

**AN AFTERNOON
AT ALGIRDAS ŠEŠKUS
AND MILDA ŠEŠKUVIENĖ'S**

with Aurimė Aleksandravičiūtė, Gintaras Didžiapetris,
Raimundas Malašauskas, Elena Narbutaitė and Jonas Žakaitis

MILDA ŠEŠKUVIENĖ

Could you translate *obuchenīye gramote*, as I see that Elena didn't understand this.

ALGIRDAS ŠEŠKUS

Teaching grammar.

MŠ

Maybe more like teaching the basics?

JONAS ŽAKAITIS

And what is the system, what kind of system are you talking about?

AŠ

What kind of system? Well, I have a theory that everything is a system, you see. And there is a system that encompasses all systems—that is the system we're dealing with here. When I am talking about this overarching system, I am equating many things. God is a system. And when we were figuring this out with my students, we understood clearly what it was...

[a telephone rings]

ELENA NARBUTAITĖ

And now God is calling.
[everyone laughs]

JŽ

He is asking Algirdas not to reveal everything.

[Algirdas is on the phone]

AŠ

In fact, when you figure everything out, it is quite simple. Everything about the human being is quite simple. Here's how I explained to my students what the system was. We're sitting indoors during one of our meditations on Panerių Street, about 40 or 50 people are in attendance. So we are sitting there, in the winter, but it is warm, nice, and cozy inside. I'm saying to them: this room we're in is a system. Everything is a system. This room here is a system, we invested some funds in it, took care of this system, now this system is taking care of us. It blocks off the cold, it is cozy, there is no wind here, it is brightly lit, we can focus on our works here, wearing short sleeves. And everything is fine. Try to take someone out of this system and put him on the street, let him sit on the pavement. Death will ensue in two hours. One cannot leave the system. If you have to go home, you have a temporary system—the overcoat; you get inside it and walk to your car. The car, again, is a system, we take care of it, and it even fastens us, so that we don't fall out of it, cleans the windshield, illuminates

the road. We have invested quite a bit of funds into this system—it takes us some place. And then we likewise consider the system as a whole, everything there is. One must not fall out of this system. Why not? Because this system takes care of us if we take care of it. Just like with any tiny system here—we take care of the grand system, it takes care of us, and then we live a wonderful life.

Jž

And what is the grand system?

Aš

Absolutely everything.

Jž

But you are speaking about particularities—concrete systems, such as a car. Where does the system of systems emerge then?

Aš

As far as the mind reaches, the cosmos, everything is that grand system. It takes care of us, provides the energy that gives vital force to our cells and our organism, and we make use of it in our everyday lives. In the beginning, when I had not yet introduced all this to some person, I would tell them that they've fallen out of the nest—You have fallen out, you are disoriented, you are afraid, you don't know what will happen to you, you cannot fly. If you fall out of this system, you are lost. And there are lots and lots of such mad people with terrified eyes who don't know what's happening to them, who are looking for help and have no idea where to get it. They don't receive the spirit, they don't receive that energy, and thus cannot act. They cannot make good use of this energy, so they perish. All of us must take care of this grand system. What kind of care should it be? This care was conceived long, long ago. This act of care is called ritual. Ritual has one

principal feature—it must be useless. For instance, we keep on burning the candle here, which seems pretty useless since there is enough light as it is, and it would not produce any additional warmth. Or we sit by the fireplace, sit and look at the flames. It is completely useless, this fire is dumb, it just keeps fluttering, there is nothing in it, utter nonsense. Yet when you engage in nonsense, your mind rests. This utter nonsense must be present in rituals, then it is good. This is what taking care of the whole system essentially is, because the whole system is not the earth that we work on in a useful way. This is very important. To sit at the seaside, to sit and look and look. And it is better if beautiful girls in bikinis are not rambling around, because then you would be about to do something useful for you... And then you just look, look and see the sea, and you recover.

Jž

So this system of systems is more of a mental space? Or the space of memory?

