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*The End of Nature: Between Disenchantment of the World
and New Mythologies*¹

ABSTRACT: *In this article, the situation of the end of nature is discussed in the terms of the Weberian metaphor 'the disenchantment of the world' and its variations. The nostalgic effort to return to nature is explained referring to the Romantic notion of nature and the peculiar reiteration of nostalgic utopia in our times (see the example of ancient Lithuanian feasts). In addition to that, the article analyses the contrasting approach which is also characterized by the negative valuation of exploitive relation towards nature. However, in this second case, the reaction to the situation of the end of nature is based on a radical reformulation of the concept of human. According to this model, the relationship with nature should refuse the anthropocentric perspective. In this article, this position is described as a disenchantment of human and is illustrated by artistic performance, which aims to demonstrate the commensurability of human and animal on the bodily level.*

KEYWORDS: *nature, exploitation, nostalgia, symmetry.*

British sociologist Anthony Giddens defines late Modernity as an apocalyptic reality where we face political, social, economic and other challenges we have never experienced before. One of the main ways constellating the new reality, as seen by him, is the situation of “the end of nature”². So, according to Giddens, it is precisely the factor of domination that, in his view, generates the process enabling the culturalization and colonisation of nature. It means that rather than postulating the thesis of the disappearance of the natural world as such, the definition of ‘the end of nature’ describes the type of relationship between human and living environment in general, stressing the relationship model based on the anthropocentric perspective, which had been formed in the epoch of Modernity. In premodern times, the world of culture was concentrated in a relatively small territory surrounded by wild nature, whereas nowadays the *ratio* between populated territories and natural areas is proportionately opposite – in the world map urbanised spaces are expanding yearly at the expense of nature. Therefore, from

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² A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991, p. 4.

a sociological point of view, in late Modernity ‘the end of nature’ is manifested primarily as the structure and mechanism designed to control nature, with increasingly stricter separation between cultural and natural levels. And as stated by Mintautas Gutauskas: “the retreat, or rather the expulsion of nature into heterotopias is a form of *the end of nature*”³.

So, the end of nature, its domination and expulsion to heterotopias, as consolidation of the structural model of Modernity, correlates with transformations happening at the ontological level that damage the basis of reality of modern man, and this becomes evident through various efforts to bring back the very reality, acquiring the forms of return to nature or return of nature, dictated by the post-secular new mythologies. This paper aims to provide a closer look at several configurations of the relationship with nature, which are characteristic to the modern epoch, stating that they are formed as reactive models, questioning the very principle of domination that has led to the situation of the end of nature. In this respect the metaphor of the *disenchantment of the world*, popularised by Max Weber, comes in especially handy, allowing to diagnose the dynamics of the relationship to nature characteristic to the epoch of modernity – in this paper this metaphor and its variations ‘re-enchantment of the world’ and ‘self-disenchantment of human’ will be used as definitions capturing the transformation of the notion of nature.

1. Disenchantment of the World as Paradigm of Modernity

In 1917 at the lecture *Science as vocation*, read at the University of Munich, Max Weber defined modern reality as a time, when based on the principle of meticulous calculation, components contradicting pure rationality, which could be referred to as mystical or magical elements, were excluded from public sphere. Weber stated: “the fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualisation and above all by the ‘disenchantment of the world’”⁴. Despite the fact that an entire century had elapsed since the moment when these words were spoken, Weber’s diagnosis has not lost relevance. On the contrary, modernisation processes, influencing most areas of life, highlighted its accuracy all the more. According to Weber, the ‘disenchantment of the world’ should be understood as a re-organisation of reality according to the fundamental principles of Modernity that were formed under the influence of Enlightenment – demythologisation and rationalisation. In the meantime, from the point of view of Modernity, the magical animistic worldview, prevalent in the pre-cultural epoch and characterised by mythical vision of the

3 M. Gutauskas, *Heterotopija zoologijos sodas ir modernus žirafos skerdimas Nojaus arkoje*, in “Athena: filosofijos studijos”, 12 (2017), p. 161. In the article *Heterotopia of the Zoo and Modern Slaughter of a Giraffe in the Noah’s Ark*, Gutauskas adopts Michel Foucault’s notion of heterotopia to analyse the case of the zoo as a model of paradigm representing the relationship with nature typical to our times.

