

Philosopher in Exile

Comments on Emigration Works of György Márkus

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Abstract

The author of this paper proposes to treat the critical philosophy of György Márkus as an example of the theoretical position which could be named “a hermeneutics of distance”. In other words he tries to look at his work from the perspective of sociology of knowledge and consider to what extent Márkus' critical approach to the many aspects of the contemporary (western) culture may be rooted in his experience of being an exile who – as an outsider – is able to glance at the social and cultural reality and pose it difficult questions. The paper is divided into three parts. In the first one the author defines his theoretical position, in the second and the third parts he tries to analyze the several problems of Márkus' emigrant writings in the light of mentioned theoretical assumptions.

Waldemar Bulira: *Philosopher in Exile. Comments on Emigration Works of György Márkus*¹

Exile from Hungary at the end of the 1970s was a crucial point in both personal life and works of particular members of the Budapest School. In spite of appearances, it is very difficult, with hindsight, to evaluate explicitly this event. On the one hand, it was a very dramatic break with previous life, the moment of eradication, loss of social and cultural context. On the other hand, that's exactly in exile Hungarian philosophers gained possibilities to unhindered theoretical-political activity that resulted in their works. At the same time it seems that in case of the members of the Budapest School both these aspects are inextricably connected. Paradoxically, it was the status and experience of an exile that gave their works undeniable originality and universality. It can be clearly seen in the works of Ágnes Heller and Ferenc Fehér; it seems that the same can refer to the philosophy of György Márkus. In this text I propose to view the works of Márkus as examples of this kind of thinking that can be named "a hermeneutics of distance". In other words, – from the perspective of sociology of knowledge – I would like to consider to what extent Márkus' critical approach to many aspects of contemporary culture results from his privileged epistemological position of an exile and as such he is able to view the surrounding reality from a different perspective and ask difficult and inconvenient questions.

My presentation is divided into three parts. In the first one I try to determine, adopted for this presentation, my research perspective. For this reason, I discuss two, most important in this context, notions: banishment/ an exile and the hermeneutics of distance. In the second and third parts I ponder over the possibility to interpret selected Márkus' emigrant writings with the help of the above mentioned theoretical tools. I refer, in turn, to two important, for the whole emigrant writings, problem tasks: the criticism of Soviet totalitarianism and criticism of contemporary culture.

¹ This paper was presented at the *György Márkus Memorial Colloquium* organized by the Institute of Philosophy, Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, on December 3, 2016.

1. *Exile and Hermeneutics of Distance*

In one of his latest works² Enzo Traverso, an Italian-French historian and political scientist, writes that as much as the 20th century was the age of violence, the twentieth century intellectuals were the first who fully recognized its (violence) roots and uniqueness. They were the ones who profoundly and correctly pointed to and discussed multiple consequences of events which shook this – let’s recall Eric Hobsbawm’s statement – extremely short century³. In his book Traverso does not limit himself to the repetition of a well-known truth, according to which an intellectual fully recognizes and explains the reality but also tries to investigate the reasons and conditions of this privileged access of intellectuals to the truth/reality. The author of *History as a Battlefield* does not stop and says – and this thread of his deliberations seems to me the most interesting in the light of the main subject of this paper – that there is a particular group of intellectuals whose representatives (due to the fact that they function in a determined historical-political conditions) seem to have a better view of surrounding them reality. This better view, that Traverso himself describes as “privileged epistemological position”⁴ is, first of all, connected with the category of an intellectual in exile. As the history (especially of the 20th century) teaches us these intellectuals who were forced to emigrate were “the first analysts”⁵ of these phenomena and processes which made them the exiles. That is why they, in the face of horrors, have acted as a particularly sensitive and early responding seismograph⁶. Thus it appears that the exile has become a source of a cognitive model which consists in viewing the history and asking the present time questions from the point of view of the defeated⁷. Of course Traverso is not the only commentator who has pointed to the unique status of an exile. Long before him, in 1985 Leszek Kołakowski in his famous essay *Pchwała wygnania* [In Praise of Exile] underlined the fact of the privileged

² E. Traverso, *Historia jako pole bitwy. Interpretacje przemocy w XX wieku* [*L'histoire comme champ de bataille : Interpréter les violences du XXe siècle*], transl. Ś.F. Nowicki, Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Książka i Prasa, 2014.

