressive means, have always been among the many means of laughable culture endangering the totalitarian regime (Dabert 2003: 30 – 40).

Postmodernism counts up on the things that society has turned down – seemingly useless things as trash or rubbish. To put things into a metaphor, "a rubbish dump" or "the trash" (German: Dreck) should be the best expressions. The same is valid for the film art: the same theme, the very same movie is produced again, but different actors, cast and film crew as well as different (subsequent) era are employed (Withalm 1993: 373-382). The same topics are re-written and re-made from old black-and-white movies and put into colourful remake or "adaptation". Playfulness (the art as a game) is established as the main criterion of acceptance; *plagiarism* is the means by which the reader/spectator is effectively influenced (Gadamer 1994: 38). As long as they are interesting and extravagant, past works are being re-written and adapted over and over again.

Literary works and films indirectly alluding to political happenings or ideology belong to the second group. Partially, to this group of artworks, a film by Jiří Menzel *Ostře sledované vlaky* (*Closely Watched Trains*) could be included. The film is based on the book by Bohumil Hrabal. As the film is set into the World War II period of Germans invading the Czech Republic, there is no allusion to the Russians during the entire movie. Despite the fact, the spectator knows that the topic alludes to the Soviet totality. Moreover, it is the very essence of the actualization; de-heroic element is in the direct opposition to the

heroic trends pursued by the totality of Soviet type in general. Artists used the manoeuvre very often (e.g. Polish director K. Zanussi). Grotesque situations are common for the aforementioned movie as well; grotesqueness is pursued by the topic itself (the main character acts as a comic figure from the beginning of the movie up to its end, but then, wrapped in explosives, he throws himself onto a train and so he becomes a hero).

The scene at the end of the first part of a film by Juraj Jakubisko *Tisícročná včela* (1983, *A Thousand Years Old Bee*) should also be approached as grotesque. Martin Pichanda, the main character, dies accidentally: he breaks the bottle containing frozen wine. While eating the wine, he consumes a piece of the broken glass bottle and chokes himself to death. In spite the tragic event and balladic ending, the end of the movie offers comic solution: the coffin bearing the dead body is carried to the cemetery down the hill, undertakers slip on the snowy surface of the hill and the coffin falls down on the snow-covered hillside and speeds down the hill. The grotesque situation is enhanced by the close shot on the coffin speeding downhill with the two men sitting astride on it as if riding the sledge. Tragic situation is replaced by a comic one; the tragic is set on ease, laughter substitutes the mourning. No doubt that a coffin in the role of a sledge creates a very unusual shot, reality is estranged and changed into the grotesqueness. If the main feature of the grotesque is the merging of extremely contradictory elements, e.g. the elements that cannot be joined in reality nor they can stand side by side, then the scene with the coffin containing the dead body and the two men riding on it must be grotesque; the type of grotesque to which Bakhtin refers to as realistic grotesque. Realistic grotesque is characterised by evoking the salutary laughter mirroring the reversed side of reality. Under the influence of this situation (the sequence), the character comes back to life inside the spectators memory and allows them to forget about the tragic moment of dying; the death as such becomes grotesque or funny, at least. When the coffin ends up in a brook, one of the characters reacts addressing the dead: "If the brook was not frozen, he (Pichanda) would have sailed away to the river Váh and then to the sea and maybe to Madagascar island".

Motif of the journey is brought up, particularly Pichanda's desire to travel is alluded. Madagascar stands for the unfulfilled but perpetual desire. The motif itself appears in the movie (and the book) quite often but the dream is never brought to practise. To be more precise, the main character travels as far as Debrecene in both: the movie (Jaku-bisko) and the book (Jaroš). Magic realism prevails in the movie and so the grotesque is constructed upon realistic, or so to say, magical-realistic grotesque.

Literary works and films that have been created after the year 1989 could be included into the third group. It is quite obvious that the nature of grotesque has been changed as well. It does not attempt to capture the totality anymore but tries to capture post-totality and its new motives instead.

Humoresque *Pam para pam* written by P. Vilikovský plays with quotations (Vilikovský 1996: 106-118). Artistic or textual point of view is rather symptomatic: the author provides space for the speeches of the long ago dead characters from XIX<sup>th</sup> century (mayor, vice-district governor in chief, teacher Rotarides) but their utterances contain many allusions to the recent period. From the poetological perspective he employs the trope of "prosopopeia" and, simultaneously, it is an anachronism, e.g. intentional substitution of the time in the text, frequent usage of the words, concepts and motives that were not used in that particular era (the aforementioned characters from the year 1848 are speaking to the microphone so the whole Hungary can hear them). When talking about playfulness and playgiarism, it is necessary to mention the usage of Hungarian sentences, expressions and words followed by strictly academic footnote as if in a lecture or an essay-study etc. The author provides academic explanation of non-interpretable sentences. By doing so, he complicates their clear interpretation. Moreover, the Hungarian sentences are not translated into Slovak but English. The text-composition as such is based on playfulness: the whole structure falls apart into fragments in which presence mingles with near and far future. According to the reasons given, the text can be interpreted only with the help of other texts – empirically based on a radio performance *Ako sa rodil šťastný dnešok* (*How the happy today was born*) and

textbook-based knowledge on Slovak poet Janko Kráľ and his mate in the revolt Rotarides, the teacher, as well as up to date political and journalist slogans and so called “eternal truths”. To conclude the topic, the textual structure is put together by the two thematic composition elements: 1. subsoil of the genre of radio performance from the totalitarian era (interview with particular people but from various eras); 2. perpetual deconstruction of language phrases which, in the end of the day, creates unified (deconstructive unity) text, its homogenization provided by systematic occurrence of grotesque language pun in the structure of “artistic” artefact.

Another artwork, in which the quotation is dominant, is a film by Dušan Hanák (director and screenplay author) *Papierové hlavy* (*Paper heads*). The impulse for making such a movie was the action with the intention to carnavalize the 1<sup>st</sup> May Celebration in the year 1990. Parody was pursued by equipping the participants – the students – with hollow paper heads by costume designer Mona Hafsahl, director’s wife. They put them on their heads and walked straight in the streets (Macek 1996: 21). The slump gave the origin to the idea of processing the documents from Czechoslovak history from 1945 up to the fall of totalitarian system. To provide the idea, the shots from newsreel and scenes from instructive movies by Ministry of Internal Affairs from the period 1945-1989 were used (Macek 1996: 122). The opening night was on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1996 and since then, the movie was awarded by several international and national awards. The top-award was the third place on the 5<sup>th</sup> international documentary film festival in Yamagata, Japan. To find particular parallels with Hanák’s processing method of history in his release, it is necessary to mention Ettore Scola’s *Ballroom* released in 1983. The French history of the period of 1936-1984 is presented by the means of dace and pantomime. *Ballroom* as the genre originated in the Theatre du Campagnol, the place which provided the background for the film realisation (Beierová 1995: 485). Since then, the history presented in the form of dance and singing was processed in Hungary (*Ballroom* is staged in theatre Vígszínház and it is a success). It is quite obvious that Hanák’s movie belongs to a different category; above all, it provides an excellent example of deconstruction of representation.



