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ON VARIOUS FACES OF POSTMODERNIST PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING

1. HOW TO DEAL WITH THE CONCEPT "POSTMODERNISM"?

In the present text I wish to share my remarks primarily concerning postmodernism in its philosophical variation, yet it is unthinkable to cut oneself off from its two other — sociocultural and artistic — mutations. It is especially the sociocultural mutation that seems to me a cornerstone for the proper understanding of what the philosophical postmodernism is about. My first reflection concerns the legitimacy of the term and of the concept which — I surmise — refers one to the postmodernism as captioned by the sociologists of culture who describe the particular configuration of things and of qualities appropriate to them, that has crystallized itself in the social processes since the end of the 1970's. This reflection is, among others, imposed by these philosophers who are considered (and who consider themselves) as champions of postmodernism, for example J. F. Lyotard, U. Eco, W. Welsch; they hold that the concept of "postmodernism" is not to be literally understood: this is no successive phase in the aftermath of desiccation of modernist ways of thinking and behavior but merely a new manner of comprehending the world within the still living organism. Can the problem of the meaning of the "post-" prefix be solved — and then, how? Will it suffice to juxtapose the philosophical thought of modernists (which modernists, though? who is to be considered its typical representatives?), or is it necessary to admit the extra-philosophical frame of reference? Another reflection concerns the ancestry of this phenomenon, and its symptoms in philosophical considerations (*Nota bene*, it concerns both those authors who analyze postmodernism from a critical distance, as well as others who identify themselves with postmodernism). The question, "Who to start with?" is, obviously, secondary in relation to the fundamental question that is, "What are the reasons that a given concept be deemed postmodernist?"; which, among others, leads to differentiation from among the seemingly converging solutions of such which hit the bull's eye from the chosen vista. The third reflection is linked to the legitimacy of postmodernist stance, both from the point of view of

its internal consequences (are not the formulated assumptions and conclusions being negated this way?), as well as from external positions to which is this current actually being opposed. Finally, a half of reflection relating to the potential peculiarity of postmodernism in its philosophical mutation. Since the latter is to be at odds with all the hitherto philosophical tradition, then it does not seem to make sense to oppose it only to modernism, or else to juxtapose it with the artistic — and to put it in a broader perspective, with sociocultural — mutation of our decade. Why, though, a mere half of reflection? This final one, after all, is not totally autonomous — it can be treated as part, or completion, of the former.

It is known that postmodernism is understood in a variety of manners, the exemplifications of this phenomenon being sometimes totally divergent, indeed. There would be no particular difficulties with this affliction — notorious within humanities — were its various formulations adding up, at least some of the time. The whole problem, though, is that the formulations are most often asunder and at each other's throats. Considering that this concept — of undoubtedly a theoretical character — had first been forged in the area of art criticism (or, rather, of literary criticism), and only fifteen years later did it sweep the field of philosophical thought, then the most encouraging strategy would be the application of this what the selected thinkers say of postmodernism to the designated novelist, painting, architectural, etc., practice. The more the former would correspond to the latter, the stronger the feeling that we have hit the mark. That, however, is not a prudent strategy. The postmodernisms in various artistic areas in many respects differ clearly from one another and so the common core of their designates is not easy to find. In turn, even though there are certain similarities and affinities (of the indirect, not easily graspable, nature) between this area of philosophy and that area of arts, nonetheless striking is their asymmetry of which it will be indispensable to say more towards the end. Moreover, the transformations in arts cannot be an ultimate yardstick, since there necessarily and incessantly do arise doubts concerning the direct bonds of the artistic practice of that type with the now dominant model of mass culture. Therefore the reflections on various kinds of postmodernism (embracing also the philosophical one) are to be advisably confronted — lest this concept be taken for a pure contrivance — with the sociological context. This means that a certain definite type of society (with its particular scale of values) is to be accepted as the touchstone of describing given postmodernist philosophical attitude. This initial theoretical assumption (better revealed than cryptic, or left unresolved) relates the concept of postmodernism both to the historically conditioned cultural fabric as well as to the research apparatus of sociologists of culture who not only do analyze this new nexus but also attempt to align with it the categories so far not used. To wit, the matter is not that the specific reflection on philosophy be deduced *modo genetico* from the new sociological categories, or from the object of research analyzed with their help, but in their functional links. That means that the philosophical thinking, which is being called postmodernist, would

"overlap" with the way of thinking and feeling dominant in the civilizationally most advanced societies, and thus give support, unwillingly, to what the sociologists ply as the idea of the culture dissimilar from the one hitherto shared. Given such theoretical assumptions it is possible — nay, commendable — to assume the existence of a new cultural mutation. *Nota bene*: even the thinkers mentioned at the beginning — those who question the legitimacy of the term "postmodernism", translating it instead into "transmodernism" actually have to admit that there did emerge a structure of culture which is no longer graspable and explicable in terms of the research tools applied so far. This structure, after all, is to be, this or another way opposed to the paradigm of modernity so far esteemed by philosophers and sociologists of culture. A new complication does emerge at this juncture; the one which cannot be escaped irrespectively of whether we ascribe to the new structure a character of diametrically dissimilar mutation (*post*) or else if we consider it a clearly different stage in relation to the previous configuration (*trans*-). Namely, it is inevitable to operate with some clear concept of modernism, to which post- or trans-modernism are to provide an alternative. And so we encounter a plethora of these alternative formulations. In the article "On the Subject of and in Postmodernism" (*British Journal of Aesthetics*, January 1992) I managed — on the basis of my reading — to classify them in six oppositions, which are clearly divergent, let alone overlapping. Thus a precondition appending to the theoretical assumption proposed so far pertains to opting for definite position in this matter. (M. Weber's theorem being as a rule accepted as a point of departure.) Let us add that within the sphere of history of philosophy it would be no mean feat to determine what were to constitute the most proper exemplification of modernism. After all, philosophy of the era of modernism (which is conceived, one way or another, following the findings of theoreticians and chroniclers of culture), is something different from the modernist philosophy. If the latter — which is mostly the case — be identified with *Lebensphilosophie*, then we would find ourselves in a quandary with postmodernism which in such a context could be in a nonsensical way linked e.g. to *Wienerschule* as an extreme reaction to irrationalist tendencies of the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To the two theoretical assumptions listed above another one should be added: namely the axiological and not purely descriptive character of our research procedures. It seems that whoever is named (or who names himself) a philosophical postmodernist is to be ideologically committed, and hence is — consciously or with dim awareness — engaged in valuating postmodernism. The case is similar with the postmodern artist, yet he does not have (or deliberately refrains from doing so) to declare his blueprint for outlook, nor to formulate the intellectual reasons for his choice. Nor is it dissimilar with the sociologist of culture, even though he in turn might fail to draw axiological consequences from the analyses he carries out.

2. POSTMODERNISM IN THE SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE (CASUS BAUMAN)

May we thus illustrate the links between descriptive and axiological stance on the basis of an extremely interesting book by Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991). According to the cited author, the epoch of modernity legitimizes itself with the need of thrusting a coherent structure upon the social life; the structure regulated by definite principles which, when turned against chaotic nature, would facilitate the construction of the system of coexistence that would be better, more humane, than the one so far. This system would have to be based on unshaken rationality which eliminates ignorance, dysfunctions, dissonances, etc. In the name of the best of all possible principles — the elites (convinced not only of their irrefutable pertinence, but also of its benefits) deem it their duty and historic mission to design the specific socio-political vision, and to rear the society appropriately. The theoretical program is here linked thus to the managerial educational practice; the aspiration of optimal rationalization of human relations with the tendency for emancipation (which turns into the utopia that designs the world of eternal bliss for everybody). The knowledge at their disposal is considered to be sufficiently trustworthy, since the criteria clearly delineating the border between truth and falsity are readily available. Equally definite is the code of ethics capable of demarcation between what is good and what is evil. On the other hand, what is intolerable for the modernity (strictly speaking for its primary perspective) is the obfuscating ambivalence, or ambiguity, that is everything which is accidental and random; everything that does not subject itself to the "horticulture" aspiring to homogenize all minds in the same manner.

