

# The need for dialogic consciousness in postmodern politic society

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This article analyses the forms of human thinking which fundamentally influence political life. The author distinguishes two of these forms – a monologic and a dialogic consciousness – and reveals philosophical pre-conditions for their formation in modern and postmodern times. The collision of these different forms of thinking is particularly relevant both for the countries of post-communist space and the old democratic traditions fostering Europe. The monologic consciousness is a closed thinking scheme rejecting the possibility of engaging in a dialogic relationship with a person holding a different viewpoint and with the reality itself. In modern-time politics, it emerged through the creation of ideologies. Surprisingly, the contemporary postmodern society also creates pre-conditions for the formation of the monologic consciousness. It is determined by the mechanisms of manipulation of thinking, the consequence of democracy turning into demagoguery. However, complex postmodern thinking is also disposed towards formation of the dialogic consciousness. The author demonstrates this process by the analysis of texts of postmodern authors, J. Derrida in particular.

**Key words:** dialogic consciousness, monologic consciousness, postmodernism, democracy, multi-culturalism

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## INTRODUCTION

When considering the place that values and their newly-developing systems have in post-communist societies, we cannot forget that the notions of values are first and foremost notions in human consciousness. Therefore, in order to assess the situation of values fundamentally, we have to carry out a philosophical research into the structure of consciousness. In this paper two competing mindsets will be discussed: the monologic and dialogic forms of consciousness. Each of these forms determines a different evolution of value systems within a multicultural society as well as a different form of its political organization. The process of democratisation that came to the post-communist countries and which today, having matured historically in the West during the modern era, has become a part of the postmodernist thought, sets an official task of transforming the monologic form of consciousness into dialogic, as the very nature of democracy demands. However, it is doubtful if the world itself, despite living in democracy for ages, has acquired a solid dialogic mindset. On the political level, the postmodernist thought, in spite of its veerings on the philosophical plane, creates a favourable environment for the monologic rather than dialogic consciousness to establish itself. Do Eastern European countries that have liberated themselves from the communist monologism avoid confrontation with a new, distorted type

of democracy and with another kind of monologic consciousness, typical of the modern West? Building on the insights about the nature of human being, understood both as an individual and as an open substance, we will attempt to demonstrate how it is possible to revive, under the conditions of postmodernism, the dialogic dimension of consciousness, and what kind of organisational principles this dimension determines in the socio-political environment.

## MONOLOGIC AND DIALOGIC FORMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The monologic or dialogic form of consciousness does not come from nothing: it is formed according to the fundamental type of relationship with reality, which determines what is held true or untrue. It is possible to foresee the monologism (closeness) or dialogism (openness) of human consciousness by looking at a certain logic in which it functions. Here it is worthwhile remembering Aristotle's basic distinction of logic into two types – analytical and topical (Aristotle 2015a: I, 4; Aristotle 2015b: I, 6). For the purposes of this paper, the only aspect of these types of logic that will be looked at, is the one that reflects the conditions for the functioning of consciousness – monologic or dialogic – on the political level<sup>1</sup>. Analytical logic is based on objective arguments, thus, the spreading of reality while using analytical logic allows discussion, that is, a conversation between, in principle, equal parties, or, in other words, dialogic consciousness<sup>2</sup>. Analytical logic is orientated by the very reality, thus the subjects that execute the operation of recognition consciously assume the second place in the presence of their searched truth. On the political level, this signals about the principal equality among citizens in the presence of universal good as well as forms a polity – a democratic regime free from the vices of subjectivity (selfishness), that allows every citizen who is in search of the objective common good to contribute to the governing of a country (Aristotle 1998: III, 5, 2–4). Analytical logic is the logic that combines dialogic consciousness and the process of polity (aspiration towards democracy), because at its centre lie the very reality and the objective common well-being of a state, rather than a well-being that depends on subjective individual feelings. On the contrary, topical logic appeals to such a condition of emotions and imagination that deprives the involved individual of any links with reality and makes him see it according to a subjective uncritical conviction that can be determined by environment or other person's influence (manipulation). Topical logic, because of its loss of openness towards reality and its lack of critical thinking, creates the rules for the functioning of monologic consciousness: a subjective belief is considered as the last indication of truth and is imposed on reality, most of the times without noticing that this very belief is only an instrument for manipulation, performed by the public environment. In this case, the most important is the opinion (partial, subjective truth) that takes precedence over the absolute truth (objective reality). On the political level, this creates regimes in which the common well-being ceases to be an objective task of the citizens and profit, sought by single individuals or their groups, becomes the driving force of the country. Such regimes are tyranny, oligarchy or democracy in the worst sense of the word: in all cases, the partial (subjective) idea of justice negates the absolute idea of justice, although it is presented as exactly the opposite (Aristotle