Aš

The space of everything. Memory is bad, all memory is bad. Memories damage people, no matter if these memories are positive or negative. It is obvious why a negative memory is bad—what I experienced at some point remains inside me, like a formed system with flawed vibrations that I remember. And if don't put an end to it, I am just increasing it and will never forget it. This is bad. Meanwhile, a positive memory is bad because we may be sitting here thinking: "do you remember, last year things were much better. Oh boy!" That's a big reproach to this day. A big reproach to God, to the system for this day—"I'm done, I don't have anything anymore, all I have is memories". No, it is what is happening to us right now at this very table that is

the best and most wonderful, and if we live our whole lives this way, without memories, our life becomes long. And if we live in reminiscences, good or bad, our body approaches death, and we ourselves get nowhere. One must live through every minute in this relationship with the system. Gratitude is very important for this. The human being's ultimate aim here, on this Earth, is to spend some time on Earth; only then comes building a house, raising children, and so on. It is important for us to be. Then we can have more goals. The main point is to be. What does it mean to be? There is neither the past nor the future. And we must be grateful for this; our mugs must show this gratitude. Thank the system that I am. Imagine how many people there were before us, and will be after us—they don't exist now. And we exist. Holy smokes, we're so lucky. And we must see this. Then the relationship with the system is good, energy starts to flow. The system begins to take care of us. When we forget about the system and, for instance, if I fall in love with Mary, if I deify her, it would seem that it is all very beautiful, but my inner system is such that I must take energy from the grand system, from God. If I idolize Mary, she is done with. *[everyone laughs]*

MŠ

Come on now, you never understood what love is. *[everyone laughs]*

MŠ

And don't you try to tell people what love for a *human being* is.

AŠ

Love must be like this: first of all you receive spirit through that system, only after then do you transmit it to Mary.

RAIMUNDAS MALAŠAUSKAS

But it is possible that together with Mary, too, you plug into a certain level of the system, which enables you to love the whole system quicker.

AŠ

It's just like with crossheading, it must enter you from there *[points upwards]* and then comes Mary's turn. The same goes for her. And the fact that we began living together, well, you know, it's just more convenient to use a washing machine; you can save on electricity... *[everyone laughs]*

AŠ

Of course it is more convenient with Mary. There is an appropriate metaphor for this using cherries: two hanging cherries touch each other, but there is no direct circulation between them. Circulation takes place via the cherry-tree. People have to be responsible in this manner. Friends and loved ones must be this way. Because when circulation happens in the wrong place, all kinds of disagreements arise. Then everything goes wrong.

MŠ

That is merely a male understanding. Not even a poet's.

RM

I am fascinated by the moments when you feel as if you're simultaneously in all periods of your life. These kinds of discharges happen at times.

AŠ

That is precisely how it is supposed to be.

RM

Because suddenly you feel that you are in all of your life.

AŠ

The here and now is simply an intermediate station. When I spoke just now about the need to be in the here and now, it is an intermediate station, and the next step is in everything else. Then you don't give much significance to the here and now at all. But first you must get out of the past and the future, and live in what the system gives us now. It gives us these potato dumplings, then this and that, and so on. This is the first step; then comes everything else. The past and the future, if they come in moderate doses, are food. Used in larger doses they become a remedy, and in larger doses still they turn into poison. This rule is at work everywhere. Just like with money, for instance. Tell a mother who needs to buy shoes for her kid to go to school that she has 200 Euros and there are also discounts on these shoes, and she will say this is marvelous. If you give the same amount of money to a businessman, however, he will say that this is no remedy—it's only worth half of a machine that needs to be replaced. It simply depends on how much you can master, how much strength you have to master alcohol, mundane relationships, work. If you have a lot of strength, you will master a lot. If you have little, you will poison yourself and kick the bucket in the blink of an eye. Thus you must be very careful.

AURIMĖ ALEKSANDRAVIČIŪTĖ

But it is not simply about strength, or is that strength the very same energy?

AŠ

Yes, energy. Spirit.

RM

Can energy in principle correspond to the physics theory that, let's say, there was a Big Bang, and after it the amount of energy in the universe became constant, that it never changes, as I understand.

Everything that exists in the universe only transforms, but the amount of energy stays exactly the same.