Dušan Hanák's movie is composed on the two documentary levels: the first level is created by shots from former newsreels mainly in the chronological order, differentiated on the principle of supporters and enemies of the democratic labour class regime (black and white perception of reality); as for the mass (workers and peasants) – apart from the demonstration against the Soviet Invasion in 1968 – it is always assessed positively but so called “class-enemies” are depicted as traitors and black-marked. The second level of the movie is represented by memories of former political prisoners; sometimes the testimonies of victims who were unjustly executed are used (e.g. testimony of Milada Horáková and Rudolf Slánský in the court were used). It is necessary to add that the movie does not use fictive, non-existing people or characters. Fictive or better to say “artistic”, characteristics of the movie are pursued by very random appearance of “paper heads” forming the



third level of the movie. The heads come to the shot in the time of great social changes in the society (finishing with collaborators after W.W.II, so called “February Victory” of labour class in 1948, the Prague Spring in 1968, Velvet Revolution in 1989). Paper heads are the symbol of people who can easily adapt to the new conditions and are able to find their place (as shadow eminences) among the political elite. At the same time, they represent (post)modern metaphor of (anonymous) mask which probably hides a common, non-authentic face and so they provide an example for contemporary art of grotesque. The hidden entity under the grotesque mask is being revealed in the Slánský trial in

the famous speech of J. Urválek, the public prosecutor. As for the film language, the manner of theatre performance enhanced by the false pathos mainly in congress and at 1<sup>st</sup> May celebrations is used. Theatre performance of this kind is rather mocked by the speech of pioneer comrade Barborka. He greets the communist congress in a much exaggerated, non-adequate manner. The zealous speech of the pioneer at the congress can be interpreted as grotesque – the child uses non-adequate and so comic and false expressions. To oppose the speech mastery of communists, the silence of paper heads is introduced. They are sporadically disoriented – mainly in the periods of the Prague Spring and Velvet Revolution.

To conclude the topic: Bakhtin considers Rabelais as one of the most democratic geniuses among all the great names of Renaissance (Dante, Boccaccio, Shakespeare, and Cervantes) and regards him in connection with “folklore point of departure”. The title of the book *“Francois Rabelais and His World”* itself suggests that Rabelais, in the accordance with artistic tendencies of his days, elevated “folksiness” above all artistic endeavours. As Bakhtin’s book can be easily read as a novel, the reader naturally tends to accept omnipotent power of folksiness. The tendency is probably enhanced by our (Slovak) experience of long totalitarian period. The ideology was based on exaggerated role of folksiness; e.g. everything valuable must have been touched by the folksiness itself. Then, it is possible to regard – supported by Bakhtin as well – Rabelais and realistic grotesque as the highest achievement in the genre. In the other types of grotesque, there is lack of salutary laughter. However, the statement is not fully valid, as there is a need to perceive and explain various changes, peripety and function of the grotesque in the particular historical periods. Another type of the grotesque should be added to the already defined three – the postmodern grotesque. Within the European context, the latter type is used to criticize political systems and ideological dogmas of communist provenience.

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## SAMA: THE VIDEO DOCUMENT AS A WAY OF GENERATING KNOWLEDGE

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**Abstract:** "Sama" is the name of a dance: a circular and transcendental dance created in the thirteenth century by Persian Poet Rumi and performed by the Whirling Dervishes. The film sama is an attempt to push the document's boundaries. We have tried to make the viewer feel how the dancer gradually overcomes his own body and becomes the dance, by exploring how the act of filming, and \*film\* as a craft, could permit us to involve the viewer in the experience of the dancer. We wanted our film sama to BE a sama.

We filmed it in Paris, at Voltaire's apartment to emphasize our approach of the dancer's process rather than the religious and mystical ground of the dance (Voltaire is a well known atheist indeed). And there is absolutely no discursive audio explaining the cultural background of the dance: two musicians re-experienced the sama through voice and rhythm, by using an imaginary language.

Some images of sama provide the viewer information on its very nature that no words can explain. The audiences' reactions raise for us the question of the reception of such document in relation to the specific knowledge that video art approaches can generate within audiences, particularly in the context of cross-cultural communication.

### What is *sama*?

*Sama* is the name of a dance. It is often said that it was created in the thirteenth century by Persian Poet Rumi although it is a discussed affirmation. Nahal Tajadod, in her book *Roumi le Brûlé* (Tajadod, 2004: 66), tells us the legend: the old dervish Shams from Tabriz, also called the Bird, took Rumi's hand and they locked themselves inside a room during forty days and forty nights. When they came out of that room, the *sama* was born. Beyond the legend: the *sama* embodies a process of enlightenment. It consists of a circular movement, cyclic and introspective that projects the human being into a paradoxical

space: within. It is a transcendence of the body and existence, and it is usually performed by the whirling dervishes. There isn't one traditional practice of the *sama*: the ritual's forms depend on the community that is performing it. A few contemporary dancers interpret and sometimes assimilate it in contemporary dance. Shahrokh Meshkin Ghalam, the dancer and choreographer who performs the dance for this film is one of them.

Two musicians composed a music specifically for the film: Imen Tnani and Juhamahat. So the final output is more than a video document: it is a created object.

The issues that we had to address in our making process emerge from this single question: how can we use "film" to make a document that would not only tell what a *sama* is but would give the viewer a knowledge about this dance that his witnessing a performance could not afford him?

## Part 1: From Vision to Film

### 1.1 Opinion vs Knowledge

Part of the answer was in the very essence of Sufism and in the definition of the different approaches a human being might have with his/her own spirituality. Sufism belongs to a cultural background generally linked to Islam. But if Islam became a religion, Sufism is not a religion. In a History of Religions introduction, Angelo Brelich points that the etymological sense of the word 'religion', that comes from the latin *religio*, does involve observances, rules but not worship, it involves neither the myths nor the rituals. He reminds that the current sense of this word has its roots in the occidental history: no primitive language, not even latin or greek have a word involving the sense that we now give to the word 'religion' (Brelich, 1999: 7). This dimension of the word projects of course the concept of religion into a dogmatic approach of spirituality: *dogma* in Greek means opinion. It is how we re-formulate an understanding through a number of principles and laws.

