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THE EXISTENTIAL PITFALLS OF AESTHETIC (OVER)SENSITIVITY

Abstract: In the following paper, I argue that a positive aesthetic experience does not make a person morally sensitive. Nor does it make him/her morally oversensitive. In the world of strong aesthetic values even the ugliest evil can be aesthetically attractive. People are doomed to live in a world of values. It is worth remembering that they live in this world even if they base themselves solely on aesthetic values. People cannot live without values, and they may find them in the world of aesthetics, though in the long run aesthetic values pay only lip service to ethical values.

Keywords: aesthetic sensitivity – modern art – aesthetic values – ethical values

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THE ALLERGY OF PHILOSOPHICAL AESTHETICS TO SENSUALITY AND ITS DESENSITIZATION IN VIEW OF PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Abstract: I intend to show how traditional aesthetics isolates sensuality and how its efforts are compensated by philosophical anthropology. I assume that philosophical aesthetics has an allergic reaction to sensuality. This means that its “immune system” opposes something not quite harmful. It could be said (metaphorically, of course) that it is wrongly oriented. I shall attempt to show that the allergy has its deeper causes in the inadequacy of the patient’s circumstances. They have to be slightly changed, and the allergen should be applied in the form of a vaccine. Both such actions, amounting to a research reorientation, have been offered by philosophical anthropology – to some extent in its classical period (*i.a.* by Arnold Gehlen, Helmuth Plessner), and most fruitfully in contemporary times (mainly by Gernot Böhme). Allergy may be also an excessive reaction to some external stimulus. With regard to aesthetics the situation is very similar. In its original meaning aesthetics – through aesthetic experience – is “a return to the body”, to sensuality. But at the same time there is a constant fear that sensuality would be equated with mere physical pleasure. Anthropological perspective does not depart from aesthetic discourse, but rather – as I believe – efficiently argues against some of its methods.

Keywords: philosophical aesthetics – atmosphere aesthetics – philosophical anthropology – embodiment – sensuality

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TOPICALITY AND TIMELESSNESS AS ARTISTIC ALLERGIES

Abstract: The terms “topicality” and “timelessness” may evoke both positive and negative emotional reactions. The present article is a reflection on their role in the context of art. In various perceptions of art, offered both by artists and by theoreticians, one may find traces of their underlying approval or rejection. Praising the supertemporal profundity of various works has led to negative reactions to the actual; the reverse situation, although much less common in the past, consisted in emphasizing present significance at the expense of eternal endurance. The above situations may be regarded as symptoms of the artistic allergies manifesting themselves in the instinctive fear, hatred or distrust of certain qualities and in attempts to formulate such theoretical models that would lead to the reduction, or even complete elimination, of the qualities lying outside the scope of what is (consciously or unconsciously) valued as positive.

The article consists of three parts. The first presents the allergy to topicality as manifesting itself in the concept of the masterpiece (developed in the 17th century and supposedly characterized by the “strategy of assumed immortality”); the concept of timeless content in art; and the idea of autonomous form, independent of cultural contexts. The second part of the article analyses the ways in which elements of supertemporality were introduced into art history. The third part depicts the allergy to the seemingly eternal, invoking 20th century notions of art. Examples of actualism typical of the Dada movement are analyzed; furthermore, contemporaryism is depicted as a present-day strategy of approaching art in a democratic and pluralistic society.

Keywords: time and art – masterpiece – historicity – actualism

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IDLENESS AND CONTEMPORARY ART ON TAKING ONE'S TIME

Abstract: In this article I propose a close examination of the notion of “idleness” that can be of relevance to some contemporary works of art. Those “phenomena-producers”, to use Olafur Eliasson’s phrase, impose on the beholder a passive attitude that leads him to reflect upon the conditions of perception, and upon the conditions of the phenomenal presence that cannot be reduced to the viewers’ place in the symbolic order. Such reduction, however, is performed in the critical writings on the minimalist tradition, mainly inspired by the poststructuralist turn, from which these works derive. The phenomenon that I propose to call “idleness”, by its connection to the Greek notion of *skhole* and its Latin equivalent *otium*, appears as the other, *allos*, of the critical, socially and politically engaged discourse. By referring to the works of Hannah Arendt, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger I try to show that re-evaluation of the notion of idleness is possible and that it should be performed together with the re-examination of the role of the notion of disinterestedness in contemporary art discourse.

