Poietic Notion of Practice and Its Cultural Context
Praxis Philosophy in the Political, Theoretical and Artistic Turmoils in the 1960s[1]

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Abstract: The aim of this essay is to present the philosophy of *praxis* as a theoretical medium which embodies the aspects of the high and popular culture in the 1960s in Croatia and former Yugoslavia. The first part deals with the topic of the lack of references to *praxis* in the recent contribution to the ethnography of socialism and cultural studies as a symptom of scientific reductionism; in the second part some arguments are presented for the relevance of philosophy in general and *praxis* in particular, as a (meta-)cultural form. The third part presents and comments the conflict regarding the *theory of reflection*, which has marked the thinking in different theoretical fields in the 1950s, and which became the foundational event for the *praxis* itself. The author is trying to provide a philosophically immanent *political* interpretation of the paradox that the philosophical/theoretical criticism of Stalinism leads philosophy to a direct conflict with the political apparatus in power which has itself carried out the same critique during dramatic political process in 1948. In the final part, the text points out, on the one hand, to the philosophical theorem of *spontaneity* in art as a fundament of the *praxis* concept of autonomy of the subject, and on the other, to the striking lack of references, within the mainstream of *praxis*, to the avant-garde political conception of art of the EXAT 51 group from early 1950s; the text outlines the reasons for interpretation of this metatheory of art as a political anticipation of *praxis*.

Key words: philosophy *praxis*, ethnography of socialism, dissidence, leisure, academic tourism, autonomous political subject, theory of reflection, social realism, philosophy of art, EXAT 51.

When we speak of *praxis* philosophy today, and this name marks in a homonymous manner a group, a magazine and a philosophical and theoretical contents of the anti-dogmatic Marxism which "flourished" from mid 1960s to mid

1 The essay is a multiply extended version of a lecture at the Zagreb School of Foreign Slavic Studies in Dubrovnik, IUC, 1 September, 2009. (http://www.hrvatskiplus.org/main.php?id_doc=250). I am thankful to Reana Senjković for her remarks on the introductory part of the lecture (first part here) and to Lino Veljak, Boris Buden, Nebojša Jovanović, Dejan Kršić and Ljiljana Kolešnik for the comments and further references that have contributed to the further development and improvement of the text.

1970s in Croatia and former Yugoslavia, it is generally considered that it is almost without any doubt an example of the so-called "controversial" heritage of the high intellectual culture. Because of that, although it has (or because it is generally agreed that it has) left an inerasable mark on the recent Croatian culture, in the academic context of the sort that provides the framework of this year's gathering of the Slavistic school, the question about the *praxis* philosophy is necessary to be asked at least partly "para-academically" having in mind its *present day relevance*. Since my field of work is philosophy, it also necessarily implies the philosophical-critical way of questioning the philosophy, not only a historical one, since the very issue of relevance is *critical*. By doing so I will outline my own standpoint when I talk about *praxis*.

1. Praxis and Its Culturology: The Untranslatable Reminder of Socialism?

The qualification "controversial" has, of course, different meanings. The meaning that I imply here is not equal to the colloquial use of the term in a liberally-correct public discourse, which levels everything that is out of the framework of the correct neutrality and according to which *controversial* is but a euphemism for *ideologically extreme* – so thus the *Independent State of Croatia* is actually called a "controversial" heritage. *Praxis* was at first the subject of a vehement rejection in the Croatian public discourse on politics and culture in the 1990s which has taken place with the political turn towards the parliamentary democracy and with the arrival of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) to power in 1990-1991.[2] Yet, during the gust of an open ideological cleansing of the "national being" from the elements that did not belong there, *praxis* actually share the same destiny of the entire leftist intellectual heritage, from the political history to the culture and literature from the time before, during and after the WW2. In the second phase of the Croatian transition, after the elections on January 3rd 2001 and coming to power of the coalition of parties in power from the so-called left centre, this process of the surrogate ideological lustration of the 90s has finally crystallised the slogan "Croatian antifascism" as an all-encompassing signifier of the Croatian social "reconciliation" regarding all dilemmas and controversies within political and cultural-historical issues, in fact the name for a big centre of zero ideology which should translate and solve all problematic differences, except the irreducible "controversies" coming from the left.[3]

2 This public discourse was well documented in the mass media like *Večernji List* daily and HRT, and in the organs of the Croatian Philosophical Society (Glasnik, Filozofska istraživanja) and the statements from Matrix Croatica (Matica hrvatska).

3 For the analysis of this process of the unofficial lustration of the *left*, which was conducted in the high, academic culture on the monuments of the "zero" or "first category" like Miroslav Krleža's oeuvre, see the polemic comments of Boris Buden in the collection of the essays from the 90s *Barikade*, Zagreb: Arkzin, 1996, especially the essay "The Wise President's Advisor Miroslav Krleža", and "Conquering the centre". The process was continued in 2001, on a somewhat more modest scale by public denunciation the "leftist" groups that remained in the NGO sector. Compare the media affair about the petition for the resignation of the newly appointed minister of culture from SDP, Antun Vujić, in 2001.

In the case of *praxis* such linguistic policy of neutralising translation is not possible for obvious reasons. The first one involves the fact that the genesis, appearance and activity of *praxis* took place in the period between early 1960s and mid 1970s, which we cannot call post-war anymore, and not only for chronological reasons. A more important reason lies in the fact that the entire period of the 1960s, and especially the second half of the decade, from 1964 to 1970, represents the time of rise and the very culmination of the Yugoslav socialism to which *praxis*, in terms of its symbolical status within general awareness, was closely connected, in both its *critical* and *positive* senses so that, due to its *ambivalence*, it represents at least its emblematic expression if not the very essence of its history. To say *"praxis"* means to associate almost automatically not only what this term designates in the narrow sense of the word – a philosophical group of the so-called anti-dogmatic Marxists who were active between 1964 and 1974 through its magazine of the same name "*Praxis*" and the regular annual conference called "Korčula Summer School" – but also the concrete political and cultural context of their activity, or, in a single word, the epoch of the 1960s in the former Yugoslavia.[4] It was characteristic, as we shall see in more detail, that *praxis* group itself was referring to this double status of both the avantgarde and the critique of socialism, most often in the cases of conflicts with the party nomenclature, thus directly expressing the (theoretical) position of the philosophical critique. Indirectly, as an effect on the side of the political recipient of its theoretical message, it also did have the (practical) position of the political competition with the ruling apparatus, although the aim of the theoretical criticism of the authorities – regardless of the possible personal ambitions of theoreticians – was improvement of the governing, not taking over the power.

That is why qualification "controversial" has an additional meaning, besides the above mentioned one, which is of local character. It is related, on the one hand, to the breakdown of the project of emancipation under the general name of "humanistic universalism" to which *praxis* was explicitly devoted. *Praxis* as a philosophical group not only didn't participate in the theoretical disintegration of the humanistic horizon and the ideals of emancipation, which characterised the Western philosophy (especially French) after 1968, but on the contrary, constituted itself through critique of the institutional alienation of humanism in socialist regimes of Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia, and even attempted, for the sake of theoretisation of disalienated human existence, to reinterpret positively the Heideggerian critique of humanism, i.e., the very foundation of the theoretical disintegration of the "humanistic universalism" within the contemporary European philosophies.[5]

4 Various statements confirm this emblematic importance of the *praxis* in the political, symbolic and cultural sense which survived particularly abroad long after *praxis* ceased to exist, all the way to the '80s. Thus the Italian philosopher Umberto Cerroni demonstrates and comments the transacademic character of the *Praxis* journal, the connectedness of its contents with scientific foundations of Marx's thought, contribution to the progress of socialism, engagement as a basic meaning of philosophy in general ("a nice and brave Yugoslav magazine"), in *Rinascita*, 31. March 1967 (Published in *Praxis* 3/1967, pp. 434-435). Similar to this, Lucien Goldman in his interview for the journal *Odjek*, 1. November, 1966 (published in *Praxis* 1-2, 1967, pp. 254-255).

5 For the critical-investigative openness and cooperativeness of the *praxis* group towards politically conservative hermeneutic heritage of Martin Heidegger in the European philosophy of the second half of the 20th century, see contributions of one of the main leaders of the group, Gajo Petrović, in the first volume of the journal (Praksa i bivstvovanje, *Praxis* 1/1964, pp. 21-34; for Marx–Heidegger discussion, see especially pp. 29-33).

On the other hand, the "controversial" status of *praxis* is related to *supra-national* and *a-national* interpretation of culture which almost proverbially designates the philosophy of *praxis*, although the position of this philosophical group regarding the issue of the national cannot be designated as unambiguously negative, at least not in the editorial politics of the journal.[6] Yet, in the local context, this issue proved to be far more decisive for the history of influence, reception and symbolic position of *praxis* than any other specified philosophical content, even before political changes of 1990-91.

