

Brief Essay

## Terrorizing Discourses and Dissident Courage

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by Eric Mark Kramer

Give me liberty or give me death.

Patrick Henry

Resignation is the worst of all virtues.

Flaubert

What does it matter if one cannot speak freely? What does it mean to walk on eggshells, to tremble at the thought that the powers that be are not in a good mood, to preoccupy one's life with the effort to humor them, to entertain them, to stay on their "good side?" What kind of strength or exhaustion does it take to dare not to care at all how "they" feel? What strength does one need to not care out loud, to deny cynical power, not by violently defeating it but by willfully ignoring it?

In 1962, during an art exhibition in Moscow, the artist/philosopher Ernst Neizvestny was publicly attacked by Nikita Khrushchev. Khrushchev showed up at an unauthorized art exhibition, with cameras in tow, determined to make an example of the "polluters." On the surface, Khrushchev's vitriolic diatribe was against what he claimed to be a form of communication and content that ran counter to the party line of socialist re-

alism. With his polemical rhetoric Khrushchev framed himself as *the* hero of the people, the defender of socialism against scurrilous manifestations of decadent Western egomaniacal "art" for its own sake, for the sake of the artist. He, the hero, was attacking Neizvestny as the diabolical anti-hero, the *individual* who, in outrageous arrogance, dared to resist the authority of the so-called people's politico-moral imperative.

Neizvestny's courageous response stopped Khrushchev in his tracks and struck at the core, the moral essence, of the right to communicate. Just as Diogenes knew how to turn the tables so that it was no longer clear who was crazy, marginal, himself or Plato, Neizvestny not only switched the imposition of criminality to Khrushchev but, at the same moment, unmasked the cynicism of his splintered paranoia (Sloterdijk, 1987, p. 104). How could such a great hero be so afraid of some pictures in the park? Standing his ground, Neizvestny shouted back at Khrushchev, "You are talking to a man who could kill himself any moment" (Insight, p. 17).

This encapsulates the existential predicament that, in such crises, foregrounds the constellation of brute power and its legitimating facade of "dialogue," especially the conjunction between criticism and crisis. As Paul de Man (1971) has demonstrated, the connection between criticism and crisis is more than etymological, it shows truth through error. This is the ultimate *aporia* upon which criticism thrives. But the error here does not lie

in the criticism but rather the very claim to legitimate and legitimating dialogue itself.

In one deft blow Neizvestny went beyond the critique of instrumental and functional reason. He was not interested in reasons but freedom. Neizvestny knew that Khrushchev stood alone. So he refused the game and all its pretense, including the robot gaze of television cameras, the disembodied eyes of a vast, atomized, distant, and alienated audience that was supposed to confer status onto Khrushchev, that was supposed to be literally and figurally behind this nemesis, even in league with him. Khrushchev was no champion; he was a bully. By refusing to be made into a piece of terroristic propaganda, to be made into an “example” of “pollution” (spiritual, as it happens), an example that would have “proven” Khrushchev’s dogma, Neizvestny disclosed to the world the egocentric nexus that bound Khrushchev’s strategy, paranoia, and cynicism. Khrushchev was a consequence of the system.

Foregoing the motive of self-preservation, Neizvestny could laugh in the bureaucrat’s face saying, “What are you going to do . . . *kill me?*” Here we have critique, satire, resistance, life, freedom, exploding in quick-witted, mentally alert kynical impulse. Unlike cynical reason, *kynismos* is a kind of argumentation that resists the “rigged game” of discourse. As Sloterdijk (1987) explains, rather than accepting that ideal and impervious rules govern social order, the kynic exposes the contingency of an order by *living* against it. For instance, when Diogenes picks his nose in response to Socrates’ oration on the divine soul, he is offering a new way to

say the truth. Sloterdijk revives ancient kynicism as an antidote for the modern cynicism of the compartmentalized self, the functional melancholic who can bear to work in spite of everything, the individual who can be unscrupulous ten hours a day and still be a loving parent or spouse at night because “that’s business.” This “chic bitterness” is not dumb. Rather, modern cynics’ psychic apparatus

has become elastic enough to incorporate as a survival factor a permanent doubt about their own activities. They know what they are doing, but they do it because, in the short run, the force of circumstances and the instinct for self-preservation are speaking the same language, and they are telling them that it has to be so. Others would do it anyway, perhaps worse. Thus, the new, integrated cynicism even has the understandable feeling about itself of being a victim and of making sacrifices (Sloterdijk, 1987, p. 5)

