FROM PERSON TO NONPERSON:
MAPPING GUILT, ADIAPHORA, AND AUSTERITY

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ISSN 1392-0588 (spausdintas)
ISSN 2335-8769 (internetinis)
2014. 62

SUMMARY. As we learn from our political history, we can withdraw from our ability to empathize with other individuals' pain and suffering. At the same time, we can get back to this ability – yet this doesn't say a thing about our capability to be equally sensitive and compassionate about all troubled walks of life, situations, nations, and individuals. We are able to reduce human beings to things or non-persons so that they awaken only when we ourselves or our fellow countrymen are hit by the same kind of calamity or aggression. This withdrawal-and-return mechanism only shows how vulnerable, fragile, unpredictable, and universally valid human dignity and life are. This article is an attempt to map this mechanism theoretically through the concepts of guilt, adiaphora, and austerity.

KEYWORDS: adiaphora, austerity, Devil (evil), guilt, modernity, precariat, sensitivity.

THE QUESTION OF GUILT

Immediately after WW2, Karl Jaspers wrote a landmark study *Die Schuldfrage* (The Question of Guilt, 1947) in which he addressed and articulated philosophically the question of German guilt. As Jaspers felt that his nation not only gravely and mortally sinned but committed unspeakable crimes against humanity, the question as to whether the nation *en masse* can be blamed and held accountable for war crimes was far from somewhat detached or naïve. It was straight to the point that Jaspers worked out a pattern for such a philosophical debate by defining four categories of guilt: criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical. He specified these categories as follows: *criminal guilt* (direct involvement in crimes and violations of laws); *political guilt* (inherited from political leaders or institutions whose actions we endorse as citizens or, worse, as political operators and voices of lies and organized hatred); *moral guilt* (for crimes against people from which we cannot be absolved on the grounds of our political loyalty and civic obedience); and *metaphysical guilt* (for staying alive or doing too little or nothing to save the lives of our fellow human beings where war crimes and other felonies are committed).

Jaspers insisted that whereas the criminal and the political guilt of Germans were directly related to crimes committed or orchestrated by flesh-and-blood individuals in Nazi Germany, moral and metaphysical guilt could not escape from the generations to come, at least due to the fact that Germans will continue sharing their language, collective sentiment, and a sense of common history. As long as people feel their attachment and commitment to their society, they would have no way out of the predicament of present guilt for the past other than through the internalization of the drama of one's parents (see Jaspers, 1947).

The sense of guilt seems to have become a watershed between the postwar European ethos and a non- or anti-European mindset marked and permeated by blunt denial of any guilt of one's nation in its recent past. As the French philosopher Pascal Bruckner suggested in his provocative book, *The Tyranny of Guilt*, the excess of guilt has become a characteristically European political commodity which is not necessarily linked to our genuine moral sensitivities; instead, it could be an ideological tool to silence the opposing camp or to stigmatize the political elite we dislike (see Bruckner, 2010). This is especially evident in the case of Western Europe's colonial guilt or that of American guilt for its racist past.

The strongest embodiment of the ethics of guilt in politics was German Chancellor Willy Brandt with his tour de force in the moral sense – when he kneeled twice, first in the Warsaw Ghetto, Poland, and then in Israel at Yad Vashem, the World Center for Holocaust Research, Documentation, Education and Commemoration. These were heroic and noble actions of public repentance before the world for the crimes and sins of his nation. In fact, they were far from mere gestures of a defeated foe, for there was no reason for Brandt to do that – the state is the state, and the individual, even if she or he happens to be its head, can hardly establish a public repentance or apology as a viable state policy.

Therefore, the state that kneels and apologizes, as in the case of Willy Brandt, violates the Hobbesian model of the modern state: the state that never admits its mistakes or regrets its faults, the state that never allows room for anything other than naked power. Power is truth, and truth is power: this is how the Hobbesian logic of power speaks. Evil is nothing other than powerlessness, vice is all about weakness; whereas virtue lies solely in prowess and the survival of the fittest. International law and all norms and values are subject to change in accordance with a great power's top priorities and needs. We respect the sovereign whenever and wherever we see one, yet we despise any kind of No Man's Land (which we create, support, and arm ourselves so that it is able to disrupt any independent and dignified forms of life wherever these tend to appear) seeing that human life there is nasty, brutish, and short: this is the real message of the New Leviathan manufactured by Vladimir Putin's Russia.

Could we have possibly have imagined the head of the former USSR issuing an apology for the heinous crimes and despicable conduct of its military, officials, the elite, and state machinery in general? Could we imagine any heads of present-day Russia ever offering an apology to the state whose existence they have undermined if not ruined?

