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XXXIII**

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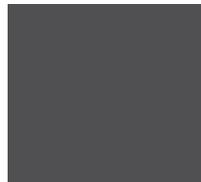




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Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts

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Māris Kūlis

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VALUES AS A HOBBY: THE TRANSFORMATION AND SURVIVAL OF CULTURAL RITUAL VALUES IN THE PROCESS OF DESACRALIZATION

The paper examines how values lose their sacred or protected significance and turn into values as a hobby. Using an excerpt from Arundhati Roy's novel "The God of Small Things", a trend of transformation of values is outlined, raising questions about the importance of different values – both sacred and secular – for the representatives of these values. In short, the question is related to the value of values: is their practice (affirmation) meaningful in the basic sense of these values, or is this practice mere imitation as a hobby? The article gives several examples that show the versatility of this topic. The case of Qutb's Islamism highlights the importance of the distinction between private and public: the exclusion of the Islamic religion from the public sphere would result in the religion and its values losing their prominent role. A contrasting direction of change is evident in the woke movement, in which secular ideas transform into quasi-religious beliefs (re-sacralization of values). Finally, an explanation of this contemporary cultural picture of values becoming a hobby (in the dynamics of private-public relations) is sought in Andreas Reckwitz's observation that the "general" is being replaced by a "singular" logic. Since the sacred and general meaning of values is abolished, this is where the shift in the understanding of values is most apparent. Because there is no longer a foundation of a sacred myth, individual values become a private matter and have no public meaning.

Keywords: values, sacred, protected, hobby, leisure activity, desacralization

Chapter 12 in Arundhati Roy's novel "The God of Small Things" paints a spectacular picture (Roy 1998). The novel is set in Aymanam, Kerala, India, around the second half of the 20th century, a time when modernity has more or less reached the outskirts of India. The scene describes a dancer, or rather a performer of sacred ritual dances, who now earns his living by performing shortened versions of these dances for the pleasure of tourists, but who assuages his resentment at night, finding satisfaction in doing the whole dance properly.

*"In Ayemenem they danced to jettison their humiliation in the Heart of Darkness. Their truncated swimming-pool performances. Their turning to tourism..."*¹

The Heart of Darkness (a reference to Joseph Conrad's story), also called the House of History by Rahel, is an old house that once belonged to a British colonialist, but after his death became part of an expensive hotel. The embodiment of history, the house where India's different destinies – colonialism and traditions, different times and cultures – meet, is now "the toy histories that rich tourists came to play with".

Performing for tourists is undoubtedly a source of income, providing a livelihood "to stave off hunger", but it is also a powerful humiliation that defiles both the performer and the ritual, and therefore the gods. After performing in the Heart of Darkness, the dancer may "collect his fee" and "get drunk", but this fails to assuage the offence to sacred feelings. In the story, the dancer, called the Kathakali Dancer, stops at a temple on his way back from a performance "to ask pardon of their gods. To apologize for corrupting their stories. For encashing their identities. Misappropriating their lives". The lives and stories of the gods, as it turns out, are no longer real, they are not even fake, because they have been rendered useless.

The sacred significance is taken away from the Dancer as well, who "from the age of three ... has been planed and polished, pared down, harnessed wholly to the task of storytelling". The cultivation of his craft has

¹ All extracts quoted from the e-book: Roy 1998.

required the utmost effort and dedication, which could only be justified by the recognition of a transcendence that no longer really exists in a desacralized and demystified world. The correct performance of a ritual is not simple, but requires long preparation and knowledge, even if it may not appear so from the outside, because the viewer is unable to see all the layers of meaning conveyed in a complex system of symbols and gestures. In the modern world, the role of the Dancer has changed radically, he has gone from being “the most beautiful man”, from being a storyteller of divine tales to “condemned goods” and his children shun him – they “become clerks and bus conductors”. Children, be they bodily children or metaphors of cultural transmission, pursue their futures in the administration and infrastructure of the modern state. But at the same time, the Dancer is also “a prince raised in poverty”, whose spiritual nobility is but a title that has lost its exchange value.