Sufism is a *gnostic* approach. The etymology *gnôsis*, that is Greek too, means *knowledge*. A common hypothesis is that the term would come from the Arabic *suf* that means wool, because of the sufis' wool clothes. Also in Arabic, *el-soufiya* is a person who has reached the highest level of spirituality and belongs to *tassawuf*: the esoteric aspect of Islam.

Nevertheless knowledge is definitely what it is about. Sufism emphasizes a direct knowledge of God's mystery and the *sama* embodies Sufis' experience of an intimate union with this mystery or, in other words, the awareness of Being.

Since the *sama* is an experience, since it is a particular state of the conscience, since this is what we wanted to capture and transmit, did it make sense to "document" the dance? Did it make sense just to install a camera and film the performance? How could we reach the inside, the dancer's inside, from the outside?

We thought about the *sama* as a gnostic experience and wondered what could happen if we had our own experience of it from our respective individual fields. We thought we should "make" a new experience: a recorded experience that would include the viewer, so his perception of the dance would not come from what he is told or shown but from what he is feeling. The way we chose for this consisted in re-locating the viewer within a "process" instead of a cultural/spiritual background.

## 1.2 Defusing cultural mechanisms: the location

Another important aspect of this project is the cultural diversity of the team: it gathers four persons from three different cultural backgrounds. Three countries speaking three distinct languages that belong to three different continents: Iran-Asia, Tunisia-Africa and France-Europe. The four of us are interested, in our work, in what links cultures before what distinguishes them and, as a matter of fact, *sama* is the result of a non-premeditated encounter. This is quite an important circumstance that also determined our will to create an object that could be received anywhere and could speak to everyone.

The first strategic choice was the location. I had initially planned to film at the Richelieu Amphitheatre, inside the Sorbonne because

the space is circular and because, in Paris, the Sorbonne is called the ‘Temple of Knowledge’. It was an interesting option in terms of form and meaning. The Sorbonne is a sort of witness of the evolution of the French thought for the last 800 years. It was created in the thirteenth century (like the *sama*?) by a chaplain: Robert de Sorbon who was King Saint Louis’ confessor. It was reformed at the end of the nineteenth century by the third republic that was “*laïque*” —a non-religious republic that acknowledges and allows all worships— and *progressiste*. It was the Republic that led the separation between state and religion at the beginning of the twentieth century. It seemed interesting to us to frame a dance that constitutes an empirical knowledge within an Institution that keeps such intellectual and philosophical process.

Unfortunate circumstances made it impossible to film at the Sorbonne. But this led to a most challenging option to film inside a baroque apartment. The place was surrounded with mirrors, which was completely relevant to the dance as this paper will attempt to explain. And above its formal beauty, it was the apartment where the philosopher Voltaire had died in 1778. So it was another opportunity to film at a place where form and symbols would highlight the empirical qualities of the dance through cultural contrast. Voltaire was a complete atheist.



As I pointed before, Sufism is no religion and the Sufis were actually often persecuted. On the other hand the Iranian Sufism assimilates Iran pre-islamic heritage that consists of a thought based on the duality between Light (embodied by *Ahura Mazda*) and Darkness (embodied by *Ahriman*) and on the adoration of Fire as a manifestation of the Light. That’s why envisaging this dance within a perspective reduced to an Islamic determinism seemed by all means inappropriate.





The Fire Temple in Yazd, Iran. The symbol of Ahura Mazda is visible on its front.

### 1.3 Defusing cultural mechanisms: understanding the dance through its philosophical background

Paradoxically during the making process, the philosophical background showed the way of desertion: desertion of a culture in order to explore Conscience and Being.

As I briefly mentioned earlier, the *sama* is a process of union between the human being and divinity. The Iranian philosopher Sohrwardî (1155 – 1191), the philosopher who rose Zoroastrianism and Platonism from Iran's heritage and integrated them into Iranian Shi'ite mysticism, describes this process as a speculative attitude that goes through four stages. As Henry Corbin underlines, it is important, in the term 'speculative', to understand a sense in accordance with its etymology which is *speculum*: the mirror.

The first stage sees how the human being faces the mirror. This is how he becomes aware that Form is only a reflection. Existence is non-form.

This awareness leads to the second stage: where knowledge and existence meet. The objects of knowledge become parts of Being.

Then the human being becomes the mirror. He contemplates the essence of Existence within and reaches the third stage where he can see that his own essence is not the result of his will but that of the *Unique*.

The ultimate speculative stage is that of the desertion, the cancellation of Ego. *To Be* is nothing but God's extension. Henry Corbin names this "the profession of Unity" (Corbin, 1938).

Unity is thus envisaged as a *non-being* that supposes the annihilation of any inherent temporality and spatiality in the human being.

This is where *Nâ kôjâ abâd* comes from. *Nâ kôjâ abâd*, in Farsi, means *non-place*. Sohrawardi created this term. It is a world: neither terrestrial, nor celestial, but an intermediary world that articulates the terrestrial and the celestial. A level of Sameness —a *speculative* level— where emptiness, as the inner substance of every thing, and form, deserted by materiality, coexist. In the Iranian aesthetics, Art emerges from this non-place. There is for example a comparable dual thought in the Chinese philosophy and traditional painting where Art is an expression of the perfect balance between form and emptiness: between painted and non-painted image (Allegue, 2003). In the Iranian philosophy it also responds to the notion of duality I mentioned earlier in this paper, the duality between Light and Darkness that deeply influenced the Iranian Islam. The Iranian Shi'ism's gnosis poses that an essential Light that only a highly spirited eye can see inhabits every material thing indeed. The poet is said to be able to see this Light (Corbin, 1938).

These considerations allowed us to overcome culturally framed aesthetics and approach a metaphysical concept that projected us into the process of the artistic creation. Thus we had the fundamental idea that potentially responded to our will to make a film that could involve a viewer in the artistic process.

What about form?

## Part two: The way to Emptiness

### 2.1 The frame

Emptiness is essential. Through the *sama* the dancer actually realizes a non-place. It is an Emptiness within that prepares him to receive the outside and reach the awareness of his own being through this union between the inside and the outside. Of course it is a transgression of the body but physicality is still the centre. When Shahrokh whirls during about one hour without stopping, his mind is not gone during the dance. He keeps interacting with the musicians, he also sings with them sometimes. His face expresses an amazing range of feelings. The transcendence is possible thanks to the limitation. It is the clothes, the hair and the skin that allow us see how the body disappears —it does disappear at some point and we only can see non-form—. The dancer's highest level of awareness is, in practice, reached through the excavation of the deepest sensuality.

Two qualities of *film* permit to envisage non-form and emptiness: the movement and the frame.

