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Struggle, Event, Media

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Why can the paradigm of representation not function in politics, nor in artistic modes of expression, and here especially in the production of works that employ moving images?

I will attempt to answer these questions by using the paradigm that imagines the constitution of the world from the relationship between event and multiplicity. Representation is conversely founded on the subject-work paradigm. In this paradigm the images, the signs and the statements have the function of representing the object, the world, whereas in the paradigm of the event, images, signs and statements contribute to allowing the world to happen. Images, signs and statements do not represent something, but rather create possible worlds. I would like to explain this paradigm using two concrete examples: the dynamic of the emergence and the constitution of post-socialist political movements and the way television functions, in other words, signs, images and statements in contemporary economy.

The days of Seattle were a political event, which – like every event – first generated a transformation of subjectivity and its own mode of sensibility. The motto "a different world is possible" is symptomatic for this metamorphosis of subjectivity and its sensibility.

The difference between this and other political events of the recently ended century is radical. For example, the event of Seattle no longer refers to class struggle and the necessity of taking power. It does not mention the subject of history, the working class, its enemy capital, or the fatal battle that they must engage in. It restricts itself to announcing that "something possible has been created", that there are new possibilities for living, and that it is a matter of realizing them; that a possible world has been expressed and that it must be brought to completion. We have entered into a different intellectual atmosphere, a different conceptual constellation.

Before Seattle, a different world was merely virtual. Now it is actual or possible, but it is something actual, something possible that has to be realized. The transformation of subjectivity must invent time-space arrangements that watch over this re-evaluation of values, which was able to bring forth a generation that has grown up after the fall of the Berlin wall, in the period of major American expansion, and in the New Economy. Twofold creation, twofold individuation, twofold becoming. The signs, images and statements play a strategic role in this twofold becoming: they contribute to allowing the possible to emerge, and they contribute to its realization. It is at this point that the "conflict" is confronted with the dominant values. The implementation of new possibilities for living runs into the existing organization of power and the established values. In the event, one sees what is intolerable about an era and the new possibilities for living that it contains at the same time. The mode of the event is the problematical. The event is not the solution to a problem, but rather opens up what is possible. For Mikhail Bakhtin, the event reveals the nature of being as a question or as a problem – specifically in such a way that

the sphere of the being of the event is simultaneously that of "answering and questioning".

The days of Seattle involve a corporeal arrangement, a combination of bodies (with their actions and passions) composed of individual and collective singularities (multiplicity of individuals and organizations – Marxists, ecologists, union activists, Trotskyists, media activists, "witches", Black Bloc, etc., which practice specific corporeal relations of co-functioning); and there is an arrangement of statements, a regime of statements formed from a multitude of statement regimes (the statements of the Marxists are not the same as those of the media activists, the ecologists or the "witches", etc.). The collective statement arrangements are not expressed solely through language, but also through the technological expression machines (Internet, telephone, television, etc.). Both arrangements are constructed in terms of the current relationships of power and desire.
The event turns away from historical conditions, in order to create something new: a new combination of bodies (actions and passions, which are strung together among the demonstrators, for example) and that which is expressed, the verbal statement as result, as effect of the corporeal combination: a different world is possible.
What is expressed (the meaning) does not describe the bodies nor represent them. The possible world exists completely, but it does not exist outside that through which it is expressed (the slogans, the TV reports, the Internet communications, the newspapers).
The event actualizes itself in souls in the sense that it generates a change in sensibility (as a non-corporeal transformation), which brings forth a new valuation: one recognizes what is intolerable about an era and the new possibilities for living that it implies.
The possible world has already been imbued with a certain reality

through talking, through communicating, but this reality must now be completed, it must be made by making new corporeal arrangements.
The event constitutes the relationship between the two types of arrangements; it is the event that distributes the subjectivities and objectivities that will overthrow the configurations of bodies and signs.

Everyone came with their own corporeal machine and their own expression machine and returned home with the necessity of newly defining these in relation to that which was done and said. The forms of political organization (of the co-functioning of the bodies) and the statement forms (the theories and statements about capitalism, the subjects, forms of exploitation, etc.) are to be weighed and related to the event. Even the Trotskyists are compelled to ask: What happened? What is happening? What will happen? And to report what they do at the event (the organization) and what they say (the discourse they conduct).
At this point we see that the order of verbal statements is what is problematic. All are compelled to open themselves to the event, i.e. to open themselves up to the area of questions and answers. Those who hold answers prepared in advance (and there are many of those), miss the event. That is the political drama that we lived after 1968, missing the event, because the questions already had their predetermined answers (Maoism, Leninism, Trotskyism).
The event insists, which means it continues to have an impact, to produce effects: the discussions about what capitalism is and about what a revolutionary subject is today, are making good progress all over the world in light of the event.
Language, signs, and images do not represent something, but rather contribute to making it happen. Images, languages and signs are constitutive of reality and not of its representation.

