

Dear friends,

You could not imagine the joy and the fear that I experience because of the possibility to express some of my views in front of you today. My first question when I said “yes” to Robert was addressed to myself – or to my “selves”, in plural: which one of you is going to talk: the student or the professor? the policy maker or a trouble maker? the power-point presenter or the *ex-cathedra* speaker?

In order to respect the brief of the conference as a “*process in which how debate and reflection occur will be as important as what is discussed*” (François Matarasso, p. 10) I dare to say that **the true subject** of my speech will exit as a *spectre* at the end of play – and not appear as a *ghost* in the beginning of it. But what I will **not do** is to present a particular Slovene case or one particular cultural practice. Because – and this is where I start – *if you want to reach the universal, you always have to look for the singular*. Never can universal come out as the sum of the particularities: it is in the dark dialectic tension between the most singular and the most universal that we have the chance of finding some flashes of truth, it is in the radical gap between those two that we can search for our survival. And if I understood well the goal of this conference, about the survival it is.

How will I proceed?

First, I will tell you about “the incredible **event** at the Ljubljana castle”.

Second, I will admit to you how *textually* I’ve understood Robert’s invitation and will try to introduce one **concept**.

Third, I will show you one **picture** and try to move it into the *moving sequence*.

Fourth, I will borrow a philosophical **lecture** about the importance of *event* in the process of truth.

And finally, in Act 5, I will emphatically ... murder the king. No, no ... I will try to confront those concepts, images and thoughts with our everyday **practice** of cultural policy.

I.

The incredible event at the Ljubljana Castle

Almost a year ago, last November, there was a conference in Ljubljana, on cultural heritage and so-called “Ljubljana Process”. There was a reception at the castle on Friday evening and, before leaving the venue, I wanted to show to my colleagues a newly adapted room that has a great view on the city. The legend of the room is connected with the view: it is said that the sad lady was known to be sitting there for long hours contemplating the city. Once in the room, you can sit on her bank, embody her point of view, become her – and thus see her view! So the room is all about *becoming the other by taking other’s point of view*.

If professor Rifkin allows me to use his concept of **empathy** – that is, “*to feel and experience another’s situation as if it were one’s own*” – this castle’s *camera obscura* is an “empathy room” *par excellence*.

All usual suspects were there: Mr. Robert Palmer, the minister of culture of Montenegro Branislav Mičunović, state secretary for culture from Croatia Nina Obuljen and myself. At a certain moment, Mr. Mičunović, not only minister of culture, but also well-known theatre director, started to recite *Hamlet* by heart – and almost in the same breath explaining that he would never put Shakespeare on stage because it can be too dangerous for a sensible theatre director like him. He said it could be fatal for him. I would never forget this moment: all dimensions of what we usually call “culture” got together in this cell: reconstructed architectural heritage and a view to the urban landscape; artistic text as a memory, live performance and doomed destiny; actor and director; cinematographic combination of *camera obscura* and edited point-of-views, science and art, love and politics. It was like we were all caught, as Gilles Deleuze would say, in a “*flagrant delit de legender*”. It was more powerful than all daily strategies, heard before during the conference, so powerful that I had to report on this event the next morning, during the “civil society” session.

It was a short moment of eternity in this dark autumn night.

Why, when discussing big culture-political strategic changes, we should not forget or neglect the mysterious dimension of such singular events? Because art might teach and inspire us more by creating and providing such “moments of truth” than by systematic paradigm-shifts.

Slavoj Žižek concludes his book on Deleuze with a chapter on politics entitled “*Plea for a cultural revolution*”. He there confronts big strategic political acts with radical “suicidal” gestures of pure self-destructive ethical insistence with apparently no political goal:

“*The point is not simply that, once we are thoroughly engaged in a political project, we are ready to risk everything for it, inclusive of our lives, but, more precisely, **that only such an ‘impossible’ gesture of pure expenditure can change the very coordinates of what is strategically possible within a historical constellation.***” (*Organs without Bodies. On Deleuze and Consequences*, Routledge, 2004, p. 205).

