

THE CURE FOR *CIVILITER MORTUUS*: COMPLEMENTARY VALUES OF PHENOMENOLOGY AND DEMOCRACY

Mindaugas Briedis

Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Department of Philosophy and Political Theory,
Saulėtekio al. 11, LT-10223 Vilnius, Lithuania
E-mail: mindaugas.briedis@hi.vgtu.lt

The core of this article is the ancient question concerning the individual person in relation to his/her society. This fundamental question of ethics and political philosophy is approached from the perspective of phenomenological philosophy. Hence, this article is an attempt to conjoin two prima facie inconsistent (because of category mistake) types of attitude towards reality and action, e.g. democracy and phenomenology. The thesis states that there is a common ground between the basic features of phenomenological method and the fundamental values of democracy. This paper explores the arguments that establish this parallelism between the values of democracy and phenomenology. One of the outcomes of this analysis will be the sketch of a new kind of virtue ethics and a new type of citizen, concerning new approaches to identity problem. In this respect method of phenomenology can be used as a technique (phronesis) for a future citizenship. On the other hand, this perspective helps to re-evaluate the treasures of antique democracy and compare them with contemporary transformations of democracy in political, social and everyday spheres.

Keywords: phenomenology, democracy, everyday attitudes, identity, values.

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Introduction

Phenomenology, first of all, is a method and democracy is a process of decision making and any comparison seems to be some kind of category mistake (when things of one kind are presented as if they belonged to another). Although this article starts with well-known facts about phenomenology and democracy, it attempts to uncover common ground between these two and the relevance of this parallelism to the problem of citizenship¹. In this article

I will also explore the interaction between phenomenology and democracy as a foundation for a new kind of virtue theory.

Phenomenology, as is well-known, represents one of the anti-metaphysical trends of modern philosophy. Its purpose is not a system, but efforts to define a context in which human knowledge begins. In Husserlian sense, it discovers the basic conditions under which knowledge is possible (Husserl 1931). According to a well-known editor of volumes dedicated to various phenomenological issues, Robert Solomon, "Husserl's phenomenology takes Cartesian attention to the primacy of the

¹ *This problem can be articulated as a question: "what are the necessary integral parts (rights, duties, temper and etc.) of a good citizen?"*

first-person experience and the Kantian search for basic “a priori” principles as its *modus operandi*” (Solomon 2001: 1). Besides this “classic” understanding of phenomenology, later I will add to it the connotation of *practical philosophy*, where attentiveness to one’s own experience and living world is much more complicated than in the case of scientific approach. Therefore, I will pay special attention to phenomenological method as it is now being practiced in the exploration of the world of our lived existence. What about the “individual of today”?

The existence of individual in a global world is constantly organized through media; therefore, various aspects of everyday activity of this individual self are arranged with the demands of democracy. However, it is still not clear what the notion of “democracy” exactly means or how it could and should be exercised. It is only clear enough that democracy should embrace certain values like consensus, liberty, equality, correct representation, civil activity etc., and, of course, autonomy.

On the other hand, the goal of a phenomenology is to describe, “what is really going on”, or put it differently, uncover the essence of various processes, presented in my consciousness and reach for a correct interpretation of oneself and the other. This task leads us to the already mentioned “democratic” values or in the case of individual citizenship – virtues.

I believe that the adequate approach to such values is cumulated in phenomenological philosophy which enables to re-examine and uncover democracy as something more than its political reductions, for example, *majority rule*.

“Values” of Phenomenology and Democracy

The word *Demos* in “democracy” means, first of all, not “majority” but ‘ruling’ held by “personality”, that is person with certain values or virtues which enable him/her to make decisions about

his/her life and the life of his/her fellow citizens adequately. This requirement for a new kind of citizen was well-known in ancient Greece where not all human beings could participate in this self-governance; but it is almost forgotten now, under the pressure of the popularity of democracy as majority rule.

The very possibility to educate oneself, to be able to open up new possibilities and life-paths and become a full member of social co-operation is no longer possible on the metaphysical grounds describing monadic individuals, but rather through phenomenological (desubstantialised) reconstruction of the self while reflecting on everyday socio-cultural interactions.

