

Tzvetan Stoyanov on the Pain and Pleasure of Alienation

Abstract

The article is dedicated to a central theme in the work of Tzvetan Stoyanov (1930–1971) – alienation. It reconstructs Stoyanov’s general attitude towards culture as a field of communication and dialogue, rather than ideological conflict, and his contributions – through translations and commentaries – to the enrichment of this environment of pluralism and exchange. Against this background, it compares Stoyanov’s contributions with those of György Lukács (1885–1971) in relation to the role of the novel in the culture of modernity, as well as postmodernism, their attitude towards the peculiarities of the artistic hero and heroism, as well as towards existentialism. Existentialism is seen as Stoyanov’s approach to the problems of alienation, to which he devotes his main theoretical studies and conceives as a gigantic framework for research. The article offers a critical assessment of this project in the context of similar scientific experiments from the era of Stoyanov and the philosophical rediscovery of alienation with its dialectically ambivalent essence.

Keywords

alienation and self-alienation, humanism, existentialism, dialogue, essayism, delay and catching up, mythology, tragedy and heroism, deheroization

As a high school student, I discovered Tzvetan Stoyanov, who, together with Zdravko Petrov, turned out to be a wonderful storyteller and interpreter in *The Wisdom of Ancient Myths* (1975, 2nd edition). This obviously prompted me the following summer, while waiting for a train transfer in Cherven Bryag, to buy a stale and yellowed copy of the collection with the strange title “*The Brocéliande Forest*” (1973). Up to the end of high school, I did not miss anything published by this author, and while a conscript in the army, I acquired *Ideas and Motives of Alienation in Western Literature* (1973) (Stoyanov, 1988f), this time wandering around Svishtov while on pass. Studying

philosophy somewhat cooled my enthusiasm for Stoyanov's attempts to conceptually explore the problem of alienation, and the interest of quite a few close colleagues at the university in the work and life of Dostoevsky pushed *The Genius and His Mentor* (1978) off the shelf. Yet *the theme of alienation* proved to be permanently imprinted on Stoyanov's interpretations, and I thought of them every time I recognized the title of a work I had not read among those I learned from him. Of course, the theme gained new prominence when the publication of *The Threads That Break* (Stoyanov, 1988d) emerged from the archives, announced as an earlier and more popular version, but nevertheless provided with a bibliography that is only found in *The Genius and His Mentor*.

I.

What, in my opinion, distinguished Tzvetan Stoyanov in a more general sense? Most of all, in none of his texts did I find even the rudiments of the so-called "class-party" approach. In his reflections there was not a hint of the clichés about "foreign to us" literature, philosophy, culture, worthy mostly of criticism, denunciation and dissociation from it. Of course, the essayistic style of exposition allowed both softness and relativization of positions, as well as insight into the nuances. Stoyanov created the feeling that people of the spirit – the artists and the audience – belong to the same era, but also that they are in the same boat against the backdrop of challenges common to all of them. I do not remember encountering in him the intrusive pain of wars, the feeling of political exclusion and persecution, an appeal to the moral superiority of the oppressed or neglected. I have not tried to reach conceptual generalizations, but I have expressed my attitude with the word "humanism"; to highlight the aspects of universality and empathy in his approaches to native and foreign works and socio-cultural phenomena. Which I later saw crystallized in the phrase "culture as communion". Everyone can establish that this worldview of Stoyanov fits into the climate of thawing that occurred after Stalin's winter. But he does not feel like the driver or mouthpiece of the change that his peers turned into a professional career. Rather, he adheres to an understanding of culture in which the chasms of rupture, the peaks of conflict or the chains of one-sidedness are transient moments and

can always be bridged, smoothed or unlocked. And his famous article about catching up in the field of translation work – “the publication of a world classic”, published in the newspaper *Narodna Kultura* in 1957, is a proclamation of precisely such a perception (Stoyanov 1988a). Lagging behind, however, is not a deviation or a movement in the wrong direction.