³ E.J. Hobsbawm, *Wiek skrajności: spojrzenie na krótkie dwudzieste stulecie* [*The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991*], transl. J. Kalinowska-Król and M. Król, Warszawa: Bertelsmann Media, 1999.

⁴ E. Traverso, *Historia jako pole bitwy. Interpretacje przemocy w XX wieku...*, op. cit., p. 260.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁷ *Ibid.*

cognitive position of *outsiders*.⁸ Kołakowski, who discusses this problem on the basis of his own experience, says that the perspective of an *outsider*, as a rule, facilitates the noticing of dangerous processes and tendencies included in the reality, it gives the possibility to form warnings against their actual actualization.

Traverso quite well and convincingly documents his deliberations with many examples from the intellectual history of the 20th century West. The uniqueness of the past century, whose important moments were Holocaust, Gulag, and Hiroshima, was to a large extent recognized by the exiles. Traverso includes to this group, among others, Victor Serge, Arthur Koestler, György Lukács, Karl Löwith, Ernst Kantorowicz, Jean Amery, Paul Celan, the members of the Frankfurt School or Hannah Arendt. They not only experienced these events but they learnt their lesson as well and expressed it in their works. Perspicacity of their analysis, sometimes of prophetic character which takes place from the fact of their emigration shows the uniqueness of their works. All this caused that the exiles with great (frequently with exaggerated) caution reacted to what was new and unknown and at the same time potentially dangerous.

It seems that one can enumerate a few factors which to some extent result in the uniqueness of the point of view of the intellectuals in exile. Firstly, one should enumerate unique historical-political circumstances that make an intellectual leave his/her safety so far place of residence and travel to an undetermined destination. In case of the above mentioned (by Traverso) group of intellectuals that later was described as “German speaking emigration”⁹ this kind of circumstances resulted from the stormy history of the first half of the 20th century: the collapse of the old order caused by World War 1, the birth of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in the interwar period, the cruelty of World War 2. If we a little generalize the narration suggested by the Italian scientist it can be said that the crisis of social-political reality, in which an intellectual forced to leave his/her own country is functioning, has been the reason of an exile. The crisis is the moment of a turning point, exhaustion or rejection of the old formula, the result of clashing of old and new tendencies, phenomena,

⁸ L. Kołakowski, *Pochwała wygnania*, [in:] *Moje słuszne poglądy na wszystko*, Leszek Kołakowski, trans. P. Mróz and B. Szymańska, Kraków: Znak, 2011, p. 279. [L. Kołakowski, *In Praise of Exile*, „The Times Literary Supplement” 11 October 1985].

⁹ See also R. Skarżyński, *Intelektualiści a kryzys. Studium myśli politycznej emigracji niemieckiej*, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 1991.

approaches and attitudes. Its birth means the crash of former order, indirectly it announces the arrival of something new. One of the basic challenges the researchers of the crisis situations are confronted with is to find a proper perspective of the view of the crisis situations. To do this they undertake attempts to exceed the current way of consideration over reality. In other words a crisis usually makes one leave current scientific tools or at least it requires their thorough revision/reinterpretation. From this perspective it not only announces the danger that seems to be an indispensable part of it but it also motivates for action/reflection and is an announcement of something new. In this sense, crisis appears as the beginning of the phenomena which Mieke Bal describes as “traveling concepts” and Traverso himself as “traveling theories”.¹⁰ The uniqueness of assessments suggested by the exiles consisted in the fact that these assessments constituted a new quality on the map of theories due to which they tried to understand/explain the crisis. At the same time this novelty of attitudes and presentations of the analyzed problems did not mean the necessity to break with the previous scientific tradition (of a given field). As Traverso says the distance changes the view but does not form new ideas¹¹. Instead of radical break down with what has been in effect one should undertake new work within the frames of the existing tradition. Thus a theoretical work of the exiles can be described in a category of a particular “hermeneutics of distance” which, as each hermeneutics assumes, the existence of the defined frameworks – horizons – inside which the interpretation is conducted.

