The Only Place to Hide? The Art and Politics of Sleep in Cognitive Capitalism[1]

Alexei Penzin in conversation with
Maria Chekhonadsikh

Maria Chekhonadsikh: It seems that the state of sleep was always a peripheral topic in theory, one that was never part of the larger philosophical and political issues. As I understood from you, at the beginning of your research, which started in the first half of the 2000s, there were only a few references to sleep as a self-sufficient subject of study in the humanities.

Alexei Penzin: My project on sleep belongs to the field of what, according to the German tradition, could be called philosophical anthropology—but re-evaluated from the point of view of contemporary critical thought. An example where we can see a move of this kind is in the recent work of the Italian philosopher Paolo Virno. Presently, following the poststructuralist and Marxist critique of many of the conservative moments and essentialisms that are embedded in this kind of thinking, this rather serves as an analysis of the concepts, discourses and potentialities which surround and compose—or decompose—the figure of the human being. But I also draw on many sources and materials that have emerged from more empirical disciplines: history, sociology, cultural studies, etc.

[1] A different version of this text was published as "Can Philosophy Sleep with Art?" in CAC interview, issue 20-21, Vilnius, March 2013.

Indeed, when I started this research, very little work had been done in this field, a few more or less theoretical and eclectic attempts existed in sociology, empirical anthropology and history: like the pioneering work by the sociologist Murray Melbin *Night as Frontier: Colonizing the World After Dark*, which, published in 1987, was devoted to the 'colonization of night-time.' Other books which historically look at the subject are A. Roger Ekirch's *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past* (2005) and also the anthropological work by Brigitte Steger and Lodewijk Brunt *Night-time and Sleep in Asia and the West: Exploring the Dark Side of Lif*e (2003). As regards to philosophy, there was the book by the Austrian thinker Walter Seitter titled *Geschichte der Nacht* [History of the Night, 1999]. I read it only later, after I had already started to elaborate a theoretical framework for my studies, and was surprised by some shared intuitions and references that really inspired me in my enterprise, which at that time was sometimes perceived as unusual and exotic by a selection of my colleagues. Seitter's book, however, was quite removed in terms of my political concerns and the general Marxist framework of what I was conceiving. Then in 2007 the outstanding French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy published a small book entitled *Tomber de sommeil* [The Fall of Sleep]. I both admired this book and was puzzled by it, partly because it stood in the way of the more political understanding of the problematics I was pursuing, instead encapsulating them inside a poetical and rather apolitical—though very insightful—reading.

Also, I rather early on discovered the beautiful book by Emmanuel Lévinas' *Existence and Existents*, published straight after World War II, and contains several parts on sleep, insomnia and subjectivity, which were very important for my work. But, from the very beginning my methodological ground was the chapter from Karl Marx's *Capital* called "The Working-Day" in which Marx writes about sleep and the wakefulness of the worker.

At that time the average working day could last between 16 and18 hours and these problems were easily visible. Marx uses the metaphor of a vampire to describe capital; a vampire that attacks at night and sucks "the living blood of labor." In my view, an important implicit metaphor here is also that the worker is asleep politically, and that he needs to recognize his position in this system in order to wake up politically and begin his struggle. Of course, years later, and especially in the 20th century, the working class became tremendously awakened. Now, however, we live in a period of uncertainty, and we do not know whether the worker—in his contemporary extended definition, not just a classical industrial worker, but a cognitive worker too—is asleep again or only awake in the passive mode of a consumer or a precarious insomniac.

And last but not least, I am indebted to my teacher, the seminal post-Soviet thinker Valery Podoroga, who among many other subjects, elaborated a theory of dreams, resisting its psychoanalytical capture within the notion of symptom, and stressing the autonomy of a dream world that is not to be instrumentalized in the form of narration or interpretation. This became one more starting point for my consideration of the world of sleep that is today captured in the scientific, medical and neurobiological discourse, and my task was to disclose its anthropological and political meanings. Probably, today we need, once and for all, to free our dreams from the burden of interpretation and produce something like, *The Interpretation of Sleep(s).* This interpretation would be not a libidinal one but a political, or, better to say, though the term is over-used now, a biopolitical one.