Salvation can only be found under the cover of darkness, at night, when the modern world is asleep and the old temple is a place to dance for the gods, not for tourists. The dancer’s salvation is in the old stories, but the stories that are believed. “This story is the safety net above which he swoops”, but at the same time one has to be aware that he is “like a brilliant clown in a bankrupt circus”. To escape, to wash away the shame, humiliation and disappointment, it is necessary to return to the gods, but – and this is important – this can only be done in hiding.

“Perhaps that evening had been a particularly bad one in the Heart of Darkness. In Ayemenem the men danced as though they couldn’t stop. Like children in a warm house sheltering from a storm. Refusing to emerge and acknowledge the weather. The wind and thunder. The rats racing across the ruined landscape with dollar signs in their eyes. The world crashing around them.”

The dancer’s world really does seem to have collapsed, with only rats running around “with dollar signs in their eyes”, for whom nothing is sacred and therefore nothing at all is sacred. In the end, the Dancer

becomes a performer, a sustainer of cultural performances, or “he becomes a Regional Flavor”. The transformation of a cultural element characterised by an extremely strong symbolic saturation into a “Regional Flavor” is a very apt description if one pays attention to the layers of meaning: the sacred has become secondary, while in the foreground is a tag given by the modern world.

Sacred, protected and secular values

The picture presented in the story can be broadened and applied to the analysis of the contemporary cultural scene. The dancer who has lost his sacred connection illustrates a well-known process, namely desacralization and demystification, a task already set by Enlightenment philosophy. The dancer’s reaction – to collect the money and get drunk in disgust – is also not surprising. But we need to look at the subject from a different angle, putting aside the resistance described by Roy (resentment, the experience of losing the history that is directly present), in order to ask about the nature of the various forms of cultural practices that seem to have been revived: do values, rituals, traditions, cultural practices embody a “higher meaning”, even if they are practised, or are they just a leisure activity, a hobby? One might ask: do the various values that are supposedly affirmed through rituals and artefacts lose their meaning, but only in this way can they survive and even flourish, because they become a hobby that does not require sacrifices inappropriate to the contemporary situation? In this sense, values and sacred practices become something radically different, and it would no longer be adequate to speak of mere change. An approach that recognises various values as existing by establishing their existence in a declarative form may, however, be misleading, because, having lost their sacred meaning, the values found no longer resemble their original form – they are different values altogether. In short, the question is one of the value of values: is their practice (affirmation) meaningful in the basic sense of these values, or is this practice mere imitation as a hobby?

In this article, the terms ‘hobby’ or ‘leisure activities’ are used in a narrow meaning in the restricted context of an issue regarding values. The further elaboration of these concepts are interwoven in the following text, but some main points should be emphasised already: a hobby is private, it is primarily of a personal nature, but sacred or protected values are public; hence, values as a hobby do not have the normative aspect. While some hobbies can have an impact on public life, there is a significant difference in the presence of normativity: indeed, private leisure activities sometimes have consequence in public life (e.g. soccer ball through a window), but they are not an argument in decision-making in political life (in contrast, when being a soccer fan becomes ‘like a religion’, outsiders can bring up the topic of sacralization).

Different answers to the questions outlined above about value transformations make a significant difference to the resolving of a number of contemporary issues, among them, above all, the search for identity and value studies. Values are sometimes spoken of as Platonic transcendent entities that can be identified and have at least some persistence; cultural and artistic values that can be found, described and celebrated. In some cases, the same values are understood as social constructions at a particular point in time and space (Freiberger 2016, 295). Baiba Bela writes that the social sciences study values as basic cultural ideas that perform certain functions in society. Values are linked to cultural norms, but are seen as more abstract and general than norms. Whereas norms regulate behaviour in certain situations, values determine what is judged as good or bad. According to Emile Durkheim, values and norms provide the social integration that allows individuals to function as a society and offer coherence, reliability and stability. Michel Foucault began to look at values as part of the social power system and argued that values offer an ideological frame (Bela 2011, 147).

Given the continuous discussion regarding the relationship between culture and religion (e.g.: Darginaviciene & Sliogeriene 2019), additional notes are required concerning the variety of values. First of all, the distinction between religious and sacral values can be problematic because

“so-called secular beliefs and practices concern the same things as those counted as religious; it is not their content that distinguishes one lot from the other” (Charlton 2016, 332). A preliminary distinction could be based on genealogy, arguing that sacred values have their source in the transcendent, but secular values originate from the human domain. However, it is possible to speak of so-called sacred or protected values. A sacred value can be defined, for example, by Tetlock et al. as:

“any value that a moral community implicitly or explicitly treats as possessing infinite or transcendental significance that precludes comparisons, trade-offs, or indeed any other mingling with bounded or secular values” (Tetlock et al. 2000, 853).