What, then, should the postmodernity be? Is it a synonym of a variegated society? By no means. After all, in the latter (which emerged with modernity) there also participate and compete tendencies towards an all-embracing order of things, and towards respect for opaqueness and miscellaneity of human attitudes. And yet — here is the principal difference — postmodernity shifts the stress to what is elemental and chaotic (asystemic). In place of trinity of basic values, characteristic for the modern (still alive) epoch — that is the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity — there appears an opposite trinity: of freedom, variety and tolerance. It is taken for granted that we live in heterogenic configurations, that there are no universally binding principles, that knowledge is fragile, that ethos changes depending on social context, that uncertainty is always with us, that it is impossible to prove that we have at our disposal some irrefutable cognitive or axiological criteria. We keep on searching for our identity — the multitude that surrounds us pertains in reference to our own self: kaleidoscopic, functionally dependent one the circumstances as it is. Still, postmodernity does by no means oust the syndrome of modernity — not that it can and wishes to do so — since at their foundation there is the rule "live and let live". Thus it is still the epoch of ambivalence (of equivocality), but with a totally different deployment of forces. Postmodernity is to be — according to Bauman

— the stage of self-awareness, which realizes all the shortcomings and mistakes, and primarily the one-sidedness of the modern blueprint-making. At the same time the author holds that postmodernity is a clear transcendence of the older model of social life; that it bids farewell to the latter. These inconsistencies of the author are revealing, this being so since they point out that the analysis leads to constataion of new cultural mutation (at least by virtue of the prevalence of tendency towards fragmentation of common experience, and of its articulation in the sphere of symbolic culture), and at the same time this prevalence does not seem overwhelming enough to him to warrant speaking of clear decline of the epoch of modernity. Be it as it may, postmodernity is so characterized in the book at issue that its particular features correspond to the metaphilosophical options defined as postmodernist. It may be so since, among others, Bauman himself was inspired by metaphilosophical inquiry when constructing his own concept of postmodernity. After all, he refers us to Jacques Derrida or Richard Rorty.

Now is the time to proceed to the valuative attitude transpiring from *Modernity and Ambivalence*, but before I do this, allow me first a few words on postmodern way of thinking and of living. In a consumer society, that is the one which savors primarily the fast wear and tear of goods, in which advertising and marketing constitute the core of exchange of information and of communication among humans, people condemned for themselves, goaded to "do it yourself", and forced to take ever new choices (buy the latest and throw away yesterday's novelty) are persistently looking for some support in their surroundings. A stopgap support. They have to ally themselves with someone who will be their authority, their lodestar here and now. Bauman, following his fellow-sociologists in that respect, calls this phenomenon a new tribality (even though it has nothing to do with the genuine tribal community); moreover, he speaks of the need for solidarity which is both to overlap with tolerance, and to ensue from it to a considerable degree. "We" is born out of "I", but the societal bonds are shifting; they move *ad hoc* from one group to another. One is entitled to surmise that such bonds concern the anonymous character of a thoroughly consumer society, that is postmodern society. Seemingly everybody is himself, but as a matter of fact he is no one definite, that is all are strangers to one another and to their own selves. Solidarity in turn consists not in assuming responsibility for oneself before someone else (since in what irrevocable, in what ethical criteria would it be grounded?), but in sharing the randomness and incidentality of existence.

In his conclusions, turning from the descriptive approach to the axiological, Bauman devotes a splendid fragment of his argument to visualization of the perils of postmodernity. Namely freedom is easily reduced but to an individual option for this or that merchandise plentiful in the abundant market, and turns into an egocentric, often voracious, venality; tolerance turns into an indifference enclosing man within the hoops of satiated and blind privacy; variety turns into a flickering offer of material goods and into multitude of the ways in which their surfeit is to be gorged. One lives aside from others with all appearances of being

together with the others. Still, the author plays down the weight of these perils. The era of modernity in the name of noblest utopias involved enslavement of man; it pushed tolerance to the margin, it failed to respect multitude of attitudes and solutions; it left a legacy of the world of barracks, hyperadministered under the pressure of Leviathan. Privatization of the phenomenon of ambivalence (equivocality) is to open the way towards the new "social engineering" — regional and local — derived from the authentic needs of various groups, oriented at solidarity not only by reason of incidental existence but aimed at a joint effort to prevent brutality or indifference to someone else's iniquity or poverty. These positive aspects of Bauman's concluding observations seem unwarranted to me. Yet it was not my intention to mete out judgment on his book. I dwelt on it not to register its assets and liabilities, but because of its illuminating grasp of the epoch of postmodernity, which facilitates juxtaposition with the ideas of philosophers whom I wish to discuss. Noteworthy, Bauman in one of his sketches prior to the book related here argued that modernist sociology misses the point of such an object of research as postmodernity. Old categories are like old keys which do not fit into new locks. The category of social system is to be replaced today with the concept of tendency to sociality; the concept of *Gemeinschaft* is to be shed in favor of the concept of an *ad hoc*, changing participation, etc. The Paris school philosophers — and not only Derrida — would certainly subscribe to such contention.

3. ON THE PROTAGONISTS OF POSTMODERNISM AND ITS ALLEGED ACTORS

Let us tentatively accept that we agree to the functional interconnections (whether intentional and direct has to be separately tackled and fathomed) between postmodernist thinking on philosophy (and within it), and the era of postmodernity outlined in the way proposed by Bauman (not the only one, after all). When faced with such a point of reference, one could simply invalidate searching far back into the past for the origins of the phenomenon that is of interest to us. One could say then that this is a current cultural trend, and it is better to avoid an established date of its birth. Still, the question of origins keeps coming back like a boomerang, even if only for the reason of persistence — as it happens habitually in the sphere of humanities — of the search for the forerunners of new cultural syndrome, and of obligation to take some stand towards these attempts. This, by the way, is not a pointless exercise since it enables one to define what constitutes the main object of analysis — that is perceiving it in relation to probable (real or pretended) protagonists — and bring to relief the specific features of new thought which we wish to render. Furthermore, the postmodernists themselves — when setting the problem of origins at lost position, and replacing genetic-structural considerations within the history of ideas with meditation on their genealogies (in the Nietzschean sense) — invite one to have a closer look from the micro-perspective at the possible location of the antecedents of this view on philosophy which indeed

should bring together Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard, Rorty, Welsch, Eco. The name of Nietzsche was already being called — he is beyond any doubt considered universally as the main source of deconstructionist thinking. The successive trace involves Foucault who plied archeology of knowledge in the same manner. It is not the place to dwell upon these two philosophers. Let me mention but this: their stimulations — and manifold — are undisputed but neither the former (since his critique of the existing philosophical heritage aimed at the constructive vision of: “the other side of the river”, to the abode of accomplishment of the superman), nor the latter (who found certain cognitive criteria and aesthetic ethos deserving of distinction and preeminence) can be recognized as the protagonists of postmodernism. By the way, when appointing antecedents it is quite often the misses that are heuristically more interesting than the hits. Such misses are, in my opinion, works holding that Bataille, Shestov and Levinas belong to the lineage of thinkers that we are to deal with. Obviously, there are some tangential points between the ideas of those thinkers and postmodernism, yet linking them with the family ties seems to me unwarranted. All of them represent the philosophy of *mythos*, focusing among others on relentless criticism of *logos*. This apparent postmodernism is usually being confused with the current which I consider the postmodernism proper, and whose characteristic feature I maintain to be the resolute rejection both the domination of *logos*, as well as of *mythos*, and in general refutation of any primal principle. Bataille, in all his chief works from the 1940’ to 1960’s (*Summa atheologica*, *L’erotisme* and *L’expérience interieure*) was in the first place irresolute about how to cope with the question of sense, or lack thereof, of plying philosophy. Three various solutions to this key question may be derived from his premises and arguments. The first version could be designated thus: there is something like the *other* philosophy, hence his idea of constructing heterology. I would place the stress not on “hetero” but on “logy”. “Hetero”, obviously, constitutes here a substantial factor, yet “logy” is valid. In *L’expérience interieure*, and later in one of the fragments of *L’erotisme* Bataille observes that philosophical thinking should be “Gypsy”: casual, not so devilishly ice-cold, desiccated and abstract, as is the case with all of the European tradition; nevertheless, heterology also is based on holistic, synthetic graping of human experience. Moreover, in the selfsame fragment does he speak of the method of interior experience, thanks to which the “core of things” may be reached. What core? Well, such core that we are given during the “night of existence” in face of death; he stressed, moreover, that the only moments of true contact with the Other are ecstatic — spasmodic moments of amorous contraction, in Eros. The analogous contraction ensues from the inalienable tendency to violence and coercion directed also at those whom we love. Both above moments in which energy expenditure, its waste, take place are these of transgression thanks to which we discover the meaning of existence. Such kind of views is to be included in the philosophy of *mythos*. In other fragments of Bataille’s *oeuvre* we come across assertions that one may and should philosophize only critically, thus exploding all of the philosophical tradition. In

this phrasing, if I understand his thought rightly, philosophizing rests on the metaphilosophical reflection which would be absolutely critical (surgical). Finally the third version, according to one of the fragments of *L'expérience intérieure* and to some of the interviews, in which it is contended that one should go beyond this discipline, or merely abandon it. The inner experience is ineffable, bordering on the inconceivable. Then philosophy as knowledge is but a delusion, in other words an activity that leads one astray. I do not think arguable that the latter two phrasings dominate in Bataille's thought; it is rather the first formulation that is significant for him, thus placing it close — for all the divergences between them — to Shestov.