And just recently I was glad to learn that a brilliantly written new book was published. I mean Jonathan Crary's *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (2013), which is very similar to my approach. It is an important research that stresses how late capitalism now attempts to capture our attention, gaze,

motility, the entire wakeful brain functioning and analyses new social media and mobile technologies as means of this colonization of everyday life. Sleep, in Crary's view, is the only "natural barrier" for this 24/7 mode of production and control. But in this perspective I miss a discussion of inner, productive, constitutive forces of sleep. Otherwise sleep may look as a theological concept, as a sort of *katechon*, which impedes a final triumph (or, actually, an apocalypse) of the 24/7 regime. That is why in my research I explore a function of sleep beyond its natural qualities, as not just a negative break in this 24/7 oppressive continuity or just as a part of means of reproduction of labor force, but as something, which is related to the intimate core of our subjectivity, as a condition for its constitution. But I will discuss this further later.

MC: Indeed, over the last few years researchers began discussing sleep in various contexts, ranging from the analysis of the modern 24-hour society to the representations and practices of sleep that is customary to various cultures. These approaches stress the late capitalist, or neoliberal, ideology of the permanent mobilization of individuals for labor or consumption. In fact, problematization of this kind is quite far removed from the fundamental rethinking of sleep as an ontological or anthropological problem. What do you think about this new stream in theory and research?

AP: To outline problems that are specific to my research we should start from zero. We can ask a simple question: What is a sleeping human being (a sort of '*homo dormiens*,' to put it in an ironic Latinized way)? The answer is not obvious. Of course, animals sleep too, but in the case of humans, the elementary biological fact of sleeping is transfigured; it acquires new cultural and social dimensions, even political ones in my view. Or, to put it better, my project is about human *problematization*, to use Michel Foucault's term, of such a biological process as sleep.

We can take as an example the practice of vigilance, which entails a conscious deprivation of sleep. And it is not only about such human practices, but also about thinking about sleep and imagining it. The general idea is that this human problematization of sleep is not just another particular problem. It can shed some light on other issues that are present in politics, society or aesthetics. It returns to the field of thinking that which has been excluded from it, and this inclusion could change the whole field.

Actually, I suggest a coming out of the 'wake-up-ism' that is embedded in philosophy and theology, as well as in politics and in economic infrastructures. Classical and modern philosophy, as we know it, is based on the paradigm of a wakeful, non-sleeping subject. Moreover, in its public practice philosophy aims at waking people up since its origins, Socrates referred to himself as a gadfly that bites people in order to awaken them. We could trace this waking-up function of philosophical initiation up to 20th century radical thought. For example, the contemporary philosopher Alain Badiou reiterates these metaphors of hidden 'wake-up-ism,' for example, by writing in one of his recent essays that the philosopher is a 'guardian of truth' who keeps vigilance even during the night: "Because we have to protect the fragile new idea of what is a truth. To protect the new truth itself. So, when the night falls, we do not sleep. Because, once more, "we must endure our thoughts all night." The philosopher is nothing else than, in the intellectual field, a poor night watch-man (Badiou 2006).

This is a critical part of my research, which opens a new space for investigation. In the constitutive part of my research, I am interested in sleep as a crucial experience of passivity, isolation, non-communication and non-productivity. And indeed, the inclusion of the experience of sleep might be a crossing point for many contemporary discourses, which would enable their re-articulation. How? I will briefly outline several points.

