THE MODES OF APPROPRIATION. FOUCAULT AND BAKHTIN ON THE AESTHETIZATION OF LIFE

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The idea of aesthetic existence appeared in 19th century. It was popular among avant-gard elites as a challenge to bourgeois world. It was also developed in a more philosophical way in Lebensphilosophie and existentialism. In this paper two different 20th century approaches to the notion of aesthetic are discussed: conceptions of Michael Foucault and Mikhail Bakhtin. Both of them closely link the notion of aesthetic with the idea of the self. Although Foucault makes the concept of aesthetic existence central to his later works in philosophical anthropology, while Bakhtin fully rejects its usefulness for the constitution of the self, both discuss it extensively as an important point of departure for the understanding of the self.

Keywords: aesthetic existence, the self, the other, ethics.

In the discussions of the concept of the self, the idea of aesthetic existence gained new significance in the later writings of Michael Foucault. Foucault places aesthetic at the center of his concept of the self, showing that creative relation to one's own life can be of crucial importance for liberating an individual from being bound by the strict rules of conduct. The idea itself appeared in 19th century in different contexts. It was popular among avant-garde elites as a challenge to bourgeois world. It was also developed in a more philosophical way in *Lebensphilosophie* and existentialism. Thinkers such as Kierkegaard or Nietzsche were dissatisfied with the traditional ethics of moral choices, and they made the idea of aesthetic existence central in their respective critiques of contemporary moral codes. They associated the ethics of moral choices with a world in which human beings were tied to advance rules which directed their behavior in "positive" or "negative" directions. To exist aesthetically means resisting the temptation of having one's own conduct justified by any kind of transcendental principles. It also means rejecting the traditional notion of the self as a substance or at least as a source of authentic activity. However, the idea of aesthetic existence is not central to Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's res-

pective conceptions of the self. It is rather a tool of critique, one which must be overcome by the positive idea of existence. Nietzsche embodies his ideal in the figure of superman whereas Kierkegaard finds the highest stage of existence in the absolute religious faith.

Here, I will not like to discuss the historical implications of the concept of aesthetic existence. Instead, in this paper I intend to discuss two different approaches to this notion which closely link it with the general idea of the self. These approaches are connected with the names of French philosopher Michael Foucault and Russian semiotic and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin never influenced Foucault's work, but they both had to cope with Kantian concept of the self, where self is seen a source of reasonable activity. For different post-Kantian movements the self has become the ultimate reality which secures the authenticity of existence. Bakhtin and Foucault reject this paradigm, and instead they propose a concept of self in which it is understood as a set of activities. Among these activities, aesthetic existence occupies a particular place, understood as a sheer creativity which does not assume any kind of fixed principles. Although Foucault makes the concept of aesthetic existence central to his later works in philosophical anthropology, while Bakhtin fully rejects its usefulness for the constitution of the self, both discuss it extensively as an important point of departure for their ideas of the self.

Michael Foucault, in his late paper "What is Enlightenment?" returns to the Kantian response to this question. In analyzing Kant's answer Foucault brings to the fore the question regarding the independence of an individual from any intellectual restrictions which are not confirmed by reason. On these grounds, modernity becomes "an attitude rather than ... a period of history". Foucault further argues that "by attitude I mean a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task" (Foucault 1997: 309).

This concept of modernity allows Foucault to build a bridge between Kant's rationalism and the capricious idea of dandyism as expressed by Baudelaire. There are two crucial points in Foucault's appropriation of the concept of modernity. First, modernity becomes understood as the will to confront the present as the only existing reality. There is no escape to the past or the future as the anchors of an individual's existence. An individual who takes the attitude of modernity has to cope with his times. He is conscious of the possible alternatives, but must be eager to embrace the present. The tension between the actual and imaginary present is central to the attitude of modernity. "For the attitude of modernity, the high value of the present is indissociable from a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is. Baudelaire modernity is an exercise in which extreme attention to what is real is confronted with the practice of liberty that simultaneously respects this reality and violates it" (Foucault 1997: 311). This tension is, of course, not only connected with the attitude toward social reality, it is also reflected in the self. Adopting the attitude of modernity means being free. The crucial point which Foucault makes here is an extension of freedom to the relation to oneself. This is the second main feature of the attitude of modernity. "To be modern is not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of the passing moments; it is to take oneself as an object of complex and difficult elaboration ... Modern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes off

to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not 'liberate man in his own being', it compels him to face the task of producing himself" (Foucault 1997: 311–312). What seems to be important here is a link Foucault establishes between a specific attitude toward outer reality and the self-invention of the self. The ability to play with the social environment comes along with the possibility to impose onto ourselves a particular mode of existence. They are two sides of the same coin, the critical attitude, "an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them" (Foucault 1997: 319).

