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THE PROBLEM OF ALIENATION IN *THE DOUBLE BOOK* BY D. KHADZIS

Among the XX century Greek writers, who touched in their works the problem of "alienation", solitude and existence in general, D. Khadzis, a writer of post-war (WW II) period, is especially noteworthy and interesting. Almost all his literary works – novels and stories – bring up the problem of "alienation", non-communicability, solitude and estrangement among human beings. In this regard, his novel *The Double Book* is particularly remarkable.

In order to set off the peculiar properties of the novel, we shall consider it against the background of the notion of "alienation" in general.

The mentioned phenomenon originated in the early period of the world history and has not once been considered and interpreted by various philosophers and men of art. The problem of "alienation" has been perceived from different angles and several of its kinds have been distinguished.

"Traditional societies of the old age perceived the environment around as a micro-world, while beyond the confined environment there lay the unfamiliar and shapeless world."[1] People locked up in their own micro-worlds associated a stranger with a fear for unknown, hatred and rancor, as the latter represented the element of aposynthesis and destruction of their world. Peoples of Ancient cultures regarded a human being as estranged if the latter did not belong to their group or community. Different cultures had different names for these individuals. For instance, Ancient Greeks called a stranger "a barbarian", Jews – "an infidel", while Chinese – "a foreign demon".

The term "alienation" itself did not appear in any sociological dictionaries and encyclopaedias until 1935. However, the idea is either distinctly outlined or briefly mentioned in classical sociological studies of the XIX century and

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[1] Μιρσέα Έλιαντ, Οικόνες και σύμβολα, Αθήνα 1994, 50.

the first decades of the XX century. If we trace down the roots of the phenomenon, we shall find out that works by IIIc AD neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus, also theological studies of St Augustine and Luther have the origins of the idea of alienation.[2] However, scholars believe that the most obvious source, which clearly conveys the idea is works by Hegel. Hegel considered alienation as an ontological phenomenon, the intrinsic property of nature related to the human existence in the world. He believed in the principle of natural demarcation between two types of human beings _subjects and objects. "Subject" refers to a creative personality who strives for existence and self-realization, while "object" is the one who is directed by others and is subjected to outside influence.[3] Unlike Hegel, Marx interpreted "alienation" as a process characteristic of class-antagonistic society of capitalism generated from labor exploitation and representing isolation of a worker from the material and spiritual values of his own produce. According to Marx, self-realization through labor is an intrinsic component of nature, but the economic system prohibits this opportunity. Therefore, the chief problem of capitalism is an alienated labor.[4]

Along with the traditional Marxian conceptions on "alienation", there exists another theory developed by so-called "Mass Society" representatives. They linked "alienation" to the disappearance of traditional society resulting from industrialism. To their belief, a human being is isolated the way it has never been – anonymous and faceless in the mass, which turns him into a bourgeois. He is deprived of old values, and does not believe in a new rationalistic bureaucratic structure".[5]

While Marx and Mass Society theorists attached to "alienation" a pragmatic, worldly sense and emphasized issues on human labor and labor organization, there outlined another conception regarding "alienation". This was existentialism founded by Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. "A concrete human being, his existence in the modern bourgeois society as the realization of existence, a man's "solitude" and "desolation", hopelessness and "being under threat", disability and misery, bancruptcy of human existence and facing nothingness, his being before death and for death, his freedom – these are what existentialism is concerned with".[6]

At first, existentialism was a conception of a few philosophers. Later, especially after World War II, the number of existentialists increased. They

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[2]   Encyclopaedia Britannica, A new survey of universal knowledge, Volume I, Alienation, 628
[3]   Ibid.
[4]   Entfremdung, Wörterbuch der Literaturwissenschaft, Leipzig, 1986, 130-131.
[5]   Britannica, Αλλοτρίωση, 59.
[6]   K. Bakradze, Existentialism, Tbilisi, 1962, 37.

developed their conception of human existence not only in philosophical studies but in literary works as well. Such a popularity of existentialism was motivated by the thinkers' particular interest in an individual fate in the epoch, when "relations between an individuum and society have obviously entered the critical stage, when a human being started to lack civil interests, when a man withdrew from the everyday life, personal emotions, beauty, even love …".[7] A horrible, estranged world and in particular, "alienated being – this is the main idea of the modern bourgeois art, while an artist is the person who reflects in his feelings and ideas essential and typical features of the society".[8]

