

Diary during the Stay in Weston, USA

by Ivaylo Belev

Summer, 2014

I have a serious gap in my general knowledge. I have read a lot in school but after starting university I've been reading exclusively specialized literature or books on self-development. I've neglected the whole world literature.

Batuz as a man with extremely high erudition, who has read literally tons of books, is trying to eradicate this “failure” and to educate me through giving me certain books to read. So, for some time I've been reading “Conversations with Goethe” by Eckermann, which Nietzsche called “the best German book there is”. In the book Eckermann describes by days his experiences of being an assistant to Goethe.

I can clearly draw parallels to my own situation, being an assistant to Batuz. So let this be my humble attempt to collect a small portion of the treasure being generated by this inexhaustible source of ideas driven by the imagination as the purest fuel. But as Eckermann says, it's like to collect rain water with bare hands.

August 4, 2014 – Weston, USA

The beginning of a new week. Actually it doesn't matter a lot to us since we are working seven days a week. But it's a nice coincidence with the start of the diary.

Batuz woke up, as it often happens, in poor condition – of the body and the soul. Nothing showed that it will turn into a great day.

Later we started discussing the album we need to prepare for the National Gallery of Art (Washington D.C.). And we need to prepare it fast. Around 28 years ago Batuz started a close cooperation with Henry A. Millon, the founder of the Center for Advanced Studies in Visual Arts, which extends beyond art and seeks its applications and influences in different areas including the society. It's a nice parallel to Batuz art – Batuz went beyond it and started applying the ideas, which initially came from the art, to the society.

Batuz dictated me a new text which is meant to be included in the album. It was a really good text, pouring out of him. I liked it very much. Of course it needed some grammar polishing and so on, but that's not important – the essence was there. Batuz stated his position to the art market – clearly and emotionally, telling what happened at that time. And it is really astonishing. Being at

the peak of his worldly art “career” he became disgusted with the art market. Art has turned into a mere commercial item, losing its spirituality. He couldn't accept that and the corrupted art society and left everything. He moved to Germany and isolated himself for 5 years in the Schaumburg Castle creating his own society – the Société Imaginaire.

Batuz became so euphoric like never been for many months! He was extremely happy because of the new text. He even said: “If I died today I would have accomplished my mission”.

That's Batuz – enormous amplitude of moods and emotional conditions. Just like his life – have been from the bottom up to the top of the social ladder.

Batuz told a nice story today:

Hirshhorn came dressed elegantly with his bordeaux bowtie, which he was always wearing.

Hirshhorn: This is my 4th wife but I'm too old to change it!

Batuz: Mr. Hirshhorn...

Hirshhorn: What?

Batuz: I'm sorry that I'm not dressed appropriately to receive you.

Hirshhorn tore his bowtie and opened his shirt: Am I alright now, Mr. Batuz? May I come in?

Batuz gave me a recent article from the New York Times - “Masterworks vs. the Masses”. It's about the flood of people visiting, or precisely said, being pushed through the most visited museums in the world. I experienced the horrible situation myself being in the Louvre some years ago. It is the busiest art museum in the world having for the last year 9,3 million visitors. It's impossible to see anything, just having a glimpse of the things there. It's just an ocean of people snapping photos here and there, with the only purpose to show off that they have been there. Most of them have no idea of art. As Batuz says, they don't belong there, they should go to amusement parks. Another topic to discuss is that museums turn into amusement parks. Yes, it's good to attract visitors but everything has its limits. Not to mention that in a crowded art museum it totally impossible for an artist to contemplate in silence the works of the great masters. The suggestion of Batuz is appropriate ? there should be special hours or days to visit for artists.

August 5, 2014 – Weston, USA

We didn't plan to write any texts today but I started taking some notes during the conversations with Batuz, because I thought that there are interesting ideas, and he started dictating me what came to his mind.

The first idea was that an imaginary society is an ideal society. As I think about it, it is so. Because when we imagine things in a positive way, we usually imagine them to be perfect, without the drawbacks of applying them in reality. And yes, as Batuz says, we need an ideal to follow. Even if we can never reach it, it is guiding light we should follow. In this way we have a direction and we can achieve much more than living/doing chaotically.