Keywords: idleness – aesthetic experience – disinterestedness – site-specificity – minimalism – critical discourse

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THE MINIMALIST ALLERGY TO ART

Abstract: In the 20th century, negation of art appeared frequently as an issue in avant-garde tendencies, assuming a different form in each case. In the present article, this phenomenon is considered as a type of artistic allergy. The author begins with a short description of the notion of anti-art, focusing on the work of Marcel Duchamp: among other characteristics, the author discusses the questioning of the significance of artifacts, the rejection of originality and the subversion of the role of formal procedures. The second half of the 20th century saw various continuations of Duchamp's seditious actions; however, the work of the representatives of minimal art is not customarily situated in this context. Reflecting on the validity of this approach, the author subjects to analysis the selected works and theoretical essays by the principal minimalists (Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Carl Andre, Dan Flavin and Sol LeWitt). As it turns out, despite its typically objectivist and constructionist character, their work essentially negates the fundamental qualities ascribed to traditional works of art. Paradoxically, however, while performing anti-artistic actions, the representatives of this movement referred to their works as "art". Considering this problem, the author suggests that minimalism ought to be viewed in the context of its successor, i.e. conceptual art, especially in the light of Joseph Kosuth's opinions, formulated in his essay "Art after Philosophy". Seen from this perspective, the minimalist project reveals its affinities not with anti-art but with the notion of art as an open concept. Thus, the aforementioned allergy is in fact recognized as pertaining to extant forms of art and is seen to suggest an infinite process of its redefinition.

Keywords: minimal art – negation of art – anti-art

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20TH-CENTURY ALLERGY TO CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY AND ATTEMPTS TO OVERCOME IT

Abstract: A non-existence of references to the classical era in 20th-century culture is very noticeable. A revival of classical antiquity is not to be expected in the general sense, but it can be a conscious and important choice made by particular artists. Looking for ancient influences (or talking about the period's reception) in the 20th century means searching for isolated plots, short-lived fascinations or conscious exceptions. This article will try to suggest the reasons for this allergy to classical antiquity. In its second part, it will present those artistic views and activities where ancient Greece has remained an inspiration and a significant reference point, above all as a source of the "Dionysian element". Finally, focusing on the example of an acting technique modelled on ancient chorea, it will present the possibility of achieving a modern effect with the use of a past source.

Keywords: Modernism – neoclassicism – classical antiquity – reception of antiquity in 20th century

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THE UNKNOWN MASTERPIECE BY HONORÉ BALZAC, OR THE PRACTICAL TRAP OF THEORY

Abstract: The author analyzes Honoré Balzac's story *The Unknown Masterpiece*, arguing that one of the main questions raised by the writer concerns the relationship between artistic theory and practice. He refers to such thinkers as Martin Heidegger, Giorgio Agamben, and a variety of different interpretations of the story in order to show that insofar as art is concerned, theory has a double effect, resembling a *pharmakon*, a substance which, as pointed out by Jacques Derrida, may have positive and negative influence: it is a positive element, for it actually turns mere objects into artworks, but at the same time it can put limits on artistic practice. The author claims that the feedback between theory and practice can be observed very clearly in Master Frenhofer's art, which justifies a great interest in this story shared by 20th century artists, philosophers, historians of literature and art historians.

Key words: Balzac – Agamben – Heidegger – masterpiece – artistic theory – artistic practice – *pharmakon*

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THE TRAUMA OF SENSE THE DECLARATIONS, MANIFESTATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS OF ANDRZEJ PARTUM

Abstract: The trauma of sense is not only a trend of modernism inspired by the spirit of nihilistic culture, and especially by the impact of Nietzsche's philosophy on modern thinking, but this condition reaches beyond the economy of modernity and the present post-human, postmodern mentality, since it also characterizes human condition. If we are searching for some more profound motives of the founding allergy in European culture, aesthetics, and art history, we cannot ignore the allergic reactions to religion, metaphysics, morals and ideology, especially in totalitarian regimes. In this study of cultural allergy I attempt to present the case of Andrzej Partum. In my opinion Partum (1938-2002) was *the first accomplished nihilist* in Polish culture and art. His declarations, manifestos and institutions show that he saw the 1970s as a state of increasing abnormality. It is therefore understandable that he either could not or did not want to accept this burdensome state. In Partum's case we are dealing with the attacks on artistic criticism and institutions of art in the totalitarian society. Partum deliberately undermined all attempts to socialise art. Both his poetry and his other artistic activities should be called, in accordance with his terminology, *antibodies* (poetic, artistic, theoretical allergens). The point is not in being avant-garde, but in being a-social and cynical in the positive sense. The Polish art of the 1980s joined in the postmodern revaluation of nihilism. The neo-avant-garde was quite simply tired of fighting. It is not surprising therefore that Partum reached in 1980–82 for the nihilist economics of relaxation, similarly to postmodern philosophy. Partum's *positive nihilism of art* – an anomaly in relation to the ordinary understanding of the term – was not an attempt at negation, but rather an attempt at provoking the pathological decay of one of the concepts of the Great Avant-garde which Renato Poggioli called *radical and totalitarian, integral and meta-physical nihilism*. The difference between modernist nihilism and Partum's *positive nihilism* is the difference between repressive nihilism and ironic nihilism, as it desires to degenerate into comic nihilism. Partum's positive nihilism is important for our study of allergy in culture, because it implies an ironic agreement to the irreducibility of anomalies, a tension which we experience when we face a conflict between the "abnormal" context of art and the "normal" context of theory, between art and religion, morals, politics, science or ideology. Partum's allergy is not an example of an obscure natural disease, but it is a symptom of social relations. His allergic reactions to all sense, like other socially constructed disturbances (for example hysteria, anorexia or agoraphobia), are from an etiological point of view a disease of dependence, of social subordination.