My standpoint rests on my conviction that the public awareness in Croatia today is determined by the twofold political negation. On the one hand the negation of socialism during the process of disintegration of the federal state of Yugoslavia and the restoration of the national state at the beginning of the 1990s through the re-establishment of the authoritarian "one-party" power in the conditions of a multi-party parliamentary democracy under the strong influence of the first president of the state, which is why today the entire decade of the 1990s is informally, but with a very negative connotation, is called the "era of Tuđmanism." On the other hand, the negation of neo-nationalism in its "tycoon" or "Herzegovian" ways of alienation of the national feeling for the sake of making pure and preserving the authentic form of Croatianhood through so-called "European shift" or through the "second Croatian transition" during early 2000s.

In this perspective each statement about *praxis* as an "emblematic" expression of history of the Yugoslav socialism is still read in the contemporary Croatian context – if it is at all an object of interest – without exception, as an identification of *a group of theoreticians, scientists and intellectuals* with socialism as a political system of management or with the apparatus of political power in the former socialist Yugoslavia. This, currently dominant, counterfactual way of reading of contemporary cultural and political history, although it is not the only one and not the exclusive one, seems to suffice that to present *praxis*, like some other "dissident phenomena" of socialism similar to *praxis*, as a form of positive "national value," is not taken into account at all by the average public opinion, (which is for the most part created by the key figures in the cultural departments of mass media. These phenomena certainly include abstract tendencies in the art of early 1950s and 1960s, which in their general conceptual and political motivation – a distancing from the socialist realism and the background theory of reflection, a humanistic universalism – represent a project close to *praxis*, it has a more positive *image* as a *national* heritage of the contemporary art than *praxis*.[7]

6 The topic of "national" and "national culture" emerges on a number of occasions through certain articles or cover issues (e.g. *Praxis* 3/1965, 4/1968).

7 For the negative evaluation of the movement EXAT 51 in the Croatian neo-national ideological paradigm, see Ivica Župan, *EXAT 51 i drug(ov)i,* Zagreb, Mala knjižnica Društva hrvatskih književnika, 2005; also *Pragmatičari, dogmati, sanjari – hrvatska umjetnost i društvo 1950-ih godina,* Zagreb: Ina/Meridijani, 2007. From different point of view: Ljiljana Kolešnik, *Između Istoka i Zapada – hrvatska umjetnost i likovna kritika 1950ih godina*, Zagreb: Institue for the History of Art, 2006. Opposite to negative or positive inscription into national heritage, Ješa Denegri (see "Unutar i izvan 'socijalističkog modernizma'?", in: *Šezdesete*, ed. by Irena Lukšić, Zagreb: Hrvatsko filološko društvo, edition Književna smotra, 2007), for whom shared "Yugoslav space" as an artistic and intellectual world is rather determined through traits of the cultural and historical polycentricity and decentricity independent of the centralistic moments in the organisation of

Therefore it seems paradoxical that politically, ideologically and conceptually such a dynamic heritage today becomes *visibly invisible* within cultural perceptions which are marked, not by national but with post-national self-understanding of the actors, in other words, supralocally, by globalistically enlightened awareness.

One such case represents a distinct under-representation of the "local heritage" of a legendary '68 at the cultural manifestation *Subversive Film Festival,* Zagreb, 2008. Namely, although both "68" and *praxis* are present in final publications of this manifestation, its main programmatic documents show that the "local '68" was planned to be presented only through films that have been labelled as "world films" (Makavejev and Žilnik), while the wider artistic and theoretical context of that film heritage (literary and philosophical production, sociological and political theory from the 1960s) had not at all been planned for presentation but, contrary to other thematic parts of the event, were additionally compensated for with *ad hoc* interventions.[8] This ellipse of the contexts looks like a symptom of discomfort in the post-national culture that was created by the protagonists of the youngest generation of cultural producers and cultural theoreticians. Namely, while on the one hand they reject the referential framework of the national culture as provincialism, and adopt the globalistic theorem that contemporary man is substantially not rooted anywhere, with the bath water of provincial culture, as its indifferent, unimportant part, they throw away its inner fissure, the culture of the critique which in fact creates the difference and supralocal meaning.

As the next stage of the "objective invisibility" or disappearance of a certain cultural phenomenon due to the subjective lack of interest among the actors in the recent public discourse I shall point out to examples of *complete* absence of references to *praxis* in recent production in the field of cultural studies and ethnography of socialism in Croatia.

The absence of the *praxis* philosophy from cultural and anthropological picture of socialism is marked in a rather good collection of essays, *Devijacije i promašaji. Etnografija domaćeg socijalizma,* Ines Prica and Lada Čale-Feldman (editors), (Zagreb, Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2006). Although this collection of essays covers a wide range of forms of discursive representation and reproduction of reality of the socialist ways of life in former Yugoslavia and Croatia, in various historical phases, in official and unofficial forms of discursive procedures, the editor of the collection I. Prica explicitly recognises

the state, whereby "the shared" can be interpreted not as something given or imposed, but as an *effect of the dynamics* of the personal and institutional ties between actors at the art scene of that time, therefore as an effect which is actually the expression of the very type of art we are talking about (collectives, groups, movements) and the modes of their *autonomous* establishment. See, also: the collective WHW, "Modernism and its Discontents: Croatian Avant-garde of the 1950s", lecture at the 5th Biennal for Contemporary Art, Berlin 2008, published in *Novine Galerije Nova*, no. 17, Zagreb, December, 2008.

8 See round table on "68 in Zagreb" (ed. by Srećko Pulig), also *Zarez*, no. 231/2008. This deficit was also noticed by Slavoj Žižek who was a participant in the discussion. As opposed to that, for a more detailed approach to this subject, see the new contribution by Pavle Levi, *Disintegration in Frames. Aesthetics and Ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Cinema*, Stanford University Press 2007, especially "I. The Black Wave and Marxist Revisionism"; see "Montage: *Praxis*", pp. 29-35. (See *Raspad Jugoslavije na filmu*, Belgrade: Biblioteka XX vek, 2009.)

the ideal of "subversion" and emancipatory capacity of social sciences in "critical ethnography." In this collection of essays, Svetlana Slapšak's paper on the corruption of Belgrade humanistic intelligentsia during 1980s is, thematically, although indirectly, closest to *praxis'* dissident heritage.

The next example is the monograph by Reana Senjković, *Izgubljeno u prijenosu. Iskustvo soc-kulture* (Zagreb, Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2008). In spite of an exceptionally detailed bibliography of even the local cultural magazines from the 1960s, in which the term and the phenomenon of mass culture was dealt with, the author does not document and does not comment any of the issues of *Praxis* in which cover topics or individual contributions were dedicated to the theoretical and empirical problems of high and mass culture.[9]

The third, chronologically earliest example of the recent cultural and anthropological literature is especially interesting in the critical sense: Igor Duda, *U potrazi za blagostanjem. O povijesti dokolice i potrošačkog društva u Hrvatskoj 1950-ih i 1960-ih*, Zagreb, Srednja Europa, 2005). With a declarative gesture of a British Cultural Studies fellowship holder, the author applies a routine disciplinary paradigm in an almost neo-colonialist manner to the history of the local, without any references or mediations to local theoretical heritage, either critically or positively. Thus the author does not consider even the topic of "consumerist revolution" (pp. 19-24) worthy of documenting of an early theoretical resistance to the mentality and ideology of the consumeristic awareness in the "local field" itself. On the contrary, he deals only with apologies.[10]

Regardless of the differences between these publications, they all have in common that *praxis* does not appear neither on the theoretical level, for example, in the status of a possible theoretical partner, competitor or opponent in the common field of the social theory of culture, nor, which is even more interesting, in the documentary part, i.e. as an object or a part of an object of the ethnographic or cultural and anthropological research on socialism where *praxis* belongs by definition. It rather seems that this is not simply a matter of the spontaneous lack of interest for a dead cultural good, whose productive time has passed long time ago and which cannot be saved from complete oblivion even by the "musealisation of socialism." Some elements of the mentioned lack of interest point to the fact that this is more a matter of the *invisibility* of a specific *theoretical* culture called *praxis*, even where, for immanent reasons, be they object-scientific or meta-scientific, it would be legitimate to expect the opposite. Namely, if the first mentioned aspect of disinterest in *praxis* as a theoretical partner is not a particular wonder, considering the acclaimed and generally known presence and influence of non-Marxist theoretical paradigms and ideological orientations in the social and humanistic sciences in Croatia and Yugoslavia as early as the 1960s, the second mentioned aspect of disinterest in *praxis* in the sense that it is a part of an object of research is interesting to an even greater degree because it means ignoring or erasing parts of an

