

# Cultural Habitus of Art: The Aletheia of Self-Identification Versus the Post-Truth of Postmodernity

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**Abstract:** The paper focuses on an attempt to apply the habitus theory, first proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, to the current situation in Ukraine's and global art, with a specific consideration of the ongoing paradigm shift in which the worlds might be moving from the ostmodern to the metamodern version. Using the method of comparative epistemology, the authors of the paper, relying on the works by Daniel Dennett, Laurent Jodoin, Seth Abramson and other analysts, make an attempt to prove the effectiveness of studying the cultural habitus of Ukraine from the standpoint of the aletheia of transcendental aesthetics. The authors discuss not just the formal adequacy and legitimacy of the proposed definition of "metamodernism", but also explore the essential effectiveness of the oscillatory aesthetics of metaxia (understood as oscillations between different narratives and cognitions), striving to overcome the shortcomings of cultural industrial strategies in anticipation of more harmonious, creative, and productive results of the new approaches, which are recognized as post-liberal. In particular, applying comparative art epistemology, scientists analyze specific examples of the use of metamodern cognition in the creative projects of contemporary artists, where symbolic engrams of "structures of feelings" are successfully involved, presenting an absolute time of the aletheia, while maintaining a connection with the realities of modernity.

**Keywords:** Aletheia, Global Art, Art of Metamodernism, Ukrainian Cordocentrism, Cultural Habitus, Postliberalism, Post-Truth

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## 1. Introduction

According to Pierre Bourdieu's definition of cultural habitus, it is a synthesis of cognitive and archetypal patterns, ethical and aesthetic assessments, acquired dispositions, skills, preferences. Therefore, habitus concentrates a holistic experience adapted by an individual or communities in certain social conditions [1] and forms a new civilization experience during the change of fundamental paradigms, expanding the gestalt of actions based on transformations of the existential system of values. That is, the system of internal perception of the individual and his activities where specific patterns of existence are condensed by external circumstances, on the one hand, reproduces the internalized logic of the existing social structure.

In art, "practices and ideas can be objectively adapted to their results, as an unconscious achievement of a goal. The condition is associated with a particular class of existence. It

produces habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structures predisposed to functions. Principles generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without conscious goals or express mastery of the necessary operations in order to attain them" [1]. Thus, creativity merely reflects a given way of representation, which explains the habitus of self-identification. For example, the habitus of global public contemporary visual art is characteristic feature of those who uncritically adopt, imitate and introduce Western European artistic mainstream.

However, on the other hand, habitus as an unconscious structure has in its arsenal not just current experience, but also historically and naturally inherited archetypes, which affect creative vocabulary. Accordingly, each nation has a unique structure of habitus of its cultural identity, whether it is recognized as such or not. This is precisely what, among other things, determines the style of thinking, behavior or

reflection of contemporary artists on external challenges. P. Bourdieu noted that for a certain purpose “habitus reactions may be accompanied by a strategic calculation aimed at performing in a conscious mode an operation that the habitus performs quite differently, namely an estimation of chances presupposing transformation of the past effect into an expected objective” [1].

However, in a globalized world, cultural habitus can fully unveil itself only through a plurality of national habiti, which are demonstrated by individuals. Habitus combines conscious and unconscious dispositions of variable and constant structures. Whether such an interpretation of the metamodern cultural identities of art expression in the mainstream of global public art is legitimate and whether there is room for nuances of the “politics of resentment” or resistance, is exactly what we must investigate, bearing in mind that in the post truth era the truth is considered unnecessary and superfluous. Meanwhile, scientific interest in the cultural habitus of the modern existence of nations is gaining momentum. Francis Fukuyama in the foreword to the book “Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment” stressed the need to “shape identity in a way that supports rather than undermines democracy”, that is, the recognition by individuals and communities of their own identity becomes the main strategy of the modern world, which opposes the populist destabilizing statements of neoliberal pseudo-nationalists whose interests are satisfied exclusively by economic reforms. So “This book would not have been written had Donald J. Trump not been elected president in November 2016” [2].

Consequently, Fukuyama stresses that distorted identity politics, is a threat to a “more universal understanding of human dignity”, provoking lasting conflicts, because the confrontation of habiti feeds on different “structure of feeling” and ways of being, which Fukuyama defined as “creedal identity”. It is no coincidence that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the war in the center of Europe is called existential, because it brought into the geopolitical scope the deep processes of Ukrainian national building of statehood. These processes exploded with the culmination of the ancient “Politics of organized destruction”, which has been waged by Russia against Ukraine for several centuries, by forcefully imposing foreign culture, mindset and values.

At the same time, many philosophers traditionally continue to reflect on the ancient topic that both Socrates and Pontius Pilate were concerned with: “What is truth and what is not?”. This is the question that Kyiv-born writer Mykhailo Bulgakov and the architect and sculptor from Chernivtsi Frederick Kiesler once pondered on. The contemporaries, dissatisfied with Martin Heidegger’s aletheia, remind that “Truth” is the substance body of knowledge [3]. Meanwhile, the truth of self-identity does not always depend on how others perceive a person (as Paul Ricoeur assumed), because the subjective apprehension tries to resist the distorted reception formed under the pressure of colonial imperial discourse, or adapts to the general model of cultural imperialism, thus distorting their own narrative of identity.

