

WHO IS AN AUTHOR (AN ARTIST)?

The goal of this article is to highlight some possible ways of considering and understanding the notion of the author, its role, significance and position within history (of art) and contemporary tendencies.

Attention will also be paid to the problem of consequences of the artist's activity, which we, most broadly speaking, name the works of art and, through them, to certain aspects of history of art as their manifestation.

The use of the question 'Who is an author?'¹ (with a clear allusion to the famous article 'What is an author?'¹ by Michel Foucault, 1969.) clearly puts emphasis on the personal dimension of the problem of authorship, that is the existence of an author not as an abstract idea, function or phenomenon, but as an (always) concrete man who acts and expresses himself through his/her action.

Who is an author means: which man is an artist, and artist (author) in what?

If we consider an author in the context of history of art, who is an author also means: why is there such a thing as history of art?

A man exists as a person, that means as a creative subject.

An author/ an artist is a person.

A person is active - creative, different, free and realizes himself/herself in a community, through love.

The source of artistic activity (creation) is precisely inside the person itself inside the content which makes the person - person.⁴

An author is a person or, more precisely, a person who realizes itself, who needs to become what it is. But is every person an author?

The answer to this question requires an explanation of what the essence of authorship is. What is that an artist does which makes him an artist (what he does as a necessity in order to be an artist)? He creates or, better speaking, he creates himself (this is exactly what makes one be a person). An artist expresses himself (exstasis), using this expression to confirm himself as an existing subject and, simultaneously, by this expression he builds communication and relationship. *Expression* as such implies community in communion. Every expression is another form of the exclamation 'I am' or

¹To understand the notion of a person, its historical genesis and significance see *From Mask to Person*, Jovan Ziziulas, Metropolitan (<http://www.geocities.com/serbdom>). For creation as the ontology of a person please see *Sense of creation*, Nikolai Berdjajev, Belgrade 1996.

²This is why the idea of absence of an author, thus the category of originality and creativity itself, has become so typical for post-modernism. In the first place post-modernism analyses a person as a unique, unrepeatable subject. With the loss of the person, it becomes impossible to consider the author.

³In here love should be seen onto logically, that is as 'coexistence which forms absolute and unrepeatable identities' (On *Being a Person Towards the Ontology of Personhood*, Jovan Ziziulas, Istocnik 6/ 1993, p.55).

⁴In here one should bear in mind that the main quality of the person is the very freedom which exists only if it is creative, it is almost as if freedom and creation could be taken as synonyms opposite to necessity and lack of creation. About notion of freedom itself, seen as ontological and personal category, please see *Philosophy of Freedom*, N.Berdjajev, Belgrade 1996.

7 wish to be '!' To be implies free choice to be and freedom of self-realization. This is why creation, as the way of expressing a person, requires freedom.⁵

(Creation, as an idea, originates from the biblical thematic as the creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). We meet the idea of creation in the very first sentence of the Old Testament: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.'⁶)

Accordingly, every person is an author and each expression of him (her) is an act of art. In its true meaning, artistic (creative) cannot be understood in esthetic or ethic categories, but rather in ontological. To create means to be. To be that is to exist as a person.⁷

'Art is, in the first place, the field of creation. It is even common to give the name of artistic to the creative element in all activities of the spirit(...)An artist is always a creator(...)The act of creation is always opposite to petrifying, there is freedom in it. The essence of artistic creation is the triumph over the terror of necessity.'⁸

From the above mentioned it is already possible to conclude that creation is inseparable from the human being. Furthermore, in the very beginning it is clear that creation is something essential to man.

Taking into account the experience of post-modernism, the above mentioned claims one could see as old-fashioned. One could protest that it is all about the modernist ideal of an acting subject (a genius, an inspired individual) which stopped being revolutionary and progressive long time ago. But here, I shall still insist on the moment of creation as

⁵ In the book *'History of Art and Humanist Science'* (Zagreb 1986) Bialostocky gives 'mastering' (masterhood) as the essential characteristic of a piece of art and authorship itself. He says: 'If there is a quality which could surely be taken as an element of connotation of the traditional idea of a piece of art, then it is the element of mastering, regardless of its definitions in different historical and technological circumstances.' (p. 151) With the above mentioned expression as a constitutive element, this observation of mastering as the crucial element (which could nevertheless be refuted by the practice of 20th century) should be seen in the sense of dynamism which makes the person move to himself, which strives for building up, for progress. The expression and its 'improving' go together for standing out against the state they found, against necessity and deadly, uncreative static condition. To develop a piece of art, to 'improve' its structural elements means to develop one's own expression and freedom, to follow the thread of self-knowing. It is generous to take all things as art. Through such attitude everything is seen as a game, as careless, easy, complete (as if we accepted the verses of the heruvic song *'let us put aside every worry of life'*). The point of bringing an expression (a piece of art) to perfection is in a person who strives to build itself, to learn and discover itself, which means in the person who wants to become the absolute person. Even the notions of expression, creation, freedom and love themselves carry inner dynamism. They do not exist but through drawing themselves from eternal, from the possibility of discovering and self-realization as a person whose development is potentially infinite. This actually is the only point of *masterhood*.

