

# JOŽE PUČNIK

## PERSONAL FREEDOM, CULTURE, AND POLITICS

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*For different reasons, but primarily because of the experience of a political prisoner, Jože Pučnik more or less rejected to play the role of “a political personality”. Slovenian public only reluctantly places him amongst the most important political personalities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, however, his political activity was based precisely upon the apology of “a free personality”.*

*Key words: Jože Pučnik, politics, culture, personality, freedom, Europe, Slovenia*

*Jože Pučnik se je iz različnih razlogov, v prvi vrsti pa zaradi izkušnje političnega zapornika, prej ko ne izogibal igranju vloge »politične osebnosti«. Slovenska javnost ga le rezervirano postavlja med najpomembnejše politične osebnosti 20. st. Hkrati pa je bilo njegovo politično delovanje oprto ravno na zastopanje »svobodne osebnosti«.*

*Ključne besede: Jože Pučnik, politika, kultura, osebnost, svoboda, Evropa, Slovenija*

In accordance with the proposed thematic frame I will not discuss at length how Jože Pučnik personally influenced recent Slovenian culture and politics, especially regarding their interconnections and interlinking, which would nonetheless be relevant at a time when the greatness of political personalities is being measured with specifically prepared barometers. I will only talk about one central aspect of Pučnik’s thought that touches on his discussion of the relation between society and culture in the Slovenian and European context. Jože Pučnik developed this discussion in detail in his book *Kultura, družba in tehnologija* (Culture, Society, and Technology), which was published in 1988 and accompanied Slovenian democratization and attainment of independence. I emphasized the importance of this work in my essay “Samorazumevanje Slovencev v perspektivi evropskega sporazumevanja” (The Self-Understanding of Slovenians in the Perspective of European Understanding, 1999). In the meantime, Slovenia became a member of the European Union, which undoubtedly conditions the comprehension of possible tasks of culture as possibly playing significant roles within society—of course, only inasmuch as one does not persist in self-sufficient conceptions regarding the development of culture and society. Therefore it seems appropriate to re-thematize Pučnik’s discussion of the relationship between culture and society, which opens up the possibility of the political in a manner that is still undetermined.

Regarding the understanding of Pučnik's activity and personality, it is difficult and probably also inappropriate to differentiate between purely theoretical-intellectual, practical-political, and personal-ethical aspects. In Pučnik's case, this is unsuitable mainly because the case at hand is not only singularly aligned, but also meaningfully stands out of line in recent Slovenian and European history. This being-placed-out-of-line has a twofold sense in being something extraordinary as an act, which not only became part of this history, but also precisely as an act essentially co-instituted with it. This makes the act extraordinary in another sense: it instates itself outside of the generally accepted order, outside of the subordination of self-proclaimed social reality, and is excessive in this regard. The fact that this extraordinariness was dramatically presented very early in Dominik Smole's play *Antigona* (Smole 1961) is in itself distinctive enough.

Because the notions of a human being's personality and activity constitute the existential basis of Pučnik's work, one must ask what kind of humanity is actually at stake. In seeking to answer this question, I am immediately confronted by the European horizon of Pučnik's activity, which was decisive for the Slovenian social circumstances, precisely because it itself fronted them from (within) the horizon of the European understanding of man as a being of active freedom<sup>1</sup> and a self-responsible person.<sup>2</sup>

Of course one might first think that this is a conception of freedom as the self-appointed subjectivity of man belonging to the age of enlightenment. This aspect of freedom is reconsidered and respected in Pučnik's conception of humanity as a being of active freedom, but it is by no means of key importance or even exclusive. Pučnik's thought and activity do not remain and halt within the horizon of enlightenment, but expressly transgress into the horizon of the world and open it up as such. Therein lies Pučnik's key political transgression, because without the ingression into this personal and active experience of the world, which meant a violent trial of and for existence, Pučnik would not have had the horizon of openness for active confrontation with the violence of social reality, in the face of which the freedom of man in an unknown and unabated way manifested itself as being "unreal." I have

