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Legalisation of Insanity through Art: Performance of Symptoms of Mental Suffering*

Summary

Along the lines of the titularly defined deliberation of performance artist D. B. Indoš on the performance of antipsychiatry and of actor Vilim Matula on romanticising “insanity” – “There is insanity on the one side of the razorblade, and mediocrity on the other” – I shall elaborate the selected performative dedications to “insanity” interpreted by Damir Bartol Indoš, i.e. as Indoš himself terms the aforementioned life matrix – “mental suffering.” The second part of the paper refers to the symptom of mental suffering in the ethnographic and mythic modus as relevant matrices of contemporary deliberations of the symptoms of mental suffering and in the context of romanticising “insanity.”

One of the most common illnesses is the diagnosis.

Karl Kraus

American psychiatrist Albert Rothenberg (b. 1930) states that the traditional affiliation between mental illness and creativity ensues due to the peculiar structure of the creative process and insanity (insanity as an unusual modus of creativity) – they are characterised by the Janusian process (thinking in opposites or ambivalences with simultaneous formation of multiple opposites or antitheses), which is similar to schizophrenia (Rothenberg 2010: 25, 194), and homospatial (Greek: *homois* – same) images (conceiving two or more separate entities occupying the same space), which resemble autism and visual hallucinations (Rothenberg 2010: 37). Having performed two thousand interviews (investigative rather than clinical) with a large number of scientists and artists, Rothenberg sought to demystify popular interpretations and stereotypes associated with creativity and insanity, and ascertained that creative persons are essentially not different from others, apart from being dedicated to the act of creation. According to his comprehension, “insanity” is not a kind of romantic and romanticised prerequisite for creation as is considered even by certain influential contemporary psychiatrists.¹ As an example, I note the

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¹ The aforementioned romanticising of insanity can also be associated with Indoš’s advocacy of legalising insanity through art, as well as with the statement of actor Vilim Matula, who collaborates with

inscription on the cover of the collection of poems *Neuro-Neuro* (2001) by Milko Valent: in his essay *The Schizophrenia of Art*, Swiss psychiatrist and author Walter Vogt posed the following question: “Is there a schizophrenia of art?”, to which he unambiguously answered: “There is nothing else.” On the basis of the two aforementioned deliberations on insanity, whereby Vogt’s is close to Laing’s paradigm of antipsychiatry, I shall proceed with the consideration of the performance of legalisation of insanity by Damir Bartol Indoš² with a closing framework on insanity in the ethnographic and mythic modus as a relevant matrix of contemporary deliberation on symptoms of mental suffering and in the context of romanticising “insanity.” In lieu of the determinant *insanity*, Indoš uses the term *symptom of mental suffering*, arguing that the individuals exhibiting symptoms of mental suffering “have been termed *sick* in vulgar or provincialist perception, and in its most vulgar variant – *lunatics*” (Indoš 2000: 31). As Director of the University Psychiatric Hospital Vrapče, Vlado Jukić (1951–2019) points out that he deliberately does not use the term “persons with mental disorders” which, “as an imprecise and inaccurate euphemism dictated by the poorly informed, albeit self-proclaimed defenders of human rights (and their non-critical followers), i.e. fighters against stigma in this case (as if stigma disappears once the name is changed!),” increasingly suppresses the term “mental patients.” He then adds: “Specifically, I agree with those who differentiate between mental patients (e.g. those suffering from schizophrenia) and persons with mental/psychological disorders or disturbances!” (Jukić 2016: 173)

D. B. Indoš – performance of antipsychiatry

I shall examine Indoš’s performance of “insanity” on the basis of two of his stage plays – *Rocking (Njihanje)*, 1987) and *Doors (Vrata)*, 1996), with which he sought to affirm antipsychiatry in Croatian practice, thereby using, among other things, visual elements from the antipsychiatric film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s*

Indoš in his performances of “mental suffering” from the realm of independent theatre – “There is *insanity* on the one side of the razorblade, and *mediocrity* on the other” (Matula, qtd. in Marjanić 2001: 12–22).

² Damir Bartol Indoš (Zagreb, 11 July 1957), author and performer of post-dramatic i.e. performance theatre. In 1976, he joined Kugla Theatre Group (1975–1981/1982), which eventually split into two factions – the initial, so-called “soft” faction, and Indoš’s newly-formed “hard” faction. Having staged the biophilic performance *Laika – the First Dog in Space* in 1999, Indoš’s faction became known under the title D. B. Indoš – House of Extreme Music Theatre, which has hitherto presented a series of performances and stage plays, i.e. stage plays close to performance art (performance theatre). The psychophysical theatre of Kugla, in which the energy of soul is inscribed into the visible body and which aims at ritualist, shamanist elimination of the system and ideologies contrary to nature and man, affirms the “doors” of Ronald D. Laing’s Kingsley Hall, a free flow of decentred symptoms of mental suffering. Available at: www.mi2.hr/indos/info.htm

Nest (1975) by Miloš Forman.³ In the performance of the autistic movements and body, dedicated to the symptom of mental suffering/transcendental experience, Damir Bartol Indoš – head of the alternative theatre group Kugla which, at the time of development of the antipsychiatric stage play *Doors* (1996), emerged under the name D. B. Indoš and the House of Extreme Music Theatre / Kugla – reduces the body to a regressive proto-image of a “subnormal” body: the performer as a *de-former*, the one who de-divinises the image of the body. The deformative body is a body of abstract movements (separated from reality), movements that “re-turn” the Body to its beginning.

