

GERHARD WAGNER:
Origin and Utopia
Visionary Motives in the Work
of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is one of the »great non-conformists« of the 20th century. Being an aviation pioneer, who lost his life during a reconnaissance flight over Corsica, he was characterised both by a sceptical attitude towards human civilisation and enthusiasm for technology and admiration of nature. For Saint-Exupéry, technology was a means to »explore the world, humankind and friendship«. His work, mainly comprised of tales and novels, reports and essays, reflect the departure and despair of a late philosopher of the Enlightenment. His modern sociological-philosophic tale »Le Petit Prince« (1943) is a friendly utopia that continues to be exciting to all – not just children.

SAMIR AMIN:
Pure Economics,
or the Contemporary World's Witchcraft

In all universities of the contemporary world an odd subject entitled economic science or simply, economics is taught. It takes the economic life of a society as its field of study, with the aspiration of scientifically explaining its crucial magnitudes such as prices, wages, incomes, interest rates, foreign exchange rates, total unemployment, etc However, and this is strange indeed, while scientific research has its point of departure in reality, economics is based on a resolutely anti-realistic basic principle: known as »methodological individualism«. This views society as being nothing more than the aggregate of its component individuals, Homo Oeconomicus, each being defined in accordance to laws expressing what would appear to be rational behaviour. Taking this absurd starting point as a legitimate, one is led to bizarre para-philosophical effusions. Therefore pure economics is a para-science, to be compared to social science as parapsychology is compared to psychology. Just as any para-science, it can be used to demonstrate particular thing and its opposite. That such an absurd and sterile exercise as pure economics should be an object of interest to otherwise intelligent individuals, this is a source of wonder.

Gisela Neunhöffer: Neoliberal Counter-Revolution in Poland

This article looks at the beginnings of neoliberal thought in informal opposition groups in Poland in the eighties, the Balcerowicz-Plan, as a highlight of neoliberal practice, and the consolidation and institutionalization of the production of neoliberal thought by several think tanks during the nineties. In this analysis, special focus is placed upon the links to transnational neoliberal intellectual networks, their function as an external support for domestic promoters of radical market reform in Poland.

HANSGÜNTER MEYER: The University at the Turn of the Millennium

German universities, it is rumored, are in a deep crisis at this turn of the millennium. Contradicting this perception Prof. Meyer argues that it is ›normal‹ that the university system is in crisis, because of its double function as provider of academic education to the social elite and as institution of research at the frontier of scientific knowledge. But these two tasks could only be successfully fulfilled if the society as a whole can guarantee relatively stable conditions favorable to their accomplishment. And the lack of this necessity turns out to be the core of the German ›university crisis‹. Under neo-liberal pressure of de-regulation the academic social environment has been dramatically transformed. On the one hand, in the period of the ›modern lean state‹, universities appear to be too expensive. On the other hand, the need to broaden academic learning – enabling a growing segment of the younger generation to meet professional requirements for the future – jeopardizes the traditional educational privileges of the elite. The ›solution‹ seems to be an increase in pressure of selection between students, i.e. the introduction of study fees and a reduction of financial assistance for socially underprivileged students. Rather than this (doomed) misguided strategy for meeting the challenges of the 21st century, Meyer proposes the self-determined university – open to all social strata – sufficiently equipped with material and financial resources.