This definition underlines the existence of certain values and moral principles that are seen as non-negotiable. While, indeed, this is more often the case with religious beliefs and ideas, one must agree with the observation that there is such a thing as the “secularized sacred”. Anthropologist Scott Atran, in a study of the unconditional commitment of devoted actors, stresses that sacred values can “refer to any preferences regarding objects, beliefs, or practices that people treat as both incompatible or nonfungible with profane issues or economic goods, as when land or law becomes holy or hallowed” (Atran 2016). The presence of the sacred element can then also be identified in political concepts and attitudes towards, for example, human rights or, as Atran rightly points out, in the broader sweep of political history marked by the Enlightenment-inspired ambitions to save humanity from misery through various revolutions (liberalism, socialism, anarchism, communism, fascism, etc.) and to raise it not only to the heights of economic prosperity but also to make the world more right and better in a moral sense (Atran 2016).

This article, however, emphasises another transformative movement of the concept of value. Not a shift from the religious to the secular and further secularisation, but a change in the various kinds of secular or protected values that alters the significance of value while retaining its performative form. Agita Misāne, investigating whether Christian values are

socially constructed or ontologically given, observes that the appeal to so-called “Christian values” is more likely a way for modern people to avoid a profession of faith. Values are separated from ontological truth. For example, rather than believing in the truth of the biblical message, modernity seeks in it an idea of the social order of the world (Misāne 2005, 77).

Sayyid Qutb’s Islamism and division of the public and private sphere

This sentiment, in which values lose their sacred significance, has been well captured by the ideologues of Islamism, who have pinpointed the fragile points of European thinking. The secularization and desecularization process have affected not only the West, the Islamic cultural sphere, but also Hinduism, Buddhism. This is most strikingly (if mostly indirectly) manifested in the development of the topic of identity, when cultures try to preserve their own identity by fighting Western rationality (Stančienė 2019, 17–18). When addressing the question of personal identity, the question is whether it is a stable, ingrained or rather a socially conditioned construction? Is a person born an Arab, Latvian or Portuguese, or does nationality develop over time?² While at a theoretical level the indeterminacy of identity is a legitimate idea, it has many opponents who find unacceptable the idea that, for example, being Latvian or Islamic or having a relationship with a god is a blatant coincidence. In other words, a person’s identity must not be a hobby to which one feels attachment and yet which can be changed at will.

Bringing to the fore the question of the importance of religious dogma in the persistence of identity, the sprouts of this tendency were noticed as early as the mid-20th century from a specific perspective by Sayyid Qutb,

² Research on the issue of identity as a fluid phenomenon is conducted more thoroughly in the case of, for instance, Latvian migration. The socio-cultural integration of Latvian migrants in various host countries and the impact of becoming and being Latvian are examined in further detail by scholars in the in-depth study “The Emigrant Communities of Latvia” (Kaša & Mieriņa 2019).

one of the leading adepts of radical Islamism. He argued that the most serious threat to Muslim societies was not the military threat, but the cultural invasion that tended to make the religion of Islam irrelevant or, to put it in more modern terms, a private affair. He observed that modern Western societies (or at least progressive cultural elites) tend to separate private identity and public behaviour as two very different spheres. Whether ethnic, cultural, sexual – any private preference is of no concern to others, i.e., it is not a public matter. Qutb, consistently following the tenets of the Islamic religion, denies such a distinction. On the contrary, he advocates a monolithic unity of public and private life. So, Islam is and can only be public — there is no such thing as private Islam. He strictly states that any Islamic state is obliged to implement Sharia, and Sharia, according to Qutb, is “everything legislated by Allah Almighty for ordering man’s life; it includes the principles of belief, principles of administration and justice, principles of morality and human relationships, and principles of knowledge” (Qutb 2006, 120). Sharia is thus understood as a comprehensive set of rules for all aspects of life. He condemns Western science and philosophy, which are pursuing “a well thought out scheme” with the aim “to shake the foundations of Islamic beliefs and then gradually to demolish the structure of Muslim society” (Qutb 2006, 128). He well understood that the separation of the Islamic religion from power or its exclusion from the public sphere would only result in the religion losing its leading role.