I emphasize here the twofold character of Foucault's position because his project concerned mainly the self-side of the attitude of modernity. Drawing mainly on the sources from Ancient Greek philosophy and early Christianity, Foucault develops the concept of "aesthetics of existence". He seeks to find the roots of this concept of existence in Greek philosophical notion of "the care for the self". This concept means the activity of an individual that is directed to oneself and treats oneself as a main target and object. Therefore, such an activity is a source of individualistic "ethics" understood as independence from culturally established rules. In this context, Foucault contrasts Antiquity with Christianity: "This elaboration of one's life as a personal work of art, even if it obeyed certain collective canons, was at centre, it seems to me, of moral experience, of the will to morality in Antiquity, whereas in Christianity, with the religion of the text, the idea of the will of God, the principle of obedience, morality took on increasingly the form of a code of rules (only

certain ascetic practices were more bound up with the exercise of personal liberty)" (Foucault 1988: 49). It seems that, using general terms, Foucault distinguishes two different kinds of ethics. The first (sometimes referred to as "morality") is a system or code of rules which precisely describes what an individual should and should not do. In the case of such an ethics, an individual is incapacitated from any independent activity of negotiating the rules of his or her conduct. The second (referred to as "ethics") gives an individual the right to create himself or herself against the rules accepted in certain culture and society.

In order to describe the latter type of ethics, Foucault develops the concept of the "technologies of the self". This means that the set of practices which "permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault 1988: 225). Pursuing this project Foucault investigates different techniques used in Antiquity and early Christianity by individuals in order to transform their own behavior, and to seek actively the fulfillment of moral principles. Therefore, Foucault seems to empower the subject and give him the capacity to alternate his environment as well as himself. Some commentators on Foucault's work have argued that this standpoint is at odds with his previous position, one in which he stresses the helplessness of the subject vis a vis the juridico-discursive power of the state. For instance Alexander Nehamas observes: "In the third and final period of his writing, Foucault turned from the power exercised on, and forming, individuals to the power individuals exercised upon, and through which they

formed, themselves. That was part of what he meant by 'ethics' ... Morality, Foucault argued, is not exhausted by our relations to others, by codes of moral behavior that govern the interaction of various individuals and groups with one another. It also concerns the ways in which individuals relate to and regulate themselves – the ways in which we practice self-government and at the same time constitute ourselves as the moral subjects of our own desires and actions. Ethics is the care of the self" (Nehamas 1998: 179). Even if we accept such a statement, we have to answer important questions concerning not only the relations between Foucault's earlier and later thought but also the fundamental status of the subject, as well as the position of the objectified morals in relation to individuals. Foucault himself emphasizes the continuity of his work, which consists in the modes of individuation as a culturally anchored process. He argues that "... if I am now interested in how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group" (Foucault 1988: 291). Not only are the principles of morality culturally produced, but the methods of their appropriation are culturally produced as well. From the point of view of the formation of the self, historical epochs differ on the proposed forms of handling the culture itself. Sometimes, individuals are encouraged to build up their personalities as a kind of creation, choosing and adopting existing principles of morality, sometimes they are forced to subordinate obediently to these principles. Therefore, when Foucault discusses four conditions of his approach to ethics (the ethical substance, the mode of subjectivization, the self-forming

activity, and the telos of the ethical change) he is concerned mainly with showing the amount of freedom which certain cultures give to an individual (Foucault 1988: 262–269).

If we take as an example the mode of subjectivization, Foucault insists that in Ancient Greece, no one was obligated to act ethically, but if people would like to live their lives beautifully and with glory, they consciously chose to do that. "The choice, the aesthetic choice or the political choice, for which they decide to accept this kind of existence – that's the *mode d'assujettissement*. It's a choice, it's a personal choice" (Foucault 1988: 266).