In Shestov's case — I focus attention mostly on his *Athens and Jerusalem* — we meet primarily with the skirmish against the all-embracing domination of the category of *logos*. He insisted upon transferring it on concretes with the rejection of thrust toward totalization and pointing to the root, in the process of which *arche* and *telos* are derived from the omnipotent reason. However, that philosopher struggled against the Athenian mentality to unfold explicitly the primacy (or supremacy) of the spirit of Jerusalem which assumes the existence of another pre-root, of another *arche* and *telos*. Instead of Tertullian's *credo ut intelligam*, one should consent to the absolute mystery of human existence — its unprovability, its helplessness in presence of *Deus Absconditus*. One should accept with humility the unsolvable paradoxes, antinomies, the nebulousness of our existence, and of the world at large. One has, briefly speaking, to take the stance of Job who becomes here a fundamental figure. This is a para-mythical vision which refers to absolute truths and sees reality in a religious manner. There are no reasons which could place it outside of the philosophy of *mythos*.

Levinas, who questions all ontological categories as imposing an excessively speculative conceptual network on the world, is referred to by Lyotard, and also by Derrida, yet one should not go too far in drawing conclusions from these references. Levinas does indeed "deconstruct" the inventory of the theory of being but on the other hand he ontologizes ethics. In all his works and interviews he emphasizes the teachings of Torah, sometimes he harks back to Maimonides. He always stresses the irrefutability and primacy of transcendence. Thus, also in this case it is only a specific manner of philosophizing that is being elevated, to prove supremacy and undisputed trustworthiness of anti-*logos*. Dialogue principle, in accordance with the specific tradition of Jewish philosophy, becomes a fundamental element; it is connected with the ethos of responsibility before, and for, the Other before the Maker — the God who is the infinity, the God undefinable, that cannot be grasped otherwise than through the difference between human existence grounded in multitude and variety of beings. Each of them has to define himself before the Face of the Other, thus becoming its hostage. It is significant that Levinas in his dispute with Heideggerian ontology calls his own formulation of the question metaphysical. Totalization, congruous with the tradition of European philosophy, aspiring for fixing The Same, is rejected by him, yet in *Autrement qu'Être* he does not subvert the ultimate source, something that cannot be rendered conceptually (hence not justified), but which

enables and forces in another way to render the entirety of our existential situation in respect of its irrevocable primary principle. Thus it is the philosophy of *mythos par excellence*, since God himself is never present (it is not him, but the Face of the Other — the epiphany of deity — that is the partner of a dialogue), while the sense of responsibility together with the tendency to do good is inexplicable, i.e. one has to submit oneself to this call, and that is that.

To the afore discussed misses perhaps the fourth one may be added: that of Adorno. Since W. Welsch in his sketch "Adornos Aesthetik: eine implizite Aesthetik des Erhabenen" (in Christine Pries [ed.], *Das Erhabene. Zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Grosserwahn*, Weinheim, 1989) gave a short shrift to misinterpreting this philosopher as postmodernist, even though he himself searched in his discourse for support of his arguments — suffice it to beckon here that the criticism of positive dialectics is insufficient to let one pass as a forerunner of postmodernism. Let it be reminded that Adorno's concept of the sublime is organically coupled with his idea of *das Andere*, an authentic variant of *mimesis*, of return to the natural, hence totally dissimilar from Lyotard's interpretation of Kant. Where the former abided by the law-making of the binding criteria, the latter negated them.

It seems instructive, moreover, to mention — in the context of the cited interpretative deformations — the output of Michel Serres, who is often mentioned as the representative of the same trend of thought, and thus linked to Derrida, Deleuze and Lyotard. I do not mean to say that there are no common points between his ideas and those of the philosophers quoted above. Nevertheless, on the example of his *Hermès* tetralogy, and especially of the way in which he construed his ideas in *Les cinq sens* (1985), he is likewise to be recognized as the philosopher of *mythos*. Revolt against "divine" knowledge grounded in *logos*, against the formalizing tendencies, runs here in the name of "diabolic" thought, that is the one lingering on the carnal and sensual absorption of the world to the detriment of libraries, and of the conceptual-discursive mediation in general. Ulysses' shrewdness is abandoned for the sirens' song which he himself hoped to stop by plugging his ears. Thus Serres' stand may be placed at most in the border area between philosophy of anti-*logos* and that of postmodernism which yearns for something more.

4. THE POSTMODERNISM PROPER (I): ITS METAPHILOSOPHIC VERSION

From the quasi-postmodernism may we now pass to the phenomenon which may be called the "subdued" postmodernism or, strictly speaking, the proper postmodernism in its special, somewhat confusing form. Why I name it confusing will be explained in the following paragraph. At this juncture we enter the territory of present-day considerations. Namely, both the French as well as other spokesmen of the current which we are slowly approaching, are magnificent historians of philosophy, who ply it in a radically critical manner and who, while doing it, make metaphilosophical reflections. Suffice it to reach for

works of Jacques Derrida. How many brilliant analyses of texts of Plato, Condillac, Hegel — and primarily of the *oeuvre* of Husserl and Heidegger — are to be found here. It is in the territory of their thought — as he admits many a time — that he plays the cunning, deceitful game to show that the logo- and phono-centric strategy characteristic of philosophical tradition produces setbacks. This deconstructionist reading is called in *L'écriture et la différence* a symptomal reading which extricates from every system that which is latent in it, that is enslavement by the first principles which are accepted as obvious and indispensable. This diversionary action — the fact that Derrida lays down himself — is at the same time an incessant gamble and perpetual trap for a deconstructionist. The threat is that, while chasing metaphysics to bunt it down, he becomes game himself. He writes of these pitfalls in *Positions*, in *Marges de la philosophie*, and primarily in *D'un ton apocalyptique...* In the process of such analysis of history of philosophy, which takes into consideration all fundamental categories within the confines of plying philosophy so far, as well as a peculiar way of thinking grounded in the idea of the world order and of our place therein (irrespective of how is this order understood and explained), Derrida unfolds his metaphilosophical point of view. When he expounds it in theses going beyond dissembling of the texts at issue — and that is the case in every work of his, inclusive of his books on Husserl and Heidegger — then he passes to the open exposition of postmodernism, I mean to such metaphilosophy which, while still feeding on the heritage of European thought, at the same time not only questions it but actually disavows and suspends it.

This transition cannot be grasped otherwise than by an astute study of the reasoning of a given thinker in a given work. Beyond any doubt, however, graspable it is. A similar case are Deleuze's analyses of Nietzsche or Foucault, and of philosophical assumptions which are to be unearthed at the bottom of structuralism; or the case of Lyotard reflecting on Aristotle and Kant, or on the heritage of the Sophists (strictly speaking Gorgias). Rorty gives a highly interesting detailed criticism not only of Descartes and his followers, but also of the Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy of our times. It is also in such a perspective that Marquard reads the philosophers of history, especially the German ones. I already mentioned Welsch's insightful and inventive reading of Adorno. Every single one of these bids is closed with a metaphilosophical veto. Even when Nietzsche's case is under scrutiny, it turns out that he had not fully transgressed habitual metaphysical thinking. Why then should be such clear-cut position be, as I put it, confused. The confusion consists, as I deem, in the uncertainty whether the metaphilosophical veto is not simultaneously an anti-philosophy. This confusion accompanies each kind of postmodernism, also the discourse which is not concentrated on the critical examination of heretofore philosophical thought, old or contemporary. This issue must be constantly upheld in memory. I shall then return to it.