<sup>1</sup> It should be emphasized that these two branches of logic and their relationship on the metaphysical, anthropological or poetic level, where topical logic would form a certain symbiosis with analytical logic, underlining the positive role of subjectivism in an objective exploration of reality, are not discussed here. This paper is limited to the political sphere where objectivism and subjectivism have to be clearly distinguished and where analytical and topical types of logic both have different roles.

<sup>2</sup> The fundamental structure of dialogic consciousness is here reserved to analytical and not topical logic, as is often the case, due to E. Weil's arguments (Weil 1950).

1998: III, 5). This disguise of subjective truth as objective indicates that the mind's openness to reality is negated (dialogic consciousness is negated): reality is replaced with the subjective conviction that reality is established (monologic consciousness). Therefore, topical logic functions in rhetoric, the art of persuasion, while analytical logic flourishes naturally in philosophy, the art of learning about reality.

The problem we raise could be formulated as such: analysing the modern democratic world, we state that its processes (the format of debates and the ways in which electoral decisions are made, the role of mass communications and the place of advertising, the processes of choosing economic criteria and determining value systems etc.) are performed according to topical logic and that they form monologic consciousness of citizens. In other words, the problem that we raise and that is typical of democratic societies all over the world concerns the crisis of democratic identity, democracy's divergence from its own principles and the vanishing of dialogic consciousness that naturally belongs to it. The driving force behind the modern democracy is not an exchange of arguments, but a manipulative mechanism orientated at establishing subjective convictions. Such is the democracy that, having denied every aspiration towards polity, has reached the post-communist European countries. This is exactly the reason why the transformation of monologic consciousness into dialogic in the societies from these countries is troublesome. With the move from a totalitarian regime to democracy only the political register of monologic consciousness has changed, while the fundamental reasons behind its formation have remained: from subjective persuasions about the truth of communism one has moved to the policy of inculcating subjective images and "simulacrum" (Baudrillard 1981) of truth, in both cases replacing the openness of mind towards reality with manipulative opinions about it.

However, the existence of consciousness even in democracy that betrays its principles is more favourable politically for the formation of its dialogic form than it is under the conditions of totalitarianism. The country, functioning as a democracy and having its main link with the doctrine of human rights, gives a fundamental opportunity: a freedom to choose one's own way of thinking and living. Man can aspire towards the knowledge of reality and can break away from its political simulacrum, although topical logic in which the modern democratic society functions – multiple manipulative mechanisms – impede such a choice and only few do make it. In other words, the outside political freedom, provided by the modern democracy, creates a better environment for the development of internal freedom (freedom from manipulation and an opportunity to study the reality independently) than would totalitarian regimes that limit the external freedom<sup>3</sup>. Next, we will discuss the philosophical assumptions about the formation of monologic and dialogic consciousness.

## THE DOMINATION OF MONOLOGIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE MODERN AND POSTMODERN ERA

The transition of a citizen's monologic consciousness from political totalitarianism to the modern democratic regime is not a process that has been going on only in the post-communist

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<sup>3</sup> The place of internal (thinking) freedom and the way in which it functioned under the conditions of the Soviet totalitarianism were already discussed elsewhere (Aleksandravicius 2011). In this paper it is stated that even under the conditions when freedom is absolutely limited, internal human freedom manages to create a favourable environment of its own and to acquire a particular sense of reality while aiming at authentic knowledge about it. However, this requires efforts that are almost extra-human, therefore, even a simulacrum democracy is more favourable for the formation of dialogic consciousness than is a totalitarian regime.