Indoš’s scenic installations or, as he himself has termed them, *spiritually recycled waste*, pertain to acoustic and kinetic installations; the stage is resonating as the body is projecting the pain of symptoms of mental suffering. This is a transfer of the body’s kinetic rhythms into a sculpture, into multiplied acoustic-kinetic installations, whereby the architectural scene, constructed by a theatrical museum of metal figures-waste, becomes a spiritual/mental prothesis (meaning extension rather than substitute) of the body (immersion of the body into the scene: scenicality of the body and corporeality of the scene). Kugla’s industrial-metallurgical music (to be read as meaning “noise”) – the creaking, the squeaking, the beating of metal waste constructions – produces a ritualist and shamanist act that aims at banishing the unnatural causes of death. Briefly put, for this occasion I have chosen the two aforementioned stage plays by Damir Bartol Indoš as the representative of Croatian alternative, independent scene who has consistently, since mid-1970s, implemented the performance of antipsychiatric practice.

Doors (which premiered in Croatia in 1996) affirm the passing through the doors of Kingsley Hall (London, 1965–1970), the antipsychiatric school of Ronald D. Laing, of whom D. B. Indoš, who considers him his spiritual teacher, states the following:

“For years I have felt a strong incarnational connection to Ronald D. Laing, in which I have found spiritual support in sharing my existence with Kukupija Drijemavica, a woman (Ivana Ranka Šikić)⁴ with strong transcendental experience, extremely educated, albeit with

³ The title of the novel by Ken Kesey, published in 1962, was taken from a nursery rhyme: “...one flew East, one flew West, and one flew over the cuckoo’s nest,” whereby the “cuckoo’s nest” could also symbolise a mental asylum.

⁴ Indoš’s mother-in-law, who most of her life manifested the symptom of mental suffering (Ivana Ranka Šikić, Kukupija Drijemavica), was an extremely educated, spirited and lively person, but was also stigmatised by the diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia. [...] She also kept track – as much as she could, in her unhinged and eccentric manner – of the lives of her children, who were surrounded by information from rock culture and the hippie movement; she absorbed all of it into her mind and would let it all out a thousand times in her everyday life, and sometimes through her artistic activity, writing or painting” (Indoš, qtd. in Blažević 2007: 276).

an absolutely outsider sentiment in the social sense. She related to my life decision to seek to implement the principles of antipsychiatry from theory into practice, which means that antipsychiatry can only be applied in the sense that one lives and works, collaborates with people from the other side of social reality. And then one such person, under the pseudonym Kukuvija Drijemavica (Barn Owl), wrote the text *Deviations upon Associations*, created in a single night in the manner of automatic writing of text. This text was my starting point for a number of years. It has found its spirituality in stage plays *Kukuvija Drijemavica (Barn Owl)*, *Zeinimuro*, *Vrata (Doors)*. I believe that *Doors* are the authentic place of this text as they are the DOORS of Kingsley Hall.” (Indoš, qtd. in Marjanić 2000: 10–17).

Indoš thereby often points out in interviews that antipsychiatry is not a movement against psychiatry, but rather against psychiatric institutions as total institutions (cf. Ćirić 2005: 1); representatives of antipsychiatry have criticised electrical stimulation therapy, lobotomy, and compulsory hospitalisation. He was also interested in the theory that family has been recognised as the source of anxiety, considering that he himself, as an adolescent and student, experienced the family situation of the dominant father figure. Ronald D. Laing often stated that parents cause anxiety. David Cooper, who got to politics through medicine, psychiatry, philosophy of existentialism, and phenomenological theories (cf. Kulenović 1980: 146), notes that from the moment of birth, most people progress through the social situation of the family and school, in which they continue to learn until they reach a level of social *normality*. Most people come to a development halt in the state of *normality*. Some of them break down on this developmental path and open up doors to “insanity” – “One should note that normality is ‘far out’ at an opposite pole not only to madness but also to sanity. Sanity approaches madness but an all-important gap, a difference, always remains” (Cooper 1980: 29). German psychiatrist, psychotherapist and theologian Manfred Lütz notes that, in the period of the 1968 student movement, society was considered a culprit for everything, even for mental illnesses. Therefore the Socialist Collective of Patients was established in Heidelberg, which also operated as a terrorist organisation (Lütz 2011: 52). Specifically, Lütz – along the lines of Foucault – shows that the psychiatric, medicinal treatment of patients saw its systematic beginning in the 19th century; the clinics were then relocated out of towns, which resulted in the severing of the already-fragile contacts of these people; in all fairness, the institutions did protect mental patients from neglect in this manner, but other issues emerged (Lütz 2011: 43; Sunajko 2016: 466). Lütz’s conclusion is the following – beware of normal people, the mentally ill commit lesser wrongdoings than do normal people – “Neutrally speaking, the mentally ill are actually merely special” (Lütz 2011: 10).