4 M. Weber, *Science as a Vocation* (1919), in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Engl. transl. and ed. by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, New York, Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 155.

world with its fundamental diversity that was manifested as interlayering of natural and cultural components, can be seen as a radical opposition to Modernity – as an elemental and heterogeneous reality, which had not yet reached the stage of the separation of things into different registers. In that respect, the metaphor of the disenchantment of the world also relates to inner transformations and contradictions of Modernity as a historical process: treating the process of disenchantment as rationalisation of reality we inevitably reach the ideological construct of the Enlightenment as a program of progress showing itself through Modernity, even though the very factor of disenchantment, as suggested by Weber's position, implies a strongly negative evaluation of the ongoing process.

Returning to the question of nature, the definition of the disenchantment of the world first of all points at an approach to nature typical to the discourse of Modernity, that was shaped under the perspective of pragmatically oriented exact sciences, aiming to turn nature and natural phenomena into an object of research, and later, into a factor of progress. The program of the disenchantment of the world has attained the results and consequences about which we hear more and more: information about plastic garbage islands in the oceans, melting glaciers, ozone holes and animal species at risk of extinction attacks us interspersed with the news of increasingly frequent hurricanes, torrential downpours and other unusual but threatening climatic phenomena. The indisputable protagonist of this unidirectional relationship towards nature is a human, projecting a maxim of progress that implies permanently postulated expansion of the limits of knowledge. Already Francis Bacon in his *New Organon* aimed to define a model of disenchantment of the natural world, according to which man – “Nature's agent and interpreter”⁵ – should finally become its sovereign. In this respect, the disenchantment of nature first of all means its subjugation to technologies. The influence of technologies is also highlighted by Giddens, who notes that the ‘beginning’ of the end of nature corresponds to a prominent leap of technological industry, and its beginning could be chronologically dated about year 1950⁶.

During a more or less similar time period the problem of the relationship between technology and nature came under Martin Heidegger's radar and was actualised in his text *The Question Concerning Technology*. For me here this text becomes important because of the two models of technological approach provided there by Heidegger. Each of these models offers different contextualisation of the landscape of the river Rhine – one can be recognised in Heidegger's description of an old wooden bridge between the banks of the river, and the other is the representation of the river Rhine harnessed to run an electric power plant. The first model can be described as based on the principle of compatibility because of the type of human activity, which is attentive to nature, and in the other case we see

5 F. Bacon, *The New Organon* (1620), New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 33.

6 “The end of nature is relatively recent. It has come about over something like the last forty or fifty years, largely as a result of the intensification of technological change noted earlier” (A. Giddens, A. Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens. Making Sense of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998, p. 207).

the model of exploitation of nature. However, it is important to note that the very attribution of these landscapes to different models of behaviour, implying a certain evaluation, would contradict the intention of Heidegger himself, because when he gives these, even though clearly inequivalent, examples that illustrate the power of modern technology, he does not rank them according to the levels of technology used or the extent of damage to nature, be it lesser or greater. By these examples Heidegger attempted to emphasise the irreversible transformations happening at the fundamental ontological level, that are presupposed by, in his words, the fatal nature of the essence of technology (*Ge-Stell*), and imply domination over nature and the matrix of its demystification as the only model of self-actualisation of being, possible nowadays.

In other words, according to Heidegger, the logic of the exploitation of nature, which implies the driving principle of the epoch of Enlightenment – the disenchantment of nature – and eventually the situation of the end of nature is inherent in the ontological structure of historicity. This premise can be interpreted as a warning that any efforts of returning to a more primeval relationship with nature by rejecting technologies should be understood as a utopia dictated by a nostalgic stance and contradicting the ontological principle of historicity. Moreover, Heidegger's position, according to which *Ge-Stell* represents not only a threat, but also “the possible arising of the saving power”⁷, allows to speak about the futuristic vision that is opposite to the nostalgic stance and implies a new, technology-based, model of the relationship between man and nature. I will discuss these two possibilities, using the example of a traditional celebration to explain the nostalgic utopia of the re-enchantment of nature, and a contemporary art project to illustrate a futuristic vision seeking to transform the notions of ‘nature’ and ‘human’.