Firstly, sleep is a natural obstacle for the pragmatic values that have been established in modern capitalist societies over the course of several centuries. These are the principles of productivity, efficiency and rationality. In the light of these principles, the only alibi, or excuse for sleep, is that it provides recreation, relaxation and recuperation for the labor force. If it were possible to speed up time or reduce the need for recreation, I believe, modern people would prefer not to sleep at all. After the retreat of religion, modern people no longer believe in the infinity of their existence, they are obsessed with the effective use of the finite time that is allotted to them.

In contemporary culture you can find many examples of such an attitude to sleep. There are many techniques and means, including pharmacological, which enable us to control the duration of sleep. In Japan, where there is an extremely dominant business culture, certain types of self-help books are very popular. These manuals offer effective techniques for how to shorten and manage sleep. For example, following one such techniques you can break sleep into several parts, i.e. you can sleep, say, 4 hours, at night, which would be supplemented by several shorter naps during the daytime.

In connection with the appearance of these trends, some anthropologists have stated that we can distinguish three historical modes of sleep: pre-modern, modern, and sort of "postmodern" or, better to say, contemporary. In pre-modern societies, in the Middle Ages, there was no standard duration of sleep. According to a hypothesis by the historian A. Roger Ekirch, medieval people knew two sleeps: a sleep from the evening until midnight, which was followed by a brief period of waking, and then a 'second sleep' (Ekirch 2005, 300-324). With the development of industrial capitalism, and a system of electric illumination and security, providing a space for night activities and work as well, human life became increasingly rationalized, and thus, certain disciplinary standards were introduced and reinforced

by the authority of medicine, or, on the other hand, by moral requirements and religious ascetics, for example the ascetic ethos of Protestantism. It was at this time that the eight-hour sleep standard emerged. Later, in the "postmodern" or contemporary period, sleep became more personalized; it could become fragmented and managed according to specific techniques as in the aforementioned Japanese managers' example. This stage produces a "synthesis" of the previous two, the loose regulation prevalent in the first one, and discipline and managerial approach of the second, transferred from collective bodies to individuals. Actually, the contemporary "deregulation" of sleep somehow reflects neoliberal deregulation of economy but in my view, the connections of contemporary social-political forms and sleep structures and its rhythms are subtler, which I will attempt to address a little later.

Secondly, it is very important to understand how the phenomenon of sleep was viewed throughout the history of philosophical and political thought. One could trace several models of thinking about sleep. Some are extremely negative, as in Plato's project of an Ideal State. The order of this State eliminates sleep in general because, as Plato argues in his final work, "Laws" [Nomoi], when the citizens of this State are asleep they lose connection both with logos, rationality, and with the political body of society. When asleep, men and women are useless, uncontrollable, and unreasonable. In fact, Plato said that a sleeper is no better than a dead man (Plato 1926, 69)! Later, from this perspective, the figure of a 'non-sleeping king', Rex Exsomnis, appears in medieval theological thought (Kantorowicz 1997, 131). Generally, in many cultures, not just in European, the rituals of power are closely linked to the practice of vigilance. For instance, the code of the ancient Chinese noble rulers depicts the model ruler as someone who is permanently awake at night, as it is assumed that he spends his nights in meditation on the welfare of his subjects and the improvement of his governance…

The sovereign can appoint delegates to spend the night awake on behalf of him. And modern power, as it was famously described by Foucault and later Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze 1995, 177-182), is closely related to a multitude of monitoring, controlling and tracking devices, which never cease to function, as a result they "do not sleep." This uninterrupted functioning, or vigilance of power covers the entire body of the society.