Let us observe for a moment Indoš’s stage play *Doors* (1996) that thematises the “doors” of Kingsley Hall, in which it is possible to achieve transcendental experience as they do not use repressive means (electroshocks, medicaments,

physical restraining), but rather collaborate together with the patient in the process of liberation. Behind these doors exist all those who lived in the practice of manifesting symptoms of mental suffering, such as Mary Burns or Ronald Laing (cf. “Damir Bartol Indoš”, https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damir_Bartol_Indo%C5%A). And while Laing’s doors enable the achievement of transcendental experience, the doors of traditional psychiatric institutions carry out psycho-control and psycho-punishment over the mentally ill, while the prescription tranquilisers (projection of pills manufactured by Pliva Pharmaceutical Company on the video wall, vomiting into the toilet bowl, which can be seen on the video wall in the play itself) are used as means of control over the bodies of the *mentally ill*. The third door opens up the attitude of the National Socialists towards *mental patients* during the Second World War, which is marked on stage by releasing gas/‘gas showers’, while *she* (Jolanda van Dijk) is hitting the lid of a metal box as the (opening/closing of) Pandora’s box of evil.⁵ Specifically, on 1 September 1939, Hitler ordered the implementation of the National Socialist “euthanasia programme.” The starting point of D. B. Indoš is the practice of Austrian *hospitals of death* (a hospital near Linz, and Landeskrankenhaus in Klagenfurt), with the memorialisation that the first gas chambers were built at mental hospitals. In the play’s programme leaflet – when it was performed as the representative of Croatia on 20 November 1995 at the London Film Makers’ Co-op as part of the event *Art on the Margins of the War Zone* – it is stated that quotes from the book *The Turning Point* by Fritjof Capra were used, and that the play brings an actualisation of reality that affirms the concept of intuition and the abolition of male dominance, and acts as support to Helge Stromberger, author of the book *Die Ärzte, die Schwestern, die SS und der Tod* (*The Doctors, the Nurses, the SS, and Death*), with which he revealed the cruelty of the Nazis towards the “mentally ill” at Landeskrankenhaus in Klagenfurt, who were killed on account of their *worthlessness*.

The introductory scene, with lights turning on and off and the kneeling female body that is bending forward in the rhythm of the lights, is a representation of shock-therapy, which does not aim to return “a lunatic to normal cultural patterns. [...] Its value is that it destroys *all* paradigms, both cultural and private, and leaves the patient temporarily in a Dynamic state” (Szasz 1982: 314: 306). An electro-shock “duplicate[s] the effects of hitting the patient over the head with a baseball bat. It simply knocks him senseless. In fact it was to imitate the effect of hitting

⁵ This is a video record of the performance within the framework of Amsterdam’s cultural summer on 24, 25 and 26 July 1995 at Felix Meritis Theatre. Film animation: Nicole Hewitt; musicians: jazz musician Elliott Sharp, Damir Prica Kafka and Igor Pavlica (members of the bands Haustor and Cul-de-Sac).

Cf. the programme leaflet of the play *Doors* (Zagreb Youth Theatre, 20 January 1996).

someone over the head with a baseball bat without the risk of skull injury that Ugo Cerletti developed shock treatment in the first place” (Szasz 1982: 314).⁶

Regarding the names Tarik and Nedim, which are the neuralgic points of the song in *Doors* and also appear in the play/performance *Labirint (Labyrinth)*, where they are written on a blackboard by Zlatko Burić-Kićo, in the context of the war migrant story of the 1990s in the territory of former Yugoslavia, D. B. Indoš notes that the aforementioned doors of the bus with war refugees leaves in front of the “mosque” (Meštrović Pavilion in Zagreb, t/n) towards Bugojno in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was still a war zone at the time” (“DBIndoš – House of Extreme Music Theatre” 2010: 28).

“The names are related to social care or the humane question of love towards children. These two children, brothers from Bugojno, lived at my parents’ during the Croatian-Bosnian war. They found themselves in a difficult, paranoid situation as Muslim refugees. In the moments in which I was watching them return to Bosnia with the bus that was leaving in front of the ‘mosque’ in Zagreb, there were amoral financial calculations with transport tickets, the people were forced to take each other’s seats on the bus... Having witnessed this, I went to the Multimedia Centre. I entered the dark room and proceeded to wail, scream out in pain, cry... I grabbed a trombone and started to wail: *Tarik, Nedim, Tarik, Nedim...* This is how the song for the play *Doors* was created. I end the song by cruelly slapping my own face. Amid these slaps, I collapse on the floor, which is followed by the scene from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* where orderlies are taking one of the patients for electroshock treatment. The experience with Tarik and Nedim, the experience of the humane relationship with children, I intertwine with the experiences from the aforementioned antipsychiatric film.”⁷ (Indoš, qtd. in Marjanić 2000: 10–17).

