L EONIDAS DONSKIS – AN ENCYCLOPEDIC RENAISSANCE-LIKE FIGURE

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Currently a professor of advanced studies and academic development at the ISM University of Management and Economics of Kaunas and Vilnius, Lithuania, and a former member of the European Parliament, Leonidas Donskis was born on the 13th of August 1962 in *Klaipėda*, Lithuania. From 2005 to 2009 he served as dean of the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy at *Vytautas Magnus* University of Kaunas, Lithuania. As a docent, visiting and associate professor, he also taught at the University of Helsinki, Finland, in the field of social and moral philosophy, at the University of Tallinn, Estonia, in the field of philosophy and theory of culture, as well as universities from the United States (Dickinson College, Pennsylvania and Montevallo University, Alabama) in the field of

cultural studies and universities from England, Italy and Hungary in similar fields of endeavor.

Alongside his scholarly career stands his remarkable contribution to the field of the mass-media, both as a producer and moderator of cultural programs for the Lithuanian Television or as editor for the print media (*The Baltic Times*, *The Ukrainian Week* etc).

The academic bettering carried out in countries like Lithuania and Finland spawned his encyclopedic character and determined the ramification of his intellectual interests. His bachelor's degree in philosophy and theater, received from the Lithuanian State Conservatoire (presently the "Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre") in 1985 was followed by a master's degree program in philosophical studies at the University of Vilnius (1987). From the same university he took his first doctorate in philosophy and the humanities, with a thesis about the culture in crisis and the philosophy of culture in the views of O. Spengler, A. J. Toynbee and L. Mumford (1990). This was soon to be followed by a second doctorate, received from the University of Helsinki, with a thesis dwelling on the relation between ideology and utopia, moral imagination and cultural criticism in the 20th century (1999).

His didactical, scientific and journalistic activity (the last one finding its fruition in books, studies, articles and cultural TV programs etc.) has been extremely rich and diverse, courtesy of an extraordinary intellectual capacity, developed to catch the essence in the evolution of ideas and to lay the benchmark for condensing the information. A scientific curiosity that is extremely alive and healthy, a critical way of thinking, resilient to any form of ideological indoctrination coupled with a very rich and solid knowledge, a relentless pursuit for self-improvement, these are the pillars of this protean activity, already molding the image of a Renaissance-like encyclopedic scholar in the era of postmodernism.

If we were however, to define the scientific, philosophical and didactical scaffold built by this man, compared to the image that he has built for himself internationally, the emphasis should be on terms like philosophy, history, culture, identity, and criticism.

A quick look at the courses taught in the past two decades in no less than twelve universities from his native country as well as the USA and a few European countries, reveals the "Philosophy of History" and the "Philosophy of Culture" to be the main focus of interest, the core from which more than two dozens of other specialty courses sprout, from "Social and Cultural Criticism", "Ideologies and Utopias" to "Urban Philosophy", "Civilization Theory" etc. Like any other great mentor, Leonidas Donskis accepts introductory courses like "Introduction to Philosophy", "Aesthetics", "Theory of Culture", "Theories of

Civilizations” etc., as imperatives toward the guidance and molding of young generations of students. Every academic who is passionate about his or her work knows just how important it is for such a course to be taught by an authority within the field. Not only for the condensed valuable information that it delivers, but also for the directions in which the topic may evolve, possible connections with other fields of study, methods of research, including the interdisciplinary ones, and last but not least, the bibliographical references being commented upon by a certified researcher.

When attending one of Leonidas Donskis’ introductory classes, students also have in front of them an example of human, scientific and moral conduct. As far as his implication with assisting young minds in their development is concerned, he goes even further, as an author of textbooks. If we consider the Romanian culture, scholars like E. Lovinescu, G. Călinescu, Al. Rosetti, AL. Graur, or more recently Eugen Simion – to name only the philologists – did not hesitate to edit and write textbooks. Again, the key thing is to extract the essence of a given field of study and to transpose it into simple yet convincing terms, following the psycho-pedagogical principle of accessibility. This is something that can only be done by those who have the ability to offer a bird’s-eye view of the discipline in question; those who can set up connections with other fields of study, those who are capable of being again overcome with wonder in front of science, those who are capable of inferring the thirst for knowledge and the need for answers to the questions that they themselves had asked when they were young.