The answer is quite simply a clear "no." Germany and Russia are close only on the surface of politics. The pacifist society created in postwar Germany coupled with their successful Ostpolitik in the 20th century (which seems to have blinded the German political elite that lost its track in dealing with Putinism) poorly camouflages the fundamental difference between the two former aggressors, one of which has radically changed its paradigm in politics while the other chose to stay the course in the ugliest way. For whereas Germany decided to be the first truly non-Hobbesian state in the modern world, Russia has always been and still continues to be obsessed with how to revive and reenact a predatory, unrepentant, and profoundly immoral political world in the 21st century.

Instead of getting stuck with Samuel Huntington's concept of the clash of civilizations which underestimated the gulfs and moral abysses within Europe itself, we should try to understand the clash of two types of statehood, which is really what is at stake now. This is the clash of Thomas Hobbes and Willy Brandt in their new incarnations. And the fact is that Russia can become a European state with a future only when it proves able to offer an apology to Ukraine, thus settling Russia's historical and moral accounts.

THE DEVIL IN POLITICS

What does the Devil in politics signify? Does it make sense to switch to theology and demonology in discussing seemingly all-too-human aspects of modern life? History teaches us that it does make sense to do so. The twentieth century shows that the Devil in politics signifies the arrival of forms of radical evil which manifestly devalue life, self-worth, dignity, and humanity. Instead, these evils come to pave the way for fear, hatred, and the triumph over someone's destroyed freedom and self-fulfillment.

Everything starts with robbing human individuals of their privacy, secrets, mysteries, and the most intimate aspects of life. European modernity and especially Baroque literature was full of such early manifestations of the Devil's spell and touch. It's enough to recall Luis Vélez de Guevara's *El Diablo cojuelo* (The Devil Upon Crutches), a seventeenth-century text where the devil has the power to reveal the insides of the houses, or a variation of this theme in Alain-René Le Sage's novel *Le diable boiteux* (see Bauman and Donskis, 2013).

What early modern writers took as a devilish force aiming to deprive human beings of their privacy and secrets has now become inseparable from reality shows and other actions of willful and joyful self-exposure in our self-revealing age. The interplay of religion, politics, and literary imagination, this notion of the Devil is manifestly what's behind modern European art: just recall Asmodea from *The Book of Tobias*, a female version of the devil, depicted in Francisco de Goya's painting *Asmodea*.

In his analysis of the emergence of the symbols of the rebellion/subversion of the established order, Kavolis traced the symbolic designs of evil understood as interpretive frameworks within which we seek answers to the questions raised by our time about ourselves and the world around us. Prometheus and Satan are taken here as core mythological figures and symbolic designs to reveal the concepts of evil that dominated the moral imaginations of pre-Christian and Christian thinkers and writers. Whereas Prometheus manifests himself as a trickster hero whose challenge to Zeus rests not only on his natural enmity to Olympic gods but on his compassion for humanity as well, Satan appears in the Bible as the one who subverts the universal order established by God, and, therefore, bears full responsibility for all manifestations of evil that result from this subversion.

Kavolis's work in cultural psychology provides a subtle and penetrating analysis of the models of evil as paradigms of secular morality and of the models of rebellion as contrasting modes of cultural logic. In this way he offers his insights into the emergence of the myth of Prometheus and that of Satan. Prometheus emerges in Kavolis's theory of the rise of modernity as a metaphor for technological progress/technologically efficient civilization combined with a kind of sympathetic understanding of, and compassion for, the urges and sufferings of humankind. Satan is interpreted as a metaphor for the destruction of legitimate power and of the subversion of the predominant social and moral order.

In this manner, Kavolis developed some of his most provocative and perceptive hints as to how to analyze the symbolic logic of Marxism and all major social or political revolutions – aspects of which are at some points Promethean, and at others Satanic. Each modernity (for Kavolis spoke of numerous and multiple "modernities," each of them as ancient as civilization itself) or civilization-shaping movement, if pushed to the limit, can betray its Promethean and/or Satanic beginnings (Kavolis 1977: 331–344, Kavolis 1984: 17–35, Kavolis 1985: 189–211, Kavolis 1993).

A valuable implication for literary theory and critique, this standpoint underlined Kavolis's insights into Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. With sound reason Kavolis noted that even the title of Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, was deeply misleading – the obviously Satanic character, Frankenstein, who challenged the Creator of the universe and of the human being, was misrepresented there as a sort of modern Prometheus.