On the occasion of performing the play *Rocking* (1987),⁸ Indoš stated that he had the *privilege* to observe a person:

“who is unfortunate enough to produce movements as a consequence of mental suffering every day. And when I present these movements on stage, I imagine and sense how much this person is dedicated to performing his ritual actions. I have never seen an aesthetic act

⁶ In 1938, U. Cerletti and L. Bini from Rome introduced electroshock therapy into psychiatry (Szasz 1982: 314).

⁷ For a detailed interpretation of the play, cf. Marjanić 2000: 10–17.

⁸ On the remake of *Rocking* from 2001, performed by Irma Omerzo, Damir Bartol Indoš and Vilim Matula with musical support by Srđan Sacher and Roy Ashis (cf. Marjanić 2001: 12–22). Naturally, the performing/performance theory *may* extend the twin mytheme to the interpretation of *opposition* between *performance* and *play*, the *actor* (Vilim Matula) and the *performer* (D. B. Indoš). For example, in one of its scenic *stories*, the Rocker directly invites Vilim to demonstrate his actor’s experience: “And what does it look like, you, you’re an actor, Vili, can you show us?” This is the scene-story *Kamen (Stone)* in which the Rocker enters *warm provocation/ironizing* with the invitation to communicate or, in David Cooper’s terms – the *insane* discourse, whereby he suggests swallowing a stone, and further remarks that this is *merely* a joke on his part.

that is as perfect as the movements performed by this boy – who is today a young man. What I do in the plays/performances is the commitment to this ritual, which *he* performs daily at a 50-meter distance from my space. Here I find the strength to commit to my own language of insanity, *insanity* in tentative terms, to *my autism*.” (Indoš 2000: 31; cf. Indoš 2003: 20–21)

In that sense, he also started to dress himself to show symptoms of mental suffering in his plays/performances, thereby highlighting that clothing is the first thing we notice in the polarity of normality and sub-normality.

“Trousers tucked in underpants, the use of clips, adhesive tape for fastening clothes, wearing underwear in public... These are the (meta)physical signs from which transcendental experience arises. I consider the adhesive tape, the grey and brown packaging tape to be a nice garment. The adhesive tape is *my own* original ‘insane’ clothing solution. It is very practical in theatre when used to fixate certain items on the body” (Indoš 2000: 31).⁹

In the play *Rocking (Njihanje)*, the performance of sensibility for the body of mental suffering, D. B. Indoš is following the autistic movements of the body of his *role model*, the anonymous hero or the outsider who is committed to autism. In this demonstration of ‘rocking’ corpography, the body is bound with pneumatic pipes that are diagonally fastened to make four corners, resembling a boxing ring. The body is in constant motion, rocking back and forth: the repetition establishes a ritual rhythm of the ecstatic body. At one point, the rocking body of symptoms of mental suffering – found at the centre of the piping (to be read as meaning “intestinal”) installation, of the pipeline (to be read as meaning “the bloodstream”), of the piping (to be read as meaning “the vascular”) material – cuts the pipes with large (gardening) shears (the scene of cutting the umbilical cord is featured in the plays *Jedadde-Jedadde* and *Labyrinth*). The body is then freed from pneumatic pipes; it resumes the situation of obsessive rocking. And while Colin Affleck, for example, interprets the aforementioned performance as the visualisation of a baby

⁹ Indoš expressed the aforementioned account of symptoms of mental suffering in the late 1970s, in the period of collaboration with Kugla Theatre Group, i.e. during the collaboration on the performance *Play Držić* (Dubrovnik Summer Festival, Dubrovnik 1978, director: Ivica Boban). In his own words: “I found myself in a kind of isolation. While everybody was sitting *normally* at a table in one of the scenes, I was sitting upside-down. I was demonstrating the manner in which I wanted to work. I found myself in a situation of loneliness, which was the first reason for disturbed behaviour. On the eleventh day, in early evening, I stormed out into the backyard of the Lazarettos. There was a chair over there. I placed it in the middle of the yard and started performing the act *Čovjek-stolac* [*Man-Chair*]. There was great astonishment and shock among those who had gathered. Even those who were rich with transcendental experience doubted that I would ever *return* to reality. It seemed to me as if I did not need to return. Nevertheless, I stopped and returned to the space of the Lazarettos, and hid under a blanket. The members of Kugla Theatre Group declared the act *Man-Chair* to be a relevant theatrical event and legalised it as the theatre act of the play *Cirkus Plava zvijezda* [*Circus Blue Star*]. The act *Man-Chair* was created in a ‘soft’ fashion, from the experience of the spiritual sources of the hippie movement” (Indoš 2000: 31).

in the womb, awaiting to be born, Boris B. Hrovat interprets in the aforementioned performance the assuming of role of the modern Laocoön – naturally, which differs from the Antique hero in the “protagonist of *Rocking* being surrounded by today’s sophisticated technology, with mere unruly plastic pipes twisting around his body instead of snakes.” The aforementioned interpretations demonstrate the possibility of interpretative diversity (that is to say, “no” interpretation is incorrect in intimist theoretical worlds); in support of interpretative intimism, Boris B. Hrovat notes that Indoš’s “individual theatre” has slipped towards hermeticism, “albeit that of a rare kind, within which the spectators feel comfortable and simultaneously suffer from a certain unclear feeling of guilt, due to which they are not fully able to consciously conceive the essence and message of the *event* they are witnessing (Hrovat 1987: 23). Or, as noted by Robert M. Pirsig – comprehension is in itself *a static intellect, an antagonist* (Pirsig 1991: 250).