The other feature that I intuitively recognized in Stoyanov’s work was his attitude towards English-language literature and his contributions to learning it in Bulgarian. Namely, in this I saw a “political” moment, since all other great cultures, not just English, have always been the object of “philistinism” from the Bulgarian side, while the English have always preferred our Balkan neighbors, which is why they deserved to be ignored at the very least. And even historical reviews and analyses from the 1930s and 1940s seemed to be silent about American literature, while the wider public learned about its modernity secondarily and by the spoonful from the magazine *LIK*. It is not right to omit adventure literature translated from English, but it belonged to the classics, in which a certain general spirit, even a scheme, prevailed, regardless of the language and national culture in which it had settled. And if through Krastan Dyankov I first came into contact with contemporary American authors, through Tzvetan Stoyanov I first thought more seriously about the significance of Huckleberry Finn, about the irresistible appeal of the characters in the books and in the life of Hemingway himself. From him I learned about the “angry young men” in general and read something more meaningful about hippies in Bulgarian; he convinced me that English crime literature is a celebration of reason, although I already liked crime movies with absurd and utterly desperate endings. Naturally, Stoyanov’s great books, dedicated to alienation and Dostoevsky, reveal a wonderful cognitive panorama. But his translations, most of his literary articles broadened the horizons of the ever-increasing interest in studying and mastering the English language. In fact, it was only decades after the contributions of people like Tzvetan Stoyanov that interest in American philosophy and sociology, reflecting on the American way of life, was awakened in Bulgaria; a delay that was also difficult to make up for in Western Europe, if we take into account the fragmentary attempts of Alexis de Tocqueville or Max Weber.

Finally, behind this attitude towards literature there is also an interest in a deeper “mythology”, not religion or psychology, but namely

mythology on which the culture of a given era relies, from which it draws and with which it argues. This worldview dimension serves to understand history, govern society and maintain personal identity, without coinciding with the official concept of ideology. This attitude was clearly shared by intellectual circles in which Stoyanov moved. But here too, among like-minded people, he behaves cautiously, or rather delicately, defending positions in which he avoids bias, which he himself subjects to all kinds of criticism. The dialogical form he uses in such cases resembles in its result an early Socratic dialogue, one with an open ending. Because simple answers are wrong answers.

What ultimately distanced me from Tzvetan Stoyanov is my own preference for philosophy over literature. This does not mean that I do not like philosophical literature, such as that produced by philosophers and writers alike. I also have a particular weakness for Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which the experience of consciousness passes through quite a few stages, embodied and unfolded in works of art. Sometimes Stoyanov's essays create the feeling that he is having conversations with hidden interlocutors whom he has read, but with whom he has no way of exchanging thoughts. These interlocutors have written on topics that excite him, he knows what he has written, but has no chance of presenting it to them, and to an audience that knows very little about those from whom he has learned, or who have provoked him. Other times he clearly arrives at problems himself that probably have been written about, but it is incredibly difficult to reach or learn about what has been written. And in this case, his essays resonate only in the narrow circle of those who are yet to be tempted. And when I came across supposed sources from which Stoyanov's research could have originated, or occurred in parallel with them, it was long since impossible to enter into a conversation with him. The notes to his publications are still poorly informative. This is how both the problem of alienation and the theme of the hero and heroism became absent.

For example, I will hardly ever find out whether Tzvetan Stoyanov knew György Lukács' *Theory of the Novel* (1916) (Lukács 1989b). During his lifetime, this study was available not only in German but also in French (1963, 1968); it was published in English in 1971, the year of his death, and it seems that it has not yet been translated into Russian¹. A decade later, when I was a student, Lukács's pioneering work was

¹ I thank an anonymous reviewer who corrected me that in 1994 *Theory of the Novel* was published in Russian in the journal *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*.

discussed diligently, although somewhat as a legacy overshadowed by “isms” beginning with “post.” The discussions, however, also made some of Stoyanov’s own understandings of literature seem outdated; since he often expressed a marked sympathy for authors who had shaken off the artistic experiments of Aldous Huxley or James Joyce. His key article “The Problem of the Hero in Modern Western Literature” (1968) (Stoyanov 1988e) contains a watershed, on one side of which is laid out in detail the diagnosis of deheroization, penetrating all literary genres and ultimately affecting the literary form itself, on the other side are outlined five ways out, the search for a new hero, for which it is not difficult to find parallels in the literary and aesthetic analyses of Lukács (incidentally, Lukács died a month before Stoyanov, but he lived more than twice as long as him and had gained experience in earlier eras).