Another very interesting idea which we discussed today was the solitude. And Batuz knows in details what it is, having spent 5 years alone in a castle. And there he realized his greatest creation – the Société Imaginaire. It seems that the greatest achievements are done by people in solitude. Obviously the concentration and dedication on a certain matter play a major role, and the daily commotion can only be distracting for the person who wants to achieve higher realms.

The idea resonated in me: “Société Imaginaire – an imaginary place where we can retreat and meditate, taking distance to this turmoil, confusion and daily noise... away from the stress and hustle, and the relentless and increasing “pushing”.” As Batuz said, the Société Imaginaire provides us with this vital “distance” from the real world without being distant from it. This allows us to see life in a different light, and many so-called important things suddenly lose their significance.

Another great thought was formulated by Batuz today: “I created a *polis* without walls – the Société Imaginaire – a society without borders.”

And the Société Imaginaire is not an intellectual speculation or an imaginary thing as it is sometimes wrongly described. It is something real which can and is applied to our life.

I liked very much the story of Kant (which Batuz told), who never traveled more than 16 km from his birth city Königsberg. And this didn't stop him from becoming a central figure of modern philosophy. Kant lived a very strict and predictable life, leading to the oft-repeated story that neighbors would set their clocks by his daily walks.

A nice quote by Batuz today: “Who takes life as a game is a shallow person, because doesn't see the whole transcendence of it. But who takes it seriously is an idiot, because life is a game; however a serious one.”

In the evening Batuz fell in a deep existential disaster. Although he has achieved more than most people who ever lived on Earth combined together, this fact brings no peace, satisfaction or joy to him. All the great achievements deliver just a temporary happiness. As he describes it, he feels something very negative inside, which combined with his poor health leads to constant anxiety and nervousness that result in a hard bearable behavior toward the outer world and the people around.

He admitted that the problems with his family are just an excuse. And even if 15 happy grandchildren would be playing around, it would make no difference. He is in a stalemate situation, in a zugzwang with only bad options to choose from.

He told me that he “is dying since 1999 in Altzella”. Actually when I met him for the first time in 2009 he told me that he would die in 2 years. And he has been repeating it every year ever since. But this year he told me “I'll die in 5 years”. Today the explanation came from him: “Dying is not as easy as man thinks. One needs to prepare for it.”

August 12, 2014

A friend of mine shared a poem by Borges. This fact struck me like a lightning. Two worlds came together and I could make a clear comparison. This same Borges, whose poem this friend of mine shared, has dedicated a poem to Batuz. I'm lacking the erudition to really appreciate the great names of the top-class writers and the other prominent personalities Batuz has been dealing with in his life. I'm used to their mentioning by Batuz, but because he and they are at the same level, these great names don't make a tremendous impression on me. But now when a name of such a personality came from another part of my world, something clicked in my mind and I deeply realized the greatness of the contacts of Batuz with all these prominent personalities.

The poem is a great piece and made me think for many days, realizing some truths...

Learning by Jorge Luis Borges

*After some time, you learn the subtle difference
between holding a hand and chaining a soul;*

*You learn that love does not equal sex,
and that company does not equal security,
and you start to learn....*

*That kisses are not contracts and gifts are not promises,
and you start to accept defeat with the head up high and open eyes.*

*And you learn to build all roads on today,
because the terrain of tomorrow is too insecure for plans...
and the future has its own way of falling apart in half.*

*And you learn that if it's too much
even the warmth of the sun can burn.*

*So plant your own garden and embellish your own soul,
instead of waiting for someone to bring you flowers.*

*And you learn that you can actually bear hardship,
that you are actually strong,
and you are actually worthy,
and you learn and learn... and so every day.*

*Over time you learn that being with someone
because they offer you a good future,
means that sooner or later you'll want to return to your past.*

*Over time you comprehend that only who is capable
of loving you with your flaws, with no intention of changing you
can bring you all happiness.*

*Over time you learn that if you are with a person
only to accompany your own solitude,
irremediably you'll end up wishing not to see them again.*