That is why “certain groups are not systematically recognized, honored, or properly perceived” [4]. Moreover, the negative effect of post-truth echoes in such a way that self-colonization by the pan-imperial idea is spreading within the cultural community. Nowadays it happens in the situation of contemporary globalization, which is guided by the business logic of the cultural industry. According to José Medina, professor of philosophy at Northwestern University, United States, Illinois [5], it is recognized as the true evolution trajectory of modernity erroneously, due to the lack of discernment of truth. It is enthusiastically replicated by the so-called interpretive community, that does not have full knowledge how to resist structural and cognitive oppression. Moreover, they articulate explicit slogans of rejection of truth altogether, as the Italian postmodernist philosopher Gianni Vattimo pointed in his monograph “A Farewell to Truth” (2011), denying transcendent truth for the sake of consistent hermeneutical knowledge in terms of “nihilistic disappointment”. In his opinion, since facts do not exist, only blunt hermeneutics matters, which is why “truth as absolute objective correspondence... is more a danger than a blessing”. Consequently, it reaches a conclusion that it must be abandoned, because through it politicians turn democracy into authoritarian state [6]. Meanwhile, in the draft essay “The Wars on Truth”, Canadian analyst Laurent Jodoin emphasizes that with the election of Donald Trump, a politically unbiased society, as The New York Times noted in 2017, is forced to ask “Is the Truth Dead?” more often because most people got used to public lies of the post-truth era, where reality has been overcome by the fake known as “alternative facts” and constant emotional instability becomes more important than the evidence of truth, so that “absence of agreement about truth is one major reason for all kinds of abuses in politics, and not only there” [7].

Therefore, it could be said that American philosopher Daniel Dennett, the author of a book on consciousness in the technocratic world (Dennett D., 2017, *From Bacteria to Bach and Back*) made a valid point when accusing postmodernists, who rejected critical thinking and legitimized infantile play, cynical aphasia, cultural ignorance, abandoned essential holistic knowledge. He notes: “Sometimes, views can have terrifying consequences that might actually come true. I think what the postmodernists did was truly evil. They are responsible for the intellectual fad that made it respectable to be cynical about truth and facts”, and, as a result, “We’re entering a period of epistemological murk and uncertainty that we’ve not experienced since the Middle Ages” [8]. The Darwinist philosopher and absolute rationalist Daniel Dennett is convinced that “civilisation is far, far more fragile than any of us want to realise”, and that “reason and consciousness are no more and no less mysterious than other natural phenomena such as gravity”, as well as that the biological evolution of man was supplanted precisely by its cultural evolution of man, who developed language, spread various memes, after which bad and simplified memes began to spread on networks at the fastest pace. However, “the consciousness is a system feature, and it cannot be reduced”,

so the civilization could evolve fastly, but it also may die, reducing life on the planet to bacteria again. It is dangerous today, because people lost respect for truth and facts have lost their holistic understanding. "Serious comprehension of everything is very recent, only millennia old, not even a million years old. However, we are now on the verge of moving into the age of post intelligent design and we do not bother comprehending any more.... Well that's the fragility, the hyper fragility of civilization right there" [8]. That is why, according to Fukuyama, there was a reduction of the ancient term "thymos": spiritual part of the soul that seeks recognition, equality and dignity, to the level of "megalothymia". The banal thirst has to be recognized as superior to other needs, but the Caesar camouflage under this thirst will still remain with people [2]. However, while defending widespread political identity that transcends narrow cultural identities for the sake of the dignity of all members of the community, Fukuyama ignores the negative implications of the reductionist globalization for the cultural habitus of nations, when, due to the superficial glocality, postlinguality loses the true roots of identity.

## 2. Aletheia Versus the Epistemic Crisis of Post-Truth

John Dewey argued that the instrumentalization of truth makes it possible to explore and understand the world better, because then the truth will not be a banal description of the world picture, but can become a creative "functional component of feeling". However, as Gilles Deleuze stated, in order to know the truth pragmatically, it is first necessary to experience the violent effect of the sign, which – the effect – will make the mind seek for the meaning of the sign, seeking the truth, because the signs betray the truth. This was reflected by the British philosopher and researcher of the nature of truth, Chris Henry at the London Conference in Critical Thought (2015), emphasizing that even if truth is a function of thought, it cannot be reduced to dogmatic instrumentalization (which, in fact, affects the philosophy of Alan Badiou, although Henry himself praises the priority of truth as something necessary to support), it is much more effective to be guided by the Delozian idea that "truth opposes not falsehood, but absurdity". But truth does not present itself, it does not need to say something to be heard, that is, everyone makes one's own choice about the truth [9].

In 2018, American literary and art columnist for The New York Times (until her retirement in 2017) Michiko Kakutani, Pulitzer Prize winner in criticism (1998), known for her uncompromisingly sharp analysis of cultural events, which received a special definition of "getting Kakutani'ed" from her colleagues, publishes a fearless criticism of the Trump era: she defines Trumpism as a general epistemic crisis in the book «The Death of Truth: Notes on Falsehood in the Age of Trump» explaining the false statements of the president, his narcissism and other things by the negative impact on the consciousness of contemporaries of postmodern philosophy,

which led to "the most reduced form of relativism" and anti-intellectualism, to the subjective rejection of objective truth. Scientific analysis of facts and science itself lost importance for the crowd, social media and even academia; However "without truth, democracy is hobbled" [10]. Thus, Michiko Kakutani compares the fake neoliberal democracy of the cultural and political nihilism of post truth and propaganda of "false news" with authoritarian rule, the relevance of criticism of which is still preserved through the works by George Orwell and Hannah Arendt. Kakutani emphasizes the need to win back the truth in order to protect the world from repeating the catastrophes of the twentieth century and the epistemic crisis. The author's position was supported by Timothy Snyder, who wrote a short review on the Amazon website "Without the truth we will be neither prosperous nor virtuous nor free. This book begins the self-defense of American culture. May it reach a generation that will make narcissism passé and factuality sexy". Unfortunately, the catastrophe has really come to humanity, with Ukraine and Ukrainians, in particular, being at the forefront of the reconquest of truth at all levels: metaphysical, empirical and epistemological ones.