Insanity in the mythic and ethnologic context

In the work “Osnova za sabiranje i proučavanje građe o narodnom životu” (“The Basis for Collecting and Studying the Holdings on Folklife,” 1897), conceived as a comprehensive set of instructions for ethnographic fieldwork and as a means of studying folklife, Antun Radić also mentions persons with intellectual difficulties, whom he terms with the syntagma “sick to the mind” (“*bolesni na pameti*”), i.e. colloquially defines them ethnographically-wise as *crazy, quirky, burnt-out* (*trknuti, šiknuti, prismuđeni*; Radić 1929: 44). I would like to note questions from the aforementioned survey under Radić’s determinant “How do sick and grotesque people live?”: “What is life like with the ‘insane’, the somewhat ‘crazy’, the quirky ones? How do these people live? How does this person think? How to ‘utter lunatics’ live?” (qtd. in Radić 1929: 44).¹⁰ Based on Radić’s Basis, Frano Ivanišević thus notes the mental asylum in Šibenik for the territory of Poljice (Dalmatia) (Ivanišević 1987: 319, 366); as regards the region of Samobor, Milan Lang mentions the mental asylum in Stenjevec (Lang 2009: 482), noting that if somebody is to “go completely insane by misfortune,” the person is taken to the asylum in Stenjevec. For the region of Slavonia, Josip Lovretić mentions the *špital* (coll. “hospital”) in Vinkovci (Lovretić 1897: 374)¹¹: he points out that such individuals

¹⁰ The theoretic and methodologic concepts in the work *The Basis for Collecting and Studying the Holdings on Folklife* (1897) have made Antun Radić the founder of Croatian ethnology as independent science.

¹¹ Tihomir R. Đorđević notes the frequency of records of sending the mentally ill off to the friars to be read prayers, and also that Studenica Monastery was so well-known that even the Ottomans themselves would send their mentally ill in the period of Ottoman ruling in the Balkans. Furthermore, he notes that the Monastery of St. Naum was also a well-known sanatorium for the mentally ill, with Ottomans and Arnauts

had to obey both the old and the young, otherwise they would be reproached for being fed for nothing; members of the household would often confine and watch over the persons with more severe intellectual difficulties as they were ashamed by them, and would sometimes even restrain the wicked ones (Lovretić 1897: 374).

Such individuals in Poljice (Dalmatia) do not even wear appropriate clothes as other people do – “Some lunatics are as docile as sheep, they live as cattle, suffering under this burden, dressed in old rags, they roam the streets and yards bareheaded and barefooted, they will attack nobody, nor will anybody come up to them and say: ‘You degenerate!’” (Ivanišević 1897: 366), which is an example of a document of costume design, of the external habitus of persons with mental suffering. Furthermore, as regards Poljice, Ivanišević notes that the *worn-down or crazy characters* are perceived as *fools* – “The folk keep safe from them and avoid them, to be near them is eerie; until this lunacy has passed, leaving them calm and collected” (Ivanišević 1897: 335). Lang for Samobor, Lovretić for Otok and Ivanišević for Poljice all note an array of linguistic determinants for Radić’s determinant “sick to the mind” – “not in their right mind, the foolish, the quirky, the burnt-out ones, the ones who lost their marbles or have one too many of those” (Lang 2009: 482). It is also indicative that both Ivanišević and Lang note records on the differential determinants of those individuals with mental suffering who are calm and those who are pronouncedly aggressive. Ivanišević thus writes as follows: “The ones who go berserk and start to fight, to throw stones, to wield knives and rifles, are at once tied by their hands and feet, kept in a separate house, barrack or cellar, two or three strong men watch over them so they do not smash up anything or kill someone, and as soon as the county issues a permit, they are taken to a hospital” (Ivanišević 1897: 319).¹² Furthermore, Lang adds a category of halfwits who were used for the amusement of others: “The most famous one was Juro Bakran. The youth gleefully picked on him, they gladly teased him to irritate him and make fun of him. They would shout after him: Jura Bakran! Or whistle after him, which he could not stand” (Lang 2009: 482). For Poljice, Ivanišević also highlights the category of halfwit and notes that people laugh at them, “they call them *yappers*, they are always yapping away, good things or bad, their words are ignored, nobody in the house or in the village minds their empty words” (Ivanišević 1897: 366).

bringing their sick. Here, however, the mentally ill would be chained so they could only lie down, and they would remain in this position until they recovered. In the meantime, the priests (there were no friars in those days) would read prayers to them, and feed them only bread and vinegar (Đorđević 1965: 96).

