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OPENNESS AS A SOCIAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL TASK

The problem of openness in our society is becoming universal. Its discussion actually means the vision of future of Lithuania. What are the fundamentals on which open society develops? Which is of primary importance – open society or open man? What are the criteria of openness?

Open society is alive through its members – respectful, self-confident, free from taboos, secure about their future and therefore not servile.

Thus, investigation of the features of both open society and open personality (individuality) is becoming a task of modern philosophy.

I. WHAT DOES OPENNESS MEAN TO US?

We have been long in non-Europe. However, in a sense, it was a peculiar state, in which we could perceive things that could escape the attention of the free European. To the free European, many things are just obvious. He may fail to understand that man is not a natural state, not a datum, but a state of constant self-creation. We, having been deprived of the things that are essential for humaneness to express, by such deprivation were made more conscious than the European who could and did consider his normally human state as natural. For us, the whole history could be determined as an ‘effort to become man’: to become an independent state, open society, open man. The effort *to become* (= to come to our identity: human, national, social) still remains our daily problem.

What is it that gives rise to anxiety about our ever developing (preserving) our identity, becoming open, i.e. coming back to Europe? It is the nowadays', new-fashioned barbarism. That's how a barbarian was described by the Greeks: a barbarian is a speechless man. The Greeks, however, understood speech as an articulated space of all that is experienced, desired and contemplated, what is created by *Paideia*. The man in the face of the world is naked, he is either God or beast (Aristotle). The man can be (= become) a man under condition that there is a space filled with the communicative speech.

The main passion (or goal) of a man is to realize himself. Unfortunately, "history in most cases is a graveyard [...] of unrealized freedom, unrealized thinking, unrealized honour, unrealized dignity, [...] unborn life" (5, 205). This is not only (and not so much) a conservative way of thinking, not only (and not so much) a poor knowledge of the world, lack of self-knowledge, but also living in a perpetual lack (shortage) of the things that are essential to man. To achieve self-realization, to be born into life is possible only in a live communicative space, in a cultivated, articulated, 'tilled' cultural space. The core of the human fate is beyond man's own limits and within this space of human speech (culture, association, thinking, freedom, openness). "Man is a very very long effort" (5, 205).

Thus, we can find Europe only inside of ourselves. There is no other way to it.

Openness begins only inside of us, too. It would be naive to assume that it can be offered by opened state borders. Neither is openness a magic word: the Sesame will not open on uttering it. The question to what degree our society (and our citizen) is open immediately turns into the question whether our society (our citizen) has preserved its (his) identity – human, national, social.

Our identity is not conferred upon us automatically together with nationality or religion. Identity is a process, each generation and each subject acquire it, conquer, preserve, develop, gain it through much suffering. Here of importance are all conditions in which a man lives – cultural, social, political, economical. Social identity is socially acquired, supported and consolidated, and it can be socially ruined.

Identity creates an open man as a precondition of open society. Openness, or 'Europeization', demands 'inward' (our own, authentic) culture, self-confidence, self-respect, self-realization of society and of the individual, civic (and scientific) courage, civic responsibility, non-servility.

The more of the world inside of us, the more original, distinctive, our own, identical we are.

II. THE WORLD AND US

We can frequently hear mentioning the basic, essential features of European Community such as equality of possibilities; democracy of participation, quality of association; raising the educational level of all members of society, and the like. These are not merely good intentions: these are the demands raised by the economical and political goals of open society, the indispensable preconditions of the rational functioning of society and of a citizen.

However, in nowadays' Lithuania quite evident is a systemic inequality of the possibilities which is attempted to be justified by means of quasi-philosophy. The incomes and advantages are being accumulated by a small group of people (see: 4, 79). The differentiation into the elite and the commoners, clever – not clever, rich – not rich is evident. The point is, however, that such differentiation is attempted to be grounded nearly on the principles of the functioning of the laws of nature. Worshiping of the elite, its differentiation into a separate caste and idolization not only flings the society back to the times of a class society, but it also is the cornerstone of the closeness of modern society.

Another essential index of open society, association, is also very narrowed and limited. The economical decline hampers peoples' mobility, the individuals cannot associate, buy books, subscribe to the press, attend cultural events, study at higher schools, participate in social activities, etc. A distinct isolation of a significant part of society becomes evident.