*Over time you learn that real friends are few
and who does not fight for them, sooner or later,
will find himself surrounded only with false friendships.*

*Over time you learn that words spoken in moments of anger
continue hurting throughout a lifetime.*

*Over time you learn that anyone can apologize,
but forgiveness is an attribute solely of great souls.*

*Over time you comprehend that if you have hurt a friend harshly
it is very likely that your friendship will never be the same.*

*Over time you realize that despite being happy with your friends,
you cry for those you let go.*

*Over time you realize that every experience lived,
with each person, is unrepeatable.*

*Over time you realize that whoever humiliates
or scorns another human being, sooner or later
will suffer the same humiliations or scorn in tenfold.*

*Over time you learn to build your roads on today,
because the path of tomorrow doesn't exist.*

*Over time you comprehend that rushing things or forcing them to happen
causes the finale to be different from expected.*

*Over time you realize that in fact the best was not the future,
but the moment you were living just that instant.*

*Over time you will see that even when you are happy with those around you,
you'll yearn for those who walked away.*

*Over time you will learn to forgive or ask for forgiveness,
say you love, say you miss, say you need,
say you want to be friends, since before a grave,
it will no longer make sense.*

But unfortunately, only over time..."

August 24, 2014 – Weston, USA

Today was a day of lots of visitors, and a big departure.

An old friend of Batuz came to visit him for a third day in a row. They hadn't seen each other for more than 30 years! The 60-year old tennis trainer Steve, who still actively plays, had been giving lessons to Sasa, which had been partially paid by Batuz with paintings. Steve is an extremely vivid and heartfelt person. He came with his wife and son and they were, as always, so excited to see Batuz. They really adore him and are in total astonishment of his work and projects. One can hear them constantly saying “wow!”.

Also Sasa came for a while. Batuz is always so happy to see him. Recently Batuz had a great idea for a catalog with all the painting he made for Sasa's restaurants. Thanks to the paintings Sasa's restaurants will offer not only physical food but also spiritual one, creating magnificent atmosphere. The four diffident restaurants where the paintings of Batuz will be exhibited, will have color themes – the white series, the gray series, the blue series, the vermelions.

With the departure of Flores the pressure on Batuz to hurry and finish some works departed too. An amazing amount of work was done in these almost three months. I'm working now to catalogize all the paintings from this and the previous summer. Flores has worked 7 days a week, 12 hours a day and was extremely happy to leave and enjoy the freedom again.

An important meeting took place in the evening. The local politician of Hispanic origin, Warren A. Peña, came for a third time to visit Batuz. In earlier meetings the project “no mas fronteras en las Americas” was discussed but there is no time to realize it now (maybe the next year). The topic of today's conversation was different – about the association Helmets for Peace. And more precisely a branch of the German Helmets for Peace e.V. Both associations should promote the ideas of peace and more associations should be founded.

August 25, 2014 – Weston, USA

Today Batuz was full of joy and happiness, as if a new era has begun.

At some point in the afternoon Batuz called me, telling me to abandon any work. On his request I brought him the book Eckerman's "Conversations with Goethe" (which Batuz accurately remembered to be opened on page 444) and we started talking about the latest things he has read. They amazingly resembled the Société Imaginaire.

[16. Dezember 1828]

...“Freunde wie Schiller und ich, jahrelang verbunden, mit gleichen Interessen, in täglicher Berührung und gegenseitigem Austausch, lebten sich ineinander so sehr hinein, dass überhaupt bei einzelnen Gedanken gar nicht die Rede und Frage sein konnte, ob sie dem einen gehörten oder dem andern. Wir haben viele Distichen gemeinschaftlich gemacht, oft hatte ich den Gedanken und Schiller machte die Verse, oft war das Umgekehrte der Fall, und oft machte Schiller den einen Vers und ich den andern.“...

This is exactly the Société Imaginaire! In 1992 Batuz coined the term „Gleichgesinnte Andersdenkende” which is the shortest and most exact definition of the members of the Société Imaginaire. It is unfortunately untranslatable in other languages without losing some of the nuances in its meaning. The other closest term was given by President Sanguinetti in his text “La Paz De Los Afines” in 2013, and namely the “afines”. A month ago Batuz had a great idea as a wonderful comparison for the members of the Société Imaginaire: being a part of a gigantic symphonic orchestra, the thousands of members of which are playing the same symphony but each one on his own instrument!