The 10th grade Civic Education textbook (Vilnius, 2010) authored by L. Donskis is such an instrument intended to be used by teenagers. That excess information which did not make it into the textbook, due to the rigidity of the school curriculum, materialized into a precious auxiliary teaching tool, namely a collection of essays entitled *The Power of Individuality and Community: the Collection for a Young Reader*, Vilnius, Versus Aureus, 2010. The perspective in both works is a bit upside-down, meaning that the textbook describes and explains the typology of various political systems and forms of government through the use of works which are more or less literary – Niccolò Machiavelli, Sir Thomas More, William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes, Jonathan Swift, George Orwell, Milan Kundera – while the essays comment upon the nature of democratic institutions, public life, the power of mass-media, the role of NGOs in contemporary societies and man’s rights and liberties. Their universal history is seen in contrast with the Lithuanian reality of the age (2000-2010).

As far as his first stage of development is concerned, that of philologist and theater expert, it has materialized in books, studies and scientific contributions such as *Politics and Literature*, *Philosophy of Literature* (with an emphasis on the

central and eastern part of Europe). We will come back to this important stage of his activity.

As already mentioned, Leonidas Donskis has held lectures in many academic and cultural institutions across the world. We can now say that they amount to almost forty such institutions in countries like the United States, Canada, England, Sweden, Germany, France, Italy, Denmark, Austria, Hungary, Armenia and last but not least, Romania. He has also attended numerous conferences, symposiums, conventions and seminars in the above-mentioned countries as well as Finland, Poland, Estonia, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal, Bosnia and Herzegovina etc. Many times he attended these scientific gatherings not only as author of some well-received scientific papers, but also as a special guest, a moderator or a member of the scientific staff.

Leonidas Donskis is a member of the editorial board and the scientific committee of periodicals like *Darbai ir dienos* (Works and Day), a journal focusing on social sciences and humanities, edited by the Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas), *Journal of Baltic Studies* printed by the "The Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies", and *Language Society Communication*, a trilingual research periodical (English, Russian, Armenian) of the Yerevan State Linguistic University, Armenia. He has been co-opted by two of the world's most renowned publishing houses as an executive editor and co-editor for scientific series: *VIBS – Value Inquiry Book Series*, Rodopi BV Press, Amsterdam & New York, and *PLP – Philosophy, Literature, and Politics*, Rodopi BV, in collaboration with J. D. Mininger.

For the impressive array of activities that he has been involved in, for his impeccable professionalism and for his outstanding contributions to the development of science and culture, Leonidas Donskis has been rewarded with almost twenty honorary orders, medals, diplomas and awards by some of the most prestigious academic and national institutions both from his native country as well as from countries all over the world. A few notable examples would be: "The Lithuanian Ministry of Culture Award", "The Lithuanian State Supreme Research Award", "The Orange-Nassau Order Commander's Cross, The Netherlands, as well as other diplomas, orders and medals in Sweden (four), the USA (four), England, Hungary etc.

In 2011 the University of Bradford, United Kingdom, awarded Prof. Leonidas Donskis with the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters and Doctor Honoris Causa.

In 2004 he was awarded by the European Commission the title of the Ambassador for Tolerance and Diversity in Lithuania. From 2005 to 2009 he served as a member of the Standing Committee for the Humanities in the European Science Foundation; member of the Lithuanian PEN Club (since 2005); member of the Global Initiative on Psychiatry council (since 2005); Honorable

Member of the International Advisory Board of the Analytical Center on Globalization and Regional Cooperation (ACGRC), Yerevan, Armenia (since 2010).

