

**Laibach:
the Group of
Power and Secrets
(Scream of Totalitarianism
from Central Europe)**

The cultural identity of Central Europe carries a certain characteristic feature of the region, which is manifested – in the history of its countries – as some sort of “being-in-between” or “middle-ness” between the so-called Eastern and Western part of the European civilisation. Various Central European artists can serve as a good illustrative example of this feature. One of them is surely Laibach, a world famous Slovenian musical-artistic group. Its phenomenon as well as its musical expression is very special. Both reflect post-modern artistic eclecticism of cultural influences from all sides and periods, as well as a very unique way of creative critique of political and organisational forms of social life, primarily on the local level, i.e. in Slovenia, on the regional level (mostly ex-Yugoslav), and later even the European and the globally-Europeanized level of the contemporary world.

Both formal and conceptual levels of the group’s activity are aimed at showing the totalitarian background of each governmental authority – Laibach acting as its “simulation” – and “its” power. The group was, however, never really transparent in its press releases (manifests and interviews) about the very essence of totalitarianism, which might have given the impression as if it in fact sympathised with it. Thus the group tries to trigger deeper reflection (or even polemic) which is aimed primarily at the recipient him/herself. In this way also the author of this article tries to follow the riddle presented by Laibach through its provocative creativity, and herewith intends to offer some hints for uncovering the mystery.

The Birth of Laibach

Laibach was established by a group of youngsters from Trbovlje, a small Slovenian town (with a long tradition of mining industry and ideology of socialism), on *June 1st, 1980*, less than a month after the death of the famous Yugoslav president *Josip BROZ TITO*. TITO was a charismatically honoured legend of the national liberation struggle during the Second World War, a Communist revolutionary and a post-war leader of the newborn Socialist country, which should in its development slowly move towards the more democratic West. *Laibach* covered with its artistic critical “mantle” acted in a spirit that was apparently opposite to this general trend. It evolved into a cultural-artistic *collective* of mainly musical creators (*Laibach Kunst*), and in 1984 (and later) was joined by other artistic groups – *Irwin*, a group of painters; the theatre ensemble *Theatre of Sisters Scipion Nasice* (later *The Red Pilot* and later again *Noordung*), the architects *Builders* (Graditelji), the designers *New Collectivism*, the *Department for Pure and Practical Philosophy* of the thinker *Peter MLAKAR*, etc.; thus creating a collective named *Neue sSlowenische Kunst* (New Slovenian Art) that favoured the *totalitarian* structure of social organisation with its culture and art as its *reflection*.

The first concert and artistic exhibition of the group in the town of Trbovlje was banned, since the communal authority accused the group of “incorrect” and “irresponsible” use of symbols. The group’s *name* (which is the *German* name for the Slovenian capital Ljubljana, used in the time when Slovene countries were parts of *Austro-Hungarian Empire*, and during the *Second World War* in the time of German *ucupation*), uniforms, marches, their flirting with Nazi and other totalitarian (eg. Stalinist) symbols (eg. the group’s symbol – the MALEVIČ’s *cross* in a cogwheel), their revolutionary-agitative mode of “singing”, all that was shocking in a society fed on socialist post-revolutionary culture. Even if punk was already “hanging” in the air, being very critical of the society (even revolting), the very phenomenon of *Laibach* was the one to *shock* the public in a very special way.

The members of the group published their official stand towards artistic activity in the so-called *Ten Points of Convent*¹ in the *New*

¹ LAIBACH, in *Neue slowenische Kunst (NSK)*. Zagreb, 1991. 18–19.

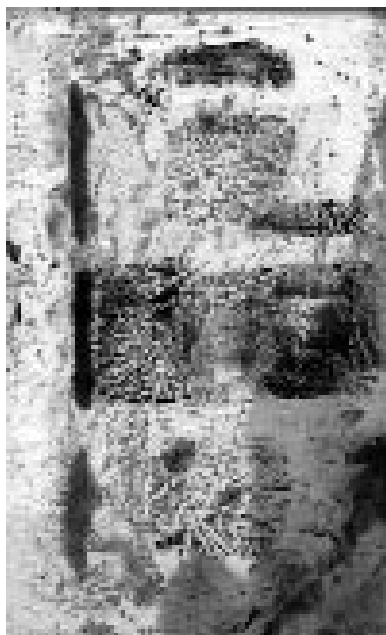
Review (Nova revija), an intellectual magazine of critical cultural-political opponents of the Slovenian regime of that time. Their art and *art* in its essence wants to be *politicised* and *ideological*, and as such it does not want to exclude *totalitarianism*, but it abolishes the *illusion of individual freedom*.