Let us turn now to the question of how signs, images and statements are used by corporations in contemporary capitalism. The corporation does not generate the object (the commodity), but rather the world in which the object exists. Nor does it generate the subject (worker and consumer), but rather the world in which the subject exists.
In contemporary capitalism, we must first distinguish the enterprise from the factory. Two years ago a large French multinational corporation announced that it would part from eleven production sites. This separation between enterprise and factory is a borderline case, but one that is becoming increasingly frequent in contemporary capitalism. In the majority of cases, these two functions are mutually integrated; we presume, however, that their separation is symbolic of a more profound transformation of capitalist production. What will this multinational corporation retain? What does it understand as "enterprise"? All the functions, all the services and all the employees that allow it to create a world: marketing, service, design, communication, etc.

The enterprise generates a service or a product. In its logic, the service or the product exists, just like consumers and producers, for its world, the world of the enterprise; the latter must be internalized in the souls and bodies of the workers and consumers. In contemporary capitalism, the enterprise does not exist outside the producers and consumers that give it expression. Its world, its objectivity and its reality mix with the relationships that the enterprise, the workers and the consumers have with one another.

Communication / Consumption

Let us start with consumption, because the relationship between supply and demand has been reversed: the customers are the pivotal point of the enterprise strategy. In reality, this definition from political economics does not even touch the problem: the sensational rise, the strategic role played in contemporary capitalism by the expression machine (of opinion, communication, marketing and thus the signs, images and statements). Consumption is not reduced to the act of buying and carrying out a service or a product, as political economics and its criticism teach, but instead means, first of all, belonging to a world or a universe. Which world is this? It is enough to turn on the television or the radio, go for a walk in a city, buy a weekly or daily newspaper, to know that this world is constructed through a statement arrangement, through a sign regime, the expression of which is called advertising, and what is expressed (the meaning) is a prompt, a command, representing per se a valuation, a judgment, a view of the world, of themselves and others. What is expressed (the meaning) is not an ideological valuation, but rather an incentive (it gives signs), a prompt to assume a form of living, i.e. a way of dressing, having a body, eating, communicating, residing, moving, having a gender, speaking, etc. Television is a stream of advertising that is regularly interrupted by films, entertainment programs and news programs. According to the way Jean-Luc Godard depicts it, if you take out all the pages of a newspaper that contain advertising, it is reduced to the editorial by the editor-in-chief. And radio is just as much a stream of advertising and programs, in which it is increasingly difficult to distinguish where one begins and the other ends. Unfortunately, we must agree with Deleuze in his conviction that the enterprise has a soul, that marketing has become its strategic center, and that advertising specialists are "creative".

The enterprise exploits to its own advantage the dynamic of the event and the process of constituting difference and repetition by distorting them and making them dependent on the logic of enhanced value.
For the enterprise the "event" means advertising (or communication or marketing). We will analyze this particular aspect of enterprise strategy in relation to the constitution of the consumers, its customers. Enterprises now invest up to 40% of their turnover in marketing, advertising, styling, design, etc. These investments in the expression machine can far surpass investments in "labor".

Advertising – like every "event" – first distributes modes of perception in order to prompt ways of living; it actualizes modes of affecting and being affected in souls, in order to realize them in bodies. With advertising and marketing, the enterprise effects incorporeal transformations (the slogans of advertising), which are stated through bodies and only through bodies. The incorporeal transformations first produce a change in sensibility (or that is what they would like to produce), a change in our way of making value judgments.
The incorporeal transformations have no referents, because they are auto-referential. There are no antecedent needs, no natural necessities that would satisfy production. The incorporeal transformations pose the valuations and their object at the same time that they produce them. Advertising represents the spiritual dimension of the "event", which the enterprise and the advertising agencies invent using images, signs and statements, and which must be realized in bodies. The material dimension of the event, its realization, is completed when the ways of living, ways of eating, of having a body, dressing, residing, etc. are incarnated in bodies: one lives materially among the goods and services that one buys, in the

houses, among the furniture, with the objects and services that one has seized as "possible", in the flows of information and communication, in which we have submerged ourselves. We go to bed, we rush to do this and that, while that which is "expressed" continues to circulate (it "insists") in the hertz waves, in the telematic networks, and in the newspapers. It doubles the world and our existence as "something possible", which is, in fact, already a command, an authoritarian slogan expressing itself through seduction.
In which form does marketing produce actualization in the soul? Which type of subjectivation is mobilized by advertising?
The design of an advertisement, the concatenation and rhythm of the images, the soundtrack are organized like a kind of "ritornello" or a "whirlwind". There are advertisements that reverberate in us like a musical theme or a refrain. You have probably already been surprised to find yourself whistling a musical theme from advertising (it certainly happens to me, at least). The Leibnizian distinction between actualization in souls and realization in bodies is very important, because these two processes do not coincide and can result in completely unpredictable effects on the subjectivity of the monads.

