Dialectics of the Remainder

ABSTRACT
The article presents an attempt to develop a project of a special version of dialectics – dialectics of the remainder. After Sl. Žižek, the authors believe that there may exist a dialectic, different from both Hegelian, positive, and T. Adorno’s negative dialectics. This dialectics appears as a result of the impossibility to divide the world, man and society into opposites – without a remainder. The remainder is a kind of "negative product" of socio-cultural changes that encourage thinking of marginal, adverse, peripheral phenomena as becoming something more significant in the dynamics of contemporary society. There are many contemporary social and aesthetic processes conforming to the remainder principle. A historical event can be represented as a significant remainder of many actions, forces and wills intertwined in the historical process. Many new artistic and aesthetic forms look like remainders of previous forms – classical or modern. Such a remaining remainder of classical and non-classical art today is social activism. As a method, the research work used the dialectical approach to dialectics itself, as well as the principle of its historical deconstruction. As a result, the author discovered a special version of dialectics that can be referred to as “dialectics of the remainder”.

Keywords: dialectics, dialectics of the remainder, organ, social-aesthetic phenomena, social activism.

1. Introduction
This article raises the question of a special version of dialectics which we refer to as “dialectics of the remainder”. This type of dialectics differs from Hegel’s classical philosophy whose dialectics reveals the meaning of the interaction of opposite principles as a source of development (progress). Dialectics of the remainder also differs from T. Adorno’s negative dialectics, according to which no progressive change occurs from the interaction of opposites. Dialectics of the remainder claims that there are practically no such phenomena or processes in the life of contemporary society and man that could be presented as a pure interaction of two opposite sides or principles. Nothing in society and man can be divided in two … with no remainder. And it is impossible to develop any integrity or singularity so as to leave nothing of the developed beyond the bounds of such an integrity. Something will always remain superfluous, excessive. Therefore, a different option conditions the possibility of some integrity being developed with the emergence of the remainder – an unexpected by-product, epiphenomenon.

The remainder of division, something extra, excessive, by-products are but a few of the manifestations of the phenomenon that Sl. Žižek designated as a remainder that sometimes becomes the most important element of social processes or human life.
The purpose of this article is to make an initial approximation of the space markup of that special version of dialectics which we have designated as "dialectics of the remainder". By the prognostic nature of the set purpose we explain, on the one hand, a large variation in the subject area of the research and, on the other hand, enforced conciseness caused by this variation in the matter of describing the mechanism of dialectics of the remainder work in various horizons of life.

The main method of research was dialectics applied to the development of dialectics itself. Also, the necessary side (aspect) of dialectics in this context is the principle of historicism.

As for the results, the study showed that the remainder logic is relevant to the material of a variety of subjects. The modes (hypostases) of the Absolute are represented in human life in the form of the remainder from the everyday course of things, from practicality of daily life. In social dynamics, historical actors that until recently were merely an unnoticed setting on the stage of the social play, tend to come to the forefront. In a sense, a well-known logic works: "we, who were nothing, have become everything". After all, many areas of contemporary art can be represented as a remainder of classical art.

"Dialectics of the remainder" can be used as a methodological tool for analyzing the social realities of contemporary society and man, which allows us to reveal many unexpected facets of their interaction.

2. Methods

To analyze the questions raised, we used the method of dialectical and historical analysis of dialectics itself, which allowed us to move from Hegelian dialectics to Adorno's negative dialectics, and to detect a shift in the principles of negative dialectics in the direction of searching for a version of "dialectics of the remainder" as it is explicated by Sl. Žižek. In relation to the analysis of social reality, the principle of dialectics of the remainder was supplemented by methods of social philosophy (the principle of historicism, the method of unity of historical and logical analysis).

As far as the research material is concerned, we analyzed the phenomena of three different spheres: first, metaphysical phenomena that represent modes (hypostases) of the Absolute and existentials of human existence; second, contemporary socio-cultural processes, such as the driving forces of revolutionary movements, the fate of particular nations in history (as exemplified by the fate of the Jewish people); the role of the subjective factor in formation of the objective state of social reality; third, phenomena of contemporary art and artistic practices (social actionism).

3. Results and Discussion

The subject and content of dialectics are always metaphysical. Antique dialectics is metaphysical by virtue of its speculative nature. Modern one – by virtue of sensory imperception and "mathematicity", Hegelian dialectics – by virtue of its objective-idealistic nature, since it is primarily dialectics of the world mind development. We are therefore have a right to label it as dialectical metaphysics or metaphysical dialectics (in contrast to "metaphysical metaphysics", for example, the theory of "first push", or metaphysics as anti-dialectics, as it is interpreted by Hegel).

Let us leave "metaphysical metaphysics" aside and focus exclusively on dialectical one. Since the time of Hegel, there have been known two versions of it: Hegelian, in a manner of speaking, positive (Hegel, 2010) and Adorno's negative dialectics (Wiesengrund, 1973). The basis of both of them is essentially the same idea - the unity and interaction of opposite principles, which has been arguably known since the time of Heraclitus. And if in Hegel this unity forms a contradiction as a source of development, complication of a phenomenon, its movement forward and upward, then, as we know, in Adorno contradiction entails no progressive transformation.