Also music as *power* against the always threatening anarchy of liberals and as a sign of sedation of the *antagonisms* within the society, especially in times of crisis, *disciplines* individuals in the form of a systematic (psycho-physical) terror by means of provoking *collective emotions and automatic associations* (through the *destruction of individual critical judgement*), creating a *mass* acting as one *humble collective*, responsible for its own position in the *system of production*. Each *subject* becomes totally *politicised* (sub-object).

Political Artist – “Engineer of Human Soul”

Thus politics – as the “*highest art*” – essentially joins with *industrial production* (here the idea of *absolute authority* can be recognised). For this reason Laibach could consider themselves *politicians*, and could arrogate sentences of dictators (e.g. Hitler and Stalin): “Laibach [in place of *art*] is a superior mission, that binds up to fanaticism” and “we, Laibach [in place of *artists*] are engineers of human souls”. However, in the case of Laibach this fanatical mission of art and its engineering expresses also the *unbridgeable split* between the unity of politics, ideology and industrial production on the one, and *spirit* on the other hand. This is a crucial view which brings the turnabout in the understanding of Laibach’s “mission” and “engineering”.

Laibach puts it this way: “All art is subject to political manipulation, except that which speaks with the language of that same manipulation.” This language is composed of the so-called *material of Laibach-manipulation: taylorism* (rationally organised working process in capitalist factories), *bruitism* (display of the world in a non-embellished form), *Nazi-kunst* (the art of the Third Reich) and *disco* (as a psychological expression of our culture representing the other three “elements”). Thus Laibach speaks with a language of



political manipulation. But why? Is it nothing but a *means to wrench from disposability* of the political manipulation (and through this of the absolute authority) as such?!²

The saturation of art with the symbols and sentences of *Nazism* and *Stalinism* in a region, “where political bureaucracy was allergic in both forms of totalitarianism”³, was naturally a serious provocation. However “does not Laibach *intensify* the totalitarian motifs precisely to reveal them in their *absurdity, disagreeableness, unacceptability, monstrosity*, and – being essentially military, and military being the essence of society – in their *unyielding authenticity*, that sprouts only ‘*from behind*’, ‘*from outside*’?”⁴ asks (himself and us) *the philosopher Taras KERMAUNER*. Of course this doesn’t go only for the Slovenian society and authorities of that time. “Nowadays *all regimes of the world are totalitarian* (politically, economically or in both aspects),”⁵ says KERMAUNER, “Laibach tends to reveal the *fictitious-*

ness of ideology within each system and to direct to the *reality which makes decisions*.”² Last but not least also the *texts* of the songs prove this, being as likely as not an expressions of *exorcist rebellion* against the suppressive authorities – for the sake of defending *freedom*, moreover at the same time also addressing everybody to real *social co-responsibility*.

Banned Laibach and the Discussion on Modernity

Slovene authorities of that time could not accept such a criticism, since it was too *unmasking*. In the television broadcast *Tednik* on June 26, 1983, it performed a presentation of *danger* to people and caused public indignation that led to the ban of the group (in Slovenia; the use of the name “Laibach” was prohibited). Consequently Laibach could not publish its first album (*Nebo žari / Red-hot Sky*). Therefore the members decided for a breakthrough abroad, mostly in Germany and Britain. They made *The Occupied Europe Tour* and in 1985 publish the double album *Recapitulation 1980–84*.