Žižek suggests two different ways of “changing the very coordinates of what is strategically possible”: one is Hegel’s “changing the religion”, second is the retroactive change of the destiny that we could call “the Terminator” one, only to avoid mentioning Schwarzenegger in the same sentence with Hegel.

In Hegel’s *Encyclopedia of philosophical sciences* Žižek found very contemporary lecture: “*It’s a modern folly to alter a corrupt ethical system, its constitution and legislation, without changing the religion, to have a revolution without reformation.*” (quoted in *Organs ...*, p. 211). So, the cultural revolution would be the condition of the successful social revolution: people should not only realize their old dreams, but they have to **reinvent their very modes of dreaming** (*ibid.*)

While mentioning Hegel in this context allow me, please, to say that not all heritage of the Enlightenment is to be simply rejected. It is exactly in his text on French Revolution (*The Conflict of the Faculties*) that Immanuel Kant is offering his theory of a participative democracy, so close to today’s “spectacle society”. In his views, the social revolution is as much in the eyes of the enthusiastic observer as it is in the often bloody reality in the streets:

“*The recent Revolution of a people which is rich in spirit, may well either fail or succeed, accumulate misery and atrocity, it nevertheless arouses **in the heart of all spectators** (who are not themselves caught up in it) a taking of sides according to desires which borders on enthusiasm and which, since its very expression was not without danger, can only have been caused by a moral disposition within the human race.*” (quoted in Žižek, *First as Tragedy, then as Farce*, Verso, p. 106).

If this Enlightenment formula was about “inserting a new possibility into the future”, the information society with its high-tech time-machines pushes the thought into the opposite direction: to inserting a new possibility *into the past*. This is how Žižek ends his small “red book” *Living in the End of Times*, edited for the Shanghai EXPO 2010:

“(W)e have to accept that, at the level of possibilities, our future is doomed, the catastrophe will take place, it is our destiny – and then, on the background of this acceptance, we should mobilize ourselves to perform the act which will change destiny itself and thereby insert a new possibility into the past.” (p. 57).

If you’re tempted to say it is just philosopher’s talk, let me remind you about the plot of two mythical science fiction movies from the end of the last century: Robert Zemeckis’ *Back to the Future* and James Cameron’s *Terminator*. They were both dealing with “undoing” the future by inserting new possibility *into the past* – the first one only to save the hero, the other to save the whole world.

And if you’re still tempted to say that it’s just Hollywood utopia, let me quote the agency news of what Slovene Prime Minister, Borut Pahor, has said at his party meeting *this weekend*, three days ago. He demanded a political debate to check if his party is united in doing what’s right “*no matter what people will say on next elections in two years*”. He said he’s ready to do everything necessary and is therefore ready to sacrifice “*many things*” in order to fulfill the promises given two years ago. He also said that it’s their historic duty and the most important thing that social democracy can give to Slovenia, but since this can influence personal careers and the future of the party, he would understand potential different views as legitimate, too.

You might say its typical political language – but exactly because of this we should be sensible to its paradoxical temporality: *since we’re doomed let’s mobilize ourselves to change the historic destiny!* From geo-sphere to biosphere, from power to partnership ...

II.

The king is a thing

When Robert offered me this opportunity to speak to you, I immediately said “yes”. I printed out his first mail and started where I always start: not with thoughts, but with words. I sincerely think that “in the beginning there’s always a word” – even if you have to invent one.

Erreur ! Des objets ne peuvent pas être créés à partir des codes de champs de mise en forme.

(PPT slides 2-9)

This is an excerpt from his mail. When he asked me about »many issues that are PROVOKING a RE-THINKING of EXISTING cultural policy and practice«, I first saw **two kings and a t(h)ing** in his question – and it reminded me of a famous Hamlet's dialogue with Rosencrantz (Act 4 Scene 2):

ROSENCRANTZ

My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the king.

HAMLET

*The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. **The king is a thing** --*

GUILDENSTERN

A thing, my lord!

HAMLET

Of nothing:

To say that »The king is a thing« is not only to say that the king is naked (i.e. to uncover to everybody the already known, but untold truth), but it is also to go further and create a Hegelian *infinite judgment*, like in »*The spirit is the bone*« which is the classical example of an internal contradiction that moves forward the thinking.