Laurent Jodoin compares theoretical aporias of truth perception in science and culture, and advocates the importance of conservation of "the legitimacy and superiority of science as an epistemic tool, and... of a privileged method for establishing truths on rational and empirical matters" [7]. He does not accept the model by Richard Rorty (a "strict atheist", in the words of Jürgen Habermas), which the scientist substantiated in 1989 in the book "Contingency, Irony and Solidarity", where the researcher states that "since truth is a characteristic feature of sentences, since sentences are dependent for their existence upon vocabularies, and since vocabularies are made by human beings, so are truth" [11]. However, eager to prove to the world the importance of empathy and sympathy, Rorty claimed that "it was a constant source of the subtlest, most sophisticated arguments", "this awe-inspiring creativity owes much to the Romantic spirit of the poet who no longer concealed himself behind the academic philosopher". Rorty believed that humanity is united not so much by abstract ideas as by life experience, in particular by confronting pain, suffering and cruelty [12]. Unfortunately, Laurent Jodoin did not pay attention to this oscillatory harmonization of materialist and metaphysical cultures by the "structure of feelings". This characteristic feature of metamodernism, leads to the "dedoxyification" of the instrumentalized consciousness of analytical philosophy. Jürgen Habermas recalled Rorty's hope in the style of young Hegel writing on the future: "Global civilization in which love is pretty much the only law" [12]. Meanwhile, Jodoin emphasized on the duality of ways for constructing life senses: a dominant new position of solidarity, where individuals join the group identity of individual communities; and the position endemic to Western culture of adherence to objective truth, the position that has existed since the times of Ancient Greece, where, regardless of the interests of a person or group, truth and valid actions in its interests were features

of civilization culture as a whole. In the end, Rorty expressed hope to harmonize approach to the truth: "Truth cannot... exist independently of the human mind", and "that would be the final abjuration of the notion that truth... is to be found "out there" Therefore, it is necessary to abandon "the Kantian notion of unconditional obligation" that "is borrowed from an authoritarian, patriarchal, religious tradition" [11, 13]. Thus, the evolution of the expanded consciousness of holistic knowledge gives hope for the unity of social justice with «the celestial beauty» of cultural and art events "pattern which will tempt the rising generation to adopt it" [11]. It has both regressive and evolutionary directions of development. Therefore, the Kantian imperative must be interpreted as "a more expansive sense of solidarity than we presently have". The protection against the Nietzschean collapse lies in "the end of our attempts not to be cruel" due to the authentic self-creation of a person who understands civilizational solidarity as a means of stopping the cruelty of "the unhuman, the nonlinguistic" great extinction of the Anthropocene, because of which "we need a redescription of liberalism as the hope that culture as a whole could be turned into the poetry, instead of the Enlightenment hope that it can be "rationalized" or "scientized" [11].

Rorty's liberal utopia as a balance of empathy of the ideal and the empirical experience might be interpreted as something that does not contradict the Ukrainian cultural habitus, which aims to focus on questions of truth as a synesthesia of the transcendental, empirical and epistemological in the context of private-public existence, and in this sense Ukraine, in the face of fierce resistance to the invader, is close to Rorty's predictive vision: "A liberal society is one whose ideals can be fulfilled by persuasion rather than force, by reform rather than revolution, by the free and open encounters of present linguistic and other practices with suggestions for new practices. But this is to say that an ideal liberal society is one which has no purpose except freedom, no goal except a willingness to see how encounters go and to abide by the outcome" [11]. However, neoliberal democrats have come to the conclusion that the truth could destroy democracy in an authoritarian way, so the truth should be abandoned. This is a typical position of postmodernism, which is criticized by Kakutani and Jodoin. Therefore, in the artistic field, political solidarity transforms into the kind of post-truth when "insisting (too much) on solidarity can lead to incoherence and uncritical intellectual permissiveness, where everything would be merely a question of taste". Hence, interests of a group of fans of postmodern visual practice are imposed by the system on the entire globalized world, scientists, artists. Contemporary art acts in a way not dissimilar to that of Trump: "With his appetite for "alternative facts" and his strategy based on his so-called "truthful hyperbole", Trump appeals to emotions rather than the empirically verifiable, blatantly ignoring all epistemic norms and settled knowledge" [7].

Apologists for post-truth and cultural populism tend to mention Plato's criticism of democracy, which opens the door to tyranny, and forget that the lack of respect for absolute

truth leads society to collapse, to violation of justice. However, wide audience believes in postmodern manipulative logic and postmodernism consciously uses it as a weapon of political power, according to Foucault, while thinking that this proves to the world their faith in democracy and the quasi-modern development of culture.

In the end, "the postmodernist notion of "deconstruction" has been developed to understand language as a system capable of constantly or systematically hiding and deferring meaning, rather than a mere medium for conveying it". Jodoin asks whether contemporary philosophy is able to explain to society what the truth and knowledge are, and how significant their importance is for the maintenance of a just society, since during the Second World War, Western civilization witnessed the terrible consequences of the antagonism between the truth and politics. And as the world saw it again, Rashism repeated the Nazi scenario as a the logical conclusion of postmodern consciousness, which abandoned the truth. As the American philosopher Gary Frankfurt wrote in his famous work "On bullshit", instead of the truth, sincerity has now acquired high value, even when people are convinced that you are openly lying. Meanwhile, spreading such nonsense is more harmful to society than untruth, because it is not at all about the truth that must be hidden [14]. Therefore, in various scientific fields, according to Jodoin "postmodernism, with its distrust of grand narratives, absolute standards and fixed canons has had transformational effects", when disillusioned with globalization experts have denied the truth for the sake of cultural populism, and by refusing to differentiate the qualitative level of knowledge, have encouraged hybridization of cultural identity. Where interdisciplinary approaches of scientific research require a wider range of experts and a new style of thinking, intellectual elites have allowed "lowering the epistemic standards for being an expert". Which is why nowadays one can read that "The frustration in face of the reality that one is embedded in may thus lead to a rejection of the facts, truth and epistemic norms altogether", and therefore, "since truth, objectivity and certainty in an absolute sense are only unreachable goals or epistemic ideals, the "solidarists" are right in considering honesty, peace, and harmony as human ideals. It is high time to find a balance between a skepticism that motivates a permanent reassessment of our assumptions and constant search for better answers, on the one hand, and an attitude of honesty and truthfulness that can recognize facts for what they are, that seeks consensus and progress with the highest standards of intellectual rigor, on the other" [7].