Diogenes, through his bizarre behavior, refutes not only the individual cunning of Socrates but calls into question the presupposed world order on which his authority depends. Against it stands what Sloterdijk (1987) so concisely calls cynical fascism with its “cold reason,” the vitalism of the dead—*Media morte in vita sumus*. The satirical cheekiness upon which kynical truth-saying depends requires courage because, “An essential aspect of power is that it only likes to laugh at its own jokes” (Sloterdijk, 1987, p. 103).

It is in this sense that Neizvestny’s response was kynical not cynical. Neizvestny was not a thrill seeker, handling venomous reptiles for stimulation. His response represented cour-

age, not boredom. He was not seeking a “cause,” to which he could sacrifice himself as an effect. Quite the contrary, he was rejecting the socialist “cause,” and maybe an entire world that creates a need for “causes.” Kynics, unlike cynics, care enough to risk pandemonium and laughter.

What we have in this encounter is not a positive dialectic that could progress to an integral synthesis. Rather, this meeting remained confrontational, strictly perspectival with a negative power as suggested by Adorno (1973). The kynical twist was that Khrushchev’s strategy to exploit the new technological power of television, exposing the Neizvestny-devil, backfired. Khrushchev’s hero mask was ripped away revealing nothing but the naked face of fascism—the master’s cynical dialectic.

The canny sense of critique is most evident in the deconstruction of power. Most power presupposes a structural ground of security that can be threatened. In this case power ultimately stands upon a global presumption of mortality. It is from this foundation that power draws its leverage, its vitality. When this ground is removed, the terror that is coextensive with power/domination as analyzed by Foucault (1980) is nullified. Ultimately, defiance in the face of terror neutralizes it *as terror*. The only recourse terror has in the face of defiance is the barbarism of gross physical domination. It is at such a nadir that the victim can with resolution say, “Get on with it. You will not smell fear so much as the shit and farts you beat out of me.”

As soon as physical domination characterizes a situation the sense of reason that is inherent to all discourse

simply because it is linguistically structured and at least potentially available for the dialogics of rebuttal (reason) is denied, and with it any sense of legitimation. Simply put, verbal belligerence is still available for disputation, but once the communicative activity, in the widest sense of discursive practices, descends to a strictly biomaterial plane, then the exchange of fists and other projectiles finds the Other no longer available for reasoning. This is so because, as Buber (1970) distinguishes between the I/You and I/It relationships, when a person is defined as a target, be it for bullets, a media campaign, or any semiotic exchange, the authentic reciprocity of equals vanishes.

Mastery is a unilateral imposition, not communication. Under such inhuman circumstances, the Other is cynically treated as an “it.” Likewise, “the intended audience” for such lessons is regarded as a collectivity of atomized consumers, as a collection of “its,” managed by the unidirectional character of television. This is not interaction. They are the destination for a warning. They are threatened that paranoid power will not tolerate resistance, that is, criminals such as Neizvestny. But a criminal against whom, the people or the so-called authority? The myth, of course, claims that they are identical. The terror is thinly veiled by the myth of the hero, defender of *their*—the people’s, the atomized audience’s—interests. Khrushchev must stop Neizvestny for their sakes, for the sake of the state order. Marx, like all economists, reduced life to material exchange.

Centralized scientific economic planning sees such “its” as energy systems that need to produce more than

it takes to keep them alive. This is an expression of a controlling consciousness that does not wish authentic communication, but desires to manage all exchange including speech. This is the horror of applying the artificial empirico-positivistic knowledge (frame of reference) of objectified “nature” to human beings. Massive destruction of ecosystems and semiosystems is the consequence of seeing the world as an object for management – exploration/exploitation. When the Other is turned into an “it,” via a fundamental change in attitude, we have “human nature” conceived by instrumentality for the purpose of self-aggrandizing will-power-drive.