Leonidas Donskis is the author of almost 35 books, over 200 studies and scientific articles, plus countless prefaces and contributions to collective volumes. Almost half of these were written in English while the other half consists of English and Lithuanian writings. Subsequently many of them were translated into Baltic or Northern-European languages – Estonian, Finnish, Swedish, Danish – as well as many other languages – German, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Korean, Hungarian. Until now, some of the titles that have been translated into Romanian include *Power and Imagination. Studies in Politics and Literature* (*Putere și imaginație – studii de politică și literatură*, „Cartea de Scaun”, Târgoviște, 2012), and more recently, *Forms of Hatred. The Troubled Imagination in Modern Philosophy and Literature* (*Forme ale urii. Imaginația bântuită a filozofiei și literaturii moderne*, Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2013), titles published with the help of Prof. Silviu Miloiu whom the author deems as “his colleague”, and the work of the translator, Prof. Mircea Anghelinu.

Two of the books authored by Leonidas Donskis have enjoyed the appreciation of international forums being nominated and awarded for *The Best Book* in their field: *Forms of Hatred. The Troubled Imagination in Modern Philosophy and Literature*, Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2003 – also translated into Romanian (*Forme ale urii. Imaginația bântuită a filozofiei și literaturii moderne*), and *Loyalty, Dissent, and Betrayal: Modern Lithuania and East-Central European Moral Imagination* (*Loialitate, Dezacord și Trădare: Imaginația Morală în Lituania Modernă și Europa Est-Centrală*), Amsterdam/New York; Rodopi, 2005.

If we were to analyze, however briefly, the first eight books of his impressive body of work, we would see that four of them approach the problem of imagination – in diachrony, in synchrony, in philosophy, ideology, in political studies and literature etc. These are entitled: *The End of Ideology and Utopia? Moral Imagination and Cultural Criticism in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Peter Lang, 2000; *Forms of Hatred: The Troubled Imagination in Modern Philosophy and Literature*, Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2003; *Loyalty, Dissent, and Betrayal: Modern Lithuania and East-Central European Moral Imagination*, Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2005; *Power and Imagination. Studies in Politics and Literature*, New York: Peter Lang, 2008.

Two other books dwell on the idea of identity: *Identity and Freedom Mapping Nationalism and Social Criticism in Twentieth-Century Lithuania* London & New York, 2002; *Troubled Identity and The Modern World*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

All these share as overtones the concepts of morality and culture. The most recent books in the above-mentioned series transform these concepts into the key notions of the study. And here we refer to *Modernity in Crisis. A Dialog on the Culture of Belonging*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, and even more important, the extraordinary analysis in collaboration with Zygmunt Bauman, *Moral Blindness. The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

In fact, the author's entire discourse (and that of the co-author as it is with the last publication) is based on the interconnections generated by these very notions. When discussing the opposite of alterity, what the author bears in mind is the cultural identity, conceived as a social, moral, political and economical construct, always alterable throughout history, subject to local influences from historical events to personalities capable of changing the public opinion – great scholars, political figures, philosophers, mentors, writers etc.

One question that arises when trying to clarify the Donskian system of thinking is whether the dominant concept of his work, when translated into Romanian, aims at *imagination* or *the imaginary*. Considering the natural references to literature and the implications of such notions as 'utopia' and 'sensitivity', one might be inclined to choose the first variant, as expressed by the same word both in English ('imagination', not 'imaginary') and in Romanian ('imaginație'). Yet, these infer the mechanisms of the subconscious, of creativity, of imaginary worlds, seen – in fact created – when in a state of physical inactivity and a psychic and cognitive semi-rest during the night with one's eyes closed, or during the day with one's eyes open. Even these compartments of thought and sensitivity are also the result of our interaction with the real world; yet, they are consciously stored closer to the realm of the imaginary than that of the tangible.