So, I've read his question in this way: are we ready to **re-think** the relation between provoking views and factual practice as an *internal contradiction* that can move things

forward? Are we even ready to join the two together: the king's *view* and the *body* of things, like in Hamlet's view of the spirit of his dead father.

(PPT slide 7)

When his mother is reproaching him that he bends his »*eye on vacancy / And with the incorporal air do(es) hold discourse?*«, the Prince of Denmark is in fact seeing “*his form and cause conjoin'd*” (Act 3 Scene IV), his view and his essence, how he looks and what he really is.

Are we ready to join the two sides of our daily experience into **one word** that would incorporate both the *spiritual*, reflexive perspective and the concrete, *material* factual body – or if you wish, both cognitive and affective experience – in order to have **one concept** for our oxymoron of »**material thought**«: with the power of concept to create the thing (again)?

In other words, do we, the policy makers, really have the capacities *to transform our thoughts into things*? Can we leave some material trace of our supposed truths? How do we make the invisible forces visible? In order to answer those questions, I will turn to – photography and to philosophy.

III.

Moving sequence

Erreur ! Des objets ne peuvent pas être créés à partir des codes de champs de mise en forme.

(PPT slides 10)

This picture was shot in the beginning of the 20th century by Montenegrin princess Ksenija. While other Ksenija's sisters married to various European courts, from Italy and Germany to Russia, she has chosen *other form of mobility*: apart from being her father's key political consultant she was known to be the first woman-driver of an *automobile* in the Balkans and devoted most of her free time to *photography*. She was moving her points-of-view from point to point, she was literary creating »*moving sequences*«.

The faceless figure in male boots, hiding behind the shadow of an umbrella a certain mystery of relation between body and thought, flash and mind, thus strangely reflecting the mirroring of a tree and its shadow, might be one of her aunts or uncles, or even her father, King Nikola. Where do those unseen eyes stare? What do they see? What does he or she think?

In order to answer all these questions, we need *another perspective*, we need what French film theory would call a »*contre-champs*« to this field. We feel the need to enter the picture like Harrison Ford (as detective Dekart!) did with his voice-controlled computer in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* – or at least to »*join our judgments*«, like Hamlet told Horatio during the Mousetrap scene: »*Observe mine uncle (...) And after we will both our judgments join*« (Act 3 Scene II). What would we see in the shadow of an umbrella if we were allowed to see the counter-field? Face? Flash? Soul?

(PPT slide 11-12)

There's no need to see Francis Bacon *avant la lettre* in this photography just because of the umbrella, but what if the dark shadow is at the same time the reflection of a tree on the water and the human reflection on time, on the nature and the essence of time, provided by a modern machine? What if this drama of »*embodied experience*« is in fact a tragic one and »*the intensification and extension of empathy to more diverse others across broader temporal*

and spatial domains« (J. Rifkin, *The Empathic Civilization*, p. 2) an extremely difficult task, neighboring to the “forbidden”?

(PPT slide 13)

Here, in this arbitrary editing of motives, in this *moving sequence*, I see the crucial, a *royal* role of culture: **to give us the tools for perception, the ethics for thought and the languages to express both perceived and thought.**

So, allow me a very short pedagogy of this particular, if not singular picture. Let me try to persuade you that, confronted with every picture and phenomenon in the world, it is not enough any more to ask the three classical questions:

(PPT slides 14-17)

Where do we stand ?	POINT
What do we see ?	VIEW
What do we think ?	REFLECTION

It would be the classical *cognitive mapping*: you have to know your own standing point and the horizon of your world in order to act and react in it.

But with *multiplicity and the mobility of the views* our every action is more and more fundamentally determined by:

Who's watching us?	POINT-OF-VIEW
What are they watching us with?	CONTROL

If we apply this to our photography, there's no more only King admiring the nature, but also Princess taking picture of him with a camera; and the subject supposed to contemplate the objective nature became himself the object of another technological »objective« where, as Wim Wenders would say, »there's always a *subjectif* on the other side of the camera«.