Along with Prometheus and Satan, we employ a gallery of literary personages and heroes who are the embodiments of our modern political and moral sensibilities: Don Juan, Don Quixote, Shylock, Othello, or Macbeth. To this list I add some historical persons, thinkers, and writers who came to shape our sensibilities, such as Niccolò Machiavelli, William Shakespeare, or the Marquis de Sade. It is precisely within this interpretive context that Stendhal may well be credited for having deeply understood the philosophical meaning and cognitive value of civilization-shaping characters and their sensibilities that are inseparable from the modern world.

Therefore, the Devil in politics is far from a fantasy. It comes to the fore in many guises, one of them being the subversion and destruction of a universal or at least a viable social and moral order. Yet the Devil may appear as the loss of memory and sensitivity resulting in mass psychosis. Both aspects are richly represented and covered by modern Russia, the country whose writers strongly felt and lucidly described the touch of radical evil whose essence lies in a deliberate rejection of human self-worth, dignity, memory, sensitivity, and their powers of association and compassion.

In a Eastern European perspective, we learn from its writers that fatal forgetting and oblivion is a curse of Eastern and Central Europe. In one of the greatest novels of the twentieth century, a work of genius and of warning, and also a Faustian tale about a woman's deal with the Devil to save the love of her life, a tormented novelist confined to a mental asylum, *The Master and Margarita* (written in 1928–1941 but published heavily censored only in 1966–1967), Mikhail Bulgakov confers to the Devil an additional and, perhaps, pivotal aspect of his power (see Donskis, 2011).

The Devil can doom a human being to be confined to non-person and non-entity in their own memory. By losing their memory, people become incapable of any critical questioning of themselves and the world around them. By losing the powers of individuality and association, they lose their basic moral and political sensibilities. Ultimately, they lose their sensitivity to another human being. The Devil, who safely lurks in the most destructive forms of modernity, deprives humanity of the sense of their place, home, memory, and belonging.

ADIAPHORA

Back when the Sąjūdis movement for Lithuanian independence was just beginning in the late 1980s, we encountered Georgian filmmaker Tengiz Abuladze's film *Repentance* and thought of it as a sensation or even a miracle, this film about the

invasion by an almost Satanic totalitarian system of the human soul, taking away its sensitivity and memory. The destruction of the ancient holy place in the city is synchronized with William Shakespeare's 66th sonnet, memorized by heart by the local murderer and dictator Varlam Aravidze and read by him to his future victims. It was a wonderful performance of an aria from Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Il Trovatore* (the cabaletta *Di quella pira*).

After his death, a woman appears whose family was murdered by the monster and who cannot come to terms with the idea that the remains of Varlam Aravidze be peacefully returned to the land of Georgia. It ends with the murderer's son being convinced that something is not right and refusing to bury his father, having come to the realization that the loss of conscience and human sensitivity is too large a price to pay for remaining loyal. Failing to recognize the crimes of the past, the family's and the entire nation's present fails to congeal, and the present becomes instead the hostage and victim of the lie. Abel Aravidze's son, the grandson of the murderer Varlam, is unable to bear the burden of shame and pain for the destroyed destinies of the town's people, whose lives had become mere details or insignificant trifles in the family's stories about their proud past and heroism.

I am talking about the Shakespearian dilemma which the Georgian film director understood so well in presenting his immortal film. What is more important: the historical tale which inspires the town and morale among its citizens, or the truth and conscience? Can these things in general coexist peacefully? Should small details and unimportant matters – which you will in any case not be able to preserve for the whole of the people with whom the current and future generations must live – be sacrificed for the sake of the heroic narrative?

Zygmunt Bauman has developed the theory of the adiaphorization of consciousness. He says that during times of upheaval and at critical historical junctures or intense social change, people lose some of their sensitivity and refuse to apply the ethical perspective to other people. They simply eliminate the ethical relationship with others. These others don't necessarily become enemies or demons, they are more like statistics, circumstances, obstacles, factors, unpleasant details and obstructing circumstances. But at the same time they are no longer people with whom we would like to meet in a "face to face" situation, whose gaze we might follow, at whom we might smile or to whom we might even turn or return in the name of recognizing the existence of the Other.

People who have lost their sensitivity for a shorter or longer time are no demons. They simply remove certain people or even entire groups from their sensitivity zone. As the Greek Stoics of antiquity and later religious reformers and thinkers in the Renaissance believed, there are things which are in reality inessential

and unimportant, matters over which there is no point to argue or cross swords. This kind of unimportant thing is called an *adiaphoron* (Greek neuter singular, ἀδιάφορον, from ἀ- , a negative prefix marker, + διάφορος, "different," yielding "indifferent") and the plural is *adiaphora*. An example of its usage is found in a letter that Philipp Melanchthon wrote to Martin Luther in which he claimed the Catholic liturgy to be an adiaphoron, hence making it pointless to argue about it with the Catholics.