The crucial issue is that representatives of public, private, scientific and academic institutions systematically lie. As Giorgio Agamben stated, those who constantly tell lies stop feeling that they are lying: "Lies can reach such an extreme extent that liars no longer know that they are lying, and when everyone lies, no one lies anymore.... A society that loses all awareness of the boundary separating the true from the false becomes capable of literally anything, even self-destruction" and this is exactly what led to the war in Ukraine, the

philosopher emphasizes [15]. Similarly, in the situation of total faith of artists and academic scientists in the promising development of reduced forms of global public art people lose the ability to hear opposing points of view. Pragmatic truth opens its tangential if not transcendental side, since the world of globalized art merges with or transforms into the world of globalized design and becomes, in so doing, totally replaceable with image making and destructive for the spiritual and cultural evolution of civilization.

Nine years of the war against Russia prove the correctness of those analysts who, according to British philosopher Matthew Charles (Middlesex University), a speaker at the conference “Utopia, Dystopia and Critical Theory”, explain the dialectical concept of catastrophe (which is at the heart of W. Benjamin’s concept of dialectical image), as exemplified by the war itself “the immanent and violent intrusion of the Absolute into the space of the present”. This event – the war – “manifests itself not in the appearance of the new, but of the archaic and primal” which subjectively can be understood as a theological and psychosomatic sense of supernatural horror, or as a surreal aspect of the creative expression that altogether “replaces the Hegelian Absolute with an early German romanticism and Goethe ideas” [16]. In Ukraine, the war catalyzes cognitive transformations and stimulates the metamodern transverse expansion of collective and individual consciousness by enriching the cognition with the feature of cordocentrism as a typically endemic manifestation of Ukrainian cultural habitus. Therefore, during the war works by a lot of Ukrainian artists have spontaneously started to embody those features that Walter Benjamin measured by the “historical index of the image”, implying the significance of art expression in historical and spiritual aspects. Indeed, since the beginning of the hot phase of the invasion, artists have been reflecting this endless horror of the terrible tragedy of genocide through the degree of inconsistency of the events they suddenly witnessed with the imagined gestalt of a perfect ideal world in which there is beauty of harmony of aletheia and to which Ukrainian mindset strives to be tangent.

### 3. Ukrainian Cordocentrism as an Existence of Identity and Resistance to War

The main pathos of the cultural habitus of the Ukrainian art expression coincides with the vector of the metamodern intention of the “structure of feelings”. Ukrainian researchers Sova M. O. and Denizhna S. O. noted: “The psychological orientation of artistic creativity of the era of metamodernism... on the development of the culture of Ukrainian society in the context of universal human values of European and world civilization, exercised psychological influence on the enrichment of the inner world of the individual, self-determination and creative self-fulfillment in the modern social and cultural space”, as well as encouraging “to reflective immersion in life situations, rethinking the spiritual values of art, overcoming the crisis situation in social and

cultural reality, establishing subject-object unity in the system “personality - art - the universe” [17]. Indeed, such complex cluster aspects of creative oscillations, inherent in the individual perception of the world and collective consciousness of Ukrainians, are demonstrated today by museum exhibitions and curatorial experience, because museum workers arranged a number of exhibitions, for example, with the support of the European community of colleagues. The first to host the exhibition “In the Eyes of the Storm: Modernism in Ukraine, 1900s–1930s” within the framework of the project “Museums for Ukraine” was Madrid National Museum Thyssen-Bornemisza, later the exhibition was transported to Cologne. From May to September 2023 the exhibition “Kaleidoscope of Stories. Ukrainian Art 1912–2023” presented modern and contemporary art: not just traditional painting, graphic art, and sculpture, but also visual objects (installation, photography, video, archival documents). In Liverpool Ukrainian artists made a loud statement during the cultural programme of the Eurofestival, organised by the British Council and the Ukrainian Institute (established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after the Revolution of Dignity), about Eurovision 2023, which Ukraine could not host. In particular, the program included a 14-hour video installation by Kateryna Buchatska “Izyum-Liverpool”, exhibited at the Liverpool City Cathedral, where the artist under audio accompaniment (composer Heorhii Potopalsky) represented mournful landscapes in the video diary of war fugitives who, under enemy fire, were heading along the railways in search of safe places.

In addition, during the war, museum workers are actively trying to reintroduce into the world’s art vocabulary the names of those artists whose creative achievements were expropriated by the Russians: A. Kuindzhi, I. Repin, K. Malevych [18]. This goal of establishing justice was pursued by the exposition of the National Museum “Kyiv Art Gallery”, which was sent to Switzerland during the full-scale invasion, first to Geneva, and then to Basel. It was a collection of some of the finest examples of artworks by Ukrainian artists of the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries that were falsely considered to be Russian. It was not until recently that well-known Western museums recognized the Ukrainian origin of the collection. As the deputy director of the gallery Volodymyr Radchenko noted: “Some very important exhibitions for us took place, their idea was to return to Ukrainian cultural space those artists who worked in the period of the Russian Empire, but are of Ukrainian origin, whose ties with Ukraine were diminished” [19].