And when scientific curiosity prevails, a return to the origins of the emergence of the modern theory of the novel reveals layers in which there is not only a desire to reform aesthetics – that of antiquity, of romanticism and of the classical German philosophers, but also a longing for metaphysics, for something beyond aesthetics itself. Lukács entitled one of his essays “Metaphysics of Tragedy” (Lukács 1989a), and then included it, of course, not by chance, as the final part of *Soul and Forms* (1911). But in practice the entire collection *Soul and Forms* is an attempt at philosophical reform, mostly through *the genre of the essay* and by focusing on *the artistic form* as an alternative to life, as an attempt to achieve personal self-sufficiency. One only needs to look at the titles of the individual parts to perceive the metamorphoses of the form – in the very unsystematic nature of the essay, but also in the ideological programs of Kierkegaard and the Romantics, in the series of basic attitudes of experiencing existence. I have never considered it far-fetched the thought that came to me long ago that half a century before Tzvetan Stoyanov, the young Lukács not only introduced his contemporaries to the birth of existentialism, raised the essay to the height of a philosophical genre, but also outlined the palette of the typology of the artistic hero in an exemplary manner, comparable to those that Tzvetan Stoyanov proposes more than once. However, the attitude towards metaphysics separates them.

It is true that very soon Lukács himself renounces the speculative way of reasoning and exposition. Which does not mean that what is written ceases to matter. Because in “Metaphysics of Tragedy” he argues for the concept that the tragic is the culmination of aesthetic

experience due to the affirmation of such an artistic unity of life, which is missing in real life, strewn with halftones and anarchy. In its metaphysical essence, tragedy is anti-realistic and elitist, it is a stage for the manifestation of the chosen ones, capable of achieving integrity, authenticity, independence, giving shape to their lives beyond any everyday life. This understanding contrasts with the understanding of Aristotle or Hegel, but even Nietzsche, where ethics plays a determining role, but it is characteristic of a cultural era in which, as Lukács writes, God has withdrawn into the role of a spectator. Without this support, the hero moves outside the axes of time and his only chance to be himself is the moment. Lukács believes that it is precisely in such a syncopated moment that tragedy erases all chance, transcends the boundaries even of culture, becomes a mystery, the hero feels divinity within himself, the awakening of true life, his actions resemble a miracle. “Perfect being is the being of tragic personalities” (Lukács 1989a, 291). Here one can definitely feel the influence of Kierkegaard, for whom the moment is an atom not of time, but of eternity. But unlike the Danish troublemaker, Lukács reaches the quintessence that because of this condensation of time, the heroes in tragedy do not go to death, but have long since died, although they feel reborn. In the most paradoxical way, authentic experience is achieved and preserved in death, which becomes an object of contemplation. While in ordinary life the limit is unattainable, therefore in it death seems a threatening and meaningless rupture.

It is difficult to say what made Lukács realize that this immanentistic, self-contained experience of the tragic was too extreme; whether it was Ernst Bloch, with whom Lukács was friends in Berlin (with Georg Simmel) and in Heidelberg (with Max Weber), because for him true tragedy (and comedy) is charged with a spirit of utopia and is inevitably a struggle with inhibitions and demonic tempters; or the First World War, which both experienced with an eschatological attitude and timid messianic hope. But it is certain that Lukács ceased to oppose tragedy and history, a tragic drama in which necessity springs from the inner world, “without a basis in itself” – to a historical drama in which necessity spills out, “without any meaning whatsoever”. History, even if it contains “metaphysical dissonance”, seems to be able to be thought out (Lukács 1989a, 305, 309). And in 1923, Lukács would develop this idea in *History and Class Consciousness*, after

which he would increasingly take on the role of a fighter against the “destruction of reason” (Lukács 1988a).

I allowed myself this diachronic comparison between Tzvetan Stoyanov and György Lukács because it arose in my mind when, almost simultaneously, in 1989, I was reading Dimitar Zashev’s translation of Lukács’s early derivatives and two articles by Stoyanov about Botev, resurrected from the past and from his personal archive – “The Second June” (Stoyanov, 1961) and “The Second Part of the Conversation” (Stoyanov 1988c, presumably). Death and tragedy! If in 1961 the self-sacrifice on Mount Vola was projected onto the Leipzig Trial, Balkan heroism acquired world-historical significance, the outline of the vile doom was broken and turned into a victorious revenge, then a few years later, at Radetzky, at Kozloduy and most of all at Vola, performances were staged – Schillerian with a thousand-fold increase!, breaking with every misfortune of the national fate or logic, in which death is “incomparable”, the hero dies not because of betrayal, but because of a self-chosen ending of the form of true life. Even if he had not read Lukács, Stoyanov wrote “Metaphysics of Tragedy” in a way that Lukács could have dreamed of. Moreover, in accordance with Pencho Slaveykov’s astonishing comparison between the Hungarian Sándor Petőfi, who foresaw his death, and the Bulgarian Botev, who foresaw his life after death.