Imagination can only materialize when applied to agrestic fields – economic, technical, political, administrative or communicational strategies etc. – but it is not to be confused with the imaginary. The latter stores within itself the concrete pieces of information – complete or partial, correct or distorted yet always from a palpable source – it includes the discourse on a certain topic and once created, they evolve, constantly, giving birth to ideas, emotions, attitudes and actions within the human conduct itself. In other words, the difference between imagination and the imaginary could be understood as the difference between reverie and action. Imagination has a surreal halo, suggestive of something, it is a Petri dish for subjective interpretations while the imaginary has a well-defined shape, striking with the force of the printing press, imposing the mass multiplication of clichés, with little room for deviation from the norm, altering the collective prejudices objectivized through repetition and dissemination, into subjective assessments intrinsic to every individual of a human collective.

These are exactly the human realities described in the works of Leonidas Donskis. Starting with his first two books *An Outline of the Modern Philosophy of Culture*, Vilnius, 1993, and *Modern Consciousness and its Configurations: Culture Between Myth and Discourse*, Vilnius, 1994, the author was looking at the culture in crisis phenomenon as a release lever for the modern philosophies of culture. He went on (with the book published in 1994) to determine the relations between the modern philosophies of history and culture on the one hand, and the social and cultural criticism on the other. Taking on the theories and ideas put forth by such illustrious minds as O. Spengler, A. J. Toynbee and L. Mumford, his studies look at the realities of the Central and Eastern Europe during the 19th and the 20th century. They show how human experience is conceptualized through different trends of discourse (as developed by Michel Foucault, of speaking, conception and action at the same time) and then mythologized. In his first book L. Donskis talked about the *megalopolis*, and in the second he talked about the *myth*, plain and simple, meaning that imagination had morphed into a collective imaginary, which in turn translates into a concrete social frame of human thought and action.

A more ambitious study materialized in the book *Between Imagination and Reality Ideology and Utopia in Current Civilizational Theory*, 1996, Vilnius, deepens the idea of imagination relatively free, bound to the cultivated imaginary. Only this time the terms seem to have switched places. It is the author's understanding that ideology and utopia are the driving forces of historical imagination and civilization, starting with the classical philosophies of history and culture and reaching all the way to the contemporary theories about civilization. "The mapping of the human thought and spiritual development" would slowly evolve to become a central operating construct in the theories of L. Donskis, coupled with a multi- and interdisciplinary analysis, as an operating mechanism. His next three books include the term *map* in their titles both in the literary sense of the word and with the connotation of 'plan', as well as with both morphological values – nominal and verbal. The collection of essays *Pique-Free: Mapping One Year's Thoughts*, Vilnius, Versus Aureus, 2006 (Essay maps), a synthesis of the programs moderated for the Lithuanian Television, looks at the Lithuanian political and cultural atmosphere of the year 2005, in contrast with the EU's new identity, but also with Russia, still wielding a powerful influence over the Baltic area, and of course, with its own cultural identity under various aspects (for example, the clash between the "high" culture and the popular culture etc.). Next in line is *The Minor Map of Experience: Thought and Aphorisms*, Vilnius, Versus Aureus, 2010. This time we are dealing with a collection of thoughts and aphorisms used by L. Donskis and his wife, Jolanta Donskienė, to create explanatory notes for the photographs taken in Belgium, France and Israel through a collection of aphorisms authored by thinkers familiar to the Lithuanian

scholar: N. Machiavelli, O. Wilde, Z. Bauman, M. Kundera, J. B. Singer etc. And finally, one of L. Donskis' most recent books completing the series on "spiritual mapping": *The Little Europe: a Map of an Aesthete*, Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2012. This is another book of intellectual development – a book for youngsters between 10 and 90 years of age – a testimony of L. Donskis' profound didactical dedication. The book comprises stories about the lives of the artists and the places representing the miracle of medieval and renaissance Europe. The turning points in the history of Flanders, Holland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, as well as the stories evoking the spirit of the era through the lives of its great figures, with their tribulations and redemptions, their loves and friendships and grudges, are all ways toward edifying the moral and political modern norms, the aesthetic European sensitivity. In fact the author outlines his own reference points in his development as a philosopher and a man of culture.