It seems that this relation between the subject and the culture, which gives both the building blocks of self-creation and the ways of their construction, was the problem Foucault was preoccupied with in the later period of his life. The metaphor of life as a work of art is useful because it shows that the situation of an artist in relation to his or her object is the same as the situation of the self-creating subject. An artist has at his or her disposal the culturally produced materials which he or she can transform. An artist, through his or her participation in the culturally defined discourses, also acquires the means of transformation. However, nobody would defend the thesis that an object of art is nothing but the mechanical transformation of available material and the given in advance ways of transformation.

There is no necessity in art, nor in the self-creation, – that is the crucial point for Foucault. Answering the question of his American interlocutors, who said that the Californians with their obsession of perfect life could be a good example of aesthetic life, Foucault clearly states that it is not a case as these people believe to "...know the truth about desire, life, nature body, and so on." Knowledge alone cannot be a

basis for the formation of the self. This includes also a special kind of knowledge, namely that of himself. Foucault rejects the notion of authenticity as a point of reference for the self. The self is an invention not a discovery. In the context of the critique of Sartrean concept of authenticity, Foucault claims: "... we should not to have to refer the creative activity of somebody to the kind of relation he has to himself, but should relate the kind of relation one has to oneself to a creative activity" (Foucault 1988: 262). The invention of the self can be attached to different fields of social activity, not only to aesthetics, but also politics. It could also be connected to bodily practices such as sex, health or food. These practices are interwoven with the practices of achieving of the self.

Knowledge itself remains somehow external to the self, albeit their relationship is of great importance. This relation is labeled by Foucault as "games of truth". They are defined as "... a set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which, on the basis of its principles and rules of procedure, may be considered valid or invalid, winning or losing" (Foucault 1988: 297). Games of truth are set up by individuals, but as they become established, they decisively influence their conduct. In a sense, they are representations of knowledge in an individual's conduct. They enable individuals to mark the limits of the social world, and set in motion mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. However, Foucault insists that games of truth are not "just concealed power relations", they remain to a great extent autonomous. They belong to the world of objectified culture, in which an individual finds tools for self-identification. The formation of the self is thus an active process that unfolds in the space defined by games of power and games of truth. An individual, knowing the rules of the game, can express himself or herself in the game.

It seems, however, that Foucault leaves unsolved the problem of the place of self in this activity. The self is defined much more through the set of negative definitions. The self is not a substance or a psychological content. It is not merely an intersection of cultural instances. It is active, but its activity remains a mystery because we do not treat it if simply as a cultural imposition. It is an important point, because Foucault seems to create a kind of Munchausen's problem. Activity of the self is a part of certain culture, so the self is active because its culture allows or even imposes that activity. If it would be so, then the difference between the active and passive self were of content rather then of form. Apparently, Foucault does not want to be trapped in the false alternative between the active, substantial self and the constructed, passive one. However, he leaves much to be added if this concept of the self is to be fully developed.

In the beginning of the twenties Russian thinker M. M. Bakhtin engaged in a project of rethinking Kantian ethics. To accomplish this it became necessary to reformulate Kant's conception of self, to make explicit the relationship between self and the world of objective culture. (The world as locus of transcendental concept of responsibility as expressed in the "categorical imperative".) His point of departure is the radical difference between the world of objectified culture and the unique and once-occurrent world of individual activity. "... Two worlds confront each other, two worlds that have absolutely no communication with each other and are mutually impervious: the world of culture and the world of life, the only world in which we create, cognize, contemplate, live our lives or die or – the world in which the acts of our activity are objectified and the world in which these acts actually proceed and are actually accomplished once and only once" (Bakhtin 1993: 2).

Thus, every phenomenon of the self is two-fold. On the one hand, it is referred to the uniqueness of the actual living, on the other, it is connected to the "objective unity of a domain of culture".