The second factor, which to a large extent, determines about “privileged epistemological position” of the emigrants was connected with the fact that they were very often sensitive to negative phenomena which were potentially dangerous for contemporary people. This “hypersensitivity” seems to be a consequence of dramatic or even traumatic personal experiences which made them at the same time ironic, skeptical suspicious, critical, and unduly cautious with regard to the subject of their considerations. As *outsiders* in the new world they can have distance towards its norms and values: owing to this fact that they are not at home, they can keep distance towards everything that is officially and commonly accepted. *An outsider*, as Kołakowki writes, is in this context, a kind of a tourist who is able to notice

¹⁰ M. Bal, *Wędrujące pojęcia w naukach humanistycznych. Krótki przewodnik*, tłum. M. Buchole, Narodowe Centrum Kultury, Warszawa 2012 [M. Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press]; E. Traverso, *Historia jako pole bitwy. Interpretacje przemocy w XX wieku...*, op. cit., pp. 270–273.

¹¹ E. Traverso, *Historia jako pole bitwy. Interpretacje przemocy w XX wieku...*, op. cit., p. 249.

things which are really hidden from the denizens of the country because for them these things are the natural elements of life.¹² The critical attitude and uncompromising works of such contemporary philosophy/culture personalities as e.g. Hannah Arendt, a complete *outsider* of American academic life, and who at the same time has left her mark on it, supports the above mentioned statement.

The third mark of the intellectuals in exile is the fact that they generally have nothing in common with one another. The experiences and fates of European emigrants of the first half of the 20th century who started their new lives (mainly) in America show that the only common ground for them was “the position of an exile” whose most distinctive feature was never-ending concern about “the world they had left behind” and “the present” which they considered uncertain and incomplete.¹³ In other words, the exile did not form a coherent group or class – even superficial reconstruction of their fates allows us to conclude that they differed almost in each respect. Traverso emphasizes that this is the reason why they are an excellent example of this category of intellectuals who were described by Karl Mannheim as “socially free-floating intelligentsia”. Let us remind that it means a lack of ties (social, political, cultural) of the representatives of some kind of intelligentsia which – literally and figuratively – would hinder and destroy their critical judgment of reality. According to Mannheim the status of entities alienated from the society was to guarantee intelligentsia independence which had resulted from the fact of being situated between contending social classes. This peculiar being “between” gave independence but it allowed to “feel” what was important for the society.

2. *Criticism of the Dictatorship over Needs System*

Although the notion of an intellectual in exile has been discussed by Traverso with reference to those emigrants from Europe who left the Continent in the 20th century as a result of political turbulences of the two world wars,¹⁴ it is clear that his analysis has gained a

¹² L. Kołakowski, „Pochwała wygnania”, op. cit., p. 279.

¹³ E. Traverso, *Historia jako pole bitwy. Interpretacje przemocy w XX wieku...*, op. cit., p. 262.

¹⁴ Kołakowski, in turn, says that although a figure of an intellectual in exile became really popular in the 20th century, it is rooted further in the past „from Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Ovid, from Dante Ockham, and Hobbes to Chopin, Mickiewicz, Herzen and even Victor Hugo”. L. Kołakowski, „Pochwała wygnania”, op. cit., p. 277.

universal character. It seems that his concept can be useful for the analysis of the works of other intellectuals in exile. For example, the theory puts an interesting light on the output and attitude of many emigrants from Central East Europe who were forced to, by hook or by crook, to leave their own countries in the second half of the 20th century. That is why, I would like to ponder over if the above theory can be applied to the members of the Budapest School who were forced to emigrate in 1977 and have been in exile since that date. If, in this case, the notion of an intellectual in exile is a key for understanding their works especially – and this hypothesis needs verification – in case of the writings of György Márkus which are very critical to contemporary Western culture.