Sl. Žižek detected a variant of negative dialectics – dialectics of the remainder in contemporary cultural and historical processes. In the study of multiple materials, he traces the logic of the life of the remainder (Žižek, 1996). For example, after the Second World War, the Jews appeared to be this kind of remainder. Not to mention the fact that even before the war the Jews had frequently represented a non-thematized remainder of mankind, after the war it even came to be a remainder of the remainder: "Thus the Jews are a remainder in a double sense: not only the remainder with regard to the other set of "normal" nations, but also, in addition, a remainder with regard to themselves, a remainder in and of themselves—the rest, that which remains and persists after all the persecutions and annihilations" (Žižek et al., 2003: 131). (See, for example, Steven Spielberg's film "Schindler's List"). However, it is this remainder that has frequently served as an actor of the development of science, art, technique, and technologies of particular nations, and, by and large, the entire post-war Western world.

This logic of the leading role of the remainder is always activated in history. For example, the French clochards are the urban Parisian poor, a minor part of the population of a huge city that made up an insignificant "epiphenomenon" of the third estate before the French revolution. But it is they who eventually became the main driving force of the revolution. Interestingly, the clochards are literally the remainder of the division: the French aristocracy and French bourgeoisie fought each other, and the social world of France was divided into these two classes, and the remainder of division is the clochards.

Slaves played a similar role in the ancient world. Plato did not even find a proper place for them among the
classes of his ideal state, in other words – among people. And “suddenly” a slave revolt broke out! Indeed, “we, who were nothing, have become everything”. It is not by chance that these words were later used to characterize the proletariat as a class. Over time (and for a time), this former remainder of the third estate became a revolutionary driving force of modern history.

In social processes, dialectics of the remainder appears self-evident. The famous subjective factor works according to the principle of the remainder, as with the resultant force of a historical event comprised of numerous “participations”, errors, deviations, and failures. There is no direct link between an event and these erroneous out of time and place actions. None of them “brings anything closer”. And this is precisely an endless tragedy of failed achievements, victories that never occurred, unattainable results. History has not prepared happy moments of “normal revolution” (Žižek, 2001), for acting with certainty and no risk for any revolution. First, wood is chopped. You can’t chop wood without making the chips fly. They are an endless dramatic remainder of the direct path of a historical event. Or, probably, the other way around: an event is a visible and tangible remainder of the entirety of the unfulfilled, unoccurred, unwon.

Society as a whole is organized according to the principle of the remainder, since at each given historical moment it represents the remainder of all mankind as such. Let us remark that it is the remainder that represents all of humanity in every “today”.

Man himself is “organized” according to the principle of the remainder. In philosophy he is often thought of as a groundless, unsupported being. There is no reason for everything specifically human in him (love, friendship, conscience, memory, an ability to do good, create beauty, and unselfishly search for the truth). Love cannot be sensibly reasoned or conditioned, friendship cannot be explained. It always remains unclear why, under the same circumstances, one commits a feat and the other shamefully flees. Man is left alone, face to face with his groundlessness because only out of groundlessness can he take responsibility, make a decision providing grounds for his further behavior and activities. He is groundless in order to set / create foundations for himself. And, in this regard, man is the remainder of groundlessness or remainder from groundlessness of pure being as such. However, man is the one who turns groundlessness of being into the remainder. But the remainder of what? The remainder of the act that is justified by his own decision and his own decisiveness. Some residual of man in relation to being is metaphysical in nature: he knows how to negate nothing and create grounds for his groundlessness.

The remainder logic, becoming the main one, works in a variety of phenomena and gains a fairly universal character. Even love complies with it. S. Žižek writes about the paradox of love: “… in order to win the heart of a woman he loves, a man must prove that he is able to live without her, that a profession or vocation plays a more important role for him. … In this situation, the choice that bespeaks true love would be as follows: even if you mean everything to me, I can live without you and am ready to sacrifice love for my calling or profession. … love as the Absolute cannot appear an immediate goal, it must exist in the status of a “by-product”, be something like an undeserved mercy. Perhaps, there is no love higher than the love of two revolutionaries, each of whom is able to abandon the other at the first request of the revolution” (Žižek et al., 2003: 19).

It is not only love that possesses a virtue of being the remainder or being in the remainder, but practically all other hypostases of the Absolute: unpurposeful, unintentional good done “in the meantime” (that is why they say that the addressee should remember it, but he, who has done it, should not); the flickering truth always “somewhere in the nearby”; unexpectedly flashing and without a trace fading beauty … As Žižek writes, “what if” everything absolute is achievable only if it is somehow turned into collateral, accidental, marginal, unintentional, in a word, it exists in the form of remainders? After all, it may be one of the possible answers to Žižek’s question: “Paul, as it were, just switches back to the universality – that is, for him, the Christians are the remainder of humanity. We all, the whole of humanity, considered as redeemed, constitute a remainder—of what?” (Žižek et al., 2003: 131). Let us leave this question aside. Let us develop his logic: due to his fundamental incompleteness, imperfection, insufficiency, a particular man is all the more the remainder - the remainder of all mankind. Unsurprisingly, he lives and keeps using - consciously or not - logic of the remainder. For example, by the principle of the remainder, in the circumstances of a loss of the meaning of life, he sometimes seeks and finds a new meaning. Over time a thing that used to be peripheral, random, incidental, becomes the main one. Just as with a side branch of a tree with a broken top being bent up and tied vertically, the remainder of meaning can become a “stem” meaning.