9 See *Praxis* 2/1964, 3/1965, 4-5/1965, 4/1967, 3/1970, 6/1971, 1-2/1972.

10 See: "Strong desire for the modern is of great importance, and neo-Marxist theoreticians love to point out that it was Marx who saw faith in the modernity as a prerequisite of the existence of consumerist society" (p. 22). When he says "neo-Marxist theoreticians" the author means, of course, Anglo-American theoreticians (see the footnote *ad loc*.)

object which are its immanent constituent parts.[11] The confirmation of the justifiability of such an objection comes in turn from the research within the closest scientific contexts of the social and cultural history, as well as the contemporary art, and its wider intellectual cultural, social and political contexts where *praxis* is seen as an inevitable part and factor of the critical operations of the contemporary science, art, social and political analysis and mass-cultural reflections.[12]

Instead of a possible further analysis in this direction, I will point out to some issues that seem relevant for the characterisation of philosophy in general as a necessary object of cultural and anthropological approaches to socialism, but paradoxically, they at least partly justify the outlined "absence" of *praxis* philosophy from the horizon of cultural studies. In doing this I will myself *simulate* the cultural-study approach to this topic, i.e. I will try to compensate for the lack of the recent cultural research and point to the reasons for the fact that philosophy, if it itself is a cultural agent and cultural product, necessarily belongs to cultural studies.

First, and in general, the absence of *praxis* philosophy from the cultural disciplines is curious because the philosophy, even from the emergence of historicism in the sciences of the 19th century, and especially since the emergence of the cultural sciences at the beginning of the 20th century, has always represented a phenomenon with the emblematic status of the 'expression of its time' or even represented the most sublime, most characteristic expression of a "specific culture."[13] The consequence of such culturalisation of philosophy from romanticism to structuralism is that we cannot imagine any survey of ancient cultures like the Greek or Indian or Chinese, or the recent European periods like the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and especially romanticism and the entire 19th and 20th centuries, without having a particular view of philosophy, be it a part of high culture in the sense of production of ideas, be it a part of culture in a broader sense, as forms and styles of life.

It is exactly this historical approach, which has always instigated discussions about national character or even national identity of philosophy, which has constantly made obvious the above mentioned strange invisibility of *praxis* in the recent cultural and anthropological studies of socialism. Having in mind the hypertrophy of the negative visibility of *praxis* during the early 90s in

11 That is why it is interesting to see that, contrary to the academic culturological production, the only time *praxis* was mentioned as a culturologicalal, (better to say, "popular") topic is in *Leksikon Yu-mitologije* web edition: http://www.leksikon-yu-mitologije.net/kategorija.php?id=17, under the entry "*Praxis*-časopis," see http://www.leksikon-yu-mitologije.net/read.php?id=780.

12 See, Nebojša Popov, *Društveni sukobi. Izazov sociologiji. "Beogradski jun" 1968*, Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2008, who was also the member of the circle around *praxis*. On the other hand, see: Ljiljana Kolešnik, "Delays, Overlaps, Irruptions: Croatian Art of 1950's and 1960's" (to be published) in: *Different Modernisms, Different Avant-Gardes*, ed. Sirje Helme, Tallinn: KUMU, 2009, where the author very often refers to main authors or to collaborators of *praxis*. See also, Boris Kanzleiter, Krunoslav Stojakovic, eds., *"1968" in Jugoslawien. Studentenproteste und kulturelle Avantgarde zwischen 1960 und 1975. Gespräche und Dokumente*, Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 2008.

13 **Typical examples of such a high valorisation of philosophy in cultural history are Jakob Burk**hardt's works on ancient Greece and the Renaissance culture. For the recent contribution to the discussion on cultural-reflexive approach to philosophy in the historical science and on the contribution of philosophy to the *culture of everyday life* of its own time, see Pierre Hadot, "Forms of Life and Forms of Discourse in Ancient Philosophy", in *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1990), 483-505. In the continuation of the Nietzsche's linguistic-structural criticism of culture, for the phenomenon of philosophy, especially see works of Jean Pierre Vernant.

Croatia, the current absence of *praxis* in the cultural anthropology, the silence about the popular and cultural importance of an exceptionally critical and controversial theoretical culture of socialism called *praxis* is not justifiable simply and only because of the exclusion of high philosophy from the heritage of socialism as its subject of study. This silence itself looks like tacit, *unquestioned* interruption of a loud, negative, nationalistically motivated discussion about *praxis* in the 1990s, and indirectly, as an *act of denying* the very *nationalism of science and high culture* of the 1990s instead of its explicit and elaborate critique. Thus the exclusion of *praxis* from being the object of science of socialism in the 1960s acts as the *truth* of the cultural and anthropological *meta-science* of the post-socialist transition, as a substitute act for its own tacit abstaining from the critique.

2. Critique Between Academic and Pop-culture Forms

Further reasons for the oddness of the present-day lack of interest in *praxis* are more immanent to the history of philosophy, and not to cultural studies. Namely, *praxis* is exactly like philosophy – which means: as an instance of a *high* academic culture with exceptionally abstract theoretical character – at the same time it is one very rare historical case of philosophy which has, in its own time, demonstrated the specific form of life or the existence, in which the individual actors and entire groups find their meaning in different forms of "realization." For the time being, we can consider this as typical and general philosophical heritage, from Socrates to Wittgenstein, and that is why, when we evoke such a matter, it is difficult to avoid it sounding like a trite phrases about "philosophy as a way of living one's own theory," about philosophical theory as a "life form," etc., which have always accompanied discourses about philosophy. Yet, the specific *life form* of the philosophical theory of *praxis* can be seen and defined less abstract and maybe less banal, if it is seen in the context of the 1960s under the closest higher category of *dissidence*.

Even though the phenomenon and the term *dissidence* itself, indeed represents a typical form of socialism, in spite of different ideological, cultural and political configurations, dimensions and character of dissidence in the former socialist states from the left-universalistic through national-liberal to religious-mystical, this general figure, in the case of *praxis*, has more specific features of an intense local phenomenon with an universally recognised relevance which has in fact to be understood as an early *anticipation* of dissidence, not only as one of its cases. Namely, one should be reminded that a generally known, although insufficiently considered fact that the dissident culture in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Poland is a direct result of the 1975 Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operaton in Europe, where the "communist regimes" committed themselves to sign and make public the Charter of human rights, including the freedom of speech, although they did not observe it. Contrary to this, the critical culture in Yugoslavia was developed *publicly* in the intellectual circles since the beginning of the 1950s and continued so with *praxis* in the 1960s, and assumed typical dissident forms of activities only *post festum*

in the second half of the 1970s after the journal ceased to be published and after the closing down of the Korčula School in 1974, and especially after dismissing the Belgrade members of the *praxis* group from the Belgrade University, which was a clear sign of *political regressiveness* of the Yugoslav regime.[14] Apart from this essential chronological difference, the specificity of *praxis* in relation to general dissident culture of socialism is particularly grounded on features of *praxis* as a coherent and consistent practice of writing of a *group of academic* intellectuals, *publicly present* as a part of an open social scene. Traces of this open and organised activity can be identified in the *horizontal* perspective as a network of actors and activities on the same level of (high) cultural production (Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, Croatian Philosophical Association, Korčula Summer School, with the connections with all major educational, political and cultural centres in Yugoslavia, especially with the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade). Also, which is today certainly more interesting from the point of view of cultural studies, this activity can be identified in the *vertical* perspective, ranging from high academic culture of a university, symposiums and periodicals, through less formal round tables for wider and smaller cultural audiences, to the "lowest" and culturally and anthropologically most specific level of everyday socialising which involves the "most philosophical" moment – *leisure*.[15]

This latter moment, which is most often associated with the annual symposium of the legendary *Korčula Summer School* (from 1964 to 1974), but also with the legendary Zagreb café "Blato," where issues were philosophised both "metaphysically" and "politically," is all the more interesting because leisure or a diffuse practice of everyday representation of intellectual life was not only inscribed in the "birth certificate" of philosophy – *scholê* as the alleged condition itself of its origin – but also because academic symposiums represent on the one hand the instrument of the reproduction of high culture, and on the other, they simultaneously represent the form of everyday life, of socialising,

14 For recent discussions on dissidence which have almost as a rule been conceived in terms of monograph, instead of providing general and typological view on dissidence, see: *On Soviet Dissent: Interviews with Piero Ostellino* (Roy Medvedev, Piero Ostellino, George Saunders), edited by G. Saunders, London: Constable; New York: Columbia University Press, 1980. See also, John Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissident. The East German Opposition and its Legacy*, Minnesota UP, 1995. In turn, see the neglected book, *The Socialist Phenomenon*, by the Russian mathematician and dissident Igor Shafarevich, published first in the Soviet Union (1975), which was translated into English and published after a while, with Solzhenitsyn's foreword (Igor Shafarevich, *The Socialist Phenomenon*, Regnery Publisher, 1982).