(...)la matière se définit à la fois par la tendance à constituer des systèmes clos et par l'inachèvement de cette tendance. Tout système clos est aussi communicant. (...) Tel est le premier sens de ce qu'on appelle hors-champ: un ensemble étant cadré, donc vu, il y a toujours un plus grand ensemble, ou un autre avec lequel le premier en forme un plus grand, et qui peut être vu à son tour, à condition de susciter un nouveau hors-champ, etc. L'ensemble de tous ces ensembles forme une continuité homogène, un univers ou un plan de matière proprement illimité. (Deleuze, 1983: 29)



In the Persian miniature it is quite characteristic that the painter makes a few elements of his painting transgress the frame that contains it. What surrounds the painted image contained by the frame is the white page: emptiness. Emptiness exists thanks to the transgression of the frame. It is the movement of the elements of the composed image, projected into the empty space that pre-exists —the non-painted image—, which signifies its presence. We also can note the unrealistic representation of the characters and the house: they are only signified, what does portray them is the whole page —painted and non-painted— of the codex and the movement that creates the transgression.

In the film, we have tried to emphasize this conception of movement through the transgression of the frames. These attempts were formalized by means of different strategies:

- the introduction of a frame within the main frame
- the use of the contrast between colour and black & white
- the exclusion of gravity from the frame
- the use of the mirrors and generally the use of the place's architectural details within the frame
- transparency
- the viewpoint shift
- the music



*Excerpt one – 25 sec*

The first two strategies, the introduction of a frame within the main frame and the use of colour and black & white to create contrast generally work together. It is the most literal interpretation of Persian miniatures and of a *champ/ hors-champ*

duality: the colour and black & white contrast underlines the presence of two frames and the movement makes the transgression all the more visible.



*Excerpt two – 20 sec*

Sometimes the smallest frame is also transparent which emphasized even more the transgression of a delimited space and the de-materialized body. This excerpt also shows how the reflect in the mirror introduces this desertion of corporality.

But beyond a literal interpretation, our aim was to give the viewer a sense of the experience.



*Excerpt three – 1min 38 sec*

Here, in addition to the second frame inside, the use of transparency and colour and black & white contrast, the main frame cuts the dancer's head and legs. He wears black clothes and I accentuated the contrast so even when the viewer catches a

glimpse of his skin, hair and hands at the beginning, he loses them as soon as Shahrokh accelerates the movement. The speed is *his* speed; the acceleration is faithful to his performance. When he whirls faster the viewer loses completely the direction of the movement. That is the reason why this sequence is a little bit longer than the others in the film: to give a first sense of loss of corporality.



*Excerpt four – 35 sec*

Progressively the montage shows the complete disappearance of the body by bringing the viewer into the eye of the movement. We introduce signs of a new place that the viewer can't fully identify yet. These signs are visual and musical. When the viewer

sees light pass through the frame, he also can hear a vibrant and constant sound that disappears as soon as the viewpoint shifts again. The position of the camera also creates an ambiguity between the architectural elements of the place and the dancer's evolution. During the six first minutes I used essentially the images from the fixed camera but after that, most of the images come from the camera I was moving with all around the dancer and the place. In the last part of the film, there are only images of this kind: we never can see the floor.



The viewer is shown where he is at 9min 45 sec (*excerpts five – 1min 10 sec*). His awareness is made possible thanks to the dancer's hand within the frame and to a 'length' that brings him from stillness to movement. Limitation and presence enable us to signify and perceive

non-form. I quoted Deleuze earlier when he wrote that the material is defined by its tendency to constitute closed systems and the incompleteness of this tendency. He also states:

Le tout est donc comme le fil qui traverse les ensembles, et donne à chacun la possibilité nécessairement réalisée de communiquer avec un autre, à l'infini. Aussi le tout est-il l'Ouvert, et renvoie au temps ou même à l'esprit plutôt qu'à la matière et à l'espace.» (Deleuze, 1983: 29) And he adds about the transversal thread: «Mais plus il est ténu (...) mieux le hors-champ réalise son autre fonction, qui est d'introduire du trans-spatial et du spirituel dans le système qui n'est jamais parfaitement clos.» (Deleuze, 1983: 31)

*Sama* attempts to show that the movement, like a body sequence made up of instant-gestures, supposes the passage from a space to another, a physical transgression that is independent from the mental space-time where the action has its origin. The act of moving involves paradoxical spaces and times, since we are memory. To overcome the body within movement is a way to non-existence.

The very action of making an image is thus like a return: it places the human being outside of the space-time. Image consequently brings us back to a non-place, to a non-Time. The choice of bringing the viewer into this particular intersection pushes our understanding of the notions of duality, transgression and process by means of an experimental methodology that gathers theoretical and creative approaches.

## 2.2 The music

Music is truly the breath of *sama*. It was composed by the band Kar-taj who are Imen Tnani, the singer, and Juhamahat, the musician and sound maker.

It is very important to insist on the fact that we worked in absolute interaction: while I was asking the musicians to underline one or another aspect of the montage through music, I kept editing the montage while they were composing the music. They started working on a definitive 13min 40 sec structure but I went on working on details during their composition process: cuts, transitions, sometimes even the order of the sequences within the structure. To keep on questioning our work

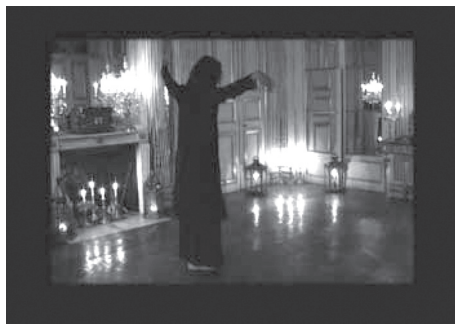
all the time permitted us to finally have a film where images and music are equal partners and fully interdependent.

Imen Tnani is also a visual artist and she is currently doing her PhD. in Aesthetics at the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. She has a visual sensibility that permitted her to receive not only the images of the film but their texture, their rhythm. She has a visual and a musical understanding of a creative process.

Initially I was interested in a multi-layered *a capella* composition but the issue was that the length of the montage. So Juhamahat determined a rhythmic structure that would be the skeleton of the music. He took into account the fact that in PAL video, there are 25 images per second and looked for the tempo that would fit with these 25 images per second. He finally chose a 60 beat per minute tempo: one beat per 25 images. This made perfect sense to all of us given the specific nature of the movement the *sama* generates: circular, cyclic, it has no poses. This is also the specificity of film: the equidistance of the images. Film reconstitutes movement from unspecified and equidistant instants (Deleuze, 1981). On that rhythmic base, they worked on a *ritornello*: a melody that is repeated endlessly and, here, puts the body into motion.