The XX century thinkers and representatives of art unanimously admit the crisis of the modern epoch blaming for it "the technical alienation".[9] "The technical alienation" is self-estrangement of a human being, which results from his own technical performance and work. According to a Georgian scholar Z. Kakabadze, "The produce of human actions and labor turn into a force hostile to the human beings themselves. The more items are produced, the more declined a human being is. The more he produces, the less happy he is. The is the situation of alienation".[10]

As we have already mentioned above, human "alienation" and solitude is most interestingly illustrated in the modern Greek literature. The phenomenon of "alienation" appears in a number of works by modern Greek writers. Remarkably, almost all of D. Khadzis' contemporary Greek writers were deeply impressed by the devastating outcomes of the World War II. Their primary concern lay in describing consequences of the war and the injuries it generated. The center of the historical-political events and socio-economic changes was occupied by a human being, who felt disharmony in the modern world and experienced tragic feeling. The majority of Greek writers of the mentioned generation emphasized in their works existential perception of a human being in the modern world.[11]

Literary works by D. Khadzis touch the problem of human "alienation" and existence in a peculiar way. We may assert that the author is particularly interested in a human fate. However, some Greek scholars believe that Khadzis is concerned not with an individual, but the fate of the Greek community in general against the background of the war: "Khadzis is among the post-war Greek prose writers who took interest in the problems of the Greek

[7] Assays on the Modern Foreign Literature, Modern Western Drama, TSU, Tbilisi, 1989, 24.
[8] Z. Kakabadze, The Problem of "Existential Crisis" and the Transcendental Phenomenology by Edmund Husserl (in Georgian), Tbilisi, 1985, 9.
[9] Ibid, 11.
[10] Ibid, 9, 10.
[11] Δ. Τσακωνάς, επίτομη ιστορία της νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας, Αθήνα.

community involved in the historical events and social, political and economic changes, while the majority of writers were more concerned with historical reality and later, personal and existential problems."[12] We partly agree with the above conception of the Greek scholar, however, we believe that Khadzis' interest in the society is not so much general. Khadzis considers the Greek community through bringing up problems of its members (*Siulas the Tanner*, *Sambethay Kabyl* …) and vice versa, each concrete human being is the face of the community itself. We shall develop this conception while considering the problems of the characters of *The Double Book*. We also believe that Khadzis numerously touches existential and personal problems of his characters (*The Grave, The Time of Tide, Saint George, The Double Book*). Our primary objective is to investigate the main causes of alienation among the characters of *The Double Book*.

The Double Book pictures two worlds completely different from each other – on the one hand, a modern society on its way to technical advancements, with developed technology and enormous factories and plants (Germany) and on the other hand, a miserable world of Volos timber plant (Greek). The novel puts emphasis on the dramatic life of Greek migrants to Germany in 50-60s, who take an active part in the industrial development of the country but have difficulties in adjusting to a strange, developed and technocratic world. They are gripped with, so to say, the syndrome of "technical alienation". In the very first chapter of the novel "the author illustrates the mechanization of the industrial production. Soon we clearly discern the worker's alienation from the production, his automation, distance between him and the work, isolation from other workers, his full solitude".[13] – These are words by S. Xristou, a Greek scholar. Upon returning to his motherland after many years of life abroad, the writer finds the modern lifestyle inevitable, but his inner self rejects it. His attitude to the modern, developed and industrial society, which he knows perfectly well after years of living in Europe, is negative. It is in Greece that Khadzis better perceives the inner world of people, while in Germany he is more concerned with the environment, the new world typical of the industrial society developed by means of modern technology and the huge plant.

The main character of the story Kostas comes from a small Greek town Volos. He has lived in Stuttgart, an industrial city of Germany for four years and has worked in a plant. The huge city, rich in colorful advertisements, shop-windows and lights, seems to him inhospitable, inhumane. He feels

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[12] Επιστημονικό συμπόσιο, Δ. Χατζής, μια συνείδηση της ρωμιοσύνης, Πάτρα 1999, 49.
[13] Σ. Χρήστου. Αποξένωση και παρακμή, Αθήνα 1976.