15 Although *leisure* has been discussed sufficiently in the "high" literature of the history of philosophy, the doxography of philosophy is in fact original by a popular genre. So, the very title of the first doxographic book *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* by D. Laertius (published in Belgrade: Kultura, 3rd edition, BIGZ, 1985) whom Hegel calls the "rumormonger of the ancient times", in the word "eminent" (Greek *endokimesanton*, i.e. 'celebrated') suggest in fact the mass popularity. For recent *popular* contribution to the topic of philosophy through centuries see, for example, Alain de Botton, *Consolations of Philosophy,* Zagreb, SysPrint, 2002. For further light on this phenomenon compare the remark by Ljiljana Kolešnik in the already mentioned work "Delays, Overlaps, Interruptions", (quote from the manuscript): "The (ideologically) satisfying explanation of the category "free time" was perceived as a rather complex theoretical problem. Interesting interpretations in 1960's and at the beginning of 1970's could be found in the journal *Praxis,* organ of radical, left oriented group of thinkers who stood behind the project of famous *Korčula Summer School of Philosophy*. However, the most comprehensive and theoretically convincing analysis concerning the origin of that term, its philosophical elaborations and possible meaning within the socialist society, could be found in a study by Blaženka Despot, *Plädoyer za dokolicu* (*Plädoyer for leisure*), Beograd: Rad (Mala edicija ideja), 1976.

of interrelations within micro-social groups with all the positive and negative moments.[16]

These para-cultural features of the processes in culture are not at all irrelevant in spite of banalities, because they reflect the ambivalent charge between the benevolent and malevolent public discourse about social function of philosophy in the media and especially in the circles of the political nomenclature. Furthermore, it is exactly at this moment of *leisure* in philosophy that we see the connection between its high-cultural origins and popular-cultural manifestations which present *praxis* as a rather visible agent in the production of cultural life under the auspices of socialism, but not the actor in socialism as a bare system of governing the people.[17] But, in spite of this, I would like to point out to some possible internal reasons which seem to contribute to *predisposition* of philosophy in general for its invisibility in cultural studies, as well as to implications that appear if we accept such reasons.

The first reason can probably be found in the fact that philosophical and social/theoretical contents belong not only to the sphere of high culture, but even more so to the field of elite culture, if not in the class sense, then certainly in the professional sense. Even if this would be a sufficient reason for the lack of interest within cultural and anthropological studies of socialism with regard to theoretical culture of *praxis*, it would be burdened with a number of new theoretical problems rather than giving some answers. One of the theoretical problems, and probably the most important one, would by all means be the implicit presupposition that high-cultural contents of philosophy, by their very nature, involve the high-cultural media of representation – for example, text as a written speech and reading the written *ex cathedra* – and the accompanying assumption that every popular form of public presentation of philosophy is just popular, or popularising and ephemeral in relation to the authentic medium of written thought.

The assumption of such "adequacy" of thought and media indeed corresponds to a great degree the largest, perhaps even the entire corpus of the *academic* legacy of *praxis* – books, articles, announcements, lectures published in the *Praxis* journal and elsewhere. However, it does not relate to the entire set of realities about the *praxis* group that have been documented in a way different than the

16 Although this aspect of *praxis* philosophy was thoroughly documented in mass media of the time, for example in the main official daily in Croatia, *Vjesnik*, in the quoted history of leisure in Croatia during 1950s and 1960s by I. Duda, 2006, the entire sector of academic tourism (scientific symposiums, conferences, etc.) in then prestigious tourist resorts like Opatija and Bled has been omitted. According to the available personal testimonies, philosophy not only participated in the existing academic-tourist infrastructure of high ranks (e.g. Bled, 1960, Dubrovnik 1963), but it actually created new destinations and additional advertising work for the existing tourist resources as it was the case with Korčula municipality. On such informal circumstances and the genesis of starting up the "school", see already mentioned memoirs and testimonies of Milan Kangrga, *Šverceri vlastitog života*, Split: Biblioteka Feral Tribune, 2002, especially "Korčulanska ljetna škola (1964–1974)" and also, pp. 343-377.

17 **For understanding of this position I refer to presentation of the political and historical background** in the already mentioned book by Nebojša Popov, 2008, especially "II. Industrijalizacija i socijalizam", chapters 1-3. According to the author, socialism as a system of governance in Yugoslavia started to develop in mid-fifties not only in terms of the program, but also in the legislative way, from the system of rule or maintaining the party in power towards the system of self-management of all "socialist subjects". Decentralisation of governance through federal laws from 1952 and 1955 proves this, as well as live public debate on "democratic centralism" in the party, the program of the League of Communist of Yugoslavia from 1958 and also the political and cultural consequences of that process.

textual corpus and which belong to the wider category of philosophical thinking in the sense of a *performance*. One of such ways is, for example, philosophising in a wrong place, like in a court, where one does not expect the impudence of the free thinking regarding the very court actions.[18] We can certainly add a beach to the list of inadequate places, where nobody, except the theoreticians-in-leisure themselves, expects any kind of mental effort other than doing crosswords.

Further reason for the invisibility of *praxis* philosophy from contemporary perspective of cultural anthropology of socialism is given, in my opinion, by the very *critical* character of the social theory of *praxis*, including the critique of scientific positivism in social sciences, especially in sociology, and in sciences in general. Furthermore, the philosophical ideal of emancipation is in the closest relationship with the critical character of the theory. On the one hand, *praxis* posits this ideal of emancipation to the political reality of a real existing socialism in its Yugoslav version which was treated by the members of the *praxis* group only as a partly enlightened Stalinist absolutism. On the other, *praxis* sets this ideal to the scientific reflection in general, from which the philosophy is not just not excluded, but is implied in its case even more strictly, including the act of self-overcoming of philosophy. However, here we cannot follow this abstract topic further.

Although the two mentioned moments – the critical scientific reflection and emancipation ideal in science itself – are the part of the contents or the overall doctrine of *praxis*, we nevertheless have to understand them as a *surplus* on the doctrine itself. They belong to its form insofar they do not relate only to the object of the critique, i.e. to the society and the political system, but the *praxis*, with its conception, as the philosophy, has overcome, at these points, defined borders of philosophy as a theoretical discipline in the garden of academic sciences, and has become an intellectual *scene* and the political *position*. Thus it moved into the practice of politics through cultural means. This is what we can call, in a single word, the *politicum* of philosophy as such.[19]

But there is a *paradox* in all this. The philosophy of *praxis* ceased to be visible *as a philosophy* at the exact moment when it became socially visible as *praxis*. Although this formulation sounds like a speculative conundrum, it is still only about the political and cultural context of the 1960s.

3. Praxis in the Gaps of a Real Existing Emancipation

It is, in fact, the matter of the confrontation of philosophy and the political apparatus of social power which was no precedent in the history of philosophy. From the standpoint of *praxis*, the social system in Yugoslavia developed, in forms of politics, in spite of all the programmatic tendencies, only to the level of an enlightened socialist absolutism with Tito as an unquestioned authority

18 Among many documents on formal and informal processes of self-justification compare material in *Praxis* 4-5, 1965, column "Kronika", especially Gajo Petrović's text "O nepoštednoj kritici svega postojećeg" (taken from *Studentski List*, No. 6/1965)

19 For this topic which has a status of a crucial figure of *praxis* philosophy, see programmatic text "Čemu *Praxis*?", in the first issue of the journal; also Danko Grlić's essay, "Smisao angažiranosti u filozofiji", *Praxis* 4/1967, pp. 479-490, is characteristic, and a whole line of other meta-philosophical contributions.

on all issues. The so-called Yugoslav "third way," which was widely respected in the field of foreign policy firstly because of the break-up with the Soviet Union in 1948, and later through *Non-alignment Movement* remained inside itself, in its essence, a centralist model of ruling the society through the party, which solved each wave of crisis by retreating to conservativism and preserving the monopoly of power. With this ambivalence between the general declarations and *real* procedures of governing it has derogated in the most efficient way not only its "general orientation" of self-management but also the achieved levels of legislature.[20]

In the critical-theoretical and scientific-analytical discourse of *praxis* about politics, economy, social and national relationships and of culture, and with irregular rhythm of the journal's issuance due to constant financial problems, occasional cessations and partial banning of the journal, one can clearly see the argumentative line that can be formulated in the following:

During the first five years of *Praxis*, which is the period between 1964 and 1970, the critique of socialism runs, as it were, in a "romantic" way, as a philosophically inspired *projection* of the emancipated human life through socialism as the *means of emancipation*, but at the same time as a critique of its alienation (in the party governance). During the second phase, from 1970 until the final cessation of the journal in 1974, the humanistic and universalistic aspects of the critique are more and more focused towards the political- and socio-philosophical analyses, the essence of which can be formulated by saying that non-democratised party system of governing produces in the state and the society its own historical gravedigger in the form of national party oligarchies and the accompanying economical technocracy. Thus, as it can be easily documented, *praxis* came into the conflict with at least three mutually opposed factors in the politics of the time: ideologists of the political centralism, of republic nationalism and of liberalism in economy.