Modern Western society is characterised by increasingly blurred boundaries between private and public, and it is no longer surprising to see rapid shifts from one to the other. But this is not only a consequence, but a co-existing precondition. One could say that this is only possible if sacred or protected values are softened in their steadfastness. To borrow Zygmund Bauman’s terms, for a fluid society to flow easily, it must avoid elements that are too rigid, which are absolute and non-negotiable values. If Islam (or any other religion) maintains its dogmatic categoricity, it also needs public relevance – and vice versa. What is publicly relevant claims to be universally relevant as well. If, on the other hand, religion

withdraws from public life and becomes “everyone’s own business”, it ceases to be a universally relevant principle in its own right, whereas if ritual practices are maintained, it should rather be called a hobby, a leisure activity.

Qutb developed the central concept of Islamic political theory, *hakimiyya* (God is the sole and undisputed sovereign of the state), which dictates that no one can directly represent God and thus usurp God’s authority. It also means that the highest values come from God alone, not from secular authority, let alone from each individual person. That is why, not without reason, the Palestinian cleric, activist, teacher and preacher Abdullah Azzam, the spiritual father of modern jihad, reminded the faithful to turn away from those who reinterpret religion: “And leave those who take this faith as mere play and amusement and are deluded by their worldly life” (Quran 6:70; Azzam). The directness of the Islamic scriptures in forbidding “a mere play” with the Most High makes it clear that submission to the will of God cannot be partial, so to speak, only when there is spare time and means to be found. If faith is real, it must be categorical.

In this context, the possibility of a so-called Euro-Islam needs to be reconsidered (see: Kūlis 2019). Tariq Ramadan, in his book “Being a European Muslim”, called for a new European Muslim identity, seeking to fuse European culture and Muslim ethics, and to disassociate itself from Saudi Arabia and Islamic terrorism (Ramadan 1999). However, if the “Muslim ethic” remains categorical, there are only two possible paths: either Euro-Islam fails or Islam loses its meaning. If Islam is made a private affair, and diluted with controversial interpretations, it is likely to turn into a hobby which outwardly imitates certain practices but does not confirm their original meaning just like yoga in gyms.

Here we can reflect on the view of terrorism research theorist Charlotte Heath-Kelly that the restriction of religious practice to the private sphere is at the heart of contemporary understandings of what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable social practice (Salvatore 1997; Asad 1993). Heath-Kelly points out that this historically developed understanding,

which is presented as universal when it is not, leads terrorism studies to the notion of a “new terrorism”, i.e. that contemporary “religious” terrorism is more lethal, less focused on utility and ontologically distinct from leftist and nationalist forms of terrorism (Heath-Kelly 2010, 235–254). However, this picture is the fruit of a distorted view, since it assumes that the sacred element has been abolished everywhere, as if the project of Enlightenment had been completed to the full.

American Civil religion, BLM and woke as cases of resacralization

Qutb’s reflections are applied to a specific historical situation in time and place, but philosophically reworked (distanced and abstracted), they can be applied to many other cases. An example of secularized sacred values can be seen in the case of the role of religion on civic ideals in the United States, famously described by Robert N. Bellah: “Although matters of personal religious belief, worship, and association are considered to be strictly private affairs, there are, at the same time, certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share. These have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere” (Bellah 1967, 3–4). Bellah’s analysis shows the same theme that Qutb addresses, but from the opposite direction: the sacralization of secular values or, in other words, the turning of a set of secular values into a divine law. In the USA, there are currently two social movements on the same vector, in which the (re)sacralization of values is prominent: although the so-called *Woke* and *BLM* (Black Lives Matter) are mostly spoken of as political movements, there are strong features of quasi-religious movements. Racism scholar John McWhorter writes that it is in the area of anti-racism in the US that religious elements are coming to the fore: superstition, clergy, original sin, evangelicalism, apocalypticism, persecution of heretics, replacement of old beliefs (McWhorter 2021, Chapter 2).