2. The Return of Nature or the Re-Enchantment of the World

Weber formulated the metaphor of *the disenchantment of the world* inspired by the German poet Friedrich Schiller who in his 1788 poem *The Gods of Greece* nostalgically lamented the lost world – the dwelling of jovial gods in the sanctuary of radiant nature. In his poem Schiller contrasted the epoch of Antiquity with his own times, portrayed as a reality marked by loss and ruled not by the godly nature as in the old times, but by the laws of science⁸. As notices David Pugh, in the worldview represented in the poem *The Gods of Greece* we can quite easily recognise the myth of the Golden Age, that, in Pugh's opinion, Schiller had taken

7 M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology* (1954), in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Engl. transl. by V. Lowitt, New York, Garland Publishing, 1977, p. 32.

8 In Schiller's poem technological progress is seen in an unambiguously negative way: “Dull to the art that colors or creates, / Like the dead timepiece, godless nature creeps / Her plodding round, and, by the leaden weights, / The slavish motion keeps” (F. Schiller, *The Gods of Greece* (1788), in *The Poems of Schiller*, Eng. transl. by E. A. Bowring, Gloucester, Dodo Press, 2007, p. 108).

over from the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*⁹. Still it needs to be noted that the German society at the end of the 18th century, which was already prepared to embrace the emerging ideas of Romanticism, was not alien to Schiller's regret over the lost world of the past that thrived in the symbiosis between gods and nature, and – at the same time – to the contrast between this mythical worldview and the dullness of the modern times. During that period nature itself was treated quite controversially – on the one hand, the natural, just as the bodily was attributed to the sphere of the ephemeral, but nevertheless nature was considered to be the manifestation of the divine and seen as a teleological model in which every detail is serving a greater purpose. Thus, the ability to see and appreciate the beauty of nature had to play a particular role in the cultural education of the individual, and the symbolism of nature (as also noted by Immanuel Kant in his third *Critique*) became a compulsory element of the image of a genius touched by divine inspiration.

This explains a quite categorical verdict of the author of *the Gods of Greece* stating that a harmonious relationship with nature is a greater aspiration than the knowledge promised by science. In a certain sense this opposition between the worlds of nature and culture, described in Schiller's poem, represents the inner controversy of Modernity as a historical epoch, highlighted through the intersection of the principles of Enlightenment and Romanticism. Romanticist worldview, being suspicious towards science¹⁰, oriented to the past, and glorifying the unattainable, and therefore, in its own view, perfect model of reality, that can only be called a nostalgic utopia¹¹, represents a radical confrontation with the Enlightenment model of permanent modernisation, oriented to the future progress.

It is interesting that this nostalgic utopia, based on the version of nature before its disenchantment, as a foundation of a certain form of sacredness, is easily recognisable in the folkloric celebrations of today, that in most cases take place precisely to mark events of the natural cycle. Let's try to have a closer look at the relationship with nature as it is shaped in one of these celebrations, for instance, the celebration of St. John's Day, also known in Lithuania as *Rasos* ('feast of dew') celebration. For the context of the situation of the end of nature, the case of this feast comes in especially handy as an example of neo-Romantic effort to re-enchant the world, and thus as a representation of the approach contradicting the instrumental model.

The nowadays unusual role given to nature during the feast is already indicated by the very name of the event, as well as by the time when it takes place – the summer solstice, the shortest night of the year. Relying on the statement of Mintautas Gutauskas about the expulsion of nature to heterotopias, we can claim that the

9 D. Pugh, *Schiller and Classical Antiquity*, in *A Companion to the Works of Friedrich Schiller*, ed. by S. D. Martinson, New York, Camden House, 2005, p. 55.

10 However, it is important to note that doubts concerning the science in the Romantic epoch were basically related to the concept of modern science as it was understood in the paradigm of Enlightenment, not to science in general.

11 Nostalgic utopia here should be understood not as a nostalgia for the past, but rather as a nostalgia for the unattainable and impossible, so paradoxically nevertheless it has nostalgic shadow, but it is directed towards future, seeking for a new, alternative human model.

