

# On the Discourse of the Victim in the Context of Biopolitics

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The victim is a universal cultural phenomenon. It consolidates the community, causes a powerful affect that allows the community to experience itself as a collective body. The main hypothesis of the article is that on the basis of understanding the specifics of the victim in modern culture, trauma can be understood as a biopolitical concept. The authors assume that in the modern cultural space the meaning of *sacrifice* is pushed to marginal positions by the meaning of *victim*, and show that the talk about the victim takes place within the narrative of trauma. Such semantic transformations vividly illustrate the logic of changing power dispositions. A clear marker of trauma is not so much the painful sense of loss caused by catastrophic events, but the breakdown and identity crisis that accompany the trauma. The victim appears as a protest of a unique collective body-topos opposed to a society of unified consumption. Arguments are given for understanding trauma as a biopolitical concept: it is a compromise between biopolitical ethics, which emphasises the sanctity of life, and the basis of biopolitics, which is connected with the reproduction of the figure of the victim as the embodiment of *'bare life'*. It is concluded that cultural trauma with its collective affectation can be regarded as the main nerve of modern biopolitics. Further reflection on trauma in the biopolitical context will make it possible to actualise the issue of transformation of the role of the victim in culture, to show a new perspective of trauma in the dramatic play of knowledge and power.

**Keywords:** victim, cultural trauma, biopolitical dispositive, 'bare life', collective body, identity

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## INTRODUCTION

A distinctive feature of turbulent socio-cultural development is the demand for redefinition of social phenomena, the need for a new interpretation of social events, which is, in particular, a consequence of 'political crises, ineffective reforms and imbalances in the systems of government' (Danilyan et al. 2022: 158). Traditional laws and rules are gradually being replaced by those derived from biopower. Discursivity prevails over the cultural dimension, 'masking' individual and collective corporeality. Like a chameleon, knowledge about corporeality adapts to reality, forms a leading episteme and political means of regulating social interaction.

The body is no longer a reality as such; it has been transformed into a symbolic construct connected, in particular, with the meanings of victim and trauma.

The figure of the victim is one of the anthropological universals. Being rooted in human nature, it strengthens the fundamental basis of any community. The specifics of the victim's circulation in modern culture are primarily determined by the discourse of trauma. Despite the blurred semantic contours, the concept of trauma characterises not so much catastrophic events as the feeling of social pain and identity crisis caused by such events. In the modern cultural space, the victim-*sacrifice* has been displaced to marginal positions by the *victim* itself. Such a semantic complex is deeply symptomatic and is connected with the current biopolitical dispossession.

Today, biopolitics is considered an 'order of things', an episteme, a source of paradigms. The canonical authors – M. Foucault (1975), G. Agamben (1998), M. Hardt and A. Negri (2001), and others – have laid down the main directions that are actively developed and are connected with the concepts of 'life and politics' (Mills 2017), 'biopower and bioeconomy' (Rabinow, Rose 2016), 'biocapital and biomedicalisation' (Marzocca 2020), 'postlife' and 'postphilosophy' (Žukauskaitė, Wilmer 2016), 'subjectivity' and 'death' (Nancy 1990; Braidotti 2013; Žizek 2002).

The world events that are in the focus of biopolitics are mostly related to crises and social upheavals that are either reverberations of the past, or are happening now, or are looming in the near future. Biopolitics is not only a power phenomenon. It involves a wide philosophical and anthropological dimension (Lemm 2023; Patton 2023; Di Gioia 2022). Means of communication have changed, major wars have occurred, migration flows have increased, and great efforts are being made in the fight against epidemics and natural disasters. Being qualitatively diverse, biopolitics has provided a context for the study of cultural phenomena, one of which is cultural trauma.

Cultural trauma traditionally poses a fundamental threat to a stable individual and collective identity. However, this is not so much an event as a dramatic cultural process related to the reworking of collective memory and the transformation of identity, 'a tear in the social fabric' (Eyerman 2001: 2), that needs to be interpreted and renewed. Cultural trauma is narrative in nature: it depends on the collective imagination, is mediated by the process of cultural meaning-shaping, and is inextricably linked to the discourse of the victim.

