

HELP! FREEDOM!

Discourse, Film, Lab.

Korsakow Institute for Nonlinear Narration. Münchner Kammerspiele**

I Idea and concept

II Topics and dates

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How do we now deal with the freedom that former generations eked out for us? What are the tools, means and skills that are necessary to accept freedom and to experience it as an advantage instead of a burden? How do solidarity and compassion install themselves in the post-religious world? Will they install themselves at all? Is freedom a good thing? Is it a task, something that needs to be shaped, a practice, that – if not coped with – transforms into pressure, excessive demand and depression or evokes a retreat to normative systems of religious or political nature – as well as to nutritional doctrines, numb rules for relationships or conspiracy theories and universal world explanation models? Is there an impulse to free ourselves from the relative freedom that us members of western society are born into as soon as possible? Who secures freedom, and where? Why is there no popular, available, neutral – in terms of *weltanschauung* – ideology of freedom that would allow people to develop an understanding of freedom as a collective work of non-restrictive communication?

These questions and similar ones will be discussed in the laboratory HELP! FREEDOM! Part of the project is also to probe a new form of public discourse.

There will be 8 evenings, each with two renowned experts on stage. In the run-up to each show at least two laypersons will be interviewed. The interviews will be cut into sequences of two minutes length at most. The sequences will be fed into a Korsakov movie*. The Korsakov movie will be projected onto a screen. The experts hold controversial views. They respond to the video clips that appear on the screen by offering statements. Each member of the audience is equipped with a laserpointer. Using their laserpointers, the audience votes for what they want to see and hear next: a video clip, a live statement by an expert or a question of a viewer. A moderator decides which offer received the most laserpointer hits.

With this mode the process of communication itself will be situated in the foreground. In an ideal liberal society there must not be any final vocabulary that is considered superior to other vocabularies because it claims to hold an absolute truth. In an ideal liberal society liberal ironists (Richard Rorty) are able to bare their own contingency and the non-finality of their views while still vouching for those very same views without ever being able to apply violence in order to assert them – since they are not absolute truths. In a liberal society the style of communication will thus be as important as its content. The ability to be free proves itself in the formal execution of communication. By combining the classic panel discussion with majority decision and a Korsakov movie a new form of

discourse will be established on stage, broaching the issue of information and opinion exchange in a democratic society.

The experts will be filmed during the discussion. The movies will be cut and fed into the Korsakov movie, this way it will grow bigger from show to show. The resulting DVD will be used by the Goethe Institute in several of their local foreign branches.

* What is a Korsakov movie? (→ www.korsakow.com) A Korsakov movie is a nonlinear and interactive movie based on the Korsakov system, a computer programme developed by Florian Thälhofer. Nonlinear, since the sequences are softly linked and their succession is variable. Interactive, since after each sequence the viewer chooses the next one from a variety of topically fitting clips. Hence every viewer finds his own way through the movie. New clips and sequences can be added to the movie at any time.

Korsakov movies are being published in various forms. As DVD-ROM, on the internet, as installations within exhibitions and as staged shows with audience participation. The Korsakov system is being used at film and art schools and universities all over the world. In recent years, Florian Thälhofer and Tobias Huelswitt taught the use of the Korsakov system inter alia at the University of the Arts in Berlin, at the Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig and in more than 30 workshops in Europe, Asia and the United States.

In comparison to classical media, the Korsakov movie stands for the idea of a more liberal, more democratic narrative. That is why it is the ideal medium for a lab focusing on the issue of freedom. More demonstrative than books and more extensive than classic documentaries a great number of interview partners can have their say. Furthermore, through its inherent dialogical structure the Korsakov movie offers multiple points of contact for complementary events.

II Topics and dates

1 Oct 30 2008 **Religions – Catalyzer or disputants of freedom?**

„Life in common faithlessness is a complicated life.“ Studying the writings of Benedikt XVI. one might get the impression that the idea of God should not be abandoned mainly because man is unable to bare life without metaphysics. But how do concepts of absolute truth fit into a liberal and pluralistic society? Perhaps what religions tend to look at as decadence may be nothing but the necessary work of freedom? Is it true that there is no hold and no moral without religions? Or: how are responsibility and compassion installed in a secular world? Do they get installed at all? Does freedom need self-chosen limits to evolve at all, and how narrow may those limits be?

