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Tausendundeine Theorie

Stephan Trüby

The world and everything in it – phenomena, social organisations, artefacts, works of art, buildings, et cetera – have always been the subject of our attention. The ancient word “theoria” is evidence of this. In modern Greek lexica, “theoria” firstly means «to view or to watch» (Rausch, 1982: 9). This viewing is also expressly connected to the phenomenon of the mind and so means mental observation, contemplation, investigation and reflection. In his still readable essay *Lob der Theorie* from 1980, Hans-Georg Gadamer explains that man is basically always a theoretical being (Gadamer, 1983). At times all he can do is be awake, look around and above all: marvel (Bode, 2011: 92). The first theorists were marvellers, who spread the word: curious delegates of a Greek *Polis*, who informed their home of the future-influencing techniques of foreign oracles and holy festivals (Hörisch, 2004: 24). Even today, whoever wishes to reasonably call his undertaking theory must also base it on prognostics. However, since the collapse of marxist experiments, prognoses no longer fall into our laps. The theoretical debates of the last thirty years are strongly influenced by Jean- François Lyotard’s idea

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of an “End of *grands récits*”, which he developed in *La Condition post-moderne* (1979). “Grand narratives” represent ideologically political constructions for philosophers, which destroy what can be regarded as the central basic value of European civilisation: freedom of the individual. In the “grand narratives” of marxism, which found its imperative climax in the emancipation of a proletariat rising above all other classes, Lyotard summed up the latest ideological source of inhuman political practice (*idem*). The critical examination of marxist thought, which culminated in the fall of the iron curtain in Francis Fukuyama’s *The end of History* (1992), can be considered as the most significant commonality of early culture-theoretical production. A comparative look at some recent (theory) theoretical publications shows that not only new super-theories rise from the ashes of “grand narratives” like phoenixes, but that also marxism at least enjoys the status of the undead.

Theoriethorie

The book *Theoriethorie* (2011), edited by Mario Grizelj and Oliver Jahraus (both from the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich) offers a good introduction to the current theoretical discussion. It primarily focuses on influential theories of the 20th century: Bettina Menke is dedicated to Sigmund Freud’s joke theory, Thomas Khurana to the ontology of Martin Heidegger, Jan Assman to Karl Jaspers’ theory of Axial Age, or Natalie Binczek to the Actor-Network Theory of Bruno Latour. Without explicitly making reference to the legacy of marxism and its ideology of equality, Jahraus makes it clear that the «most advanced» options produced by the last third of the 20th century are not equality theories, but rather «difference theories» (Grizelj, Jahraus, 2011: 25): deconstruction and system theory.

Based on Paul de Man, Jahraus’ «Idea to develop a theorytheory which can understand the resistances against theories, the figures of their negation as constituents of theories themselves» (Grizelj, Jahraus, 2011: 27), is masterfully spelt out in the book by Uwe Wirth and his article *Gepfropfte Theorie: Eine ‘greffologische’ Kritik von Hybriditätskonzepten als Beschreibung von intermedialen und interkulturellen Beziehungen*. Referring to Jacques Derrida’s historic essay *Signature Ereignis Kontext*, in which the grafting (*greffe*) becomes the metaphor for the repeatability and quotability of signs (Wirth, 2011: 154) and referring to the postcolonial studies characterised by Derrida, Wirth makes it clear that hybridisation means more than just mixing and can also describe a power relationship: «The concept of hybridisation is thus used to describe a colonial constellation, in which the colonised use the mixing of the separate culture of the colonisers as a subversive strategy – as a strategic reversal» (Wirth, 2011: 152). The deconstructed “grafting” (Wirth, 2011: 162) is, generally speaking, a good model for a diverse scientific practice which mixes theories. While the deconstruction, which, as a graft, is *part of* and at the same time *not part of* its subject of analysis, ambivalently conveys its own

theory character as disregarded in its reading files, the system theory rejects a – literally – superior theoretical knowledge. If one follows Grizelj and Jahraus, the term “Theorytheory” taken from an essay by Jean Clam on Niklas Luhmann (Grizelj, Jahraus, 2011: 20) must be understood, in terms of overall system theory, as an “expression of a second-level observation”, «which connects that which it observes to its act of observation» (Grizelj, Jahraus, 2011: 10). Clam assumed that “super theories”, such as system theory, also had to be theorytheories, because the theory itself has to re-appear in this type of theory (Grizelj, Jahraus, 2011: 20). Indeed, one may not reduce the term theorytheory to the autoreflexive moment of super theories such as system theory, although a Luhmann preference is given in Jahraus’ beautiful description of the “theoretical primal scene”: theories, according to the author, are fed by a “lack of experience”, therefore an “experience of difference”: «The difference between observation and the observed, perception and perceived, signs and the identified, is the origin from which theories develop» (Grizelj, Jahraus, 2011: 28).