The discussion on this subject should be of course started with the statement that leaving Hungary effectively meant the collapse of the Budapest School. Emigration, which gave Hungarian philosophers the ability to a really free theoretical and political expressions, relatively quickly showed irremovable limitations absolutely included in the functioning of the philosophical school. From the perspective of later theoretical accomplishments of the authors who co-created the Budapest School it can be said that at one moment the formula of a school has become too narrow (and not elastic enough) to hold their different interests, and philosophical temperaments. It seems that the difference of opinion among its members especially concerns the evaluation of the condition of Western culture at the end of the 20th century and can be seen along the line Heller, Fehér, Vajda – Márkus. If anything has connected still their particular philosophies it was a distinct criticism and skepticism to many new phenomena, processes, and tendencies that have taken place in the western culture so typical for an outsider who was to read a new for him reality from the perspective of his/her own experience.

The writings of György Márkus on emigration can be divided into two periods. The first one would consist of the papers written in a spirit of the Budapest School or at least written from clearly exposed Marxist perspective; and the second period where in his papers Márkus has appeared as an original critic of the negative tendencies of the modern Western cultures. It seems that in spite of important differences they do not form separate parts of his writings: in both cases Márkus is perceived as a critical and insightful observer/commentator of surrounding him cultural reality. It seems that the position and status of an exile, who

although many years have passed, does not feel at home give him the possibility and right to a critical view and evaluation of the social world in which he has to function.

The flag ship book from the first period of Márkus' emigrational writings is of course *Dictatorship over Needs*.¹⁵ This book was written with the collaboration of Ágnes Heller and Ferenc Fehér and is a form of final squaring of the Hungarian authors with the system of the real socialism, it crowns the work of other people who contributed to the birth of presented here the concept of Soviet totalitarianism as a dictatorship over needs. However, at the same time it seems that both the final shape and the list of problems are to a large extent the consequences of a new status of Hungarian philosophers who have been in exile for a few years.

Let's recall that Márkus is the author of the first part of this book in which he discusses the problem of uniqueness of the social-economic structure of the Soviet system. With the help of theoretical Marx' assumptions and to some extent Weber's (see consideration on the phenomenon of the bureaucracy of Soviet type), Márkus not only severely criticizes the system of real socialism but includes into discussion on Soviet totalitarianism the problem of its unique and modern character and he does it against dominating in the Left theoretical paradigms of the discussed phenomena. And this aspect of Márkus' analysis seems the most important in this context. In the last part of his considerations in which he has a discussion on the prominent and dominant leftist theories concerning Soviet totalitarianism; he argues from the typical position of an exile .He convincingly refutes particular theories formulated by Western leftist milieus during the last few decades showing either their wrong assumptions or omissions or by presenting the unwillingness of their authors to acknowledge a criminal character of the USSR. His voice in the discussion appears like a voice of reason. Sometimes, it may even seem that Márkus does not want to refute the above mentioned theories but to show some negative attitudes of the scientists who "by force" try to find any positives in the Soviet system (e.g. praise for paternalism of the Soviet state as a kind of protection of the workers against the exploitation from the management and prevent the rebirth of capitalism in this way) which distort the real face of this system.

¹⁵ F. Fehér, Á. Heller, i G. Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, New York St. Martin's Press, 1983, 2. ed.; see the first and short presentation of this conception in: F. Fehér, *The Dictatorship over Needs*, „Telos”, 1978, no. 35, pp. 31 – 42.