European space for the last twenty years. It involves the entire Western civilisation and has been lasting for several centuries. It can be identified as a transition from the modern period on the basis of Descartes' ideas to the modern postmodernism. It should be emphasized that although monologic consciousness still persists, this transition has nevertheless created a favourable environment for the dialogic form of consciousness to emerge.

The Cartesian *cogito* revolution has created the best ground for the formation of monologic consciousness. In its essence, it is an extreme separation of the thinking subject from the thought object, which has deprived the objective reality of any pretensions it might have of containing reflexive categories. Without a thinking object, i. e. the human mind, reality is only a formless and chaotic mass. Reality is not an active partner to be explored, but meaningless matter of a purely subjective process. In this case, analytical logic is used as a pure instrument to form an idea and, therefore, reality itself: from beginning to end the explored object is determined by the conditions of its logical possibilities that are univocally set by the exploring subject. In this case, analytical logic loses its ontological pretension, vivid in Aristotle's thought, of opening itself for the independent reality: there is nothing that could open, reality itself does not give any new impulses, it does not surprise or baffle. However wide is the range of modern philosophical doctrines, all of them, from Descartes to Hegel, from rationalism to empiricism, from positivism to Marxism, from scientism to structuralism, have a typical inclination to see the sum of reality and a logically rational idea as identical, that is, to squeeze the former into a coherent system, expressed in concepts. Nothing apart from this system can be real and it requires, for the sake of coherence, to refute everything that contradicts its logic and principles. Such a process of identifying reality with an idea determines the monologism of the consciousness that makes it: firstly, its sole aim is to protect the purity of idea, i. e. to draw any experience of reality closer to it; secondly, given that consciousness is the only reasoning instance and the place where the idea about reality lies, it has to handle this idea on its own. The main characteristic of such a consciousness is closure that turns reality to an equally closed substance.

On the political level, it did not take long for a social contract idea, theorized first by Hobbes in the modern era, to develop from such a condition of consciousness: if by nature human consciousness is closed, and, correlatively, egoistic, a state can exist only when everybody agrees what is allowed and what is forbidden. At first, it caused an absolute monarchy and totalitarianism: social contract is treated as a concession of rights by a self-governing citizen to his leader, in other words, as a subordination of separate consciousnesses to one common consciousness that functions on a single idea (Hobbes 1988). When such a political model historically failed, an idea of the fragmented social contract was suggested, and it was Locke who was first to prove it systematically (Locke 1988; Locke 2009): individual citizens can discuss together how to make their actions agreeable, while the state guarantees only certain natural rights that have continued to increase in number up to this day. Such a liberalist social model created a favourable environment for the dialogic form of consciousness to develop: firstly, by making an individual absolute, it gave up its pretension of governing citizens according to a metaphysical idea that is common to all and according to its respective political manifestation; secondly, by strictly separating the public and the private spaces, liberalism gave unlimited freedom for an individual to seek truth in religion, culture and philosophy, which fostered an opportunity to emancipate oneself, breaking away from the modern attitude towards reality as closed substance.

However, the opportunity, provided by the liberal democracy, for monologic consciousness to develop into dialogic, cannot be fulfilled automatically. It is a result of individual determination and search for personal truths. Although many citizens in today's society have

dialogic consciousness, as attested by their education and culture, there are even more subjects with monologic consciousness that functions according to the given simulacrum of reality. The liberal democracy gives an opportunity for every individual to form his own relationship with reality, but it does not dictate the type of this relationship. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority chooses a world attitude that is uncritical and based on topical logic rather than openness to reality, which requires a certain amount of human maturity. Such uncritical thinking gives in to a certain type of imposed ideology. The liberal democracy allows not only freedom but also manipulation to flourish. By opposing political totalitarianism, it can lead not only to the spiritual liberation but also to the psychological slavery.