² The Heidegger- and Christian-oriented Slovene philosopher Taras KERMAUNER, being one of the first critics of Laibach, realises that. In his essay *X+(-)11=?* (in *Nova revija*) he writes: “For Laibach *challenges* are the basic poetic (and existential) means. To name your own poetic (and broadly also artistic, esp. musical) group as *Laibach Kunst* – moreover when considering that the group comes from a nation, that was formed out of a precluding conflict (and finally war) with the German nation, *Germans* in general (not only Nazis), is an indecency in itself; *dadaistically* a more successful turn can not be thought of. The name of the group is their most successful poetic idea. The group provokes the established authority, which is the direct form of the winners over Germans, provokes guardians of tradition to declare it as treacherous, as the fifth column, as a military enemy. (Military enemy is graduated *class* and *religious* enemy; is a specimen of enemy *as such*. The essence of the state is *political-military*.) Laibach superbly suspects: only with as radical challenge as this it is possible to *tear apart* the nice and empty appearance: to induce *state terrorists*, that they imagine a *scapegoat* and force *the truth: sacralising murder*. Namely *society* can not be *consecrated* again without a scapegoat and collective lynching of the selected victim, *unconsecrated* society however is only a *simulated* and *ludistic* society. The paradoxical, witty touching *intention* of Laibach is to *re-create the socius* through *personal martyrdom* and with the help of *tremendous insult* of Slovene ideal and existential tradition. Meaning, that Laibach *barbarously* enter from *outside* (in the society this is possible only from the standpoints of “*nomadism*” – as “*criminal, devil*” – or of “*divinity*” – as “*Jesus*”; as *foreigner* into Slovene *home* (the same however can be said for the home of every nation), and *discredit* it with the intention of *purifying* it; meanwhile those who *praise* it, they in reality *disgrace* it?” KERMAUNER Taras, *X+(-)11=?*. *Nova Revija* 1983/13–14. 1474.

At home they operated *illegally* (e.g. an *anonymous concert* in memory of Tomaž HOSTNIK, one of their members, who committed suicide in december 1982, *anonymous album*, etc.), while intellectuals quarrelled about the validity of the ban on their behalf. The philosopher Lev KREFT wrote: “The prohibited event is a *double event*: it forces *one* part of the society towards an *ideologically repressive* escalation of the right populist type, but *others* it excites to the utmost efforts to ensure *freedom of activity* to the *retrograde*. Both parts of society were *provoked by retrograde* and upon this provocation they *show their cards*.”⁷

Retrogradism is an expression of an artistic style within postmodernism that Laibach – as well as the total collective of NSK (Neue sSlowenische Kunst) started to apply in the mid-eighties of the XXth century. Within art, postmodernism itself is dedicated towards overcoming the modernistic experience, the typical feature of the latter being a radical cut with *tradition*. In his study “*Shot during the concert*”⁸, the philosopher Mladen DOLAR characterises traditionalist art as a reminder of *hope* for a restitution of the former era of *non-conflict organic community* beyond ideological notches, where music should constitute *harmonic* community of *consensual* reconciliation and concordance *beyond any antagonisms* that might threaten social unity. In its *illusiveness*, however, this just *hides* basic contradictions and tensions of the *real* social structure, where its general *dysfunctionality* (social-ness beyond society) exquisitely “*functions*” as the *manipulative mechanism* of the governing ideology, and acting as the *fetish substitute object* meaning conformist *withdrawal* from the thing itself, from the *emptiness* within.

Precisely this fact uncovers *modernism*, that in this manner wants to *take apart* this ideological mechanism and its art becomes a *symptom*, which brings – contrary to the comfort of a phantasm – essential dis-

³ BARBER-KERŠOVAN Alenka, *Laibach – Ten Years of Provocation. Delo*, 15th May 1993. 26.

⁴ KERMAUNER Taras, op. cit. 1475.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 1477.

⁶ *Ibid.* 1485.

⁷ KREFT Lev, *Aesthetics and Mission*. Ljubljana, 1994., 172.

⁸ DOLAR Mladen, *Shot during the Concert*. In ADORNO Theodor W., *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*. Ljubljana, 1986. 300–357.

comfort, pain, incomprehensibility, and senselessness. In the sphere of *language* and *poetry* the game between the *metaphor* and *metonymy*, *overcoming* and *condensing*, as a continuous slithering of *marking process* (transforming the marker into the marked) goes on. However music now *reflects* – with its *immanent* structure – that very essential inner social *splitting*, *uncovers* the usually *covered fact* of its *non-entirry, non-organicity* (the organic community is “*always already lost*”), now exposing exactly its own *untamed conflict-ness* and entire *obscurity* of the (human) world, which thus it “takes upon itself”.