Therefore, the position of *praxis*, which I previously marked as a loyal critique or a critical apology of socialism, is not based on the identification of the group of philosophers and social scientists neither with positively existing realities of socialism, nor with the ideal projection of a political model of governing. In this technical sense of politics, Zagreb *praxis* members were openly "apolitical" compared to the Belgrade group.[21] The distancing of the Zagreb *praxis* group with regards to the political nomenclature in the 1960s is relevant today – especially after the experience of non-critical identification of the largest part of Croatian philosophical intelligentsia with the project of the restoration of the national state from the 1990s – because it points out to three crucial matters regarding the position of philosophy as philosophy:

20 Turning point is most obvious in the years after 1968. Thus the cover issue called "Crisis of socialism. Moment of Yugoslav socialism" extends in sequels I to III in the issues 3–6 of the journal from 1971, although the contributions really date from the previous decade, i.e. late 1960s. See texts written by R. Supek "Protivurječnosti i nedorečenosti jugoslavenskog samoupravnog socijalizma" (*Praxis* 3/4, 1971), and by M. Marković "Struktura moći u jugoslovenskom društvu i dilema revolucionarne inteligencije" (*Praxis* 6, 1971).

21 The belated process of this conceptual but also of personal division within *praxis* is documented in the Belgrade philosophical journal *Theoria* in its issues from 1984 and 1985. For further discussion on the process of disintegration of critical Marxism after 1989 see, for example, the collection of essays *The Road to Disillusion: From Critical Marxism to Postcommunism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Raymond Taras, M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1992.

autonomy of philosophical motivation in the critique of the political system which simultaneously appeals to the central idea of the system, to the idea of self-government; *the character of fundamental and principal conflict* between the two elite instances of the society – the bureaucratic and the academic-intellectual – and, thirdly, *the size and the sociological relevance of the conflict as a fundamental social event*.

The column "Odjeci" (Echoes), within the journal, documents the constant tension, even to the level of enmity, in the official and semi-official opinions about *praxis*. This column that had been in the journal from the beginning, and which got positive reviews abroad, provided in each issue the documents about the statements of politicians and party ideologists against *praxis*.[22] Systematic reporting on such "echoes," continual replies of the editorial board to the criticisms were, it seems, a tactful way of defending through transparency. Whereby there was a persistent insistence on the right to autonomy and openness of the philosophical school, and its mission of intellectual mediation between the East and the West is legitimised through pointing out to a fundamental and general political principle of self-management. This can be proven by the practice of extensive and detailed reports of the editorial board about its work to the Croatian Philosophical Association.[23]

In my opinion, this tension explains, or it at least outlines in social and theoretical terms, the true dimension of the conflict which *praxis* group had with the apparatus of party authorities immediately at the beginning of 1960s. At the same time, it seems that it retroactively puts light on the tensions that used to mark the relationship between politics and other forms of cultural production even in the 1950s. In that sense, it seems that the 1960s in philosophy are not just a chronological continuation of the previous decade but an accumulation, escalation and partial completion of cultural and political processes that were initiated in the artistic practice by the group *EXAT 51*, through *Gorgona* and *New Tendencies* (*Nove tendencije*), from early 1950s to the time *praxis* came to being in mid 1960s. Those processes will continue in the seventies, partly and indirectly mediated through *praxis*, under the name *New artistic practice* (*Nova umjetnička praksa*).[24]

Before we address the very term of practice and its "poietic" character, which represents a conceptual basis of the above mentioned autonomy of the philosophical motivation for the critique of the self-management socialism, it is necessary to outline the basic features of the mentioned conflict between the philosophers and the party apparatus in its institutional aspects. It is a matter of a seemingly banal event, of a regular congress or a conference of the *Yugoslav association for philosophy and sociology* in Bled, in 1960, where an internal break took place between different groups of Marxist philosophers

22 Thus, in issue 1–2, 1969 (page 220), there were quotations from *Vijesnik* daily in which *praxis* was seen as a "political action, not scientific action" (V. Bakarić), and questions were asked regarding further financing of the "subversive activities," the *praxis* "monopoly on criticism" and the "axis of the political group which gathers oppositional and dissatisfied elements in our society" (M. Tripalo).

23 See characteristic polemic report of Gajo Petrović, "Još dvije godine *Praxis*a", in one of the most important issues, no. 1–2, 1969, pp. 345-355, or, "Informacije o ciljevima u radu Korčulanske ljetne škole", no. 2, 1971.

24 About the relation of *praxis* and the mentioned art practices, especially *EXAT 51*, see final part of this paper.

about the theory of reflection in philosophy, and about the status of the dialectic materialism (so-called "diamat") as an ultimate scientific theory in the philosophy and all sciences.

Although theory of reflection is politically very important for the constitution of *praxis* as a group and as an orientation, it is in fact a general heritage of philosophy, not only of Marxism; it is the accompanying theorem of the adequacy theory of truth all the way to Wittgenstein; in the production of the members of the *praxis* group it is represented only as a matter of critique.[25] Secondly, and maybe it is of more importance, Yugoslav philosophers who will appear as critics of both theorems at the mentioned congress had done their preparatory research work long before that congress, almost a decade earlier.[26] That is why what is new regarding this conflict about the theory of reflection from 1960 does not consist only in the conceptual turn towards the anti-dogmatic interpretation of the Marxist heritage on the basis of the *Manuscripts* by Marx and Engels, but is maybe even more rooted in the *political investment* of that conceptual turn.

Namely, the conflict regarding the theory of reflection in philosophy and around diamat as the ultimate form of the truth of the Marxist doctrine can be evaluated today as a *politics of theory* which *renews* a political conflict between Tito and Stalin, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union that had already taken place. There is a general agreement concerning this conflict, namely, it has the status of a *fundamental event* for self-understanding of the Yugoslav society in the 1950s, with all of its positive and negative results. However, the point of such evaluation of the Bled congress is not to establish the sameness between philosophy and politics, because if we consider it as an act of *repeating* the politics, only then all the tensions and paradoxes emerge which mark the position of *praxis* against the politics, including the constant protests coming from the Soviet Union against the *praxis* tearing down the very "fundaments of Marxism."

This position is marked by the paradox that the *critique of dogmatism in the theory of philosophy* causes a massive enmity of the political apparatus which declared itself to be anti-Stalinist, after the break-up with the Stalin's Soviet Union in 1948. The very paradox manifests itself in the fact that a certain theoretical discipline, such as philosophy, becomes problematic practically and politically when it follows the *right course,* i.e. the course of anti-Stalinism. If we express the paradox in terms of culturalism, it is exactly the process which should have "descended" from its academics heights among the people, or *popularise* it, i.e. include it in the process that had started in post-war times

25 Point of departure of direct criticism of the theory of reflection presents the publication *Some problems of the theory of reflection* (*Neki problemi teorije odraza*), Beograd, Published by the Yugoslav association for philosophy, 1960. Theory of reflection and the adjoining positivism are the "model of philosophy for bureaucracy", see: Rudi Supek, "Još jednom o alternativi: Staljinistički pozitivizam ili stvaralački marksizam", *Praxis* 6/1965, 891-915. From the later period, an example of comprehensive scientific and research approach to this problematic from the *praxis* perspective is presented in Lino Veljak's study *Marksizam i teorija odraza. Filozofski temelji teorije odraza,* Zagreb: Naprijed, 1979.