AŠ

The energy I am talking about, bio-energy, spirit or whatever you might call it, is not from the Big Bang, it is not carbon or electric energy either. This energy is subject to the mind, subject to words. If you need it, you can accumulate incredible amounts of it. This energy originates in a very concrete and simple thing—in tension. This energy emerges when there are two. We use the same energy in art; I keep noting this in my writings now, because I want to talk about art, what it really is. You know that there is no art when there is only one. In general, there is nothing when there is only one. It's the same as a stick with only one end, which does not exist. There is no such thing. We even say of sculpture that it must interact with the environment, otherwise it does not exist. We are producing some painting, and all the time we are dealing with relationships. I remember once sitting in the countryside and juggling birch leaves around on the table. Imagine one leaf—if it does not interact with anything, there will be no art here. Here comes a second leaf, there is little art still, but it's building up. Those objects begin to interact. Try to pull them together, and this tension will be gone again. All art production is essentially about looking for relationships. And there comes a time when you say stop, this is the highest tension point—that's where art emerges. In other cases we say, oh, the proportions are flawed, the leg is too long, it should be a bit closer, and if you extend it there is a good proportion, a good relationship—the artist did a good job. So, in this sense there is nothing that is not art. Nothing other than art. This twig, how nicely it coincides with the bud, with the leaf, and

what is happening here. The only question is: how much art is there in it? More or less? Absolutely everything is art, but how much of it? We the gourmands want more of it, it makes us salivate. This is what you call professional art. The rest is art created by everyone else. I've drawn a table showing that there is God, then there's art, then culture, and then come the people. Art can never belong to the people. For art to be a bit more comprehensible to the people, there is culture. Its function is to adapt and present art.

JŽ

So you don't equate art and culture at all?

AŠ

There are different layers. For artists, culture is lethal. When I design my books, I'm often instructed to make them accessible for the people, otherwise they will not be understood. I'm told they need to be better adapted. And the ones who demand this from me are solid people whom I trust—they can read art, they understand it, but their work is to bring this art to the people. The culture adapts it. Meanwhile we, the artists, must break culture, we must disregard it. Because otherwise nothing will be made out of the ordinary. There are also cases when culture itself starts producing, then a layer of kitsch also emerges—this is meant to reach everyone without exception. But this does not mean that there is no art in kitsch. There is. The most miserable drunk puts on his coat and looks at how interestingly it matches his trousers. And women—what classy works they make of themselves.

RM

How do you communicate this whole system to your students? Through some methodical explanation, or the way you're doing it now, in a conversation?

AŠ

Yes, we speak. Their questions themselves compel me to find a way, and I also find it while meditating. In meditation, you have to distance yourself from the vibrations that the earthly environment produces; you distance yourself and go out into this cleanness, and everything is made in that cleanness. I don't know about you, but I often have good thoughts when I have just woken up, but am still not fully awake. There is this interval when Earth has not yet encroached into you, and heaven has already left you—in this interval you can do something, especially if you learn to use it, set an objective. You must have a voice recorder ready by your bed so that you don't have to remember things later, then you just say something, and it carries you away to a new place. These are meditation moments. Meditation is a very simple thing, you just have to distance yourself from everything and do your thing. There is nothing except distancing yourself. Especially from the things that keep gurgling, the things we have made up, the things that make us anxious.

RM

But if everything is inside ourselves, what do we end up with? Repression?

AS

You must modify the vibrations inside yourself. When we say that everything is inside ourselves, we must change it.

RM

Give a different vibration to information itself?

AŠ

Destroy this information. So that spirit does not vibrate inside us, this is of no use to us. Although initially it looked like it would be not bad at all.

RM

Yes, so, to cross it out. For instance, if you remember your childhood completely differently, will it make you a completely different person in the present moment?

Aš

To make up one's childhood in order to avoid remembering it?

GINTARAS DIDŽIAPETRIS

Yes, to make it up.

AA

But how can one do that?

RM

For instance, the day before yesterday I met my mom, and she told me stories that took place not so long ago, about 20 years, but when I try to remember them, I realize that they don't exist in my memory at all.

Aš

But do you feel inferior because you don't remember?

RM

No, I am happy that I don't remember.

Aš

Therefore, one does not need a different childhood, one just has to forget theirs.

Mš

But why must one forget all of a sudden? Can I argue with you? *[laughs]* For example, now as I am getting older, I quite like remembering my childhood, just to look at myself as a child and try to figure out what was already programmed in me. Then I see myself as a child today, in my present life, and I am very much interested in getting to know the world.