Theorie-apotheke

While Grizelj and Jahraus particularly single out deconstruction and system theory as the most consequential theories from the post-marxist Grand-Récits darkness using a bright spotlight, the theory theatre in Jochen Hörisch’s *Theorie-Apotheke* (2004) has proven to be more diverse. From ‘a’ for “analytical philosophy” to ‘z’ for the german “Zivilisationstheorie” [The Civilizing Process], the author has led the way through the social clinical picture and theoretical suggestions for healing since the middle of the 20th century. As the key trend, the – completely postmodern – literary scholar from Mannheim makes a «transition from salvation to healing expectations» (Hörisch, 2004: 7): «For ambitious thinkers, the not so distant past times when large-scale theories used to promise general cures, are gone. Today, most human-scientific theories, if needed, promise to cure specific diseases and ailments – Hörisch, who pursued the goal of a – pharmaceutical cooling of heated and feverish large-scale concepts», entices the reader with a simple core message in his introduction: «Theories exist [...] in the plural» (Hörisch, 2004: 10).

This exceedingly entertaining book is not quite as pluralistic as this. The Cultural Studies and Jürgen Habermas in particular do not escape unscathed. Hörisch accused the Cultural Studies of dissolving the Western Canon, which «dries up communicative opportunities» (Hörisch, 2004: 69). Thus the author also attacks anti-universalistic hopes of «understanding a culture of itself: [...] be it female circumcision in certain Islamic regions or sadistic initiation rituals for young men in Papua New Guinea, or be it the anti-Semitic mass murder in Germany of the twentieth century or the mutilation of women’s feet in China: is the culturalistic sentence [...] ‘understanding everything means: excusing everything’ [...] a meaningful motto for *cultural studies*?» (Hörisch, 2004: 70-71).

With Luhmann in mind, the author also doubts Habermas' thesis «that consensus is the regulative idea of communication» (Hörisch, 2004: 168). The reverse applies: «We therefore communicate incessantly because we do not agree and do not reach a consensus. Dissent, and not consensus, is the regulative idea of communication» (Hörisch, 2004: 167). According to Hörisch, we then stop communicating when there is a consensus (Hörisch, 2004: 168).

Hörisch's book written in the aftermath of 9/11 is relaxed with regard to the challenges to humanities by the "new sciences": computer science and biogenetics (Hörisch, 2004: 15). The problems of the start of the third millennium are «almost shamefully anachronistic problems», the solution to which neither computer sciences and biogenetics nor neurophysiology nor astrophysics contribute: «Namely problems with God, fanatics of all kinds, cultures which remain foreign to us, conflict logics, communication difficulties, affect-laden, questions on justice, the gender ratio, media usage, the raising of children, technology assessments and the destruction of the environment» (Hörisch, 2004: 317). As far as the solution to these problems is concerned, Hörisch expressly warns against too much of Carl Schmitt's Freund-Feind theory – and thus against too much political theology. Instead, he recommends exploring the comparative religious sciences such as the works of Jan Assmann or Klaus Heinrich (Hörisch, 2004: 212). This, however, could also result in an «understanding as an excuse», similar to the Cultural Studies, which certainly have a reputation for being unfair in the *Theorie-Apotheke* if *pharmakon* acts not only as a "remedy" but also as a "poison".