26 The initiator of the discussion was Gajo Petrović with his works on Plekhanov, which he started to write during his scholarship in the Soviet Union in 1947; Milan Kangrga continued this line and is one of the main protagonists of the turn towards basic Marx with his dissertation "Ethical problem in the work of Karl Marx", from 1959.

and which was called the "amassing of culture," through educating masses for higher forms of good life through work, instead of bare living for work.[27]

Why does the anti-dogmatic *praxis* philosophy, even though it has taken the desired party course, become an undesirable political ally? The most convincing answer to this is given by the undoubtedly documented strive of the communist party with greater or smaller aberrations, that, as one and always a unified Party, apart from the political power it has a unique ideal monopoly on regulating all the deviations, including the politically loyal ones.[28] But such an answer, as much as it could be confirmed in the cultural history cannot avoid the inherent reductionism which we use to bring down systematic problems to the contingent pathological factors, such as, for example, intellectual limitations of the party cadre in relation to the philosophers (or artists and writers). The difficulty is not so much in the incapacity of the party cadre to *integrate* theoretical contributions in the practical battle against Stalinism. Many of the party cadres were intellectuals, the scientists and the artists. Therefore, the first problem lies in the incapacity to evaluate the theoretical contribution in a political manner if it is *abstract* and *theoretical*, specific and truly philosophical, as its own *politicum*. Instead of this, the Party demands engagement through the Party. This incapacity is particularly characterised by the position of the *confession through simultaneous denial*, as stated by Stipe Šuvar: "*Praxis* emerged at the time when our society was experiencing a particular theoretical liveliness after the Programme of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was declared (...) *Praxis* gave a certain theoretical contribution to the critique of Stalinism. This contribution by *Praxis*, of course, would not be possible if our Communist Movement did not come into practical and political, and also ideological and spiritual conflict with Stalinism as an organised power in the world and locally."[29]

This statement pronounced from several points of uttering – from the standpoint of a political and ideological historian, party and political official, social chronicler, colleague in the field of scientific social theories – implies that "political and practical conflict" between the Yugoslav Party and the Cominform carries enough "ideological and spiritual" context that every theoretical and philosophical critique is actually just additional polishing that does not go any further than the practical achievements of the Party. Since, according to Šuvar, the *praxis* group did not develop any *theoretical research*, except in the

27 Having said that, one has to have in mind that the expression "mass culture" here means *people's culture* in a very determined meaning, typical of socialist societies in the early phase of their establishment: it is the amassing or the national ownership of the traditional *elite* culture, such as literature, theatrical or visual arts, higher education and academic education. Only later, in late 1950s and in 1960s, will the term mass culture gain the specific meaning with an admixture of consumerism which is valid still today.

28 For the same problem in the art see the above mentioned lecture by WHW (Novine Galerije Nove, 17): "But why was the project of total design and synthesis of all arts, as propagated by EXAT 51, not acceptable to the system? Perhaps because the artistic antidogmatism of the group was an indicator of a far more progressive involvement with the idea of socialism than was the case with the bureaucratic apparatus in power. And this is why the activities of EXAT 51 sparked tensions and risks, not because of the pressure of soc-realism that had already lost its battle in Yugoslavia."

29 See Stipe Šuvar, "O *Praxis*u i onome što je (bilo) oko njega", in: *Lijevo i desno ili desno i lijevo. Varijacije o idejnoj borbi, inteligenciji, ljevici, desnici i druge teme*, Vrnjačka Banja: *Zamak kulture*, no. 16, 1975, pp. 69-73 (quotation, page 69).

critique of nationalism, but actually dealt with politics (p. 71), a fatal deficit has occurred: "*Praxis* has chosen excesses and that is why it was warned – because of the excesses. […] Had the people from *praxis* involved themselves in critique along the Party Line it would be good. But they remained on the abstract level." That is why this position reconfirms that the authorities do not understand that the essence and purpose of *philosophical critique* of the authorities is not in taking over the power but keeping the horizon of the idea open in contrast to the so-called positive politics. Therefore the answer to the paradox lies in the *perseverance of the new philosophy to criticise*. i.e. on the *insistence* of these "abstract" subjects in uncovering the *fundamental hypocrisy* or *cynicism* built in the system of ruling over people itself, in uncovering the alienation of the "idea" of socialism in its "reality."

Yet, the political problem of *praxis*, and with *praxis*, consisted not only in unveiling the general hypocrisy of the system and on the insistent pointing out to the fact that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is in fact *dictatorship over the proletariat*, i.e. that the system(atic) alienation of life production from the real subjects of that production. Cynicism can always find some sort of justification for the discrepancy between the "principle" on the one hand, and "life" on the other. I believe that the true sin which *praxis* committed in the eyes of the political apparatus is much more important. It consists of something which seems apparently opposite: namely, *praxis* pointed out to the fact that the proclaimed, i.e. principal, and partly the real practice of the social politics in new socialism was disproportionately more advanced than its *really existing theory* in the academic niches (universities, institutes et al.), and that actually now it was the "theory" that recognised that *within,* as a philosophy, it must compensate for this delay as *its inherent deficit*. It didn't consist at all in anything external, like for example, the institutional distance of philosophy from the Party, which could be compensated through joining the "Party line," through abandoning the "abstract level."[30] The problem was the persistence of philosophy to remain on the abstract level as a medium of the negative, which makes it possible for philosophy as such to act as an *autonomous political subject outside of the party* and thus to be the only authentic subject (at least in the vocabulary and self-understanding of philosophy).

From there one can easily see what makes the *surplus* or *profit* of this "belatedness" of philosophy in relation to the action of "our Party" which had already carried out the practical criticism of Stalinism (Šuvar): this surplus, which philosophy carries with itself, is the real, actual, existent model of the *autonomous and auto-poietical subjectivity* as a social and political *paradigm* which represents itself in the very *medium* of philosophy (or art) through the act of philosophising as an act of a demonstratively free subjectivity.

30 About this collision speak not only general theoretical debates, like Gajo Petrović's "Filozofija i politika u socijalizmu" (*Praxis* 2/1964) or the cover issue "Moć i humanost" (*Praxis* 1–2, 1970) but much more, the literal taking over of the principle of the 'clash of opinions' and "acting through ideas" instead through decrees, which was proclaimed at the 6th Congress of the League of Communist of Yugoslavia in 1958. In this sense, instructive are political appearances of the members of *praxis* group, like Gajo Petrović's and Mihailo Marković's presentations at the 8th Congress of the League of Communist of Yugoslavia (see *Praxis* 2, 1965) but also, an entire decade earlier, the polemic writings of Rudi Supek in *Pogledi* (1952–54) especially the text "Zašto mi nemamo borbu mišljenja?".

Nomadism of a radical critical thought of socialism should be seen on this background. As some place of philosophy, in the way Supek saw "clash of opinions," would close, so would the philosophical "meeting up" of emancipation from Stalinism moved, like nomadic herdsmen or a tolerated guerrilla from one temporariness to another through instances of high culture – from the university academic journal *Pogledi*, through *Naše teme*, to *Praxis*, but there were also other journals which appeared and disappeared following a strange dynamics before, during and after the 1960s in Croatia and outside Croatia, like *Gledišta* and *Filozofija* in Belgrade and later on *Theoria* and *Dijalog* in Sarajevo, etc. The mass-popular effect of this production can be called today a critical culture for the people or the philosophical education of the "people" for the critique.[31]

4. Praxis and EXAT 51: A Sketch for Another Non-relationship

The conceptual ground which is the base of the mentioned autonomous position of *praxis* vis-à-vis the socialist apparatus of power is the *poietic term of practice*. In terminology of *praxis* philosophy it marks a human activity as essentially creative, or, to be more precise: self-creating nature of a man. Having said that, it does not imply only the human technical relation towards nature and human being-there in the world but a process of educating man for the existence as a *specifically human* responsibility for the world – exactly inasmuch as it is a *human product* or the form in which both the nature and the culture are mediated.

This striking philosophical concept of *praxis*, without which this philosophical group would not be recognisable, is a *syncretic* idea, which emerged as a result of a modern philosophical heritage from different but related sources, from Rousseau, Kant, romanticism and the philosophy of the German idealism (above all Fichte and his figure *Tathandlung* or "productive act") Marx, and also Nietzsche. One can immediately say, in a critical manner, that the very term of *poietic practice* certainly did not experience a more contemporary conceptual elaboration and explication, which were possible by all means, like, for example in the sense of *performative* theory, and which would probably make *praxis* philosophy more attractive and fruitful in the field of philosophical theories. But, apart from that critical perspective, here we will take a look at some close aspects of the culture of the 1960s which are in connection with the notion of artistic creativity in *praxis*. As I see it, the most typical are two aspects which again have features of a paradox.