Bakhtin stresses the validity of the objectified world of science and ethical norms, but he also insists that it is not the world in which we live. This is the world which can survive without any human intervention in it, so *per se* it is somehow irrelevant for the crucial decision we make in our life. "Any kind of *practical* orientation of my life within the theoretical world is impossible: it is impossible to in it, impossible to perform answerable deeds. In that world I am unnecessary; I am essentially and fundamentally non-existent in it" (Bakhtin 1993: 9). The world of objective culture can exist for us only as far as it is mediated through an individual's decisions. The most obvious, but also most difficult example of the relation between individual existence and the objective world is the problem of truth. Bakhtin insists that truth is eternally objective, and independent from human cognition. But *for us,* what is most important is the *encounter* with such objectively understood truth. "The validity of truth is sufficient unto itself, absolute, and eternal, and an answerable act of deed of cognition takes into account this peculiarity of it; that is what constitutes its essence". There is a paradox involved in the relationship between truth and human activity. Truth as an objective, absolute phenomenon is unavailable for human cognition. Its existence, however, secures an objective moment of reference which is crucial for ethical responsibility. This responsibility, in turn, can happen only in the once-occurrent, unique world of Being. "Newton's laws were valid in themselves even before Newton discovered them, and it was not this discovery that made them valid for the first time. But these truths did not exist as *cognized* truths – as moments participating in once-occurrent Be-

ing-as-event, and this is of essential importance, for this is what constitutes the sense of the deed that cognizes them" (Bakhtin 1993: 10). These remarks refer also to any kind of theoretizing, including psychological reasoning. This is why Bakhtin rejects approaching the self as a psychic being. Psychology creates very abstract theoretical construction, which can be compared only with other theoretical constructions. It is not able to understand the complicated relationship between the world of deed and the world of objective culture. The self as a psychic being is a result of abstracting mental elements from once-occurrent Being. Bakhtin generalizes his considerations as follows: "The world as a content of scientific thinking is a distinctive world: it is an autonomous world, yet not a detached world, but rather a world that is incorporated into the unitary and once-occurrent event of Being through the mediation of an answerable consciousness in an actual deed. But that once-occurrent event of Being is no longer something that is thought of, but something that *is*, something that is being actually and inescapably accomplished through me and others (accomplished, *inter alia*, also in my deed of cognizing); it is actually experienced, affirmed in an emotional-volitional manner, and cognition constitutes merely a moment in this experiencing-affirming... All of theoretical reason in its entirety is only a moment of practical reason, i.e. the reason of the unique *subiectum's* moral orientation within the event of once-occurrent Being" (Bakhtin 1993: 12–13). Therefore *any* kind of abstraction can become a part of the self only insofar as it finds its expression in moral activity. The self cannot be then constructed as a theoretical entity as it resists any universalization. Even the universalization of the self itself (Bakhtin gives an example of psychology but I think that it could also include other concepts of the self as cultural, anthropological etc.) has to

follow the same procedure. It is not a part of the self until it becomes an element in moral activity.

The other possibility of the universalization of the self is its aesthetization. It is oriented at the same goal as a cognitive theoretization, namely to juxtapose two constructions, that of the self and that of the world. "A characteristic feature of contemporary philosophy of life ..., which endeavors to include the theoretical world within the unity of life-in-process-of-becoming, is a certain aesthetization of life, and this masks to some degree the obvious incongruity of pure theoreticism (the inclusion of the larger theoretical world within a small, also theoretical, world). As a rule, the theoretical and the aesthetic elements are fused in these conceptions of life" (Bakhtin 1993: 13). Bakhtin refers here mainly to Bergson's philosophy which is for him the best example of *Lebensphilosophie*. He perceives Bergson's concept of intuition as a mixture of intellectual and aesthetic elements. The subtraction of intellectuality leaves "purely aesthetic contemplation". However, this kind of contemplation produces the same problems in the construction of the self as theoretical abstraction. It cannot penetrate into the real activity of the self. "The world of aesthetic seeing, obtained in abstraction from the actual *subiectum* of seeing, is not the actual world in which I live, although its content-aspect is inserted into a living *subiectum*. But just as theoretical cognition, there is the same essential and fundamental non-communication between the *subiectum* and his life as the *object* of aesthetic seeing, on the one hand, and the *subiectum* as the *bearer* of the act of aesthetic seeing, on the other" (Bakhtin 1993: 14).