Thus, in the global cultural space, Ukraine, taking advantage not only of the difficult situation of the Russian-Ukrainian war, but developing long-term projects of cooperation with Western European institutions, is trying to assert its sovereign identity, liberating itself as a sovereign state from the colonial past and false Russian narratives (when Ukrainian culture was presented as “Russian”, and if Western museums offered cooperation exclusively to Ukrainian museums, Moscow officials blackmailed European

institutions by claiming they would stop any cultural exchange [20]).

The creative director of the Ukrainian Institute Tetiana Filevska, who participated in the spring of 2022 in the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Ukrainian “Shchedryk” premiere, says: “Britain supports at the political level Ukraine, citizens massively help Ukrainians, all this has formed a huge request to discover Ukraine in Britain. Now our task is to reformat this situation into a long-term cooperation. In such away that not only once something was done for Ukraine in support and forgotten, but Ukraine became a part of the activities of British art institutions.... For example, we organize meetings with British museums and talk with them about decolonization, about the adequate representation of Ukrainian culture in the expositions of these museums.... Once Britain hosts Eurovision on behalf of a country at war, art should show what is happening in Ukraine. It should be in our words, from our perspective, so that it is sensitive to our situation, in solidarity with Ukrainians.... We must now change the principles by which museums see and map Ukraine and objects of our culture, how they cooperate with us, how they treat us. And this process is called decolonization” [20].

The manifestation of the cultural habitus free from colonial pressure was unveiled by the project “Slava Ukraini” (Glory to Ukraine), which was held during the March battles for Ukrainian independence in the Southbank Centre in London. British artists performed the anthem of Ukraine, recited poetry by Ukrainian authors, and in Oxford at a separate project of the festival of classical music “Bouquet” there was a performance by Valentyn Silvestrov, who celebrated his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday there.

In fact, the accentuation in the cultural habitus of contemporary Ukrainian art of empathy of the “structure of feelings” might be understood as something that confirms the synergy of the new experience of the metamodern episteme and the archetype features of national identity, where cordocentrism occupies the central place. Moreover, these characteristics correspond to the fact that, according to many scholars, metamodernism is not so much a repetition of the modernism ideas in the ironic game of neoliberal postmodernism, as it is a challenge to the Internet aesthetics of after postmodernism posed by the “politics of the spirit”, according to the statement of the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler [21]. As Seth Abramson put it, metamodernism as an updated system of post-liberal attitude is an attempt to “dedoxify” (Linda Hutcheon) the art episteme of the outdated cultural paradigm of postmodernism by returning to the art vocabulary the ability of free embodiment of the subjective understanding of truth and essential feeling, beyond the repressive pressure of reigning ideological clichés of imperial colonial models of the West or the East. Seth Abramson emphasizes: “Metamodernism is, like modernism and postmodernism, a cultural paradigm”, and accordingly that “it can be construed as a movement, a philosophy, a system of logic, a structure of feeling, and a cultural dominant”, tangential to the political dimension, and “what Frederic

Jameson wrote of postmodernism may also be true, then, of metamodernism” [22].

Meanwhile, in the context of the war in Ukraine, the paradigm of metamodernism reshapes the model of the postmodern cultural logic of late capitalism in favor of the prevalence of the endemic quality of the world perception of Ukrainians — cordocentrism, which the researchers distinguish in the context of the spiritual and humanistic dimension of a person, first of all, the qualities of “tolerance, mutual respect between people, self-esteem, that humanize the living space of a person, contribute to the formation and affirmation in the worldview of the individual of national and universal human values” [23]. In addition to numerous ancient examples of the philosophical substantial national “doctrine of the heart”, modern researchers point to the appeal of the head of the Kyiv Mytropolia to the glorious prince of Kyiv Rus: we are talking about the “Message of Metropolitan Nikephoros to Volodymyr Monomakh” — message from the standpoint of Neoplatonism, that uncovered the cognitive culture of man, based on bodily and spiritual substances, which are constantly in struggle, demanding a harmonization of mind, feeling and will.

It is interesting how the Metropolitan interpreted moral culture in the unity of rational and spiritual principles, achieved through the struggle between good and evil, truth and falsehood, therefore a virtuous person must distinguish between those aporias without relying only on emotions and feelings, that is, “without the activity of reason, Nikephoros could not imagine other variants for comprehending the essence of moral truths and building on their basis the structure of the educational process”. Thus, in one of the first original domestic religious treatises, an attempt was made to reveal the “mechanism” of human cognition and its dialectics, to show the role of elements of cordologism in it, to identify approaches and tools to the moral education of a person. The thinkers of the ancient state of Kyiv Rus, which is generally considered to be the cradle of Ukrainian culture, were the first in our national culture to focus on perceiving the heart as a center in which a personal determination to know and implement certain actions and deeds is born; a cell containing desire and will; a phenomenon that bears the main feature of Ukrainian national psychology — emotionality, that is, giving significance of sensation, a peculiar vision of nature, manifested in the desire to merge with it” [23]. Similarly, numerous Ukrainian medieval and modern philosophers pointed to the dominant importance of spiritual knowledge over material values, because it occupies the heart. The true self of a person is a guarantee of his essential harmony of beauty and wisdom, therefore “they spoke more to moral than theoretical and philosophical consciousness”, recalling Pythagoras, Democritus, Socrates, Diogenes, Plato... H. Skovoroda, relying on the symbolism of Ancient and Christian philosophy, explained: “Every thought crawls on the ground like a serpent. But it also contains the eye of a pigeon, looking through the Flood waters at the beautiful Revelation of Truth” [24]. The philosophy of cordocentrism in Ukraine has become “a kind of protest against the attempts