A silent agreement to abandon and reject the ethical dimension in human exchanges is the very essence of adiaphora.

CIVILIZATION OF THE YOUNG

What happened to Lithuania after 1990 was something that calls for in-depth exploration and rather sophisticated insight. The first rebellious and breakaway republic in the former Soviet Union, Lithuania blazed the trail for the rest of the collapsed Soviet empire by becoming a member of NATO and joining the EU. This history reads like a success story setting the Baltic states as an example of a nearly miraculous break with the past. Yet Lithuania got on another track of modernity. Totalitarian modernity died before our very eyes. Long live liquid modernity, as Zygmunt Bauman would say.

The Cold War was marked by a sense of the economic, political, and moral superiority of the West (itself a concept of the Cold War era) over its totalitarian rivals, first and foremost the Soviet Union. After 2004, almost immediately after the accession of the Baltic states to the EU, the new global crisis began and quickly buried the euphoria of Eastern and Central Europe but also washed away all of Francis Fukuyama's anticipations of the end of history related to a seemingly global embrace of liberal democracy with the end of ideological politics. That was not to be.

The differences between Western and Eastern-Central Europe in terms of economic might, overall potential, purchasing power, and quality of life remained high. The sense of superiority over the rest of the former Soviet Union that the Baltic states had shared and enjoyed as "the West of the USSR" began disappearing. Instead of a sense of pride and all high hopes to reenact history restoring social solidarity and the belief in a shared project for the future, Lithuania found itself overwhelmed by a sense of bitter disenchantment with its own state, rigid and senseless bureaucracy, lack of respect for ordinary citizens, profound problems with human rights, and the like.

This led to a disturbing move – if we are to believe official statistics (which some say are too sanguine), nearly half a million people left Lithuania over the past ten

years. For large nations, such as Ukraine and Poland, similar figures would hardly pose an existential threat. Yet for tiny Lithuania (less than three million people) they certainly do. No matter how much lip-service we pay to social and academic mobility in praising the ambition and brilliance of young Lithuanians up to the skies, the fact remains that we are in a painful process of slowly losing a vital opportunity to reform, renew and refurbish our academia and political life. Letting go of more than half a million people many of whom are highly educated and creative individuals capable of changing or at least significantly influencing the moral and political climate in the country is no joke. It's a trajectory for the future.

The brain drain is a painful challenge to Lithuania, as the country is losing the best of its young people, would-be scholars, artists, business people, even public figures, policy makers, and statesmen as well. A sincere wish to spend more time elsewhere before going back to one's country, no matter how human and natural, may turn out to be a form of self-deception, as it is becoming increasingly difficult to go back once one has started a new life somewhere else.

Lithuania will survive this ordeal. Some young people will return, others will not, but their presence in Lithuania even when they're abroad may be felt through their ideas, feelings, affections, and silent dedications. As long as they symbolically participate in Lithuania's life by reading its news and controversial stories, by debating its political projects and decisions, by feeling injured by its iniquities, and so on, Lithuania will grow and benefit from this second voice in its politics and culture. The worst thing that may happen would be total indifference and forgetting. Living in an epoch of organized forgetting makes us immune to the pain of indifference, yet this hurts especially those who want to be remembered here and now while they are still young. Alas, they will be remembered only when they get old. This is how it works.

What happens in our reality is concealment of it through a secondary reality, or simulacra, as Jean Baudrillard would have had it. For ours is a civilization of the young. Mass culture and mass democracy make citizens into consumers by urging senior consumers to emulate the physique and body language of the young. The pattern of economy as well as the blueprint for global social and political existence are simply unthinkable without appropriating the competences, energies, talents, and creativity of mainly young foreign laborers. Their beauty and competitiveness, along with their unsafety, insecurity, and uncertainty at home, that is, in their respective countries, prepare that same package of global consumption which also includes their pain, nostalgia, and a withering sense of belonging.

Home is a painful problem for an ambitious and creative individual, but not for that tyranny of the economy which we euphemistically call the world as a single place.

AUSTERITY POLICIES IN THE BALTICS

A curious philosophical book, disguised as an innocent fable and published at the beginning of the eighteenth century, may throw new light on all these entanglements and the mixed logic of modernity. The book is Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of Bees: Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (two successive editions in 1714 and 1723). Originated in 1705 as a sixpenny satire in verse, titled *The Grumbling Hive; or, Knaves Turn'd Honest*, later it developed into a book by the addition of "Remarks" and other pieces.