With this it brings an *unbearable experience*. It becomes “*unheimlich*” (*unfamiliar*, which is essentially deeper *familiar*, however also *downtrodden*), the *herald of motherland-less in a false motherland*, where this art-symptom is manifested as a single possibility of the *critique of the world, respinned with ideology*, on whose side stands *phantasm. Atematism, atonality, dissonance, incompleteness* of musical composition, even the *concert without listeners* (as an extreme), mostly however *the never-ending (manifestive) theorisation* and *interpretation* of his creations on the part of the artist – all these are characteristic elements of this kind of music.

Also through Laibach⁹ it is possible to recognise the modernistic properties that painfully “*cut*” into the entertainment layer of *popular music* and its *mass culture*, strongly influenced by overseas trends (e.g. jazz, rock’n’roll, rock and disco).

All this reminds of ADORNO’s reply to the false emancipation of freedom of jazz, which supposedly – through its spontaneous improvisation – serves hidden reproduction of a small number of rhythmical forms, which it does not destroy with constant syncopating, but rather strengthens, turning manifold dissonance into consonance at

⁹ It goes mainly for the initial period of *industrial rock* (dating from the early eighties), that was typical for bands, that – “following the motto ‘boredom against boredom’ – describing the *sound environment of hi-tech society* as a loud-voiced, inexorable, ever recurring noise, [and whose] sound orgy [the bases] are *blunt strokes of bass-drum*, whose *brutality* causes that the rock-typical ‘groove’ is missing [and through which] there spread *monumental stacks of acoustic waste*, reaching physiological threshold of pain, that do not pay regard to *any development*, that do not move towards any summit and that instead of reproducing the *catharsis* rather reproduces *uninterrupted noise of industrial production*”, as it is defined by the publicist Alenka BARBER-KERŠOVAN, op. cit.

last. Therefore ADORNO's (modernistic) demand is "a painful and severe elaboration, discipline, the only one leading into atonality, harmonic discenteredness, of new rhythmical and formative structures, up to the radical split with traditional forms."¹⁰

Essentially this is the *punk avantgarde*, musicians whom the rock sociologist SIMON FRITH in his book *Sound Effects* presented as those, who "disproved the assumption that music acts as an *emotional code*, ie. the *individual sensuality* can be grasped from the *musical expression*. They (i.e. the musicians) developed punk-style voices claiming that the singer should not be *attached* to the song, since the *voice* is *only an instrument* for singing, but not necessarily the medium through which one sings. In parallel, electronic devices were emphasised, *machines*, that one could not watch or listen to *emotionally*. *Electronic instruments* can not be played or symbolised that way. Having proper programme, *everybody* can create exactly the *same* programme, irrespective of *individual 'feeling'*."¹¹ Planning in advance, self-discipline and intellectual selfishness are crucial, surely more important than the power of feelings and passion. For the punk avantgarde *all music is constructed*. Newly the question emerged as to "how music grasps experience, controls it and interferes with it."¹²

So these musicians appreciated *artificiality*, *pop* quality and they were interested in *rhythmical* rules (in disco, funk and reggae). One can notice the exposure of sole *mechanisms of technical-rational manipulation with elements of musical structure* and its *construction* emphasizing the "cold" intellectual side. The same goes for the *total-*

¹⁰ Precisely in the context of mass culture Mladen DOLAR recognises *punk* as "a late response to jazz, that in its initial gesture meant precisely affirmation of the blunt, unbearable, unadorned mechanical rhythm, endlessly repeating itself with some elementary melodious forms – however through this very uncompromising attitude, which is literally unbearable and does not allow the subject any enclave or spontaneousness, it probably far the best presented the blunt pressure of ideology and – without distance – made it seen as bluntness of mechanical repetition, that is blurred by ideological gesture, in other words being made bearable and acceptable." Op. cit., 309–310.

¹¹ FRITH Simon, *Sound Effects*. Ljubljana, 1986. 161–162.

¹² Ibid. 163.

¹³ HOSTNIK Tomaž, *On the Delicacy of New Romantics*. In *Neue sSlowenische Kunst (NSK)*. Zagreb, 1991. 27–28.

itarianism of Laibach. This is indicated already in their affinity towards the German band *Kraftwerk* and its “*trailblazer’s*” *techno* (known also as “*industrial folk-music*”), in opposition to the phenomenon of *new romantics*¹³, even if Laibach uses pop elements as well. Thus the style of Laibach clearly manifests modernistic and postmodernistic qualities.