As with the evolution of his career, he became more and more involved in the philosophical analysis and the criticism of political ideas from a diachronic and synchronic perspective, universal and local. As early as 1997 with the publishing of *Between Carlisle, PA, and Klaipėda; Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, **Klaipėda: Klaipėda University Press**, 1997, he 'maps' the Lithuanian nationalism in comparison with the one of Central and Eastern European origin. The nationalist political practices are exemplified through data collected from the modern Lithuanian language and the politics of the 20th century.

His studies then start to draw more and more on the concept of political philosophy but also on what could be referred to as 'applied politics'. The titles of the books materializing from these studies speak for themselves: *Civil Society and its Enemies: Authority, Truth and Public Space in Lithuania in the Beginning of the 20th Century*, Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2004; *Yes, but... Non-Political Considerations about Politics*, Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2007; *Silent Alternatives: Sketches on Social Analysis and Critique*, Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2008 etc. The author extrapolates real-life situations from his native country, bringing the argument closer to the philosophy of history, political philosophy and cultural criticism: the presidential scandal of 2003-2004, the dynamics of domestic and foreign policies as a new NATO and EU member, the political and cultural shifts in the light of the holy trinity of globalization, uncertainty, ignorance and insecurity. Other studies are dedicated to Lithuanian intellectual figures, grown into paradigms of individual and public conduct all around the world, like Alexandras Shtromas (cf. *The Twentieth – Century man...*, 2008, translated into five different languages); others look at cultural and political movements and ideologies, cf. *Lithuanian Liberalism*, a collection published with L. Donskis as editor, follow-up to a series bearing the same title edited in 1959 in the US, by an illustrious forerunner; others look at a

certain geopolitical territory, as is the case of 99 *Baltic Stories*, Klaipėda: Druka, 2009 (English and Lithuanian).

It is against this background that most of the aforementioned theories start taking shape. The author turns more and more bitter toward the flaws of the contemporary society. We can see the researcher and the philosopher being completed by the Lithuanian politician and the European parliamentarian who sees the world for what it is as it unfolds before his eyes. The historical perspective and the theories put forth by great thinkers help him understand the ways of the present, down to their inner workings. The author takes it upon himself to lay bare the causes hindering the human society in its path to liberty, democracy and genuine culture. *Unpopular Insights: Political Commentaries and Essays*, Vilnius, Versus Aureus, 2009, is a collection of essays attacking such abnormalities as racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism occurring both in his home country and around the world. As already pointed out *Power, Imagination, Memory: studies in Politics and Literature*, Vilnius, Versus Aureus, 2011, is an analysis of the way in which the origins of the political consciousness meet their counterpart in literature. The first signs of political and religious tolerance appear in utopian literature rather than philosophical and academic treatises. This is where we come back to the key term mentioned in the beginning of this paper. This time it is imagination per se, for only literature, as a product of imagination can yield forms of power and authority structures which in reality can only be attempted by political leaders. Writers and thinkers like N. Machiavelli, Th. More, Czesław Miłosz and M. Kundera whom L. Donskis deems as paradigms and sources of wisdom, show how fictional characters can achieve what present-day politicians can only theorize. Reading L. Donskis' book one finds it difficult not to think of Plato's famous work 'The State', in which he gave the prototype for the ideal society. Unfortunately, the attempts made at implementing those ideal philosophical principles into small countries, apparently easy to govern, (supported by his students from the Academy) failed miserably, leading to Plato being deprived of his liberties and even sentenced to death.