The aesthetic contemplation assumes always the intimate link between subject and the object of seeing, that of empathizing. The process of empathizing is, for Bakhtin, a complex interaction of two consciousnesses. It assumes the ability to place oneself in the consciousness of another, and producing both a moment of objectification and a return into oneself. I think, that for Bakhtin's concept of empathizing, the moment of objectification is of distinctive significance. In this moment an individual is located outside of the object of empathizing, and distances himself from it. The last stage of the process is bringing this objectified consciousness back into individual. Bakhtin, of course, insists that all these moments have no chronological character, but that they form the "unitary act of aesthetic activity" (Foucault 1988: 262).

The main implication of empathy understood in this way is the ascription of aesthetic reflection only to the *other*. "... the aesthetic reflection of living life is, in its very principle, *not* the self-reflection of life in motion, of life in its actual aliveness: it presupposes another *subiectum*, a *subiectum* of empathy, a *subiectum* situated outside the bonds of that life" (Bakhtin 1993: 15). Aesthetic contemplation, though carrying a great deal of intuition, ends up with the *product*, the *object* being the result of objectification. One could say then that the aesthetic perspective on life is a "frozen intuition". Such an intuition is not a part of any individual activity, so it can only convey very impoverished sense of real life deeds. Bakhtin illustrates this thesis by referring to the world in which Christ's life and death occurred. This world is "fundamentally and essentially indeterminable either in theoretical categories or in categories of historical cognition or through aesthetic intuition". In the first case we are not able to approach the uniqueness of the event, in the second case, we can grasp the uniqueness of the fact itself but we cannot ascribe meaning to it. In aesthetic intuition "... we have both the being of the fact and the sense in it as a moment of its individuation,

but we lose our own position in relation to it, our ought-to-be participation in it" (Bakhtin 1993: 16). This distantiation from ourselves is a crucial point in understanding aesthetic existence. It can grasp the feeling of actual activity, but, similar to theoretization, it is not able render its uniqueness. It seems that, for Bakhtin, aesthetic being is a border; a limit of the self understood as a locus of activity. We cannot approach the self with objective, interpersonal tools. What we really approach is not an actual self. It is a self of the *other*, not ours. That is why the subject can only play aesthetic existence taking a mask of other person. Living aesthetically means for the subject to be an observer of his own deeds and to compare them to aesthetic categories. In this, aesthetic reason shares with practical reason the ability to universalize activity. Similar to practical reason, it has to turn actual life into abstract universalization. The only way to avoid this is to introduce the aesthetic categories into the deed, but then they loose their objective character and become a moment in activity. All these points are summarized in the following statement.

> Yet aesthetic being is closer to the actual unity of Being-as-life than the theoretical world is. That is why the temptation of aestheticism is so persuasive. One can live in aesthetic being, and there are those who do so, but they are *other* human beings and not I myself.... I shall not find *myself* in that life; I shall find only a double of myself only someone pretending to be me. All I can do in it is to play a role, i.e., assume like a mask, the flesh of another – of someone deceased. But the aesthetic answerability of the actor and the whole human being for the appropriateness of the role played remains in actual life, for the playing of a role as a whole is an answerable deed performed by *the one playing*, and not the one represented, i.e., the hero (Bakhtin 1993: 18).

Now, we have to return to the problem of activity of the self which seems to be crucial for Bakhtin and Foucault. Both reject the notion of the self as something given, a substance. Instead they focus on the self as an activity. However, they differ as to the locus of this activity. As I have mentioned, Foucault links activity of the self to creativity instead of authenticity. He states in the context of the critique of J-P Sartre's philosophy "... Sartre avoids the idea of the self as something that is given to us, but through the moral notion of authenticity, he turns back to the idea that we have to be ourselves – to be truly our true self. I think that the only acceptable practical consequence of what Sartre has said is to link his theoretical insight to the practice of creativity – and not that of authenticity" (Foucault 1988: 262). Foucault believes that creativity arises out of the relation to oneself mediated by culturally-produced mechanisms of self-fashioning. Therefore, aesthetics is the only possible alternative to knowledge as an anchor of the self.