Postmodernism’s Cure for Hipocrisy

Postmodernism transcends the modernistic experience, in which it recognises a fundamental *hypocrisy*. Its *phantasmatic* function does not coincide easily with *ideology* and the function of *symptom* does not coincide with the *critique of ideology*. In the analysis of DOLAR, the fundamental *illusion* of modernism was that it demanded the *abolishment of phantasm*, as if it has been just an illusion. In this manner *phantasm comes back*, but the *symptom remains*. The *symptomatic foundation of phantasm* is preserved. Modernism forgets as well that symptom does not bring only *pain*, but also *enjoyment*.

On account of all this, DOLAR rejects the apology of modernism and Frederick JAMESON’s¹⁴ critique of postmodernism as shallow and superficial. DOLAR speaks of the postmodernistic return to *art-work*, a return to its *aura* (in Greek: *breath of Muse*, power of inspiration; commonly *transcendental shine*, particularly – *sacred value* of the art-work, which in modernism is *broken*, lost in its “*illusiveness*”). He speaks of the return to *audience* (even to *populism*), to *fascination*, to *story*, *form*, *object*, to *harmony* and *melody* – all these being a *step back* (“*retro*” of the *retrogradism* can be recognised as such) towards phantasm. This return, however, does by *no* means mean a *simple regression*, simple *reactualisation of traditional art* and its *quasi-archaism*.

After the experience with *modernistic notch* supposedly this should not be possible any more. “If the modernistic attitude has lost its authenticity and the traditional art cannot be brought back, then the art has just one option left: *remake* as a great postmodernistic method”¹⁵. The *sublime object* (of *symptomatic phantasm*) of the postmodernist

¹⁴ JAMESON Fredric, *Postmodernism*. Ljubljana, 1992. 5–56.

¹⁵ DOLAR Mladen, op. cit. 351.

art remains (becomes) “merely” a *mask* of unabolishable shortfall, *emptiness* in a structure (essentially – from the other point of view – of *plentifulness* of *secret, mystery!*), something, that is within aura painfully fascinating, and thus it does not mean anything, it just exists. Since postmodernism nevertheless bets on such an object, it can stop modernistic never-ending (marking) *process* and maybe only then it truly emphasises *advantages of the object* (that ADORNO speaks about) and thus can a subject “surrender” to the object.

In its musical expression Laibach started to introduce more *stimulative rhythms*, which pointed to *dance-ness*, preserving however *brutal shock-ness*, whose *obscure atmosphere* in its common *monotony* enables *mystic meditation* and “is illuminated by heroic bright wind-instruments, mostly trumpets and horns”¹⁶, as well as by other *classical* instruments, mostly strings, piano and organ, and *electric rock-guitars*. Additionally a mixed *choir* can be heard more and more audibly. Both the album *New Acropolis* (Nova Akropola, 1986) as well as the musical “score” for the theatre *spectacle* of NSK titled *Baptism under the Triglav* (Krst pod Triglavom; dealing with the history of Slovene trauma of Germanic Christianisation, presented through the poems of France PREŠEREN and Dominik SMOLE.) already include these elements, however “*Opus Dei*” (1987) is the work that with fullness of these expressions brings to the group *world-wide success* as well as a “triumphant” return to the Slovenian scene.

Laibach Defeats Communist Censorship

The new set of *reform-oriented* Communist authorities in Slovenia (led by Milan KUČAN, the later president of Slovenia) namely abated under the critiques favourable towards Laibach as well as under the group’s consecutive successes, and they annulled the ban of the group and of its name “Laibach”. Then Laibach publishes the album “*Slovene Acropolis – Parliament of Our Freedom*” (Slovenska Akropola – parlament naše svobode), which conveys the spirit of the newly rising *national consciousness*. The group wins recognition for its special style, that is fed on different musical influences (*eclecticism* of *idyllic-traditionalistic, militaristic-neoclassicistic, heroic-*

¹⁶ BARBER-KERŠOVAN Alenka, op. cit.

quasiarchaic and *traumatic-modernistic*) and for its ability to “sponge on” well-known pop-music hits.