Neizvestny refused to capitulate to such a definition. He refused to have his life and art be seen as part of a larger system of power/domination, to be seen as simply a tool for Soviet propaganda: the romanticization of the Soviet worker, her miserable condition, the state’s sense of progress, managed collectivized power, life purpose, and honor. As an individual, a conscience, he also refused the title “criminal.” For him, state-imposed definitions made a world of shallow legalities that could not fathom the moral obligation he felt for being a human, an artist.

At the level of material brutality one encounters economic violence. This involves the material dependency that economic currency expresses. The phrase, “Take this job and shove it,” manifests the same liberation from mortal fear that Neizvestny’s defense of artistic expression presented. Clearly, for Neizvestny, art was not abstract, but, as vision, was one of the motors at the very base of practical affairs. Art is an expression of con-

sciousness and a consequence of real labor. Essential to this self-concept is the definition of oneself by what one produces rather than by what one consumes.

As one accumulates “things,” including expectations and social position, a dangerous companion follows step-for-step like a shadow. And this is heightened by the fact that self definition/identity is often constituted of such “things,” so that if they are lost, one’s very self is threatened. For Neizvestny, as for ascetics generally, the “annihilation,” “release,” “abandonment,” of self makes possible the “encouragement” to express. This is the fundamental irony of expressive courage. But this is not exactly correct. One does not gain courage so much as lose oppression. This is, perhaps, the only way to defeat political terror that deprives humans of their humanness, their power of expression; *archi-écriture*.

This characteristic of the human condition is not limited to the extraordinary circumstances, but rather, as Thoreau (1881/1981) intended when he said “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation,” it is a fundamental predicament applicable to the human situation universally (p. 8). The important term for this discussion is “quiet.” The idea that discretion is the better part of valor indicates that often the act of protecting others, such as one’s dependents, manifests a courage masked by resignation. This is self-effacement that presupposes a polycentric rather than monocentric world view. According to Gebser (1949/1985), such an aperspectival attitude, which is concretely expressed in innumerable daily communicative choices, demonstrates not a disinterestedness

but a depersonalized interest. Such an “aperspectival” attitude may be the answer to the “spiral of silence” Noelle-Neumann (1984) identifies when individuals feel compelled to keep quiet because their opinions do not agree with perceived popular opinion.

Gebser’s notion of integration hinges on this idea of “aperspectival” communication. Gebser (1949/1985) argues that the modern condition is dominated by an egocentric perspectivity that is evidenced by the emergence of the “private/public” and “subjective/objective” dualisms that “erupted” during the Renaissance in Europe. A few of the civilizational expressions of modern perspectivity (which had its initial and temporary glimmerings in Ancient Greece) include private legal rights, contestant jurisprudence, various diacritical thematics, the Cartesian bifurcation, modern subjective psychology, inalienable political rights, perspectival art, the personal god, silent reading, easel painting, isolation as criminal punishment, the fragmentation of curriculum, the conception of decontextualized facts as data, et cetera. For instance, the modern notion of “mass” means the aggregation of isolated, perspectival individuals. Consequently, Noelle-Neumann’s (1984) concept of alienated silence is anticipated by Gebser’s (1949/1985) theory.

Regarding the term “aperspectival,” Gebser writes:

we have used the Greek prefix “a-” in conjunction with our Latin-derived word “perspectival” in the sense of an *alpha privativum* and not as an *alpha negativum*, since the prefix has a liberating character (*priva-*

*tivum*, derived from Latin *privare*, i.e., “to liberate”). The designation “aperspectival,” in consequence, expresses a process of liberation from the exclusive validity of perspectival and unaperspectival, as well as pre-perspectival limitations. (Gebser, 1949/1985, p. 2)

The Gebserian notion of aperspectivity suggests a means of encouraging the individual to escape the myopia of private interests. The point is that such courage may manifest as either a willingness to compromise, silence, or uncompromising confrontation. In complementary fashion, we should make no mistake that Thoreau insists “resignation” is shot through with the moral challenge that power/domination manifests. For, in the very next line of his chapter on economy, Thoreau (1981) tells us that, “What is called resignation is confirmed desperation” (p. 8).