The amazing closeness between Lukács and Stoyanov, which flashed through my mind, dissolved in their historical analyses, the touch on the paradoxical metaphysics of tragic heroism resonated and returned like an echo, but in the field of social psychology, and finally unexpectedly acquired flesh and blood in the split way of existence, which directly marked the last decade of Lukács’s life in particular and indirectly Tzvetan Stoyanov’s preoccupations with the fate of Dostoevsky. (By the way, Zashev also owned an edition of Lukács’s *Notes on Dostoevsky* (1985), which he ironically called “utopia”)². So the deheroization in contemporary literature, and more generally in art, turned out to be an ominous deheroization in the dimensions of real life as well. And mentoring, whether revolutionary or conservative, is a deformation of the ontological framework, in which

² Lukács intended to write a special study on Dostoevsky, and this is documented in the final paragraph of *Theory of the Novel* (Lukács 1989b, 463). The project was not carried out, and the notes from it were discovered after Lukács’s death among the documents deposited in the Heidelberg Bank and were published in 1985. In 1943 Lukács wrote the essay “Dostoevsky”, which also has a Bulgarian translation in *Literaturni Portreti* (1988).

God has withdrawn as a spectator, to be replaced by puppeteers. At such a moment, one imperceptibly remembers Marx's phrase, complementing Hegel, that history always repeats itself twice, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.

II.

When Lukács wrote about Kierkegaard, existentialism was not even a project, but appeared as a term in the mid-1940s; when it was in its heyday, Lukács dedicated articles to it, which he united in a book – *Existentialism or Marxism?* (Lukács, 1951). It contrasts sharply with the well-founded articles of Herbert Marcuse from 1928–1929, written under the influence of *Being and Time* by Heidegger, to whom he was an assistant at the time, in which the connection between phenomenology, philosophy of life and Marxism is unraveled, moments of a revolutionary attitude are discovered in the basic “historicity” of human existence, the need for a “concrete philosophy” is proclaimed. Lukács's postwar book practically erases the enthusiasm that he and Marcuse expressed when Marx's “Historical and Philosophical Manuscripts” of 1844 became available to the world for the first time in 1932, and the theme of “alienation” complemented and gave new meanings to “reification” and “fetishism.” Yes, a little later, civilization collapsed for more than a decade. Lukács emigrated to the Soviet Union, where he learned about the purges in the Lubyanka dungeons and the internal emigration in Tashkent, and after the war, although he was recognized as a professor, academician and MP in his native Hungary, he realized how easy it was to be overthrown by the party press; because he presented the struggle against reaction in the name of progress as topical, thereby *postponing* the struggle between socialism and capitalism into the indefinite future, and *replacing* the dictatorship of the proletariat with the construction of people's democracy. But Lukács was possessed as if by demons when he published *Progress and Reaction in German Literature* (1947) or *German Literature in the Age of Imperialism* (1952), *Existentialism or Marxism?* (1951), but also *The Destruction of Reason* (1952); it is difficult to accept as justification such a self-defensive reaction, in which behind every non-socialist work one discovers a triumph of irrationalism and evil intent. And until recently this was not the case. At the end of *The Young Hegel* (1938, 1948) according to

Lukács in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* one can already discover Marx himself, and not his predecessor. But when Cervantes' *Don Quixote* was published in Hungarian in a new translation in 1951, Lukács provided it with a preface in which the greatness of the novel is demonstrated with a quote from “comrade Dimitrov”, who had once said “Write such a satire against German fascism as *Don Quixote is*”, in order to arrive at a summary of the “class content of enthusiasm”, the delusions of the “petty bourgeoisie”, the reasonableness and “sober wisdom” of Sancho Panza (Lukács 1988b, 16, 24).

But let's get back to existentialism. In it, Lukács mainly denounces the sin of fetishism – towards “pseudo-objectivity”, towards the “third way”, towards “nothingness” and towards “freedom”, and against the background of this fetishism – the “ethics of ambiguity”, which lacked “historical responsibility”. Therefore, he sees salvation in “Lenin's theory of knowledge”, which combined objectivism, dialectics and total thinking of causality, which could find adequate continuation in practice. The term “alienation” is cited twice, the second one in Heidegger's use, who refers to... Marx, and the first one in *The Holy Family* of Marx and Engels, where both classes – the propertied and the proletariat – are “self-alienated”, but one knows *its own power*, although it leads a “false existence”, and the other feels *destroyed* in its “inhuman existence” (Lukács 1951, 164, 78). Naturally, the German word for existence is *existenz*.