phenomenon of *Rasos* celebration can easily be seen as an effort to create a certain ephemeral, utopian and nostalgic heterotopia, in which the world would again return to the mythological time and nature would acquire miraculous powers¹². The structure of the celebration and the traditional rituals performed once again confirm a particular mythological dimension of heterotopia, implying a personalised relationship with nature. In this case, the very beginning of the event can be singled out as one of more important examples – it has to do with the choice of place and a certain consolidation of that place through the symbolism of the gate. According to the tradition, the gate into the place of celebration is constructed straight on an empty field, and that is precisely one of the most important moments, giving basis to the conceptual dimension of the celebration. Moreover, this very moment belongs to the level of performativity, which separates the sacral space from the profane reality. Here a remark from Giorgio Agamben's book *Profanations* is worth remembering: religion primarily relates to the separation of the spheres of the divine and the human, rather than to their connection¹³. Therefore, the gate built in the middle of a field during *Rasos* celebration, should be treated as a symbolic figure, representing the boundary which separates the dimensions of the everyday and the festive. The nature-related context of the event allows us to speak about different configurations of the relationship with nature, which mark this boundary. If on the level of daily life the relationship between nature and the individual who lives in the contemporary disenchanted world is usually quite fragmented, then the modern man participating in the celebration performs ritual actions, such as weaving flower wreaths, flowing wreaths in water, jumping over bonfires, searching for fern blossom or washing in the morning dew, that can easily be attributed to the level of the romanticised relationship with nature, also characteristic to the one described in Schiller's poem quoted before.

Yet, the unusual exceptionality of these performative practices in the context of the mundane allows to talk about an equally fragmented, though in the emotional sense a more intimate relationship of modern man towards nature. To a certain extent, during this celebration nature only performs a function of a nostalgically tinted background, giving sense to the core mission of bringing back the lost reality. In the contemporary global society marked by identity crisis, adherence to tradition alone supposes a certain stance of resistance, marked by a nostalgic aspiration to stop a sliding foundation of reality. As Giddens rightly notices in his explanation of the definition of 'risk society' given by the German sociologist Ulrich Beck, beside the above-mentioned element of the end of nature, the second transforma-

12 In his study *The Sacred and The Profane* (1959), Mircea Eliade discusses more than one example of periodical celebrations, in which ritual practices meant to re-create the structure of the primeval mythical time are performed (M. Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane* (1959), Engl. transl. by W. R. Trask, New York, A Harvest Book, 1959, pp. 68-99).

13 As Agamben states: "religion can be defined as that which removes things, places, animals, or people from common use and transfers them to a separate sphere. Not only is there no religion without separation, but every separation also contains or preserves within itself a genuinely religious core" (G. Agamben, *Profanations* (2005), Engl. transl. by J. Fort, New York, Zone Books, 2007, p. 74).

tion making a fatal influence on the contemporary reality is the end of traditions¹⁴. Here we can remember a whole array of other authors talking about the impossibility of a celebration during the epoch in which the flow of time has turned into a permanent festivity, which does not depend on natural cycles or culturally formed religious context, but rather acquires the structure of the background regime representing the logic of consumerism¹⁵. In the context of late modernity, which is defined by the situations of post-nature, post-tradition and post-celebration, the phenomenon of *Rasos* feast is linked to the nostalgic efforts of bringing the reality back to the state of 'pre-post-reality'. Whereas nature in this concept of 'slipping reality' (that is marked by a permanent motion of self-destruction) becomes, in the best case, part of a new mythological discourse¹⁶.

3. The Self-Disenchantment of Human

We have to acknowledge that at least in the public sphere the model of disenchantment of the world acquires more and more negative connotations, and therefore starts to be treated as retrograde and remaining in the paradigm, where nature could yet be associated with resources and diversity of species, in contrast with today, when it is first of all linked to the threats of ecological disasters. The metamorphosis of the notion of nature, implying a negative evaluation of modernisation itself, is pervading the whole context of the contemporary culture and makes a good proof for the statement about 'progress turning into regress' by the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* authors duo. Rationally based use of natural resources has reached the point of culmination, when it has to be acknowledged that the future of humanity depends on the ability to apply rationality not for increasing the spindle speed of the mechanism of exploitation, but for reversing this driving principle of Modernity – for stopping the apparatus that is rolling downhill at full speed. Recently in scientific, political and cultural contexts the use of the term 'Anthropocene' is becoming increasingly frequent, to denote the geological period we live in now, which is not shaped by natural elements, but by human activity. The concept of Anthropocene itself implies the shift of accents from natural influence to human influence and once again leads to the thesis of the end of nature – human activity becomes chaotic and unpredictable, and thus, not only dominant in respect of nature, but also adopting the principles of action that up to now were thought to be an exclusive prerogative of the natural world.

14 A. Giddens, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens*, cit., p. 207.

15 I will mention only some examples: Walter Benjamin *Capitalism as religion* (1985) [1921], Guy Debord *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Giorgio Agamben *Profanazioni* (2005).