Bakhtin also accepts creativity as a crucial point in his approach to the self. Using the category I-for-myself for the most intimate, active part of the self, he describes the function of the self in the following way: "I-for-myself" constitutes the center from which my performed act and my self-activity of affirming and acknowledging any value come forth or issue, for that it is the only point where I participate answerably in once-occurrent Being; it is the center of operations, the headquarters of the commander-in-chief directing my possibilities and my ought in the ongoing event of Being" (Foucault 1988: 60). These instances of objective culture are important for the actor insofar as they are included into his or her deed. The self has no content, it is an attitude toward objective reality as well as toward objective culture. "... he [participant in

the act – L. K.] sees clearly *these* individual, unique persons whom he loves, *this* sky and *this* earth and *these* trees [9 illegible words], and the time; and what is given to him simultaneously is the value, the actually and concretely affirmed value of these persons and these objects. He intuits their inner lives as well as desires; he understands both the actual and the ought-to-be sense of the interrelationship between himself and these persons and objects – the truth [*pravda*] of the given state of affairs – and he understands the ought of his performed act, that is, *not* the abstract law of his act, but the actual, concrete ought conditioned by his unique place in the given context of the ongoing event. And all these moments, which make up the event in its totality, are present to him as something given and something-to-be-achieved in a unitary light, in a unitary and unique answerable consciousness and they are actualized in a unitary and unique answerable act" (Foucault 1988: 30). The self as activity exists as momentary phenomenon, appearing as a moral decision embedded in moral activity. What organizes these momentary selves is the ability to respond to the situation in an answerable manner. For this reason, Bakhtin is skeptical about the possibility of setting up a general mechanism which would account for the whole phenomenon of the self. The self is a creature in the space marked by the three elements: I-for-myself, the other (or strictly speaking the other-for-me), and I-for-the-other. The life of the self consists of constant shifting position between these centers. "The highest architectonic principle of the actual world of the performed act or deed is the concrete and architectonically valid or operative contraposition of *I* and the *other*. Life knows two value-centers that are fundamentally and essentially different, yet they are corelated with each other: myself and the other; and it is around these cen-

ters that all of the concrete moments of Being are distributed and arranged" (Foucault 1988: 74). In his analysis of Pushkin's poem "Parting", which serves as an illustration of his position, Bakhtin insists on maintaining the validity of all value-centers. A unified context can be achieved only from outside, from the position of the reader and the author (Morson 1989: 24–29).

Thus, for Bakhtin as for Foucault, the self is constituted in the complicated interactions between the subject's activity, the other, and the instances of objectified culture. For both the self has no independent content, it is an active form which has to be endowed with meaning in the course of an encounter with the other and the cultural codes of conduct. In a sense the self is a border, a limit of activity. As such, it can be described only from outside, and the ways of description make the most important difference between Bakhtin and Foucault.

For Bakhtin the decisive moment is an event as a phenomenon which has to be rebuilt by the descriptive consciousness. He writes: "An event as unitary and self-equivalent that could be read *post factum* by a detached (non-participating) consciousness that is not interested in the event; yet even in this case there still would be something that remains inaccessible to it, namely, the very event-ness of the event" (Morson 1989: 46). The uniqueness of an event makes any description in the universal terms inappropriate. Even the aesthetic approach, although relatively close to the event itself, cannot render the momentary character of the decisions making by the moral subject.

Foucault transforms the uniqueness of the self into the aesthetic categories. He believes that the boundary of the self can be rendered in the aesthetic categories of life as a work of art. The unique character of the self would be then preserved but its momentary existence can be trans-

cended. Life becomes universalized in the moral decisions made against the binding codes of morality. On the other hand, however, life as a work of art shares with the other works of art the ability of escaping any definite descriptions. It is always ambiguous and open to many possible interpretations. In this sense aesthetic existence represents formal, active character of the self. It does not, however, have an independent existence. It is rather an impress of activity of the self which we recognize from outside and from the past.