Keywords: anomaly (anomalies) – error – medicalisation of allergy – trauma of sense – nihilism

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A KURGAN GRAVE OR AN ORANGE SQUEEZER? A MATTER OF PERSONAL PREFERENCE

Abstract: The National Temple of Divine Providence in Poland has been a source of fierce arguments, even though it was meant to become a symbol of freedom, harmony, reconciliation and solidarity among the Polish people; a votive offering of the nation for the resumption of Polish independence and the pontificate of John Paul II.¹ The idea of erecting the building was originally conceived after the signing of the Polish Constitution of 3 May 1791, but for the next 200 years it was not possible to implement the project. It was only in 1999 that a committee supported by the Union of Polish Architects invited tenders for the design of the shrine. The jury selected three winning works from over 100 proposals. Of those three, in May 2000, the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, who was also the originator of the competition, selected the design by Professor Marek Budzyński. The work was viewed as a very interesting concept, complying with international standards. However, the Management Board of the Foundation for the Building of the National Temple of Divine Providence took a surprising decision to reject the design and announced another, closed tender, inviting only selected architectural teams to participate and thus excluding many distinguished architects, among others one of the previous three winners.

Keywords: modern architecture, architectural design competitions, sacred architecture, the National Temple of Divine Providence

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THE HIDDEN OTHER CLOTHING AS AN ART OBJECT

Abstract: The theme of this article is contemporary sculpture which refers to clothing. This includes objects shown in galleries, performers' costumes, as well as film or photographic documentation of ephemeral "packaging" of the human body. The artists discussed here, whose art fits this description were once marginalized because of their gender, skin color or sexual identity. In the postmodern age, they occupy the position in the mainstream of art, determined by the status of the Other. However, I am looking for a different type of otherness. Interpreting the selected works, I refer to the familiar discourses (of power, body, etc.) as well as search for other hidden meanings. The hidden other may be only suggested. His/her ethereal nature can manifest itself in allusions, distortion, or an order based on oppositions. Balaclavas decorated with symbols of power made by Rosemarie Trockel provide a curtain for a sensed different order. Costumes from the action by Rebecca Horn question the habits of the subject-object relationship. Like the miniature installations by Charles LeDray, they reverse the vectors of power. Confrontation with something infinite, beyond rational comprehension, also creates an opportunity to sense the hidden Other. Helen Chadwick's action *In The Kitchen* can be interpreted as a confrontation with the infinity of space. *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for Albino Anorectic* by Jana Sterbak is an encounter with the mystery of death. Sometimes it is questions and concerns which arise upon viewing the work that are helpful in finding the hidden Other. The excessive details in Shonibare's installations do not reveal the identity of the headless hero presented by the artist. Many associations and interpretative paths are hidden behind the simple description of the works of Dorothy Cross. The hidden Other avoids being captured once and for all in a definition. To describe him, to define him would destroy his essence.

Keywords: Contemporary sculpture – gender – postmodernism

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ART AND TERRORISM AS CATALYSTS OF SOCIAL TENSIONS

Abstract: The present times provide us with events provoking a multitude of social reactions – from callous indifference to oversensitivity towards various phenomena. In the last decade most of the allergic social reactions were caused by terrorists rather than artists. The key issue is the attention of the media as well as the production of images determined by media logic and preserved in the collective imagination. In this field even critical art is not able to compete with the terrorists, but at the same time it does not wish to remain indifferent. Therefore it tries to find an adequate language for actively commenting on the reality after the 11th September 2001.

Keywords: visual culture – terrorism – contemporary art – aesthetics of terror

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POSTCOLONIAL DISCOURSE, OR HOW TO READ GLOBAL ART

Abstract: Some years ago, we wondered what would emerge from the demise of modern art. Today we know that it is global art. It makes us change our way of thinking about art, about what we are ready to perceive as art, place in the context of art and view in terms of art. Global art should be distinguished from world art and Weltkunst. World art and Weltkunst fall back on the concept of universal art, which global art does not believe in. Instead of looking for one, universal definition of art, global art accepts multiplicity and variety of art definitions, which allows it to freely combine high art with low art, elitist art with popular and mass art. This is possible because global art introduces an ethnographic understanding of art and uses geo-aesthetics, where aesthetic categories gain meaning depending on a geographic context.

Keywords: Central Asia, global art, global art scene, globalization, modern art, modernity, postcolonial discourse, United Arab Emirates, Weltkunst, world art