The very name of the movement, *woke*, and the concepts of vigilance and waking suggest associations with a religious cult. In the context of the movement, they have a special nobility, an exaltation, a belonging to a community blessed with a special knowledge of diabolical “structures”. In other words, in the case of *woke*, there is a sacralization of postmodern technical terms and, in the opposite direction, the introduction of religiously imbued terms into philosophical discourse. Some examples: *woke* as rebirth or resurrection, privilege as depravity, original sin, cancellation and excommunication, the status quo as the post-Fall world, responsibility to the future as divine judgement, etc. (Lindsay 2020).

The *Woke* movement has a special role for rituals that address the role of white people in creating and maintaining structural injustice.³ Redemption is achieved through public expressions of repentance (from pledge statements to foot washing) that lead to a state of rebirth or *woke*.⁴ In this worldview, the subject of responsibility becomes problematic, as the “system” is elevated to the heights of transcendence. The victim is like a saint whose complicity in his own grief must not be questioned, because to do so would be to question the whole system, both its existence and its interpretation, but that would be blasphemy.

In the context of the analysis of values as a hobby, the examples of *Woke* and BLM are interesting as they highlight the misleading appearance of a hierarchy of values. Although often different values (e.g. in the 2018 Eurobarometer survey: peace 45%, human rights 42%, respect for human life 37%, democracy 27%, personal freedom 24%, equality 21%, the rule of law 18%, tolerance 16%) are named as particularly important, but it could be hypothesised that these are just labels, in other words, values

³ Indeed, today’s US universities have been the scene of religious, sectarian ritual-like performances that demand loud, blatant and non-negotiable expressions of one’s position. A striking example is the Diversity Commission event at Evergreen University in Washington, where participants were invited to board an imaginary canoe and paddle to new shores of social justice. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHM7SUFIE8w>

⁴ For example, in the US, the public washing of black people’s feet as atonement: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8397065/White-police-officers-community-members-wash-feet-black-faith-leaders-protest.html>

are identified but treated as a hobby.⁵ This is more evident against the backdrop of, for example, the *woke* movement, in which secular ideas (e.g. social justice) become the object of unreflected, dogmatic adoration: they are no longer “merely” the subject of academic research or political decisions (values as a hobby), but are transformed into quasi-religious beliefs (resacralization of values).

In a broader sense, the question of identity outlined above is revealed here. Namely, are traditional practices, ideas or rituals just a private hobby, a leisure activity, a pastime, or do they have a public, social role? Is my religion, the foundations of my faith, socially significant, public, or is it just a private activity? But here we have to understand that private pursuits are not socially significant and influential or, to put it very simply, the private is not public because it does not concern others.⁶ This feeling is also recognisable here in Latvia: are the Latvian language, customs, traditions, as well as the national costume at festivals and beer at Jāņi just a matter of hobby, a pastime, or do they represent something deeper, unquestionable and befitting of all “real” people?

The examples given above – Islamism and American exceptionalism (one could add Russian exceptionalism, Jewish exceptionalism, etc.) – are extreme, they show blatantly zealous pursuers of values. In other words, the subject is usually seen in terms of religions. However, by continuing the reference to Latvia, the theme can also be extended to the cultural sphere. Just as there is a distinction between the conventional understanding of religion and so-called civil religion, a distinction could be made between culture and culture as a hobby or consumer culture.

⁵ More research on values in Latvia in relation to Europe, see: Kūle 2016a, 2016b.

⁶ This may be different in specific cases. Krūmiņa-Koņkova (2021) looks at how Eastern spiritual ideas emerged and were adapted in Soviet Latvia between the 1960s and 1980s; in particular, she examines how people actively pursued their spirituality (e.g. Yoga movement) in their private sphere while navigating legal boundaries or finding ways to get around them. See also Pazuhina's (2021) paper where she explores the concept of ‘everyday religiosity’ of the Orthodox Old Believers religious tradition, which defines the central place of religious practices within the private scope of family life.