Neizvestny was not seeking to be one of what Thoreau (1881/1981) called “the greatest bores of all,” a “self-styled reformer” (p. 170). Neizvestny was not propelled, like so many hypocritical (see Paul Johnson’s *Intellectuals*, 1988) social reformers, who embody a “cause” that is identical with their ego. To the contrary, Neizvestny’s courage is of a humble sort, for he is seeking fundamental freedom of expression, not a grandiose new world, and also because it is the self-proclaimed messiah figure he dares to question. Just as Thoreau repeatedly insisted, it is *simplicity* from which is derived great and true courage, so it is that Neizvestny’s strength comes from a lack of complex attachments. From a lack of attachment, from a nakedness, honesty, which is authentic expression—truth, is exposed.

And what of those who exploit anxiety and fear in the daily lives of those around them? As such persons become increasingly isolated by the silence that surrounds them and emanates from their malicious presence, they too are victims of the strategic instrumentality that is politics. Under such instrumental conditions, even “intelligence” becomes a resource for achieving the ends of power/domination.

“Politics” is meant here in its most broad sense, the power of rational will (*Kurwille*), cunning, suspicious, contractual, as compared by Tonnies (1887/1957) with *Wesenwille*, which characterizes *Gemeinschaft*-like traditional social organization.<sup>1</sup> The political mentality characterizes *Gesellschaft* means—ends cynicism and inequality. It is evident by the fact that the speech its members utter is not their own—it is alien—it is the language of authority (*Herrschaft*) in the Weberian sense.

When, out of fear, the speech one produces does not belong to oneself it may be said to be the most complete form of alienation because one’s *expressed* will (intention) is not one’s own. Such speech is a portrayal, an endless series of staged self-censored reactions or attempts to meet the expectations of others who hold nominal power in the speaker’s world. The speaker whose speech is not his own is a function, a machine appendage, a “mouth piece,” a self-automating prosthesis of an absent ventriloquist.

By the very nature of bureaucratic organization, communication becomes distorted as power distribution assumes a so-called rational, hierarchical structure. For Thoreau (1981), the “leaden resignation” that is the

consequence of stifling oppression is confirmed as desperation—gnawing silence. This runs, as he notes, against the catechism that argues that the chief end of man is the opposite of such a deprived state.

Everyday, and not so everyday, life experiences (as in this case) share the same basic dread in the face of illegitimate power, that is, power beyond reason, be it of physical or human nature. One must be careful here to not confuse power with authority.<sup>2</sup> Neizvestny had no choice but to respond to Khrushchev’s power. However, the very tenor of his response denied to Khrushchev any transcending authority.

Barthes (1972) rightly argues that any and all attempts or claims to depoliticize speech, that is, to remove historical and ideological contexts, are a sure clue that cynical power lurks behind such efforts. Claims of political innocence are usually the most self-incriminating of all speech forms. Such rhetoric of innocence is the mask of power. Its very rhetorical influence betrays the power that motivates modern realism in all its guises including public relations and advertising, especially political campaign advertising.

*Gesellschaft* legitimacy (legality), being based upon the internal logic of a system (defined as its structure), has the rhetorical advantage of defining itself as a pseudo-nature, a determinism beyond question. Such an oppressive condition will endure so long as the conventions of the structure are not recognized as being contingent. This is the obstacle of what Gadamer (1975) calls “blind prejudice.” The result is the proclivity to surrender manifest in the expression, “That’s just how it is.” This is a trace, or clue, to the amoral-

ity that rationalizes defeat at the unseen hands of the “powers that be”—the nihilism of a self-definition as absolute fatality—an attitude that sees life as nothing but a series of accidents. This is the essence of apathy. Fate dissolves responsibility.

Alternatively, the struggle may, for many members of the system, be preempted by an endless effort to belong, to succeed by the system’s own internal criteria, which are always self-serving (hence the effort of liberal managers to align the needs of the employees with those of the organization). This is promotion and perpetuation of the system from the inside out. By scratching your back, my itch is also satisfied. Identity with the organization is the essence of the “organization man,” or, more appropriately, organization family. Incidentally, the organization family is increasingly characterized by intolerance and anxiety about time, a siphoning-off of all energies for work. This is the most pervasive affliction of the modern family, as it struggles to integrate with bureaucracies.