Finally, a positive model for understanding sleep can be found in Aristotle's writings—in the treatise *On Sleep and Wakefulness* and in his *Metaphysics*. Here sleep is not connected to *logos*, reason, but rather it is seen as part of the process of life, in which it plays a crucial role by preventing the immediate waste of vital energy. Sleep suspends human faculties and charges them with potential. We later discover elements of these models in modern philosophy, for example, in Kant and Hegel. As you can ascertain if you read page 398 of *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* which was very inspiring for me, the Hegelian sleep is ambivalent: on one hand, it is a dropping out from universal rationality, *Geist*, etc.; and on the other, it is the highest form of subjectivity, i.e. it is complete interiority, an 'absolute potency' of residing in itself. In 20th century philosophy, or more precisely, in those infrequent statements on the topic of sleep that are relevant to the context of my research, we can find an even more positive understanding of sleep. For example, Lévinas thinks of sleep as a subject formation "support," comparing a sleeping human being to a refuge from the pressures and brutalities of the wakeful daily world that is characterized by anonymous and alienated rationality (Levinas 1978, 69). Lévinas coins a beautiful and very contemporary metaphor that relates sleep to our subjective being; that our being is like the luggage that we drop each day as we fall asleep. In sleep, we are as if absolute 'subjects without being' but we still exist, in a potential form, which is the safe, mute and secret ground of our existence.

So there are many intriguing dialogues and crossroads between ancient, modern and contemporary philosophical discourses concerning sleep.

To connect all the points, I think, generally, even at a deeper ontological level, capitalism is the first social-economic and power formation, which "reveals" a *vigilance of being* itself, this ontological "vigilance" or "insomnia" of being itself which never leaves us; it never let us go "alone" from being. And the contemporary power and capital, which tend to be absolutely continuous, are two mirrors of this absolute continuity/unity of being itself (even a void *continues to be*). As Marx once said, only the late, ripe and developed social forms fully discover their origins in "primitive" forms (Marx 1993, 105).[2] Why not relate this to pre-human origins as well? And maybe this "revelation" of contemporary power/capital is actually a symptom of this "pre-human" being itself. Maybe, being is an archeo-power, a "primordial" *dispositif* of this forced continuity. Probably, it is a super, mighty stubborn force, which makes us, and everything, be, or to choose extermination as the only "alternative," and the third is not given; we can't stop being and then "return to being." This is a sort of ontological "double bind." And as any double bind, this one, the most important, ontologically speaking, dements philosophy for many centuries, beginning from "Parmenides."

[2] Here is this famous quote from Introduction to *Grundrisse*: "Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby also allows insights into the structure and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up, whose partly still unconquered remnants are carried along within it, whose mere nuances have developed explicit significance within it, etc. Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape."

You cannot play with being, entering and exiting it repeatedly, like virtual characters in computer games do. At the subjective level, an "alternative" or "interruption" in this great and monstrous continuum of being is death. But as known from classics, where death is, there can be no subject in place. Many thinkers, except Lévinas and the few others, have forgotten about another interruption: sleep. And sleep is "compatible" with the subject, and maybe even more fundamental for understanding it than finitude. It gives us a model for rethinking and exiting from this finitude paradigm. Thus, according to this hypothesis, which is of course quite risky, disputable and speculative, humans, paradoxically, are in fundamental state of antagonism with being itself. They do not accept this forced continuity. They don't want to execute this ontological imperative: "Be or disappear!" which was famously inverted in the notorious question asked by Hamlet "To be or not to be?" Maybe, in the most profound sense, what we try to think and anticipate as communism is a name for this ontological revolt.

MC: This hypothesis is really impressive, but let's returns to more concrete realities of the contemporary moment. The Fordist society constricted and disciplined the rhythms of the body–a kind of machine, which has to work, eat and sleep. Symbolically, this system embodied itself in the vast project of sleeping suburbs (or sleeping blocks in Russian) —urban areas designed for living machines, which, after the working day is done, have to 'switch off' in their apartments. In contrast, Post-Fordism plays with the plastic and flexible nature of the human being, testing its limits in various forms of precariousness: fragmented working days which stretch into the next morning, unstable economic situations, housing issues and increased mobility. This had probably already been anticipated in 18th century in Denis Diderot's novel *Rameau's Nephew.*

There is a small fragment in this novel where the main character, a bohemian and poor musician, explains why he believes that a happy person sleeps in a special way: '[…] when I go back to my garret in the evening and tuck myself in on my pallet, I'm shrivelled up under my coverlet – my chest is tight and my breathing short, like a weak moan that's hardly audible; whereas, a financier makes his apartment reverberate and amazes his entire street (Diderot 1976, 33-148).' Would you agree that these new forms of precarious life also modify sleep?