Imen watched the images just twice and then worked on her singing improvising on the rhythmic structure: she was a member of a *Sufi* band in Tunisia and felt intuitively the movement in her voice. She defines this process as part of an inter-disciplinary experience series at the intersection of sensations and interpenetrating feelings, a visual realisation that invites all the physical senses to elaborate Form. She

and Juhamahat did not reproduce an existing model but re-created a *sama* with the same aspiration as the images, transferring it to the musical genre.



*Last excerpt – 1min 55 sec.*

At the beginning of the film, the voice is what projects the



body into movement: she starts *a capella*. Rhythmic elements appear when the dancer starts raising his arms and the instant in which he starts whirling is underlined by a vibrating sound while all the other sounds are suspended. This vibration is the sign of silence-emptiness and in-betweeness: every time the viewer will be at the centre of the *sama*'s circle, a vibrating sound will intervene.

The repetition of the melody but also the fact that Imen is singing in an imaginary language helps creating a state of mind in which the viewer is conscious of the voice, the movement, the rhythm but he is not conditioned by words therefore he can follow easily the flow of the dancer's experience.

### **Conclusion: *sama en devenir***

Kar-taj made a shorter version of the music for which I made a shorter version of the film to be screened on stage while the band performs: *Sama* will keep on *being*. This latest evolution completes the philosophical process of a dance that whirls but never returns to its starting point.

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# THE MODUS OF (UN)CONSCIOUSNESS IN MUSIC PERCEPTION (IN EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE)

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*Music anticipates things that man does not know he lives.*

Miroslav Petříček, jr.

*Words? Music? No, everything beyond those.*

James Joyce

**Abstract:** The paper deals with the meaning and the character of holistic musical experience of “extra-temporal reality” as well as with the fact that the blocked dimensions of unconsciousness are spontaneously stimulated during the experience of music perception. Homeostatic meaning of such de-blocking process is mentioned by David Dunn (interactivity of mind and environment), psychoanalytics Carl Gustav Jung, Marie-Luisa von Franz, Verena Kast and by psychotherapist Stanislav Grof. The essay also deals with a Buddhist concept of multi-dimensional mind (consciousness), which does not employ a dual notion consciousness – unconsciousness. It is about transposition of one (notion of) consciousness into qualitative higher degrees or spheres. One of the methods of their activation in human beings is creativistic perception of multi-dimensional correla(c)tive flow of musical shapes. The integrity (wholeness) of music and (un)consciousness, which is listening to it, comes from their mutually resonant multidimensionality.

1

It was more than five years ago in Nové Zámky, that I came a bit late to the workshop of Susan Rawcliffe, an American ethno-music archaeologist and member of a music ensemble called Many Axes. I missed her introductory lecture and found myself amidst the presentation of the prehistoric mostly wind instruments of the pre-Columbian America.

Immediately, after the first tones coming from the weirdly wheezing “triple ocarina” I was forced to close my eyelids being unprepared for the astounding intensity of the experience. The sound evoked in me an almost archetypal (vividly visual) image of a vast prairie. Rawcliffe explained that the triple miniocarina was in the ancient times used before hunting to drive out evil spirits from the prairie, which in fact pushed me to use the word “archetypal” to describe my experience. Her revitalising improvisations performed on different bizarre instruments (shofar, udu, trombone-didjeridu etc.) were not less impressive, however, the trace of that initial sonic flash have remained and still dwells in me. How and by what was there such a weird imaginative trace so unexpectedly and suggestively activated in the space of my consciousness?

## 2

A very narrow understanding of the phenomenon of consciousness as that of merely rational self(awareness), which ignores the non-verbalisable emotionality and separates it from the realm of intuition and unconsciousness, is inapplicable for the attempt to comprehend the states of consciousness and its otherness during music perception. Lubomír Plesník's rejection of the misleading idea that consciousness is located inside the head as well as mostly František Miko's understanding of consciousness as a qualitatively higher “transposition” of holistic perception throw a radically different light on the reflexion of the unique experience of the existential correla(c)tivity of musical processes. The current music-aesthetic research of consciousness relies more on its abyssal interpretation (as justified in the Jungian psychoanalysis) as the tip of the iceberg of all-embracing psyche<sup>1</sup>, which includes not only conscious but also the profoundly structured and differentiated unconscious processes. This approach to the comprehension of the otherness of consciousness in the mode of the holistic unity of perception and (perceived) music has direct reconstituted

implications on the ontological model of the music work of art, which is indefensible within the limits of its physical materiality.

3

The holistic and psychoanalytical approach to the contemporary music-aesthetic problems is meeting with a lively response also on the ground of Nitra semiotic school, namely in the long-term research of the musicologist Renáta Beličová. In her inspiring two volume work *Reception Music Aesthetics (Introduction and Theory)* the author is defining and defending the space, the subject, the methodology and specifics of the music-reception inquiry as a thought-autonomous alternative to more established conceptions.

Beličová also points out the relations of music perception with unconscious processes: “Musical experience is generated predominantly by the unconscious contents of the listener’s psyché, which is the richest source of his/her spontaneity and authenticity” (Beličová 2003: 80). Her (with the aim of this work) synchronous considerations stand in many points in concord with the view of these notes, but are nevertheless differing from these in the more specific comprehension of consciousness, which (regarding the previous statement – contradictorily) refuses any penetration of the unconscious into the realm of the conscious.

However, the very fact (thus in certain sense ontology) of musical inspiration proves something else. Duke Ellington, being asked where he gets his musical ideas from, answered: “It is only dreaming...”. If the conscious and the unconscious were absolutely separated, would we be able to dream then?<sup>2</sup>

The understanding of the notion and phenomenon of human consciousness in the context of music perception inclines in this text more to its multi-level interpretation, which in the context of Slovak music aesthetics has been dealt with for a long time (since 1970s) and in a subtle way by music composer Roman Berger. In study *Semiotics and Practice* (1994), fifth part *Consciousness – Physics* he argues that

consciousness is not identical with brain or memory, it is not non-differentiate totality, but there is possible to distinguish many integral levels in it and phenomenological postulate of “clear consciousness” – the peak of it – is not equal to creation of arts. In artistic practice we can talk just about oscillation with states of ekstasis, samádhí, satori etc. (Berger 2000: 175)

4

The act of detailed creativistic<sup>3</sup> listening to music is a wholesome perception in which the organic adherence is implicitly processing between the perceiving and the perceived. The category of wholeness can be applied both to the activity and the “object” of perception, just as on their mutual interconnection. Buddha’s well-known koan can serve well for the characterisation of the wholeness of perception of (and) the contemporary music:

...he silently stepped in front of his disciples, holding a white lily in his hand, and left after a while...