The study of the processes of victimisation and the biopolitical practices that construct them is one of the urgent tasks of modern philosophy and theory of culture, as well as a very promising direction of interdisciplinary research. The purpose of the article is to attempt to comprehend trauma as a biopolitical concept based on an understanding of the specifics of the victim in modern culture.

In choosing a **methodology**, the authors proceed from the understanding of episteme as the driving force of cultural development (M. Foucault 1975). Culture is seen as a space of discourses that shape the strategies of society's development. The authors draw on the idea of victim as a powerful factor in ensuring collective solidarity, an integral element of cultural communication that helps to overcome traumatic memories and threats to collective identity (Cultural Trauma... 2004). The psychological interpretation of trauma, which limits the tragic impact of an event to its direct participants or eyewitnesses, is also taken into account. Understanding the dynamics of the 'sacrificial Pantheon' is facilitated by the idea of changing the context in which the victimised image acquires a new special meaning.

## BIOPOLITICS: POWER OVER THE PRODUCTION OF HUMAN LIFE

Michel Foucault noted the following: 'In any society, the body is squeezed in the grip of power, which imposes coercion, prohibition, or obligation on it' (Foucault 1975: 138). The body exists in numerous dimensions, has many labels, and traditionally remains an epistemological mystery. Specific means of influencing the bodies of subjects and the forms of their lives are embodied in biopolitics, one of the historical forms of power that 'particularly well covered the entire surface located between the organic and the biological, between the body and the population' (Foucault 2014: 30). In the biopolitical dimension, the purpose of life is the production, and production is for the sake of life: all this resembles 'a great hive in which the queen bee continuously oversees production and reproduction' (Hardt, Negri 2001: 32).

Biopolitics has a diffuse character, changes along with the dynamics of social transformations. The biopolitical agenda is present in health care, everyday food, funeral culture, sexuality education, global digital surveillance networks, migration camps, etc. Biopolitical strategies range from the hyper-tanatal to the hyper-vital, from intimidation and horrific experiments on humans (the Holodomor in Ukraine, Unit 731 in Japan, concentration camps during World War II) to promising medical research to radically extend human life.

The broad field of biopolitics has a capitalist basis. Individual and collective corporeality is considered primarily an economic resource, subject to close control and management. The natural other side of this disposition is *bare life*<sup>1</sup>, whose politicisation has become a decisive event of our time. As G. Agamben emphasises, nudity in culture is not a state, but rather an event where the body is reduced to a purely biological functionality, while nudity itself is the result of the traumatic experience of being 'undressed' by someone else (Agamben 2014: 101).

Biopower, as an expression of the total economic power of capital, enters into a kind of security pact with the population that takes on contradictory forms. A person cannot exist outside of society, but each individual has a certain amount of freedom. Hence, there is a need to find 'a common tool to measure the civic freedom providing a framework to ensure an individual's personal freedom' (Danilyan et al. 2018: 27). Today, any individual is born 'wrapped' in various rights and freedoms that attach him or her in the civil and political legal order – the proclamation of freedoms is accompanied by an 'inscription' on the biopolitical body. However, the guarantors of rights and freedoms are certain external instances, primarily the state, which regularly reminds us of its exceptional ability to withstand disasters, terror, and natural disasters. As a result, in an emergency situation – *the state of exception*<sup>2</sup> – an average citizen, who is used to having his or her own unique world and a unique opinion about what is happening around him or her, helplessly slides down to 'bare life' as an object of the authorities

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of *bare life* means primarily a politically unprotected life that is constantly exposed to death or humiliation by the impunity of the sovereign power or those who constitute it as citizens. *Bare life* is a consequence of forced reduction: it is a life pushed beyond the boundaries of law and culture, the life of those excluded from society, life as an object of violent manipulation. The concept of *bare life*, along with the concept of *zoē*, is actively used by G. Agamben when analysing the figure of the refugee. When it comes to the concentration camp as a hidden paradigm of political modernity, Agamben uses the concept of *Muselmann* which is a 'living corpse' that has come to terms with death, is overwhelmed by humiliation, fear and horror and in which 'there is nothing natural or universal' (Agamben 1998: 185).