Aš

There is no need to know it at all.

Mš

Why so?

Aš

The only joy there is is feeding on the spirit. Art provides this here, in the world, but really one can do away even with art. Do you remember me telling you that my works were exhibited at the Contemporary Art Centre, when it was still called the Art Exhibition Palace, and an old warden told me that her pains would disappear when she got near my works, and so on. I put this into my works, the same art, the same energy that her life required, and she took it from them and felt better. It turned out I was making retransmitters. I told you that my exhibition was even called "Retransmission of the building's load". Now I can do it without any intermediary object, I can transmit it directly to her. Why should I wade into childhood now? I will only waste time, I feel so good in the present.

Mš

Well, you always say, "I am not interested in colors, only in white light, when I die this white light will shine for me". But I am so fascinated by all those colors, all that were and all that are now.

Aš

You wish to run away.

Mš

Why run away? I have nothing to run away from, I enjoy my life. But I am also interested in the things from my childhood.

AA

So how should one look into the future?

JŽ

Then there is no future. There is only now.

AA

And you cannot plan or program anything?

RM

Exactly. It's like when people say, "I will love you forever". In reality this statement is an institution somewhere in the future that makes us feel better right now. Because when you say "I will love you forever", you feel as if it is really ages.

MŠ

You try to program yourself.

RM

Yes, yes.

AŠ

In this way you create the structure inside you, and also create that structure for your partner by saying so.

RM

I, for one, have discarded this thought completely.

AŠ

What if your structure changes, for instance, but your partner's doesn't? And your partner says, "You promised!?"
[everyone laughs]

MŠ

No, you yourself also feel bad when you don't keep your promises.

RM

Yes, but what I don't like is this institution—this limiting of love with eternity is wrong.

AŠ

Let's try to introduce one more category,

that of freedom. Without which it is impossible to feed on art. You must be free in order to understand how much art there is in a particular work. It is worthwhile to go and look at things, see something. Freedom is very important. "I will love you forever" infringes on that freedom. I invited you to come, you agreed to come—freedom is already limited.

MŠ

I think "I will love you forever" can give you such an extraordinary energy of faith. On the other hand, it also testifies to the intensity of your feeling. So if you don't believe in it, then I have to say: why the hell do you need to marry? You must believe it in that moment at least, even if later it does not become a reality.

RM

But in reality marriage is a ritual. A ritual of convenience and pragmatism.

MŠ

Well, it's bad when people get married only for it to become a mere contract. You should marry while you still idealistically believe that you will love forever.
[everyone laughs]

AŠ

For instance, a child is brought to me. The child is dying. I make him and his mother sit down in front of me—I want to talk to them. The mother looks at me for just a second and then continues to look at the child. I say jokingly, "Madam, look at me, I'm not that bad, you can give me a glance as well." She seems to understand the joke, but the child is dying, so she cannot understand it. I say, "You love him a lot?" She says, "Well of course, how could it be otherwise." I ask her to tell me how much she loves him. She says, "Oh God, I'm so afraid of losing him." This

is a part of what her love is about. “Oh God, I’m so worried that he’s missing out on a lot of classes.”—he has no future in any case. “And I am so worried when he crosses the street.” I say, “What do you think—will we get love if we add up 15 fears?”

[everyone laughs]

Aś

This won’t give us love. Furthermore, we can give another person only what we have, not something we don’t have. I say, “Madam, do you realize what you have? Terrible anxiety because of this child. Panic because of this child. A 10-year-old boy. What are you giving him? You are finishing him off with your love every second in this way.”

This is why a guru in India says that a mother’s love for her child, or any love between us, is false. The same goes for Mary, whom one idolizes. This shouldn’t be done. Jesus told us very clearly to love the Lord more than our fathers, mothers, sons, even our own lives. And, thank God, that woman was quite smart—a doctor by the way. She had travelled to hospitals all over the world with her child. The right side of his body had failed to develop. And you could put your hand on his left side and bend it like that; the kid was only this thick in places.

Jž

I’ve never heard of anything like this before.