(PPT slide 18)

To »**re-thing**« this world of ours, to understand the noun as the verb, means to *mobilize* our knowledge to be able to confront it with the situation where:

- **subjects** are at the same time watching and being seen? (*The king is a thing*);
- **nature** is at the same time the ultimate object of all our measuring (*res extensa*) and the public sum of inter-subjective views (*res publica*);
- **media** are not only confronting subjective views and thinking, but also controlling the world by creating their own objective “state of the things” (*l'etat des choses*).

In such a world, art sometimes creates breaks that *radically change the course of time* and creation is able to *anticipate* the objective by pushing the subjective to the extreme of a »*matter of fact*«. It's by no chance that this expression, »*matter of fact*«, comes from Francis Bacon – because my *hommage* to professor Rifkin is the suggestion that we should move from Francis Bacon the Scientist of the 16th century (1561-1626) to Francis Bacon the Artist of the 20th century (1909 – 1992) – because there we might find the best examples of »embodied experience«. It is because of this profound insight into the complexity of human flash and mind that Francis Bacon was able to paint some of the events that were still to come – and thus provoke a break in the time by *inserting a future possibility into our past*.

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(PPT slide 19-20)

IV.

The process of truth

The more we enter the pictures, the closer we're to the central plane of my cultural landscape today – which is the plane of *ethics*. In order to be fully understood in the final chapter, please, allow me to summarize here a short passage from Alan Badiou's book *Ethics*, namely from the chapter about *the ethics of truths*.

It might help us to understand the situation in order to change it.

The **situation** is what there is. It's a kind of zero level of reality.

But than something happens that can not be reduced to the usual inscription into “what there is”. This irreducible singularity is an **event**. It forces us to decide for the new mode of being – and it goes the same for all four fundamental fields of human achievements: science, art, politics and love. That's why Badiou's examples for this irreducible singularity of the event are as different as French revolution, meeting of Heloise and Abelard, Galilean physics and Haydn's musical style (or, when he wants to be even more personal, Chinese cultural revolution, personal love passion, Grothendieck's *topos* theory and Schönberg's *dodecafony*).

The key question now is how to be **faithful to such event** – because to think its radical novelty demands invention. **Truth** is the name of this process of being faithful to a certain event, it is in fact what this *fidelity* produces in the situation. Truth is “the material trace of this event(u)al supplement to the situation”.

Therefore the truth is always **the immanent cut, break** of the situation – and it is in this break where the subject is born: **the process of truth introduces the subject**. Not the psychological, reflexive or transcendental subject, but *the subject as the result of this process*: the Two as the subject of love process, the revolutionary subject as the subject of the political process, the art-subject of the art process (not the particular “genius” artist nor the artwork alone, but the two together).

(It’s almost like the Princess had cut the situation with her shot and the material trace of this event opened the space for our *subject* – which is the royal view, the point-of-view of the author and our own view at the art-work, all three at the same time.)

Let’s summarize the process of truth as Badiou does it: events are irreducible singularities, a kind of “out-laws” of given situations. Processes of truth are immanent cuts, invented every time anew. Subjects are local appearances of the process of truth, singular and incomparable “points” of truth.

The key question is *can we insist* in this breaking point – can we live in it, can we make it last? That’s the ethics of truth: *“Do everything that you can in order to maintain what went beyond your bare existence. Insist in the break. Embody in your being what’ve gotten you and broken you.”*

(When I was recently listening sculptor Tony Cragg in Ljubljana, he was claiming the same: that life without art would be only a bare existence. And he explained to us how important for him is the *material* part of his work, his direct contact with the matter.)

Why is this philosophical excursion so important for our subject of change?

Because it can teach us that we can be deeply *interested in something* without necessarily understanding the “interests” as the way of appropriating, possessing everything. In this “royal quartet” of four fundamental human activities, of **processes of truth**, art is on the same level with science, politics and love. *“What will I do out of the fact that one evening I’ve met the eternal Hamlet”* – this question is for Badiou at the same level as the invention of the world once you watch it side-by-side with your loved one, or the feeling that you can move the workers in front of the factory with your words.