A witty and subtle attack against three vices, Fraud, Luxury, and Pride, the poem offered a strong argument, presenting a hive as a mirror of human society. Like society, the hive lives in corruption and prosperity. Yet it feels nostalgia for virtue and keeps praying to recover it. When the prayer is granted, everything changes overnight beyond recognition: there is no more vice, but activity and prosperity disappear. What replaces activity and prosperity are sloth, poverty, and boredom. Last but not least, all this happens in a considerably reduced population.

The essence of what I would define as Mandeville's paradox is that individual vice in universalistic morality can turn into a public benefit, whereas individual virtue does not necessarily increase the well-being of society. Once society can benefit from our pursuit of our own interest, we cannot lightly dismiss private vices. Mandeville achieves something similar to Machiavelli's effect: no one single truth exists in social reality, and every coin has two sides as far as human interaction and social life is concerned. Nothing personal lurks behind the predominant social and moral order, and nobody can be blamed in person for the shortcomings and imperfections of our life. Our jealousy and greed just happen to coincide with other individual's wishes and desires.

Public benefits result from private vices just as common good comes from our realism, sober-mindedness, and imperfection. Like Machiavelli, Mandeville deprives us of One Single Truth in social and political life. Nothing is certain and obvious here. A greedy but laborious fool can be more useful for society than an idle sage – here we can clearly hear the early voice of modernity with its ambivalence, skepticism, and relativism.

What can be found behind the fictional paraphernalia of Mandeville's *Fable of Bees* is Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. Mandeville's skepticism, antirationalism, relativism, along with a strong emphasis on psychology and sensualism, relates him to French theoretical and intellectual influences, Bayle and Pierre Gassendi. Incidentally, Adam Smith knew this fable through Francis Hutcheson. The following winged expression of Smith's has really much in common with the intrinsic logic of Mandeville's paradox: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest."

Here we can hear the birth-cry of "rational impersonalism," as Ken Jowitt would have it. Impersonalism, ambiguity, and ambivalence coupled with what Max Weber once described as "the iron cage" are those intrinsic forces that make modernity and capitalism in particular so deplorable and hateful in the eyes of those who want to restore what has been irreversibly lost by our modern world – namely, the predictability, clarity, visibility, stability, and certainty of social reality; safety and security; political passions and social upheavals; emotional intimacy; human fellowship; a sense of community.

Yet this is all but one side of the coin. The celebration of rational impersonalism and our private vices turned into public benefits reflected an uncritical and unreflective attitude of a post-Communist society. The fable of bees by Mandeville seems to have been nearly a perfect narrative for a transitory period in a society where economic and moral individualism was long suppressed and then released with no ability to counterbalance the portrayal both of self and the world around oneself in black and white. A gradual destruction of the public domain without which democratic politics becomes impossible was not on the minds and lips of those who celebrated the free market and the invisible hand as just another term for democracy.

My Finnish friend, a philosophy professor from Helsinki, once told me that Estonia for some of his colleagues was an example of the worst nightmare of libertarian politics. Such a remark, if widely publicized, would have dealt a blow to Lithuanians sweetly dreaming of standing in the Estonians' shoes and enjoying Finland, a country just 70 kilometers away and so radically different from post-Communist traumas and painful dilemmas. This dream was demolished by my colleague like a house of cards.

Too much individualism, atomization, and fragmentation of societal ties, too little sensitivity and compassion, too huge a gap between the jet set and ordinary folks, no welfare state – these were the main points raised against contemporary Estonia by my Finnish friend. It's ironic that the post-Communist folk who had always thought about the West as a bliss of freedom and civil liberties accompanied by some iniquities of capitalism should have found themselves in the shoes of those admirers of free-market economy's side effects that manifest themselves in our new habits of the mind and those of the heart.

"Whereas life in Helsinki is like a constant Sunday afternoon, life in Riga is always Monday morning," a graduate student from Latvia once put it after my seminar in Helsinki. Here I'd make the argument that we, Eastern Europeans, seem to have skipped the earlier, industrial era of political and moral individualism. Its late comeback takes us aback and brings us more than one repercussion. One of them is exactly the aforementioned rational impersonalism and, one would think, those politically and morally neutral technical decisions that it implies. When such

seemingly neutral decisions become a policy, the country may be in trouble even without being aware of this and without being able to solve some of the technical problems it faces.

The Contradictions of Austerity: The Socio-Economic Costs of the Neoliberal Baltic Model. Edited by Jeffrey Sommers and Charles Woolfson (London&New York: Routledge, 2014) is a timely, incisive, perceptive, provocative, and important book which addresses all those issues. Hit by the crisis with all its devastating effects, the Baltic states underwent similar processes tackling nearly the same challenges; yet their responses were far from identical. Whereas Latvia got the loan from the IMF, Lithuania firmly refused to do so, and claimed credit for overcoming the crisis with no external assistance.