<sup>2</sup> According to G. Agamben, *the state of exception* is the termination of the legal order, which has become the dominant management paradigm of modern politics and threatens to significantly transform the structure and meaning of traditional constitutional forms. The state of exception is 'not a special kind of law (like the law of war); rather, insofar as it is a suspension of the juridical order itself, it defines law's threshold or limit concept' (Agamben 2005: 4).

manipulations. As a result, the dignity of life becomes a kind of caesura in determining the political significance of life and the possibility of access to the political space, from an internal value of a person to the result of an external decision.

It should be noted that with the current form of biopolitics, the state of exception, in which everyone without any 'official' rights violation procedure can find oneself in the status of a disenfranchised *homo sacer*<sup>3</sup> (suddenly find themselves in the role of a hostage, refugee, etc.), is not so much totally spread as, according to G. Agamben, is virtualised. In turn, M. Hardt and A. Negri note the following: 'power becomes entirely biopolitical, the whole social body is comprised by power's machine and developed in its virtuality' (2001: 24), which emphasises the expediency of considering virtual (digital) reality as integral part of culture (Getman et al. 2022: 93; Danilyan et al. 2023: 149). The virtuality of terror, for example, lies primarily in its omnipresent threatening nature. The locality, on the other hand, is connected with the *Passion du reel*<sup>4</sup> – the direct unbearable experience of the Real (as opposed to everyday social reality), absolute evil that sporadically occurs in certain areas. According to Sl. Žižek, 'the Real in its extreme violence as the price to be paid for peeling off the deceptive layers of reality' (Žižek 2002: 5–6) and whose fundamental paradox is this: the passion of the Real 'culminates in its apparent opposite, in a theatrical spectacle – from the Stalinist show trials to spectacular terrorist acts' (Žižek 2002: 9). Hence the numerous talks about a post-apocalyptic world in which a global catastrophe has already occurred, although it has gone unnoticed.

The virtualisation of the state of exception is also natural because the final approval of the biopolitical disposition coincides with the total growth of media communication, which provides 'the global matrix of extraterritorial control' (Kovalenko et al. 2023: 226). The current biopolitical paradigm is immersed in a virtual environment, permeated by network interactivity. Therefore, it is not surprising that the image of the modern victim and her traumatic experience is built according to the laws of the modern media environment, depending on its capacity and ability to generate and support collective affects. The mass media form of representation of the collective body gives a sense of 'We' and at the same time actualises certain socio-psychological and medical phenomena.

## BIOPOLITICAL GROUNDS FOR READING THE VICTIM AS A TRAUMA

Traditionally, victimisation is considered one of the factors of social consolidation: it causes a powerful affect, due to which the community experiences itself as a collective body. However, in contrast to the *sacrifice* (a sacred sacrifice placed in the topos of sacredness and ceremoniously attesting to the circulation of identity, order and power), the modern figure of the *victim* unites the community not through sacrificial enthusiasm, but through negative influence.

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<sup>3</sup> In ancient Roman culture, the concept of *homo sacer* meant a person excluded from the sacred sphere of sacrifice and the profane sphere of human laws; as a result, such a person could not be sacrificed, and killing him or her was not considered a crime. In G. Agamben's conception, the concept of *homo sacer* is key and means the result of the functioning of biopower, which deprives a person of all his or her specific features and reduces him or her to the elementary property of 'being alive', the flip side of which is the property of 'being dead' (Agamben 1998: 81).

<sup>4</sup> As A. Badiou points out, *Passion du reel* is one of the key phenomena of modern culture, poetically evidenced by the vocabulary of excessive vitality – atrocity, piracy, extreme cruelty, ecstatic immersion in violence, etc. (Badiou 2007). According to Sl. Žižek, *Passion du reel* actualises itself in its pure form in the face of biopolitics, which forms the basis of the current 'war on terror' and shows the relevance of the concept of *homo sacer* (Žižek 2002).