Theorien der Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaften: Eine Einführung

Unlike Hörisch's "A to Z", Bernd Stiegler's introduction in the *Theorien der Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaften* (2015) is chronologically structured and limited to fewer theories. The hermeneutic has the honour of representing something as the «first literary and cultural theory»; this is followed by critical theory, psychoanalysis, structuralism, deconstruction, discourse analysis, gender studies, postcolonialism, system theory, media theory, visual studies and finally visual culture studies. The book is based on a series of lectures, the spoken style of which has been retained. Individual theories of literature, art, media and culture were not recorded; only «reference theories, which provide these with direction» were documented (Stiegler, 2015: 7). The following striking sentence can be found on just the first page: «Theory, we can all agree on, is not usually limited to individual disciplines, but has a *transdisciplinary approach or scope*. It claims to be of use in very different fields and areas of application, even if these initially appear to have little to do with theory» (Stiegler, 2015: 7). Against this background, Stiegler, who teaches modern German literature in Konstanz, Germany, did not include reception aesthetics (which is discussed by Hörisch) and the actor-network theory (which is not addressed by Hörisch).

The *iconic turn* (Gottfried Boehm) and the *pictorial turn* (William J.T. Mitchell) appear, however, to be doubly present – as visual studies and visual culture studies. Stiegler is able to credibly make differences clear. While the former are mainly run by German-speaking art experts – as part of the mega research project *eikones-Bildkritik* in Basel – the latter stand for a theory practice of Anglo-Saxon literary scholars in particular (Stiegler, 2015: 143). The latter are rather more orientated to philosophical and traditional theoretical approaches in art history and include scientific theoretical analyses; the latter are, above all, indebted to semiotics, discourse analysis, psychoanalysis, but also the social theory of Louis Althusser and critical theory: «The Visual Culture Studies are more colourful and heterogeneous, but also scientifically less gravitational and much easier to navigate than the clearly more philosophical and scientifically more important visual studies» (Stiegler, 2015: 145). Stiegler clearly distances himself from the media theory of Norbert Bolz, Vilém Flusser or Friedrich Kittler, and wrote, with regard to military and war centrism: «The technical media offer models of explanations for a new meta-narrative in the age of their postmodern declaration of death. The media theory of this time becomes clearer from a well-nigh apocalyptic perspective, which obscures it at the same time. It suffers, however, from a diagnostic delusion of grandeur, which makes the theories so interesting at the same time» (Stiegler, 2015: 139).

Does a diagnostic delusion of grandeur make theories “interesting”? Stiegler’s passing remark runs oddly counter to the four theory stipulations of his introduction: theories are not methods, «they are not instructions on how to build something like an Ikea shelf» (Stiegler, 2015: 13-14). They are also «accessible to the world» and have uncovered phenomena (Stiegler, 2015: 14). And thanks to the alienation effect, they have resulted in an awareness of problems: «Theories are designed to question traditional and accepted assumptions» (Stiegler, 2015: 15). Finally, theories provide new concepts.

«The sky of the theory may be dark, but its stars [the new concepts, S.T.] nevertheless show the way» (Stiegler, 2015: 15). With *Theorien der Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Stiegler succeeded in creating a useful introduction to the formation of theories of the recent past, of which the “interestingness” still remains unspoken.

Der lange Sommer der Theorie

In contrast, the historian and cultural scientist from Berlin, Philipp Felsch, impressively presents this “interestingness” of theories in *Der lange Sommer der Theorie* (2015). In his book, Felsch recounts the history of the theory between 1960 and 1990, mainly with the aid of the Berlin Merve publishing house, initially founded by a socialist-inspired collective of Peter Gente (1936-2014) and the eponym Merve Lowien, from 1975, then led by Gente and Heidi Paris (1950-2002). Merve is considered to be the “Reclam of postmodernism” and, as the publishing house main-

ly made a name for itself with translations of the French post-structuralists, a «legal creator of the German word 'Diskurs' [discourse]» (Felsch, 2015: 14). Without Hans Schmoller's *Taschenbuchrevolution* (Felsch, 2015: 37), which has been shaking up the international book market since the mid-Seventies, the publishing house was barely conceivable. It represents the technical-medial background against which the mutation of the grandfatherly ordinary philosophy became a life-affirming “theory” with “sex-appeal” (Felsch, 2015: 13) that suddenly sold like hot cakes – and then conducted a mainly aesthetic project.