<sup>1</sup> The earliest of Pučnik's writings already bear witness to this. The introduction to the essay "O svobodi. Razmišljanje o poteh k svobodi" (On Freedom. Reflection on the Ways towards Freedom) from 1957 reads: "Probably no notion exists that would so consistently protrude into the cultural life of the European man as the notion of freedom does. The search for freedom is the common thread in the search for European culture, the common thread in the history of its nascence and generation" (Pučnik 1986: 29.) At the same time, it is important in the context of my discussion of the relation between culture and society to acknowledge Pučnik's admonition that freedom "should not be a cultural supplement to social life, should not be an *epitheton ornans* of civilization. Freedom should be social life itself, should be the reality of our life" (Pučnik 1986: 29).

<sup>2</sup> "The phenomenon and concept of the person are closely connected to the development of European civilizations. They are elements of the process how Europe took its place in the world and how it is, so to say, organizing its household. A 'person' is a certain kind of realizing of the 'self'. A 'person' refers to a process in which conventional characterizations of that, what a person is—expressed by concepts such as freedom, autonomy, and human dignity—are only late stages whose possibility is grounded in previous constitutions. This process is a fluctuating medium that changed the meaning of the person and defined the *oikos* of Europe to a certain extent" (Sepp 2010: 3).

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R. Pesek: *Pučnik*,  
Ljubljana, 2013)



in mind of course the violence of totalitarianism, which exerted such a profound influence on Slovenia, Europe, and the world in the previous century, and which even today still presents a global threat to humanity, despite the common comprehension that sees humanity's future in progress, growth, and development. Work not only does not "make a man," it can also be a totally counterfeit remake of one's humanity; and it is the sign over the symbolic place of totalitarianism that cynically reminds one of that. Within "total mobilization" there is no place for the active freedom of man and the question remains how to disclose this place (the world) in such a way that it will be human and not inhuman. For instance, can the "open society" present a satisfactory guarantee? Totalitarian societies likewise declare themselves to be open and cynically demonstrate this openness with the closing of those that do not agree with the way they are being served this openness. An even deeper problem, however, lies in the circumstance that society in general claims the right to open up the world and liberate humanity, and that therefore also the political as the expression of active freedom is being conditioned in advance with sociality. Perhaps this reveals today's key problem, which supersedes the reality of the democratic society and also the degeneration of totalitarian systems. This actually is "a defect of the system," which is not being recognized as a defect because such a recognition would mean the recognition that society cannot claim an exclusive right to truth, but has to be subjected to the verification of its own veracity. Faith in society has replaced all other faiths and beliefs.<sup>3</sup> Thus today one only talks about "European society" and not about "European humanity," which obviously has become unimportant where the future of society is at stake. Accordingly, historical identities are being replaced by manifold identifications, which supposedly institute new forms of sociality, regardless of what is happening with humanity

<sup>3</sup> Big Brother shows are a symptom of this condition in a way. A definition: "Producers count their profits, contestants count the minutes of their appearances, and the viewers count their voyeuristic pleasures" (Jakopič 2007: 6).

itself; that is, with what within the European spiritual sphere not only constitutes a sort of a general culture, but the creative culture of the individual.<sup>4</sup>

In the introduction to the treatise *Culture, Society, and Technology*, Pučnik ascertains that:

the naive optimism of the natural sciences, which arose in the nineteenth century, was joined in the twentieth century by a naive optimism of the social sciences. Both optimisms are naive because they instated and effectuated illusory perceptions about the productivity of their technologies as models for activity. (Pučnik 1988: 9)