Today, a victim is the object of illegitimate violence, opposed to the figures of the priest and the executioner, who are equated with criminals and terrorists. Victim events are considered not just traumatic, they threaten authorities with discredit, can undermine social order and break identity. Accordingly, power dispositive can neither directly demand victims nor bring them, but only appropriate them and hold them accountable. The internal demand of the system to reproduce and demonstrate the victim's 'bare life' cannot be accepted openly, so it takes the form of a symptomatic exclusion – a disaster repeated in different places, causing collective horror and grief.

The biopolitical horizon of trauma discourse has not only temporal but also semantic correlations. The concept of trauma comes primarily from the medical dictionary, which, in turn, is based on paradigmatic knowledge for biopower. This connection explains the appropriateness of transferring the relevant terminology to areas that at first glance are not directly related to medicine, such as society, culture and history. In the medical sense, trauma violates the integrity of a living body and involves medical restorative manipulations. Given that the human body has been subjected to a variety of cultural encodings in different eras, it is clear that the strong emphasis on the natural right to health, integrity and safety (along with the tendency to assign responsibility for respecting this right to both individuals and numerous institutions) fits well into the modern disposition.

The expansion of bio-power is facilitated by the growing diffuse influence of medicine as an agent of social control. The number of problems considered through the prism of its competence and jurisdiction is increasing.<sup>5</sup> Since the interested parties here are corporations, scientific laboratories, insurance companies and the state, this helps to overcome the narrow view of biopower as an isolated power of medicine and clearly shows that it is intertwined with other types of power, especially economic power.

The development of the private sector and entrepreneurship in medicine and health care actively contributes to the medicalisation of individual and social life. The private sector creates the right conditions for replacing the values of psychophysical health and personal happiness with the values of comfort, pharmacological efficiency, and a continuous process of consumption. In essence, the intention of modern technoscience not only for therapy, but also for the biological 'improvement' of a person is based on economic prerequisites related to the search for new ways of obtaining and maximising profit.

The discourse of trauma also correlates with the psychoanalytic tradition, which is characterised by extrapolating the description of post-traumatic (mainly post-war) mental disorders to a wide range of cultural symptoms. As it is known, the psychoanalytic vision is primarily linguocentric: the basis for the diagnosis of trauma is discursive breaks in the patient's story about himself or herself, 'speech addressed to the other' (Lacan 1956: 13). In fact, the trauma is the result of the reconstruction that the diagnostician carries out on the empirical material of the story, but the interpretation of such reconstruction is purely realistic.

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<sup>5</sup> Let us mention as an example of the aggravation of the problem of age differences in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic: the choice to save lives with ventilators in favour of those who have 'all their lives ahead of them' cannot in any way be considered criminal; such a choice seems justifiably natural, but it inevitably turned the elderly into the *Muselman* of the 21st century – they were forced to accept death, but were not sacrificed. According to G. Agamben, the essence of governance in the modern era is largely the normalisation and propaganda of horror. This is the basis for Agamben's critique of the political basis of the health emergency: there is a real threat of turning not only the elderly into *Muselman*, but also all individuals of Western civilisation into *homo sacer*.

The discrepancy between the Self and the imaginary Self is traumatic, the subject is traumatised by the encounter with the Other and the forever incomprehensible unrevealedness of his desire. The encounter with the vague and Terrible Real, the Passion of the Real – all this has a huge traumatic potential: life is inseparable from trauma, all that remains is to accept its symptoms. Accordingly, identity is not only split by trauma, but also shaped by it.

One cannot ignore the critique of psychoanalysis as a capitalist discourse expressed in G. Deleuze and P.-F. Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1983). The authors consider the psychoanalytic cult of scarcity to be repressive and ontologically questionable, but emphasise its key role in the capitalist production of desire. Desire itself does not appear as a desire to fill in a lack, but as a physical and mechanical process, flow, energy that feeds a person as a 'desire machine'. The capitalisation of desire, conditioned by the production of needs, implies the introduction of the fear of lack into the core of all experience. This mission is carried out by the paternalistic figure of the psychoanalyst, who, working with the trauma, actually imposes on the patient a view of himself in the style of fear of castration, the horror of the primary scene and other Oedipal schemes. For G. Deleuze and P.-F. Guattari, the Oedipus complex symbolises total internal suppression, which the state – by transferring it from the psychological field to the social field – transforms into external, beneficial to it legislative restrictions. Thus, the state turns out to be a machine of suppression, and it needs a person to demand not to desire (Deleuze, Guattari 1983: 349). In the biopolitical horizon, this logic gives a more complete picture. Biopolitics changes the anthropological substance: sacred blood is displaced from the field of power's attention by resource-intensive sexuality, and, accordingly, control is introduced into both reproductive bodies and the mechanics of desire production.