One aspect is the circumstance that *praxis* on the one hand in its programmatic documents and in the large part of the production of philosophical papers insists on the moment of *creativity* in the notion of *practice* as opposed to the narrower meaning of the term *practice* in the sense of the *moral and practi-*

31 For this strange dynamics of quick initiation and even quicker disappearance of journals, see N. Popov (2008), p. 153sq. But the author evaluates this also in a positive way as a process of establishing the "lower threshold of tolerance" in the party nomenclature. This includes also the line of the emergence of journals such as *Pogledi, Naše teme, Praxis, Kulturni radnik*.

cal action.[32] This conceptual transformation occurs on the *paradigm of the spontaneous artistic act*, so the general position of *praxis* is permanently connected from the inside to the philosophy of art of the German classical idealism which comes from Kant's notion of spontaneity.[33] Thus the term "poietic" along with the notion of practice in the title of this essay can undoubtly be understood as a specific, in fact, idealistic and romantic, art-philosophical conception, and less as an aesthetic-theoretical one.[34] Therein certainly lie substantial limitations of *praxis* both for the development of the concept of "practice" within the philosophical theory and with regards to understanding, thematisation and reflection of contemporary, especially abstract and conceptualist artistic tendencies, which represents an obvious deficit in the *praxis* corpus.[35]

Still, to outline the limitations that emerge from the inherent art-philosophical conception of the central notion of practice in the *praxis* philosophy for cultural-research purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to direct oneself to external aspects. They can be clearly seen in the fact that in the history of the origin of *praxis* philosophy, in late 1950s and early 1960s, and until the initiation of the *Praxis* journal in 1964 and later on, there is a curious general lack of reference to the artistic practice of the 1950s and 1960s in all of the aspects of its representation.[36] With regards to this striking lack of a direct and thematic cooperation between anti-dogmatic movements among actors of the contemporary artistic practice and the authors of artistic auto-theory of the

32 For orientation, see the programmatic cover part "O praksi" in the first issue of the journal (*Praxis* 1, 1964), especially the text written by Branko Bošnjak, "Ime i pojam *praxis*", pp. 7-20.

33 Very characteristic example of an exceptionally strong role of such an understanding of the art, with constitutive repercussions for the general position is Milan Kangrga, whose oeuvre is more marked by the philosophy of art and less by the aesthetic-theoretical or the aesthetic-historical than in Danko Grlić's case. See: M. Kangrga, *Njemački klasični idealizam* (lectures), Zagreb: FF-press, 2008, particularly the fifth lecture dedicated to the Kant's *Critique of judgement*.

34 For illustration, see especially Danko Grlić's article "Čemu umjetnost", *Praxis* 2/1966 (cover issue "Umjetnost u svijetu tehnike"). For the discursive identity of the concept constant insisting on the opposition regarding the notion and phenomenon of *reification* (see the cover issue "Stvaralaštvo i postvarenje", *Praxis* 5-6/1967) is of great importance. For the way how the concept of the productive, (which, as a Fichtean legacy of German Idealism, was emphatically and most persistently elaborated by Milan Kangrga, was applied also to the concrete analysis of the crisis of the political and social system, with a distinction between *community* as a production principle that establishes the individual, and *territory* as an instance of the state, see, for example, Andrija Krešić, "Proizvodni princip samouprave", *Praxis* 6/1971, (cover issue "Trenutak jugoslavenskog socijalizma III"), especially pp. 831-832. For the theorem of the 'spontaneity', see *Praxis* 1-2/1972., especially Enzo Paci, "Spontanost kao temelj i modalitet *praxis*a" (pp. 129-138).

35 From the perspective of recent works about the history of contemporary art, for the connection of the artistic tendencies of the 1950s and 1960s with the philosophical critique of socialism as a political system, see Ljiljana Kolešnik, "Delays, Overlaps, Irruptions: Croatian Art of 1950s and 1960s", in which the position of Matko Meštrović, art and media theoretician, also member of *Gorgona*, is pointed out as extraordinary relevant, and whose position is exemplified in his collection of works *Od pojedinačnog općem*, Zagreb: Mladost, 1967 (note 12). For the closeness of this author to the general philosophical concept of *praxis*, see: M. Meštrović, "Ukupni radnik i totalni praksis", in "Interdisciplinarnost: znanosti obrazovanja i inovacija", ed. by Zvonimir Šeparović, 1982, pp. 1970-79. See also more recent works by Mladen Labus, *Umjetnost i društvo: ontološki i socio-antropološki temelji suvremene umjetnosti*, Zagreb: Institut zadruštvena istraživanja, 2001, and *Filozofija moderne umjetnosti: onto-antropologijski i socio-kulturni pristupi*, Zagreb: Institut za društvena istraživanja, 2006 (especially papers on the artistic and philosophical opinions of the *praxis* generation of Grlić, Focht, Sutlić).

36 As far as I know two exceptions are the sociological analysis of the contemporary artistic scene by Rudi Supek "Naši likovni stvaraoci i kulturna situacija. Osvrt na jednu anketu", *Praxis* 4/1970, and the already quoted paper by M Životić "Socijalizam i masovna kultura" (*Praxis* 2/1964, 258-268), where avant-garde art represents an argument of a special rank.

praxis philosophy, the presence of Vjenceslav Richter, one of the most eminent actors of new art tendencies in one of the early issues of *Praxis*, and the presence of the *praxis* member Rudi Supek in the publication *New Tendencies* are rare exceptions that rather confirm non-cooperation than prove the principal cooperation.[37]

On this background, the lack of references to programmatic documents and manifestos of the artists from the group *EXAT 51* becomes even more visible, although within them, through another means than in *praxis*, and a decade earlier than in *praxis*, a similar *practical and factual negation* of the theory of reflection, of the ideology of socialist realism in art, and the bureaucratic practice which was in favour of this orientation was performed, and thus in fact the previous challenge to the socialist project in its positive form. In this sense, the activities of the artistic avant-garde of *EXAT 51*[38] represents an unofficial, yet none the less determining moment of the socialist social project which, like *praxis* later, was responsible and meritorious for its intellectually most productive achievements and tensions.

Namely, when we speak about the emancipatory theory of socialism which has emerged from the modern European intellectual heritage in areas as different as philosophy, art, architecture, social and political theories, and in order to understand the constellation we are talking about, it is necessary to take into account the epochal local contexts. Starting from 1948, during the dramatic time of the political division from Cominform, Ivan Picelj, Vjenceslav Richter and Aleksandar Srnec, the most prominent figures of the movement, realised a series of projects, ordered by the state, primarily pavilions for big international exhibitions – the representative projects of the new, young state which perceived itself as a modern, contemporary and progressive and wanted others to see it in that way.[39]

That is why it is important, for evaluation of this avant-garde art movement, to bear in mind that their program orientation is not just bare transposition of an already existing foreign model but is, similar to the *praxis* case later on in philosophy, the matter of a specific project for which the contemporary international heritage of the 20th century and the local context were of equal importance. In its early beginnings it had two meanings: it included

37 See "Asistencija i angažiranost", *Praxis* 4-5/1965 (cover issue "Jugoslavenska kultura"). Rudi Supek, "Humanizacija ljudske sredine i ljudskog stvaranja", in: *Nova tendencija* 3, Zagreb, 13. VIII - 19. IX 1965, pp. 13-14. For typical *praxis* approach to artistic production from the standpoint of the opposition of *creativity–reification*, see: "Odgovornost umjetnika, čije djelo teži opredmećenju i trajanju u konkretnom prostoru na domašaj svim ljudima, postaje stoga svakim danom sve veća" (str. 13).

38 For history, testimonies, manifestos and works of the members of EXAT 51, Gorgona and Nove umjetničke tendencije, see the material available at the web pages of the Museum of contemporary art (http://www.mdc.hr/msu/hr/zbirke/fs-2-2-2zbirka.html). For EXAT 51. see Ješa Denegri & Želimir Koščević, "EXAT 51, 1951–56", Galerija Nova, Zagreb: Centar za kulturnu djelatnost socijalističke omladine Zagreba, 1979; Ješa Denegri, *EXAT 51 i Nove tendencije, Umjetnost konstruktivnog pristupa*, Zagreb: Horetzky, 2000. Also the already quoted publication *Novine Galerije Nove* 17, December 2009, and other publications quoted here.