of the new European philosophy to exhaust all the spiritual wealth of man with the help of rational knowledge, which is impossible. Therefore, the ideological and value consciousness of the Ukrainian people and its culture is characterized by bringing to the fore what constitutes the foundations, the roots of moral life, that is, the “heart” as a metaphor for the depths of the soul. Subsequently, cordocentrist philosophy entered the spiritual culture of the Ukrainian people as a holistic but peculiar worldview, reflecting the moral and ethical values of the Ukrainian nation, the unity and harmonious coexistence of man with nature and society”; Cordocentrism has formed the cultural habitus of Ukraine, has become “the leading feature of the Ukrainian mindset”, which makes “each of us a person who seeks to bring spirituality into the living space” on the ground of beauty, love and justice [23]. Is it any wonder that the Russian-Ukrainian war touched the depths of the collective soul of the people (according to H. Skovoroda, this is the common heart of all — “the abyss of waters and heaven”, a strong-willed spirit that seeks truth in self-development and is existentially purified), and spontaneously activated the aesthetic aspect of the philosophy of cordocentrism, an example of which had numerous exhibitions of the war years, where artists presented confessions of their own hearts, that echoed in a single rhythm with naked pain, anger and faith in the victory of emotions, feelings, thoughts of the whole nation.

#### 4. The Cultural Habitus in the Engrams of the Postliberal Doctrine of the Heart

At the spring of 2023, the project “Altar” by Oleksandr Zhyvotkov was exhibited at the Ukrainian House (Kyiv, Figures 1-4). Its synthetic technological and composite vocabulary might make the spectator recall the “metaxic” oscillation of the “structures of feelings” that have been raging in the national and individual consciousness since 2014. It is crucial to say that the artist did not leave the city and worked in his Kyiv workshop during the most active phase of shelling and rocket strikes in March, 2022. The polylogue of works-symbols, which is cut in wood and stone, using almost monochrome laconic hybrid technique, captured the polymorphic-multidimensional universe of human existence: here are the emotions of anger, rage, protest, misunderstanding, grief, fear, pain, desire to counteract the apocalyptic scenario...; along with attempts to understand causes and effects as aspects of the war, to find a logically adequate explanation for crimes against humanity, to fix all the nuances of the tragedy, and all this is centered on the main message, on the irrational appeal to the genetic memory of the nation, to ancestors, and, finally, to divine sacred forces, as patrons of the past and present, preserving Ukrainian soul, and together all civilization human values illumined with spirit. The project “Altar” became a unique case where the technical arsenal of means of expressing

capacious engrams, as intuitively selected “oscillation” epistemes of modernism and postmodernism, created the main syntagm of figurative intonation: instead of the sophisticated rational doxa the spiritual gnosis prevails, carrying out “dedoxification”. And that is why the project prompted an ecstatic comprehension of the cultural paradigm offered by the latest theoretical substantiations of metamodernism, where independent critical thinking created the latest “spirit politics” on the principles of empathy, good virtues and justice, as former Head of the Department of Cultural Development of the Centre Georges Pompidou Bernard Stiegler would say, it could protect the civilization future from falling into the abyss of barbarism.



**Figure 1.** Oleksandr Zhyvotkov. *Project Altar. Ukrainian House. Kyiv. 2023.* *Where are you coming from? Mother's dedication. 2022.*



**Figure 2.** Oleksandr Zhyvotkov. *Project Altar. Ukrainian House. Kyiv. 2023.* *Maidan. 2014.*



**Figure 3.** Oleksandr Zhyvotkov. *Project Altar. Ukrainian House. Kyiv. 2023.* *Ukraine 2022.*





**Figure 4.** Oleksandr Zhivotkov. *Project Altar. Ukrainian House. Kyiv. 2023. Bucha 2022.*

In fact, the same opinion, but formulated as an independent critical assessment, was expressed by the curator of the aforementioned exhibition “Altar” Tetyana Voloshyna, who noted: “Zhyvotkov, having begun his career as a painter, fully comprehended the achievements of modernist artists and revealed the sacred, intangible essence of art, which for many remains hidden behind the formalism of the craft. In creative search the artist turned to the heritage of ancient cultures, which Ukrainian land is so rich in. This made possible to revive a unique spiritual component of creativity, which was largely lost in the era of total tolerance of postmodernism. Remote from each other in time and space, Scythian idols, Trypillian ceramics and folk Ukrainian icon, the art of early Christian catacombs and Fayum portrait, Georgian embossing and Tibetan manuscripts appear behind each other in Zhyvotkov works. Zhyvotkov artistic creations are by no means refraction of artifacts from archaeological collections. Zhyvotkov interprets the archaic expressive language in the confident rigid lines and sensual forms of sacred symbols — dove, feminine outline, circle and cross” [25]. Thus, one might interpret this as evidence for the fact that in contemporary Ukrainian reality, the metamodern cultural paradigm was revealed precisely as a philosophically grounded return to the system of cordocentrism.

However, the metamodern paradigm can be perceived at the same time as a structure of feelings of artists, citizens and the whole Ukrainian society. In fact it reflects and diagnoses the causal thinking of the community. The causal connection of the manifested being in synthesis with the unmanifested existence of subtle thought forms and energies of feelings influences the egregor of the nation as its collective unconscious and, in turn, forms the epistemological background of cultural and artistic processes.