The composition *One Vision of The Queen* is revived as *Geburt einer Nation*, followed by the hit *Life is Life* of the band *Opus*, as well as *Sympathy for the Devil* (1988) of *The Rolling Stones*. The complete album *Let It Be* of *The Beatles* appears in 1988. Correspondingly Laibach starts to use English and German rather than Slovene. Sound impression becomes easier to listen to, gets more attractive, even if it essentially preserves some pathetic *fearfulness*. In spite of that it *cathartically* relaxes the listener for *pleasure*. It works as “*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*” (Rudolf OTTO), in which a distinctive *power* of this music is manifested. This is recognised also by the *critics*. Laibach, however, connects this fact to the concept of *totalitarianism*, which thus becomes not so evident but rather a *mysteriously questionable matter*.

Gesamtkunstwerk on Stage

Laibach shows the fullness (total(itar)ity) of *its* artistic audio-visual expression especially in *its concerts*, which as some sort of *rituals* realise the group’s planned *conceptual multimedia artistic project* and are perceived as *Gesamtkunstwerk* (*integral art-work*; according to *Richard WAGNER*). Although part of the music is recorded in advance onto the matrix (choral-classical and techno-rhythmical part), the experience is very powerful especially due to the very *loud* music, due to the *scenography* of the stage (flag with crosses, antlers, usage of spotlights to pierce the darkness, laser or projection of films) and mostly due to *theatrical* actor-like poises of performers.

¹⁷ PRIBAC Igor, *Upon First Decade of Tito Laibach*. *Evropa*, 10th January 1991, 38.

¹⁸ “The *audience* finds it hard to realise that Laibach uncovers as *totalitarian* what they are fond of, and they do not like it, since *rock* should be *against totalitarianism*. They get angry, even if they are *excited* by the quality of Laibach’s music. They are aware of the fact that trumpets, drums and the noise of Laibach produce much *better* rock than rock itself does. Exactly this fact makes them angry far the most. When they become *aware* of that, they become part of an *intellectual process*, which itself is in contradiction with rock, which is supposed to be *instinctive*. They realise, however, that also within this higher level of response to the idea they can find *pleasure*. In this probably lies the greatest success of Laibach,” says Biba KOPF in the film *Bravo* of director Peter VEZJAK in TV Slovenija in 1993.

On the stage the performers are extremely *static and serious*, the *front man* however is *convincingly solemn* due to his *heroic-spiritualised* movements and due to his way of singing, which is an essentially *pathetic-exclaiming declamation* in a roughly crunching voice, that reminds one of an “*agitator’s proclamation* from revolutions of different origin”, in the analysis of Alenka BARBER-KERŠOVAN. The usual setting of the stage is also very typical – she continues – with two “symmetrically standing *army drummers*, which with *severe* faces, *hypnotic* gaze and *mechanistic-schematic* gestures ominously [reminds us] of *Hitlerjugend*.” “You will dance as the stick will beat the drum membrane,’ it echoes within the intestines of visitors of their concerts.”¹⁷ On the pop-culture scene such music surely sounds very peculiar¹⁸.

The Question of Totalitarianism and Democracy

Laibach – together with the complete collective of *NSK* – therefore makes us think through provocation of our *sensual-emotional moods*, asking us to be aware of our own position in social reality. Publicist Marko MILOSAVLJEVIČ quotes the statement of psychoanalytical philosopher Slavoj ŽIŽEK, that namely “Laibach does not function as a *response*, but rather as a *question*.’

Its *audience* – says ŽIŽEK – is obsessed with *longing for the Second* and asks itself: what position does Laibach actually stand on? Is it *truly totalitarian* or not? Since Laibach avoids the definite answer, it forces us to take our own view and to decide according to our wishes. Thus it leads to psychoanalysis in the end. In psychoanalysis the patient expects the final answer [via *transfer*] from his analyst, although he already feels the answer within himself. Laibach is as an analyst that clearly says: ‘I do not know the answer. You have to find it by yourselves.’ Therefore it is not odd, that Laibach is seen as *fascistic* by those who on the inside hide seeds of fascism; Laibach is regarded as cynical by those who are cynics themselves; and is regarded as un-serious teaser by those who actually are un-serious teasers.”¹⁹

¹⁹ MILOSAVLJEVIČ Marko, *Rhetoric Steadiness and Practical Fragility. Delo*, 15th October 1994, 30. It presents also a critique of Laibach from the book *Metastases of Enjoyment* by Slavoj ŽIŽEK.