This mutation is one from marxism in a post-marxism, including the new and even old rights positions. The year 1977 emerged as a key date in the history of the German-speaking intellectuality when the image of the left project, which had positive connotations in other social circles, suffered from terror at the hands of the RAF: «After 1977, 'theory' was no longer the same» (Felsch, 2015: 136). One year later, an “Internationaler Merve Diskurs” came into being from the *Internationalen marxistischen diskussion* – the title of the early Merve publications (Felsch, 2015: 104). Arguments against marxism were now coming from a marxist-based publishing house. The compass of the progressively minded german-speaking theory reader turned from Italy, the promised land of marxists, to France, where, as in any other country, intellectuals worked «with so much verve on their old marxist convictions» (Felsch, 2015: 104). Lyotard's Merve book *Das Patchwork der Minderheiten für eine herrenlose Politik* (1977), which left the vocabulary of dialectic materialism far behind because he considered weapons of the labour movement to be obtuse, became the key book of this paradigm shift: «The smaller things condemned to inefficiency from a traditional left viewpoint, transformed into a promise. The semantic field of the microscopic, which conquered the theory in the middle of the Seventies – microphysics, micropolitics, but also microhistory – indicates the end of the belief in the power of the masses» (Felsch, 2015: 103). The fact that, in the wake of this development, reactionary German writers such as Ernst Jünger were once again capable of giving satisfaction on the route to France, surprised only a few (Felsch, 2015: 198).

From the Eighties, according to Felsch's highlights, occasional dangerous thinking emerged from the challenging theory – and ended up mainly in a hedonistic, nocturnal art world. Merve is the best example of this. Peter Gente and Heidi Paris were regular guests of the Berliner Paris Bar, and some ideas for books arose from evenings with Martin Kippenberger or Heiner Müller: «The fatigue training which the publishers underwent in the Eighties is inseparable from the theory culture of the time» (Felsch, 2015: 218). The fact that the publishing house celebrated its forty-year anniversary in the Falckenberg collection with an exhibition which took the form of a frieze from all 336 titles published to date on the white walls of the former Phoenix-Werke in Hamburg-Harburg fits the picture easily. The characteristic rhombic form of the “Internationalen Merve Diskurs” had

become a serial art masterpiece. Felsch's grippingly written book ended in the Nineties for good reason: ironically, the decade which hailed the arrival of the Merve volumes in universities also bore a deep rift with the *science wars* around Alan Sokal and others; the theory was no longer unquestioningly compatible with an often naturalistically narrowed concept of science.

Kulturtheorien zur Einführung

If Felsch focuses his narrative on theory as a form of life as a practice, the question arises as to how the relationship between practises and theories is cultivated. Iris Därmann's introduction to culture theories offers conclusive answers. Her focus lies in «such theories which deal with cultural practices, rituals, procedures, cultural, reproductive and physical techniques» (2011: 9). She provides theoretical explanations of the societal and relational aspects of culture: «Intersubjectivity, sociality, community or society are not simply given; they have no permanent or stable existence, but must be recreated, maintained, interrupted or completed each time by different cultural practices» (*idem*). Against this background, she unfolds a cultural-theoretical panorama on subjects such as “kitchen and table fellowship”, “ritual and moral sacrifice”, “magical powers”, “performativity, rituality, theatricality” and “parlour games, play elements of culture”. While Felsch is very much concerned with the subject of “theory” in relation to art, Därmann, who teaches at Humboldt University in Berlin, places architecture at the centre; or to be more precise, the house in the sense of the economic unit. In the ancient Oikonomia writings «with their agricultural-economic, social-kinship, politically-legal and cosmologically-religious catalogue of subjects», “proto-cultural theories” (Därmann, 2011: 112) are encountered which should not remain without consequences in modern times.

What Plato and Aristotle write about the polis may be a criticism of the ancient Greek *oikos*, which appeared as the «only central political body of action» in Homer (Därmann, 2011: 119). However, upon the formation and consolidation of the locally entrenched polis, the oikos was gradually disempowered. With the philosophical “bombshell” (Därmann, 2011: 120) of *Politeia*, Plato abolished «the oikos together with the established family, relationship and gender associations as political and economic power factors» (Därmann, 2011: 120). Plato, in the same way as Därmann, creates «a vast oikos from the polis» (Därmann, 2011: 120). It is only logical that Plato's policy of the oikos does not stop even before the abolition of the house as a residential building: «Instead of single houses, apartments are to be built which – combined in living units – give the polis the appearance of a single house» (Därmann, 2011: 120). Aristotle also took the same line of oikos relativisation. Although he did not share Plato's view with regard to the destruction of the oikos, «he undoubtedly aims at the political disempowerment of the genders and the “house-society”, and does so using a two-fold strategy: on one hand, he radically separates the domain of the oikos from