It is impossible to verbally fully embrace and seize the meaning of this poetic Zen gesture, which impressed John Cage so much at a time (it can/must not be connected in a way e. g. with the piece 4’33’). By this gesture Buddha demonstrated the fascinating totality of being embodied in the unique unity of a lily and a human being who perceives this flower in its verbally inexpressible essence, unutterable “suchness” and wholeness (and in spite of how paradoxical it may sound, the flower also perceives the human in its own way).

5

Consciousness and unconsciousness are mutually consonant in the process of awareness – that is the conviction of David Dunn, a modern interdisciplinary “da-vincian” artist-scientist relying on his research in the field of analytical philosophy, experimental linguistics, cybernet-

ics, etology, ecology and bioacoustics. In his view this fact also helps to understand that “*the Self*” is getting lost in the external pathways of the wider mental structure (Cseres 2001: 116). Jozef Cseres legitimately applies Dunn’s idea also on “the inexplicable process of the aesthetic adding the meaning to the world”, thus also on the creativistic reception reaction, which is considered by Dunn as the form of interaction between mind and environment (Cseres 2001: 116).<sup>4</sup>

If in the act of awareness we can in one breath talk about the concord of the conscious and the unconscious and at the same time talk about the *mutual* interconnection of (in this way functioning) mind and environment, it all means that we come to the de-blocking interaction with what is in the “exterior” just as synchronously in the “interior” of our psyche. In the holistic context of the creativistic hearkening and the correla(c)tive musical shape, our attention should therefore be also focused on the latently present “galaxies” of our unconsciousness. It is because these are significantly activated during the music perception.

## 6

Carl Gustav Jung’s co-worker Marie-Louise von Franz, who worked on research into such topics as the mythological background of fairy-tales, the ontology of simple numbers in the context of coincidence, vaticination, alchemy and synchronicity, people’s pre-death dreams or creational myths from different parts of the world, contributed significantly to the recognition of the ungraspable phenomena of the unconsciousness. It draws a (maybe for someone) surprising conclusion that even the strictly rational world has a strong, even though invisible relationship with the archetypal universe of our unconsciousness. Franz understands its deepest and at the least comprehensible layer – the collective unconsciousness as a field of psychic energy consisting of “excited” points – of mutually contaminating archetypes which crucially influence our (not only rational) conscious state (Franz 2001: 84-86).

Her colleague Verena Kast focuses on the relationship between the unconscious and the imaginative within the analytical modus of psychoanalysis. According to Kast, the imagination conditions all creative solutions – in the line with Immanuel Kant, she considers it a “necessary ingredient of perception itself” (Kast: 1999: 17). She sees imagination as not only the basic principle of human processing of information and emotions, but also – and it is important in the sequence of these note sketches – as a meeting space of consciousness and unconsciousness. Referring to Jung’s and Corbin’s research, she claims that creatively active imagination is a bridge, a mediator, between the visible and the invisible, between the physical and the spiritual worlds: “This dialogue between me and my unconscious is a prerequisite for the process of individualisation, which is a psychic phenomenon in the course of which a person is becoming the one who he/she really is” (Kast 1999: 18).

In this way we maintain a consonant, simultaneous “dual-dialogue” having its correla(c)tive sound coming from outside and its intimately (un)known voices of our agitated inner being waken up by the sound during the implicitly imaginative, creativistic music perception. These are two qualitatively multiplying dialogues in one (the internal and external dualism seems to be losing its foundation in this musical “being-otherwise”).

## 6

The beginning of disintegration of a human being was reflected already by expressionistic and cubistic modernism. Its consummation has become, however, one of the main themes of the post-modern paradigm of art. Pessoaque, Borgesque, Warholian or Shermanian labyrinths of self-multiplication of (the same but still different) face have bared antinomic ambiguity of our illusory certainties more than anything else.

Another example of artistic articulation and reflexion of disintegrated (un)consciousness is the following project of special contemporary music group Palinckx (NL/UK), which has created many interest-



ing, taxonomically chameleonic records since 1980s. Palinckx devoted its attention to the subject of multiplied inward nature, too, in the extraordinary multimedia *Henry's Triumvirate* with subtitle *15 Scenes about a Threesome Man*. *Henry* was written by Jacq Palinckx (music) and Han Buhrs III (libretto & texts) and was premiered in 2001 at Dutch Korzo Theatre in cooperation with the rest of the members of Palinckx, chamber Asko Ensemble (conducted by Martin Fonse), dance group Drie Ons (in choreography of Ives Thuwis) and the video-environment of H. Grünewald & R. Jagers. This intermedia „wild mixture of high lyrics and low comedy“ makes visible and audible the bizarre triple world of the main character: his schizophrenic triplicity – Henry himself, Mr. Bones and self-reflecting „me“ – is reflected in almost the whole compositional structure and levels of the work. It determines e. g. a separation of involved artists: Henry's three alter ego are presented by the three singers (Han Buhrs, Joop van Brakel, David Eeles), the three players of Palinckx (Jacq Palinckx – guitar, objects, Bert Palinckx – double-bass, Alan Purves – drums, percussions), the three trio of Asko Ensemble and the three woman dancers (his vision of a person he meets...).

I do not want to reveal any plots of the story, after all they can be interpreted differently as well as the symbolism of the three persons in one (Mr. Bones can personify boundaries of the physical finitude, Henry can represent lustful animalism and „me“ can remain an illusion of consciousness; They can but need not, too). Beckettian sujet of Han Buhrs, inspired by the poet John Berryman's *Dream Songs*, can by itself draw you into a whirlpool of simultaneously or successively speaking Henry's voices because the metaphor of extremely contradictory triplication refers directly to the tricky games of human ego.

Jacq Palinckx transforms Henry's "threefaceness" to the music in a unique way: he exposes various compositional approaches to mutual mutations in his heretic alchemy where the borders between written abstract parts, hard rock, neo-be-bop, musical happening, and song are erased. Jacq's situational musical-semiotic game of confusion of different musical languages is sharply focused and expresses Henry's world(s) in a very close-fitting way. Keeping the balance in different

style masques, intelligent changes of moods, fresh arrangements as well as perfect interpretation of every musician are contributions to a profound impressive form of musical materialization of Henry's universe.

According to the Polish writer and "dissident" of structuralism Witold Gombrowicz there are two opposite kinds of humanism: the first forces the man to kneel down to "Art" and to adore "Work of Human Culture" while the other one spur him/her to defiance, sovereignty and independency on that idolatry. He thinks, however, the most authentic style is able to imply both tendencies corresponding to discrepancy of our nature. Palincx's *Henry* belongs, I think, just to this kind of artistic expression.