In this sense, Weber (1925/1947) realized (centuries after military powers around the world), that bureaucratization of human behavior, the organizational machine, was the basis of formal power. This is also suggested by Jacques Ellul (1954) in his attack against what he calls the “cult of efficiency.” But this formal power is in turn based on pragmatic power, the threat to an individual’s vital interests that is most basically manifested as one’s power of self-expression. One’s vital interests are enmeshed within the larger social structure and experienced as various dependencies. Hence, each of us relies on money (the market

economy) to get what we need. If an individual could forego this dependency, that is, predetermination as consumer by the system of commerce, then at least one of the structural determinations might be avoided. But this is an unlikely scenario, especially in the current world and its expansion. It is in this case that Heyneman (1984), Jacob (1982), and Feyerabend (1987) have warned against the “advancing fog” of sameness that is engulfing the world.

Clearly, this is the exact opposite concern of those who have promoted the use of media, including organizational structures, in cultures around the globe in order to help facilitate “development” in the image of the West (or perhaps more accurately the imaginings of Westernized elites). Diversity, not only in the wild world, but also in the already tamed world, is retreating at an alarming rate in the face of advancing “development” (modernization/Westernization) with its presupposition of objective progress, antirelativism. The process is one of global “normalization,” conformism. Of course, the word “normal” carries with it the always alreadiness of a pseudonatural state, which rhetorically outruns any critique by always defining such oppositional activity as already deviant, sinister, at odds with the smooth maintenance and operation of the system itself.

The innocence of sterile value-free efficiency is the most beguiling and persuasive mask. It is the modern rhetoric of experts and managers alike—those with the power/knowledge (often mysterious, secret “big picture” information). Such a rhetoric conceals the interests sacred efficiency serves. “Economy,” in its simplest, most brut-

tal essence, has come to mean “efficiency.” The modern goal (which is of course a valued future state to be striven for but never attained) is the achievement of ever greater control for ever decreasing effort. Behind such rhetoric is a calculating, measuring mode of being that reduces life to the search for the greatest return on investment.

On the level of interpersonal communication, critique is in opposition to the values of the organization which have become identical with those of the members because, as stated earlier, individuals are increasingly dependent upon complex organizations for survival. As social complexity increases, self-reliance, self-determination, fades from practice. The strategy of identifying and coordinating the interests of the individual with those of the organization effectively short circuits reflection and resistance. One does not dare bite the hand that feeds one—especially when one believes the hand to be one’s own.

Reflection as such is defined by the larger structure as deviant/evil. This is the curse of liberals charged with being unduly pessimistic (the malaise factor) by anti-intellectuals. How dare they not “*be* (inauthentically) happy.” The shadow hegemony casts either leaves us blind or fills us with dread because it is in us, in our very thoughts, and as intimate as our secret aspirations, who we are and who we want to be (like—increasingly in the mass media age). This feeling, which vacillates from a general amorphous dissatisfaction to dread, is based on the perceived tenuousness of personal life-security, including the insidious internalized sense of success. If it fails to nullify resoluteness completely, the

life-condition of dependency at least silences it. For the resolution to speak from within a condition of dependency is itself dependent on the benevolence of organized power-with-a-purpose to listen without, or even with, retribution. The channels of feedback offered by “humane” organizations are in and of themselves a means of controlling dissent via demographic dispersion and exhausting attrition. It is no accident that mood-altering narcotics and antidepressants have been far and away the most prescribed medications in the United States (See the “top 200” lists periodically published by the pharmaceutical industry in *The American Druggist Magazine*). “He who has cares has brandy too” (Busch quoted in Freud, 1929–1930/1961, p. 22).

The presence of critique is far less tolerable than critical thoughts. Intent made present through overt expression is least tolerable and exemplified by the phrase, “I know what you’re thinking, but don’t you dare say it.” For it is the act of expressing from which a community of consensus can develop oppositional power. But, of course, with some sorts of totalizing authorities, such as divine ones, even wrong thoughts are presumed detectable and punishable. This is complete terror—terror from the inside out. Our very consciences can become suspect—a persecutor that never rests. From the depths of such a modern schizoid condition we set out to re-make ourselves, to “improve ourselves,” to maintain a better surveillance and management of self.