Democracy as a process presupposes not only the vision of society without the need for external violence but also guaranties the opportunity to reshape individual and collective identities. Phenomenological method in turn helps to uncover the elements of individual identity, its cultural conditions and, at the same time, gives a perspective for a re-evaluation of traditional values, everyday practices, individual habits, social roles beyond the satisfaction of narrow utilitarian needs: “natural world includes not only the other things – more or less alive, but this is also the world with values, duties and practical interests” (Mickūnas, Stewart 1994: 44). Hence, phenomenology appears to be very close to the mode of human being which Aristotle called *phronesis*, because it deals with the practical spheres or even situations where various aspects of this “living” human being are most sharply manifested – meal, conversation, promenade, memory, attention, comprehension, decision making etc.

According to phenomenology (Эмбри 2005), unarticulated attitudes and eventually following practices shape individual paradigm of intentional processes and are correlative with personal identity. Attitudes take form of traditions (in a case of group) and habits (in a case of individual) which is reflected in everyday ethics and aesthetics. The re-evaluation of these usually unarticulated attitudes is crucial for

the authentic comprehension and cognition of oneself and *the other*.

While reflecting on phenomenological task, Spiegelberg writes: "its ultimate objective is the examination and justification of all our beliefs, both ordinary and scientific, by the test of intuitive perception" (Spiegelberg 1960: 64). Hence, in phenomenology it is held that the flow of intentional processes is dependent upon some presuppositions, which Lester Embree called "attitudes" including cognitive, axiological and volitional approaches, "past", "future" and "present" temporal modes, "us" and "them" divisions and etc. (Эмбри 2005). Phenomenology can uncover those individual and cultural attitudes (in the forms of traditions, customs and individual habits) which are usually unarticulated but really uphold culture and guide its member's patterns of behavior. From phenomenological point of view it is a mistake to reduce one's theoretical and practical preferences to static opinions about things because phenomenological epoche can be extrapolated to any phenomena.

As was mentioned above, the actuality of this specific case of intentionality (individual self) or "identity" cannot be grasped "theoretically" (as some kind of a "substance") but discloses itself "practically" and this usually means pre-reflectively. Pre-reflective sphere is always under the power of various attitudes so we can conclude that "identity", first of all, consists of these attitudes which determine intentional processes and eventually the whole of practice.

Socrates already underlined this intellectual and ethical duty of every mature agent to understand t(his) pre-reflective state and its "outside" roots (influences) and re-evaluate the specific attitude towards the wholeness of environment. Besides, he uncovered the path to the meaning of objective values through the reflection of subjective experience: "Socrates appears to have had a gift <...> of being all things to all man" (Ferguson 1970: 4)².

For this, firstly, we need to make our own attitude an issue (usually in conflict with the other attitudes on the same object), secondly – deconstruct it and thirdly – validate it (or not). This enterprise, according to Embree, "can reveal our attitude as the case of rationalization (in a Freudian sense), as ideology or just a simple mistake" (Эмбри 2005: 199–200). Finally, the position of intense observance of everydayness not only suspends traditions, customs and habits but also can repudiate them if the observance does not end with obvious evaluation. This brings us to the problem of "values".

Famous Lithuanian phenomenologist Algis Mickūnas argues that from the phenomenological point of view, "both empirical and metaphysical accounts on values are misleading" (Mickūnas, Stewart 1994: 122–124). Empiricists seek to root values in natural world while presenting it as the only objective reality. Metaphysical attitude, on the other hand, is too formal, abstract and "transcendent" in traditional sense.

But this "phenomenological fact" that every state or act of consciousness has its correlate as an intended object, means that subjective – objective dichotomy no longer holds. Secondly, phenomenology states that the process of valuation is always an experiencing of something what is already presented to consciousness. Thirdly, in ethics of phenomenology as in Kantian ethics (Kant 1964), all basic notions are senseless without postulated freedom. What is added to Kant here is the precise description of fundamental human condition, which tells us that freedom is the very constitution of human consciousness. This means that the main criteria for choosing concrete values are the respect of other person and the responsibility before him as the center of certain practice and correlate of my own "world".

From the phenomenological point of view, human mode of being is pure actuality, not individual substance and this actuality realizes itself due to the structured flow of the acts of consciousness. If we identify person with this

² *Sounds as the task of phenomenology, doesn't it?*

flow, the main personal characteristics become attentiveness, critical attitude and openness. Phenomenology seeks to uncover the meanings of already presented moral experiences and eventually opens new possibilities for action.