Aś

His body didn’t develop, and he just began to die slowly, because half of his body didn’t function anymore. And, thank God, the mother was quite smart. I convinced her that first of all she had to love God or something like that. She said, “How can I do it, what are you talking about?” Then I told her that she was

giving him the worst she could. I told her that she must go out there, get that, first love the Lord as Christians do, love her neighbor as herself. Why as herself? Because, as we spoke earlier, there is force, there is spirit, and it is not informed. You receive it clean, beautiful, useful. You must love yourself so that it does not change, so that your anxiety does not change what you received from there. Give it to the kid, then he will recuperate. And when we set this straight, she’ll be all up there *[points upwards]*, not looking at her child or at me. Here our head functions perfectly, here is where our energy center is, here we see how strong the connection is. She is all up there. And she left that kid to me—I stuffed him with energy springs so that they would pull his ribs apart like this. And he would say, “It hurts so much, I feel as if I’ve been run over by a car.” I’d reply, “It’s ok, kid, stay put.” After a month he got perfectly straight.

Jž

He recovered?

Aś

Yes, and his mother was up there.

[points upwards]

[everyone laughs]

Aś

Do you understand how we must leave Earth, leave our most cherished ones, so we can go out there and bring something back for them? This is the highest point of mastery. Not “let’s share what you and I have, a little for each, and we’ll survive somehow”.

[Raimundas giggles]

Aś

Another thing to be mentioned is that there is no such thing as truth. There is no such thing as truth on this Earth. But

people—just like Milda here—still keep making something up.

[everyone laughs]

AŠ

This other time another woman sits in front of me and says, “I teach my children that truth is the most important thing.” I ask her, “Madam, are you cold?” She says, “No, not at all.” I continue, “Why are you wearing those clothes then, what are you hiding? You go to the restroom, you lock the door. Are you hiding something?”

RM

I think there is also such a thing as chemistry. And the way we feel is very much conditioned by chemical processes. A balance or imbalance of a certain element, for instance, completely changes one’s worldview. Do you account for chemistry in any way?

AŠ

Chemistry is subject to spirit. So let’s say we are created by that grand system—there is a design that determines we are like this, and function in this way. And the system designed this in the best way it could. If we submitted to the system fully, we’d live for a hundred years, and all of the chemical processes would be beneficial for us. But when we disturb those processes, begin to think this way or that way, we enter into a conflict with them. Then there is a problem. But only because we put them out of tune.

GD

So you’d say the process takes place in a simple way, with a predetermined duration.

AŠ

The process takes place in a very useful way. This is why there is no conflict. There is no fundamental conflict with either physics or chemistry. We have a need for

chemistry when we disturb something and wonder how to restore it. Then we are given some medicament with some potassium, some magnesium, which we lost for one reason or another. As such, everything is finely arranged.

JŽ

But at the same time this process levels everything.

AŠ

Yes, it does. While meditating we are all the same, even gender disappears. I want to explain to my students somehow what kind of state this is, to be merged. For instance, imagine standing on a sidewalk and having to cross a street with heavy traffic. You don’t really think in that moment “I am a man and I cannot cross it”, or “I am a woman and those boars do not make way for me”. No, we want to cross it, whether we are a man or a woman. Do we have a gender then, if we are thinking only about this? We have no gender, no name, let alone academic status, no year of birth, no sore feelings; we just need to get to the other side. So, what is left on the sidewalk? Maybe nothing? No, there is something there. And if you experience this, you go towards it, towards this feeling, and enter it. Then there is no thought, no gender, no volume, no measures, only that place. One must concentrate to do that, not just drink some wine and have a chat, but concentrate. Exit into that state.

JŽ

But it seems to me that this moment of crossing the street is a particularity, it is a certain situation that has a direction, a certain meaning. Meanwhile, the system of systems looks more like a thing that one must in some way create so that it can happen, but in reality is more of an end in itself. And it levels everything in

this sense. I don't know how to put it exactly, but it becomes this pure abstraction.

AŠ

More than that—not even abstraction remains.

[everyone laughs]

GD

It is not a purposeful thing at all. It is pure being. Then neither what you create nor what you don't create exists.

JŽ

Right.