Existentialism is the subject of criticism from many sides and, as is well known, Sartre defended it with articles that became manifestos, and interest in it flared up after the death of Stalin and the May events of 1968, during the Hungarian events and the Prague Spring. Therefore, it is not surprising that when Tzvetan Stoyanov came to the idea of dealing with alienation, the Marxist attitude towards existentialism had already changed considerably. This is clearly seen if we compare *The Threads That Break* and *Ideas and Motives of Alienation*. The earlier text does not begin with Marx, and Sidney Finkelstein's book appears at a key place in the bibliography *Existentialism and Alliteration in American Literature* (Finkelstein 1965). The book in question was translated into Russian as early as 1967, and during my studies there were copies of this edition in several of the libraries of Sofia University. And when in 1989 I saw it duly cited by Stoyanov, this dispelled any doubts about an undisclosed borrowing of ideas.

Alienation is a topic with which Rousseau, Hegel and Feuerbach provoked Marx, and Marx provoked the Frankfurt School. But the real existentialism of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s did not simply take it up, but gave it new dimensions and even a new meaning. Camus's *The Stranger* made it the focus of the era, with which artists on both sides of the Iron Curtain had to reckon. Finkelstein, adhering to Marxism, to a large step realized this, which certainly opened new horizons for Stoyanov. These horizons are rather literary and literary criticism, but the beginning of the study is determined not only by Marx, but also by Kierkegaard, on which Nietzsche and Dostoevsky stepped a little later. Moreover, when Finkelstein and Stoyanov focused on alienation, a galaxy of professional and popular psychologists were dealing with it. And if the majority examines the manifestations in a subjective way, but emphasizes its connection with narcissism, Tzvetan Stoyanov is among those for whom objective conditions, processes, and trends are important. The program of his unfinished project is like the backbone of a global, albeit Western European history. Unfortunately, shortly before his death, attempts began to appear to rediscover "alienation" in the texts of classical sociologists; such is the undertaking of Joachim Israel, who, however, does not draw parallels in art. Shortly before Tzvetan Stoyanov's untimely and ridiculous death, Richard Schacht's *Alienation* was also published, where it also has no connection with artistic creativity, but the philosophical framework has not lost its importance to this day and even seems paradigmatic, especially since it includes in its perspective the philosophical anthropology that was current at the time without omitting theology, and last but not least, it distances itself from Americanized psychoanalysis.

Even in the etymology of the word "alienation" it is clear that it refers to the transformation of something of one's own into something foreign, or at least into something other than mine or ours. This separation is unproblematic if it has occurred consciously and voluntarily, but especially if it has remained reversible or is not experienced as a loss. Alienation becomes a real problem when the rupture and confusion are transferred to the field of interpersonal relations or to that of the individual psyche, when connections become anonymous. The original thing about Marx is that the germ of deformation is contained in production, where – especially in capitalism, when lawlessness and personal dependence have remained in history – the products of one's own labor and the personal labor activity itself escape the producer

in the moment, *because of the very division of labor*. And because of an un-lived sympathy for essentialism in the youthful manuscripts, one even reaches a diagnosis of total alienation from nature and from human essence. From my university professors, I know that the generation of Tzvetan Stoyanov (*1930) and Asen Ignatov (*1935) / Petar-Emil Mitev (*1936) was simply obsessed with the chance that opened up in their student years to “meet the young Marx”, to catch the “alienation” that was literally floating in the air. And at the same time, to witness how, within a decade, the topic became taboo when studying the world in which they themselves lived in the East, unlike their contemporaries in the West, who had no illusions that alienation had moved somewhere else as soon as their fellow citizens felt satisfied.

It has already been discussed. For some of the researchers of alienation, we are dealing with a completely subjective phenomenon, with deformations in the psyche, for others these deformations are due to objective processes. But it seems that it is the existentialists, especially the existentialist writers, who create impressive and convincing works in which *the objective source of alienation, no matter whether and how it is primarily reflected in the subjective world, secondarily creates illusions and self-deceptions about the authenticity of life and identity in the psyche. It is precisely these perverse forms and even perversions that Tzvetan Stoyanov has captured*, regardless of how much and what kind of original and secondary literature he has used and known. Hence the special, nonlinear character of his expositions, reinforced by their essayistic form.

Below I will rely on philosophical, not literary chronology, to draw a typology that does not claim to be complete. I will refrain from drawing specific parallels with Tzvetan Stoyanov’s two studies on alienation, since they also do not claim to be complete and exhaustive. However, they initially outline a kind of conflict, which Hegel also signals and criticizes as two manifestations of one-sidedness.