Few things can split the public opinion to the extent it did with regard to whether the then Prime Minister of Lithuania, Andrius Kubilius, should be regarded as a great reformer who got all things done to pull the country out of the slowdown and crisis, or as a decent, intelligent, albeit narrow-minded political technocrat who had his lion's share in all those miscalculations, flaws, and mistakes that we know as our austerity policy. Some media people were arguing with passion and zeal that Andrius Kubilius, who served his first term as Lithuania's Prime Minister during the 1998-1999 Russian turmoil that badly affected Lithuanian and Baltic economy, richly deserved to go down in political history as a role model policy maker and as a true hero of difficult decisions; yet others were and continue to be convinced that the role of Kubilius as well as his drastic cuts in public spending were too highly praised. Without further ado, let us take a look at some side effects of Lithuanian austerity policy.

Drastic cuts in public spending, no matter how indispensable and unavoidable, resulted in a rapid deterioration of the public domain. Although Lithuanian political commentators and opinion makers, like their Baltic colleagues, often stressed the need to oppose Russian propaganda in the information war, the weakening of higher quality and investigative journalism, smaller publishers, civic education, and translation programs hardly served the purpose of strengthening the public domain and civil society in the Baltic states. That analytical journalism, political analysis, high-brow and non-commercial sectors of culture suffered tremendously from austerity is too obvious a fact to be challenged. This is to say that one of the biggest contradictions and paradoxes of austerity policies in the Baltic states was the ever-growing dependence of the Baltic region on the Russian media and information zone. Contrary to the widespread opinion that the fast recovery from crisis at any cost would leave us stronger vis-à-vis Russia and its increasingly aggressive geopolitics, civil society and solidarity scarcely benefitted from the aforementioned drastic cuts and austerity policies in general.

Yet the editors and contributors of the book in question go even further. They argue that the austerity paradigm in our economics and politics would have been unable to harm the public sector if the Baltic region had been less dependent on the neoliberal model. The ambivalence of the major tales of modern economics and politics is too obvious to need emphasizing. Like the *Fable of Bees*, the austerity story reads like an exciting tale of wisdom and virtue. As James K. Galbraith writes in the Foreword of the book: "Whereas the tale of expansionary austerity is simple, timeless, and context-free – an allegory of virtue rewarded – the tapestry presented in these pages could not have been woven in any other time or place" (p. xv).

As for the wisdom of the classics of economic thought, it is more relevant than ever before, since the founding fathers of socialism and liberalism warned us long ago against excesses and the dark side of modernity. Summing up the rich analytic tapestry of the book in the Conclusion focused on the neoliberal Baltic austerity model as opposed to Social Europe, the editors of the book, Charles Woolfson and Jeffrey Sommers, note: "Undreamed of only a decade ago, many Europeans have experienced the widespread return of what Karl Marx described as 'immiseration' and ignoring Adam Smith's caution that 'no society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable' " (p. 139).

According to Galbraith, the austerity dogma easily found the Baltic states a nearly perfect place to carry out a dangerous social experiment of this sort. "It is the fate of small countries to serve as pilot projects, as battlegrounds, and as the point-of-origin for myths" (p. xv). Contrary to the Keynesian paradigm of the stimulation of the public sector and spending or the Schumpeterian paradigm of innovation as the very core of the economy and as a bridge between the private and the public, the austerity paradigm with its zero respect for any sort of regulation, public safety and well-being, coupled with neoliberal deregulatory zeal produced a frightening degree of indifference to the public domain, education, and culture. Small wonder then that Charles Woolfson and Arunas Juska offer a polemical postscript to this book focused on the tragic roof collapse of the Lithuanian-owned Maxima supermarket in Riga on 21 November 2013 (see pp. 149–173). Hence, their grim sum up of the story: "The Maxima episode reveals criminogenic characteristics of a new capitalism that developed in the Baltic region following the collapse of the Soviet Union" (p. 150).

The question arises here as to whether the Baltic states could have avoided this dangerous, if not devastating, social experiment. The premise of several contributors of the book is quite clear on this: due to their being in a boundary region between Russia and Germany (and close to the Nordic countries), their burdened history, their complex political and historical legacy, the existential threats from Russia, the completely discredited left-wing values, the ideological rejection of socialism, and the duality of money flowing in and

people moving out, the Baltic states were tailor-made for this civilizational experiment. "Each of these countries has been heavily funded by private capital inflow and official European assistance. Each is dealing with a rapid decline of population and emigration of educated and able-bodied workers. In each, the political classes disregarded warning signs and forged ahead, committing themselves irrevocably to the austerian dogma" (p. xv).