AŠ

In fact, a human being can only be in two places, or in between. Let's say, roughly, heaven and earth. So this is this nothing, either pure spirit or earth. And we keep dangling this way—we cannot merge with the spirit completely, because we were made as personalities; we will vanish if we merge. Like drops in the ocean, we will cease to exist as personalities. So far, we have to exist. But as soon as we come close to earth, we grow distant from the spirit, we become hungry. Earth is the place where energy is used up. We lose it, and pain comes. Our job is to keep dangling right here.

GD

How long do you think one can stay there?

AŠ

Where, on Earth?

GD

No, in that in-between place.

AŠ

We should be there all the time.

RM

And what does your system say about authority? For example, you are referring to your students as students.

AŠ

It's bad. It's a useless thing. Any authority, any group of people, we Lithuanians. *[laughs]* We are sufferers of some lung disease, we have created a society. *[everyone laughs]*

AŠ

It is an inferiority complex.

JŽ

But you yourself have some circle of followers, which is also a community of sorts.

AŠ

That's what I tell them: this is bad. *[everyone laughs]*

MŠ

Now wasn't it you who was teaching that there must be a pyramid, the lower layer?

AŠ

A pyramid?

MŠ

Yes, you said so a while ago. *[everyone laughs]*

AŠ

I know nothing of it.

JŽ

He takes his words back now. He doesn't recognize the pyramid anymore.

MŠ

You said there had to be a supporting base.

AŠ

No, no pyramids.

RM

I reckon that Frank Ocean doesn't remember any pyramids either.

AŠ

We belong to no one. In addition, everything must be very simple. If it's not simple, it's suspicious. It means there's something we don't know.

GD

I am interested in those forms of simplicity too, such as city layouts or methods of state organization. How everything really has so many particular features and so much complexity, but on the other hand retains—let's say parenthetically—the most primitive forms of movement or appearance that recur in so many different things, from plankton or algae to cities. And the way we deal with immaterial things—if we put them in some map we would see this recognizable, perfectly familiar thing, when we never realized we had been organizing it this way. It is interesting. But I wanted to go back to what you said about that order of art—that there is art, then the layer of culture that channels it to the people—and all of this related to cosmic calmness, which can be reached. Still, I don't see any place for innovation and the pursuit of novelty. For instance, you say that art is everywhere, we want it and we seek it, but then there are also artists who seem to constantly desire to surpass themselves. What do you think about this quest for new things, and why do people engage in it at all?

AŠ

I think that medium levels of art in a work are not enough anymore. This is the reason behind interdisciplinary art, when

each generation manages to stuff in more art. I have separated the element of 'art' and the element of 'work' in the notion of the artwork. The function of the work is to create a form that is as conducive to art as possible. Thus over time, each generation creates ever more complex or simple new forms that can accumulate more art in them.

GD

It's like computer innovation: computers become smaller, but their capacities grow.

AŠ

Art would not have emerged if people had not needed it. It is like food. It emerged, who knows when. People first got the idea of sacred oak, sacred river, sacred relationship between the banks, relationship with the sky or something else. Precisely at this point they gave significance to relationships, they began to focus on them. Then you understand how much art there is in it. That sacred oak is very important because it nourishes energetically. Suddenly autumn comes, winter comes, the leaves fall. It becomes bad, the relationships have changed, there is no art. Man ran back to his hut and drew that oak for himself on the door. He sits there during the winter and feels fine. Then he realizes that it is not enough for some reason. Petras can do miraculous things, so he asks Petras to come and carve some ornaments in the window shutters, and he's alive again. And thus professional art emerged from folk art. It would seem that there are so many things in folk art, but then you see that there are also professional artists who manage to squeeze more into some works of art. Those innovations are important in this sense. This is also our salvation, our lifebuoy; we produce intermediaries that provide this. One may not do that as well.

GD

This is exactly why I am asking this, because I believe that, for instance, it took you more energy to do those photographs than making mediocre conventional art, the sort that was usual at the time. But this motivation, this moment when this motivation and conviction that it should be done this way emerges, that intrigues me.

JŽ

Algirdas, what about your patients, or however you call the people you work with? How does it happen, in a conversation or in some other way?