**Figure 5.** Andriy Naboka. *War Canvas. 2022. Canvas, acrylic, mesh fabric.*



**Figure 6.** Evgeniy Maloletka. *Mariupol Maternity Hospital Airstrike. 2022. World Press Photo of the Year.*

This mysterious connection has been explicated in the works by many artists. In particular, this was vividly and convincingly proved by the paintings by Andriy Naboka, namely «War Canvas» (Figure 5), or “Voices” by Andriy Bludov (Figure 9), where images of the past Ukrainian history crowd and appear through the thin surface of reality, forming the domestic “Mnemosyne Atlas”. In the late 1920s Aby Warburg tried to compile such an Atlas, describing



precisely emotional conditions, overcoming the linearity of space and time, when a separate place is occupied by an expressive gesture of “grabbing his head”, “Griff nach dem Kopf”, the emotional gesture of European Renaissance art, which was in great demand by Ukrainian artists during the war. The need for gestures reactivated pagan symbols with the formulas of the “catalytic quintessence”. The same is true about other engrams, which, like the previous engram, also reveal additional meanings and emotions of the contemporary slogans “The gaze inside”, or “The breakthrough of the human spirit”. At the same time, they determine, revealing the position of the author’s attitude towards the social “symbol of the situation”. That is, the experience of current cultural formation, when “cultural formulas”, engrams, “pathos formulas” (A. Warburg), codes of the past are fully used, is not a purely innovative know-how of metamodernism, but epistemic accents that represent polylogue and multiple dimensions. As it turns out, the heterogeneous structure of cultural space does not deny the representation of unique ethnic and national features in the context of international cultural dialogue, and makes it possible to “overcome closed boundaries, move from one system to another, while taking into account multiple directions and efforts, the ability to look beyond paradigm separation” [26]. Therefore, today analysts investigate intelligent situations where “the congruence of transcultural and transversal perspectives of the context of globalization, which forms a heterogeneous space of communications that transcend all the boundaries”, is capable of forming an “ontological demand for a transversal mind”, which, under conditions of increasing differentiation of rationalities, makes “transitions between them, not reducing differences, but affirming them” [26].

Another undeniable success was the victory (at the World Press Photo 2023 competition) of a photo journalist Evhen Maloletka, whose pictures of the besieged Mariupol (Figure 6) were chosen as the best photos. The photo of the maternity hospital bombed by the Russian army was recognized as the photo of the year, and although it is very hard to go through his photographs due to a flurry of powerful emotions and thoughts, which are often ruthless and appear to tear the soul and the heart apart, which might be precisely how catharsis works. The official website of the competition contains the following accompanying text and comment of the jury under the picture: “09.03.2022. Iryna Kalinina (32), an injured pregnant woman, is carried from a maternity hospital that was damaged during a Russian airstrike in Mariupol, Ukraine. Her baby, named Miron (after the word “peace”) was still born, and half an hour later Iryna died as well”; “The jury felt that this image captures the absurdity and horror of war. It is an accurate representation of the year’s events and evidence of the war crimes being committed against Ukrainian civilians by Russian forces. The image rises as a deeply painful historical fact and highlights the murder of future generations of Ukrainians. By giving the image a platform, the jury hopes that the world will stop and acknowledge the intolerable realities of this war and consider the future of

Ukraine” [27].

It is believed that today every innovator or rebel is a metamodernist, so Seth Abramson recalls the expression by Vermeulen and Van den Akker: “Committed metamodernists are also likely to be confused by the recent announcement, by one of the editors of “Notes on Metamodernism”, that “today everyone is a metamodernist unless they’re out of step” [22]. In a way, the postmodern absorption of the dialectics of the world by the hyperreality of simulacra leads to the fact that “the real is not erased in favor of the imaginary, it is erased in favor of the more real than the real: hyperreality. Such a simulation is more authentic than truth. Presence is not erased by emptiness; it is eliminated by doubled presence, which destroys the opposition between presence and absence, so “we come alive to surface in the model, float alive into fashion and into simulation” [28].

Lord Bhikha Parekh (the University of Westminster) – a former chairman of the Commission on the Future of Multiethnic Britain (whose theory of multiculturalism influenced the post-liberal vision of this issue by a number of analysts, including Charles Taylor, Dorothea Kolodziejczyk and others), considers the cultural diversity of countries not as a universally homogeneous cluster of lifestyles, beliefs and attitudes, but as a multicultural personalized-identifiable value that cannot be ignored or overestimated. He criticizes uncritical intellectual investments in Eurocentric pan-imperial conceptions of paradoxical neoliberalism, which bets only on the Western way of life and cultural formation, ignoring the individual identities of numerous ethno-groups, which limits the true diversity of the multicultural cluster of values, creative art expression in particular [29, 30].

In general, we could say that metamodern analysts practice a critical approach to the Enlightenment slogan of freedom and equality of nations. Being aware of the pitfalls inherent in the liberal project as seen by the globalized Western civilization, they now see it precisely as the tendency of annihilation of cultural differences as self-identifying qualities, which limits the rights of “post-ethnic” groups and levels their unique cultural features by the distorted globalism of false multiculturalism. In Ukraine, this is especially noticeable in the uncritical spread of the Western contemporary art episteme born at the beginning of this millennium, which exposed signs of soft colonization, subsequently transforming in the post-Soviet territories of Eastern Europe into a neoliberal phenomenon of “self-colonization”. Bulgarian analyst A. Kiossev states that postmodernism got free of the self-identifying differences of national art epistemes, and replicated Western clichés. It is significant that culturally fundamental critique of social vices of consumption by means of postmodernism remains within the scope of the same neoliberalism of late capitalism, or, according to Bernard Stiegler, of “insane computer capitalism”. Therefore, in the conditions of war, Ukrainian artists, who are not apologists for the endemic mentality of cordocentrism, present the facts of the ongoing genocide of the Ukrainian nation to the world community with their projects, but they are trying to broadcast the pain of the

people in the language of contemporary art that is radically incapable of transmitting any empathy.