AP: This is a crucial question today, and the reference made to Diderot's quote is very appropriate and thought provoking. The general premise of my research is that the capitalist order, far more strongly than any social order before it, privileges wakeful and active time over passivity and non-productivity and reasserts old metaphysical ideas, which shared the same preferences. The merging of the borders between work and life in "cognitive capitalism," a phenomenon which has been lively discussed in contemporary critical theory and social sciences, is evidence of the fact that the general colonization of society by capital and its axioms (not only concerning wakefulness and sleep) has been completed. Marx called this state of things the "real subsumption" of society under the rule of capital.

At the same time, in cognitive capitalism the question of sleep sheds some light on the overall logic of the system of incessant, uninterrupted, sleepless production, communication and monitoring. I am not saying how it is going to help us. I am just arguing that in this new zone of indifference between work and life, sleep has a special position: as *the only non-working time*. This makes it ambivalent; from the point of view of capital, it is negative, from the contemporary 'creative' and precarious worker's (whose entire life is work) perspective, it is rather positive.

If for Fordism the key sleep disorder was insomnia, based on a disruption of disciplinary temporality of industrial capitalism, for post-Fordism, or cognitive capitalism, it is probably so-called sleep apnea, which is associated with involuntary interruptions of breathing during sleep. It is a secret illness, as those who 'promote' this disorder in the market of new medical services argue. It has no visible symptoms; it can be diagnosed only after a long (and expensive) laboratory study. If insomnia is visible, agonizing many modernist writers and artists with its hysterical staging of the 'wake-up-ist' imperative of capitalism, apnea is concerned with dangerousness and ambivalence of sleep itself. It is very interesting that the Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus, who thought very profoundly about sleep, once said that in the state of sleep our only connection to the world (and Logos) is our breathing (Kirk 1971, 207).[3] In this contemporary projection, sleep apnea is maybe a symptom of this fear of loosing any ties with the continuity of current incessant forms of life, which are imposed by the latest stage of 24/7 functioning of society.

Hence, this new interest in sleep has began to surface in the media and the public sphere, as well as a desire to use sleep as a kind of natural biological 'capital,' a resource which can be individually managed and calculated. The proliferation today of institutions which study sleep, as well as popular self-help books on "how to sleep better" are also results of this conjuncture—as are nightclubs, Internet, 24/7 services, etc. Take, for example, the famous

[3] This fragment is DK 22a16 (Diels-Kranz numbering) and reads as the following: "According to Heraclitus, we become intelligent by drawing in this Logos through breathing, and forgetful when asleep. But we regain our senses when we wake up again. For in sleep, when the channels of perception are shut, our mind is sundered from its kinship with the surroundings, and breathing is the only point of attachment to be preserved, like a kind of root."

and already old movie "The Matrix" (1999)*:* in the film sleeping bodies are used as living batteries, power sources for machines, which have seized control over humans. This is probably the most secret desire of contemporary capitalism—to put everything to work, to make profit even from sleep. But the sleepers resist its grasp [laughs].

MC: We have already addressed sleep in contexts, which are very close to the contemporary art system—discussing new forms of labor and the conditions of cognitive capitalism. I suppose art has strongly inspired your investigation. Could you explain how you connect art and sleep in your research and why it is an important part of your project?