¹² Ivanišević points out that the lives of *crippled and silly folk* are not entirely bad, but at the same time also notes the stigmatisation of such individuals in society: “If they are completely thick, they are not placed at the table with others, they are put away in the kitchen with children or servants when friends are visiting for dinner, as they are a disgrace and others make fun of them” (Ivanišević 1897: 365).

As regards halfwits, multimedia artist Vladimir Dodig Trokut (1949–2018) accentuated the role of the halfwits of Split in the making of the action *Red Peristyle* in the revolutionary year of 1968 – or, to quote Dodig himself:

“In order to comprehend at all the question of emergence of *Red Peristyle*, one needs to understand that Split in itself has always been the site of actual, spontaneous theatre in the true sense of the word, arising from the spirituality of the oafs and halfwits of the time, who had special significance. We used to adore them, and every day we would present a series of performances and actions on the subject of the *fusion of traditional folk theatre and a bash*. Within the framework of halfwits, I would like to notably mention Gudo, chansonnier Sančo Pančo, Dr. Picula who presented an array of performances and actions at our urging, and within the framework of oafs, I remember Bačo who, in the style of a marathon runner, ‘beat’ a six-horse stagecoach from Split to Omiš in which he, naturally, arrived before it. Hence, this was the mentally accumulated energy of the city. Faust Vrančić served as our role model in that context. The principle connoting the artistic one had already been present in the city’s mindset which we, by socialising with and managing these energies – whereby the Diocletian’s Palace itself was packed with all of these energies – inadvertently provoked certain worlds, the occult, hermetic, parallel worlds. These folk feasts and *living* theatre constituted an informal, undisciplined, spontaneous, primordial, direct and real approach to art” (Dodig Trokut, qtd. in Marjanić 2014: 921).

Furthermore, the only documentary film of film director Bruno Anković, *Van-ka škvar* (*Outside the Box*, Factum, 2000), thematises the *originales* of Split as trademarks of street life of Mediterranean towns in the early 20th century. The film documents how Vicko Mihaljević,¹³ former Mayor of Split, initiated the practice of organising annual banquets in the early 20th century (1907–1911) for the city’s halfwits, known for their humour and eccentric behaviour, who thereby had the opportunity to be officially honoured by the city. In the late 20th century, the City of Split decided to revive this traditional banquet; director Bruno Anković documented the aforementioned practice in his film. The halfwits build upon the subject of Diogenes’ kynical body that proved to work best on the streets, with quips, uttered words or gestures, thus banishing philosophy to squares at the very beginning of its encapsulation in various schools. It is evident that he had no other choice, just like Split’s *originales* who operated in the exteriors of Split, since he was poor. This philosopher presented his philosophy in body language and masturbated on squares within the framework of numerous street performances, in order to show that sexuality is a basic human need; his acts can thereby be viewed as well-conceived scenic accounts with the function of conveying an idea through gesture,

¹³ Mayor Vicko Mihaljević was popular with his fellow citizens, and was especially kind-hearted and charitable towards the poor. He left a mark in Croatian literature as a poet and published his works under the pseudonym Neurastenikus (Mladineo Mika 2018: 178). As politician, he is remembered as the Mayor of Split, whose character was embodied in the television series *Velo misto* by Boris Buzančić, who later served as the Mayor of the city of Zagreb (1990–1993).

pantomime, mime, and acting. Starting from the determinant by Ronald R. Dudley from his book *A History of Cynicism from Diogenes to the 6th Century A. D.*, in which he defined Diogenes as a showman, Damir Marić concludes the following: “This is why Diogenes is a ‘walking riot’, a clown character, a performer of greatest calibre” (Marić 2000: 141–151). Furthermore, Thomas McEvelley notes Diogenes of Sinope as the great prototype of performance and conceptual art, stating that his entire life was marked as performance of philosophy; while living on the streets of Athens and Corinth, he performed each of his actions under public eye, with a lifestyle he simply called “dog’s.” Briefly put, in his book *Kinici i metafizika (Kynicists and Metaphysics)*, Damir Marić defines Diogenes the Kynicist as a superb performer who seeks to undermine the *arrogance* (Greek: *typhos*, literally meaning ‘smoke’) of political cynicism that overtook all aspects of life.