the *pólis*. On the other hand, he explains the *oïkos* as an almost closed and isolated unit without chrematistic external contacts, to reduce it to its economic functions and therefore degrade it politically» (Därmann, 2011: 120). Antagonistic to the ancient *oikonomia* concepts, which pursue a «policy against the *oïkos* and the integrative practices of kinship» (Därmann, 2011: 114), are the reactionary theories of “Ganzen Hauses” by Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl (1823-1897) or Otto Brunner (1898-1982), who turned against an egalitarian-critical society, equality and specifically a female-dominated salon culture in their Plato and Aristotle reception. Därmann discovered a more productive house theory in the late work of the marxist structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss. According to the investigations of the medieval historian Karl Schmid regarding the aristocratic house of the 10th and 11th century, Lévi-Strauss developed, thanks to the concept of the “house society”, a corporate entity which cannot be reduced to the family: «According to his own marxist theories of the superstructure (“superstructures are social, ‘successful’ mistakes”), for Lévi-Strauss, the languages of kinship or alliance as well as the myths and arts (the house as a fetish: splendid adornments, furniture...) have the function of either disguising or in a way dissolving internal tensions, conflicts, contradictions, antagonistic principles or external changes [...], which is not possible for the respective society at political, economic or institutional level» (Därmann, 2011: 118). Därmann can barely be credited enough for emphasising the possible central role of architecture for any advanced cultural theory with her reference to Lévi-Strauss’ “house society”.

After theory

While Därmann also encounters cultural theoretical ambitions, especially in Greek antiquity, for Terry Eagleton, “cultural theory” represents the achievement of a specific epoch which starts in 1965 and ends around 1980 (2004: 23). This era – marked internationally by strong government participation of the political left, which also entailed national liberation movements such as the rise of civil rights, students’, women’s, gay and anti-war movements – was also a “golden age” (Eagleton, 2004: 1) of theory: «Theory [...] was born somewhere in the dense, democratic jungle of the Sixties» (Eagleton, 2004: 77). Since the days of Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Edward Said and others, not much has been written that could compete in terms of ambition and originality. Eagleton states that all new cultural-theoretical approaches of the Sixties and Seventies arose from an «extraordinarily creative dialogue with marxism» (Eagleton, 2004: 35). The marxist theories of the 19th century had, however, little (“superstructure”) to nothing to say about subjects such as pleasures, desire, art, language, gender or ethnicity. This marxist void was filled by the word *culture*, «which included Bill Wyman and fast food as well as Debussy and Dostoyevsky» (Eagleton, 2004: 39). For the marxist Eagleton, who teaches literature at Lancaster University, cultural theorists are always somehow communists – «Communists in the

sense that John F. Kennedy was Berliner» (Eagleton, 2004: 36). However, according to Eagleton, a rollback began in the Eighties: out of the “sexy topics” of structuralism and marxism, only sex itself remained as a central theme (Eagleton, 2004: 36); out of socialism, sheer sado-masochism came about, from “French philosophy” came only “French kissing” (Eagleton, 2004: 2). These rhetorical exaggerations strike a nerve insofar as they rightly reproach the typical cultural-theory studies of the late 20th century: «the body is an immensely fashionable topic, but it is usually the erotic body, not the famished one. There is a keen interest in coupling bodies, but not in labouring ones» (Eagleton, 2004: 2). The “policy of amnesia” of the neoliberal end-of-history propagandists who caused many people to consider anything before 1980 to be “ancient history” is to blame for this (Eagleton, 2004: 7). The narcissistic self-reflections yielded a theoretical fetish of difference that camouflaged the real postmodern difference blending:

It was ironic that postmodern thought should make such a fetish of difference, given that its own impulse was to erase the distinctions between image and reality, truth and fiction, history and fable, ethics and aesthetics, culture and economics, high and popular art, political left and right (Eagleton, 2004: 46).