Aš

Raimundas knows [*laughs*]*—*he went through it. You see, when a person has become ill, it means he does not know. He is lost, he is mistaken. This mistake can be corrected in several ways. Imagine a person coming to me and cursing someone nastily—his neighbors, his employer, someone else. The entire world is flawed for him, and he curses it relentlessly. You put your hands on his head, on his back. You see that there is no one to speak with. A madman. But the problem overwhelms him so much that he is unable to speak. Then I do what I did to you the last time—remember when something leaked into your hands? Then the person calms down. I ask him why he doesn't curse the world anymore. "Oh, it has passed, I feel better now", he says. What this means is that his worldview has changed. At first he regarded the world with such anger that he could not stop himself from barking at it. Now he looks at the world much more lightly—his worldview has changed, without a single word.

JŽ

So language is not a very important aspect?

Aš

Sometimes you have to tell him that he should stay away from making the same mistakes he did before. You have to tell him. But you can only tell it after he's already like this, when he can hear.

Mš

When he has received at least this initial dose.

Aš

You see, you only need to understand what creation is. He has created this kind of life for himself; we have created a different one. What is creation? We could start with Adam and Eve, you know, but we must realize that everything is made of two things. The whole world, us ourselves, the things inside ourselves—all of this is made of two things. These two things are information and energy. Energy does not know what to do; we give it a direction, set a goal, and then this energy works. This is how creative work functions. Each of our words has a different vibration. If you are angry it vibrates one way, and if you are in love then you, your environment, and everything else vibrate completely differently. So when we say a word, we can say it in such a way that we will remember it for the rest of our life. Alternatively, we can barely mumble it. What is the difference between these two things? We create a shape that is high or low in energy depending on how much energy we put into this shape or information. And this energy acts along the way paved by this information; it goes and works along this way. This is how creative work takes place. If I say this and the person believes me and embraces it, this enters him and affects that person.

More than that, energy vibrates the way this word was uttered some time in the past, and from time to time that vibration becomes information again. The human being knows how it should be by hearing it. In other cases we say, “Those thoughts, those same thoughts keep nagging at me”. What does this mean? When you linger over something for a long time, you create a formation that has a lot of force and vibrates in a precise way, and from time to time this becomes the same thought. And it is pretty much impossible to drive these thoughts off if you have that formation inside you. This energy is referred to as so-called ‘spirit’ in Catholicism, and in the East it is called ‘the energy of the spring of life’.

JŽ

And what can help one to solve those troubles? Does consciousness help, or is it completely unrelated?

AŠ

Consciousness is important. First of all, being responsible for what you are doing. Every single one of your words has an effect. Folk wisdom says that a word is not a sparrow—you won’t catch it as it flies out. Of course this sounds very banal, but every word has an effect. There is no word that doesn’t have a reverberation. Put it this way: you say, “Oh, I love this person”, and then you see that this formation within you is such that if the relationship fails, you are ready to cut your chest open just to make it go away somehow. My students have a saying: “Think before you think.”
[everyone laughs]

AŠ

This is a very serious thing, because you must arrange your worldview, yourself, your relationships in a way that you don’t keep thinking nonsense.

RM

Yes, exactly. So that you don’t think some crap about other people, for instance. Or so that you don’t have a quarrel with someone while standing in a queue, because it will first of all affect you yourself in the most negative way.

AŠ

More than you could imagine. Even if you’re getting scolded by your boss, or are having an exam, and you just think to yourself, “I’ll do this nasty thing”—it never goes away. On the other hand, you can deal with people like I did the person whom I simply stroked with my hand, very tenderly, and his view of the world is already different. And if you come to a teacher who has a big influence on the way it goes for you, if you are considerate with him, he will be considerate with you—this will also be done.

RM

Yes, if you see people as good, for instance, they will be much better indeed. Let’s say I notice it purely empirically, but it is about some kind of relaxing. If you are more relaxed and you radiate good energy about the people you see, because you like them and you know that they have a good potential in any case, then they really transmit this potential. But if you see a person and think, “here, what a nasty guy, he’s probably thinking all kinds of nasty stuff about me”, then you’ve impeded everything.