Forms of Hatred: The Troubled Imagination in Modern Philosophy and Literature, translated into Romanian in 2013, comes in midway of L. Donskis' intellectual evolution, between his theoretical-philosophical analyses from his first years as a researcher of socio-cultural and political phenomena, and the criticism aimed at the present-day society and its foul by-products (e.g. globalization and all its mechanisms), a time of tribulation, never before seen. All the terms that had been used in previous studies, like *philosophy* (of history, of culture), *literature* (classical and modern), *criticism* (cultural and social), now converge to make the subject of a study built around another concept previously mentioned in his works: *hatred*.

Right from the preface of the Romanian edition, the author points out the fact that all the changes brought by the development of the Central and Eastern European countries have enabled the worldwide heightening of two endemic traits of the human kind: *fear* and *hatred*, as parts of the same whole. The post-revolutionary Europe (i.e. post 1989) bears no resemblance to what the artisans of uprisings and modern revolutions used to dream about, that “better world” painted with such romantic words and yet so worn out. It is also the idea dealt with by Milan Kundera in the collection of essays entitled *The Tragedy of Central Europe*. The result was a new Europe which made the westerners (including the Americans) even more fearful of the ‘danger looming in the east’ on the one hand, and turned the ones living in our part of the Europe into lab rats. In the view of L. Donskis, Central Europe has become “a laboratory without historical precedent of life put on fast-forward, with all the uncertainties and insecurities that define a laboratory.” To this we might add the enormous laboratories underneath the city of Geneva where scientists perform experiments on the particle accelerator and study the “God particle”, while in the other Europe operates overtly, the laboratory for human particle acceleration, an experiment conducted on almost 250000000 human guinea pigs. The author provides examples of accidents that have already happened here; the mass emigration set in motion by economic instability is one of them. He thinks that half a million Lithuanians who left for the US, England, Italy, Spain etc., is a lot, mainly because he has no knowledge of those over two million Romanians who left their country under the same circumstances. Social contrasts are another by-product of the experiment done on central-eastern Europeans, while the endemic corruption is yet another. The result is a great disappointment toward everything which has been created during all these years in the attempt to bring about a ‘better world’. According to L. Donskis the underlining trait of these phenomena is *populism*. Its manifestation is explained in a way that is typical of the author's reasoning – exposed in numerous books and studies: a) populism is an imported concept (from countries which are more developed than our own, countries that we, the easterners, like to look up to); b) what generates it is the shift from private property to public property and the harnessing of fear. When personal interests take the appearance of the public ones, and the fears and obsessions of the few become the spirit of the masses, things can only go bad. He who brings his insecurities and uncertainties with him wherever he goes, is usually feared by everyone. There is the fear of Islam and Muslims, the fear of being invaded by emigrants from all over the world, the fear of homosexuals and lesbians, the fear of punkers and conspiracies etc. We became members of a Europe which we had thought would never accept us. And yet it did. As a result ‘we adopted all its phobias and stereotypes which prior to the integration had worked against us’ (p. 13). If that is not the case, then the world

has become a 'One and Only, Globalized East Central Europe' (*ibid.*), which would be tantamount to the impossibility of ever reversing the aforementioned changes. As the implied opposite of fear, hatred has flourished in the modern era. Compared to the 19th and the 20th centuries, truly the era of 'collective organized hatred', spanning from conspiracy theories to ideocratic hatred and manifesting itself in an array of forms, the modern type of hatred has managed to double its effect in the same way that it has refined it. Left-wing totalitarianism spawned its right-wing counterpart, with a rhetoric and practices one more atrocious and criminal than the other. Modernity was born out of the fear of stagnation of a certain state of affairs, but it generated the hatred of those who identify themselves as defenders of 'Tradition'. The hatred between 'us' and 'them', and even worse, self-hatred, is wreaking havoc in our present-day society.