Before we present the other kind of proper postmodernism may we quote after Derrida albeit in a summary manner, what a radical objection is being

raised towards the existing European philosophy. The latter, the argument runs, is based on the old Greek principle of *hypokojmenon*. It is unable to conceive that reality may be grasped without the elements of presence and of identity. It is seeking incessantly for the ultimate meaning, committing — consciously or unconsciously — as it were a “translation” of religious *kerygma* into a philosophical *kerygma*. It thinks that inquiries about the beginning and end are fully legitimate and necessary, just like the inquiry into some substantial matrix of the world and of human existence. It admits the existence of polysemy only because there may be distinguished from among the significations the transcendental *signifiant*. It respects the mystery which obfuscates what is absolute and ineffable, and thank to *Lichtung* (as for example in Heidegger) gives unquestionable evidence of itself. It is attached to a clearly and strictly provable truth, or to a hermeneutical inquiry. Actually, says Derrida, what is given is but the writing in the texts amassed over the ages, which are by their nature pluri-emic not so much depending on context and in individual reading, but as a result of frequent semantic slippage, indecidables which enforce infinite interpretations. To ask about *arche* and *telos* — once such point of departure (and of arrival) — must be recognized as deceptive, since we move only within the circle of signs multiplying the meanings. Nor are there any convincing reasons to establish any permanent criteria of truth built on *mimesis*, individual expression, collective experiences, or on social *praxis*. Parousive vision may be treated seriously from the poetic or mythological point of view but never from a metaphilosophic one (by the way also historiosophy in general is suspect, since its backbone is some design for human history and definite causative powers to which one should succumb having learned their mechanism). Since there is nothing but the intertextual relations — given here and now — one cannot reach some original source from which an all subsequent enlivening current were to spring, and which thus would be a court of appeal. There are but repetitions, *toujours déjà* — stresses Derrida — of by no means the same meanings (these, after all, incessantly shift and transform themselves), but only of the same semantic shifts. In this game of constant deferring of meaning (while no one can be fixed), we realize that the *différance* entangled in repetitions is always and everywhere the condition of thinking. This particular difference which is not — Plato-wise or Hegel-wise — a derivation of identity of being, but closely interrelated with deferment of sense divulges the self-evident substantiality of being as a century-long illusion. It is to this illusion that is linked the metaphysics of remembrance (*anamnesis*, reaching to the roots of things, to their beginnings). The writing — on the contrary — entails the idea of forgetting and ceaseless wanderings in the labyrinth of meanings, in the maze without exit. Our thought would like to be able to linger with something, to find a haven — but in vain as there are but palimpsests which are to be decoded anew. The systemic space and temporal linearity or circularity are being established, but a futile effort this, because what is given are but spatial point configurations, overlapping with one another and changing places in the concrete temporal point configurations. The

authorship — divine or human — is craved, but these are only hypostases, since every text is authorless, reinterpreted interminably in pursuit of the “traces of traces” of meaning, with no support either in the self or in some “tablets of stone” of signs.

Propositions of other thinkers who are to be recognized as postmodernist metaphilosophers, to a considerable degree accord with what I attempted to evince on Derrida's example. They overlap, and yet obviously part with it since every one of them in his own manner developed the analogous concept. Giles Deleuze in his *Différence et répétition* (1968), when reflecting upon Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, and when unmasking the “theater of faith”, the idea of *ricorso*, the idea of — in his vocabulary — philosophical porters outfitted with the equipment of the sense given *a limine*, the difference in Hegelian-dialectic formulation (as simply a negation of assumed positiveness) — was predisposed to argue that the universe is in the state of savagery and chaos, i.e. deprived of any root and obvious parameters. Identity is paradoxically reduced to nothingness which is revealed both by the differences themselves, and by the repetitions derived therefrom (or the other way round). In *Mille Plateaux* (a book of 1980 written together with Felix Guattari) the metaphilosophical exposition is already direct, and no longer performed through the critical analysis of given and selected philosophic ideas. It is not only the idea of thought-tree (and of known roots) that is rejected but also the many-rooted thought, whereas the rhizome — i.e. the bulk of various perceptive, gestural and mimic, textual acts — is accepted. It is being pointed out that what is given is a multitude of various agencies and arrangements without their continuity and hierarchy, in the network which is all the time subject to transfer segmentation and transformation (*déterritorialisation*). It is said that signs, in the ant-like manner, move fast from one place into another without building a permanent ant-hill. The singularity of “regions of pulsating intensity” (*plateau*) characterizes our experiencing of the world, whereas every generality is but a mystification. This conception, called rhizomatic (from *rhizome*) replaces the category of *cosmos* with the category of *chaosmos*; it defines philosophical thought as nomadic (immersed in inter-being, in the state of ever renewed *intermezzo*), that is without the center, with no “generals” and “guides”.

Lyotard did emphasize (at least since his *Economie libidinale* (1974) where he employed the work of Deleuze and Guattari *Anti-Oedipe* published two years earlier, devoted to relation between capitalism and schizophrenia), that one should accept as the fundamental frame of reference not the hitherto categories, but the erotic energy which finds its vent in desire, that is, in elemental force. Which categories are to be rejected, then? Structuralist thinking on linear configuration, on established relation between the signifying and the signified. The historiosophy which assumes that all recital of history (*le grand récit*) is inscribed into an unavoidable order of civilization and culture as well as pertains to a liberating mission which has to be performed. Unacceptable are also all religionlike ideas which philosophy easily assimilated and hid under the lay garb;

likewise with the utopian designs which had dominated social philosophy since the beginning of modern times. The conviction that there is some fundamental truth to be unearthed, or some authenticity at the source of being etc., is pure mythology. One should follow the wisest essayists' intuition and tell oneself: "Enough of these mythologized system-making temptations". One should admit that we are rather mad than reasonable, that the ideas are guided by wishes (*nous sommes tous les sauvages*).

There is no need to report here the booklet *La condition postmoderne* (1979), or his chief work *Le différend* (1984) in which he put forward the idea of clash (conflict) rather than contention. I limit myself to mentioning, and that perfunctory, of the ideas which supplement what we said above. We learn that there is no ultimate tribunal, i.e. no ontological either cognitive or ethical criteria of universal scope. Therefore, what is left for us is simply a clash strife without resolution, whereas in contention some specific arguments may prevail and negotiation is commendable. Every sentence linked with others is subject to definite rules within discourse of a given type (cognitive, ethical, political, etc.) which are neither mutually translatable, nor is there any transition from one to another. To realize that clearly to oneself and to others — this is what constitutes an honest thinking, i.e. not looking for some universal key to the coherent whole of being and of human history. Every utterance occurs (*la phrase arrive*) in this instant experience (*il y a*), and should not be *a priori* included into some ready made strain of thought which engages transcendentals and universals. One should begin thinking in a new fashion abandoning the idea of God and his substitutes, leaving behind everything that persistently calls for unfolding of the absolute. We live surrounded by randomness, with our immediate obligations, admittedly under the pressure of options but the latter are always unsteady. The languages and norms that we use are mutually incompatible — they are (as things and phenomena which they concern) heterogeneous. And this cannot be otherwise. The justification and legitimization of what we proclaim and of what we do are to be formulated in a sophistic manner. Therefore the dialogue going on among people (not only philosophers) is only apparently an exchange of views with some points in common; actually it is a dramatic dialogue without consensus which is mere illusion. In *Au juste* (conversations with Jean Loup Thebaud, 1979) the duty ("ought") is expounded as an inalienable act when one faces the ethical question but at the same time Lyotard says that it is only occasional rules (do's and don'ts) that are available. After all, there are no constant principles defining what is good and what is wrong; hence so deceptive are such theorems as Kantian, Christian, or their analogies.

Metaphilosophical considerations of Rorty, Marquard and Welsch do not stray far from the considerations of Paris thinkers. Admittedly, Marquard does not subscribe to being a postmodernist preferring to call himself a Pyrronist of our day, or a transcendental fiction-writer but — witness the titles of his two books of 1981 and 1986 — philosophy should bid farewell to the principled orientation (that is to the establishing of metaphysical tribunal and its