The figure of the witness is extremely important for the process of constructing cultural trauma. Representation of the victim requires articulating the nature of pain in such a way that the audience can recognise the trauma of the other as their own and rally around it. Next, it requires the identification of the perpetrator and the subsequent distribution of moral responsibility. All these processes are tied together and intensified by the witness. This role can be played by the victim herself or by an eyewitness (sometimes a perpetrator or accomplice), but in any case, the process of cultural trauma embeds such a witness in the speech paradigm of a psychoanalyst's patient rather than a participant in a trial who testifies.<sup>6</sup>

The discourse of trauma assumes that catastrophic events cause so much damage that individuals and communities cannot cope with it on their own and need external help. Trauma implies a medicalised approach to suffering, as well as the right to assistance and compensation. If we assume that external assistance is a blessing, then the discourse of trauma is used precisely to be able to claim this assistance. The defenselessness, powerlessness of the victim, as well as the inability to 'reassemble oneself' without the professional help of special services, is undoubtedly of a biopolitical nature. The management of the vital

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<sup>6</sup> In this regard, Claude Lanzmann's documentary *Shoah* played a paradigmatic role, with 9 hours of air-time filled with close-up testimonies and interviews of former concentration camp inmates (almost without the use of archival footage). Witnesses of traumatic disasters are immersed in introspection in the face of an authoritative other that lures out their painful memories. The task of such witnesses is to present not so much the factual account of the event as the phenomenal experience of it, including silence, 'confused' speech, a 'lump in the throat' and even lies, which also play the role of significant symptoms for the audience. In this regard, G. Agamben's opinion about the impossibility of true discursive representation is interesting, since the 'true witness' of suffering will be the one who has lost the gift of speech as a result of the experience (Agamben 1999: 150).

resources of the population is perceived by the people themselves as being in their interests, but at the same time there is a feeling of a certain alienation from one's own life.

Undoubtedly, the biopolitical background is also inherent in the identity crisis observed in post-traumatic syndrome, for which the experience of encountering violence will be paradigmatic, and only secondary to natural disaster. However, not all pain, loss and even humiliation are traumatic. It is primarily about cases of forced loss of human status, which the subject experiences as irreversible. In other words, the traumatic experience of a victim of radical violence is the experience of reducing one's own existence to 'bare life', this reversal of the biopolitical order.<sup>7</sup>

The experience of being a victim of radical violence can be experienced as a trauma in the perspective of both individual and collective identity. Genocide, purges, forced population displacement and other biopolitical excesses associated with terror can undoubtedly be perceived by the communities that experienced them as a blow to the collective identity, since the community itself is unable to prevent it. The background of demands for the restoration of rights and dishonoured justice remains the same indestructible shame in the face of the other who appropriated the sovereign declaration of terror.

The discourse of trauma reduces the degree of potential sacredness of events marked by victims or, more precisely, turns this sacredness into a different direction. An example is the precedent of the Holocaust, one of the largest biopolitical catastrophes. The genocide of the Jews is presented in terms of both victim and trauma. The discourse of the victim (not always indisputable – see Nancy 1990) places the event of genocide in the context of sacred history<sup>8</sup> in order to save mass deaths from the meaninglessness that is unbearable for individual and mass consciousness. The discourse of trauma implies the context of neglect and restoration of humanity, the sanctity of life, and the importance of the biopolitical package of rights to life, security, liberty and dignity. It should be recalled that this package is granted and guaranteed by the institutions of the rule of law and civil society.

