

Introduction: “Vilnius variations”

Tomas Kačerauskas¹

Published online: 31 May 2017
© Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2017

The topic “Vilnius variations” flows out of studies of (creative) cities (Landry 2000), cultural regionalism (Klimczuk 2014), creative society (Florida 2012), and religion (Eliade 1959). The role of philosophy is twofold here: on the one hand, philosophy, which is concentrated in universities, typically in cities, is an important factor in the development of cultural forms; on the other hand, the philosophical perspective allows such dichotomies as locality and globalism, tradition and novelty, past and future to be viewed in a different way (it is not enough to say “in a critical way”).

Here, Vilnius is not simply the historical capital of a European periphery that has followed the cultural fashions of Western Europe. Vilnius was established and developed with an ambition both to rule the wide expanses of Eastern Europe and to equal the capitals of Western Europe. As such, it is an example of a multinational, multicultural, multi-religious city where distinct religious denominations (such as the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church), philosophical-religious positions (as represented by the Vilnius Gaon), schools of architecture (the Vilnius Baroque school), and traditions of painting (as represented by M. K. Čiurlionis) emerged in different periods. Vilnius is also a case in the clash of civilizations whereby different political forces established their power through visual forms (churches, monuments, and even principles of urban planning). As a result, Vilnius is also a case of visual culture (Mitchell 1994) being inseparable from political interactions.

It seems that philosophy should be associated with things most general, fundamental ideas of goodness, beauty, and justice. If so, any localization, including geographic or urbanistic, adds distance to any philosophical intentions. And yet even in antiquity, in the very origins of philosophy, its theoretical (ontology), practical (ethics, aesthetics) and applied (logic) fields underwent differentiation. As

✉ Tomas Kačerauskas
tomas.kacerauskas@vgtu.lt

¹ Vilnius, Lithuania

as a result, we can speak about aspects of practical philosophy (ethics and aesthetics) as applied to a local region such as Vilnius. As regards theoretical philosophy, its topics also need an environment for testing ontological ideas. Vilnius is related to transitions from East to West, from Orthodoxy to Catholicism, from a totalitarian environment to a liberal one, from a communal way of life to an individualistic one. All these are aspects of a human being's transformations. For Martin Heidegger (1996), ontology is inseparable from daily temporal being towards death and Existentials (the milestones of being) are idle talk, falling prey, and ambiguity.

In paying attention to time and to space, M. Heidegger has in mind first of all the individual. Can we speak about a city as a social individual with its allotted time from birth until death? If so, what relationship is there between history and historiography, between our identity in urban time and the sequence of urban events? What is an event in a city—an experience that redirects our life or an inscription supplementing the urban historiography? Another question is, how did Vilnius become the educational environment which shaped the outstanding individuals who spread from there throughout the world?

Speaking about such a city as Vilnius, we have another theoretical perspective, one of media studies which are inseparable from the philosophy of communication and the concept of meta-communication. On the one hand, Vilnius is out of the way of global media. On the other hand, local media often imitates global media. Does a city such as Vilnius confirm or negate M. McLuhan's (1994) depiction of a big city as a global village? Do not meta-communications (speaking and thinking about communication) illustrate a communicative practice in a city of transitions such as Vilnius?

We can analyse a city (not necessarily Vilnius) as a place of concentration that a heterogeneous postmodern political society needs for dialog (Aleksandravičius 2016), as an urban space of artistic practice (Bajarkevičius 2014; Lavrinec 2014; Monginaitė 2015; Urbonaitė-Barkauskienė 2014; Briedis 2015), as an example of touristic practise (Keturakis 2015; Rabazauskaitė 2015), as a case of urbanistic narration (Keturakis 2016), as an area of public space (Lavrinec 2011), as a consumer society (Pruskus 2014), as the object of a cultural map (Rimkus 2015), and as an environment for cultural communication (Rudokas 2013). In Lithuania, all of these aspects have been analysed on previous occasions.

This issue both extends the above mentioned research in Lithuania and reflects global tendencies. As a result, these studies of Vilnius are another field of transition and of intersection. By way of Vilnius, the authors analyse the coexistence of different logical discourses (V. Valatka), the philosophical aspects of urban strangeness (T. Kačerauskas), the ambivalence of the sacred and the profane (B. Nikiforova), and urban images in socio-realistic photography and video projections (A. Juzefovič).

References

- Aleksandravičius, P. (2016). The need for dialogic consciousness in postmodern politic society. *Filosofija. Sociologija*, 27(1), 14–22.
- Bajarkevičius, T. (2014). Garso meno praktikos miesto erdvėse [Sound art practices in city spaces]. *Santalka: Filosofija, Komunikacija*, 22(1), 69–76.

- Briedis, M. (2015). „Žemės menas“ ir fenomenologinė intersubjektyvios percepcinės vaizduotės struktūra [“Art of the Earth” and the phenomenological structure of intersubjective perceptual phantasy]. *Filosofija. Sociologija*, 25(3), 177–183.
- Eliade, M. (1959). *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion*. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Florida, R. (2012). *The rise of the creative class*. New York: Basic Books.
- Heidegger, M. (1996). *Being and time*. Trans. by J. Stambaugh. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Keturakis, S. (2015). On the road with a smartphone. *Creativity Studies*, 8(2), 149–157.
- Keturakis, S. (2016). Topography of a dream, or some features of nonlinear narrative. *Creativity Studies*, 9(1), 53–63.
- Landry, C. (2000). *The creative city: A toolkit for urban innovators*. London: Earthscan Publications.
- Lavrinec, J. (2011). Revitalization of public space: From “non-places” to creative playgrounds. *Santalka: Filosofija, Komunikacija*, 19(2), 70–75.
- Lavrinec, J. (2014). Community art initiatives as a form of participatory research: The case of street mosaic workshop. *Creativity Studies*, 7(1), 55–68.
- McLuhan, M. (1994). *Understand media: The extensions of man*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. (1994). *Picture theory*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Monginaitė, L. (2015). Šviesos-spalvų pajautos matmenys [Light-colour sense dimensions]. *Filosofija. Sociologija*, 26(3), 184–192.
- Pruskus, V. (2014). Consumption as a value in the context of social sustainability. *Creativity Studies*, 7(1), 1–10.
- Rabzauskaitė, V. (2015). Revitalisation of public spaces in the context of creative tourism. *Creativity Studies*, 8(2), 124–133.
- Rimkus, E. (2015). Kultūriniai žemėlapiai: filosofinės ir sociologinės perspektyvos [Cultural maps: philosophical and sociological perspectives]. *Filosofija. Sociologija*, 26(1), 72–80.
- Rudokas, K. (2013). Kultūrinė komunikacija: architektūra kaip įvaizdžio formavimo strategija [Culture based communication: architecture as image making strategy]. *Santalka: Filosofija, Komunikacija*, 21(1), 35–45.
- Urbonaitė-Barkauskienė, V. (2014). Vilniaus graffiti žemėlapis kaip socialinės miesto kaitos indikatorius: Naujininkų rajono atvejis [The map of Vilnius graffiti as an indicator of social urban change: the case study of Naujininkai neighborhood]. *Santalka: Filosofija, Komunikacija*, 22(1), 53–68.