The television networks recognize no national borders, no differences in class, status or income. Their images are received in non-Western countries or by the poorest classes of the Western population, who have little or no buying power.
The incorporeal transformations work well on the souls of the television viewers (of these countries, as well as on the souls of the poor in rich countries) by creating a new sensibility, because something possible certainly exists, even if not outside the medium of its expression (the television images). For what is possible, in this sense, it is enough to be expressed through a sign in order to

have a certain reality, as Deleuze demonstrated to us.
However, the realization in bodies, the possibility of buying and living with one's body among the services and goods that are expressed by the signs as possible worlds, does not always follow (and not at all for the majority of the world population), occasioning expectations, frustrations and rejection.
In conjunction with the observation of this phenomenon in Brazil, Suely Rolnik speaks of two subjective figures, which represent two extremes, in which the variations of the soul and the body are articulated, that are produced by the logic just described: the glamour of "luxury subjectivity" and the misery of "trash subjectivity".
The West is horrified by the new "Islamic" subjectivities. But it has created this "monster" itself and specifically with the help of its most "peaceful", most seductive techniques. What we are facing here are not remnants of traditional societies in need of modernization, but in fact cyborgs that conjoin the "oldest" with the "most modern".

The incorporeal transformations happen first and faster than the corporeal transformations. Three quarters of humanity are excluded from the latter, but they have easy access to the former (first and foremost through television). Contemporary capitalism does not arrive first with the factories: these follow later, if at all. It first arrives with words, signs and images. And specifically these technologies precede not only the factories today, but also the war machine.

The event is an encounter and it is even a twofold one: one time it meets the soul, the other the body. This twofold encounter can make space for a twofold shift, because it is only one opening of possibilities in the modality of the "problematical". Advertising is only one possible world, a fold sheltering virtualities. Unfolding

what is enveloped in it, unfolding the fold, can bring forth completely heterogeneous effects, because on the one hand they encounter monads, which are all autonomous, independent and virtual singularities. On the other – as we have seen in neo-monadological ontology – a different possible world is always virtually present. The bifurcation of divergent series haunts contemporary capitalism. Incompatible worlds unfold in the same world. For this reason, the capitalist process of appropriation is never closed in itself, but is instead always uncertain, unpredictable, open. "To exist means to differ", and this differentiation is newly uncertain, unpredictable and risky each time.

Capitalism attempts to control this bifurcation, which is virtually always possible through variations and continuous modulation: neither the production of a subject nor the production of an object, but rather subjects and objects in continuous variation guided by the technologies of modulation, which are in turn continuously varied.

Control is expressed in Western countries not only through modulating brains, but also through forming bodies (in prisons, schools and hospitals) and through life management ("workfare"). We would be doing our capitalist societies a favor, if we think that everything happens through the continuous variation of subjects and objects, through modulating brains and by means of the occupation of memory and attention by signs, images and statements. The control society integrates the "old" disciplinary dispositive. In non-Western societies, where disciplinary institutions and "workfare" are weaker and less developed, control immediately means the logic of war, even in times of "peace" (see Brazil, still).

The paradigmatic body of Western control societies is no longer represented by the imprisoned body of the worker, the lunatic, the ill person, but rather by the obese (full of the worlds of the enterprise) or anorectic (rejection of this world) body, which see the bodies of humanity scourged by hunger, violence and thirst on television. The paradigmatic body of our societies is no longer the mute body molded by discipline, but rather it is the bodies and souls marked by the signs, words and images (company logos) that are inscribed in us – similar to the procedure, through which the machine in Kafka's "Penal Colony" inscribes its commands into the skin of the condemned.

In the 70s Pasolini very precisely described how television had changed the soul and the body of the Italians, how it was the main instrument of an anthropological transformation that first and especially affected youth. He used practically the same concept as Tarde to describe the modalities of an effect of television at a distance: the impact of television is due to example rather than discipline, to imitation rather than coercion. It is the steering of behavior, the influence on possible activities. His film trilogy about bodies was rejected, because it did not take up this transformation. It still spoke of the body before the modulation of brains and, with regard to certain aspects, even before disciplinary societies.

These incorporeal transformations that come into our heads again and again like ritornelli, which are circulating all over the world at the moment, penetrating into every household, and which represent the real weapon for the conquest, the occupation, the seizure of brains and bodies – they are simply incomprehensible to Marxist theory and to economic theories. We face a change of paradigms here, which we cannot grasp starting from labor, from practice. On the contrary, it could well be that the latter supplies a false image of what production means today, because the process

we have just described is the precondition for every organization of labor (or non-labor).

Images, signs and statements are thus possibilities, possible worlds, which affect souls (brains) and must be realized in bodies. Images, signs and statements intervene in both the incorporeal and the corporeal transformations. Their effect is that of the creation and realization of what is possible, not of representation. They contribute to the metamorphoses of subjectivity, not to their representation.