For the present, Eagleton sees great potential for a renaissance of theory in his highly readable book. The “war on terror” following 9/11, which threatens to cause a “clash of civilisations” between the West and political Islam, makes one thing clear at least: the thesis of “Ende der Geschichte” came to its end – history has been happening since. Theory must also become more ambitious accordingly: «Not so that it can hand the West its legitimations, but so that it can seek to make sense of the grand narrative in which it is now embroiled» (Eagleton, 2004: 73). Furthermore, some problems of the Sixties are still unresolved:

Cultural theory as we have it promises to grapple with some fundamental problems, but on the whole fails to deliver. It has been shamefaced about morality and metaphysics, embarrassed about love, biology, religion and revolution, largely silent about evil, reticent about death and suffering, dogmatic about essences, universals and foundations, and superficial about truth, objectivity and disinterestedness (Eagleton, 2004: 101).

No idea, complains Eagleton, is more unpopular in contemporary cultural theory than absolute truth – and there are fears that it has been found.

Utopie oder Untergang. Ein Wegweiser für die gegenwärtige Krise

While Eagleton portrays marxism with absolute self-assurance, he owes continuous doubt to the American writer and essayist Benjamin Kunkel born in 1972. Kunkel’s essays, which have appeared in magazines such as *n+I*, *The Jacobin* and the *London Review of Books* since 2010 and have only now been translated into German for the first time, do not, by his own ac-

count, constitute an original contribution to marxism, but merely represent partly praiseworthy, partly critical introductions into the thinking of a good handful of contemporary leftist intellectuals: Robert Brenner, David Graeber, Boris Groys, David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, Thomas Piketty and Slavoj Žižek (Kunkel, 2013a: 7). Kunkel confesses to have come to marxism by sheer chance, as the Nineties were «not exactly the ideal decade» (Kunkel, 2013a: 11) for discovering the socialist within: «In the era of the end of history, mass political parties that might have advanced a transformative program were almost everywhere going over to neoliberalism» (Kunkel, 2013a: 23). However, times have now fundamentally changed.

What 11 September 2001 is to Eagleton, the subprime crisis from 2007, the Lehman-Brothers crash of 2008 and the resulting global financial crisis represent for Kunkel. This brought about a “new era” (Kunkel, 2013a: 24), which was accompanied by a renaissance of marxism. Kunkel regards especially american marxist writers such as Brenner and Jameson highly. Above all, the latter contributed «more than any other contemporary author» to «reinforcing the initially hesitant self-awareness as a radical and leftist» (Kunkel, 2013b: 219). In a time when «Utopia was considered to be the euphemism for Gulag» (Kunkel, 2011: 63), literary scholar Jameson always pointed out – in opposition to Lyotard and others – that post-modernism had provided the ultimate great narrative of perpetually late capitalism. Jameson is only criticised for focusing on cultural issues and the silence around economic-political themes. Brenner is assigned by Kunkel the role of oracle, as the historian had already predicted the financial crisis in 2006 at the end of his book *The Economics of Global Turbulence* (Kunkel, 2013a: 20). Brenner’s thesis according to which «chronic production overcapacity has led to a downturn of investments in the industry production so that available capital is increasingly being invested in speculative financial transactions and speculative bubbles are occurring at increasingly shorter intervals» (Kunkel, 2013a: 20), was dramatically proved true in 2008. The global headlines of the European left are boldly put in place by Kunkel. Žižek: «This foul-mouthed wise guy, with an eastern bloc accent out of Central Casting, baiting his detractors with talk of “good old Soviet times” and plucking at his black T-shirt with Tourette insistence» (Kunkel, 2012: 151) confuses the existence of markets with that of capitalism. Piketty stands out due to a lack of Marx knowledge and is therefore too vulnerable to defend the survival of capitalism (Kunkel, 2014: 189).

Groys, the German-Russian art theorist, who became known as an apologist of the unity of art and politics with *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin* (1988), did not score particularly highly. «At the core, – says Kunkel, – his work is inspired by the longing that contemporary art may somehow exchange the autonomy of the court jester, who is allowed to say anything because he is practically superfluous, for an autonomy which is more like that of a leader – who is free because he is in authority» (Kunkel, 2013b: 195). Reading Groys engenders great perplexity: a “Greatest literary vice” is the propensity to inflate one’s own ideas to the extent that they eventually no longer mean anything (Kunkel, 2013a: 205). In his motto «No one knows what it means [...]. But it’s provocative» (Kunkel, 2013b: 216),

Kunkel sees a profound connection between art of neoliberalism and the texts or theories of the “doubtful critic” of this art (Kunkel, 2013b: 216).

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