

## EGOISM: THE CAPTIVITY TO THE ILLUSION OF A VICTORY

by Artemis Chrysostomidou

My talk tonight will align with the text-based series that I have developed for the project *On Egoism*, curated by Harm Lux. I chose the title *Egoism: The Captivity to the Illusion of a Victory*, exploring the confinement of meaning within subjectivity and the role of contemporary art in shaping the conflicting conditions of humanity.

My work aims to reconstruct the frame of reality, creating a context where shared reconceptualization leads to a meaningful narrative, with a keen investigation into the impact of art on the history of humanity. Alain Badiou asks, "What is our role? Which is our historical function?" As a society, we often neglect the protection of the vulnerable and the environment, prioritizing what caters to our narcissism. If knowledge and the arts don't contribute to fostering human unity and the perception of the world as a single entity/body, what value do they hold? How can we shift from seeing and presenting Creation in fragments? How is it possible not to struggle in our art, finding a way for our limited part to carry the whole, the complete? Egoism is an occurrence trapped in the monoplane that constitutes blindness.

Of course, egoism is necessary in our lives, that's why when we break up or miss our loved ones, we still manage to survive. Egoism helps us to endure when it's in a minimum amount, much like the dosage of a vaccine. We only need a trace of it; if there's more, it can be dangerous for the body. When our self-direction is excessive, we develop a completely misleading impression of who we are and what we do. So, when we refer to egoism, we are not discussing the instinct of survival but rather an exaggeration.

In a way, egoism has been allowed to emerge and cultivated through the indifference of contemporary artists to engage with viewers and redefine meanings. This indifference limits the role of art, contenting itself in a selfish self-expression by the artists, creating "Art for artists" and proclaiming "I don't care about your perceptions; I deserve your attention". We could further explore this theme by commenting on the failure of contemporary art to resist the surge of egoism, referencing the insightful work of Simone Weil, who asserts that while we are proud of modern culture, we cannot ignore that it is ailing; it is a patient.

Egoism is the captivity to the illusion of a victory. The true defeat in a battle lies in the false certainty of superiority over others. There is no winner in a fight. Complete humility is the only path to end a war. This theme reverberates throughout my work. To what extent can we break free from illusions in order to embrace a renewed reality of togetherness? On the boat of existence, if one, even one, begins to move recklessly, tipping towards the water, the entire boat is in danger of capsizing and we all risk falling into the sea. This implies that, in a way, we all bear responsibility for each other.

Another axis of my work, contemplates contemporary cultural issues, exploring visualization, myth, deconstruction, imagination, references and content. In this exploration, I seek to infuse a poetic

and sarcastic gaze into my texts, utilizing visual-linguistic material. Humor is merged with an exploration into the meaning of aesthetics and language; even through traces of signs, street names, labels and captions. Language, as a vibrant material, becomes a focal point, probing the nuanced ways in which it translates into and inhabits the image. The aim is to organically bring forth a conversation between image and language, avoiding overly rationalized explanations. At this point, we will spend a significant amount of time in museums, exhibitions and theaters, looking for art works that reconstruct gaze, thought and reality, acting as examples of courage, giving the strength to defend our individuality and freedom while being into the present world. So, what do we find?

We explore concepts such as love and solidarity in art, but without concern for the notion of sacrifice. Modern society proclaims our right to desire everything without limitations and regards. This problematic understatement of our presence has led us to an impasse of wars, extreme economic inequalities, an unprecedented environmental disaster and relationships amid ruins where one attempts to dominate the other until dissolution. In the end, we are wanderers. Can art transform the tragedy of egoistic, toddler selves into responsible adults who understand that love entails the sacrifice of rights, justice and egoism for those we love? Does the art stock exchange leave room for a relationship with the spectator? No work of art can be perceived without good faith. While we seek the faith of the audience, do we reciprocate it by imparting cryptic but generous gazes, aflame onto the world? After all, we are wondering if utilitarianism is what ultimately dominated art, disorienting artists and throwing humanity into the chaos of instrumentalization.

The contemporary French philosopher Jacques Rancière states, "There is no art without a gaze to see it as art." Observation, a pivotal element, allows the discovery of poetry in daily life, contradictions and paradoxes, and dialogue with them. An object, automatically becomes a spectacle, proclaiming, "I deserve your attention". But does it truly merit it? If we embrace the formulation of the Greek contemporary philosopher Nikolaos Loudovikos, that "A gaze is an act of mercy", then spectators have a tendency to kindness towards the artists. Yet, on the other side, we are struck by praise and defeated by chatter.

This exhibition, distanced from the commodification of art, serves as a self-reflective and self-critical stance for me, a moment of stasis in the field of art. Or, I dare to say, even as an awakening. As an artist I come here to confess that I am to blame! We make noise without being ready to sacrifice our very serious ego, flooded with opinions. This talk serves as nothing more than a brief, almost prefatory discussion on the theme of egoism in contemporary art. On the stock exchange of the arts, artists content themselves with expressing, without concern about whether they become in any way understandable, depriving the viewer of the common ground of secret contact with them, making, after all, the subject of egoism seem self-referential. However, we can't confine meaning to subjectivity!

It would be beneficial if we were inclined to engage in dialogue with the world, rather than distancing ourselves by expressing abstract thoughts that make it difficult for others to relate to

what we say. This attempts to capture the fact that meaningful engagement with the world involves communication that is accessible and relatable, as opposed to being overly abstract and detached. In the field of art, our work should not be confined to expressing ourselves or to the subjective articulation of ideas. It must go beyond, exploring and providing a broader framework that contributes to dialogue and interaction with the world, aiming for revelation through each artwork.

We can't constantly engage with and prioritize how we express ourselves; we have nothing to express. Existence is ineffable; life is incomprehensible. Our time is difficult, but if it's darkness, then what does our thinking illuminate? If art aims to be philanthropic, it must show how to be courageous in the journey of human experience. How to be wounded and how to provoke thirst. It must say to the spectators, *I am here so that my gaze may catch fire with yours!* Thank you. Courage! MUT!

\* Subjectivity: Opinions and the way we evaluate an art piece without criteria. If we don't accept that there are objective criteria to evaluate art, we confine the meaning to the chaos of subjectivity.

\*\* Humility: To be aware of who we are, our capabilities and magnitude.