derivatives) and come to terms with the contingencies of existence, multiplicity of phenomena, unprovable and heterogeneous thought in which no common motifs of some Leibnizian sort are to be found. The philosophy that relinquishes indicating the essence of things, the unconditional truth, thereby cuts itself off the theological ways of thinking about being, self, destiny of individual and history. The problem concerns not only theodicy, which was pushed aside as early as the seventeenth century, but also of its successive quasi-incarnations; that means substituting Divine Being by nature or thinking subject, or human history to which the rank of god-like power is awarded. Rorty — from *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1980) to *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989) — struggles against the same (as he thinks) specters. And so one seeks, as for Ariadne's clew of thread, for *glassy essence*, but in all truth there are neither such clew nor such substantive properties. Neither the objectivity of nature that is divine, cosmic or otherwise, nor the cognizing subject, are the trustworthy frame of reference for the truth sought; the latter is always construed in respect of circumstances and contingencies, relative, challenging the principle of *mimesis* as much as the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*. Randomness instead of regularity are to be taken with empirical lock, stock and barrel. Our irony is due not only to the saviors of the world, but also to those who proclaim that they know for certain what the ontological structure is, how to grasp it best, how to act nobly. The human solidarity — according to Rorty — will be satisfied by the awareness of unbearability of cruelty; elemental resistance to wrong, and compassion for one's neighbors (starting with family and friends, until the group that is someone's *Umwelt*). There is no need for any onto-epistemological universals, for any ecumenical code — these are but fictional creations. Finally Welsch with his concept of *transversale Vernunft*; instead of distinct rationality founded on philosophical logos — overlapping of various types of rationality, and transition from one to the other. He defends the discourse refraining from chasing aporias, but he recommends uncovering of contradictions and of inner cracks in the analyzed thought. One should stress the states of uncertainty towards many different and mutually incompatible solutions and decisions. Totalization in the hitherto sense is questioned since the self-critical reason eliminates them inevitably. In his later collection of essays, *Aesthetisches Denken* (1990) the author speaks of ambivalence and opaqueness of the discourse which should concentrate precisely on what is nonidentical, and abandon hope in logical criteria. The imaginary thinking makes contact with reality more pertinently and genuinely than the purely conceptual thinking. The unfolding of the throng of attitudes and truths is served better by intuition than by the theorems, especially when the latter are treated in an axiomatic manner. Thus similarly to the manner of French philosophers does Welsch subvert the whole hitherto tradition, to free the place it occupies for reflection which in his formulation is called an aesthetic one (i.e. supported on *aisthesis*, on *Sinnwahrnehmung*, which is to get to the crux of the given phenomena).

5. THE POSTMODERNISM PROPER (II): BY-PHILOSOPHY AND BEYOND PHILOSOPHY

The postmodernism *proper* in its variation at issue, calls for its part for extension, when a given thinker faces the question: what is the substance of philosophizing; and, whether what he plies is still its embodiment, or perhaps else, and then what? When we cross this threshold we place ourselves, I hold, in the very center of postmodernism reflection. And so does Derrida say that it is impossible to part with philosophizing (*Positions, Marges... and D'un ton apocalyptique...*), but at the same time he asserts that his thought — and in general the thought which he reclaims from the deconstructed tradition — belongs neither to philosophy, nor to fiction. He calls his thought rhetorical, grounded in and resulting from the textual work; a striking, fragmentary thought which aspires for neither denotation nor connotation, but instead “to-be-listenable-to”, or more precisely “to-be-readable”. The written discourse is, after all, different from the spoken one; this difference implies a constant struggle with the metaphysical appropriation, without the comfort of “pilgrim’s goal”, with which there would again appear some constants (invariants). Rhetorician juxtaposes various languages, applies metaphors which are not a replacement of the concept (category), but yet incorporate conceptuality. He employs footnotes and quotations alongside with his own judgments; he plays the game of surprises; at everything — his own texts included — does he place quotation marks, wondering what the limits of thought are. Thus did write Derrida *Glas* and *La carte postale...*; I would say that these works are as much metaphilosophical as — and primarily — by-philosophical. This is neither sophistry nor the speculative *distinguo*. Derrida transcends as a postmodernist beyond philosophizing, but he does not abandon it entirely. Rhetoric here is not, in the meaning of the ancients, the ability to persuade that things are like this, or what they should be, or how to steer our actions. It is something else, since the traditional rhetorician never decapitated the presence of principles; he was at least indifferent to that question. Whereas here the problem was set — but not solved (perhaps because it is unsolvable) — of the sense pertaining to the ways of presentation, disputing and resolving of philosophical theses; here not only answers which were to be universally binding are being stripped of their legitimacy, but also the questions. Deleuze already in his *La différence et la répétition* juxtaposed philosophical book with the detective novel or science fiction, recommending to ply history of philosophy in the same manner as the painter’s collage. As in Derrida’s output, is the overcoming of philosophical hackwork recommended; when taking side of Nietzsche against the Platonic-Hegelian paradigms he approves of *another* philosophizing, and at the same time refers exclusively to the artistic examples (e.g. Mallarmé and Joyce) or essays of Borges. The shapeless, chaotic reality may be grasped — he argues — only by thought which counterblasts the given extraphilosophical paradigms. In *Mille Plateaux* philosophy is reduced to schizo-analysis and cartography; thinking is to be an abstract literary machine set in rotary motion. There is no

talk of rhetoric here; his "nomadic knowledge" is a linguistic and reflexive assemblage in which hieroglyphic metaphors, aphorisms, apparent explicating, private anti-ideological deliberations, etc., are blended. It would seem that Deleuze bade farewell to philosophizing on behalf of his rhizomatics, something that is neither fiction, nor rhetoric, but an altered kind of reflection over the world. Still, in his conversation with Claire Parnet (1977) he emphasized that he aspired towards exit from the traditional philosophical area, to continue yet philosophizing from outside (*du dehors*). It was at that time that he did design together with Guattari the idea of rhizome and of chaosmos. In his collection of articles and interviews *Pourparlers* (1991) a separate part concerns directly the understanding of philosophy but this motif keeps recurring through almost all of his considerations. Deleuze stresses that the true philosophizing should be creative and not self-reflexive, let alone ideological. What is that supposed to mean, though? Creation of new concepts — such as for instance rhizome — and mobilizing the thought permeated with affections, saturated with the intense energy seeking impulses in the extra-rational sphere. The concepts can be, and notoriously are, invented by artists, scholars, politicians, theologians, etc. What then — does Deleuze ask himself — would distinguish philosophical invention in this respect? The answer runs: giving to them precision and lucidity. It is not hard to realize that the answer is vague, or even wishy-washy. This ambiguity of attitude is characteristic for the stance that I called before by-philosophical or even beyond-philosophical.

In case of Lyotard whose self-awareness is phenomenally acute, it is convenient to start with his *Rudiments païens* (1977) where to the given philosophy there was counterpoised pagan philosophy which is close to arts, sophisticated and lively, with no pretense to terrorizing with the general principles and to taking the position of the supreme judge in questions of truth, good, beauty, and political rationality. In *Le Différend* we read that there has come the time of philosophy testifying that one should be content with the clash (strife) itself, without any chances for reconciliation. A philosopher — it is being said — different in this respect from theoretician does not know anything in advance, does not have any program, any assumptions, any rules. His material are sentences, and what will ensue therefrom will turn out in the train of thinking. Therefore is the idiom of his utterances essayistic, and he himself aspires for getting rid of his personal style not to woo the reader with some quasi-artistic vision of the world. Nevertheless Lyotard, considering himself a philosopher, in the discussion at a conference in honor of his work (c. *Témoignage du différend. Quand phrasier ne se peut*. 1989) admitted that thinking while meeting with resistance (since in the form of discourse it progresses towards the extra-discursive matter) is constantly driven to counter-philosophy. Thus also in this case the ambiguity of his stance gives one pause. And so neither in this case was the philosophical reflection (in its meta-variant, at least) totally abandoned, though by — or even beyond — philosophy is evidently prevailing. The same misgivings are to be found in Rorty, Marquard and Welsch. It is pointed out that

the hour of philosophy is past, or passes now away and yet maintained that it is impossible to cease philosophizing. Especially with Marquard and Welsch of particular force is the motif of discourse dissimilar from those hitherto practiced, and of other assumptions, that is of inconclusivity, and yet of remaining within boundaries of Pyrronist or aesthetic thinking which keeps raising the same fundamental questions in an ultra-critical manner. For Rorty in his *Philosophy...* it is the question of taking the side of hermeneutics and therapeutically-educational stance of a thinker who appreciates most in human history conversation, without searching for universal principles. In *Contingency*, the stress is shifted to the artistic vision, the private outlook, in which some philosophical reasons do dominate, yet without any uplifting-dictatorial claims. Thus the dilemma of by-philosophy or even of transgression *beyond* philosophy, and at the same time of metaphilosophical entanglement, has not been rescinded in either of those cases. One speaks persistently of *another* thought, but nowhere is it explained what should the philosophic thinking consist in. This thinking — let us recall — is once totally gainsaid, and still reappears as an inalienable precondition. It seems that we may handle this problem best if we accept as the point of reference Lyotard's declaration from his article "Règles et paradoxes" (1981) in which he foils not only the philosophers answers but also the fundamental questions that they keep asking. Annulment of questions (suspending the questioning of questions transcending the text which is here called the testimony of "savage thought" or "other thought") — that seems to be the goal of postmodernist irredenta.