Our educational system is far from the European standards, too. Science suffers devaluation: in 1988-1994 nearly one third of scientific workers abandoned science (6, 106).

The economical and social discrimination of most inhabitants leads to a total loss of self-respect, inferiority of society's self-consciousness. Economical decline leads to deficiency, deficiency leads to poverty. Existence without association, without science, suffering from unemployment, factual or threatening, homelessness, poor food, recurrent diseases deprive people of the possibility to associate, they cannot respect poor things who are very much like themselves; their abilities die out without

starting to develop; the individual does not and cannot respect his own body. Science and learning, many professions are devalued; discrimination (not only moral) is experienced by the elderly. Scientific people, feeling no approval or recognition, are doubting their profession, feel no more respect of their mind; women have lost their self-respect and sell themselves in any way. The unsafe social environment means not only loss of job, but also spiritual and even physical exposure to danger. Even life (both of a stranger and one's own) evokes no respect. Which part of our society has become underclass?

Desperate life results in desperate behaviour. According to the first index of social healthiness – suicide number – Lithuania holds a stable leadership in the world (!) (4, 104).

What can be done by social researches? So far, we have a sufficient number of educated people, and they comprise the best part of the legacy from the past decades. So far, we have a sufficient number of people who keep the historical memory, and they are the best part of what history has left to us. We still preserve the sense of our nation, of our independent state, we still are strong enough... Nevertheless, we should hurry.

Thus, the answer could be as follows: we should preserve the individual and social identity, because it is only identity that ensures openness. To **come back** to open society means to **become** an open society, because Europe is nowhere but inside of us.

III. OPENNESS AS PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM BY KARL POPPER

The terms “open society” and “closed society” were first used by Henry Bergson. H. Bergson characterized the closed society as human society just coming from the hands of nature. Claude Lévi-Strauss defined such society as a “cold society”. According to the definition of Karl Popper “the closed society is characterized by the belief in magical taboos, while the open society is one in which men have learned to be to some extent critical of taboos, and to base decisions on the authority of their own intelligence”, because “only the personal decisions may lead to the alteration of taboos” (7, 539; 173). In other words, an open society is a rational and critical society. In what follows that “the magical or tribal or collectivist society will also be called the *closed society*, and the society in which individuals are confronted with personal decisions, the *open society* (7, 173).

The closed society breaks down, according to K. Popper, when the supernatural awe with which the social order is considered gives way to active interference, and to the conscious pursuit of personal or group interests. By K. Popper, the transition from the closed society to the open society takes place when social institutions are first consciously recognized as man-made, and when their conscious alteration is discussed in terms of their suitability for the achievement of human aims (see: 7, 631).

K. Popper left for us a web of substantial concepts such as *personal decision* (and a force to make it), *conscious alteration* (which demands the individual will), *the suitability of social institutions* to achieve the human purposes.

IV. CLOSENESS: WHAT IS IT?

Closeness of a society is revealed in its *anomies*. The notion of anomie was used by Émile Durkheim in the cases when he wanted to note that because of economical or political reasons – loss of social values, social isolation of an individual – the social standards become invalid. In such cases the individuals are deprived of relations to such a degree that suicide becomes the only possible way out. Ralf Dahrendorf added one more aspect to such understanding of anomie. He designated anomie as the “failure of the cultural structure” which becomes evident when people, because of their social position, fail to accommodate to the values of their society (1, 163).

What are the features that reveal the anomie’s of our society, i.e. show its closeness? First of all, it is the appearance of the marginal class. The feeling that they have no part in society is characteristic of its representatives (1, 162). They perceive society as something distant, symbolized mostly by police and courts. People that have no part in society are not bound by its standards.

A symptom of anomie is loss of self-respect and thus of responsibility. Loss of responsibility manifests itself also as a *crowd’s syndrome*. In philosophy it is designated as a monologous way of thinking; it is personified by relativism as a philosophical principle, anonymity.

A closed society is characterized by the dominance of threat as a feature of existence and as a principle of philosophical explanation. *The Other* is always an enemy (J. P. Sartre). Closeness implies intolerance of the other(s), aggressiveness, conflict. A system is closed when it does not feed

on the environment and therefore is entropic, i.e. self-destruction (E. Schrödinger, I. Prigogine) (see: 9; 8). Of absolutely the same nature is 'love' for the *status quo*. According to V. Havel, the order which is meant just to consolidate without improving it is "the highest degree of entropy" (2, 29). The slogans of social entropy are: "keep patience", "wait", "sacrifice in the name of better future", "sacrifice in the name of the good image of the state". It has been already mentioned that in a closed society the state and its citizen are complete strangers to each other, therefore self-sacrifice here is sheer nonsense.