This mode of human being transcends Kantian *pure reason* and eventually transcends formal ethics. Scheler argues that values are of emotional nature which attunes human being with reality, life in all its concrete forms (Scheler 1973). Values stripped from emotional content and left with formal clothing are destructive (as with democracy *only* as a right to vote). The thing is that, according to phenomenology, emotion is a kind of value – attitude, or intentional process. But again, moods and feelings are usually habitual (once we learn to feel something, we will feel it every time it appears in our horizon of experience), and if they are value-attitudes, we must constantly reflect on them because many intended objects (correlates of emotions) have their culture-contextual characteristics.

“Phenomenological values” are those (aesthetical, juridical, cognitive and etc.) which bind human beings together in rational, educational and cultural co-existence. But all these values are for a person rewritten anew for the age after the substantial notion of the self. This person is not reducible to nothing or no one else and one is the absolute and the concrete centre of all acts. On the other hand, the value of a person is arranged with responsibility for constant critical re-evaluation of oneself as the institution which seeks to be in a position to decide one’s own life and life of others. This is the absolute foundation of all other values and this is where phenomenology and democracy embraces each other.

As Socrates was mentioned, I find important complementarity between phenomenology, democracy and Greek virtue ethics. Here virtues are in some sense values in itself – they are prior to social and juridical duties or definite conditions of “good” life (friendship, power, health, fame, wealth or a simple walk)³. The possession

of such values ensures authentic living as well as the ground for proper functioning of democratic mechanisms, such as communication, free play of ideas, development of distinctive individuality and a spread of spirit of social co-operation, reciprocity of diverse views and experiences. Such an outlook gives a new meaning to phenomenology as practical philosophy: constantly re-interpret living world, underlie new possibilities and re-evaluate the democratic ideal itself. This re-evaluation should uphold the real living context of contemporary citizens.

Re-evaluation of “everyday” attitudes for cultural dialogue

Everydayness and the problem of identity

The goal of this chapter is to conjoin the true locus of the philosophical rehabilitation of everydayness (after the dominant “platonic” version of it as the sphere of share inauthentic naivety), namely, phenomenology with the practical sphere where various aspects of this “living” being are most sharply manifested – dialogue of cultures. This compound problem can be approached properly on the grounds of phenomenological method which enables the observance of everyday practices and attitudes.

Phenomenology emerges as a new way of dealing with the problems that surround cultural interactions (dependence on one or another

³ For example, we can deduce ability to be silent as virtue from the fact that the necessary condition of every dialogue is some kind of a silence. But it is not silence in the sense of loneliness or emptiness, but rather a creative, positively charged vacuum or the state of solitude. On the other hand, this positive silence is the main precondition for awe and respect without which no dialogue is possible. If all these conditions (of dialogue) are fulfilled, we can uncover the “democratic way of everyday-life”, which enables the dialogue with the other as a real exchange of experience. Without such exchange the conversation is merely about information, but usually is meaningless or even harmful.

cultural identity usually presupposes configuration of will to power and etc.), offers reflective analysis of those practices (everydayness and its presuppositions) where attitudes towards the other or self-image are most obvious.

Now when it is clear that for the sake of cultural dialogue we need to suspend (*epoche*) any attitude towards the other cultural identity, we can extract new means for the understanding the other from the careful observance of such areas of individual's everydayness or everyday world (wrapped in a bigger context of cultural identity) as music, dance, meal, cultural heroes, myths, clothing, which in turn are deduced from ethnical, religious and linguistic specifics of that particular culture. Therefore, we can get to the core of cultural dialogue right through the observance of everyday practices (for example, sharing a meal is not about eating but firstly serves as an integral part of socialization process in a broader sense). Finally, the position of intense observance of everydayness not only suspends traditions, customs and habits but also can repudiate them if the observance does not end with obvious evaluation.