In case of *Dictatorship over Needs* we are facing a kind of a paradox that has been perceived in full after many years. A contemporary reader of this book, especially the resident of the Middle East Europe, probably will not find much new information on totalitarianism of the Soviet type. This remark refers mainly to Márkus' deliberations: it was he who has undertaken the task to recognize the subject of his studies using Marxist assumptions and the ones of classical sociology and economy. *Dictatorship over Needs* seems one of many voices in the discussion on the specificity of Soviet totalitarianism. But the value of this book – especially of the part written by Márkus – lies somewhere else. This book presents its originality when we look at it as an example of a political intervention. One can risk a statement that Hungarian emigrants not so much wanted to crush the real socialism as, first of all, they tended to provoke a confrontation with the Western Left; both with that part of the milieu which very often expressed its unwillingness to any criticism of the system in the states of the eastern bloc (Tony Judt¹⁶ has written about it) and with the one that after the 1968 events sought new identity outside Marx and Marxism (understood in a traditional sense)¹⁷. At the beginning of the work we can read that it is designated, first of all, for the Western Left¹⁸. Why? Because, as it seems, it was the milieu that due to its troubles with its own identity, and probably due to uncompromising fight with capitalism has lost a visual acuity of the most important matters. To some extent, *Dictatorship over Needs* reminds Leszek Kołakowski's *Main Currents of Marxism* in which the Polish philosopher deals with Marxism and especially in volume III he criticizes the so called the New Left. Kołakowski, as an exile from communist Poland, has observed and critically evaluated the revolt of Paris or American students of 1968. One can only guess to what extent his criticism and perceptiveness of his utterances resulted from his life experience in the system of real socialism. This kind of uncompromisingness has not met with favorable acceptance or at least understanding from the

¹⁶ See e.g.: T. Judt, *Historia niedokończona: francuscy intelektualiści 1944-1956* [*Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944–1956*, University of California Press 1992], transl. P. Marczewski, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2012.

¹⁷ This kind of research is perfectly documented by: E. Laclau i C. Mouffe, *Hegemonia i socjalistyczna strategia: przyczynek do projektu radykalnej polityki demokratycznej* [*Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London – New York: Verso, 1985], transl. S. Królak, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji TWP, 2007.

¹⁸ F. Fehér, Á. Heller, i G. Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs...*, op. cit., p. IX.

part of prominent representatives of the criticized milieu for whom, as Jürgen Habermas said, the arrival of Kołakowski in the West was “a real catastrophe for the Western left”¹⁹.

In case of proposed by Márkus in *Dictatorship over Needs* analyses of a society of Soviet type (this remark to a lesser degree concerns the parts discussed by Fehér and does not concern the part written by Heller at all) one can find at least one more trail which confirms that his attitude was a typical one for an intellectual in exile.; the one that Enzo Traverso speaks about. Márkus uses “a traveling theory”. Of course, in his case it is Marxism which, as a social-economic theory, he uses to show an oppressive character of the Soviet system. The conclusions he draws are devastating not only for the system itself but also for the above mentioned Western Left. Inspired by Marx the analysis of the system does not leave any illusions that it is the system which, against its declarations, does not tolerate the alienation of an individual. Moreover, due to the domination of bureaucracy (a peculiar new social-economic class) that exercises an absolute dictatorship over the needs of individual members of the society, the level of the alienation grows. If capitalism and communism/socialism are really the dominant social –economic formations in contemporary world (this seems to be Márkus’ opinion) and if in socialism the Left should pin its hope in improvement of the situation of a contemporary individual, thus the experience of members of the Soviet type societies prove that this is the wrong way.

3. *The Crisis of Philosophy*

The second period of Márkus’ emigration writings was preceded by a long time of silence, and Márkus, in a sense, withdrew himself from academic/public life. It was, to a large extent, connected with his son’s accident. If one take into consideration the dates of the publishing of particular essays, which a few years ago, were edited in the volume entitled *Culture, Science, Society. The Constitution of Cultural Modernity*²⁰, it can be noticed that since the half of the 1990s he has become more active. All important papers from this period are clearly (substantially) connected: Márkus expresses his deepest concern about the condition of the contemporary Western culture which appears to him in crisis. He tries to find out the solution to this situation. He equates crisis with the birth of postmodernism, which at

¹⁹ L. Kołakowski, *Czas ciekawy, czas niespokojny*, Kraków: Znak, 2008, vol. II, p. 38.