AŠ

This positive thinking about people must originate in such things. Of course, if a dog bites you in the butt, and you think positive about it, that’s absurd. We must keep in mind that we are all made of the same stuff and we are good, but then we also make all sorts of stuff up about what is inside us, and how this or that thing

works. In fact, people have no clue how they must think, they don't know how they should be like. You see clearly that a person is lost. This is how you perceive them. If you saw a person lost in the woods, you wouldn't run to him and slay him—you would try to lead him out of the woods. In the same way, the drunkard is lost. The one waiting for heart surgery corroded himself and made it possible for this thing to happen to him. That aggressive thug is lost as well. This is how you must think somehow. When you go and see a drunkard lying in a puddle, don't think, "Oh, what a swine." You should think this way: "Would you like to be lying there in his place?" Nope. Then you think, "This person is so down on his luck. He made some mistakes at some point, just as we all do, and this is what all these mistakes did for him"... this is how you should think. Of course, this does not mean that we must come up to him, embrace him and interact with him. He must look for a way out, very gravely.

EN

Maybe something hasn't necessarily happened to him; maybe we should not think that he is feeling very bad?

AŠ

Well, we are not stupid, we understand that it is bad.

EN

Yes.

RM

I would like to speak about the concept of conflict then. For example, in revolutionary theory or in Western dialectics, conflict is one of the driving forces. That is, if you engage in conflict, you develop and do something further.

AŠ

This compels you to improve yourself so that you don't lose in some future conflict, then civilization evolves. Still, conflict is this thing of lowly forces, lowly vibrations. Last year I walked around Tibet—well, not all of it of course, but as much I saw—and I never saw any conflict between those people, between those environments, between animals. And it is so good to be there, such bliss. Conflicts make me think of business, industry, especially military industry. It's so good that Syria needs so many weapons now. What a great relief—jobs are created, economies go up. Every time war breaks out somewhere, it translates into great benefits. Now the American police are chasing after those guys in Boston. Just how valuable and necessary do they feel, how good do we feel that we armed them and gave them those helmets. Now imagine that there are no criminals. Millions and billions of those police officers lose their jobs and go on the streets.

RM

They would get retrained. Well, yes, then one would need to fundamentally change society as a whole; create anarchy, that is. I had several conversations recently about the fact that if society was much more complex and had no disciplinary structures, it would still survive. Of course, some structure would probably be created—say, a state or a semi-state. But the way it is now speaks about a fear of complexity, it seems to me.

AŠ

People would work less. Three hours per day would be enough. Just like some aboriginals living in the woods—it takes them four hours per day to take care of food, maybe replace some leaves on the roofs when they are torn by wind, while the rest of their time is spent in rituals

and festivals. And of course one does not need to work more than necessary for a decent living.

MŠ

Elena looks as if she is scared! [*laughs*] Algirdas scares everyone the first time they meet him.

GD

New things are scary.

RM

But the Western counter-argument would be that the average life expectancy of these aboriginals, say, is about 40 or 50 years, while we now live for 80 years on average. But we must work more to live even longer.

AŠ

Well, you see, let's take a simple farmer who lives off the land: in spring he sows and in autumn he harvests—it's the same thing for him all the time. He has been doing this for 80 years, but when death comes, he would like to keep doing it for another year, his 81st year. And us outside observers think, "What's the difference?" To regard death as some kind of punishment—that is the mistake.

RM

I, for one, would not even want to be that farmer. I imagine the routine of repetitions, in my life or in anybody else's life, as a constant. In this sense, even if it seems to you that you are changing, transforming from one activity to another, there are still certain repetitions that are always at work. But I personally would not want to be a part of such a mega-repetitive structure as the life of a farmer, for example knowing when I must come out with a plow, when I must do something.

MŠ

Like a squirrel doing its rounds in that wheel, feeling happy.

AŠ

I think the only difference is that your wheel is bigger.

RM

Yes, perhaps the wheel is just larger.

AŠ

For instance, it may not end with your life. You can go only halfway through it. [*everyone laughs*]

GD

A fragment of the wheel.

JŽ

Algirdas, while listening to you, I keep thinking about the change of names. Inside this thinking of yours, one could essentially replace all notions with other words. Nothing would change.

AŠ

Indeed.

GD

Essentially, these words are just like how color photography is color photography.

JŽ

Or God, we could replace God with other words too.

AŠ

With anything. Freedom, truth, anything. Everything, nothing.

☪