One of the pivotal traits of the Donskian endeavor is the idea that hatred is always in disguise, maximizing its noxious effects. Hatred hides itself behind self-denial and the denial of others, 'under the pretext of a noble cause or a heroic resistance in the face of evil' (p. 24). It infiltrates in all forms of criticism, in the intellectual objectivization, in the free assessment of values, in neutrality, in patriotism or social concern. Many of these manifestations have been studied individually, in free-standing books by L. Donskis, before and after his publication from 2003. All modern ideologies whether they are conservative, liberal or socialist, have fostered and promoted hatred. It cannot be explained in psychological and psychiatric terms, as long as it is inherent to political ideologies, philosophical theories, literature, pedagogical practices etc. It can even speak in the name of God with the tongues of the ones who serve in fact the Devil. In the words of L. Donskis, 'without the Devil ... hate cannot sustain itself' (p. 24).

The book published in 2003/2013 has a symmetrical structure. The main body following the generous introduction (pp. 23-44) is comprised of two sections: *Part 1: The Making and Unmaking of Enemies: Evil and the Troubled Imagination*; *Part 2: The Uncertainties of Modernity: Ambivalence and the Troubled Identity*. Each part consists of two almost symmetrical lengthy chapters, correlated with the four main variants of hatred. The first chapter entitled *The Conspiracy Theory of Society: From Sir John Mandeville to the Modern Troubled Imagination* looks at the modern versions of ghost chasing, witch hunting and demonology; namely conspiracy theories which 'appear to be the oldest and most resilient form of collective hatred'. Neither of the two totalitarian regimes of the 20th century was able to function without a conspiracy theory, and the place of the Olympian Gods from Homer's time, and that of God's, in the Christian era, has often been taken by the Learned Elders of Zion, monopolists, capitalists, imperialists (cf. K. Popper, 1959, *apud* L. Donskis, 2013, pp. 51-52, „Who takes God's place?“).

The second chapter entitled *Transferred Loyalties, Fabricated Identities and Organized Hatred: The Politics of True Believers vs. The Literature of Skeptics* debates the transposal of one's own alienation and identity crises into militant theories that speak of transparency, certitude and a 'black-and-white social optics'. The complexity of modernity is being shunned, the author thinks, as supported by George Orwell's essays (*Notes on Nationalism*, 1970) dealing with the nationalism transposed into the framework of modern life, or his fiction (1984, *Animal Farm*), but also by Czeslaw Milosz with *The Captive Mind*, 1981.

The third chapter, *Alternative Modernity? Marxism, Modern Ideocracy, and the Secular Church*, deals with the metaphysics of change and transformation in favor of restoring the past, or on the contrary, in the sense of building a bright future, revolutionary, the latter having been proposed especially by Marxism in all its forms – symbolic, dogmatic, Russian, modern etc.

Finally the fourth chapter, *Modernity and the Loss of Roots, or Two Modes of Being of the Troubled Identity*, examines the metaphysics of the 'blood-and-land' purity of our origins, namely the violent denial of any trait of complexity and interculturalism, of collective identity and even individual. It draws on the relation between culture and civilization (not always as complementary elements; sometimes in opposition to each other) its topic of debate being the morphology of culture and tropical imagination in the philosophical challenge of Oswald Spengler and the theory of Ludwig Wittgenstein concerning the Jewish self-hatred and the creative genius.

One of the concluding ideas of the work is that 'hatred never stops just at individuals'. It needs a form of appeal – symbol or image, it always speaks the language of the crowds, of anonymity, of mass hysteria. On the other hand "reason hides hatred, presenting it as morality, progressive politics, deep religiosity, or even worse, love and compassion" (p. 335).

As probably expected, not all intellectuals agree with the ideas put forth by L. Donskis. For example Robert Ginsberg shares the idea that hatred is at the core of literary dystopias and oppressive political regimes, while Timo Airaksinen rejects the idea of hatred always manifesting itself as something else and that radical evil is a real thing and we subscribe to these observations. Also the idea that fear breeds hatred has not been a constant throughout time; if we consider the Christian doctrine alone, the fear of God actually creates moral values. On the other hand, the author himself remarks that even in the most oppressive regimes human dignity can prevail, somehow rising above hatred and evil.

