

DISJOINTED MOMENT

A REFLECTION ON *FREE FALL*

Let us imagine de-territorialization caused by mobilization. Mobilization of everything from capital and authority through goods, services and information to crime, risk, health and, of course, our bodies. All things that are, are in motion. Let us imagine all of this movement portrayed in a single frame viewed from a bird's-eye perspective of Google maps. The frame is zooming out and the image is slowly moving away. All of this seemingly random movement, swarming and bubbling of mobilized entities, from bacteria on someone's arm to financial transactions on Wall Street, starts to take the form of a spiral. A downward shaped, relentless and unbearable free fall spiral. It is the old story about Prometheus, his retarded brother and a certain flame. Or rather, a story of the modern age, founded on the process of permanent technical innovation.

The beginning was promising. We had dealt with tradition and other collective ballast, spread our wings and flew away into the age of nuclear holocaust. Later on we had also done away with various modernist projects, such as national states and totalitarian ideologies. However, something has gone wrong on that road to self-fulfilment, self-realization and self-liberation. The fever of the Hegelian night got us substituting personal freedom for immortality. By reaching for the former out of longing for the latter, we simply knocked the ground out from under our feet and began - free falling. Our liberation took place along the laboratory - factory axis with mobility substituting sedentariness, functionality devouring authenticity and individuality trampling over communality.

There is no worse curse than the life of an outcast, ostracized into darkness and cold of isolation. Although pretty on paper, social and political emancipation of the individual in practice amounts to nothing more than voluntary exile. Ascetically idealized lack aside, the smell of burning idols is the hallmark of the age of identity. A word, which practically did not register on our ontological horizons a century ago, is now the focal point of our lives. Problematizing identity, searching for it and dealing with it is a completely modern invention. The victory of "I" over "us" inevitably leads toward loss of meaning in life and sense of belonging to the community. And the silly little "I" even likes that.

We still haven't found the technical solution for the problem of individuation, although our greatest minds are working on it right now. But while we await salvation, the substitute of consumerism is available. It is so human, all too humanly pathetic when people build their identities based on whom they copulate with, what they feed on, what means they use to move around, how healthy they live, and other banal forms of consumption of everydayness. Even God, if we paraphrase the archaeologist of thought a

little bit more, has nothing left to do, but take care of his banal everyday life. No wonder then that we sent him into retirement.

Since the modern age is based on the aforementioned process of permanent technical innovation, the objects of symbolic and material consumption keep on changing. And that transforms identity from a given into a lifelong process and liquefies it into an eternal promethean quest for reinventing oneself. The problem of identity's free fall is actually a problem of mobilization of life in its entirety, a metaphorical roundabout from hell, which is constantly forcing us to choose, decide and of course face the consequences. At this point those two multiple Frenchmen would characterize our lives as rather schizophrenic.

If at first glance our lives are seemingly "normal", taking a look from above reveals the horrible dystopia of the present. Relentless choosing, searching for and inventing of oneself, one's lifestyle and career means living under permanent tension, under constant pressure to maintain an ephemeral self-image. At the heart of this dystopia we find the consumption of technology which has become an obligatory choice and which has compressed our perception of time-space into an infinite moment, representing an inversion of the bird's-eye perspective. Under such conditions the divide between objective and socially constructed reality keeps growing. We are living disjointed and displaced lives of mindless drones waiting for something exceptional to happen in order to break that endless moment. In the meantime, we pretend that everything is fine, that everything is exactly as it always was.

Let us return to the initial scene and imagine the movement of all those mobilized entities as forces within a system. Modulation of the system's principal components allows us to see the laws that govern it. Only by modifying a certain important force, such as the force of gravity, and then observing the changes within the system, are we able to see the dynamics of its operation, the unweighted influence of other driving forces in the background. One of such driving forces could be called desire. The desire for social and political liberation is really nothing more than another socialization of the survival instinct. A force that is attempting to defy other forces and is upturning reality while doing so. But this defiance is illusory since every attempt at it inevitably leads into the divide between realities and thus towards an Icarian free fall.

Bojan Stefanović