AP: If we had to systemise it sleep has been presented in many works of art from antiquity to the present day. You could compose a whole collection of paintings, from classical (Brueghel, Rubens, de la Tour amongst others) to modern art which depict sleeping people and their bodies —serenely open, in all possible poses and situations, in private or public spaces. They express a variety of states; helplessness, vulnerability, or the quiet enjoyment of peace and rest. Actually, similar thematic collections have already been put together and commented upon, for example, the beautiful book *The Art of Sleep* by Sophie de Sivry (1997).

But it is more interesting to consider the way in which the conditions of the artwork could be compared to those of sleep. There is an interesting book *Sublime Poussin* (1999) by Louis Marin, an important French thinker and art historian of the 20th century. One of the chapters of this book is devoted to the remarkable multitude of sleeping bodies in Poussin's paintings. In passim, Marin discusses the possibilities of letting these 'powerless' bodies express themselves, allowing them to open themselves up in front of our eyes (Marin 1999, 153).

He notes that language, in its broader sense, is not merely composed of spoken or written words, but also symbols, bodily gestures, visual representations; it is the force of a somewhat aggressive and wakeful mobilization of things and bodies in the world. But in itself, as an immense treasury of words and phrases that are never fully actualized, it is a sleep-like potentiality, a 'sleeping body' too. Following Marin, I would say that Poussin's obsession with the scenes of sleep in his work is perhaps a reference to the initial state, the zero degree of any expression and artistic representation. 'The painted picture is a sleeping body: a mute poem,' as Marin says (Marin 1999, 160).

To put it rather loosely and generally, an artwork is the isolation of a phenomenon (or an event, an object, an assemblage of things); it is an exclusion from the pragmatic contexts of everyday life. This isolation translates it into the aesthetic dimension that opens it up to our eyes not as an instrument or a reference to something else, but as a phenomenon in its own league. Actually, the Kantian understanding of art as an object of "disinterested" [uninteressiert] contemplation could be mentioned here as it is roughly equivalent (Kant 2007, 37). Likewise, sleeping human bodies are not instrumental; they are disconnected from work, activity, production, interests and affects. Sleep is this loss of interest in the world. For instance, Henri Bergson described the state of sleep as one of disinterestedness (Bergson 1959, 892); Sigmund Freud defined sleep as "suspense of interest in the world" (Freud 1999, 3190). From this essential link between artwork, disinterestedness and sleep, it could be concluded that when we sleep, we become artworks of ourselves.

On the other hand, in the arts there is also a tradition of stressing awakening, mobilization, activity, in short, the ability to influence the spectators, to change their vision of the world and even the world itself. This tradition manifested itself

especially strongly in many of the art avant-gardes of the 20th century which were truly "wake-up-ist." Sometimes this movement of an 'awakening through art' addresses sleep itself by trying to change its conditions. For example, in the USSR in the early 1920s, an all-encompassing project for the transformation of daily life was deployed, and avant-garde art played an active part in this. We might recall *Sonata of Sleep* (1929), a project by the famous architect Konstantin Melnikov, for example. Its idea was to create an ideal environment for workers to sleep in, i.e. a space for the recreation and reproduction of the labor force. Melnikov believed in the healing powers of deep sleep. To facilitate this sleep therapy, an absolutely fantastic building was suggested; a membrane composed of a circular arrangement of rooms for sleeping that was able to rock like a cradle, with special relaxing music, scents and even séances of massage! Unfortunately it remained only on paper.

I think that Andy Warhol made a major contribution to problematizing sleep in modern art. In his film "Sleep" (1963) he simply shot a 6-hour-sleeping person in real time. While for centuries art and philosophy had asked questions about dreams and their meaning, Warhol merely drew attention to sleep as such.