A closed society is characterized by "postponed life" (V. Havel), life "later on", "some time". And *vice versa*, the richer, the more free is life of society, the deeper it realizes the "dimensions of social time, *dimensions of historicity*" (3, 60), as well as the historicity of man, his significance, value, uniqueness. The "arrow of time" makes no concessions or exceptions. Thus, a live, open society has a *history of its own* and does not just try on somebody else's one.

Quality of life is the total index of openness, both of society and man. Does our own history exist nowadays? It cannot exist because of a very strong regime of entropy. Most its members do not live a valuable life because of the lack of elementary – economic, social – conditions and do not interchange with the environment. That's why we feel ourselves as marginal people, although we live in this ironical center of Europe. According to V. Havel, "the lively life is mortified, also the social time is stopped, and history vanishes" (2, 31). The individual's life is postponed to later times, to the future. And now, when I live, everything is closed for me.

It is first of all the quality of the individual citizen's life that is an indicator of closed society. The time of his life stops for a poor man, there is no history of his life, no its flow any more. A personal life degrades to such a historical level when the rhythm of the time is marked only by such accents as birth, marriage and death. Born – lived – died. Instead of events – false events: one is living from one anniversary to another, from holiday to holiday. Instead of association – quasi-association (TV, radio). The life is closed, the flow of life has stopped. There is nothing that matters – this is the dominating feeling. *Homo Lituanus* is *homo depressus* (humiliated, sunken). It is as if we are coming back to the level of Lévi-Strauss, "cold" history, i.e. moving away from Europe. Television, this substitute for the flow of time, still keeps reporting on the events which take place

somewhere, but the man himself does not participate in anything any more, his social ties have broken.

Flourishing *informal* relations are peculiar to closed society. The consciousness of such society is characterized by lack of responsibility, persuasion that the other, more important people know better. Worshiping of the elite or separate groups means closeness or mythical society (“relatives” society, “clan” society). The ideology of worshiping the elite as an atavism of class society is the cornerstone of any type of closeness, a distinct indicator of the closeness of social consciousness. In open society the elite considered as a separate, highest, richest and most perfect group of society (“class”) is a contradiction by definition.

In social self-consciousness various complexes, sense of inferiority, feeling of *outsider*, *depression* appear. The sense of inferiority because of provincialism, of being in non-Europe is frequently justified by saying that Lithuania is a country of lagging processes.

We are often offered to go to Europe on our knees, i.e. to lose our European identity: all is promised to do whatever demanded by political Europe. Also, there is the opinion (supported also by philosophers) that in the modern world belonging to a definite national culture has lost its basis. Inferiority complexes are instilled: if you are not a cosmopolitan, then you are a provincial, unlucky wretch, etc.

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Thus, philosophy faces the task to explain the modern constantly changing society, to provide the intellectual basis for understanding a rapid and essential transition to a new political, economical and cultural order.

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OTWARTOŚĆ JAKO ZADANIE FILOZOFICZNE I SPOŁECZNE

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Otwartość jest dzisiaj najważniejszym problemem w myśli politycznej, społecznej i filozoficznej na Litwie. Utożsamia się ją z cywilizacją zachodnią czy też „powrotem do Europy”. Definicja społeczeństwa otwartego zawiera przede wszystkim problem społecznej tożsamości. Tożsamość społeczna z kolei oznacza poszukiwanie sposobów i możliwości, jakimi można osiągnąć społeczny rozwój i poprawę warunków życia. Obecnie zasadnicze niebezpieczeństwo dotyczące osobowej tożsamości leży w niesprzyjających warunkach i niedorozwoju.

Współczesna strategia nakierowana na zapewnienie otwartego społeczeństwa i otwartej osobowości opierałaby się głównie na zasadzie głoszącej, iż każdy obywatel stanowi część otwartości, tj. jest aktywnym członkiem.

Ewolucja od społeczeństwa zamkniętego do otwartego wymaga od filozofii otwartości.

Thumaczył Jan Kłos

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Key words: open society, open personality, social identity, close society, social anomies.