Laibach is in fact a *mirror of self-criticism* for their spectators and listeners. Laibach alone therefore does not shoulder any responsibility, but it carries a *provoking appeal to responsibility*, which should essentially and existentially affect *everybody*.

In the late eighties and early nineties radical political and economic changes took place in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The Communist one-party system and Socialism were replaced by parliamentary democracy and a capitalist economy respectively. The *Warsaw Pact* was abolished, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia disintegrated – the latter in a tragic and bloody war. Laibach, however, even if considered by many in Slovenia as a contributor to the decay of Central and Eastern European totalitarianism, had their own opinion on all that.

In public statements following the publication of two new albums, *Kapital* (1992; in *techno-gothic* style) and *NATO* (1994; with arrangements of *anti-war* compositions of the groups Europe, Status Quo and Pink Floyd), it unmasked *democracy* as merely a *disguise for totalitarianism* (or even of fascist authorities) of the *capital*²⁰. The consequence may even be war, sometimes artificially managed, which is profitable for the capital, so that the capital can “feed its vampire-like living lifelessness” with corpses of war. This lifelessness can ultimately be destroyed (only) by the capital’s own greed. Thus Laibach mercilessly criticises the mass culture as well as its *pop music*, which it compares to the mechanisms of the totalitarianism of religion(s), whose critique the group presented in the album *Jesus Christ Superstars* (1996) in a *heavy-metal-oriented* sound setting.²¹

²⁰ “Eastern ideological (Communist) totalitarianism happened exclusively as a reaction to economic colonialism and totalitarianism of the West. Totalitarianism as a political system is a typical phenomenon of Western-European nihilism, which manages with the power of financial capital. Democracy is just a milder term for developed totalitarianism. East has *decayed*, since it blindly believed Western utopian definition of freedom of the individual. West however keeps itself only due to the fact, that it has a *guilefully* introduced *system*, which persists in the freedom of people, however – via its corporative economic logic – it introduced also a system of unconscious *collective bondage*, meaning that in democracy people believe, that they act according to their will and wishes. Democracy blinds people with utopian injection of wishes and dreams into the social blood circulation. The industry of entertainment is the needle of its injection. This is a common needle, and common needle leads to expansion of diseases. Democracy has no cure for its own disease.” LAIBACH, <http://www.ljudmila.org/embassy/3a/exc/13.htm>.

Shepherds as Wolves Meet God and the Devil

“Pop music is music for sheep, we however are wolves disguised as shepherds.”²² The conflict between the *Devil* and *God, truth* and *untruth* (as an inheritance of the split between reason and sensuality, with the loss of trust in sensuality-emotionality due to relativism of Greek sophists, and continued later as *absolutism of Mind* in *philosophy* and *theology*) is totally *problematicized*: “God invented the Devil – unless of course the Devil invented God. God is God and the Devil is the Devil, however God is maybe not so good as we think and also the Devil is not so evil as they present it. God is love, but love is the Devil. Devil is what is *human* in God, is its intentional mistake and phantom/punishment of God. Laibach comes from God and from Devil, our sympathy is for both of them. Those who love us, they themselves come from God too; those who dislike us, to them we show the Devil. God is in each of us. The one who finds God within oneself, shines like a superstar.”²³

“Our mission is to bring Evil out of the mind. We are there, where Evil begs for mercy.”²⁴ “God alone can subjugate Laibach. People and Devil cannot do that.”²⁵ Neither the authorities of any politics or ideology. Indeed Laibach does not give up easily. After a longer creative break in autumn 2003 they publish the most recent album *WAT*, which contains the group’s *apocalyptic* view of the present danger, leading towards *the end of the western civilisation* (by its *inner evil*, although it seems to be seen as coming from the *out-*

²¹ “*Priests of rock’n’roll totalitarianism* try to suggest to their worshippers an illusion of perfection of *alternative freedom*, that is supposed to be an expression of *radical revolt* against establishment and realisation of the utopia. It is the very establishment, however, which owns and manages radio and TV programmes, magazines with the highest circulation and publishers of the records with the most powerful distribution; moreover idols of rock and pop music are nothing but the instruments of this very establishment; by using them, pop culture, mass concerts and mass rave-parties establishment successfully introduces the *system of frustration* as well as it stultifies religious audience, corrodes their intellectual level and castrates the potential, truly revolting and socially creative energy of the youth. That who remains is an *ideal consumer*.” LAIBACH, in GOLIČ Janez, *God and Devil. Stop*, January 1997, 65.