Before I pose the question how this naivety of the social sciences could be surpassed, it is necessary to see the complexity of this question, which was raised by Pučnik during the democratization of Slovenian society and Slovenia's attainment of independence, but which undoubtedly surpasses that time because it also represents the central problem of the formation of the European Union as the European response to the challenge of globalization. The question therefore demands a certain human responsibility, which cannot be equated with this or any other kind of social discourse, with a social critique of ideology or, if I were to use Pučnik's vocabulary, with an interpretive technology. Disputable is precisely the naivety of sense itself, which always already permeates interpretations of the social sciences and under the influence of which they have "fallen" in accordance with the mannerism of enlightenment; that is to say, they have taken sense naively, as an already always presupposed culture. Society disposes over each realization of the sense of humanity without positing it as such. Through the positing of sense (the logos), it is possible to think of the originality of culture without posing it as an origin because culture itself has its own source in the origin of humanity. Society operates only with "human resources." The key "epistemological incision" for Pučnik thus lies in the stipulation that society should recognize its partaking in culture, instead of always taking it merely as one of the parts of its construction; namely, society as a structure. Here I should emphasize that this recognition constitutes the horizon of the sense of decision-making, which touches on human responsibility and is not just one of its aspects. The divide between what human society presupposes as its "knowledge" and what poses it as a knowledge society, and at the same time the circumstance of how very little human beings know about themselves, is becoming enormous and unendurable. How is this possible if society, and especially Western society, was instituted precisely upon the rising of man into the subject, which became universally appraised?

Pučnik asks, "[w]hen the program (the turn) of enlightenment principally instated man as the origin of every legitimization of social institutions, what was intended was the concrete individual man. But it was thereby not further specified what this man actually is. Is it me? Is it you? Is it someone else? All of us together?" (Pučnik 1988: 209). If I listen intently, I can sense that the "worldness" of the world protrudes into this question as the socially presupposed and the culturally posited sense, which always effectuates and affects me as a being

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<sup>4</sup> Pučnik discusses the problem of understanding "the role of the individual in a society" in the essay "Družba in država" (Society and State) from 1957 (cf. Pučnik 1986: 15–28).

of active freedom. The world addresses my activity by the very circumstance that it always has a portative meaning for me and that I always ascribe it importance. It is precisely to this that Pučnik's definition of culture as "the totality of the constitution and the organization of meanings" refers: "If we define culture as the totality of the constitution and the organization of meanings, then society is a part of culture, and not vice versa. Characteristic of the part of culture, which we call society, is a specific technique of organization, which social sciences call institutionalization" (Pučnik 1988: 17). Thus society institutes itself upon institutionalization, and not upon the formation of meanings from which the meaningfulness of the world arises. In the sense of our everyday habituality, one customarily describes this world-formativeness as culture, and in closer detail as creativity, but precisely as the activity upon freedom, which can never be reduced to a kind of "social engagement." At the same time, I am confronted by the fundamental dignity of humanity decisive for the faculty of the political. The distinction between society and culture with regard to the worldly decisiveness of the latter therefore indicates a change of the political (cf. Komel 2004).

Without bearing in mind this intermediary sense of the meaningfulness of the world, one cannot see why Pučnik ascribes the constitutive priority to culture before society in an age in which the social indiscriminately precedes everything. This progression of the social, attempting to legitimize itself as social progress, leaves all the worldness of the world behind and therefore the latter recedes into a "disworlding" crepuscule that cannot be superseded by any kind of illumination.<sup>5</sup> Contrarily, culture, precisely because it is always connected with transferring of the tradition of the world, transfers itself towards the world and preserves its openness. In this regard, culture is world-formative, which society, even though forming the world among people, never can be, but nonetheless always only re-appropriates the meaningfulness of the world all the way down to its expropriation—that is to say, its meaninglessness. One should not endeavor to understand culture as being world-formative within the program of enlightenment, which otherwise decrees a key position to man in the constitution of the meaningfulness of the world, but at the same time positions man within this meaningfulness and not there where it opens up towards sense. According to the program of enlightenment, man realizes himself within this or other sociality, but humanity understood in a post-enlightenment manner as active freedom realizes itself within worldness that also shows it the reality or the unreality of its sociality. It also does so in nihilistic perversion, in a similar way as this occurs, for instance, in the novels of Franz Kafka.