In the Latvian context, there could be numerous examples.⁷ The Song and Dance Festival is often cited as the most prominent event of Latvian culture, “uniting the nation” and confirming its “values”. However, it must be admitted that at the same time, this event is not a re-enactment of pagan rituals mentioned in folk songs, but a relatively modern performance, borrowed from the alien German culture⁸. The Midsummer celebration has already become an anecdotal example, in which the focus is not on the multiplication and growth of life, the cyclical nature of time or similar intentions, but on the collective drinking of beer and the “traditional” eating of Caucasian shashlik. In the last decade, it has become increasingly popular to decorate clothes with “folk signs” and patterns, even to wear folk costumes during festivals, but one may wonder whether, for example, the sign of Mara on a t-shirt protects against evil or simply looks pretty. Sometimes defenders of Latvia’s ancient culture speak of the Latvian virtue of work, traditions and a peculiar pantheism, but the reality of the Latvian countryside today raises doubts about the virtue of work in a significant part of society, while urbanisation makes one question the validity of invoking pantheism. Yes, values are invoked, but one can reasonably doubt whether they have anything to do with their in-vokers.⁹

⁷ An interesting study of visual signs about Latvian values: the Latvian values of my generation (implemented by the Department of Sociology, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Latvia); <https://latvijasvertibas.wordpress.com/>

⁸ When discussing the subject of inherited values and practices from the German community, it is crucial to bring up historical movements like the 19th-century Baltic German Evangelical Lutheran community. Numerous songs with Latvian lyrics were written using works by German composers (See Karnes 2005).

⁹ Philosopher Elga Freiberga speculates on the causes of it: “The heterogeneity of Latvia’s social life, social alienation prevents our being able to speak of cherishing common values in Latvian society. The causes and reasons for this alienation are clear, they are of a historical nature. They come from the socialist past, in which all the values keeping up man’s life and self-esteem were deliberately and systematically denigrated, starting from religious values and ending with political and individual ones” (Freiberga 2016, 297).

Andreas Reckwitz's analysis of society of singularities

One way to explain this contemporary cultural picture of values becoming a hobby in the dynamics of private-public relations is to look at the German philosophical sociologist Andreas Reckwitz's observation that the "general" is being replaced by a "singular" logic, with its consequences in all forms of social life — economic, cultural and political. Reckwitz argues that a structural transformation has taken place in late modern society, in which the dominance of the social logic of the general has been overtaken by the dominance of the social logic of the particular. The core of classical modernity, which had taken root in Western Europe since the 18th century, was expressed by a social logic that promoted standardisation, formalisation and generalisation, as well as the replacement of traditional customs by large-scale sets of predictable rules. The singular social logic that has been prevalent since the 1970s or 1980s, on the other hand, is completely at odds with what has formed the core of modern society for more than 200 years.¹⁰

The reason for this shift is that, since the second half of the 20th century, the forces that drove industrial standardisation have become drivers of social singularisation. Reckwitz explains that the first structural break occurred in the transition from the old industrial economy to cultural capitalism, and also in the transition to an economy centred on the creative industries. The second turning point is the digital revolution, which has made it possible to track individual users, but has also paved the way for customised products and advertising.

The rise of singular logic has also led to a profound change in attitudes towards culture. Unlike industrial society, which sought to marginalise it, the society of the singular logic of particular placed culture at the centre.

¹⁰ Philosopher Maija Kūle describes the state of this era in culture, art, science, politics – in all spheres of life – with life form "on the surface". In contrast to the life form "upwards", expressed by hierarchy and the aspiration to the absolute, or later "forward", expressed by coexistence and the idea of progress, the primordiality of place replaced by being in time, and the present defined by an ever-changing accumulated past, the life form "on the surface" is characterised by dissolution and diffusion (Kūle 2006).

However, this shift is not self-evident: for Reckwitz, the rise of singularisation and culturalization can be explained as the convergence of three mutually reinforcing structural moments: the emergence of cultural capitalism, the triumph of digital media technologies, and the post-Romantic, revolutionary hunger for authenticity of the new middle class (Reckwitz 2020, 10). Culture is indeed coming to the centre, but with a new and peculiar meaning: “In late modernity, moreover, the sphere of culture has adopted a specific form: no longer a clearly delineated subsystem, it has rather transformed into a global hyperculture in which potentially everything – from Zen meditation to industrial footstools, from Montessori schools to YouTube videos – can be regarded as culture and can become elements of the highly mobile markets of valorization, which entice the participation of subjects with the promise of self-actualization.” (Reckwitz 2020, 8–9). If a new hyperculture is emerging, it is to be expected that it will not be content with its status as steward of the old system but will reassess its values. This is what happens in a globalized world, where what is locally significant loses its value at the international level because it is not attractive to outsiders who look at values from a pragmatic point of view or as tourists who explore them as examples of “Regional Flavor”.