39 See Radoslav Putar, "Od oslobođenja do danas", the catalogue of the exhibition "Šezdeset godina slikarstva i skulpture u Hrvatskoj", Umjetnički paviljon, Zagreb, 1961; Vera Horvat-Pintarić, *Vjenceslav Richter*, Zagreb: Grafički zavod Hrvatske, 1970. Also, Denegri & Koščević, op. cit.; WHW, l.c.; Jasna Galjer, *Dizajn pedesetih u Hrvatskoj*, Zagreb: Horetzky 2004. And the catalogue *Pedesete godine u hrvatskoj umjetnosti,* Zagreb: HDLU, 2004. See also the review of the activities of *EXAT 51* in the already quoted lecture WHW, Novine Galerije Nova, no. 17.

above mentioned aspects of mass movement of acculturation of the wide social masses, from the literacy campaign and compulsory education to the national appropriation of *high culture* (especially literature and theatre), but at the same time the highly intellectual critical processes, like the critique of social-realism and the insisting on autonomy of the cultural sphere in the avant-garde, which are not necessarily unequivocal.[40]

It goes without saying that exactly through this *very project* of massification of high culture, involving the popularization of abstract modernism though state commissioning in avant-garde architecture, *new tensions were created* that will be also of great importance in the field of cultural policies.[41] Looking at this from the perspective of *praxis*, on the background of this conflict between the principle of the autonomy of avant-garde art and social requirements, M. Životić's plaidoyé, mentioned above, for the avant-garde art is interesting within his critique of mass culture where the author, while confronting the mass culture and elite art, finds out a theoretical solution in the avant-garde abstract art; the *mass* and the *elite* do not represent original oppositional pair in the cultural field; the true opposition is valid only for the *authentic–elite* pair whereby the 'authentic' is related to avant-garde art. It is the agent of true creation, the issue which for the members of the *praxis* group was so important.[42]

But, regardless of how insignificant external references are, it is exactly in this field that one can find the latent similarities between *praxis* and the artistic movements in the first decades after WW2. That is why the difference regarding their political destinies is more paradoxical. While *praxis* was immediately seen by the party nomenclature, from its beginning, as a *politicum* worthy of suspicion, this was not the case with the arts. They were, in spite of the latent ideological tensions, representable from the very start.

The reason why the art-theoretical critique of the social-realistic ideological aspects of the early Yugoslav political system did not experience the po-

40 See the statement of Vojin Bakić, sculptor, one of the most prominent representative of *New Tendencies:* "After 1945 a very responsible task was placed before artists – to create the abundance of contents and topics from our closest history from the Liberation War and contemporary life, but in such a way [...] to find a higher form, a higher and more comprehensive grasping which would be suitable to our new man and the time we live in" (quotation from: *Novine Galerije Nova Nr.* 12 (Bakić), June, 2007, p. 41 (Originally in *Ilustrirani vjesnik*, 1950, "Glasam za narod, glasam za škole"). For the same orientation compare *EXAT 51* manifestos.

41 Compare the dramatic case of inconsistency of the most prominent actors of the critique of social realism, like Miroslav Krleža, on the occasion of commissioning of the monument to Marx and Engels on Marx and Engels Square in Belgrade in 1953, when the commission consisting of M. Krleža, Milan Bogdanović and Josip Vidmar rejected both version of Vojin Bakić's project as conceptually and historically inadequate and impossible to realise from the standpoint of representing needs of socialism. See material on this in *Novine Galerije Nove*, no. 12, June 2007, on the retrospective exhibition of WHW dedicated to Vojin Bakić's oeuvre, especially Milan Prelog, "Vojin Bakić's Work" (originally in Pogledi, no. 11, Zagreb, 1953, pp. 912-919).

42 This is certainly the most direct, although generalised, meeting point between *praxis* and new art tendencies, but it is interesting also because within the narrow circle of *praxis* one can detect a kind of hostility regarding "technique" in general, especially regarding "hypertrophy" of technique in art, although for the avant-garde tendencies in art it is an unavoidable moment of experiment. See *Praxis* 2/1966, cover issue "Umjetnost u svijetu tehnike"). On the presence of media- theoretical interest in the inner circle of older members of *praxis*, see: Ivan Kuvačić, "M. McLuhan. Teoretičar masovnih komunikacija", *Praxis* 4/1968. For the outer circle of *praxis* and more complex references in theoretical relations, see: Ljiljana Kolešnik (l. c.) and also her earlier work, "Tipologija izražajnih formi nove umjetničke prakse i novi mediji komunikacije umjetničkog djela u Jugoslaviji od 1969–1975, Zagreb, Filozofski fakultet, 1987 (B. A.).

litical destiny of *praxis*, in spite of tensions with the official institutions and bureaucracy, about which two manifestos of EXAT from 1951 and 1953 testify, appears to be obvious, although not completely simple in its obviousness. Namely, although the abstract and avant-garde art of the 1950s and 1960s was programmatically accused for social elitism and bourgeois decadence, because of the demand to have the right to abstraction, although the autonomous self-constitution of the artistic practice is a phenomenon of ultra-high culture, so that its inherent *politicum* – the resistance to collectivism in the official political ideology of the social realism in the theory of visual art, thematisations of the difference between socialism as an universal-human historical issue and its real, practical achievements – art deviation from the general Party line of development remains, by its very nature, the inherent constituent part and the "inner" issue of the art itself as art. It does not refer only indirectly to the political reality – and in this sense "abstractly" – it always self-creates itself in each of its acts, no matter how politically explicit they are, and thus it necessarily is an act of art. So, *EXAT 51* group in its manifesto of 7th of December 1951 sees "[...] our reality as a striving towards the progress in all forms of human activity" and "believes that battle against old-fashioned ideas and activities in art is necessary." The group finds that their task is to synthesise all arts and emphasise the experimental character of art activities without which no progress in the creative approach to art is possible; the group sees the fundament of their activities as the "positive outcome of development in the differences in opinions, which are the necessary prerequisite to advance the artistic life in the country." If we can see in this why the two *EXAT* manifestos are considered their most representative *artefacts*[43] it explains why the "minimum threshold of tolerance" (Popov) could have been so high.[44]

And this was the essential difference between the immanentistic autonomy of art of the 1950s and 1960s compared to the intellectual autonomy of *praxis* philosophy of the 1960s which, in order to be immanently productive, must look for its autonomy outside itself and become a paradigm of the *political* subject within the social field, which is independent of the party politics.

Thus the destiny of *praxis* is really paradoxical, namely, it was erased from the social field as "abstract art" instead of the art itself, as if it was the matter of an art group for "art-for-art's-sake humanism" which has abandoned the field or art in order to act "practically and politically" (Šuvar). However, there is a benefit at least for us in it. This way the above mentioned lack of coincidence between the *praxis* philosophy and art tendencies of the early Yugoslav socialism unnoticeably transforms into a convergence of intellectual phenomena in different fields of visual art and philosophy, which I will show in the end only as a sketch of an impression and suggestion that this aspect perhaps contain

43 The first manifesto from 1951 was signed by Bernardo Bernardi, architect, Zdravko Bregovec, architect, Ivan Picelj, painter, Božidar Rašica, architect, Vjenceslav Richter, architect, Aleksandar Srnec, painter, Vladimir Zaharović, architect. The manifesto was read by B. Bernardi at the plenary session of the Association for Applied Arts, on 7 December 1951. The second manifesto from the exhibition by Kristl-Picelj-Rašica-Srnec of 4 March 1953, was more polemic, directed towards different kinds of dispute.

44 In that inner division I tend to see the constituting positive moment of socialism itself. Rastko Močnik interprets the oncoming of modernism as pushing out of the partisan cultural policy which was, unlike the citizens autonomy of the cultural sphere, changing the social structure of the time, see "Partizanska simbolička politika" in *Zarez*, no. 161-162.

a possible answer to the riddle why *praxis* ignored the artistic practices of the 1950s and 1960s.

This aspect consists in *autonomy* of the intellectual practice of philosophy which enables us to recognise the way *praxis* actually works as an artistic group outside the field of art, and which, in the field of philosophy, is faithful to one concept of art, strictly defined as a subjective power of creativity based on spontaneity. Although the notion of an "art group" can be considered only in a weak, almost figurative meaning of the term, there are some important characteristic moments in self-understanding and in the way of self-presentation of the *praxis* group that speak of it. *Praxis* does not express its philosophical doctrine only declaratively *sub specie* the creative paradigm of art, as has been shown before, but as a philosophical group and conceptual affiliation it appears as some kind of art producer and as its own artefact. Its important features are auto-referentially and auto-poiesis, i.e. constant self-producing and auto-articulation of the theoretical and political position through permanent programmatic *manifestos* and referring to its intrinsic principle of *freedom* in the production of ideas. This can be properly documented in theoretical discourse of the *praxis* group as well as in its polemical discourse.

This is, in my opinion, the background in which the *praxis* ignoring of the previous and contemporary practices in art is shown as an expression of theoretical autarchy. From the standpoint of today's theoretical needs in the fields of culture, society, politics and everyday life, which are both declarative and in their programs conciliatory and non-discriminative, it would certainly be more desirable that the relation of philosophy toward other cultures was more integrative and complementary.