Philosophy and humanity: a farewell registration? (Sergey Horujy, Academician)

The world wants to add the profits of death to the goods of life.
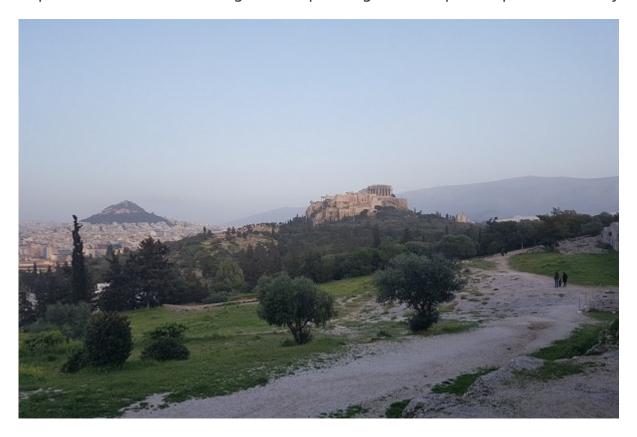Paul Valery

Today a philosopher could say about his subject what prince Hamlet said about his time: Philosophy is out of joint. Philosophical discourse has lost its unity and integrity, it is fragmented and disconnected, and philosophy is now an archipelago, all the islands of which live by their own rules and laws. Political philosophy, linguistic philosophy, ethics, epistemology... there are many islands. May be, another anatomical metaphor is even more adequate here: Philosophy has no backbone. Trying to express the reasons of this, our philosopher might complement Shakespeare with Thomas Eliot: The centre does not hold. In the past all philosophical domains went back to their common core, Philosophia prima, or ontology, which had, in its turn, a core of its own, the idea of the transcendent and the idea of being as distinct of present empiric being. However, contemporary philosophy is inclined to reject this core. The idea of transcendence is usually treated nowadays as ill-founded or definitely fictitious. And this produces the

domino effect.

Centrifugal drive. Why?

Deprived of its ontological core, philosophical discourse, as said above, becomes fragmented and disconnected. What is more, owing to this de-ontologization philosophy loses its prestige and its top position in the ensemble of disciplinary discourses. There starts the process, which Deleuze called the deterritorialization of philosophy. Crucial problems and principal questions concerning man, society and world are not treated anymore as philosophical problems and questions, they are transferred to the territory of neighboring discourses such as sociology, psychology, linguistics or formal logic, as in analytical philosophy, etc. Leading thinkers of the last decades are openly reluctant to solve philosophical problems within traditional philosophical framework, and it is very characteristic that François Laruelle, one of the great old men of modern philosophy, provides his big and imposing system with the name "non-philosophy". It is a kind of flight, as if philosophical thought had an urge to take non-philosophical form, as if it experienced some centrifugal drive pushing it out of philosophical territory.

But why does it all happen? To answer this question we must turn from philosophy to philosopher, to human being cultivating some special "philosophical" practices. We see that he changed drastically the character of these practices, and looking for reasons we discover that he changed not less drastically himself. At the same time

when radical changes in philosophy took place radical anthropological changes took place as well. Reconstructing these changes in my synergic anthropology, I find that they represent the change of the anthropological formation or, in other terms, of the type of human constitution. For a very long time humans were forming-up their constitution actualizing their relation to being or God, which corresponded to the formation of the "Ontological Man". Then there emerged competing types of the constitution, in which human being forms it up without any respect to being or God: for example, in patterns induced from the unconscious (the formation of the "Ontical Man") or in virtual anthropological practices, like going-out into cyberspace (the formation of the "Virtual Man"). Anthropological experience in these new formations is very different from the experience of the "Ontological Man", and hence philosophical experience, which is some special kind of anthropological experience, should be different too. Thus the Ontical Man and the Virtual Man cannot accept unreservedly classical philosophy developed by the Ontological Man. In their experience the relation to God or to the transcendent or to being (as distinct of empiric being) is absent and hence from their viewpoint all philosophical systems and constructions involving this relation, in other words, all religious and all ontologically-based philosophy, represent purely formal or fictitious constructions.

Thus we conclude that the changes in philosophy, its drastic de-ontologization and deterritorialization, are the reflection or implication of anthropological changes. But in both fields the process of change is far from being finished, it is of the domino character and it continues. Whither?

The Exit trend

Yes, anthropological changes go on. Actually, they deepen, and anthropological dynamics becomes more active reaching a new stage. At this stage radical transformations of human body and all biological framework, which were once among popular themes of science-fiction, become perfectly practical subjects. Main tools of these transformations are of two kinds, genetic technologies and computer technologies. On their base two anthropological projects emerged, which are now in rapid progress. They both are of the same nature, which was considered as completely utopian not long ago: they plan to replace human being with some artifact "posthuman" creature, cyborgs in the case of the computer project or genetic mutants in the case of the genetic project. There is also an extreme form of the computer project called transhumanism, which plans to convert all the contents of human consciousness into computer software to be loaded into some supercomputer system.

All these influential present-day projects share one important new feature: they show man's weary desire to leave the scene, to give up his place to somebody else who is not human being, to some Posthuman. They propose different scenarios of such leaving, but they all are oriented to "our posthuman future", by Frances Fukuyama's formula. This famous formula should be corrected, however: for us, humans, the posthuman future is not ours, we shall not be there. And we conclude that the leading trend in present-day anthropological reality is the Exit trend. It implies man's repudiation of his specific identity and disappearance of human being as a species: quiet and painless, even comfortable disappearance staged by man himself, a kind of the euthanasia of mankind.

And we notice that the course of things in philosophy as described above is perfectly in tune with this anthropological trend. The deterritorialization of philosophy can also be considered as a sui generis exit trend and a kind of the euthanasia of philosophy.

Final registration

There is a significant fact, however, which seems to contradict this prospect. Nowadays anthropological thought is in a period of mounting activity. Deleuze's and Nancy's vision of man as a de-ontologized singularity, theory of practices of the Self by Foucault, my synergic anthropology describing pluralistic human being, which constitutes him/herself by means of various kinds of the unlocking… – in these and other conceptions new anthropology arises, which is radically different of the old classical one and is able to comprehend recent sharp changes of anthropological reality. However, this upsurge of creative activity is not a

contradiction to the exit of either humanity or philosophy. Quite the opposite, it is a specific aspect of the Exit trend.

Human being is a peculiar kind of being, and so his exit is peculiar as well. He observes his own exit intently and keenly at all its stages and rigorously registers it. He does it because he feels deeply that the mission of registration is his duty and destiny, and he must do it till his last breath. Rilke has expressed this idea with artistic force: "Victim of a shipwreck or man bound hopelessly among polar ice-blocks forcing himself tries till his last minute to put to paper his observations and his emotions... he holds to the registration of all interconnections and intercommunications in the phenomena of the world although the latter is already turning away from him" (the letter to Wilhelm Hausenstein, 23. Feb. 1921).