In Reckwitz’s analysis, the social logic of the singular is closely linked to the concept of culture, but it requires a shift from the traditional understanding of culture that might be found in the concept of value. Reckwitz writes that in the course of singularization, social entities acquire characteristics that allow them to become cultural subjects: a culturalization takes place. In this process, according to Reckwitz, valorisation plays a leading role, which is a fundamental process of assigning or denying value (Reckwitz 2020, 54).

The concept of value must be reviewed in light of the analysis of singular logic. Reckwitz underlines that value cannot be viewed in a neo-Kantian spirit, but rather must be seen as a practice of valuing individual objects, in other words, values must be seen as part of the dynamics of social circulation. In this interpretation, values are not something stable

and enduring, something essential, but something open and even contradictory. Reckwitz emphasises the valorisation processes in which values are singularised and desingularised; they are given or denied an intrinsic complexity. If one joins Reckwitz's analysis and understands cultural practices as practices of valorisation and devalorisation, it becomes clear that it is possible to break away from an earlier understanding of the concept of culture in favour of one that takes into account the effects of singular logics (Reckwitz 2020, 56). One can only speculate whether this process of valorisation is the same as the one referred to in Arundhati Roy's story as a world where only rats run around "with dollar signs in their eyes".

The transformation of values into a hobby is probably partly explained by the changes in social order described by Reckwitz, and in particular by the process of singularisation, which, although not self-evident – singularisation leads to authenticity – it is not yet clear what kind of authenticity is at stake. On the one hand, the logic of generality claims universality, but the emphasis on the particular degrades it. In such a context, various traditional values might even seem to gain ground, because they need a higher force: generality and universality. However, it is important to note here that the logic of universality is a derivative of industrialization, a product of Weberian rationalization, and that is why it has become alienated from the "sacred" nature of values. In other words, the values of modernity can be universal without the burden of a sacred background. Singularisation breaks the link with the universal and thus, on the one hand, really distances from the dimension of universality, which in turn distances from the sacred significance that usually claims at least some universality. On the other hand, however, the emphasis on the particular is more important. If values are separate, they may have something like an "aura of significance", but they cannot be recognised: they become a private activity, a "separate hobby", just as private language is impossible (Wittgenstein's argument). Individual, private value is like a means of payment without the management of the financial system: a banknote is real, it can be kept in a purse, carried around, admired, but it is useless as a medium of exchange.

In the social order expressed by the singular logic, private values are not impossible; on the contrary, they become just that: they become unique, their value is constantly changing, and the course of these changes is unpredictable. It is here that the change in the understanding of values is most clearly seen, as the sacred meaning of values is abolished: values are still important, but they are not universal. Values are “my” values, not “common” values. Values become a sign of recognition, a “regional flavour” as in the story of Roy. Individual values become a private affair, they no longer have any public significance because they no longer have the background of sacred myth that made them so powerful. An analysis of the contemporary situation must take this into account, because a superficial view can present a false picture in which values are found to be not only present but also authentic and alive. However, such a picture is misleading, since the values in question are only “alive” in the foreground, on the façade, but do not possess the essence encoded in the original understanding of these values, which requires values-appropriate behaviour *in their entirety* within a given system of values, beliefs and practices that derive from them. Values as a hobby, on the other hand, give freedom to a completely different pattern of behaviour: it can be seen as theatricality or performance, the basic aim of which is entertaining imitation. Values as a hobby move from the sacred sphere into the realm of play.