7

One of the reasons why my attention of interpretation is focused often on intuitive (improvised) music consists in the accentuating the relationship of intuition and unconsciousness, which is strikingly presented in common real time and space of a musician as well as a listener. In the space of their creative/creativistic imaginative thinking and "the suspicion of something else" special communicational "arteries" are appearing between (seemingly) remote "galaxies" of unconscious contents and "planet" of consciousness, which generates meanings. The intuition as a herald of unconsciousness teaches us to be sensitive to "suchness" of existence – it makes us to be able to receive things as they are in their enigmatic uniqueness. Intuitive suggestions plays important role in the distinction process of musical sonic impulses as well as in their conscious and existential "evaluation".<sup>5</sup>

8

Buddhism interprets consciousness in deeper sense of its multi-levelness connected with the motif of five *shandha* (mutually operating

essential parts of human being).<sup>6</sup> It subtly distinguishes five functionally inseparable, graduating dynamics of levels of consciousness:

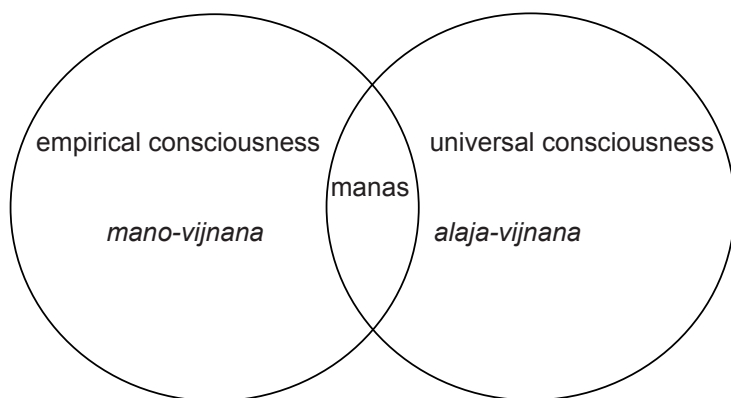
- level of sensual contact (*rupa-skandha*)
- emotional level (*vedana-skandha*)
- discursively and intuitively distinctive level (*sanja-skandha*)
- level of creative will (*samskara-skandha*)
- spiritual level (*vijnana-skanda*) which involves and coordinates all above (Govinda 1994: 72).

Within the framework of the last of the mentioned levels, in (from European view maybe paradoxical) circle return to senses, this conception differentiates consciousness of seeing, listening, smelling, tasting, touching and intellectual consciousness: all mentioned in complex called *mano-vijnana* (it can be more or less equal to usual understanding of consciousness) and also spiritual consciousness (*manas*): “The object of seventh consciousness (*manas*) is not only the world of senses, but that eternally running flow of consciousness which is limited neither by birth or death, nor by any individual form of appearance” (Govinda 1994: 72). In certain explanatory simplification we can comprehend *manas* as the field of (personal and part of collective) consciousness, which is appearing as the most inner nucleus of it.

It is evident that Buddhistic comprehension does not use the notion unconsciousness. An advantages of this “absence” are recognizable. Terminologically, in Jungian psychoanalysis the procreative pair consciousness – unconsciousness implicates *dual* understanding of psyche, which can put the members of this pair to distinct (op)position (it can cause immanently many misunderstandings; one of them is mistaken image of impossibility of mutual permeability of consciousness and unconsciousness). Buddhists do not have to solve this problem because their view applies qualitative transpositions of *one* – (notion of) consciousness to higher degrees and levels. (This view is very inspiring especially in the context of the research of music wholeness of the perceiving and the perceived.)

*Manas*, however, is not the final level but a mediator, “meeting-place” of individual-empirical consciousness (*mano-vijnana*) and all existence involving universal consciousness (*alaja-vijnana*), which

is unchangeable, stable, free of egoism, distinction, greed and hate (Govinda 1994: 72).



Scheme taken from Lama A. Govinda's book *The Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*.

If human being is dependent just on the world of senses and intellect (*mano-vijnana*), *manas* as an organ of inner consciousness and seeing atrophies to an ego – to an illusion of separation of his/her consciousness<sup>7</sup> and self-importance. If (s)he turns his/her inward eyes and ears from individual (in)to universal, then consciousness of *manas* can become a spiritual instrument of communication and participation on transcendental intelligence(*arja-jnana*) as well as a point, a place of balance between *mano-* a *alaja-vijnana* (Govinda 1994: 73-76).

To bring about this state of (un)consciousness is possible by regular meditation, Zen sitting or praying in general. Creation of music and its creativistic perceiving can contribute to generate it.<sup>8</sup> For example, in Indian culture the main significance of music is to calm and extend human consciousness and enable it to perceive divine influences. Pre-Renaissance Music in Europe had the same mission (Šťastný 1991: 109) – not by chance many composers of modern period in 20<sup>th</sup> century (Debussy, Stravinsky, Bartók, Hindemith, Honegger, Cage and

others) were inspired in their works by this ancient era. Postmodern age in its “senile phase” (E. Bondy) could also benefit from dialogical actualisation of this mission.

9

Trans-genre American digital marimba player and composer Amy Knoles, co-founder of the chamber group E.A.R. Unit (which has co-operated with John Cage, Earle Brown, Elliott Carter, Morton Feldman, Steve Reich, Pierre Boulez, Karl-Heinz Stockhausen, John Adams Frank Zappa and others) devotes her solo artistic attention to so called video-noise compositions. Their specification consists in interactive connection of her free interpretable pieces opened to intuitive music approaches (e. g. from projects *Men in The Cities* /1999/ and *2x10x10x10+1* /2001/) with a video-graphic art of Richard Hines. In real time they mix audiovisual material of different origin and proveniences (adjusted shots and sound samples of birds, people’s voices taken from the streets in Los Angeles, of kids from Inner City Arts, theatrical group on Neuropsychiatric Institute UCLA, of poets Ch. Bukowski, D. Mac Iver etc.) including film scanning of details of environment where they are creating video-sonic performances.

The results of their cooperation are unique intermedia fusions of mutually intensified (said in Deleuzian way) “picture/sound-movements”. Viewer-listener can deal with new, in real time created intermedia work of art *sui generis*. Its specific otherness is a consequence of dialogical confrontation and intensification of the qualities of two autonomous, transparently processual artistic media. Pars pro toto I can mention last piece of their performance in concert cycle of contemporary music called Hermes’ Ear in Nitra in 2003. Knoles’ unhampered harmonies of transforming “liquid” rhythms and “confusion” of voice samples in the introduction percolated through “chaos” of dark amorphous smoke diaphragms, which were lately illuminated by blueness of summer sky. Knoles in following quotations of *Exposure*

piece has calmed to minimum of subtly cogent tones while Hines created impressive visual moving pictures of the azure sky.