2 Nov 11 2008 – *In the future: Which work, at what cost?*

The necessity of selling life time and performance to an employer, the duty to obey, hierarchies, spying scandals, dependency and vanishing certainty in the world of employees. Unlimited working hours, predominance of gainful occupation over private life, rationalization and economization of daily life, never ending competition and self-exploitation in the world of self-employed workers. The ubiquitous pressure to perform, even in churches and in the arts. Unemployment, insufficient education and a lack of

specialists. As solutions, some call for ‚Buergergeld‘ (unconditional citizen’s income), some for ‚Buergerarbeit‘ (low payed civil labour), some for a minimum wage or zonal fares, some for plenty of rope for companies. – How does the individual feel in the neoliberal world, and what will labour in Germany look like in the future?

3 Dec 19 2008 Depression & psychosis – How much freedom can we endure?

The rise of depression to its status of the most successful illness in the liberal western world began, according to the French sociologist Alain Ehrenberg (La fatigue d’être soi: Dépression et société), when authoritarian behaviour control was replaced by a norm of individual initiative obliging everyone to become himself. Hence depression is the tragedy of responsibility, in which a feeling of deficiency prevails. ‚The depressed does not feel up to the mark, he is worn out by the effort it causes to be obliged to become himself.‘ – Is freedom the only source of depression? Is it the catigorical prize for freedom? And what has become of depression’s siblings, neurosis and psychosis, in times of the emancipated individual?

4 Jan 16 2009 Politics and surveillance – Central residents register, data business, electronic passport – how free ist the German citizen?

In the times of terror, they say, the security of German citizens could only be guaranteed if acquisition and exchange of relevant data among the responsible institutions would be made easier. New technologies like RFID (Radio-Frequency Identification), which is used in the electronic passport and in health insurance chip cards, surveillance cameras or the digital storage of the data of every single German citizen are said to preserve security. – But which dangers of misuse come along with these technologies? Who will use the collected data? Will we be able to tell when our personal data is being collected? How transparent are we already? Can the daily routine of a person be reconstructed completely even if that person is not under special surveillance?

5 Febr 13 2009 Bundeswehr/Military – Which deployment for our freedom?

The German military is the big unknown in this country. It is there, and it is doing something. But what exactly is that? Is it still the defensive military it once was? Is it de facto still a parliament’s military? Which influence does the NATO have? Does the average German know where in the world the German army is defending him? And against whom? Does the private person know what precisely he’s defending? How voluntarily do our volunteers go to Afghanistan? For how long and why has the German military operated abroad? How many German soldiers have died abroad? What is the difference between ‚Freiheit‘ and (Enduring) ‚Freedom‘?

6 March 6 2009 Education & school system – Where do we learn the skills of freedom?

Body awareness, conflict management abilities, communication skills, self-knowledge and self-confidence, a sensible handling of the media and an immune system against infringements of boundless capitalism, the courage to decide, deliberate abdication and the potency to bear uncertainties – these are the skills of freedom. But how can our children learn them in a school system that focuses on content transfer and standardized performance testing (while ignoring individual talents)?

7 April 3 2009 Narration – *Let me know how you narrate and I'll tell you how free you are*

The linear, Aristotelian narrative – like the Hollywood movie – takes the viewer by the hand and leads him through a world of conflicts and catastrophe, of developments, beginnings and endings. Everything in its world abides by the orders of a superior dramaturgy that is untouchable by what ever happens within the narrative. The Aristotelian narrative hence establishes a superior interest that negates chance and incalculability on a meta-level (even if the story's about chance). Prior to the advance of the computer and the Internet traditions of a more liberal, nonlinear and pluralistic narrative existed, which were more interested in networks and associativity than rigid connections and dramaturgical hierarchies. How long will the authoritarian-Aristotelian forms of storytelling endure in a liberal, pluralistic, information based society?

8 Copyright – *Immaterial goods between freedom and economy*

We like to see the age of the Internet as an era of a free flow of information, as a materialized utopia where everybody has free access to any existing information. In reality the continental European ‚Urheberrecht‘ and the anglo-american Copyright foreclose this utopia. They regulate the transfer of immaterial goods (ideas, inventions of any kind, concepts, intellectual creations and information) as products in a profit oriented economy. But what is more important: the protection of ‚authors‘ and copyright holders or the protection, i.e. the realization of the free flow of information?

The Korsakow Institute for Nonlinear Narration has been founded by the media artist Florian Thälhofer, the author Tobias Huelswitt and the intermedia artist Matt Soar. It is engaged in the theory, practice and spreading of nonlinear forms of narration in film, theatre, literature and society. www.institut.korsakow.com