Noteworthy, Lyotard elsewhere defends the sense of philosophizing where — as he radically alters his position — the main task concerns meditating on questions so far common and standard whose importance has to be unmasked. This corresponds to a consequently deconstructionist analysis of Derrida who, after all, treats seriously the whole philosophical heritage, inquiring into the how and why had it been entangled into dealing with deceptive problems. It is only when we juxtapose this strategy with a superb book by Leszek Kołakowski *Horror metaphysicus*, that we do realize fully well the peculiar properties of postmodernism. Kołakowski demonstrates how philosophy was always self-scrutinizing, always questioning its own status, always doubting its legitimacy. Therefore no ecumenical solutions were ever found, nor was there established any linguistically-thematic matrix which would bring together various conceptions and various vocabularies. Yet it is something else to resign from the cursed questions. As long as a given thinker moves within the circle of metaphilosophy — openly or tacitly showing deference to the fact that human (which may also be defined as religious) condition as it were forces him ceaselessly to ask questions which have no satisfying answers — he remains anchored in tradition. He knows quite well that the history of philosophy is mostly history of setbacks — and despite the fact setbacks which are splendid as they feed all of the culture. On the other hand, when the threshold of metaphilosophy is crossed towards the reflexive "savagery" or "otherness" (as it is a somewhat natural aftermath of

deconstructionist-subversive analyses, that they aim at thinking which is and which is not philosophic, or strictly speaking, it turns into something that can be called "neither-nor"), then philosophizing becomes suspect or confusing. One might object — at least on the grounds of what I reported myself — that this does not apply to every type of philosophizing, or at least not to the one that a given thinker considers proper. The problem, however, lies with the haziness of those proposals, competing as they are with the tradition of philosophizing.

On one hand the postmodernist philosophical works are written only to snipe at all the hitherto philosophy. However, in which sense the deconstructive reflexion is of philosophic character, we hardly know. On the other hand, from Derrida, who, it seems, is most consistent in philosophizing against philosophy, we learn for instance in his *Parages* (1986) — while he refers to Blanchot deliberately obliterating the border between fiction and philosophy — that philosophers should both produce fictions and make one think. Neither should it be forgotten that the phenomenon of "double bind" (gravitating from singularity towards plurality, and towards placing oneself within and without both aforementioned areas) so much stressed by Derrida has tangible results in his educational and organizational activity, as the founder and chairman of Greph, a group of inquiry into the best ways of teaching and propagating philosophy. For there is no end to it but at most the closure (*cloture, pas fin*) of its specific cycle.

At the end of this fragment of my discourse I implore that attention be paid to that all we have said about metaphilosophical and by-philosophical postmodernism corresponds to Bauman's analysis. It would be no exaggeration to assert that the aforementioned thinkers produce the sublimated support for premises and generalizations of sociologists of culture who speak of replacing the old axiological trinity (liberty, equality, fraternity) with another trinity (liberty, variety, tolerance with their significant distortions, that is permissiveness, chasing the fresh commodity, mutual indifference) in the rootless world deprived with no arbitrator. Of some note is that, likewise to the decline of the elites proclaimed in socio-culturologist considerations, so in meta-or-beyond-philosophical reflexions is it held that philosophizing is no privileged occupation at all; moreover, it is no special vocation at all. And should one keep such pretense, then he is ridiculous and dangerous, wishing as he does to save the mankind. But after the twentieth century experiences it is well known that roads of paradise lead to hell.

Have I handled the problem of limits of philosophy competently? I do not think so. I barely touched the crucial question, namely: what are the constitutive qualities that determine philosophical thinking (language alone, or the character of discourse, or the problems, or the answers to questions, or all together)? Only a more detailed consideration given to these matters would enable one to say what postmodernism actually is in relation to the philosophical area. May be, one should drop such kind of inquiry altogether because postmodernism is at odds with searching for constitutive qualities, and distances itself from the task of defining anything in a fixed manner. But, if so, why should one studying the

postmodernists follow them and apply their instruments of analysis? A thorny and nodal question.

What I presented here is but a reconstruction of the way to the goal which still lies ahead. Nevertheless, I could not escape this issue since it is closely connected with the third, and partly with the fourth, problem, to which we shall pass in turn.

6. CAN POSTMODERNISM ESCAPE PHILOSOPHIZING?

Let us refer to the cited symptomal reading, following Derrida's proposition. One might apply to the reading of the texts of his and of his followers the analogous device, that is pointing out what was tacit and yet not less characteristic for this thought than what had been expounded. And even if it is not hidden, then it is so crushed by the rest of argument, that it calls to be brought to the top. Our question is the following: did the postmodernists manage to escape the assaulted philosophy even when they assert that they are at their meta-reflexive perimeter, or even beyond its pale? The question might be given a short shrift by repeating the doubts formulated a moment ago, relating to the ambiguous position, i.e. dilemmatic oscillation between the inherited and defused thought, and some other thought. This, however, does not suffice to grab the bull by the horns. One should say tentatively (and that is but a preparatory chore which I will not manage to develop), that the core of philosophizing is totalizing the picture of the world and the sense of existence. This is the operation comprised in all those cursed persistent questions of which I spoke in connection with Kolakowski's *Horror Metaphysicus*. Generally speaking, this is the problem of philosophy as a substitute for religion and theology which cannot be bypassed. Totalizing involves accepting some fundamental elements; the first principle might as well be found in death with which we have to cope, or in evil, since devil is lurking everywhere — to the same degree as in their refutation. Derrida abstains from ascribing priority to deconstruction, and yet does he not turn it into the Fundamental Strategy? When he analyzes *la différance*, he dodges any definition as devil dodges the holy water; he denies substantiality to it, and yet does he not substantialize conditions of thinking? If texts are everything, does there not exist — even though spoken of furtively — some pre-Writ, some pre-Trace, which at the same time become pre-source of intertextual game? Even if there is nothing else beside "savage sowing" of signs and flickering meanings, then is it not that this negation assumes the form of positiveness? I did not concoct these taunts myself — they were addressed at Derrida many times before. The rejected ontic quality and truth return like a boomerang; anti-order, anti-telos, the semantic dissemination become axioms opposite to the ones so far accepted. In his dissertation of 1987 (*De l'esprit*) on Heidegger's changing understanding of *das Geistige* Derrida reveals with critical distance his messianic eschatology and focusing on the primary source (*l'originnaire*). Nevertheless, in the conclusion — what is illuminating he assents to *Zweispache*, to leaving this problem unsolved. In the book *Jacques Derrida* (1991) — undersigned by

Derrida and by Geoffrey Bennington, perhaps the best monographer of his thought, in which under the text of the latter there runs — as in the sacred Jewish books — the text of the philosopher himself, i.e. his self-presentation harking back to Augustinian Confessions — we read, among others, that the linguistic (textual) reality is not exclusive. The world does certainly exist and the whole difficulty of philosophizing consists in the chasm between these two frames of reference. And further it is emphasized that one deconstructs metaphysics without, however, bidding farewell to it for good (*demi-deuil*), since the problems lying at its core are never removable.

In *Pourparlers* Deleuze ascribes to a philosopher the role of the *l'intercesseur*, that is the champion of, and intermediary in, unfolding of logic of multiplicity of senses. Are these not the first principle and the foremost hypothesis, as much as he dissociates himself from them? On whose behalf? Of solely pure negativity? After all, he points out the “schizo-livres” (of model quality to him) of American authors who visualize the might of un-reason; and moreover, he repeats Artaud’s idea of the “body without organs”. Thus he approaches in these utterances the philosophy of *mythos* — by design imprecise, multi-discursive, asystematic, etc. Moreover, with Deleuze the place of cosmos is taken by chaosmos with tubers of rhizoma; repetition in difference (and the other way round) is to be recognized as the principle of principles. Since the world and our experience are heterogeneous multiplicity of “regions of intensive pulsation” in the flickering network of aggregates, then what is being plied is not so much counter-ontology as rather para-ontology. If instead of the regal (settled) knowledge, one is offered as the proper knowledge the gypsy, vagrant knowledge, then the problem of truth otherwise expressed comes ricocheting back. When speaking of schizoanalysis embracing everything that can be said of the world — inclusive of history and political science, psychiatry and literary criticism, anti-*logos* and anti-*mythos*, etc. — Deleuze and Guattari totalize. That is they deduce from the definite principles, what is — paradoxically — on the whole fragile, fragmentary and incoherent. This negative quality turns into a positive quality.