MC: The ideas of non-productivity, laziness and the independent artist's autonomy arose together with the very concept of modern art and have since been understood as a criticism of the relations and norms which prevail in society. This may account for why 19th century bohemia hailed idlers and loafers as the new aristocrats of the spirit. Arthur Rimbaud proclaimed his hatred of the "century of hands." (quoted in Saint-Amand, 2011, 79)For him, only idleness could open the way to freedom and creativity. To be modern, then, means to establish a form of life that is autonomous and

independent of power structures – in this sense, idleness is also a way to resist the established capitalist order. When Mladen Stilinović extols idleness and inactivity in his manifesto "In Praise of Laziness" (1993) he is writing about the right not to produce anything—a right he enjoyed under socialism that he was deprived of under capitalism. From the perspective of sleep, could these notions of laziness and idleness be understood as a model of resistance to this 'wake-up-ist' ideology you have described?

AP: It is problematic to relate sleep to laziness, as the latter is another story as far I am concerned. I am not sure whether my chosen problematization of sleep could be 'included' in the plane of laziness. For example, Paul Lafargue, Karl Marx's son-in-law, wrote an entire treaty on "the right to be lazy," (Lafargue 1883) but in his famous pamphlet he never paid special attention to sleep. It is true that laziness is a sort of unproductivity. If laziness is a conscious strategy, it could be seen as a form of resistance in a capitalist society that is obsessed by work, profit and success. But there is nothing in laziness that interests me as much as the sleeper's separation or non-communication, laziness, on the other hand, can be very chatty…

Charles Baudelaire, an emblematic figure of modern art, once said: "I fear sleep as one fears a deep hole, full of vague terror." (Quoted in Navarina, 2009) He had a very intricate approach to sleep; he was fascinated by the rather banal experience of it and exhausted by its monotonic regularity. Just before his attempted suicide in 1845, he wrote: 'I am killing myself because I can no more live, the fatigue of falling asleep and the fatigue of waking up are unbearable for me...' (Quoted in Navarina, 2009).[4]

[4] I owe this quote to my friend, the French artist Virgile Novarina, whose work I will also discuss a little later.

Baudelaire's refined and in some ways comic critique of sleep gives its meaning another twist. And perhaps it might be that the laziness and flaneurism that were characteristic of the modernist artists, who sought new and exciting impressions and innervations, were oppositions to the monotonic "large hole" of sleep, at least in the case of Baudelaire and many other poets and artists. Laziness can also be permanently wakeful and vigilant. Is it not just modern power and capital vigilance's double?

I think that the considerable number of artists trying to explore the themes of sleep, sleeping body, conditions of sleep, etc., signals a growing awareness of this remarkable symptom of the present moment. Actually, my first published text about the topic we are discussing was a short review of an exhibition called *Sleepers* by a graduate of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Moscow (Penzin 2001). And my research was, and is, not just a theoretical discourse, but a form of life as well – it has generated various encounters with outstanding people, thinkers, artists, etc.

I could mention a couple of stories. My friend from the group that I am also a part of, *Chto Delat? / What is to be done?*, the artist Nikolay Oleinikov produced a mural series in 2005-2011 called *Is the Worker Asleep?* Strangely enough we never discussed this work before it was completed, which was such a surprise for me! These huge acrylic murals were initially made for the exhibition that took place in the Sormovo neighbourhood of the city of Nizhny Novgorod. The historical and political background of this work was the first Russian revolution of 1905; its riots, barricades, and the incredible rise in self-organization of the working class in this particular area. Over the century we have seen Sormovo, a revolutionary district, become transformed into an area of sleep, of so-called sleeping blocks.

This is surprisingly linked to the part of my research on the political and biopolitical dimensions of the sleeping body in relation to Marx's theory as mentioned above.

Another amazing story is related to the French artist Virgile Novarina whom I met recently. We are true accomplices in this uneasy undertaking of the exploration of sleep. He told me that once, when he was young, he said, "I am 22 and I have spent almost 7 years in sleep. I know nothing about these 7 years of my life, that is, about myself!" For around 15 years now he has been developing a specific sleep-related art practice. Novarina memorizes and documents not dreams–although he started with that–but sleep, or to be more precise, the states between sleep and waking. When sleeping we experience 'micro-awakenings,' ten or more during the night, that we usually do not remember afterwards. Novarina has his notebook and pencil by his bed at night and tries to record the splashes of light, vision, the words or figures that appear during these awakenings. The artist has already produced a large series called *Ecrits et dessins de nuit (2003)* [Night's Writings and Drawings]. He also makes sleep performances in unusual public places, like a shop-window, an abandoned factory space or at the opening of his own exhibition. These things really inspire me; all the anthropological questions of my research are implied in his work.