Cultural trauma assembles the social body primarily in the modes of grief, guilt and resentment. In this regard, two interesting aspects of the actual existence of cultural trauma can be distinguished. On the one hand, experiencing someone else's trauma causes emotional identification with the victim, his family and friends. On the other hand, the therapeutic context is often supplanted by attempts to repeatedly experience someone else's loss and, by making it a part of everyday life, to build a network of unifying rituals and practices around it.

The discussion of the totalisation of grief, guilt and fear around cultural trauma resonates with Benjamin's vision of capitalism as a secular religion of guilt, in which utilitarian practices are equivalent to cultic acts (Benjamin 2005).<sup>9</sup> For W. Benjamin, religion is a conventional

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<sup>7</sup> Jean Améry, one of the intellectuals who survived Auschwitz, left an extremely eloquent description of the experience of torture, which turned out to be a prologue to the camp existence. Améry notes that with the first blow to the face, a person (especially if he is forcibly deprived of the right and opportunity to respond) loses 'trust in the world'. For a modern representative of Western civilisation, such trust is something like an a priori knowledge that physical and metaphysical existence presupposes caring and respectful treatment by others (Améry 2005: 59).

<sup>8</sup> The word 'Holocaust' literally means 'burnt offering'; 'Shoah' in Hebrew means calamity, catastrophe, and in the Torah it means severe trials sent by God to the people of the Covenant.

<sup>9</sup> W. Benjamin pays special attention to the 'demonic ambiguity' of the German word *Schuld* (debt and guilt at the same time), which gives grounds for characterising the totality of capitalist relations as relations of guilt without the possibility of redemption.

concept. Capitalism as a religion is not a transformation of existence, but rather its destruction, its transformation into ruins. It is primarily a structure formed by belief, behaviour, law and economics that aims to organise the universal nexus of guilt and debt. Accordingly, capitalism explains (and thus partially alleviates) care, anguish and anxiety by guilt and debt, it does not eliminate them, but rather intensifies them. According to W. Benjamin, the bearer of guilt is primarily 'bare life'. In addition, all-encompassing and ever-growing guilt subjugates even God, and, in the end, threatens a worldwide catastrophe. According to this logic, capitalism looks like a system of guilt. This system condemns to punishment in order to profit from debt and increase it at the same time.

As we can see, the understanding of the victim in terms of trauma is ambiguous: behind humanistic pathos, biopolitical exploitation is visible. In this sense, the talk of 'biopolitical theology', or 'the dispositive of the trinitarian economy of glorification' (Agamben 2011: 9), may not seem so fantastic: the biopolitical government is endowed with heavenly majesty, although it does not have its own divine substance from which its power derives. Such a theology, based on the general potential involvement in the abomination of violence, provides a secular cult of the sanctity of life with a corresponding body of security rituals. In such a system, cultural trauma with its collective affectation can be regarded as the main nerve.

Finally, we should mention the phenomenon related to the transformation of trauma into a spectacle. Assembling the collective body through affectation presupposes a performative, spectacular beginning. Thus, in archaic practices, sacrifice took place in an openly unveiled form. Trauma is not associated with spectacle as such; it presupposes that certain catastrophic events took place, which often took place covertly, without spectators and witnesses (for example, genocide or repression).

However, as J. Alexander (Cultural Trauma... 2004) notes, events in themselves do not form a collective trauma, are not inherently traumatic. Trauma is a socially mediated attribution. It follows that collective trauma is a product of public representations. Trauma is created by social agents by composing a 'new leading narrative'<sup>10</sup>, namely, by qualifying catastrophic events as trauma, publicly presenting the figures of victims and perpetrators, providing testimonies and arguments – in essence, providing cultural experience not only for the immediate victims, but also for those who are spatially and temporally distant from the original traumatic event.