It is clear that for Bakhtin and Foucault the ways of the description of the self are also the ways of its existence. Thus, while arguing from different perspectives, they have prepared the ground for the new conception of the self. The self is neither a substance, nor an instance of objective culture. It is a mode of appropriation of culture, active but formal agency which is able to transform the cultural and social environment. Its moment of activity always escapes the observations, as they have to be conducted in the universal terms. The self resists the description in the universal categories because it is of momentary and unique character. However, its "natural" environment is the world of language, culture and social interactions. They are the building blocks for activity of the self which are constantly transformed and reshaped. From outside we can get in interactions only with the traces of activity of the self. We can grasp the trajectory of the self as far as it has to leave its impression on material of cultural and social relationships.

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SAVASTIES ĮGIJIMO BŪDAI. FOUCAULT IR BACHTINAS APIE GYVENIMO ESTETIZACIJĄ

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje aptariami du požiūriai į estetiškumo sąvoką – M. Foucault ir M. Bachtino. Abu filosofai estetiškumo sąvoką glaudžiai sieja su savasties (*self*) idėja, abu išsamiai svarsto ją kaip savasties analizės pradžios tašką, tačiau Foucault filosofinėje antropologijoje estetinės egzistencijos sąvoka tampa kertine, o Bachtinas estetiškumą laiko visiškai nenaudingu savasties konstitucijai.

Įvairūs pokantiniai judėjimai savastį laikė pamatine realybe, egzistencijos autentiškumo šaltiniu. Foucault ir Bachtinas atmeta savasties substancialumo paradigmą ir abu siūlo žvelgti į savastį kaip į veiklos visumą. Skiriasi tik abiejų filosofų požiūris į šios veiklos turinį. Foucault savasties aktyvumą sieja su kūrybiškumu, o ne autentiškumu (viena iš svarbiausių Foucault prielaidų – įtampa tarp aktualios ir įsivaizduojamos dabarties, kaip pirmas modernaus pasaulio bruožas, lemiantis naujo tipo etiką, kurios aiškinimui pagrindine tampa „savasties technologijų" sąvoka). Foucault įsitikinimu, kūrybiškumas kyla iš santykio su savimi, kurį įtarpina kultūriniai savikūros mechanizmai. Foucault naudoja gyvenimo, kaip meno kūrinio, metaforą ir savastį interpretuoja kaip išrandamą, o ne atrandamą. Savasties išradimas – kūryba – siejama ne tik su este-

tine, bet ir politine, seksualine, sveikatos ir mitybos praktika.

Bachtinas pabrėžia tai, kad savastis, kaip veikla, yra momentinis reiškinys, iškylantis moralinio sprendimo, įkūnyto moralinėje veikloje, forma. Šias momentines savastis sieja gebėjimas atsakingai reaguoti į situaciją. Bachtino pabrėžiamas savasties momentiškumas lemia rusų filosofo skeptišką požiūrį į viltį rasti kokius nors bendrus (objektyvius, tarpasmeninius) mechanizmus, leisiančius paaiškinti savastį. Jo skepticizmas apima ne tik mokslinį teoretizavimą, bet ir estetinę kontempliaciją, o ši, jo požiūriu, taip pat neapsieina be objektyvacijos, taigi baigiasi tam tikru produktu, objektu, o ne savastimi. Estetinė gyvenimo perspektyva, Bachtino požiūriu, – tai „užšaldyta intuicija", ji negali būti

individualaus veiksmo savastimi. Bachtinui estetinė būtis yra savasties, suprantamos kaip veikla, riba.

Taigi tiek Bachtinas, tiek Foucault aptaria savastį kaip konstituojamą sudėtingoje sąveikoje tarp subjekto veiklos, *kito* ir objektyvuotos kultūros pavidalų. Aišku, abiejų filosofų požiūriu savasties aprašymo būdai yra kartu ir savasties egzistavimo būdai, o juos Foucault ir Bachtinas supranta labia skirtingai.

Taigi žvelgdami iš skirtingų perspektyvų, Foucault ir Bachtinas padėjo pamatus naujam savasties aiškinimui: savastis – nei substancija, nei objektyvuotos kultūros pavyzdys, tai kultūros įgijimo būdas, aktyvi forma, neturinti savarankiško turinio, ir prasmės ji įgauna susidurdama su *kitu* ir kultūriniais veiklos kodais.

Prasminiai žodžiai: estetinė egzistencija, savastis, kitas, etika.