The research problem is whether the art will continue to preserve the ambiguity and extravagance of the metamodernism on the threshold of millennia, or will gain a balance, harmony and aesthetic precision in the fundamentally new future paradigm. Each creative personality that is engaged in an amazing search for themselves, becomes a wandering knight in the atomized society of postmodernism, as Massoud Zavarzade said, and will find a “radical response” to the total crisis due to the “volcanic” energy of new narratives and images. The time and hard work will give the answer. The authentic creativity is free of the artificial spectacular innovation and absurdity, “as if” it is simply daily experience: neither significant nor absurd, it means merely what “is”. Likewise, daily relationships and occurrences can be rendered and indeed experienced as if they were, in a sense, sublime» [31]. Ultimately, only the search for the truth, and in this case, the aletheia of art, is a reliable foundation for further evolutionary development, which protects culture and art from falling into hysteresis and degradation at transitional moments in history.

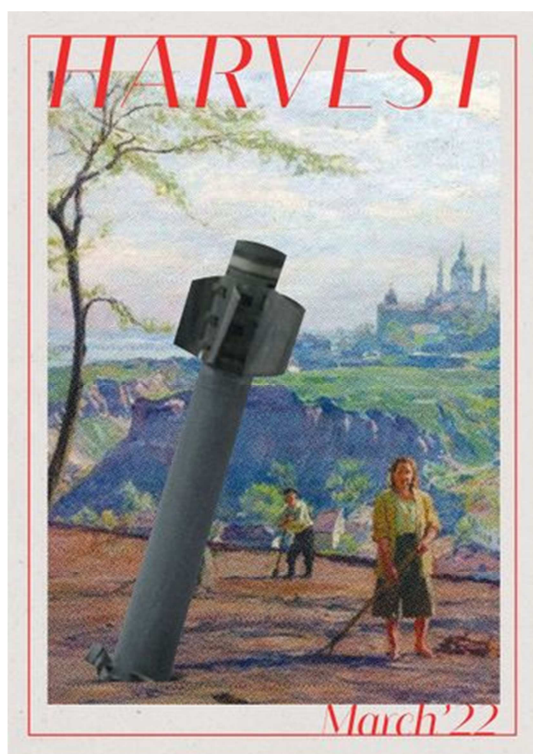


Figure 7. Dasha Podoltseva. Harvest. Poster Biennale. Warsaw 2023.

The First prize at the XXVIII International Biennial of Posters Warsaw'2023 was given to the artist Dasha Podoltseva from Kyiv: her poster «Harvest» (Figure 7), from the cycle «Ukraine\_war», contains references to once-peaceful life of Ukrainians executed in the form of quoting some of the most famous artworks by Ukrainian artists, e.g., “Khlib” (Bread, 1949) by T. Yablonska (Figure 8), alongside with the symbols of the today’s genocide of Ukrainian nation by the Russian Federation. In the artist’s own words:

«"Ukraine\_war" is my project, provoked by the full-scale invasion of Russia on February 24 and the terrible war brought to our people and cities. I invest my reflections, observations, and thoughts into posters, which become expressions of everything that is happening around me. Thus, I am constantly adding to the corpus of my artworks, because the news continues to emerge and hurt. I keep all the posters in my private online archive in order to record and have before my eyes the chronology of my war experience» [32].

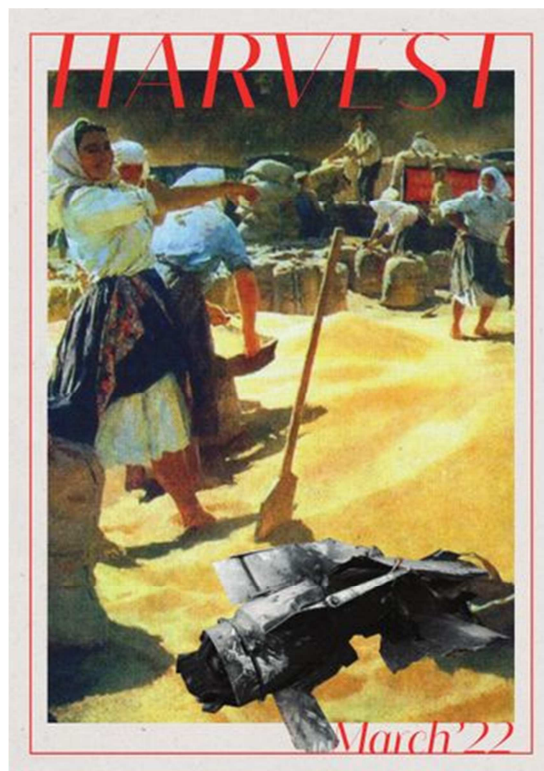


Figure 8. Dasha Podoltseva. Harvest. Ukraine\_war.



Figure 9. Andriy Bludov. 27.03.2022. Voices. Canvas, oil.

## 5. Conclusions

The technocratic system of the logic of cultural industry, together with the neoliberal aesthetics of post-truth global public art, might be slowly starting to give way to the long-standing philosophical doctrine of cordocentrism. The doctrine has already proved relevant in the stressful context of Ukrainian artists' creative self-expression during the first months of the ongoing war. The philosophy of the heart, which may be, from a certain perspective, considered to be a defining Ukrainian self-identifying feature during the long historical path of nation formation, has formed an existential center of Ukrainian cultural habitus. Multiple centers can be found united inside of it: moral and aesthetic thoughts and empathic feelings; spiritual and mental worldview and intuitive cognition of transcendent truth; faith in the freedom and sacred value of each person and the volitional impulses of empirical actions in the name of justice, love, good virtues and beauty. Therefore, due to a synergy of knowledge and the absolute sense of truth, the art truly explicates the aesthetic act of the highest mental activity of the spirit, as Hegel once stated. Therefore, the cordocentrist approach to understanding the cultural habitus of art as a self-identifying aletheia of each nation, and Ukrainian nation as well, seems to be a plausible direction within the context of paradigm changes in the globalized world.

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