Every cultural identity can be divided into different attitudes, which can be grouped or analyzed by phenomenologist in isolation. Basic ones usually are attitudes towards gender, race, environment and etc. Careful observance (as the second step of analysis after the problematic aspects of something that was obviously clear are posed) of such attitudes can uncover that they are seen as attitudes of, for example, supremacy. Embree gives us an excellent example when the primal primitive attitude of dominance or supremacy in such cases can be changed with egalitarian one (Эмбри 2005: 213–220). Further re-examining of everyday positioning towards the other can (depending on context) evaluate intelligence rather than power (love), such features as care and mutual assistance rather than competition (gender), gratitude, respect and care rather than exploitation (ecology). This is definitely crucial for developing dialogue of cultures.

For democratic purposes it is crucial that we could constantly re-evaluate and change our attitudes eventually reshaping our everyday life. For this one ought to maintain his ignorance and work with oneself (in Socratic sense). Although it is difficult to change our attitudes as the basis for traditions (for groups) and habits (for individuals), it is necessary for overcoming our lack of intensive relation to the world, which is the basis for the possibility to transform our own identity (what in turn is the goal of such processes as democracy). Moreover if our attitudes are mostly the product produced not by our direct experience but constitute the heritage of communication with others, this communication is essential in transforming and re-evaluating these attitudes as well.

In postmodern era new approaches to the anthropological question uncovered many forces that shaped modes of human “everyday” identity in the form of ideologies. The last ideology of western civilization is consuming, manifesting in the variety of “lifestyles”. These new representations of social and cultural power (media, advertisement, “success formulas” and etc.) a) denounced traditional authorities (religion, customs and etc.), b) fashioned individual tastes of social agents and this ultimately, c) determined their identity. Changes in lifestyle narratives based on social changes in economics and values are considered as preliminary conditions for identity fragmentation and *everyday* ethics and aesthetics determination (Černevičiūtė 2008).

It was mentioned above that phenomenological observance of everyday practices can change attitude and eventually the estimation of traditions in the forms of customs and habits. But the other side of this deconstruction of traditions is a new crisis considering the identity problem in modern consumer society. In postmodern society individual experience is very fragmented, transient and diverse. This disintegration of experience eventually influences the understanding of personal and cultural identity. Today the problem of identity

is determined by the market of lifestyles which additionally serve as the instruments in social competition (Černevičiūtė 2008).

Different relations between citizens and their living context

There are many ways to show how phenomenological attitude can be applied to the reflection of everyday and/or socio-cultural world⁴. This also means that phenomenology contains infinite interdisciplinary potential. In this last chapter I will make only few comments on different aspects of this “everydayness”. First of all, I will explore “urban” environment.

In urban life and language the existential self searching for identity is determined and constituted by urban *motion*. This motion is the true content of one’s “way” of life. Streets and areas of “slow motion” (squares, plazas etc.) are the fundamental aspects of urban life. This is even called something like “pedestrian culture” and was already exploited by an all-watching engineers of consuming systems, who purposely constructed shopping environment for these pedestrians – simulated streets, colonnades and etc. (for instance, the biggest shopping mall in Vilnius – “Akropolis”). I want to remind you that “promenade”⁵ was a method and sometimes purpose of educational process in ancient Greece. Today this feature of urban life ensures slow but steady buying. What would be the difference between promenade in the ancient Athens and contemporary Vilnius? This rather strange question reveals more substantive differences between these two partners of cultural dialogue.

⁴ *This problematic distinction between “natural” and “socio-cultural” world are not be reflected here in appropriate length. I can only notice that today it is fashionable to uncover various socio-cultural presuppositions of everyday behaviour and comprehension of “natural” world, while ancient and medieval philosophers tended to identify these two.*

⁵ *This is also the name of another shopping mall in Vilnius.*

Contemporary “apocalyptic” cities (New York, Hong Kong and someday in appropriate degree – Vilnius etc.) have a very distinctive feature – very complicated net of social spaces. This looks like a web where the “real” zones of human activity are only intersections (interests of consumption) and the biggest part of the net is missing. The “nodes” of this net are work places (corporate offices), points of education (crowded schools and mega-universities) or places of spare time spending (bars, theatres, concert halls). The space between them looks like an obstacle, brutally requiring energy (expensive traveling), attention (crime danger) or rush (time wasting). Therefore, the world “beyond” these cozy nodes is hostile and it is better to forget it till the degree of “non-real”. Eventually, when individual enters such interspace, he ceases to exist, too. This unpleasant trip from “points” “A” to “B” is usually filled with a different sort of information consuming and stimulus (magazines, car smoking, music and video devices, cell phones activities) to which one can respond endlessly in order to escape this not uncontrolled (useless, unpleasant) and therefore dreadful space. It is more comfortable to wake up and start to exist, for example, in a loaded pub at 18 p.m.