The confrontation with the apparition of totalitarianism within the horizon of enlightenment not only loses the ground of reason, but rationality itself can also contribute towards instituting it in the function of a rationalization of the world. Strictly speaking, the question remains whether the totalitarianisms of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are the opposition or perhaps the logical consequence of enlightenment's comprehension of humanity. The

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<sup>5</sup> It is interesting and indicative that these attempts at illumination on the basis of Western or Eastern worldviews appear especially when the weakening of the faculty of the political causes the decline of human dignity.

logic of totalitarianism as it was described, for instance, by Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt 1951) is far from being reasonable, but it nonetheless still remains logic and as such is based on the definition of man as a rational animal. Even the highest of rational ideals cannot prevent “the animalization” of rationality, as soon as the social morale, based solely on the respect towards reason, vanishes. On the other hand, it is not possible to simply renounce rationality because that would mean the denial of an essential aspect of human active freedom and with it also the capability of the constitution of worldness, which is not limited only by rationality, but speaks in an inexhaustible manifoldness. If it were to be expressed in culture, I cannot limit it as a functional part of social structure because culture would thus necessarily become conformist, instead of being formative, namely as the mediator of sense in the opening-up of the intermediality of the world, which also (as the Slovenian word *sredina* ‘middle, medium’ indicates) has a social character. However, I cannot limit this mediality to the capability of communication or rational discoursivity (as, for instance, Jürgen Habermas (1984) does), but must understand it with regard to its world-formativeness from within the essential formativeness of the word, which distinguishes man as a being of active freedom in the openness for the world. The word is what primordially opens up the world, and therefore only a human being that has the word can really be free in activity; in this is also embedded the origin of the political. In being based in the capability of the word, the political coincides with the origin of culture—to which, on the one hand, the beginnings of politics in ancient Greece bears witness and that, on the other hand, is becoming increasingly decisive in our time, wherein the distinction between the world-formativeness of culture and social structure is gaining political relevance in a manner as yet not fully ascertained, which could basically change the understanding of the political as well as political decision-making as such. At stake is an integral turn, through which first and foremost the speaking of the integrity of the world would become the primal element of political debate about discordances and concordances. At stake is a transcending of political exclusivism, which is parasitizing upon the inclusivity of the social and does not allow humanity to express itself as a being of active freedom that bases its responsibility in relation to what the world speaks and not according to the structuration of “social relationships.” This is by no means a renouncement of “social critique,” but a decisive shift in the criteria for discussion of the social, whereby the understanding of the presupposed level of culture would also be transformed. Culture can no longer hide itself behind a kind of a principal apoliticalness, but it cannot also fall victim to politicization because this would mean that it had lost its formative world-formativeness and betrayed the sense of the human.

Thus reflecting on the actual Slovenian situation from the standpoint of the European value context in the work *Culture, Society, and Technology*, Pučnik was able to decisively transcend the self-sufficient conceptualization of culture as the bearer of national identity as well as, on the other hand, transcend the self-managing reorganization and subordination of culture as a social factor. The consequence of the first is a political conservatism that in the end renounces the political and sees political decision-making as being something external and thus something alien, and the consequence of the latter is a political revolutionarity guided

only by the will to govern over the functioning of society, which thus denies the measure of humanity as such. Here, of course, the following question arises: what defines democracy—the social norm and normality, or human dignity and humane value?

In this context, it is necessary to draw attention to the conception of civil society as Pučnik developed it in the third part of his book *Culture, Society, and Technology*. Although the elaboration of this conception is connected with specific conditions of the transition from a totalitarian society into a democratic one, it nonetheless remains topical, insofar as it inscribes itself into the distinction between society and culture or into their interaction. The understanding of civil society namely remains critical throughout the entire post-independence era. On the one hand, civil society in Slovenia represents an important democratic corrective; on the other hand, it willingly renders service to the enforcement of hidden or overt ideological interests, together with the flaring-up of culture war. This war does not affect culture so much as society as such with regard to the instating of values. Thus one can legitimately ascertain a value crisis of the institutions of society and state. I am bearing witness to a conflict of values concerning the condemnation of the former totalitarian regime and the legal rehabilitation of its victims, hindering the work of journalists and journalists themselves, media blockades, numerous controversial legal proceedings, ensuring rights to marginalized groups of citizens, politics regarding asylum seekers, control over economic crimes and corruption, violation of social rights, unresolved legal proceedings, the relation between church and state, disregard for ecological standards and ruthlessness towards the natural environment in general, the position of Slovenian universities and the education system as a whole, and how literature is not only being judged today, but also judged and condemned in courtrooms, which even Ivan Cankar could have hardly had imagined. All of these show that people are living not only in altered values, but also in perverted values. The key question is who poses the values and who they are being posed for.