⁶ To understand this idea more closely, its essential significance for man's existence and existence of his creative (artistic) activity, even if taken only conventionally, I quote the first verse of the Bible in original (in Jewish), and translated to Latin, German, English and Serbian:

In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram.
Im Anfang schuf Gott Himmel und Erde.
In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
U pocetku, stvorio Bog nebo i zemlju.

⁷ 'The person makes the nature to exist, freedom is identified with the being of man.¹; 'Art(...) is nothing more than an effort of man to confirm his presence in a way excluded from the 'given' existence. (Art) is striving to create something out of nothing.' J. Zizioulas, *From mask to person*, p.25,44

⁸ *Sense of creation II*, N. Berdjajev, Belgrade 1996, p.45

the manifestation-expression of a (unique) person; and all 'quotations', interpretations, even 'literal' repetitions do not oppose to creation; the methods mentioned, together with many others, do not but confirm creative (ecstatic and dynamic) intention of the person who can choose to realize itself even through a surrogate, copy or anything else. (Besides, this is not about exclusivistic concept of an individual, but about creation as a universal human category which carries inner dynamics and fights first with itself, then with the world. Freedom is not the problem looming up only on the horizon of gifted individuals, but is the question facing each and every human being.) The choice itself is already manifestation of a person, although it can simultaneously be his/her failure. Repetition can be a miss (lack of creativity) as well as the confirmation, demonstration of originality.

If the idea of creation, as a work of art, is inseparable from the man, then neither its history can be isolated from history of man. Does history make sense? Does history of art make sense?

Really, does such entity as history of art truly exist; can its sense be talked about at all?

If we identify a person as a free and creative subject, on the basis of the mentioned, with an artist (an author), then history of man is, in essence, history of man's creative (artistic) activity.

In his article 'The end of history of art'¹ (1984.) Hans Belting says that both artist and art historians have lost faith in rational, teleological order of history of art.¹¹ According to him, anthropological interests dominate over exclusively esthetic ones. Old antagonism between art and life loose'it's intensity with the loss of the rigid artistic borders.

These observations originate from ancient separation between life and art (creative activity). If the field of art is an autonomous one, then its history can be observed. The loss of the strict borders of the media puts the question mark on the point of a process - it is observations of fragments that is required instead.

True nature of the antagonism art vs. reality (life) exists in the sense of accepting artistic creation as something that does not reflect reality but presents 'adding of that which has not existed before to the reality of the world'¹², creation of another world, free cosmos (of a person) (as well as learning what is a creative act by itself). So, antagonism exists in the sense of getting free from the necessity of the world the way it is, but it is this creative act which builds up the person, that makes it living and makes life itself possible. All things exist only if they exist for a person.

Life is not opposed to artistic, but is the precondition and the sense of artistic and cognitive. This is why the system which does not preserve the unity of the being, which does not find its source in life itself, in the direct 'feeling of the land', falls to the perverted self-sufficient vanity that has brought bad reputation to philosophy and

⁹ 'And sin (mistake, failure) is a tragic privilege of the person only' (From mask to person, PhD Jovan Zizjulas, p.38)

¹⁰ It is important to mention that the person's creative intention, which is inherent to itself, does not necessarily have to present itself as constructive. (the futuristic exclamation 'destruction is creation' should be viewed in this sense.) Creation as the manifestation of the person can, as already emphasized, lead along the path of failure, but can also, by destruction, confirm creativity, that is the person himself when the person stands out against the dead rules, schemes, order imposed to him as necessity.

"Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte, Hans Belting, Muenchen 1984.

¹² Point of Creation II, N. Bergiaev, p.56.

theory¹³. Therefore, theory has been conceiving as an unavoidable evil that follows the reality of life, but that has no immediate common points with it. Creation confronts this separation. Learning (realizing) which educates (leads to education) is already creation, life itself.

Acquiring knowledge that is separated from life and does not find itself in it, is useless, dead.

Art and philosophy have been shadowed by the bad reputation of imitating, performing, interpreting, that is, of something that is not life itself but rather its image, reflection, interpretation. An image gave the illusion of reality, like a window into a world that is not reality itself, but looks like it or tries to look like it. In the solutions offered by modernism this image tried to replace reality, to become the reality instead of reality, parallel, virtual reality (if this sum-up term can be used without being pleonastic).