When an individual self is cut off from environment with the help of technologies or personal (“cool”) attitude, he/she misses the point of ancient “urban motion” understanding, where individual self does not stand in front of environment looking for an easier way of consumption, but organically coalesces with a traveling space, new landscapes, smells, faces and etc. On the other hand, he/she misses the point of “democratic way of life” as I presented it earlier.

Here I must reconsider one of the most known features of ancient Athens – i.e. democracy, which I understand not only as a public speaking, but firstly as the dialogue with other members of society, participation in the process of decision making (about the things that are crucial for my own life) and the possibility to

change identity. This understanding of democracy automatically indicates concrete features of individual, which can be trained and infiltrated in everyday behavior.

In ancient Athens, the true living rests exactly *in between* points A and B, where we can stop while moving, open up our selves for a new experience, and such attitude would be the equivalent of ancient Greek *virtue*. Urban life boils not in buildings but in this *in between*. The public urban places that surround islands of private life are the real place of urban life richness. But sometimes, and this is largely true about Vilnius and other post-soviet cities, it looks like public places still are hostile to citizens and *vice versa*.

The creativity of citizens, the richness of their everydayness, cultural depth and perspectives of tolerances are uncovered in various practices which take place in public places: citizens can stop for a short conversation, ask time or direction, argue, bargain, kiss, work and have rest. But, under different political regimes and urban philosophy forms of public life vary largely. Regrettably, contemporary society lives under such "urban philosophy" which reduces public spaces to narrow strictly structured utilitarian activities. Although we live in a post-totalitarian regime, still it is not acceptable to perform free, non-formal, "unnecessary" actions in public, for example, sitting on a pavement or dancing in park without any clear reason. In soviet period non-formal physical activities were banned because of ideological motives, today – obeying laws of consumer's society. However, if in soviet period zones of free thought were moved to private palaces like "kitchens" (this living place still has many intellectual connotations) and flats (paradoxically) became real public places, today this phenomena is almost inconceivable, because of the lack of consuming potential in such private places. On the other hand, public spaces in Vilnius, occupied by consuming pedestrians, still remain the sites of unnatural, demonstrative activities.

The cultural tradition of post soviet countries is deformed and almost twenty years of capitalism only transferred and adapted symbols of tradition to various strategies of marketing and advertising. Today Lithuania evidences real boom of consuming which is the equivalent of reality when one's life is generated by media and giant supermarkets. These changes (crucial to everydayness) are accompanied by the transformations in living areas, when small flats of soviet type are displaced by a western type apartments or even private houses. The mood and dictate of this consuming relation to environment is obvious in public spheres and architecture as well. This changing landscape of everydayness is by no doubt closely related to identity problem and frameworks of a new cultural mood. Although this helps to understand the other (especially the western one) through the use of modern technologies and consuming commodities common to all western world, it also unifies potential partners of dialogue and blocks the very possibility of dialogue between the "I" and "Thou", having as basic disposition to the environment the "I-It" relation.

On the other hand, intense level of consuming and denouncement of traditional spiritual authorities stimulates counterculture and helps to consolidate different subgroups while creating new forms and practices of spirituality. The goal of this enterprise is to move from the biggest concern today (how to spend more money and have a fun time or how to kill reproving time and earn money right out of fun) to the real knowledge of what is really happening and this is the hope for the dialogue between culturally constituted individuals. Finally, every attitude discloses more about the mind which intends than about object intended, and phenomenology of culture finally is not about how "they" act but first of all how "we" approach it.

Enabling new possibilities is essential for the evolution of life. Therefore phenomenology as well as democracy assigns special, though secular, value to Kierkegaard's possibility and

Kantian basic question: “What may we hope?”. This question gives new understanding of phenomenology as practical philosophy, where openness and dynamics of meaning are more important than static truths. Phenomenology constantly re-interprets living world in that way which uncovers beliefs in possibilities, while these beliefs need to be constantly re-evaluated as the democratic ideal itself.