A debate regarding values, which I expressly connect with culture, has been opened, and the question of culture as a value have also been raised. This debate about culture as a value has an extremely wide span because it extends from problems of national identity and alternative identifications to the reduction of cultural values into market values. It is not possible to discuss here all of the aspects of value conflicts. I would like to emphasize only one, which is directly connected with Pučnik's elucidation of the relation between society and culture. Thus, for instance, the official documents of Slovenia's Development Strategy still define culture as a social subsystem, which among other things should also be the caretaker of national identity. In other documents, this role is also ascribed to the humanities, but at the same time they are denied their scholarly tasks and their special situation regarding language.

In principle, I can ascertain that entry into the European Union represents a final confirmation of Slovenia as an international subject, but it also fundamentally shook and even shocked "the national substance," thus provoking strong protective feelings on the one hand and, on the other hand, the refusal of each and every re-attachment to tradition. The first inflects itself into an antiquated cultural populism, and the other deflects itself into a

dispersed cultural populism. However, instead of confronting them, recently there has been a debate about the legitimacy of state investments in cultural institutions and state support for professionals involved in culture. This otherwise empty discussion, although amply covered by the media, is denoted by an attempt to substitute the former ideological subordination of culture, which found its concretization precisely in vigilant control over the livelihood for professionals involved with culture, with economical subordination that leaves these possibilities undecided and relinquishes them to the free market. In both cases, I ascertain that neither the autonomy of cultural creativity nor the special connection of this cultural creativity with Slovenian reality is being taken into consideration and given due respect. Slovenian reality is not bound only by the actual market conditions; its time and space are inter-mediated through manifold aspects, which one cannot arbitrarily abstract from, if one does not want to abstract from himself or herself. The manifoldness of aspects is inter-mediated only within the open intermediality of the world, which provides space for the spiritual openness of culture, but which can also become the domain of a cultural war and many a worldview division.

If I therefore attempt to appropriately confront today's situation within culture, it is not enough to justify the value of culture with its role in the preservation of national identity, which, of course, cannot and should not be denied. However, culture that does not create its own value from within itself cannot gain this value by ascribing itself roles and tasks, however highly historically defined they may be (cf. Komel 2006). The situation of culture has undoubtedly become even more complicated by the circumstance that it is precisely in the core of its creativity faced with the loss of the value center. This loss can afflict culture with regard to its central role, yet at the same time it can also allow different thinking about culture, which does not see in it the center anymore, but the open intermediality of the world that institutes identity forms through differences and thus also instates different values. If I look at the post-independence era precisely, this aspect of culture has become problematic to such an extent that Slovenian society will gradually lose its cultural consciousness and conscience, if it, of course, does not realize them as the creative acceptance of its own freedom.