Most strongly opposed to the systematic nature of modern philosophy and its proclaimed principle of closed substance is postmodern philosophy. While the modern thinking aspires to a rationally coherent system, made of strictly-defined notions and concepts, and considers such a system as an explanation of world's objective identification with its constituent parts, the postmodern thinking negates, in principle, all systems, limits to notions and concepts and the very identities of the world and its objects. According to postmodernists, it is a too mild statement that the mind and its rules are not adapted to the world exploration, and it does not reveal enough how radical is the line that separates the mind from reality. In fact, the mind itself is extremely fragmented: it produces concepts, arguments and systems that are a self-lie and an attempt to hide oneself from one's own self, while reality with its objects and phenomena remains a random toy in the run of this deceptive and chaotic process. Various identities and concepts, especially when they are granted the status of constancy in time or even eternity, are only energetic grimaces that have nothing in common with identity, conceptualism, constancy or other forms of rationalism. Foucault, for example, considers all systematic statements and scientific structures as well as their argumentation as blind, irrational impulses, coming from the individual psyche as well as from the group force (Foucault 1966; Foucault 1969). Derrida with his deconstruction of all written discourses demonstrates their metaphorical nature and, therefore, denies, in principle, the possibility of scientific knowledge that would satisfy the criteria of *logos* (Derrida 1967a). Rorty treats the hermeneutics of meaning as an expression of basic pragmatic human needs that determines the types of discourses and perspectives on the so-called truth (Rorty 1991). Lyotard interprets all sources of civilized identities – the great narratives – as an instrument of social power and maintains that their credibility was strengthened by the creation of fundamentally empty metaphysical truths; therefore, he welcomes their end, observed in the last decades, as a possibility of liberation (Lyotard 1979). Finally, Deleuze claims that the idea of identification is vain; he upholds universal “eradication” (*déterritorialisation*) and speaks up for the nihilistic notion of the world, which justifies contradictions and radical relativism in various epistemological and value systems (Deleuze 1968; Deleuze 1969).

Postmodernism is an original nominal manifestation that radically denies the possibility not simply of mind and reality coming into contact, but also of mind meeting itself. The principal crisis of an individual identity that originates from all this destroys all possibilities of stating any type of belief, value, attitude or culture. All this is just a colossal game without ethic or epistemological shade, relation with good, evil, truth or lie. On the level of philosophical discussions, the postmodernist consciousness also does not have relation with the object of this paper: neither with monologic nor dialogical consciousness, as it lays claims to be beyond both of them. However, on the political level, consciousness influenced by postmodernism is an easy prey to manipulation and it becomes monologic. While denying the principle of identity, postmodernism forbids the opening towards reality, therefore, “the postmodernist relativism that is

close to nihilism leaves man without any criteria or guidelines” (Kuzmickas 2012: 168). However, it is impossible to live without criteria and guidelines: such a life is only a theoretical form without substance. On the practical, daily and political plains, people, bereft of guidelines for identity, take those that are imposed. Postmodernism manifests itself as a radical relativism in all sectors of reality – from arts to law, from economics to literature, – therefore, if all transcendental criteria are denied, on the political level human consciousnesses become “instrumental consciousnesses” (Mickūnas 2012: 294–304) that have an inculcated doctrine which brings profits to somebody else while making the crowd perform specific actions, like this and not that, vote for this and not for that, buy this and not that. Postmodernism negates modernism in everything except this: both of them form not the dialogic, but the monologic form of consciousness.

### **THE POSSIBILITY OF DIALOGIC CONSCIOUSNESS UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF POSTMODERNISM**

However, the transition of Western society from the modern to postmodern era cannot be considered unambiguously. Despite the domination of monologic consciousness, postmodernism created conditions also for the development of dialogic consciousness, as does democracy for authentic human freedom and not only for demagoguery. The transition from modernism to postmodernism opened a middle way which allowed consciousness to liberate itself from the dictate of a closed idea, avoiding, nevertheless, the traps of relativism. While following this way, consciousness functions as an open substance, it is guided by open concepts and it establishes for itself an open identity. Openness here indicates the refusal of closed ideas, substances and notions that in modern times constitute an absolute aim, while the notions of substance, concept and identity resist postmodern relativism. An open substantive consciousness, considered as dialogic, matches subtly the notions of identity as stable and as dynamic as well as describes a certain relation between man and reality. This relation should be defined as an openness which allows the acquisition of authentic knowledge of reality, expressed in rational concepts, and as an openness which requires this knowledge to be supplemented with new and necessary experiences of reality that would constantly modify these concepts. The attitude that emerged from the Christian theology and which states that this notion of open identity corresponds to the human’s understanding of himself as a person was analyzed and adopted elsewhere (Aleksandravičius 2012: 245–269).