Due to the whole range of circumstances (in the first place because of possibility of reproduction pointed out as early as by V. Benjamin) (re) presenting of the world becomes general characteristic of the greatest number of activities and reaches its full blow in pop art and pop culture. Illusionistic model has spread and generally penetrated inside the culture of image which made progress through commercials, films and later the screen (in its broadest sense). It is probably true that the world of today enters the age of screen, the culture of screen. In this sense, an unusual and antinomic synthesis is taking place today, the one of reality (through breaking the limits of media, discipline, geographic and language borders) and false creation of life instead life (virtual reality, ideology...).

Within such speculation, to whom not Belting has managed to resist also, it is possible to observe antinomies, but not the problem of a person (author). All processes are depersonalized making the questions about the sense of history, about whether or not history is still being created, utterly pointless. As if there were the necessity of Hegel's *spirit* floating over all of these concepts. This domination of particular phenomena over the person itself is the source of the failure. Person is not considered in its freedom, but is determined by something imposed from outside.

The sense of history and history of art is being questioned because the person has become pointless in the atmosphere of post-modernism. The end of history is not seen as eschatology, but as giving up (lack of) the meaning followed by, most often, rationality (logosness has been mistakenly reduced to it) matched with eschatology.

^B In the sense it is being used today, theory indicates monstrous, unnatural, non-understandable abyss between practice and theory, form and contents, subject and object. Theory is no more *sozercanije* (that is observation by The mind, looking the essence) as it was well- translated from old Greek into ancient Slavic, but today it hinders the one who learns from what is being learnt.

[#] This surely does not imply an attitude towards reality in the manner of vulgar pragmatism, empirism, positivism or in the historical-materialistic way. None of the mentioned philosophical directions does not provide a satisfying answer, since they start from necessity and division as given and necessary, not from wholeness which is always *something* and not the talk about or reflection on *something*. Wholeness of the being implies immediate experience, not just the partial and phenomenal reflection. (For this please see the mentioned pieces by N. Bergiaev, J. Zizjulas, but also pieces by St. Maxim the Confessor, George Florovsky and others. In a significantly different context, but very relevant for understanding the problem of division, in the sense of 'be¹ of the self and ontologically, between subject and object, please see pieces by D.T. Suzuki {*Zen Buddhism, The Zen Doctrine of No Mind: The Significance of the Sutra of Hui-Neng, Essays in Zen-Buddhism, First Series* etc.).

The former analysis, although incoherent, helps us understand the aim of history of art which strives for total revelation of the truth (the being) and, by this, for total revelation of the truth of the artist.

Main problem lies in the lost unity of being as the personal existence. Post-modernism means making peace with the separation brought by rational individualism. Post-modernism is yet again yielding of necessity and, thus, it is uncreative.¹⁵ This is also the true source of postmodern criticism of originality, but, at the same time, it is the point where modern ideologies meet with Marxism, Hegelianism, positivism.

Modern art has drawn its moving strength from individualism that should have made man free. That basically (and ontologically) absolutely positive intention, is epochally unsuccessful because of falling into the necessities of very broad spectrum that were overlooked. Moderna understood person as individuum, or it put person into the faceless collective, and that was the cause of its failure. The exit has been sought in postmodernity.

Post-modernism denies the person or neglects it, and this is where its failure comes from. The correction of post-modernism in the new age (the age of global integrations, new technologies...) is trying to find the metaphysical support that has been lost. But even this is not the final phase, it is not post-historical nor eschatological for it builds a completely new *reality* in which things and meanings will be 'ideally' defined from the very beginning, so that problems brought by the process of history will not be thought about at all, let alone posed. Something new is being created, something that superbly looks as creative.¹⁶ But, because this *something* completely neglects the person (giving up freedom as such), creation (as manifestation of the person) will paradoxally become the main subversive element in the new-coming *reality* . In the view of this virtual reality, artistic creation (creation of man) will be undermined by creative process as the cry for freedom and life instead of the commanded (necessary) happiness and forged life.

The artistic (personal) will become the carrier of the living (life) in here, in the most obvious way.

It is only now that the meaning of an author and his sense becomes more clear. His role, when identified with a person, does not have only individual and subjective significance, but it gets, in obvious way, extraordinary significance it has always had. Art cannot be understood but through residing in it, through becoming an artist. Life cannot be understood but through living. A person cannot be understood but through becoming one. All three, at least potentially, are present in all of us.

It is in eschaton and 'coexistence which forms absolute and unique identities' that artist (man) and history (of art) reach their final identity and sense.

¹⁵This does not mean that creation is utterly impossible within it.

¹⁶ See the text of the author 'Significance and Meaning of the Process of Global Integrations, Prijepolje, Savindan 14/2004, p. 4-5.