To be different, diversity as a global issue, is the fundamental possibility of exchange and communication. Fascism is a drive toward purity,



identity, silence; the erasure of difference, that is, conformity, means the end of communication. Identity cannot exchange with itself. Hitler's dream was to create an order that would last for millennia. Communication/exchange would cease to have a purpose except in terms of maintenance. This is the danger that all fundamentalistic eschatologies, with their attendant teleological orientations to life, share. We have here the insane vision of a subhuman, hexapodal or insect-like, collective deterministically ruled by reflex action. All would respond identically to the same stimulus. "*Zeik Heil!*" is a magical incantation operative at a prereflective, subconscious level. Intense emotion, like instinct, is involuntary.

The dark ages of a dogmatic universe are characterized by the dominational power manifested as the transformation of symbols into signals. Symbols rely on reflection and interpretation. Signality, by contrast, provokes blind response. The former is fraught with ambiguity, the latter is clear and efficient. Taylorism with its response time studies epitomizes this efficiency in somatic terms. The cockroach is a master of survival. Viruses and bacteria are even more persistent. Instinct is utterly blind and therein lies its power. In humans signality approaches the level of biomechanics, the self-erasure of the self through ego hypertrophy, the implosion of fanatical self-preservation. Obsessive conformism can, on the surface, guarantee security, but it actually assures the death of the creature (creation, creature, and recreation all rely on freedom—diversity).

By shattering the tyrannical parameters for this discourse, Neizvestny

forced open a space where an oppositional discourse could exist, thereby rescuing not only his own humanity as a communicating being but ironically, also that of Khrushchev. Neizvestny reflexively expressed his will-to-express through his rhetoric, which outran, or in Bloom's (1977) words "masterfully troped," via misprision, Khrushchev's repressive demand for conformity, silence. In Nietzschean terms, Neizvestny transvaluated the values of the Soviet system including the supreme significance assigned to Khrushchev. By resisting Khrushchev, Neizvestny raised the exchange to an authentic communicative level. Khrushchev found himself, no doubt shocked, talking to a human being, an alter-will.

The difference between Khrushchev and Neizvestny is so starkly drawn that it leaves little room for any so called "necessity of misreading," a stance earlier held by Bloom in his *Map of Misreading* (1975). In this sense Khrushchev and Neizvestny understood each other all too well. Hence, as observers of this powerful instance of difference (verbal exchange), we are pushed toward the distinctly modern attitude manifested by the hermeneutics of Booth (1979) and Gadamer (1960), which upholds not only the possibility of communication but of a limitation on endless dissemination. This may seem like the ultimate aporetic (double) logic. And it may be, because, to invoke Iser's (Holland, 1981) "eminently sensible" dualism, Khrushchev's response to the exchange was already determined by how he, through his intolerance, created it. In fact, for neither Khrushchev nor Neizvestny was there any indeterminacy. They could not escape the

truth of this situation nor, as noted before, could there be a positive synthesis. This is a profound instance of negative dialectic.

In this case, dissemination was rudely limited (Derrida, 1972/1981). The confrontation was essentially characterized by the paradoxical condition of presence. Khrushchev embodied the immediate, literally somatic, physiognomic presence of differences such as submission/rebellion, silence/speech, life/death, which he presented as scenarios with vital potential; choices, all tensed by immediacy, simultaneity; temporal anxiety. However, these spurious choices, these myths of “freedom,” were rejected by Neizvestny as mere alibis (see Barthes, 1972, p. 123). Neizvestny forced the repression to become nakedly present as immediate facticity, not allowing it to hide for an instant as mere future potential contingent on his “right” or “wrong” response. When he rejected this pretense of choice, he took command of the discourse, thereby instantly exposing Khrushchev’s posture as already repressive.

Khrushchev lost any room for rhetorical maneuvering. He could avoid the mantle of repressor by pretending to be the guardian of the peoples’ interests and their revolution by “correcting” Neizvestny’s false consciousness. Neizvestny forced Khrushchev either to retreat into silence or to repress him physically. Neizvestny never attempted to absent himself, to shyly deny his own existence as rebel. Rather, he insisted on the clear assertion of his presence as a difference magnified by his embodied voice (manifest antithesis). Neizvestny, and his art, *were* the opposition to

Khrushchev, his attitude, his world. The adjectival form of “opposition” (“oppositional”) is avoided because it would confuse the fact that Neizvestny was not *in* opposition, but *was* opposition. Thus being sharply foregrounded, defined as the opposition, Khrushchev had no choice but to fall silent. The existential status, including the power relations of each of these individuals, was starkly and publicly revealed. Khrushchev could not pretend to be the teacher, the moral superior.