Conclusions

1. Phenomenology differently from metaphysics is much less concerned with the “hierarchy” of “natural” and “social” being and its ends and more inclined to appreciate and understand things for what they are. Hence in phenomenology we can see even the democratization of philosophy that is the liberation of philosophy from such traditional concerns. Phenomenology generates new outlooks and this is crucial for life of individual and society as well.
2. Democracy as a process presupposes not only the vision of society without the need of external violence but also guaranties the opportunity to reshape individual and collective identities. Phenomenological method uncovers the elements of individual identity, its cultural conditions and at the same time gives a perspective to re-evaluate traditional values, everyday practices, individual habits, social roles and etc.
3. Phenomenology emerges as a new way of dealing with the problems of democracy concerning cultural interactions. Fundamental question here is: “what validates one or another attitude towards the Other?”. Phenomenology offers reflective analysis of those practices where attitudes towards the other or self-image is most obvious.
4. There is a fundamental complementarity between phenomenology, democracy and virtue ethics. Here, virtues are intrinsic values, which are prior to social and juridical duties or definite conditions of “good” life. The possession of such values ensures authentic living as well as the ground for proper functioning of democratic mechanisms, such as communication, free play of ideas, creativity, development of distinctive individuality and a spread of spirit of social cooperation, reciprocity of diverse views and experiences.
5. The correspondence between the basic features of phenomenological method and fundamental principles of democracy conjoins phenomenological (reflective analysis, epoche, attentiveness to one’s own experience and environment, critical attitude, encounter, participation and openness) and democratic (critical thinking, social courage, care, respect, responsibility, re-evaluation of identity, communication, ability to decide) “values”. Those are the values, which bind human beings together in rational, educational and cultural co-existence.
6. Such an outlook gives a new meaning to phenomenology as practical philosophy: constantly re-interpret the living world, underlie new possibilities and re-evaluate the democratic ideal itself. This also means that phenomenology contains infinite interdisciplinary potential.
7. The careful observance and description of contemporary living contexts and especially post-soviet citizenship, disproves that the balance between the duties to himself, others and society and consumers needs is already reached. Similarly, we can doubt if the democratic atmosphere of social environment is already established.

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VAISTAI NUO CIVILITER MORTUUS NEGALIOS: DEMOKRATINIŲ IR FENOMENOLOGINIŲ VERTYBIŲ KOMPLEMENTARUMAS

Mindaugas Briedis

Straipsnio probleminę ašį sudaro dar antikoje suformuluoti fundamentalūs moralės, politinės (ir ne tik) filosofijos klausimai: kaip apibrėžti individo ir visuomenės santykį? Kokiomis savybėmis turi pasižymėti geras pilietis? Į šias problemas straipsnyje žvelgiama iš fenomenologinės filosofijos pozicijų. Taigi straipsnyje derinamos dvi prima facie nesuderinamos perspektyvos į kasdienę ir socialinę tikrovę, privatų ir viešą veiksmą, savo prigimtimi įtraukiančios tiek kasdienės, tiek filosofinės ir politinės-kultūrinės mąstymo formas: fenomenologija ir demokratija. Iškeliama tezė, kad egzistuoja paralelizmas tarp pamatinių fenomenologinės nuostatos bruožų ir svarbiausių demokratijos vertybių.

Kad pagrįstume šią tezę, būtina išspręsti tokius uždavinius – išryškinti bendriausias fenomenologinio mąstymo savybes; reabilituoti demokratijos sąvoką po jos redukavimo į politikos sritį, konkrečiai, „daugumos taisyklę“. Pateikti argumentus, pagrindžiančius fenomenologinės nuostatos ir demokratinių vertybių paralelizmą. Tai atlikus jau galima laisviau eskizuoti naujo tipo „dorybių teoriją“, kurioje fenomenologija pasitarnauja ir kaip naujo tipo pilietiškumo ugdymo instrumentas.

Tokia perspektyva reabilituoja fenomenologijos kaip fronetinio mąstymo galimybę. Kita vertus, leidžia iš naujo permąstyti antikinės demokratijos vertybes ir jų transformacijas šiandieniniame socialiniame politiniame ir kasdieniame gyvenime.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: demokratija, fenomenologinis metodas, išankstinės nuostatos, tapatumas, vertybės.

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