In Lyotard’s approach communication among humans aspiring for consensus becomes dramatized — dissensus takes its place and turns into the backbone of social life. It is being accompanied by clash (strife) that is by the counterprinciple of universal character. We read that there are no right ideas; there is only varying correctness of various ideas (*juste des idées*). And yet in his considerations of ethical code, even though none of them can be distinguished as binding, Lyotard reiterates a number of times that ethics (obligation) entails actions which are generally called worthy and noble. The situations are always concrete and heterogenous, proper name (someone, somewhere, some time) decides about the proclaimed opinion, the language and discourse games change. Nevertheless, the criterion of good bearing on irrevocable *ought* consists, according to him, in that one listens to one’s conscience without knowledge which should help to substantiate the given choice. It is like with faith of Jews, their reliance on Torah, or with Kantian regulative idea, but without its

concretization in the definite imperative. Granted in advance that Lyotard wants the impossible, which means bringing to terms conventionalization of ethical verdict and resignation of definition of rules, renunciation of metadiscourse operating the principles, and at the same time remaining in such deontological field where the matter of what we approve of and what we oppose is by no means negligible. In his Freiburg lecture of 1989, *Heidegger et les Juifs*, the German philosopher is charged with letting memory lapse on the principal question: the moral law, the duty to protest against crime. It is the moral judgment that is being spoken of, and so the elementarity kicked out the front door, returns by the back door. Later in the year the same motif found its even stronger expression in his conversation on sublimity with Christine Pries. In the aforementioned book *Témoignage du différend...* many debaters emphasized and Lyotard himself admitted that he does, maybe, create — be it with bitterness or with musing — a historiosophic project (*grand récit*) on the end of all projects of that type. What is more, he by no means excluded there the likelihood of turning the clash into a contention and debate. Indeed, is it not that the overcoming of meta-discourse and of universal keys calls for another kind of meta-discourse and for another totalizing operation? Why does he interpret the monstrous case of Auschwitz as a phenomenon of extraordinary historic and ethical importance, though the rationale of the Nazis may be juxtaposed with the rationale of their victims only within the mutually irreducible discourses? If so, one has to find then, as I suggested earlier, some fundamental yardstick beyond the limits of cognitive rationality, i.e. a common “ought” which legitimizes the use of the term “monstrosity” in relation to Auschwitz. Lyotard writes, after all, that the events (and the utterances thereupon) are no new Lord; that the need for legitimation of the consensus — especially in ethical matters — never totally disappears from our horizon. Well and great! This aporetic feature of Lyotard’s texts confirms the force and depth of his thought which keeps coming back to philosophy as to its cradle.

Lyotard cogitates on the need for specific — different from Levianas’ vision — ontologization of ethical sensitivity, sense of guilt, and responsibility. One does not have to seek in Marquard’s output for the motifs traced here, as he himself defines his concept as an attempt at totalizing (*Prinzip des Nicht-prinzipiellen*). Welsch, as I said before, does not hold that the definition of some principle should be given rest — it merely should be different from the one so far, that is, it should ensue from crisscrossing of many rationalities, and this without elimination of a problem of some definite meaning of reality. The question being only what that meaning is, and how is it given (in *Aesthetisches Denken* there is the issue of *Sinnwahrnehmung* which replaces the abstract, speculative logos). Rorty — a liberal ironist — perceives the infrangible principles in solidarity and in conversing of mankind. Let us say that every negation — dialectically, in the Hegelian manner (Hegel being the black sheep of postmodernism) — is thus inevitably extended to the whole picture of reality, and so becomes a binding truth. I do not maintain that the analysed thinkers do not

realize this. They know well that — as long as they squabble with their great predecessors on their own ground — they fail to kill philosophy. Nor do I forget their effort at breaking away from this manner of thinking towards — in Lyotard's own words — *autre savoir*. It seems unlikely, though, that they ponder on themselves (on the other side, apparently) so profoundly and critically as on the repertory of main traditional concepts. Can the thought placed within "neither-nor", in some in-between zone, in the midst of philosophy, literature, and essay — manage to avoid getting again into the ruts of philosophy, when it constructs its vision composed of segments, contradictions, para-logisms? Does not their destruction of Logos bring them near to the philosophy of *mythos*, although they ostracize both principles? Does their by-philosophizing withstand the test of comparison with the philosophy of *Logos*? Finally — and most pertinently — can this type of reflection, against which do they warn their fellow-philosophers and the humanities-reading public, be ousted since it seems to be one of the deepest human prerequisites, analogous to religious one? The only thing that can and should be done is to realize keenly the presence of the absolutized claims involved in totalizing thinking, particularly when the given manner of totalizing treats itself to be the one exclusive and superior, and especially — when the bad comes to the worst — when it is abused by ideologues and politicians for purposes of their own.

Has the third snag been eliminated? Not quite, since my — relevant or otherwise — diagnosis concerns potential inconsistencies, or even contradictions, of postmodernist stance to an equal degree as my interpretation. I realize that my arguments presently brought in do not cling without dissonance to those employed earlier. If the totalizing of a particular character is indispensable when we philosophize, then should we not treat seriously only a detached meta-philosophical reflection, and relate — Pickwick-wise, tongue-in-cheek — to by-philosophical and especially beyond philosophic reflection without ascribing to the latter a co-constitutive role? In a word, is postmodernism but a philosophical metadiscourse of radically critical character, which is to find its formulation in positive negativeness (or negative positiveness) or else a kind of thought which does deserve to be only pondered as simulating philosophy?

We stumble again on the key question which I signalized in advance. Namely: how is the phenomenon of philosophizing to be conceived? It seems that in every option, in every (most private, artistic, or otherwise) vision of reality which propose the definite principles of the latter, and which invites for dialogue to sway as many people as possible, are there inherent results of philosophical thinking. This would mean that the remarks and observations I formulated could be also applied to the postmodernist "other knowledge". Then the arguments associated with the third snag would not run counter to the conclusion resulting from my previous reflections. It seems to me that a good example for the feasibility of such a conciliatory solution is the instance of de Sade who is thought by many students to be the forerunner of postmodernist approach. It can be justly argued that de Sade's reflection is thoroughly philosophical. Moreover

— and most peremptorily — wishing to escape philosophy, he failed because of the counter-principles (defiled mind, criminal tendencies, anomalies). In other words, de Sade constructed in a holistic manner a picture of the world of another kind: inescapably positive even though built of negation.

7. POSTMODERNISM OR POSTPHILOSOPHISM?

A half of a snag is still left. The question being whether the postmodernism — dissociating itself as it is from all its heritage in the philosophical field, attacking Plato as much as Hegel and Husserl, pre-Socratics as much as Heidegger — should not be called a post-philosophism rather than being persistently linked with a new cultural mutation? Is there a way out of this trap? I think this possible. I will attempt to approach this question in a slightly roundabout manner. Lyotard — whenever he exemplified the artistic postmodernism — did in a striking manner bring in the works of the most recent *avant garde*. He was not the exclusive one to have done so, since in the 1970's Ihab Hassan (one of the leading American theoreticians of literature and concerned with our problems), wrote in the similar manner. Today it seems rather evident that postmodernism — because of the prevailing artistic practice and among others, because of its meta- and beyond-philosophical assumptions — is anti-*avant garde*. If Lyotard's perspective is accepted, then the era of postmodernism would be the era of post-art and — parallel to it — of post-philosophy (no matter whether implemented, but certainly planned). In this situation, its opposition would be not so much modernism but the entirety of culture since the beginning of the emergence of the civilization of writing. Welsch argues in his essay "Die Geburt der postmodernen Philosophie aus dem Geist der modernen Kunst" (*Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 1990, nr 97) that one of the precursors of meta- and by-philosophical assumptions and conclusions was Jean Dubuffet: less as an artist, than as a philosophizing critic of our civilization. He questioned the European anthropocentrism, the primacy of *logos*, the stipulation of unequivocality, and domination of form in the work of art. One of the main subjects are here opinions of Lyotard starting with his *Discours figure* (1971), through his comments to art of Duchamp, Newman, Buren, Adami, Arakawa, ending with his considerations on aesthetic revolution degrading the category of beauty and enthroning the category of sublimity. Thus the modernist art was supposed to have prepared the ground for postmodernist philosophy, ascribing as it does the peculiar role to the process of decomposition of the work, to its fragmentation and collage, till dematerialization, discursive metareflection (plied alongside with the work or instead of it), ceaseless experimentation (which is to be linked with the fluidity of means of expression and of material when faced with an idea which cannot be fully visualized and locked in a beautiful structure), finally heterogeneous character of what is being created (no common denominator, no clear criteria), which inevitably brought fruition in the shape of pluralism of attitudes, of programs, etc. Since the mature modernist (*avant garde*) art of our

time is so miscellaneous that there is no logic to be perceived in its development or image, then — one reads — it may be grasped as fully homologous to the ideas propagated by Derrida, Deleuze, etc. That was, by the way — we read on — why Foucault appreciated Mallarmé, the critic of the Boof of the World, while Derrida for his part esteemed Artaud and Bataille, whereas Deleuze revered the writers that I mentioned when pausing over his *La différence et la répétition*.