Khrushchev was trapped by his own intolerance. To do nothing, that is, to fall silent, would prove Neizvestny right. Likewise to act and physically silence Neizvestny would also prove him right. Justice in this situation was a double-edged sword—inescapable. Although Khrushchev was caught in an aporia of his own making, the situation itself, and the sense of injustice/justice it foregrounded, could hardly be interpreted otherwise. All that was left for Khrushchev, given the discourse reconstituted and totally redirected by Neizvestny, was the choice of either hearing Neizvestny or silencing the embodied voice of dissension on the purely physical level. Either way, Khrushchev was condemned.

Neizvestny’s rhetoric points unmistakably toward one of the essential parameters of humanness—expressivity (see Landgrebe, 1981, and Heidegger, 1926/1962). From this follows meaningful existence itself upon which the leverage of power/domination depends, forced deprivation of life, security, happiness. Neizvestny would not, out of fear, or any other intimidation, allow the issue to escape or be masked. Here we are not transcendently beyond good and evil but right in

the thick of things, purely political and stinking of our all-too-human odor.

The great irony in all of this, a twist of fate that could not be more kynical, is that Neizvestny was later commissioned by Khrushchev's family to execute the tombstone for the Soviet leader's grave in the Novodevichiy Cemetery, Moscow. In his memoirs, Khrushchev expressed regret for his attempt to reform Neizvestny. Neizvestny's undeniable talent and spirit did not save him from harassment, however. Finally in 1976, after 65 attempts to obtain a passport and permission to go abroad, he managed to emigrate to Switzerland. This was after an open-air exhibition of his nonconformist art was bulldozed. Today he resides mostly in New York City.<sup>3</sup>

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> Tonnies was strongly influenced by Wilhelm Wundt's distinction between two psychological concepts, purposeful will (*Zweckwill*) and instinctive will (*Triebwille*).

<sup>2</sup> For my purposes, Gadamer's (1975) modern sense of authority and legitimation, as based on the high arbiter of reason, clearly resolves the boundary between power and authority.

<sup>3</sup> Neizvestny's friends, namely Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Chancellor Kreisky, the Roman Catholic Cardinal in Vienna, General Pyotr Grigorenko, and the physicists Peter Kapitsa and Lev Landau, helped him to emigrate. He is most famous for his monumental sculpture. For instance, the tallest free-standing sculpture in the world is his Lotus Flower, rising 300 feet from the top of the Aswan dam in Egypt. Besides world fame, this work also opened opportunities

for the artist at home, despite the fact that when Neizvestny's anonymous entry was selected, it caused a tremendous scandal in official Moscow art circles. Since Nasser was a leader favored by Moscow, the ban on his work in the Soviet Union became an embarrassment. After this, he gained several commissions in the Soviet state. In 1968, the Minister of Electric Power, Shokin, who had come to respect Neizvestny, commissioned him to do a 1,000 foot relief (the world's largest) for the Technical Electrical Institute's building in Moscow. He also did a huge bas-relief at the Soviet children's camp, Artek, in the Crimea. Today he is working on a monument to stand where the Berlin Wall was. He has been working, for ten years, on the New Statue of Liberty for Taiwan's Kaohsiung Harbor, which will stand 152 feet tall like the original by F. A. Bartholdi, in New York City. He sees the light from both forming a bridge of freedom across the Pacific. His greatest project, which he hopes to build in the United States, is "The Tree of Life," a colossal statuary group that depicts the achievements, and indomitable spirit, of humanity. This multistoried work is to be Neizvestny's monument to hope, which he sees manifest in America's permanent youthfulness. Neizvestny was born in 1926 in Sverdlovsk in the Ural Mountains.

There are more than 200 articles, ten books, and at least one film about Neizvestny's life and work. Perhaps the best in English is John Berger's *Art and Revolution: Ernst Neizvestny and the Role of the Artist in the USSR* (1969).

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