Was it possible for the Baltics to come up with an alternative scenario relying on classical economic recipes for recovery? Or was any other option for them trying to catch up with the EU not to join the league of those unfortunate actors of Eastern Europe that found themselves on the losing side of the game? Serious doubts arise here, as the Baltic states had to tackle the problem of their underdevelopment. They had to speed up the process of integration at any cost. Hence they achieved what Erik S. Reinert and Rainer Kattel describe as a "failed and asymmetrical integration." These authors suggest that "despite impressive growth numbers in exports and foreign direct investments, Eastern European economies failed to develop genuine Schumpeterian dynamics of imperfect competition" with all its preconditions and implications for free-market economy (p. 64).

The themes of a Latin-Americanization of European integration and underdevelopment are echoed by Michael Hudson who insists on the structural underdevelopment of Latvia created at independence. Arguing with neoliberals who claim that austerity could restore Latvia's economic growth, Hudson notes that Latvia's "economic contraction in 2008-10 was brutal" and that "it remains the most impoverished country in the EU after Romania and Bulgaria" (p. 46). Introducing the book, Jeffrey Sommers and Charles Woolfson subscribe to this point of view, adding to the topic of integration-through-austerity that "the Baltics' economic plunge was purely a result of private-sector banking crisis, which in the context of the global recession revealed the deeper structural underdevelopment of their respective economies. These uncomfortable truths have been obscured in the haste to discover a generalized formula for the successful imposition of austerity measures in the Baltic states" (p. 3).

To cut a convoluted story short, the question arises here, Was the Baltic recovery a success story? Here is the somber and sobering answer of Galbraith:

> And of course, a common theme here is that the Baltic success is no success at all. Rising gross domestic product (GDP) is a benefit only to those whose own incomes are actually rising, and many are not. The Baltics have become polarized and segmented societies, dominated by oligarchs and civil servants, with low wages, paltry benefits, and precariousness for the rest. It is a tale of life rendered so uncompromising – by ideology, by oligarchs, by creditors, by economists – that many in each country are leaving. Many do not expect ever to return. All three countries are in rapid demographic decline, which if it continues will soon enough transform them into retirement communities, supported largely by remittances, for so long as they last. (p. xvi)

Here comes an existential challenge to the Baltic countries, especially Lithuania and Latvia. Over the past ten years, more than half a million people – in most cases, highly qualified, educated, active, and civic-minded individuals – left Lithuania. The population of Lithuania decreased quite drastically, and now it is less than three million people, although the first rebellious and break-away republic in the former USSR met its independence with a population of three and a half million. Much ink has been spilled arguing as to whether this reflected the general twentieth century pattern of social mobility of a small nation with a large diaspora, or whether it was the outcome of a new failed state with its lack of competence in all too many faculties of modern life.

In addition to Chicago, Illinois, in the USA, which used to be described for a long time by émigrés and local Lithuanians alike as yet another Lithuania outside of Lithuania, such cities in the EU as Dublin and London have become new little Lithuanias over the past few years. The Lithuanian writer Marius Ivaškevičius penned the play *Expulsion* where he depicted the lives, passions, and dramas of economic migrants from Lithuania, Latvia, and other Eastern European countries in London. This play has been recently staged by the Lithuanian theater director Oskaras Koršunovas in Vilnius and Riga where it became a sensational cult production. His is a new Lithuanian and, perhaps, Baltic narrative, a postmodern epic of society gone with and swamped by the change, and a great saga of the new *austeriat*, as these people are referred to in the book edited by Sommers and Woolfson. In addition to social theorists who spoke about the *precariat* (for instance, Zygmunt Bauman and Guy Standing, to name just a few), the *austeriat* appears as the local-turned-global segment of alienated labor and mass impoverishment (see p. 107).

In fact, Eastern European countries seem locked mentally somewhere between the discovery of the intrinsic logic of capitalism characteristic of the nineteenth century and the post-Weimar Republic period – an incredibly fast economic growth and a passionate advocacy of the values of free enterprise and capitalism, accompanied by a good deal of anomie, fission of the body social, stark social contrasts, a shocking degree of corruption, a culture of poverty (to recall Oscar Lewis's term, which refers to low trust, self-victimization, disbelief in social ties and networks, contempt for institutions, etc.), and cynicism.