16 Especially significant in this respect is the analysis of the myth of the Golden Age carried out by Raoul Girardet, which, showing how a radical separation of cultural and natural dimensions is formed, implies negative meanings in the first one and deems the second to be the lost reality and, simultaneously, the only possible reference point for the future (R. Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, pp. 131-188).

However, it seems that the end of nature as the consolidation of the structural domination over nature does not have anything in common with the power over nature – as announced by the mass media almost daily, the natural element becomes more and more difficult to predict. On the basis of the logic of Anthropocene, this element emerges not from the nature itself, but as a result of human activity, and nevertheless, the factor of natural element keeps functioning, like anxiety lingering on the sub-conscious level and bearing a destructive force that can be provoked by any seemingly rational action. The particularity of our times is that the raging natural elements not only mean the unpredictability of nature, but also point at the dialectics of control and application of the mechanism of Modernity, which is based on the principle of rationality.

In one of his last books, *Facing Gaia*, French philosopher and anthropologist Bruno Latour speaks about the emerging necessity of the Anthropocene epoch to recognise that we are now living the Apocalypse, which in his opinion manifests itself not just as all possible ends: the end of time, of nature, and first of all the end of epistemology functioning up to now, but also as a possibility allowing to open an access, where nature (world, earth or, in Latour's terms, Gaia) can finally be understood not as something external or even oppositional to the cultural dimension, but from a completely different angle. More precisely, in Latour's theory the new relationship between man and nature is signed by the requirement of transformation of both concepts – 'human' and 'nature'¹⁷. As stated by Latour: "Gaia is *an injunction to rematerialize our belonging to the world* [...]. Or, to put it still another way, Gaia is a *power of historicization*. Still more simply, as its name indicates, Gaia is the signal telling us to come back to Earth"¹⁸. The very intention of the author – calling by name¹⁹ the environment that surrounds us – allows to understand that Latour seeks an absolutely symmetrical relationship, undoubtedly implying the need to take *homo sapiens* off the pedestal on which he was put by Modernity. However, in this case we should understand symmetry differently than in the aforementioned example of *Rasos* celebration, where the nostalgic aspiration to re-enchant the world is configured as a still ongoing mourning over the disenchantment of the world that has occurred, focusing on the adoration of the state of loss itself. In Latour's case we see the ambition to achieve a qualitative transformation, that has to re-format the position of humans in the relation to all other species of life. Latour suggests to change the "Human" term with the "Earthbound", seeing these two concepts as indicating the different modes of

17 Yet in his book *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), Latour insisted on the refusal of the distinction between natural/cultural domains, which, according to him, makes a part of modern mythology: "the ozone hole is too social and too narrated to be truly natural" (B. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), Engl. transl. by Ch. Porter, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 6).

18 B. Latour, *Facing Gaia* (2015), Engl. transl. by Ch. Porter, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2017, p. 219.

19 Latour uses the 'Gaia' term in the sense proposed by British environmentalist James Lovelock around 1960s – as the definition of the self-regulating principle of the Earth (ivi, p. 2). So, Gaia in Latour's theory means not the personification of the planet, rather the *nomos* which should be understood as a network of actants, as he states in his Actor-Network Theory.

acting on Earth: “whereas Humans are defined as those who take the Earth, the Earthbound are *taken by it*”²⁰. According to such a view, human exceptionalism is replaced by the aspects of relationality and materiality, opening up the way to see the Earth as the place where all living beings and all kind of things are connected by symbiotic dependence. It is important to note that in this respect Latour’s position echoes the posthumanistic trends that are rapidly spreading in contemporary philosophy and which are represented by a whole array of thinkers²¹. Today we can quite boldly speak about the formation of a new paradigm²², which includes different disciplines and authors who discuss a new model of post-reality, featuring the rejection of the anthropocentric perspective and treating man as part of the environment, in the literal sense, i.e. as a life form or a being that belongs to the same level as pigeons, bacteria or technological mechanisms²³.