Not so much Rousseau as “Rousseauism” sets out a sustainable model of escape from civilization, of a return to nature, which persists to this day as a striving in Romanticism, in the nostalgic utopias of closed farms, in alternative pedagogy programs that attempt to overcome the so-called “split.” These attempts at *radical and regressive transformation*, however, miss Kierkegaard’s criticism that any universalization of a model, especially its total variants, inevitably leads to abstraction, and hence to a new alienation.

Contrary to this option for an exit, a “Schilleriade” for salvation through art is making its way into the programs for “aesthetic education”. Because in artistic creation, even the most alien is ultimately something of one’s own. Instead of transformation, an all-consuming opening, *a virtualization of the entire reality* of life, is recommended and propagated. In this case, the lessons of Nietzsche’s life drama are forgotten, when the endless change of masks leads either to the startling discovery that another director is hiding in the Self, or to the complete loss of oneself.

These are the two trodden alternatives that have left deep traces in art, but have deserved criticism in social theories. But ever since I came across Stoyanov’s *Ideas and Motives ...*, it has been ingrained in my mind how this acquaintance gave rise to a desire to read Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*, because I learned not only the title, but also accepted that the heroine is an exemplary literary type, comparable to Robinson, whose alienation, however, is in society, but this makes her not just interesting, but in her own way key to unraveling and exposing the reality she inhabits. The thief as the central character of the adventures and as a starting point for the explanatory principle deployed in Tzvetan Stoyanov’s interpretation. Later, when I reread Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, I discovered that alienation may be a *philosophical trick*, somewhat similar to the famous cunning of reason. Alienation, or rather self-alienation, is a moment in the complex dialectic of “split”, in whose bosom a burning philosophical need is born, and in its dynamics the educational process of the modern world takes place, both in the plan of personal growth and of national and world history. Appearances that are as accidental as they are necessary. And in the end, alienation alienates itself from itself. In a similar way, Lukács, who does not know *the Paris Marx’s manuscripts*, *he sees in the reification necessity* of the development of modern rationalization, which in turn *necessarily reaches* a dead end – to formalism and aporeticism in philosophy, and this state of affairs that revolves in a circle *can be overcome* only if philosophy *theoretically* begins to think of society as a totality and if – and only with the help of such thinking – the proletariat awakens *to the practice* in itself mentioned that it was not a commodity. Unlike the bourgeoisie, for which it is *impossible* to achieve the thinking of totality. But let’s stay with alienation. In some of the novels that Hegel did not realize, Stoyanov has seen “Hegelianism” on a more everyday level. Just as Siegfried Krakauer

will later reconstruct the philosophical dimensions of the detective novel; but he will also establish that the detective novels themselves are a denunciation of the idea of philosophical concepts as a key to unlocking and dealing with the problems of modern life. Because any trust in some absolute spirit, different from the objective one, leads to reconciliation only in the world of ideas beyond social reality, which, as Nietzsche foresees, is a precursor to nihilism and to intoxication by its annihilating power.

In general, Tzvetan Stoyanov reaches this point in his most systematic reconstruction, and the bridge to the emergence of existentialism remains “hanging”, but like a question without an answer. Therefore, with somewhat risk, I will try to complete some unfinished links of this bridge, based on my general impression of the project and Stoyanov’s preparatory work. So the transition from the 19th to the 20th century will remain interrupted. But at least three philosophical contributions, correcting and building on Hegel, seem to me worthy of mention.

Feuerbach relies on unity not in philosophy, which stagnates in the realm of the spirit, but in a new religion, which should transform the spiritual into a real and non-alienated form of life. Since then, up to the present day, all forms of *new spiritualism*, but also of a new *sensitivity*, promise salvation for the whole person, and not only in the dimensions of the spirit, projecting the need for a transversal anthropology, no matter how paradoxical this intention may be. *All-round development* becomes an obsession, therefore the step to the idea of religion as opium is a small one and, as Petar-Emil Mitev said, Marx borrowed it precisely from the Young Hegelians. And the concrete solutions, then and today, are simple, true religion must be freed from the stifling rules of rituals, from the tutelary caste of priests; thus religion would not be alienated, but would remain sheltered among and within people, with it they would have to govern themselves without dominating one another. Marx is the one who discovers that the cherished dream of complete emancipation is incomplete if it does not take into account the economy, where particular mechanisms of alienation prevail, embodied in intermediaries such as property, money, capital, whose essence is reduced to simple exchange.