Batuz described in his first call (1989) the Société Imaginaire as an imaginary polis; and he recently added the fine expression “a polis without walls, a society without borders”. Today came to his mind another beautiful comparison: “The Société Imaginaire is like an imaginary city build on spiritual poles over insecure ground, rising above the mud and silt below. It is so high that the spits of mediocrity can't reach it. The inhabitants of this city exchange pure ideas among themselves, unpolluted by the mediocrity.”

[16. Dezember 1828]

„...man muss das Wahre immer wiederholen...“

Here Batuz added, that the uniqueness of an idea, of the truth, should be expressed in different forms and in different ways. Like his ideas – demonstrated and applied through over 100 projects – they are always the same ideas but seen from a new angle. I think this is exactly the way. Because the Truth is usually “too big” and people see only a portion of it. They can see just a part of it depending on their knowledge and experience. Like a big monument in the dark, illuminated from different sides by many spotlights. And every spotlight is the view of a person. So if you present to him a part of the Truth, which is not illuminated by his spotlight, the chances are that he won't understand it. So presenting the Truth from different sides increases the chances that more people understand it, because the different approaches can coincide with the “spotlights” of more people.

[16. Dezember 1828]

“Alles Große bildet, sobald wir es gewahr werden.“

Batuz: “Of course, in order to understand something you need to be at the same 'eyelevel' with it.” Actually that's a major problem for Batuz. His ideas are so big that the people cannot grasp them. People prefer to deal with their minor daily stuff which fits in their minds. The great, elevated and often abstract ideas are in most cases a bite too big to chew. And if you are not at the level of something you cannot appreciate it. That is why Batuz seems not to be understood by the masses.

[11. Oktober 1828]

Goethe: “Meine Sachen können nicht populär werden; wer daran denkt und dafür strebt, ist in einem Irrtum. Sie sind nicht für die Masse geschrieben, sondern nur für einzelne Menschen, die etwas Ähnliches wollen und suchen und die in ähnlichen Richtungen begriffen sind.“

This is absolutely true for the Société Imaginaire! We should not deceive ourselves that there are millions of people out there waiting just a sign of our existence to jump on board. As Álvaro Mutis wrote, the Société Imaginaire is a privilege only for the “Happy Few”. Société Imaginaire is for elevated minds. Unfortunately such minds are a rarity nowadays.

In the evening a car arrived. We didn't expect anyone?! Because of my shortsightedness I could only recognize that it is a black car, so I shouted to Batuz that Sasa is here (who else?!). Then I went out and from the car got off... Tas! It was such a great surprise! Batuz was already talking loud from the upper floor to "Sasa" when Tas appeared in front of him. Batuz could almost jump out of happiness because of the beautiful surprise! Their relation has undergone many tribulations but there is no doubt that they love each other.

One could hear them talking full of emotion, even mixing four languages – English, Hungarian, Spanish and German! Sometimes the sentence started in one language and ended in another. Sometimes the questions by one side were in one language and the replies by the other side in another language. Pretty amazing! That's a real use of languages!

Some things can be expressed much better in one language than in other. So one uses the best language. I've heard some appeals for keeping the language pure from foreign words. It is nonsense for me. The main purpose of languages is communication. Why should we make up a new word for a new thing, when the world already has such a word and it is already in use. Like the ridiculous quest I heard once on the radio to find a German alternative of "online". We just hinder the international communication.

I heard a distinct fragment of the conversation between Tas and Batuz – a clearly emphasized profound question by Tas: "Is it worth doing anything if it doesn't bring us joy?" A quote comes to my mind: "People rarely succeed unless they have fun in what they are doing." Joy may not be the whole truth but is at least half of it. I would also add satisfaction. And these two – joy and satisfaction – are the ingredients of happiness. And we need both of them.

And what's the meaning of life? To be happy. As simple as that.