The spectacularity in the construction of trauma is confirmed, in particular, by demonstratively impressive current forms of terror. However, in the biopolitical context, a paradox arises: the transformation of individuals with their personal dignity and a set of civil rights into the phenomenon of 'bare life' appears as a forbidden, indecent spectacle. The obscenity of viewing the torn, naked corpses of Auschwitz victims, the agony of earthquake victims,

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<sup>10</sup> As J. Alexander has shown, the narrative of cultural trauma must meet four 'requirements': describe the nature of the pain caused, identify the victim, explain the relation of the victim to the wider audience, and clarify responsibility for the trauma (Cultural Trauma... 2004: 13–15). Accordingly, the first element of cultural trauma begins with a claim of harm. Cultural trauma occurs when a narrative that articulates and defends a claim of trauma becomes dominant. The second element allows identification of the affected party. The third element shows how the suffering of a small number of people relates to a larger collective. This ensures the universalisation of the trauma – its extension not only to those who were directly affected. The fourth element accurately identifies the perpetrator – attribution of responsibility. As a result, a coherent narrative is formed that interprets the experience.



etc. is due primarily to considerations of respect for the dead and injured. However, in reality, such events turn out to be hypnotic. The fascination with the death of others is reinforced by the media, which demonstrates the victim's body, desecrated by a senseless death, as closely as possible in intense information flows. A tragedy, witnessed by the media and thus transformed into a media event, unites communities through the cultic condemnation of absolute evil.

## CONCLUSIONS

The changing historical and social interpretation made the human body vulnerable and prone to all kinds of violence (both physical and discursive), forced it to go through certain phases of control, close to the latest forms based on economic exploitation.

Today, life has been transformed into a political construct that has various forms. Biopolitics significantly expands the range of social practices directly related to interference in human life in all its manifestations. Biopolitical control is related to 'human rights', which are fundamentally defined through the 'right to life'. Life is perceived primarily as 'bare', that is, devoid of the essential characteristics that specify human existence.

The securitisation of everyday life is one of the biopolitical technologies that expand the state's ability to control 'bare life' and is primarily related to the discourse of the victim. The figure of the victim is inscribed in the general cultural mechanism of legitimization of power. The modern tendency to think of the victim in terms of trauma is deeply symptomatic. The context of trauma in talking about the victim in terms of trauma reflects the compromise between modern biopolitical ethics (which affirms the absolute sanctity of life) and the basis of biopolitics, associated with the reproduction of figures that embody 'bare life'. The contemporary tendency to the victim in terms of trauma is deeply symptomatic.

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## Apie aukos diskursą biopolitikos kontekste

### *Santrauka*

Auka yra universalus kultūrinis reiškinys. Ji konsoliduoja bendruomenę, sukelia galingą afektą, leidžiantį bendruomenei patirti save kaip kolektyvinį kūną. Pagrindinė straipsnio hipotezė – remiantis aukos specifika šiuolaikinėje kultūroje supratimu, trauma gali būti suprantama kaip biopolitinė sąvoka. Autoriai daro prielaidą, kad šiuolaikinėje kultūrinėje erdvėje *pasiaukojimo* reikšmę į marginalines pozicijas išstumia *aukos* reikšmė, ir parodo, kad kalbėjimas apie auką vyksta remiantis traumos naratyvu. Tokios semantinės transformacijos vaizdžiai iliustruoja galios dispozicijų kaitos logiką. Akivaizdus traumos požymis yra ne tiek skaudus praradimo jausmas, kurį sukelia katastrofiški įvykiai, kiek suirutė ir tapatybės krizė, lydinti traumą. Auka iškyla kaip unikalus kolektyvinio kūno protestas, priešpriešinamas unifikuoto vartojimo visuomenei. Pateikiami argumentai, kodėl traumą reikia suprasti kaip biopolitinę sąvoką: tai kompromisas tarp biopolitinės etikos, pabrėžiančios gyvybės šventumą, ir biopolitikos pagrindų, susijusių su aukos, kaip *nuogos gyvybės* įsikūnijimo, figūros reprodukcija. Daroma išvada, kad kultūrinę traumą su jos kolektyvine afektacija galima laikyti pagrindine šiuolaikinės biopolitikos varomąja jėga. Tolesni traumos apmąstymai biopolitikos kontekste leis aktualizuoti aukos vaidmens transformacijos kultūroje klausimą, parodyti naują traumos perspektyvą dramatiškoje žinojimo ir galios žaismėje.

**Raktažodžiai:** auka, kultūrinė trauma, biopolitinis dispozityvas, „nuoga gyvybė“, kolektyvinis kūnas, tapatybė