

The Philosophy of Parochialism

Originally published as *Filosofija Palanke*

The Philosophy of Parochialism is Radomir Konstantinovic's (1928–2011) most celebrated and reviled book. First published in Belgrade as *Filosofija palanke* in 1969, it attracted keen attention and controversy through its unsparing critique of Serbian and any other nationalism in Yugoslavia and beyond. The book was prophetic, seeming to anticipate not only the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, but also the totalitarian turn in politics across the globe in the first decades of the new century. With this translation, English-speaking audiences can at last discover one of the most original writers of eastern European late modernism, and gain an important and original perspective into contemporary politics and culture in the West and beyond. This is a book that seems to age in reverse, as its meanings become deeper and more universal with the passage of time.

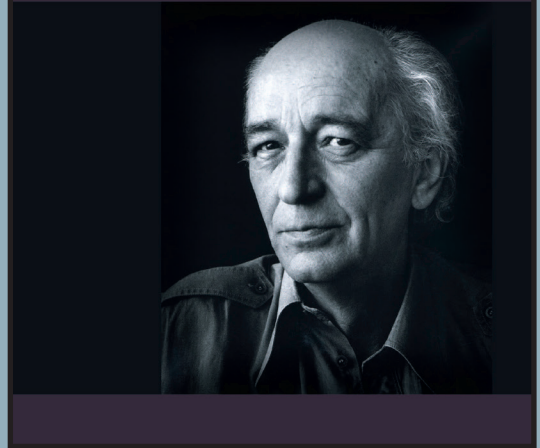
Konstantinovic's book resists easy classification, mixing classical, Montaigne-like essay, prose poetry, novel, and literary history. The word "philosophy" in the book's title refers to the solitary activity of reflection and critical thinking, and is also paradoxical: according to the author, a defining characteristic of parochialism is precisely its intolerance toward this kind of self-reflexivity. In Konstantinovic's analysis, parochialism is not a simply a characteristic of a geographical region or a cultural, political, and historical formation—these are all just manifestations of the parochial spirit as the spirit of insularity. His book illuminates the current moment, in which insularity undergirds not only ethnic and national divisions, but also dictates the very structure of everyday life, and where individuals can easily find themselves locked in an echo chamber of social media. *The Philosophy of Parochialism* can help us understand better not only the dead ends of ethnic nationalism and other atavistic ideologies, but also of those cultural forces such as digital technologies that have been built on the promise of overcoming those ideologies.

Radomir Konstantinovic (1928–2011) was a Serbian poet and novelist.

Edited and with an Introduction by Branislav Jakovljevic, Translation by Ljiljana Nikolic and Branislav Jakovljevic

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