

## **15<sup>th</sup> Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 15th July 2013**

### **THEORY OF ART**

**Marcus Steinweg**

#### **1. WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?**

Philosophy means the 'love of wisdom'. To philosophize is to love. To philosophize is to desire, to want something, to desire, to love or to want *sophia*, 'wisdom', the truth of reality. Philosophy loves truth; it demands truth; it desires the reality of the real. It is the desiring of reality. Philosophy is realism in this sense.

#### **2. WHAT IS ART?**

Art exists only as an assertion. Every assertion is headless, blind and exaggerated. To assert headlessness itself demands of art a kind of breathless precision. The subject of art is a subject of this self-assertion. It asserts itself as a subject of breathlessness which leads it to the limit of its being as subject.

#### **3. WHAT IS AN ARTWORK?**

The art work neither articulates its intimacy with nature and the origins, nor does it declare its solidarity with the *Zeitgeist*. Art exists only as a conflict with its time. Every genuine art work comes from the future, never from the past.

#### **4. WHAT IS REALITY?**

Reality is the hypercodified dimension of established certainties.

#### **5. WHAT ARE CERTAINTIES?**

Certainties are invented to prevent truths. The subject of certainty is the subject of the reality of facts. Truth is what interrupts the possibility of certainty, that is, of calming oneself in the universe of facts. The subjects of this interruption are "friends of loneliness", "incommensurable subjects" of incommensurability, "subjects without subject and without intersubjectivity" (J. Derrida).

#### **6. WHAT IS THE REAL?**

The *real* is the name of that which does not or no longer belongs to the space of facts. The real names the limit and the constitutive exterior to the dimension of facts. The real is more real than reality. It is that which inscribes a fundamental inconsist-

ency into 'realistic' calculation, into the idealism of facts. To touch the real is to touch this inconsistency, the weak link in the system of facts.

## **7. WHAT IS TRUTH?**

The dimension of truth is the dimension of what is unfamiliar or monstrous. That truth exists means that knowledge and its certainties are limited. Truth is the name of this limitation. Truth is the concept for the absolute limit, the absolute. It marks the (enabling) impossibility and the inconsistency of the universe of facts.

## **8. WHAT IS INFINITUDE?**

Infinitude is not the (theological) eternal. It is the limitlessness of the actual. The actual, however, is not the factual. The factual is only the delimited actual, its limitation. The actual itself is limitless. Here, the hyperborean subject of the desert moves, reels, decides without finding a home. Heidegger calls the hyperborean space of the desert eeriness. The zone of eeriness as the sphere of not being at home is the *abyss*.

## **9. WHAT IS A SUBJECT?**

The subject is that which mediates between the orders of objective finitude and absolute infinity without giving this mediation the stamp of a dialectical-speculative reconciliation. It is a process without end, an inconclusive procedure. It holds the subject in its ontological fever which is the truth of its finitude — of its finitude insofar as it is the opening to the infinite, to the limit of its life, to death which is the brother of infinity.

## **10. WHAT IS THE SUBJECT OF ART?**

The subject of art is an infinitesimal subject. It articulates its infinite distance from infinity. It *is* nothing but this distance. The art work which it brings forth can therefore be called an *infinitesimal* because it expresses the distance which separates it from the incommensurable. In the art work, the untouchable is touched and it is clear that this touching makes of the art work an incommensurable magnitude which blocks its complete comprehension.

## **11. WHAT IS THE ANTIGONEAN SUBJECT?**

The Antigonean Subject is the subject of headless precipitation towards incommensurability as such.

## **12. WHAT IS THE SUBJECT OF RESPONSIBILITY?**

The subject of responsibility authorizes itself to be free and responsible. Responsibility is an achievement. It is not something dictated by God. It does not follow the pleas of conscience. It transcends God and conscience, morality and theology, so that the subject becomes responsible only to itself.

### **13. WHAT IS THE FACTUAL SUBJECT?**

The factual subject is a subject that holds on to itself in its identity. It is a *dead subject* where death is posited as the "mode of existence of the last human being" (S. Žižek). That the last human being is the human being who locks out truths, meaning and life, the human being of small factors ("petit faits"), the fatalistic human being. "Wanting to keep standing before what is factual, the *factum brutum*" is what Nietzsche calls in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, "the fatalism of the 'petit faits', the petit fatalisme". The factual human being reduces himself to the facts. He makes his dead truth from the facts.. He is the subject of the faith in facts, of the fatalism of facts and the obscurantism of facts. The facts are his unshakeable law.

### **14. WHAT IS THE SUBJECT OF PHILOSOPHY?**

The subject of philosophy has surpassed and transgressed itself into the night of non-evidence. It overflies the space of facts and their transcendental historical determinants. Sleeping, dreaming, flying, it accelerates toward the nameless.

### **15. WHAT IS FREEDOM?**

Freedom is a conquest; it does not fall from the sky.

### **16. WHAT IS THE "WRONG CHOICE"?**

The wrong choice chooses unfreedom. It decides against decision, against the condition of possibility of decision, by refusing freedom and the will to freedom. It selects options, arranges offers. It subordinates itself. It is the expression of fear, convenience, passivity or indifference.

### **17. WHAT TOUCHING THE UNTOUCHABLE MEANS?**

Touching the untouchable, the incommensurability of the real or the exterior demands of the subject of touching a certain degree of strength and courage of will. The subject of touching is the subject of freedom to self-surrender and self-transgression. Instead of enclosing itself in its image of itself, it must gather the courage to activate another self. It is the subject of a necessarily auto-aggressive self-elevation through which it transfers all responsibility to itself.

## **18. WHAT IS CHAOS?**

Chaos is the non-ground or abyss. It is the dimension which from the outset precedes the logos, reason, language and communication.

## **19. WHAT IS SELF-ELEVATION?**

The self-elevation of the subject is resistance against the dictatorship of facts.

## **20. WHAT IS THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND ART?**

What art and philosophy share is courage in the complete confrontation in the here-and-now to accelerate out of the texture of facts which is the universe of our shared evidence — our opinions, hopes, consistencies — to go through the experience of the inconsistency of this consistent universe that we call *reality*. In art and philosophy it is not a matter of basing oneself on hard facts; it is a matter of seeking out the inconsistency of these facts themselves in the experience of what I call *truth*, the truth of reality.