The posthumanist theories were favourably received in contemporary art, and here I would like to briefly present one example of a project illustrating these ideas. In 2017, Slovenian artist Maja Smrekar won a Golden Nica Award in the category of hybrid arts for her work *Ecce Canis* (K_9_topology). The purpose of this art project – subtitled by Agamben’s quote: “the total humanization of the animal coincides with a total animalization of man” – was to erase the boundary between a human and an animal. During the project that started in late autumn 2015 and ended in late January 2016, the spectators could observe the artist who turned into a surrogate mother of a dog. So Maja Smrekar presented the project in her web blog:

I am submitting myself into the dog-human kinship relationship as a radical intimate action of “returning home”. The biopolitical statement of the project is about *becoming-animal* during a process through which I transcendent myself into a surrogate mother of the dog. *Becoming-she-dog*. I have been executing a performance within which I nurtured a puppy, after submitting myself under a two and a three months of physiological training.²⁴

20 B. Latour, *Facing Gaia*, cit., p. 251.

21 Here I will mention only some representatives of contemporary posthumanist philosophy: Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, Jane Bennett, Francisco Varela. Therefore, also Michel Foucault, Gregory Bateson, Peter Sloterdijk, Giorgio Agamben could be considered as ‘classical’ representatives of posthumanist trend.

22 In the book *What is Posthumanism?*, Cary Wolfe defines posthumanism through the dialectical division between this term and the concept of humanism: “my sense of posthumanism is thus analogous to Jean-Francois Lyotard’s paradoxical rendering of the postmodern: it comes both before and after humanism: before in the sense that it names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world [...]. But it comes after in the sense that posthumanism names a historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore, a historical development that points toward the necessity of new theoretical paradigms” (C. Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, Minneapolis, University of Minneapolis Press, 2010, pp. XV-XVI).

23 The contribution of Donna Haraway is especially significant in this respect (D. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York, Routledge, 1991; D. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

24 [Http://majasmrekar.org/BLOG](http://majasmrekar.org/BLOG) (accessed March 24th, 2018).

The intentions of Maja Smrekar and their realisation²⁵ illustrate the destruction of the anthropocentric human-animal difference and by this keep in line with the posthumanist paradigm. The artist seeks to present the commensurability between a human and an animal on the bodily level, showing them not as entities which belong to different worlds of culture and nature, but as homogeneous life forms, one of which nourishes and the other one is nourished. However, considering the helplessness of one of the participants, it raises the question of which extent of the human-animal relationship, created in this artistic project, can really be called symmetrical and equitable. It looks like that the symmetry here should be understood in a different way – not stressing the dichotomy between subject/object or active/passive agents, but emphasizing the dissolution of the nature/culture divide. At this point the metaphor of returning home used by the artist and the emphasis on the component of vitality should not be understood in the terms of natural/cultural opposition, but, first of all, as the rejection of humanistic concept of human. This impression is strengthened by the action of suckling that had been chosen as a central axis of the project – the most natural thing, giving mammals the possibility to the newborn to develop. Therefore, the ‘natural’ aspect of breastfeeding here is constructed with the aid of technologies²⁶ – so, it is not an element belonging to the ‘natural order’, but a product of art aiming to deactivate this ‘naturalness’.

After taking a closer look at what is happening during this performance, it is easy to notice that an effort to establish a symmetrical relationship with an animal is performed by adopting a model of dismantling the usual logic of things, especially characteristic for contemporary art. In the already quoted text *Profanazioni*, Giorgio Agamben identifies a similar ambition of overturning the usual logic as a game – the practice, that, in his words, has only been mastered by children, artists and philosophers, and during which things are profanated, i. e. taken out of the system they belonged to, giving them a new dimension of use through this action of deactivation²⁷. In the performance of Maja Smrekar we recognise the moment of the play as a profanation, in the effort to dismantle the myth of absolute human superiority in respect to other species of life, that was created under the influence of Enlightenment. The action of suckling a dog deactivates the anthropocentric dimension, but before any new systems get established, we find ourselves in a certain grey zone in which – to continue with the variations of Weber’s metaphor, here we face the situation of human self-disenchantment – human has rejected the position of the sovereign of the world, but has not yet become part of any other narrative structure. And although the human self-disenchantment as such does not imply a compatibility of the extremes yet, enabling the return to a neutral relationship between humans and other species of life, and because of this the ambition of the

25 The visual material of this project is available on the website of the artist.

26 On the website of the project we can get acquainted with the complicated technological basis created as a result of cooperation between Maja Smrekar and the Institute of Biochemistry of the Medical Faculty of Ljubljana University.

27 G. Agamben, *Profanations*, cit., pp. 76-77.

art project to establish the commensurability between life forms is only fulfilled partially, it may nevertheless be that this project performs an even more important task by showing that merely the human self-demythologisation opens a new perspective of moving towards the disenchantment of the whole methodological apparatus which has brought us to the situation of Anthropocene.