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Vērtības kā vaļasprieks: kultūras rituālo vērtību transformācija un izdzīvošana desakralizācijā

Kopsavilkums

Rakstā aplūkots, kā vērtības zaudē savu sakrālo vai aizsargājamo nozīmi un pārvēršas par hobiju. Izmantojot fragmentu no Arundhati Rojas romāna “Mazo lietu dievs”, tiek ieskicēta vērtību transformācijas tendence, kas ļauj jautāt par dažādu vērtību – gan sakrālo, gan laicīgo – nozīmi šo vērtību pārstāvjiem. Rojas stāstā parādītā aina tiek attiecināta uz mūsdienu kultūras ainas analīzi, ko starp citu raksturo desakralizācija un demistifikācija. Īsāk sakot, rakstā tiek jautāts par dažādu kultūras prakšu šķietami atdzīvināto formu būtību: vai vērtības, rituāli, tradīcijas, kultūras prakses iemieso kādu “augstāku jēgu”, pat ja tās tiek praktizētas vai arī tās ir tikai gluži kā vaļasprieks? Rakstā minēti vairāki piemēri, kas parāda šīs tēmas daudzpusību. Islāmists Saijids Kutbs islāmisma interpretācijā izceļ privātā un publiskā nošķiruma nozīmi: islāma reliģijas izslēgšana no publiskās sfēras novestu pie tā, ka reliģija un tās vērtības zaudētu savu nozīmīgo lomu: ja ticība ir īsta, tai esot jābūt kategoriskai, bet, ja islāms tiek padarīts par privātu padarīšanu, tas pārvēršas par vaļasprieku, kas ārēji atdarina noteiktas prakses, taču neapliecina to sākotnējo jēgu. Ja islāms (vai jebkura cita reliģija) saglabā savu dogmatisko kategoriskumu, tā paģēr arī publisku relevanci – un otrādi. Publiski relevantais pretendē uz vispārnozīmīgumu.

Savukārt, ja reliģija aiziet no sabiedriskās dzīves un kļūst par “katra paša darišanu”, tā savā būtībā vairs nav uzskatāma par vispārnozīmīgu principu, taču, ja rituālās prakses tiek uzturētas, to drīzāk būtu jādēvē par vaļasprieku. Pretējs pārmaiņu virziens vērojams sabiedriskajās kustībās *woke* un *BLM*, kurās saskatāma sekulāro pārliecību transformācija kvazireliģiskos uzskatos (notiek vērtību resakralizācija). Jau agrāk ir bijis iespējams runāt par t. s. amerikāņu pilsoniskās reliģijas tapšanu, ko raksturo dažādu valstisku un sekulāru jēdzienu (brīvība, demokrātija u. tml.) padarišana par kvazireliģiskiem mērķiem. Tas notiek arī rasisma apkarošanas jomā ASV, kur ir vērojama reliģisko elementu iznākšana priekšplānā. *Woke* gadījumā ir vērojama postmodernisma tehnisku jēdzienu *sakralizācija* un pretējā virzienā – reliģiski piesātinātu terminu ionešana filosofiskajā diskursā, piemēram, *woke* jeb mošanās un modrība kā atdzimšanas metafora, privileģētība kā samaitātība, kā iedzimtais grēks, atcelšana (*cancellation*) un ekskomunikācija, pastāvošā situācija kā pasaule pēc grēkā krišanas, atbildība nākotnes priekšā kā dievišķā tiesa utt. Minētie piemēri virza pie jautājuma, vai vērtību pārtapšana par hobija izpausmēm nav vērojama arī Latvijā, piemēram, dažādu pagānisko zīmju attēlošana uz apģērba u. tml. Visbeidzot – skaidrojums šai mūsdienu kultūras ainai, kad vērtības kļūst par hobiju (privāto un publisko attiecību dinamikā), meklējams Andreasa Rekvica novērojumā, ka “vispārīgo” aizstāj “singulārā” loģika. Tā kā vērtību sakrālā un vispārīgā nozīme ir atcelta, tieši šeit visuzskatāmāk izpaužas vērtību izpratnes maiņa. Ja tiek konstatēts, ka nepastāv sakrālā mīta pamats, individuālās vērtības kļūst par privātu lietu un tām nav publiskas nozīmes. Tādā gadījumā sakrālās vērtības, pat ja tās tiek praktizētas, zaudē savu sakrālo nozīmi un tādējādi to praktizēšana drīzāk ir tikai atdarinoša performance – tās pārtop par hobiju.

Atslēgvārdi: vērtības, sakrālais, brīvā laika pavadīšana, desakralizācija

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