himself a stranger, alienated and solitary in the city: "Here I am, in the ave-
nue, on the pavement … Nobody awaits me, there no place I would want to
go to. My home, my motherland happen to be here, but no home, no mother-
land … we have all become strangers in these huge cities … And I am the
truest citizen of the city of strangers".[14] What may have caused such a state of
the character? The hero answers the question himself as he understands the
reason of alienation: "… This is it, our present world. It has all ready and
specified for us, we lack nothing – one just does not know what to do with
oneself",[15] Kostas says. He feels alienated not only in the city but in the plant
and at home as well. He is estranged from all. In the plant he is captured in
long corridors, moves like a tram, talks over the same topics with his bosses,
carries the loaded barrow to the inner yard, twice a day, at the same time,
pierces a voucher to confirm his presence at the place of work and above all,
he is regularly paid, and quite well – and that is all. And while at home, "the
kitchen door has a small gap. I pay the rent through it and see nothing. I put
the money in an envelope, pass the dead zone of the corridor and throw it
there …, this is the same as in "Autel", just here it is vice versa. There I am
paid and I see nothing, and here I pay and see nothing".[16] The Greek emi-
grant, whose life in Germany is confined to isolation and robot-like work in
the plant (Autelectrica) and a solitary existence in the blank walls of Frau
Baum's house, attempts to realize his place and adjust to this new but strange
environment however difficult it may prove to him.

A Greek psychologist I. Ghalan[17] makes an interesting comment on the
alienation of Greek migrants to Germany, which, to our mind, is directly re-
lated to the problem raised in *The Double Book*. According to Ghalan, aliena-
tion of a Greek migrant worker is caused by: 1) sudden replacement of his
native and friendly environment (home, square, café, district) by the one in-
hospitable and hostile to him, the environment with strange customs and a
foreign language; b) living in absolutely different circumstances; replacement
of a peaceful square, backgammon and cards, unscheduled life and work
where privacy prevails by noisy, technology-wise developed, programmed,
estranged and faceless civil life and work".[18]

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[14]   Δ. Χατζής, "Διπλό βιβλίο", 63.
[15]   Ibid, 67.
[16]   Ibid, 61.
[17]   The problem of "alienation" of Greek migrants to Germany in 50-60s of the XX century was
       considered not only by writers, but has become the subject of many Greek Psychologists' stu-
       dies.
[18]   Γιάννη Γ. Γαλάνης, εφαρμοσμένη ψυχολογία, απελεύθερο Εγώ και κατεστημένο, 35.

Among the plant workers, Greek migrants are not the only victims of the "technical alienation". People who sit in solitude in tiny rooms isolated with glass walls surrounded with telephones, printing machines, telexes, dictaphones, turn into faceless beings, true machines: "Their faces are hardly noticeable, they always keep their heads down, say something, listen to telephones, click something on the machines … And we are even more miserable suffering with our hands and bodies, and they over here, are really punished … they have their eyes extracted and two autel lamps of our production installed in their place in order to prevent them from seeing anything else from 8am till 4pm".[19] Even blond long-legged ladies walking to and fro in the corridors look like artificial, mechanical toys: "To my mind, they select them by their fine legs, then wind them up and so they go around wound up all day long".[20] Müller himself, the head of the department has turned into a spiritless machine: "Müller has no spirit at all, just a taper-recorder – and nothing more is necessary here… he always sits in his room and seems to form one entity together with his chair… He sees to everything from his place…he says something all the time, never shouts, never changes his voice. His words, the four words, he seems to print them on the machine installed in his mouth, the cassette in the tape-recorder put in his mouth".[21] To our mind, these "products" of the technocratic society deprived of all humane by the modern civilized community, have become supplements to technology, as Edward Bond has it.[22] The Greek scholar M. Meraklis believes that both the bosses of the plant and their employees are victims of the absurdity called the production system.[23]

The characters of *The Double Book* are not the victims of the "technical alienation" alone. Another character of the novel, Skouroyanis is doomed to estrangement and solitude as well. After leaving his motherland, he has been attempting to establish himself in Germany for twenty years, but "Stuttgart, enormous buildings, illuminated streets, cafes and bars, shows – all strange, totally unknown, distanced from him, insignificant to him is unreal, a wall erected around him".[24] Throughout twenty years of living in a strange land he wondered to return to his native Dobrinovo. He hoped that his native people,

[19] Δ. Χατζής, "Διπλό βιβλίο", 12,13.
[20] Ibid, 13.
[21] Ibid, 15.
[22] I. Kereselidze, The Mask of the Social Drama, The Modern Western Drama, TSU (in Georgian), Tbilisi, 1989, 104.
[23] Μ. Γ. Μερακλής, Προσεγγίσεις στην ελληνική πεζογραφία, η επανεμφάνιση του Δ. Χατζή: «Το Διπλό Βιβλίο», Καστανιώτης, 121.
[24] Δ. Χατζής, "Διπλό βιβλίο", 177.