The remainder may appear to us in the form of an excess or in the form of a by-product, an epiphenomenon, the result of separating and dividing into parts: the whole, parts, and … an indivisible remainder. As with a divorce of spouses, one can easily divide and separate property, but it’s problematic to divide and separate children … It is an indivisible (not merely physically, but mainly metaphysically) remainder of the split family, which, in fact, is the most important thing.

Apparently, the thing that is usually marked as excessive, appears as a particular form of the remainder. Needless to say, the excessive often becomes the most important: Shakespeare’s King Lear said: one can easily do without the necessary, but without the excessive a person turns into a dirty animal. Excess is the most important human remainder, but the remainder of what?
In the logic of the metaphysical remainder the film "Seven Lives" directed by Gabriele Muccino appears iconic. A young man drives a car and gets into a fatal car accident in which seven people are killed. The one who survives is the main hero. After that, he is not able to live his usual life. He searches for sick people in need of transplantation of various organs or tissue, and successively donates them his organs, one after another. First, he donates a part of his lung to his ill brother, then a part of the liver – to a woman with cancer, a part of the bone marrow – to a little boy with a serious disorder of the musculoskeletal system. Between the operations he undergoes, he gives his house to a mother of two little children, who hides from the cruel cohabitant that persecutes her. Finally, he arranges his own death in such a way that his heart could be transplanted to a woman who needs a transplant, and his eyes – to a blind musician. As a result, he saves exactly seven lives. In the English version, the film is titled "Seven Pounds" – the approximate weight of all of the organs or their remains given to other people by the hero. Seven pounds of organs is what remains to live in other people after the death of Will Smith’s main hero – Ben Thomas. He, as much as possible, paid his debt off – he returned seven lives to the world – at the expense of his mortal remains. For all of those seven, the remainder appeared decisive.

One would think that this film contains a biopolitics ideologeme (Foucault et al., 2008; Kobylin, 2011): donate your organs, facilitate the work of the authority dispositive. But for one circumstance: Ben makes all decisions on his own and implements them on his own as well, without any explicit or implicit coercion. It turns out that the logic revealed by Foucault works: the authorities invest in a person (in this case, it is a biopolitics ideologeme), and, subsequently, a person deprives the authorities of this investment (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977). Likewise, once he deprived the authorities of the discipline in European prisons and armies, he internalized it, made it his own asset; he took away the investments in sexuality, transforming it into an intimate, personal affair; finally, he took away his body created by army training, physical education, and sports. Then the authorities, in the form of biopolitics, “reached” the individual organs of this body, and Ben Thomas became the first person to fulfill his claim for these organs against the authorities dispositive. If biopolitical state racism formulates the relation "if you want to live, you need someone else to die", then the hero of the film as if declares by his actions: I want to die so that someone else lives " (Fuko, 2005). This experience can serve as a material for the analogy: N.N. Trubnikov believed that the world listens to itself with our ear, looks inside itself with our eyes, begins to conceive itself with our thought (Trubnikov, 1989). It turns out that man is the eye of the world, the ear of the world, the heart of the world, i.e. a kind of cumulative organ of the universe. As in the film, the organ is unquestionably a remainder, but it is the organ that becomes the most important thing.

Contemporary aesthetics often explores art forms that cannot be called art from a classical point of view. In a sense, we can say that all contemporary art consists of an endless series of remainders of the classics (but the opposite theorem seems to be true too: what if the classics are a gigantic remainder of all art that has existed in human history?). Today, so-called social actionism (Aronson & Petrovskaya, 2015), appears to be an extreme form of such a remainder. Actionism is defined as an action, social in the meaning and aesthetic in the form, from which nothing remains except for a photo, audio or video recording. What does remain is most important thing – an impression, emotion, social feeling – the human metaphysical remainder.

4. Summary
The article attempted to execute markup of the actual space of “dialectics of the remainder.” The article revealed quite significant areas of human activity where the principle of remainder works. They are: a) the space of the Absolute with its unpurposeful, unintentional good, with love, existing in the status of a “by-product” or an undeserved mercy; b) the processes of social reality with the actors who “were nothing, but became everything”; and c) the field of the contemporary art and contemporary aesthetic practices, for example, social actionism appearing to be a form of classical art’ remainder.

5. Conclusion
Thus, the remainder logic (dialectics) is built according to the remainder principle of “proper”, “full-on” or traditional dialectics as well, and it does not mean to be universal. Nevertheless, there exists an irreducible human metaphysical remainder, which makes one think about the reasoned discovery of certain universality of the dialectics of the remainder phenomenon. Accordingly, the principle of “dialectics of the remainder” can bear methodological significance in the analysis of contemporary social realities and aesthetic phenomena, in the study of the metaphysical component of contemporary man.

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References