²⁰ G. Márkus, *Culture, Science, Society: the Constitution of Cultural Modernity*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011.

that time dominated particular spheres of contemporary culture, including philosophical discourse itself.

It is the philosophy, which within the framework of contemporary culture has lost its place; and it seems to be the one of the main concerns of Márkus. The author of *Culture, Science, Society* sees the collapse of modern philosophy, the loss of its rank and importance and inquiries into the reasons of this situation as well as tries to pinpoint the way of rescue. Philosophy, he says, should regain its traditional role which has started diminishing since the 17th century and finally has disappeared with the beginning of the so called postmodernity. This condition of philosophy is an intellectual challenge for Márkus. In his texts from this period he seems to find for philosophy a way out from this situation. He tries to rebuild the position of philosophy not just because he wants to defend some kind of particular/corporative privileges nor he is frustrated philosopher who has lost its auditorium but he is worried about the future of modern culture.

Márkus seems to point to two reasons of the weakness of contemporary – Western-philosophy and philosophers. The first one is connected with the growing importance of modern sciences that has dominated contemporary culture and has become one of the main ways of explaining our world²¹; no one wants to listen to the philosophers. Philosophy has lost its social authority. The drama of philosophy consists also in the fact that this reassessment has been done due to passive permission given by philosophers themselves who have not only abandoned their own interests and problems they had always tried to solve but also abandoned shared (dominant) way of practicing the philosophy as such. As a result, they have nothing interesting to say about the contemporary world. Moreover, they seem to resign from such privilege: instead critically analyzing the reality and on these bases formulate postulates of its correction they prefer to observe it passively. A contemporary philosopher asks questions but does not want to answer them and as a result he deprives his judgments of the virtue of normativity. Márkus sees the crisis of contemporary philosophy as a kind of crisis of its identity.

Márkus sees the reasons of this crisis in the phenomenon of “destruction” or “deconstruction” of the Western intellectual tradition²² which is said to be a part of postmodern detotalization of modern culture and growing inner plurality of philosophy.

²¹ G. Márkus, *After the System: Philosophy in the Epoch of Sciences*, [w:] *Culture, Science, Society : the Constitution of Cultural Modernity*, György Márkus, Leiden: Brill, 2011, pp. 263–264.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 279.

Supporters of the so called postmodern philosophy tend to a radical revision of all the achievements of the Western philosophy in this sense that, firstly, they resign from, used at this moment, theoretical tools, secondly, they reject majority of philosophical problems telling e.g. about the end of “tradition of metaphysics, humanism, onto-theology, logocentrism and the like”.²³ The problem is that if one rejects metaphysics as a philosophical discipline he/she rejects his/her own tradition and as a result social consciousness of their function diminishes.²⁴

The consequence of such fundamental reconstruction of contemporary philosophy is “to efface the boundaries of philosophy as a cultural genre” and disappearance of the “criteria of criticism” which give the possibility of independent (critical) analysis of reality²⁵. As a result – as Márkus says – there happens the final crash of internal coherence of philosophy which consists today only in relatively common respect of principles of philosophical discourse conducted on the basis of clear and rational arguments. As Márkus, rather dramatically, sums up this part of his considerations, “the view which demands a principled extraterritoriality for philosophy in respect of the requirements of scientific rationality in general, may turn them (...) into a guru applauded by the faithful of their particular sect.”²⁶ There are no doubts that in this case Márkus refers very negatively (and probably he is not fully right) to postmodern philosophy.²⁷ Márkus sympathizes with such a model of philosophy in which, on the one hand, it does not claim the right to know the principles that rule the reality but on the other hand it does not want completely to resign from the construction of its normative images, treating them in categories of regulative ideas rather than objectively existing rules. He does not want to speak about one philosophy but he is also

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ G. Márkus, *The Ends of Metaphysics*, [w:] *Culture, Science, Society: the Constitution of Cultural Modernity*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011, pp. 105–129.