After the concert Richard Hines verified my opinion that it was kind of imagine metaphor of “rebirth” in spiritual dimension. An intensity of archetypal experience from the final piece of Knoles’s and Hines’s intermedia performance was comparable with the “flashpoint” during Susan Rawcliffe’s play (mentioned in the first of these motif sketches). Difference between them resided just in the way of its receiving (the important changes can also happen sequentially, too).

Since 2004 Amy Knoles has been stepping over the conventional bounds of intermedia concert also with Polish experimental composer and „magus“ of optical or kinetic electronics Marek Choloniewski in duo called Natural Plastic. Except composed pieces played on instruments and combined with impressive videographics (*Global Mix* či *Passages*) they control a course of bizarre electronic sounds by different movements of hands or light of little lamps in front of clusters of special digital optical and kinetic sensors on the floor, music-stands or on their bodies (compositions *Dark & Light Zone* or *Face*). Natural Plastic creates a kind of sonic temporal-spatial sculpting – Knoles and Choloniewski do a musical carpentry of fascinating electro-acoustic plastic art, which makes a dialogue between potential of actual expressive means and almost “metaphysic” dimension of their artistic expression audible, visible, shortly real.

The modus of consciousness while perceiving the multidimensional “else-being” of music cannot be classified as non-standard. Its difference, however, is directly connected to the following facts. Research done in the area of “in-depth” analytical and transpersonal psychology (apart from thought concept so far presented in these texts) speaks for the holistic understanding of the unity of music and its creativistic perception. Consequences for music-aesthetic research should be drawn

from its frequently empirically and experimentally confirmed knowledge basement associated with extraordinary states of consciousness.

The transpersonal psychology trying to clarify the mysteries of human psyché is making findings that are very close to the mentioned Buddhist spiritual wisdom (even transpersonal psychology does not work with the term of unconsciousness). It turns upside down the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm according to which the conscious should be just a physiological “product” of the brain: The brain is just a mediator of consciousness, being a mere component of the “consciousness field” with the capital “C” which is not dependant on it (Grof, Bennet 1993: 192). This finding of psychiatrist and psychotherapist Stanislav Grof is supported by long-term research into extraordinary states of consciousness, where he focused on its broadening and expanding (both inside the general concept of time and space and outside of it).

By this he builds on the exploration of Carl Gustav Jung who was convinced the psyche sometimes works a-causally, outside the framework of the time-and-space laws of causation (the discovery of synchronicity) and that the transpersonal world exists independently of us. Grof forms a postulate of a multi-level holotropic (focused on the whole) consciousness in which our “operating” consciousness represents just “the ground floor”. One may enter his/her latently present “higher storeys” not solely by means of the “lift” of para-psychological trances. (S)he may get a different “view” also by climbing on the “stairs” of a music experience.

The reason for this is that the creativistic perception of the multi-level correla(c)tive flow of musical shapes spontaneously drags him/her into a different mode of (un)consciousness and subtly activates his/her (un)suspected poly-dimensionality. Both the essential wholeness of a musical work and its growing importance in a perceiving consciousness result from their mutually resonating multi-dimensionality. The stated facts have a reconstructing impact upon the ontological status of a music work of art, which exists only in the (un)consciousness of a creativistic listener in the state of existentionally mutual union (integrity) of music and its listener.

Concrete musical expression stimulates peculiar contents and dimensions of (un)consciousness. Different ones are stimulated by concrete improvised musical piece, different ones by poetics of musical happenings of John Cage's pieces. Connexion between a specificity of concrete music style and equal modus of (un)consciousness (or spontaneous activation of creative/creativistic potentiality of self-cultivation of man in wholeness of music and its perception) should become the matter (not only) of current music therapy but also of existential, holotropic music aesthetics.<sup>9</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Notion *psyche* in Jung's psychoanalysis can be understood as the unity of consciousness and (personal and collective) unconsciousness.
- <sup>2</sup> Unconscious is presented not only in conscious but also in perceiving (in which perception of colour or sound is not passive reflection of property of object, but it is always colour and sound for us – as Jung mentions, it is psychological phenomenon of projection of subject). Nuclear physicist and molecular biologist Jeremy Hayward in his text *Ecology and Experience of Sacredness* writes that most of neural physiologists agree that perceiving is the process into which signification, motivation and emotional answer are entering in deeply unconscious levels. (Hayward 1990: 58).
- <sup>3</sup> Alternative adjective *creativistic* is used in this book with an inclination to express non-identity of the nature of creativity in the process of perceiving the art and the act of artistic creation. It can help to avoid possible misunderstandings which conventional using of adjective *creative* for both cases can produce.
- <sup>4</sup> David Dunn claims that in virtue of interaction of mind and surrounding environment we can see and feel how our individualized mind becomes wider to apprehend something we did not expect to be a part of us (Cseres 2001: 116-117).
- <sup>5</sup> Czech semiotician Zdeněk Mathauser in discussion of symposium *Semiotic Modelling of World in Art* in Nitra (2003; dedicated to memory of Anton Popovič) talked about aspect of intuitive, inwardly lightened knowledge, too. According to him an intuition (as something what is not possible to derive from empiric presumptions) is kind of meta-intention at the beginning of shape perceiving, while in the final phase (generating of meaning) it is presented in consciousness in the field of "supervision". Both sides of the "double intuition" are not continually connected.
- <sup>6</sup> I apply different ideas and concepts of (mainly) oriental cultural context as models on which I can methodologically demonstrate some important coherences in comparative analogies.



- <sup>7</sup> An image of personal “Self” as a separated ego is not considered illusory in Buddhism only. “A man lives himself/herself, his/her thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest – it is certain optical illusion of consciousness” (Grof, Bennet 1993: 91): Author of this sentence is Albert Einstein.
- <sup>8</sup> As Edwin Prévost writes in already quoted text that there is only one God – it is consciousness itself. He also points out that by means of pray, philosophy or creativity art becomes a mediator by which we can contact and generate consciousness (Prévost 2000: 2).
- <sup>9</sup> The text is slightly developed version of the study from Július Fújak 2005: *Musical Correla(c)tivity. Notes On Unconventional Music Aesthetics*. Nitra: Institute of Literary and Artistic Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra.

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## PHOTOGALLERY OF THE SYMPOSIUM



Opening of the Symposium by the Head of CPU in Nitra Prof. Libor Vozár



Prof. Eero Tarasti



Proceedings of the Symposium



Participants of the Symposium



Jozef Lupták (cello) in old Concert hall of Region House in Nitra



Ambassador of Finland Mr. Rauno Viemerö with his wife

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