As Galbraith sums it up offering a metaphor of the Devil's bargain in our accelerated history and politics:

> Still, one can't help but wonder. Suppose Mephistopheles had appeared before the Baltic independence leaders in 1991 and had offered this bargain: Independence. Capitalism. Freedom. Democracy. The dissolution of the USSR. NATO. Europe. And eventually the euro. And the price? Only that within a half century the Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians would be an elderly remnant in their own countries, their society in tatters,

> their children in economic exile, their homes abandoned or in hock, and eventually their economies and governments permanently subordinated to new elites – local and foreign. Would they have taken the deal? (p. xvii)

What is this all about? Is it about the Devil in economics and politics? Or moral blindness? Or our being unable to see and grasp the world around us otherwise than through the pleasure-and profit-maximizing lenses that confine the human being to statistics and relegate his or her suffering to the margins of GDP? I guess everything is less pathetic and more related to the unbearable lightness of incessant change.

Our postmodern and post-totalitarian era, in the Baltic region, proved capable of squeezing two centuries of uninterrupted European history within one decade of the "transition" of the Baltic states and other East-Central European countries from the planned economy of Communism to free-market economy and global capitalism. In a way, Eastern Europe appears to have become a kind of laboratory where the speed of social change and cultural transformation could be measured and tested. In fact, the Baltic countries and their societies are far ahead of what we know as the grand historical narrative, or, plainly, predictable and moralizing history; nay, these societies are faster than history.

Yet, keeping in mind what is happening now in Russia, the question is quite simple: Did the Baltic states have a plausible alternative to squeezing the decade-or-century-long developments of the West into a decade or two offered to them to catch up other than through the neoliberal model? I am not convinced that they did. Of course, this remark does not diminish the value of an excellent volume with its charms of alternative, or imagined, history, and questions like, say, What would have happened had this or that been so?

The Baltics paid the price for their indispensable and unavoidable acceleration of life and development. The alternatives could have led them back to the East, instead of the West, as we clearly see now.

POSTSCRIPT

In 2013, I have written conjointly with Zygmunt Bauman a book of intense philosophical dialogue on the loss of sensitivity. The title of our book, *Moral Blindness*, was Bauman's idea, and it came out as an allusion to the metaphor of blindness masterfully developed in the Portuguese writer José Saramago's novel *Ensaio sobre a cegueira* (Essay on Blindness). Yet the subtitle of the book, *The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity*, came out from my own theoretical vocabulary, albeit with

Bauman's touch, as his books would be unthinkable without the adjective "liquid," be it liquid modernity or liquid fear or liquid love (see Bauman and Donskis, 2013).

I recall the allusion Bauman makes in his works to the Nazi concept of "life unworthy of life." The phrase "life unworthy of life" (in German, *Lebensunwertes Leben*) was a Nazi designation for the segments of populace which had no right to live. In our days, we witness a liquid-modern designation for the regions and countries whose tragedies have no right to break the news and whose civil casualties or sufferings from political terrorism and violence have no right to change bilateral relations and trade agreements. The disturbing news is that the idea of life unworthy of life has never completely disappeared; nor has it been ever defeated and abandoned politically and morally in the most democratic countries.

As we learn from political history, we can withdraw from our ability to empathize with other individuals' pain and suffering. At the same time, we can return to this ability – yet it doesn't say a thing about our capability to be equally sensitive and compassionate about all troubled walks of life, situations, nations, and individuals. We are able to reduce a human being into a thing or non-person so that he or she awakens only when we ourselves or our fellow countrymen are hit by the same kind of calamity or aggression.

This withdrawal-and-return mechanism (to borrow and slightly remake Arnold J. Toynbee's term) only shows how vulnerable, fragile, unpredictable, and universally valid human dignity and life are.

Leonidas Donskis

NUO ASMENS IKI NEASMENS: KALTĖS, ADIAFOROS IR GRIEŽTOS EKONOMIJOS TEORINIS ŽEMĖLAPIS

SANTRAUKA. Politinė istorija rodo, jog mes galime pasitraukti iš mūsų empatinės galios lauko, kuriame išgyvename kitų individų skausmą ir kančią. Sykiu galime sugrįžti į šį lauką, nors tai nieko nepasako apie mūsų gebėjimą būti vienodai jautriems ir atjaučiantiems visus visuomenės sluoksnius visose situacijose, visas tautas ir visus individus. Galime redukuoti žmogų į daiktą arba neasmenį, o patys morališkai nubusti tik tada, kai mes patys arba mūsų tėvynainiai patiria tokią pačią nelaimę ar agresiją. Pasitraukimo-ir-grįžimo mechanizmas tik rodo, koks pažeidžiamas, trapus ir visuotinai svarbus yra žmogaus orumas ir gyvenimas. Šis straipsnis atveria pastangą nubraižyti minėtojo mechanizmo teorinį žemėlapį – per kaltės, adiaforos ir griežtos ekonomijos sąvokas.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: adiafora, griežta ekonomija, jautrumas, kaltė, modernybė, prekariatas, Šėtonas (blogis).

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