Thus it is not surprising that in one of his last extensive political analyses Pučnik speaks about the cultural renewal of Slovenia and ascertains:

The chronic lethargy of legal, political, and moral measures is causing an erosion of the rule of law and presents a threat to the democratic system. The cause does not lie only in the negligence and irresponsibility of individuals because both are already the consequence of the general value lethargy of the Slovenian public and the institutions of the state. This lethargy enables the spread of an insincere relation towards reality, the falsification of facts, and public appearances, in which the people assuming the key positions in our country are lying to your face while at the same time looking into your eyes. ... Not only politicians do this, but also people in journalism, science, business, and government. Because of this general value lethargy in Slovenia, we do not have a completely formed sensitivity to truth and lies. ... Even worse: some people are trying to theoretically justify that consistence and moral values have no place within an efficient



public activity, for there, so they say, “elasticity,” “pragmatism,” “adjustability,” and “efficiency” must prevail. (Pučnik 1999: 46)

Thus once more one must pose the question of Pučnik as a personality that distinctively transgresses the usual perceptions of personality, either with regard to his “historical role” or with regard to his “presentation in the media.” I do not have in mind only that his personality was and still remains politically controversial throughout—encompassing the scope from glorification to debasement—and that there is no lack of attempts to problematize it anew in different ways. This transgressiveness of Jože Pučnik’s personality is in direct connection with the transgressing of the aforementioned norm of enlightenment, which standardizes normality and on this basis normalizes human world into a society. The phenomenon of the depersonalization of human individuality, which a large part of the human and social sciences drew attention to in the past century, is a negative consequence of this process of the socialization of individuality. However, the other incomparably worse consequence is dehumanization, which entails the annulment and annihilation of human beings transfigured into being inhuman. Furthermore, already in the earliest of his critical writings (as, for instance, Hannah Arendt also does very similarly) Pučnik ascertains that the central problem of politics in the circumstances of the realization of social reality is its perversion into social office-holding and subsequently its inactivity in the constitution of social sense.<sup>6</sup> Of course, I should not neglect the positive potential of enlightenment, which could be epitomized in the postulation that on the rational basis of free choice (Pučnik summarized this in the concept of “argumentative rationality”) the human subject releases himself “from his self-incurred tutelage” (Immanuel Kant), which is of key importance not only for the formation of political parties’ worldviews, but also for the views and horizons of civil society, to which Pučnik ascribed an immense political and cultural relevance.

All of these aspects fundamentally contribute to the circumstance that, in the process of democratization and attainment of Slovenia’s independence in the 1980s, Pučnik was able to establish himself as a leading political figure, but not also as a leader. In addition to the actual political conflicts often resembling politically driven agitation, and in addition to the incitement to culture war, which was flaring up during the entire 1990s, one must also consider the blockage of Slovenian political and cultural space, not only in an ideological sense after the Second World War, but also the centuries-old absence of a Slovenian state, wherein culture served as its replacement. After 1945 the question of freedom of political activity could find its place only in the circles of intellectual and cultural opposition; the leading positions and

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<sup>6</sup> Thus in one of the earliest (if not the earliest) of his writings, entitled “Moralne korenine kulta osebnosti” (The Moral Roots of the Cult of Personality, 1957), Pučnik mentions the problem of political activity: “A typical example of such an anachronism in state life is the cult of personality. The immorality of the relationships within a cult lies in their unreality, in the deceptiveness and the violence against real social goals, against everyone in society that is active and moral. The cult of personality is the fetishism of modern man; it is the worship of deceptive authorities, the embodied symbols of an abstract right. Liberation from this fetishism is a transition from inactivity to social activity; it is the way from the passive indignation of a self-indulgent slave towards a free man’s active part within real social life” (cf. Pučnik 1986: 14).

the functions of leadership were re-arranged, ordained, and ordered in advance. In Pučnik this triggered an existential and intellectual resistance that grew in the circumstances of the Yugoslav and broader Eastern European crisis into a straining stance of taking over the leadership of the Slovenian democratization process and attainment of independence. After 1990, also by assuming political functions, Pučnik remained active within the cultural circle of the periodical *Nova revija*, although a number of his contemporaries demanded separation between cultural creativity and political engagement (e.g., the polemic between Rudi Šeligo and Dimitrij Rupel in *Nova revija* in 1990). The consequences of such a “separation of spirits” are visible—or, properly speaking, are yet to become visible—namely, in the form of different political and cultural “specters.” Accordingly, there are too many that boastingly impose their own personalities onto others, and very few of those that would accept their own exposure.