²⁵ G. Márkus, „After the System: Philosophy in the Epoch of Sciences”, op. cit., p. 279.

²⁶ Ibid., s. 280.

²⁷ Critical commentaries on Márkus stance in this issue can be found in: M. Vajda, *The Philosopher's Schizophrenia*, [in:] *Culture and Enlightenment. Essays for György Márkus*, ed. P. Johnson, P. Crittenden, and J.E. Grumley, Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2002, pp. 37–47; Á. Heller, *Questions Concerning the Normative Scepticism of György Márkus*, [in:] *Culture and Enlightenment. Essays For György Márkus*, ed. J. Grumley, P. Crittenden, and P. Johnson, Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2002, pp. 13–36; J. Grumley, *A Family Quarrel: Márkus and Heller on Philosophy*, [in:] *Culture and Enlightenment. Essays For György Márkus*, ed. J. Grumley, P. Crittenden, and P. Johnson, Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2002, pp. 49–72.

afraid that the excess of its alternative specifications can effectively make difficult to fulfill its function which is to ease the inhabitants of modernity the orientation in the world which is assumed to be deprived of permanent orientation points. That is why, he, somewhat obsessively, unwillingly looks at the growing pluralism inside philosophy. He is afraid, that this extreme personalization of philosophy deprives philosophers of common denominator i.e. that in the realities of radical pluralism they will not be able to communicate among themselves and as a result philosophy will not be able to accomplish its task. The extreme pluralism constitutes a threat to philosophy – it makes that contemporary philosophy is like “a coffee house chatter”.²⁸

Márkus’ diagnosis of the condition of contemporary philosophy is very interesting and, to some extent, correct especially when he points to the negative tendencies included in the cultural reality of postmodernity. It seems that in a general dimension his attitude is too one-sided. I must admit that I do not want to discuss this problem here.²⁹ I only want to stress that Márkus could criticize this phenomena because he was a thinker who, for many reasons, was outside the trend of contemporary philosophy. Márkus was a philosopher-outsider who during his long stay on emigration did not undergo the philosophical trends. His perspectives and statements were not limited by current binding conventions, changing truths, and customs. Márkus’ emigrational works are a perfect example of the fact that as *outsider* he does not risk anything and has nothing to lose; he gains the privilege to express critical opinion, often falling in extremely pessimistic tone. Many of his books are of pessimistic character which is not an accusation. I even think that thanks to this pessimistic assessment of many aspects of modern culture Márkus – *outsider* can elicit what Kołakowski named “a mental ferment” which often appears creative and beneficial for both sides.³⁰ Márkus who, as Kołakowski himself, was gradually moving towards conservative positions as far as the question of evaluation of culture was concerned, is right in warning us about the growing relativism and permissiveness which are entering the scene of contemporary culture through the back door which in turn very often results in the growth of fundamentalist attitudes.

²⁸ J. Grumley, „A Family Quarrel: Márkus and Heller on Philosophy”, op. cit., p. 68.

²⁹ This problem is more broadly discussed in my book in printing: W. Bulira, *Teoria krytyczna szkoły budapeszteńskiej. Od totalitaryzmu do postmodernizmu* [The Critical Theory of the Budapest School: From Totalitarianism to Postmodernity], typescript.

³⁰ L. Kołakowski, „Pochwała wygnania”, op. cit., p. 281.

Almost all Márkus' works written in exile express anxiety about stability of the modern world. He formulates them from the position of an exile or at least a stranger from *outside* who is still conscious about his maladjustment to the new world. This accepted perspective enables him to notice the problems that the locals and researchers of the Western culture do not perceive or are not aware of, especially those who accept a dictum "anything goes". I do not want to say that only a philosopher in exile can notice these dangerous tendencies inscribed in contemporary culture. I only want to say that in case of Márkus this exaggerated criticism and one-sidedness which result from the fact of being *an outsider* appear to be very useful and fruitful for both his theoretical development and us, attentive readers of his works.