If we consent to such approach, an obvious conclusion comes to mind, namely that modernism transits into postmodernism without any cultural upheaval. Lyotard, as I hinted at the beginning of this essay, really launched such idea but with his reservation that postmodernism is a new mode of the old formation. Welsch follows in his steps emphasizing that postmodernism is, after all, a mutation which corresponds to the new forms of everyday life; that the demarcation lines are still palpable, since in *Alltagsleben* there takes place cloning of what is standardized, mass-produced, replicated in millions of disposable copies, whereas at the other pole there grows the aesthetic sensitivity (*aisthētis*) to the surrounding world which undermines the dominance of *Logos*. No matter whether Welsch's observation is relevant (I for my part think its relevance only partial, and his generalizations too hasty and rash). What is important is that, as was also the case with Lyotard (in his book *Le postmodernisme expliqué aux enfants* for one), the arguments they use, are not convincing. Their idea of deriving the philosophical postmodernism from the most recent *avant garde* art clearly breaks down because avantgardism (old and new alike) is spectacularly at odds with postmodernism what is evinced by emancipationist and utopian character of the former. Moreover, an escape from traditionally conceived arts is characteristic to the former whereas the latter returns to it by its employment of pastiche and eclectic devices. The process of decomposition is given a totally different meaning in either case — for the postmodernism this is primarily heterogeneity, whereas for the new *avant garde* this is getting rid of the canons which sustain the very status of the work of art. The avantgardist does not wish to be sublime, least of all in this arbitrary meaning ascribed to this category by Lyotard (experimentation as the expression of idea without adequate form). The multiplicity is here and there basically dissimilar — in postmodernism it is subordinated to the glimmer of the market, advertising, fashions, whereas in the *avant garde* this is struggling with the meaning of art and of reality, as well as looking for some Principle Idea recognized by the group. Thus, the two phenomena at issue lack symmetry both in substance and in time. Post-art means something else than post-philosophy, the latter following the former and gainsaying it all along.

Having rid oneself of this contrived pedigree, we encounter the pedigree proper which might enable us to liberate ourselves from the presaged pitfall. Namely, postmodernism grows out of the spirit of the consumer society. Its philosophical variation drew its stimulation from the surrounding social world, and then rationalized it in its resolutions. The fact that it assumes the shape of radical rejection of all philosophical tradition ensues from two interlinked

causes. The epoch of modernism — rejecting as it did theodicy, and critically evaluating the ontological, epistemological and axiological categories — paved way for the postmodernist onslaught. Why? Because it unawares laid the traps to itself. Namely, its philosophy of subject (as of the measure of all things) as well as reference to universal principles and invariants connected with nature or history pushed to the negation of such thinking of the world, if the criticism had to be taken seriously. It is for these reasons that modernism became for postmodernists the most convenient object of analyses — not only for its contiguity in time, but primarily because it facilitated demonstration that half-hearted criticism of the hitherto (always of necessity religious) philosophizing does not make the grade, and that it has to be uprooted. Hence the anti-modernist tendency easily turned into the generally anti-philosophical tendency (whether an accomplished one is another matter). At that of much greater importance is the other cause — namely the innovative character of cultural transformations of our time. So innovative that it took to deconstruct the whole heritage of thought, and not only of the predecessors who were our masters. The breakthrough faced the thinkers at issue with the necessity of changing the thematic repertory, the style and type of discourse, the questions as well as answers. Faced with permissiveness, toleration of strangeness and difference with the same equanimity as what is native, participation in the consumer shows, surfeit of the kaleidoscopic metamorphosis of commodities, obliteration of identity (since everybody has a thousand faces, depending on circumstances), etc. — then there was the need for introducing negative principle and the counter-principles. And so the post-philosophical epoch by no means is at odds with the era of overcoming of modernist heritage. It seems that handling the half-sag is within intellectual capacities of a researcher who assumes the concept of postmodernism as a new cultural mutation.

The whole problem, however, is whether the breakthrough at issue is a beneficial one. Lyotard, Welsch, and partly Bauman, perceive its sundry advantages, Baudrillard and Gehlen considering our epoch a time of spiritual poverty which they call post-historical. I see it in yet another manner. I cannot acquiesce with the opinion that history suddenly “stopped”, mankind basking in such good feelings and being so blind that there will be no ideas aspiring for improvement of reality once the impulse and motivation are spent. The proclivity for designing better future, hoping against hope, the virus of utopia, are as persistent as philosophical thinking and religious needs. I think thus, that the present cultural breakthrough will encounter growing resistance and will bring about natural self-correcting tendencies.

In turn, I cannot share the optimism of stalwarts of postmodernism. It is more an act of desperation that I perceive in their attitude than of enthusiasm. They turn vice into virtue; they attempt to procure the philosophy for mankind liberating itself from its eternal vices and shortcomings. And yet it is better to realize that we have to totalize, and that among the inescapable setbacks the worst were those which they consider victories over the nightmare of totalization

of the picture of the world. While at that, they commit a glaring mistake proving groundlessly that every totalizing reflection is tainted with the uplifting-dictatorial tendency which ultimately legitimizes the authoritarian system. Obviously — it may be so; and in some particular historical circumstances it did happen so. Nevertheless, there is no permanent juncture between the philosophical thought totalizing the reality and despotism or imperialism in practical sphere. Philosophers do not command but persuade; their argument is reference to *mythos* or *logos*, not to power, fists, weapons, or incarceration. They exhort to share their outlook without means of penalization. The latter can be done — utilizing the formers' premises and goals — by managers and politicians. These, however, can with equal — if not greater — facility instrumentalize postmodernist counter-principles. They can turn liberty into obedience to advertising and marketing; they can change miscellaneity into stupefying frenzy of information and propaganda; they may reduce tolerance to the principle "my home is my castle", and to leave the whole home (society) to their own means. Did thus philosophical advocates of postmodernism — while desperately consenting to the world of consumer surfeit given in the most civilizationally advanced countries — make a good choice? Is it not by any chance the case of submission to civilizational fatum as a result of conviction — unconvincing to me — of its might, or out of rational cunning, expecting to be able, as far as possible, to ply the world in accordance with their wishes? It does not take a malicious person to hold that both the surrender to fatum, as well as an attempt at outsmarting it, actually gainsay their antimodernist crusade. In such formulation postmodernism would be little more than duplication of the given — and, it seems, not the best — solutions. It is significant that Deleuze and Lyotard, Derrida and Rorty do not comply with the world of today, dominated as it is by the Moloch of technology, signs and consumption; it is significant that (as distinct from the postmodernist artists) they keep asking — in a manner different from that of before because following the deconstructing job — the question about the sense of human being at large, and of thinking. Nevertheless — striking paradox as it may be — their anti-philosophical diversion supplies arguments to those who think that values are a marketable commodity, and that it suffices to live an unconstrained life, making one's little garden grow, undisturbed by choices going beyond our pale.

POST SCRIPTUM

Is my controversy with the postmodern philosophical strategies taking side with universalism? Frankly declaring, I see no direct connections between my stance and universalistic outlook. Anyway, I was involved in my discussion with Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard etc., not because of a definite position I wanted to defend at any price. However, after reflecting upon the question of universalism, I would be prone to distinguish its three versions and spell out my agreement with the weakest. The strong version assumes that there are steady universals (of

whichever origin and character — ontological, onto-existential, nature-bound or cultural-historical of longest possible conjuncture) which must be assented to as the very frame of reference in all ultimate matters. According to the moderate one it is maintained that there are only cultural-historical paradigms of extensive duration but changing from time to time (epochs to epochs) and from space to space. The weak solution amounts to stating that there are many competing attempts of indispensable totalization of phenomena under examination because any *Weltbild* requires taking into account everything and setting it in an order of ontological, epistemological and ethical paradigms. Philosophizing cannot avoid it but it is accompanied by self-consciousness that the endeavor will be a failure. There are many universals of different sort and no common matrix of them. There are, maybe, the same questions but infinitely different answers to them. Universalizing is thus of dramatic kind. It is a philosophic propensity but without any chance of establishing any binding solutions. If anything is genuinely universal, it cannot be brought down to convergent points of various worldviews (for they occur to be illusionary) but to the permanent questioning of the reality and our mind's constructions. This questioning is self-critical and fully lucid as to its potentialities and competences. Such weak universalism is my weapon in debate with postmodernists if I understand well their approach and undertakings.

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