It is not a certainty that this “middle” way remained completely foreign to the cited postmodern thinkers. It seems that after taking the mind to the radical negation of identity and to nihilism, many of them have turned, in one way or another, to the recognition of how valuable reality is, while isolating and identifying its certain level with an objective aim. Foucault talks about a “lifestyle” where every individual “I” represents itself, and locates there the possibility of an objective episteme, regardless it being ephemeral and depending on the historical context (Foucault 1969: 157–170). After negating the rights of the “grand narratives” to regulate society, Lyotard mentions “small narratives” that would have ethical legacy to manage intrapersonal relationships since they would appreciate individual differences (Lyotard 1979: 102–108). Deleuze suggests a widely-discussed notion of “concept”, which draws his form of postmodernism much closer to the understanding of the already mentioned open substance that manifests itself through “open concepts”. Concepts to Deleuze are a means to catch the moments of flowing reality and they resemble artworks. Although their value is extremely ephemeral if they are considered

separately, they open a way to an event in reality, if they are treated as a part of a process (Deleuze 1991). However, the attempts made by these thinkers seem modest in comparison with Derrida's efforts to replace reality that is conceptual and deconstructed into nihilism with something that in reality is "impossible", revealing within it, in such a way, the sacral dimension of Lévinas' infinity. In the last two decades of his life, Derrida, constantly appealing to the biblical world, talked about justice, mercy, hospitality and friendship (Derrida 1995), he considered thinking as begging and tears (Derrida 1991: 146–147), he spoke about "religion without religion" (Derrida 1992: 52–53). The beginnings of his thought should be also remembered: he writes in a way that liberates the reader from the dictate of a written discourse, giving him an opportunity to catch the meanings of a free and authentic albeit illogical world (Derrida 1967b: 143–223). In fact, should not Derrida's works in their entirety be considered as a transportation of thinking from the plane of rational reality to the plane of reality that is innocent, where the world starts anew, where lie the uncorrupted roots of identity rather than identity itself, where rather than reality itself, the impossible possibility of this reality is located, in which one finds a deity who proves to be real by never appearing in front of us? Due to such a staggering impetus, J. D. Caputo, an American Catholic philosopher, suggests that one should consider seriously the possibility of "postmodern Catholicism": Derrida manages to reveal the fundamental structure of religion behind its historical forms and behind its manifest religious and philosophical figures, he manages to reveal this structure within one's very thinking, and in such a way revives, together with Lévinas, the "prophetic" aspect of philosophy (Caputo 2004; Caputo 1997). "Are we Jewish? Or Greek? Or Augustans? Or Thomists? Or pre-modernists? Or postmodernists? We live in the difference between these figures, staying loyal to philosophers and prophets" (Caputo 2004: 161)<sup>4</sup>. Caputo encourages one to implement the closer intimacy between postmodernism and Christianity, seen in Derrida, according to the legacy of St. Augustin. Following this insight one might ask if Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of *actus essendi*, opening the perspective of infinity behind the known reality, could not be also integrated into postmodernism by replacing nihilism and relativity of reality with reflections on the secrets of reality. Such a symbiosis would mean that notions of substance and identity are rehabilitated without negating the phenomena, that are so precious to postmodernism, of crossing the border of absolute openness and identities. In such a symbiosis, the relationship between a substantial identity and its openness can be described in the same words that Caputo uses for a philosophical and prophetic elements when they form a unity: "A Christian or a Jewish who philosophises is loyal to two extremities: to prophets and philosophers; he finds himself in the middle between a Jewish and a Greek; he is torn between these two dichotomies; he thinks in clear philosophical notions while being constantly disturbed by voices of prophets; he does two different things at the same time. We allow one side to beat or provoke the other, stating that the best way to protect one's peace is not to leave in peace any of them. Neither a philosopher nor a prophet has the right to draw a conclusion because we are bound to both of them, and we cannot allow any of them to silence or to start governing the other" (Caputo 2004: 154).