Roughly speaking, Marx compensated for the economic deficit in the criticism of the Young Hegelians, but turned it into the center, and gradually into the sole, topic of his research and theory. And *the*

privileged point of view of a single class displaces the philosophical thinking of totality. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the concepts of reification and fetishism displace alienation (which has already been discussed), and interest in the forgotten concept returns with the discovery of the young Marx in the early 1930s.³ And in turn, contemporaries of Tzvetan Stoyanov come to the conclusion that the two stages of the emergence of Marxism differ in the point of view of the studied social actors, whether it is interpersonal and perspectivist or distanced and objectivist. This inevitably affects the understanding of the coordination of collective actions and solidarity and has direct relevance for alienation between people and for overcoming it. In particular, it feeds the thesis heretical to official Marxism that alienation is a phenomenon inherent in both victorious socialism and its political economy. But also the opposite thesis that non-alienated forms of life could be sought regardless of the surrounding economic context. *Solidarity has an independent value and deserves independent study.* Unfortunately, most of the projects for workers' collectivism and for co-participation in the management of enterprises do not take into account Nietzsche's fundamental criticism of the ethics of the majority, clogged with poisonous envy (ressentiment), Krakauer's sociological discoveries in the transformation of workers into employees, Freud's prophetic visions of the psyche of the masses, Adorno's diagnoses of the modeling power of mass culture and mass media.

Sociologists who provoked the so-called "second birth" of sociology and carried it into the twentieth century overcome Marx's economic reductionism, but also questioned the unalternative triumph and the unilinear manifestation of secularism. Take Max Weber. In his analyses of the disenchantment of the world in the transition from traditional to modern societies, of the unleashing of the spirit of capitalism, he did not fail to note and acknowledge the role of ethics inspired by interpretations of religion itself. Therefore, the behavior of his social actors is never determined solely by the division of labor, but by interests as well as values. Such is the attitude not only of Weber. *The sociological approach in a peculiar way gathers together the legacy of Hegel, divided between Feuerbach and Marx.* Moreover, it does not bring the pluralism of social and cultural forms of life into the

³ An attempt at a contemporary rethinking of "reification" is offered by Axel Honneth (2010). This and the following paragraphs were provoked by this lecture, given at the awarding of an honorary doctorate to Honneth by Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

whirlpool of unifying tendencies in the rationalization of worldviews. Yes, in each of the great sociologists one can find leading phenomena, such as bureaucratization for Weber or mechanical solidarity for Durkheim. And to diagnose social pathologies. But the very pluralism of culture, *the diversity of value spheres does not merge into a common background*, but remains porous, dotted with niches between which a choice and transition according to one's preference is possible. Moreover, even when anonymous intermediaries have settled and even universalized in the lives of modern people. This is especially clearly seen in Georg Simmel – one of the fathers of sociology, who deals with alienation in a direct way. Moreover, who shares and even reinforces Marx's ideas that the division of labor is a tragedy of culture, who deals with a manifestation of fetishism, of which no one has ever been aware until now. But his famous book *Philosophy of Money* (1900) reveals this universal intermediary in a new light. On the one hand, any direct contact with the world, with other people, with their very psyche has long disappeared; and money is a kind of intermediary and of the intermediaries themselves. On the other hand, however, this unloads individuals, disengages them, *although sometimes it alienates them, more importantly, it distances them*, especially from each other. By keeping a distance, so to speak – “left alone”, people learn to use their freedom in a creative way. Money gives them the power to easily acquire the means with which to realize their life choices, their life plans. Even to bring to light the dormant potentials of their labor force. The “merchant” is an empirical embodiment of *the archetype of the “stranger” or “wanderer”, of the autonomous foreigner* with his unity between proximity and distance, which Simmel will deal with in several pages in *Sociology* (1908).⁴ Thus, unlike the conclusions of Marx or Lukács, social actors are not dragged by the misfortune of a common historical fate. Alienation also turns out to be charged with positive energy; and not only in the role of a Hegelian instrument to set in motion the dialectic of its own disappearance. For most sociologists, social actors are capable of playing different roles, between which the transition is not closed, of presenting themselves in everyday life (H. Goffman), and in a plastic way.

Unfortunately, existentialists are not (good) sociologists. The behavior of their social actors or artistic characters is constantly on

⁴ According to Kolyo Koev, alienation can also be a search for an organizational and unified generative principle within oneself, since such a principle is lacking in social life (Koev 1991).

the edge and is mired in the swamp of repetitions. Hence the dominant of alienation, which cannot be broken by some logic of negation of negation. Especially in the era of consumer societies. And Tzvetan Stoyanov joins those who realize that this is a problem that is painfully important and worth intellectual efforts. Attempts to make sense of it with the help of literature have not lost their relevance. And they intertwine in a heuristic way on the philosophical canvas that I tried to unfold in my reconstruction.