²² LAIBACH, in *Neue sSlowenische Kunst (NSK)*. Zagreb, 1991. 59.

²³ LAIBACH, in GOLIČ Janez, *God and Devil. Stop*, January 1997, 65. 64–65.

²⁴ LAIBACH, in *Neue sSlowenische Kunst (NSK)*. Zagreb, 1991. 58.

²⁵ MILOSAVLJEVIČ Marko, *Pop Music is Music for Everybody, We however are Wolves*

side...), and some of the group's *un-covering answers* to the basic question about them, such as "what do they do?" and "what are they?" At the end they mysteriously say: "We are time"!

Will to Power, NSK-State and the Broadness of God

Laibach has, throughout its entire creative period, preserved a *collective* spirit, criticising the creative ego-trip of individualistic artists, who do not realise that their creations become "*common property*" and that this is their only reasonable and practical value. Laibach has persisted in its *sympathy to totalitarianism*. But what kind of totalitarianism is it? I believe that this totalitarianism has to be seen in a *double* perspective, which proceeds from the two-logicalities of philosophy of Friedrich NIETZSCHE²⁶, whose concept of *will to power* can express either the tendency of an individual or a group in fighting others for *power over everybody* (totalitarianism) or a tendency for *power alone* – of *God Dionysius*, transforming its *abundance* into *celebration*, which can be responsibly completed by passionate people, to whom the trust in sensuality, emotional moods and mental discussion with others has returned.

Maybe through this duality the *riddle* of totalitarianism itself can be solved. In the nineties, Laibach, together with the other members of NSK, launched an unusual artistic project and established the "*NSK-State*" (with its own apparatus, passports and embassies), in opposition to "real" states of *national territories*, that are more and more subordinated to *transnational* associations and to the imperialism of multinational corporations. The NSK-State is a state mobile in time, without borders and territory, an abstract exposure of mechanisms of state administration representing a key *frame*, which enables and protects social co-existence of citizens and which converts a material capital into a spiritual one. Laibach claims that "democracy is a system, where subordination of minority to majority is implemented. In Communism however it is vice versa, whereas the NSK-State is an

²⁶ URBANČIČ Ivan, *Zarathustra's Tradition I-II*. Ljubljana, 1993 and 1996. URBANČIČ Ivan, *Power and Authority*. Ljubljana, 2000.

²⁷ <http://www.ljudmila.org/embassy/3a/exc/131.htm>

²⁸ HRIBAR Tine, *Introduction to Ethics*. Ljubljana, 1991. HRIBAR Tine, *Phenomenology I-II*. Ljubljana, 1993 and 1995. HRIBAR Tine, *To Allow to Be*. Maribor, 1994.

all-inclusive [therefore: *totalitarian!*] mixture, in which subordination is a universal imperative of common happiness.”²⁷

The issue is basically the striving for the balance of the *freedom of the individual*, who should not exaggerate it on the account of others. It may also be a *surplus of categorical imperative* of Immanuel KANT, which in its formality (the impulse of the individual is directed towards that what everybody should do – all the same) is a summary of every “common mind” morality and its essentially *authoritative totalitarianism of deficiency*, may it be fulfilled with whatsoever contents. Therefore it does not accept any secret into its uncovering, and by that it essentially lies before the fact of its *un-covering*. It is closer to HEIDEGGER’s fundamental-ethic synthagm “*to allow to be*”²⁸, which permits everybody her or his existential and essential *uniqueness*; altogether however it keeps within such a *loving* (and also *painful*) *coexistence* as a momentum of conversational culture of communication.

Only that way the call of “*Fate of God*” can be fulfilled truly, which connects us with all our *different particularities* into a *civil society*, whose richness we *altogether* compose. Here I recognise the *totalitarianism of superabundance of power* (of God), which in the authenticity of its *mysterious uncovering into uncoverness*, allows and connects manifoldness of its *heterogeneous* manifestations. Therefore many of the different appearances of people as well as their motives and habits will not be understood as “Satanistic” resistance to the uniform “God”, but as the sole expression of *God’s fundamental richness*, being *holy* in the entire *life-game* of the *world*, into which everything invites us from the depths of its never completely and finally exploited *secret*. Maybe Laibach in its power carries precisely this message.

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