How will I endure in those conditions that go beyond my existence? How will I think this material trace of truthful event without conceding to common-sense opinions that will necessarily lead me to communication? Because, as Badiou would say, “*la vérité ne se communique pas*”. You don’t communicate the truth, you meet it – and then you should **never forget what you’ve met**. Love meeting; the sudden feeling that this song is *addressed* to you; incredible beauty of the scientific truth that opens new horizon; the brutal understanding of a political circumstance – all those are singular moments when you’re literary “struck by truth”. The ethics of the truth is not the ethics of the communication or of cultural studies, it’s the ethics of the Real.

So, the Truth breaks the reality with the flashes of the Real – like in the famous D. H. Lawrence umbrella episode, where we stretch our opinions like umbrella against the chaos. But the artists and the philosophers cut this umbrella to let the fresh air of chaos in, to break the reality with the Real. Later, imitators try to fill the gaps with colors and common-sense opinions, but the real art is already somewhere else.

Isn’t it also what we’re doing here: trying to let some fresh air in the opinion-guided politics? Trying to move from words to things, to influence the Real, to insert a new possibility into our future – and past! Didn’t we discover just yesterday that we have *mirror-neurons* all the way from the beginning but we just didn’t know it? When Alain Badiou is elaborating the *process of truth*, he is claiming exactly the same: one couldn’t know that he or she is capable of belonging to the situation and breaking into event that would materialize the trace of truth. Inscribing this experience into duration means *thinking it and conceptualizing it*, means becoming a subject even without knowing it, *à son propre insu*, means inscribing a singularity into universal – or, if you wish, means to *make a moment of our time a moment of eternity*.

(PPT slide 21)

A propos de parasol, please, recall only for a moment the hidden face of King Nikola behind the umbrella. I see a Baconesque Dark Knight there, full of difficult thoughts, fears and anguish. I almost see, like Naomi Klein reported for *subcommandante Marcos* in her book *Fences and Windows* (2002), “*that his black mask is a mirror, reflecting each of their own struggles*”.

I need the concept of “struggle” here because I want to include the notion of social or class struggle in my final remarks. Like my professor Slavoj Žižek I don’t believe in the organic-corporate model of a universal order within which every particular moment plays its determinate role, contributing to the wealth of All. “In other words, the common-sense reasoning which tells us that, independently of our class position or of our political orientation, we all will have to tackle the ecological crisis if we are to survive, is deeply misleading: the key to the ecological crisis does not reside in ecology as such.” (Žižek, *Living in the end...*, p. 23).

V.

Teacher, thinker, talker

That's why, if we want to answer to François Matarasso "*what immediate steps should governments and public bodies take to protect the creativity, vitality and diversity of European cultural life in the next three years?*" (p. 10), we could not do it "out of time".

In those particular times of ours I see the role of culture as the main supplier of **the tools for perception, the ethics for thought and the languages to express**. In other words, it has to teach us how we see the world, how we think of it and what ways of expression do we have to change it. If we're reducing the first question to science, the second to philosophy and the third one to technology, than we're closing the art into the cell of "beaux arts" or chasing it to *bazaar*, only to decorate our reality or to be sold on the market like fruit and vegetables. But if we're able to maintain this triple dialectics of art being *at the same time* "**teacher, thinker and talker**", we might have the chance to avoid the apocalypse.

In practice, it means that culture should:

- a) go **back to school**: through cultural education *curricula*, much more ambitious than just "preparing youth for economic competitiveness" (not as a functional tool for *other* programs, but as a subject *per se*);
- b) become **food for thought**: by introducing reflection on work of art as an integral part of their reception and a way to influence creativity (public debates, community workshops, specialized magazines, TV-programs ...):
- c) create **common concerns**: culture should be aware of the social struggles and its potential to be either "sedative" for pacified information society or "catalyst" of emancipatory politics, "the reformation of the revolution".

The further cultural policy reaches from the government cells to the civil society landscape, the more chance it has not to be a sad lady passively looking through the window of the castle but to "**embody the experience**" – no matter whether it will awakes as a princess moving around and touching the essence of his father with the camera or falls asleep like a young prince, "*bending his eye on vacancy and holding discourse with the incorporal air*".

In both cases, the eternal break-throughs of the situation were created, the moments of truth were touched – and the autonomous subjects were born. What more can we dream of?