close friends could put and end to his solitude, his long adventure. However, after returning to Dobrinovo, Skouroyanis found out that even his close friends are strangers to him, he realized that Dobrinovo is the place of his ultimate solitude, "unreal place. He suffered for twenty years wondering to come back to the non-existing place…".[25] Thus Skouroyanis is alienated in doubles ways. Neither in a foreign environment (Germany), nor in his native land (Greece) did he find refuge, the people he would open his heart to and tell about himself and his solitude. He feels "lonely" and "estranged" even at home.[26] After twenty years of living in Germany, Skouroyanis found out that Dobrinovo has also become an estranged place to him. Skouroyanis was unable to find his place in life and in the existing society and felt himself alienated. According to the Greek critic Andrea Karandon, "these are the stories of our compatriots who had to leave their motherland to work in German enterprises wondering to overcome hard life and return to their country they miss so much, but they can not get accustomed to the foreign country, and on their return to their native land, discover a new solitude. They are complete failures".[27] However, there still exists a way out. Skouroyanis, tired of solitude and unsociability, found compassion with animals. He walked on in solitude and opened his heart to a Pindusian bear: "He caressed his head. The animal took to his hands. This was an outbreak of his sorrow, solitude, despair – he embraced the lovely head of the animal… We two are left here – no one else – nothing is left over here".[28] D. Khadzis is sorry for the modern society, where people find it difficult to understand one another and live aloof and secluded: "When people in a society are driven to the extent when they feel more affection for a bear than a human being, the society must have been on the edge of destruction,"– says the author.

This decayed society and abnormal human relations cause the fact that a person of a tender nature was called crazy: "They called me the tailor's half-crazy daughter. Women around me, I felt, kept away from me, they did not want to talk to me."[29] Said Anastasia, Kostas' sister. The real world was too hard and painful to Anastasia, she felt herself estranged and secluded from all, even from herself: "The most strange to me is my own self".[30] she said. The distinguished French philosopher Gabriel Marcel stated: "…To my mind, self-alienation is the fact when one's own self, one's being seems to one more

[25]   Ibid, 128.
[26]   Ibid, 122.
[27]   Αντρέα Καραντώνη, 24 σύγχρονοι πεζογράφοι, εκδόσεις "Νικόδημος", Αθήνα, 227.
[28]   Seeuite 23, 131,132.
[29]   Ibid, 159, 264.
[30]   Ibid, 167.

and more estranged".[31] As to Sartre, like to all existentialists, self-alienation is a natural state of human beings in the society, which has become most senseless and aimless to them. This is the right appreciation of Anastasia, secluded, lacking self-realization, who sometimes attempted to escape reality and find spiritual compassion and her self in her fancies. She was lost amid reality and illusion. Blue, golden, greenish-golden birds drenched in sunlight were the beings that lived in her fancy to help her forget her solitude and alienation from all around for at least a while. Anastasia's marriage to a person strange to her destroyed her illusions. She knew that birds would come to her no more and she had to get accustomed to her husband's world, which was strange forever to her. "…Here we live, the defeated daughter of a Hellasite warrior, defeated in double ways, the mother of the fellow who was murdered by Hellasites … And he is the third, crazy about money, three lonely beings, inaccessibly estranged, each secluded in themselves – in the house, which we have enlarged and decorated".[32]

So, we may conclude that the characters of D. Khadzis' *The Double Book* are the victims of the estranged world – so-called "technical alienation" on the one hand and of decayed social relations on the other. Non-communicability between society and individual, or sometimes lack of contacts between individuals results into the tragedy of each character of *The Double Book*. It is significant that the author is concerned with human beings, their struggle with themselves and the society. However, he is not confined to a concrete individual only. Through the image of Kostas, the writer raises the problem of alienation among Greek migrants, while Skouroyanis represents each Greek repatriate who experiences double alienation: "And here write it down the way as to make society visible beyond his image, the society, which is on the edge of fall"[33] – says the writer himself about Skouroyanis at the end of the novel. As regards "self-alienated" Anastasia, her image reflects the decayed social relations characteristic of D. Khadzis' contemporary society.

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[31]   Seeuite 8, 8.
[32]   See 23, 168.
[33]   Δ. Χατζής, «Διπλό Βιβλίο», 176.