In his work *Povijesna građa o zaštiti, odgoju i obrazovanju mentalno retardiranih u Hrvatskoj do II. svjetskog rata (Historical Holdings on the Protection, Education and Care of the Mentally Retarded in Croatia until the Second World War, 1982)*, Slavko Bančić notes Old Slavonic belief in an evil spirit called *bijes* (Old Slavonic: **besŭ* – evil spirit, demon), who supposedly enters a person and causes manic states, which people today call *bjesnilo*, *bjesnoća* (*rabies*).¹⁴ Furthermore, folk medicine was familiar with herbs that provoke altered states of mind, e.g. *velebilje* or *pomamnica* (belladonna),¹⁵ *bunika* (henbane), *jadić* (aconite), *čemerika* (hellebore), etc. (cf. Marjanić 2006: 189).¹⁶ Slavko Bančić thereby determines that the Ancient Slavs, i.e. folk medicine, did not ascribe pharmacological properties to these herbs, but rather magical ones. Furthermore, he underlines that the word *glup* (stupid) comes from Old Slavic and is found in all Slavic languages, while the expression *lud* (insane) is typical only for South Slavs and is found in records from the 15th century onwards. The 13th century saw the emergence of the word *be-*

¹⁴ *Bijes* (Old Slavic **besŭ* – evil spirit, demon) appears in hagiographies, narratives and prayer rolls for the sick as the impure spirit that dismays an individual and does physical and moral harm, causes sickness, hysteria, inebriation, and tempts into the sin of fornication. In hagiographic literature and prayer rolls, there is a list of ways to banish *bijes* that possessed an individual: a saint enchains it, ties it up, shouts at it, beats it, and chases it away to the desert (to the open sea, to hell) or into enclosed space (e.g. a cave, a mountain, a hole, a vessel) (*Slovenska mitologija* 2001: 24–25).

¹⁵ Deadly nightshade or belladonna (also known as *luda trava*, *vučja trešnja*, *norica*, *Atropa belladonna* L.) is one of the most poisonous plants found in the South Slavic region: “According to witnesses, when someone is deceived and eats its sweetish berries, that person becomes properly insane, walking amok and talking nonsense. When more of those berries are eaten, they cause a type of rabies with hallucinations, paralysis, unconsciousness and uncontrolled body movements. Then the people say: ‘he/she has been caught into the witches’ dance’ (*vrzino kolo*), or ‘he/she suddenly went mad’” (Kazimirović 1986:174).

¹⁶ For instance, folklorist Will-Erich Peuckert explained in his interpretation of the broom that this psychonavigational *vehicle* was used as an applicator for lubricating the sensitive vaginal membrane with hallucinogens containing atropine, which produce the sensation of *flying* (Petersdorff 2001: 162, cf. Plant 2004: 105).

zumlje, meaning dementedness, while expressions *manen* (nuts) and *mahnit* (frenzied) can also be found in writers of the 15th century. The expression *nor*, derived from the German word *Narr* (fool, jester) and meaning ‘brainless’ according to Ivan Belostenec, was domesticated in northern Croatia. In the Middle Ages, it was believed that mental illnesses were of demonic origin, and that relics possessed a miraculous effect; Bančić notes that also in these areas, the mentally ill were bound in iron chains, equally as in other parts of Europe, and that there was no difference between mental illness and *mental retardation*¹⁷ (Bančić 1982: 9). Roy Porter states that, according to Christianity, insanity developed surreally, be it under divine or demonic influence, depending on whether saints or witches were involved. The Renaissance and scientific rationalism introduced the medicinal concept, thus rendering the aetiology of insanity corporeal. Alongside this somatic turn, the question of nerves was also introduced, which also made the psychological turn essential as regards the comprehension of insanity – “With this somatic turn, the nervous system became the focal point of enquiry and explanation” (Porter 2003: 126).

As regards the straitjacket, Foucault claims that insanity has been suppressed by Reason, and thus lost the ability to mark the boundaries of the social order and to indicate the truth. According to Foucault, Philippe Pinel and Samuel Tuke initiated the conceptualisation of insanity as a “mental illness.” Foucault states that the straitjacket is not to be understood as the humanisation of chains and a progress towards self-restraint. “A process of conceptual deduction leads to the straitjacket (*gilet de force*), showing that in madness, the experience was no longer of an absolute conflict between reason and unreason, but rather of a play – always relative, always mobile – between freedom and its limits” (Foucault 2013: 498–499). On the other hand, however, it is notable that Pinel is used by certain domestic psychiatry textbooks as a template that allegedly leads to a humane relationship towards the ill; as an example, I would like to indicate a record on Pinel in the psychiatry textbook for undergraduate medical studies (authored by Ljiljana Moro, Tanja Frančišković et al.), which says that the mentally ill were unchained as early as the 18th century and notes Pinel as being the most deserving for the aforementioned concept, while terms *luđak* (lunatic) and *ludnica* (madhouse) were replaced by *duševni bolesnik* (mental patient) and *duševna bolnica* (mental asylum) (Moro, Frančišković 2011: 18). Manfred Lütz points out that, due to lively imagination, Pinel setting the mentally ill free of metal chains has been turned into a myth on the establishment of modern psychiatry and – as Director of the Alexian Hospital in Cologne, specialising in psychiatry, psychotherapy, and neurology – highlights that science was not the first to recognise that the

¹⁷ In the socialist context of the year 1982, Slavko Bančić uses the term *mental retardation* in view of the politically incorrect name of the organisation – Association of Societies for Assisting Mentally Retarded Persons in the Socialist Republic of Croatia.

mentally ill are individuals who suffer, but rather the untrained Christian monks, i.e. Alexian Brothers in Belgium, the Netherlands and northern Germany, who tended to mental suffering; it was not until much later, in the late 18th century, that the mentally ill have also been discovered by science (Lütz 2011: 43).