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## JOŽE PUČNIK: OSEBNA SVOBODA, KULTURA IN POLITIKA

Prispevek se že v izhodišču sooča s paradoksnou okoliščino, da slovenskega politika Jožeta Pučnika ne moremo obravnavati znotraj utečenih koncepcij in recepcij političnih osebnosti. Pučnik sam je bil slej ko zadržan do podeljevanja in nadevanja tovrstnih reprezentativnih vlog, kolikor sledijo zgolj iz uvrščanja v tako ali drugačno politično igro, večinoma le igrico. Verjetno

je eden ključnih razlogov za tako zadržano politično držo bila njegova večletna izkušnja političnega zapornika. Poleg tega ga slovenska javnost, neredko tudi ob nič kaj dobronamernem zasipanju z očitki ravno glede te disidentske preteklosti, ki je bilo še posebej izrazito med predvolilno predsedniško kampanjo leta 1990, le z rezervo in tudi nejevoljno postavlja med najpomembnejše politične osebnosti 20. stoletja.

Seveda pa je že samo po sebi problematično, da merila za izbiranje »političnih osebnosti« določajo javnomnenjski polit-barometri, še zlasti, če so že vnaprej uglašeni na brezosebno opravljanje političnih funkcij. Slednje za Pučnika nikoli ne more obveljati kot kriterij političnega delovanja in odločanja, marveč kvečjemu kot njegova diskriminacija. Da ga je ravno to intelektualno in politično prepričanje spravilo na »kriva pota« je seveda družbena krivica, ki pa sama od sebe kliče po pravici ter poziva k družbenemu delovanju, ki bistveno vključuje tudi osebno dejanje ter z njim speto osebno izpostavljenost brez slehernega postavljaštva. Prav zavoljo tega je Pučnik med kritičnim kulturništvom že pred prestajanjem zaporne kazni v šestdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja, veljal kot vzor dejavne eksistence, ki ga je Dominik Smole uprizoril v drami *Antigona*, Primož Kozak pa v drami *Afera*. Pučnik sam ni hotel izstopati kot tak vzor, kar je nemara tudi porokovalo njegovo prostovoljno izgnanstvo v Nemčijo po izpustitvi iz zapore leta 1966.

Pučnik je že v enem svojih prvih zapisov s konca petdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja kritično obravnaval socialistični kult osebnosti (Članki in spomini 1957–1985. Maribor: Obzorja), v svojih zadnjih obširnejših analizah stanja duha na Slovenskem pa se obregnil ob produkcijo političnih medijskih osebnosti postsocialističnega obdobja (Kulturna prenova Slovenije. V: Grafenauer, Niko (ur.) *Sproščena Slovenija. Nova revija* 18 [206], posebna številka, 26–49). Tarča njegove kritike je bila predvsem brezosebnost političnega nastopanja in nastopaštva, najrazličnejše interesne manipulacije, kot je bila npr. tista z »nacionalnim interesom« v gospodarstvu, ter po drugi plati nezainteresiranost za ustvarjanje skupnih dobrin in za dobro posameznika.

Tako lahko ugotovimo, da je Jože Pučnik ob zavračanju kulta in kultivatorjev osebnosti poudarjeno odobral »kulturo osebnosti«, kar v največji meri izpričuje njegov osrednji socialno-filozofski razmislek v delu *Kultura, družba, tehnologija* iz leta 1988, ki je določilno pospremil procesa demokratizacije in osamosvojitve Slovenije.

Zastopanje »svobodne osebnosti« je položeno v samo osnovo Pučnikovega političnega delovanja, ob čemer se jasno načrtujejo navezave na razsvetljsko misel, seveda predvsem na Kantovo filozofijo. Pučnik v okviru tistega, kar naj tvori smoter človeške dejavnosti in kar lahko zaobsežemo s pojmom »kulture«, pokaže meje razsvetljskega pojmovanja družbenosti človeka, s tem da ohrani relevantnost evropskega razumevanja človeka kot »bitja dejavne svobode«.

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