The union between substance and identity, on the one hand, and absolute openness, on the other hand, can vary in its degree and intensity. There is no doubt that Deleuze's concepts or Derrida's impossible possibility would constitute an extreme side of the "open identity" that emphasizes the boundaries of identity as transgressed rather than as constant. However, a more

<sup>4</sup> Caputo paraphrases Derrida's statement which Derrida himself adopted from Lévinas (Derrida 1967b: 227–228).

symmetrical version of symbiosis between substance and openness is also possible. It can be found in M. Beuchot's, a Mexican philosopher's, suggestion that one should resort to the analogy of proportion. Using the latter as a principle for thinking about reality, univocality of the modern philosophy and equivocality of postmodernism would be modified and harmonized: "Analogy has been usurped for a long time, sometimes by univocality, sometimes by equivocality. On the one hand, the practitioners of univocality put emphasis on the logic-formal argumentation and disregarded the dialogic context, on the other hand, the practitioners of equivocality demanded argumentation that depended entirely on the context and was absolutely relative. <...> Now one needs to aim at a dynamic balance: dialectics that is positive and not simply negative and that would lead to the supreme stage of truth" (Beuchot 2004: 321–322). The comparison between substantial identity and its openness, or the principle of analogy, is the main factor in the formation of dialogic consciousness. In such a perspective, consciousness never shuts itself up in its own idea, culture or tradition, but always searches for the moment of truth in the views of other people or persons; nevertheless, such an exploration does not imply the levelling of all notions, since truth is considered and experienced as an identity that is concrete, personal and constant. Only such a notion of dialogic consciousness saves one from being usurped by a differently thinking consciousness, on the one hand, and uninterested in other forms of thinking that results in social atomisation, on the other hand, – that is, from both ways that lead to the dictate of monologic consciousness.

## CONCLUSIONS

The dialogic dimension of consciousness is a determining factor when modern man solves his spiritual and political problems. The dialogic form of consciousness restores the relationship between an individual and other people, allowing one to participate again in one's own truth as well as to actualize one's own existence as open to reality, without the necessity of renouncing one's identity. On the political level, dialogic consciousness is necessary for a double reason: only it allows democracy to renew its authenticity and only it creates conditions for peace and justice in today's multicultural society. It is doubtful whether there is any other way to solve problems of a pluralistic and globalised world.

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## Dialoginės sąmonės poreikis postmodernioje politinėje visuomenėje

### *Santrauka*

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamos žmogaus mąstymo formos, turinčios fundamentalų poveikį politiniam gyvenimui. Autorius išskiria dvi iš jų, pavadindamas jas monologine ir dialogine sąmone, bei atskleidamas filosofines jų susidarymo prielaidas moderniaisiais ir postmoderniaisiais laikais. Šių skirtingų mąstymo formų kolizija yra ypač aktuali tiek postkomunistinės erdvės šalyse, tiek senas demokratijos tradicijas puoselėjančioje Europoje. Monologinė sąmonė – tai uždara mąstymo schema, atimanti galimybę užmegzti dialoginį santykį su skirtingą pasaulėžiūrą išpažįstančiu žmogumi ir pačia tikrove. Moderniųjų laikų politikoje ji reiškėsi per ideologijų kūrimą. Nors ir keista, šiuolaikinė postmoderni visuomenė taip pat sudaro prielaidas monologinei sąmonei formuotis. Tai lemia manipuliacijos mąstymu mechanizmai, demokratijos virtimo demagogija pasekmė. Vis dėlto kompleksiškas postmodernus mąstymas yra taip pat palankus dialoginės sąmonės formavimuisi. Autorius parodo šį procesą, analizuodamas postmodernių autorių, ypač J. Derrida, tekstus.

**Raktažodžiai:** dialoginė sąmonė, monologinė sąmonė, postmodernizmas, demokratija, daugiakultūriškumas