Towards a conclusion: still between the dichotomy of Reason and insanity

Similarly as Damir Bartol Indoš in his systematic performance of antipsychiatry, Manfred Lütz also notes the question whether a new regard of mental conditions could help the overall provincialist society to relax and free themselves from the steel grip of the insanely and stupidly normal ones, and boost the development of new attitude in psychiatry and psychotherapy, far from the public eye, which does not see only mistakes in mental illnesses, but also resources, special capabilities that can help patients free themselves from mental crisis on their own (Lütz 2011: 36).

As noted by Andrew Scull, Greek epistemology has presented the last interpretation of insanity in a more positive sense, as found in Plato and Socrates, which echoed the Hebraic idea of the inspired prophet. “Insanity could have presented another possible way of ‘seeing’: the Bacchanalian, erotic, creatively prophetic, transformative one” (Scull 43–44). Therefore the dichotomy continues to exist as some believe that the Mind opens up the royal path towards knowledge, while others insist that there is another, hidden door to knowledge – the intuitive, visionary and transformative door of knowledge and mysticisms, and that insanity can provide the keys to this mystical experience (ibid.). Briefly put, in his book *Madness in Civilization*, sociologist Andrew Scull demonstrates that today, mental disorders are largely viewed through the lens of medicine (which began in the period of Renaissance), while societies have also sought to find significance in them through religion and the surreal, or by creating psychological or social explanations in an effort to subdue the demons of dementedness.

It is exactly in this sense that I have formed this text-diptych in a whirligig between Mind and Dementedness, insanity; specifically, while the performative dedications to “insanity” and antipsychiatry in the interpretation of Damir Bartol Indoš seek to open up doors for practice along the lines of Ronald D. Laing on the Croatian scene, the second part of the paper refers to the symptom of mental suffering in the ethnographic and mythic modus as a relevant matrix of contemporary deliberation on symptoms of mental suffering and in the context of romanticising

“insanity.”¹⁸ Hereby I would like to note that Laing himself also pointed out that he had not talked about romanticising insanity, as is also indeed the case with Indoš (they both stress the flow of experience that comes from an altered state of mind). Thomas Szasz notes that Laing disassociated himself from his statement that “insanity is superior to mental sanity. I regret if I have given the people this idea. I would never recommend insanity” (Laing, qtd. in Szasz 1982: 325). Or, as suggested by psychiatrist Robert Torre, the romanticising, poeticising of insanity “is simply inauspicious. These are primarily quite unpleasant, difficult inner experiences laden with suffering. It is one thing to be offbeat, and another to be unhinged. It is one thing to be peculiar, and another to be insane” (Torre 2019, [http](#)).

While answering the question contextualising the fear of insanity and the fear of death as two of our greatest fears, Torre among other things underlines the following:

“The phenomenon of insanity is familiar to all civilisation groups from all historical periods. In the last two centuries, the western civilisation circle has termed instances of insanity as psychiatric disorders. To us, the chronically normal individuals, insanity is a radically different experience of perceiving ourselves and the world around us. We approach it through a medicinal model and view psychiatry as a branch of medicine. We approach it in a way that we medicalise and psychiatrise it. However, regardless of the impressiveness of all psychiatric conceptualisations to-date, insanity still eludes us in its essence. We are still unable to define the exact nature of these disorders, how many of them there are, what causes them, their prognosis and outcome. And finally, how we can help people with such radically different experience of life that is incomprehensible to a ‘sane mind’, and yet profoundly human.” (Torre 2019, [http](#)).

Lastly, I would like to bring to mind Lever’s interpretation of Lacan, with which he concludes his history of the jester; specifically, he concludes the book by depicting who replaces court jesters today (in his time) on the line of Jean-Paul Sartre¹⁹ – Salvador Dalí – Jacques Lacan – Jean-Edern Hallier. When mentioning Jacques Lacan, “a jester in spite of the absence of laughter,” Lever thus states that the former, as well as Dalí, develops an auto-mythology of deviation. In that sense, some call him the “Buster Keaton of psychoanalysis,” whereby Lever especially notes the ritual part of Lacan’s public appearances (lectures, seminars, congresses), which renders them similar to a ritual of transgression (Lever 1986: 228).

Translated from Croatian by: **Mirta Jurilj**

¹⁸ It is notable that ethnographic data feature a far greater extent of acknowledgment of rationalisation and faith in the practice of the Mind, considering that all three ethnographic examples (Samobor, Otok in Slavonia, and Poljice) underline the essential role of confining the persons with mental suffering.

¹⁹ Ljiljana Filipović points out that Sartre and Laing are linked by the existential approach to mentally ill persons (Filipović 1990: 64).

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