Generally, I think that what Louis Marin, whom I quoted earlier, said about a painting as a sleeping body is also true for contemporary art, though in a modified sense—an artwork is a sleeping body. What is, for example, an anthropological model for any readymade exhibited in a white cube? For me, the sleeping body is such a model; a minimal experience of isolation, separation, potentialization. An untouchable sleeping body is a "minimal difference" (Deleuze 1986, 171), which at another level produces an artwork.

We should also make reference to the idea of sacralisation/profanation as developed in contemporary thought by Giorgio Agamben. His premise is that all sacralisation is rooted in the elementary structure of isolation of a body, image, object, and its withdrawal from human practice and use (Agamben 2007, 73-93). For example, you can find in many anthropological studies that in traditional communities a sleeping person was untouchable, to disturb him/her was a strict taboo. Contemporary artwork still retains a sacralisation/profanation dimension —the anthropological model of which is, in my view, the sleeper's separation from the world. In this way, perhaps, each sleeper is comparable with an art performer.

The point of articulation between sleep and resistance is, in my opinion, a quite ambivalent moment if it is taken seriously. My project is definitely not about resigning oneself from the world in which we live. Sleep as an act of non-communication and non-productivity is a powerful form of exodus from a society, which is based on communication and production. If all the people of a given society were asleep, that society would no longer exist. It would become a political mobilization, if every single person came to a demonstration, or to a sleep-in at a strike, the government would be toppled for sure. This is why I was excited to learn about the recent so-called 'sleepful protests' that were part of the Occupy Wall Street practices where the activists slept on the sidewalks near banks... However, I am not praising sleep as a strange new and actual form of resistance. I am attempting to understand the complex connections between capitalism, metaphysics, ontology, sleep, waking, and subjectivization.

Agamben, Giorgio, 2007. *Profanations.* New York: Zone Books.

Badiou, Alain, 2006. "Bodies, Languages, Truths," in *Lacan.com.* Available online: http://www.lacan.com/badbodies.htm [last accessed May 2014].

Bergson, Henri, 1959. *Oeuvres*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Deleuze, Gilles, 1995. "Postscript on control societies," in *Negotiations*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles, 1986. *Cinema I.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Diderot, Denis, 1976. "Rameau's Nephew," in trans. T. W. Tancock. *Rameau's Nephew and D'Alembert's Dream*. London: Penguin Classics.

Ekirch, Roger, 2005. *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Freud, Sigmund, 1999. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 15. London: Vintage Books.

Kant, Immanuel, 2007. Critique of Judgement. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kantorowicz, Ernst, 1997. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kirk, Geoffrey and Raven, John, 1971. *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lafargue, Paul. *The Right To Be Lazy*. Available online: http://www.marxists.org/ archive/lafargue/1883/lazy/index.htm [last accessed May 2014].

Levinas, Emmanuel, 1978. *Existence and Existents*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Marin, Louis, 1999. *Sublime Poussin*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Marx, Karl, 1993. *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin Books.

Novarina, Virgile, 2009. "Le sommeil est une seconde vie," in *Supérieur Inconnu,* Autumn 2009.

Penzin, Alexei, 2001. "Sleepers," in *Moscow Art Magazine*, 2001, № 32.

Plato, 1926. *Laws, vol. 2*. London: William Heinemann.

Saint-Amand, Pierre, 2011. *The Pursuit of Laziness: An Idle Interpretation of the Enlightenment*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.