The Lithuanian scholar thought his ideas might reverberate among the public of present-day Romania, given its history ridden with flaws and dramas, so that the Romanian translation of his book is a valuable acquisition. The idea of literature, myth and fiction offering a more convincing prototype of assessment

and knowledge than the most consistent philosophical systems and academic treatises, has become a fact agreed upon by most scholars. It explains the relation between imagination and the imaginary which has been previously talked about, a limitless source of interpretations present in all of L. Donskis' books.

His philosophical and literary development as well as his area of interest is very well reflected in his writing. One notices the use of long sentences with classical syntax symmetries, with daring protases and explanatory apodoses occurring even in titles of the chapters, not only in the main body. On the other hand, when the sentence is shorter it bears the resonance of a philosophical and moral dictum. A selection of such statements has been put together by Timo Airaksinen, the Swedish editor of the English edition of *Editio Princeps* (2003): "It is seldom that hatred does not appear in disguise"; "Deep hatred would be impossible to conceive in the absence of radical evil"; "The war between good and evil is eternal"; "Our times are times of hatred". The style can be traced back to the old treatises of philosophy – ancient and medieval, but also modern – that have constituted the backbone of his intellectual endeavor. It is not by accident that we can find collections of aphorisms, maxims and proverbs in his rich body of work. In his original work, assertions like these denote a very well-balanced moral judgment, cast into 'right words'. Here is another example: "Some people are masters of turning the private into public". Such a style of writing could not have avoided the use of the paradox as a logical and linguistic means of revealing the complexity of both the spiritual and the material world in which we live. Right from the beginning, from the preface of the Romanian edition, the author states that "the less power you have, the more devoted you are, both politically and morally", with the implied remark that such a truth is paradoxical. He also points out a paradoxical trait of the East Central European countries (a subject that we have dealt with in a study on present-day Romania): the generalized state of disappointment, after twenty-five years of freedom, of market economy etc. However, the fall of communism brought great achievements, historical, material and cultural, with reference to the entire history of those countries, as well as the inclusion in the Euro-Atlantic structures. It is ridiculous, says L. Donskis, to see the European Council enacting family rights and traditional values, while at the same time imposing the values of secularism and the respect for minorities. He also talks about the paradox of the troublesome identity: we want to be ourselves, yet we are fascinated by target-groups (p. 334). He quotes Max Scheller saying that love and hate bond people together (p. 25). At times, the paradox takes on more subtle forms, stylistically speaking (including the tight wording of a proverb), yet it retains its rich semantic content. The author adopts the idea expressed by Milan Kundera (already cited here), that the revolutions and uprisings leading to the fall of communism (as well as the ones preceding them),

were nostalgic, anachronistic and conservative. To refer to a revolution as 'romantic' is something to be accepted, *post festum*, because it implies a state of excitement, irrationality and young fervor, but to refer to it as anachronistic and even worse, as conservative, is completely oxymoronic.

As a rule, the metaphoric discourse is a trademark of L. Donskis' works. Twenty-five years after the fall of communism, says the Lithuanian scholar, we use our victim status as an aspect of our foreign policy; we use our weakness and our sorrows as a passport to the Paradise of Global Consideration. Indeed, it is to be remarked that a propensity has taken root in our society manifested by a craving for attention. Citing the great Latin church figure St. Augustine, according to whom "evil is an insufficient good", L. Donskis comes up with a metaphoric definition of hatred, seen as "a stray love". In the same context he personifies it saying that "hatred is a kind of love unable to let people be, for it has lost its way and its purpose" (p. 25).

In conclusion, one can firmly state that L. Donskis' book, like all his other works, takes on profound ideas and noble emotions and gilds them with the stroke of a pen in clear and vivid words.