References

- Finkelstein, Sidney. 1965. *Existentialism and Alienation in American Literature*. New York: International Publishers.
- Honneth, Axel. 2010. "Prerazglezhane na 'oveshtnyaneto'"; translated from German by St. Yotov. *Sotziologicheski problemi*, 3-4 [Хонет, Аксел. 2010. Преразглеждане на „овежняването“; прев. от нем. Студиян Йотов. *Социологически проблеми*], 3-4, 251–261.
- Коев, Кольо. 1991. *Metamorfozite na chuzhdenetsa*. Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo; UI "Sv. Kliment Ohridski" [Коев, Кольо. 1991. Метаморфозите на чужденеца. София: Наука и изкуство; УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“].
- Lukács, György. 1989a. "Metafizika na tragediyata: Paul Ernst" (1910). Lukács, György. *Haos i Formi*. Lukács, György. Translated from German by D. Zashev. Sofia: Narodna kultura [Лукач, Дьорг. 1989а. „Метафизика на трагедията: Паул Ернст“ (1910)], 285–313. Лукач, Дьорг. *Хаос и форми*. Превод от немски, съставителство и бележки Димитър Зашев. София: Наука и изкуство), 285–313.
- . 1989b. "Teoriya na romana. Filosokso-istoricheski opit vurhu krupnite epicheski formi" (1916). Lukács, György. *Haos i Formi*. Sofia: Narodna kultura [Лукач, Дьорг. 1989а. Теория на романа. Философско-исторически опит върху крупните епически форми (1916)] 363–463.
- . 1988a. "Oveshtnyavaneto i saznanieto na proletariata (Iz Istoriya i klasovo saznanie)" (1923). Translated from German by G. Kapriev. *Sotziologicheski problemi* 3 [Лукач, Дьорг. 1988а. Овежняването и съзнанието на пролетариата (Из История и класово съзнание (1923). *Социологически проблеми* 3], 50–68.

- . 1988b. *Servantes: Don Kihot* (1951). Lukács, György *Literaturni Portreti*. Translated from Hungarian by J. Naydenova. Sofia: Narodna kultura [„Сервантес: Дон Кихот“ (1950). Лукач, Дьорг. *Литературни портрети*. София: Народна култура], 15–24.
- . 1951. *Existentialism order Marxism*. Berlin: Aufbau Verlag.
- Stoyanov, Tzvetan. 1988a. “Izostavame v izdavaneto na svetovna klasika” (1957). *Sachineniya v dva тома. Tom 1: Kulturata kato obshtenie*. Sofia: Balgarski pisatel [„Изоставяме в издаването на световна класика“. *Съчинения в два тома. Том 1: Културата като общение*. София: Български писател], 246–262.
- . 1988b. “Vtori Yuni” (1961). *Sachineniya v dva тома. Tom 1: Kulturata kato obshtenie*. Sofia: Balgarski pisatel [„Втору юни“ (1961). *Съчинения в два тома. Том 1: Културата като общение*. София: Български писател], 201–207.
- . 1988c. “Vtorata chast na razgovora” (1964). *Sachineniya v dva тома. Tom 1: Kulturata kato obshtenie*. Sofia: Balgarski pisatel [„Втората част на разговора“ (1964). *Съчинения в два тома. Том 1: Културата като общение*. София: Български писател], 364–385.
- . 1988d. “Nishkite, koito se prekusvat. Problemut za alienatziyata (otchuzhdenieto) v literaturata I obshtestvenata psihologiya na Zapad” (1967). *Sachineniya v dva тома. Tom 1: Kulturata kato obshtenie*. Sofia: Balgarski pisatel [„Нижките, които се прекъсват. Проблемът за аalienацията в литературата и обществената психология на Запад“ (1967). *Съчинения в два тома. Том 1: Културата като общение*. София: Български писател], 63–205.
- . 1988e. “Problemut za geroya v modernata zapadna literatura” (1968). *Sachineniya v dva тома. Tom 1: Kulturata kato obshtenie*. Sofia: Balgarski pisatel [„Проблемът за героя в модерната западна литература“ (1968). *Съчинения в два тома. Том 1: Културата като общение*. София: Български писател], 316–341.
- . 1988f. “Idei i motivi na otchuzhdenieto v zapadnata literatura” (1973). *Sachineniya v dva тома. Tom 2: Otchuzhdenieto*. Sofia: Balgarski pisatel. [„Идеи и мотиви на отчуждението в западната литература“. *Съчинения в два тома. Том 2: Отчуждението*. София: Български писател], 207–540.