Critique in the Field of Immanence: The Case of New Polish Art

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In the presented paper, the author, referring to several examples of Polish contemporary art, reflects on the concept of criticism. The author asks the question: Whether are we dealing in late capitalism with a post-critical turn in art and philosophical thinking at all? He analyzes the post-critical turn by referring to other concepts such as immanent critique (S. Turkle), critique in the field of immanence (G. Deleuze), post-theoretical culture (T. Eagelton), assembly art (G. Didi-Huberman), "technical perfection" (M. Heidegger), mnemotechnics (J. Derrida), mechanosphere (G. Deleuze & F. Guattari), and finally the famous distinction of Walter Benjamin between "display value" of the work of art and its "cult value". The ultimate goal of the article is to determine the possibility of criticism (critique) in the age of techno- or affective capitalism (L. Berlant & B. Stiergler). At the end, the author poses the question: To what society we belong? Are we part of the "society of display value" or a "co-creative society"?

Keywords: art, criticism, escapism, formativity, immanence, just image, machinic assemblage, mechanosphere, mobile images, techno-capitalism

Imagined Community

First, I would like to ask a question: What could connect five seemingly different works, both formally and thematically? What could connect five different artistic strategies, five different aesthetics and workshop methodologies? Hence, from the beginning, I am asking about the "community" of the new generation of Polish artists, or rather female artists. At the heart of the complexity and variety of art life, in the plurality of space and the stratification of time of culture, the place that excludes the very notion of what is "common", I am asking about the common denominator of the "new Polish art". While I am asking about this, I am looking at the works that were awarded prizes during the third edition of the "Attempt 3—International Contest for Experiment in Visual Arts", organized by the City Art Gallery of Kalisz. What am I asking or rather whom am I asking? In front of which paintings am I asking my question?

Firstly, I stand before the images of Anna Palusińska entitled *Identities*, images which are an attempt to think through the memory "after the Shoah". Certainly, *Identities* is an attempt to express memory without distorting the image of the past, attempting to give justice to anonymous victims, whom history has sought to deprive of the right to mourn and the right to a name, as well as the right to be mourned. *Identities* is an extraordinary cycle, which consists of portraits of women imprisoned in an Auschwitz concentration camp. Naturally, this must immediately and inevitably be associated with the well-known photographs "taken" from the Auschwitz camp by members of the Sonderkommando in August 1944, depicting naked women driven by SS

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men to the crematoria and incinerating corpses in the open pits in front of the gas chamber of the Crematorium V. The latter pictures, with all the political and aesthetic implications, were described by Georges Didi-Huberman's significant and widely discussed book *Images malgré tout* (Didi-Huberman, 2008).

Portraits of the *Identities* cycle were taken by the photographer Wilhelm Brasse, who as a prisoner of the camp was assigned by the Nazis to carry out camp documentation. In Anna Palusińska's project, women's portraits, thanks to the crystallization process, have been covered with salt crystals. The growing crystals on the fragments of victims' images are an attempt not only to "heal" these images but in some sense to "save" them. They are certainly an attempt to give them the benefit of the "work of mourning" which had been denied to them. Thus salt crystals are not only a mechanism of purification, but above all they become the crystals of time. The crystallization process violates the structure of images, but it also violates the structure of time and memory. As in the famous story of W. G. Sebald, in which Jacques Austerlitz, a Jew who was adopted at the age of five by a Welsh family and as an adult found an image of his mother in a concentration camp, the photographs of anonymous women from Auschwitz found by Anna Palusińska demand of whoever sees them to "recount" them anew or "imagine" what can be told, starting with the images that are "unimaginable" and "unspoken". It's as if the author again was giving names to people whose names had been taken by extermination (Sebald, 1999).

Secondly, in the case of Ludmiła Kaczmarek's project entitled *Avantgarde*, I am dealing with a kind of interactive painting inspired by Władysław Strzemiński's work. Here, I am facing a "work" realized in the name of the "democratization of art". What we have is basically an "art-making machine", "digital application", "interactive keyboard", where the *interface* acts as an "empty canvas". Ludmiła Kaczmarek proposes us an innovative use of "new technologies" in order to rethink the notion of an "artist-craftsman" and perhaps even art history itself. The challenge—"Do it yourself!"—perhaps reflects not only artistic passion and flatters our "creative drive", but is also a political challenge such as: "Create yourself!" or "Create your own art history!" If that were the case, art would cease to be "in the image and likeness of God" and would become something other than mere crypto-theology. Improving the eye and practicing not only speaking skills but also a new vision is done here using digital technique. Technology remains in the service of politics, and the latter is incorporated into work for aesthetic democracy, i.e., a new story about what has been seen.

Thirdly, I stand before a series of paintings by Izabela Łęska, entitled *Subjective Walks*, which is an audacious attempt to "recover the city" for oneself, i.e., an attempt to find the outline of a city found in the pace of everyday walks. It is a subjective drawing, created as a type of record in the form of a linear image, transforming into a form of urban map. Here is a drawing resulting from collecting *objets trouvé*—items found while roaming, hiking, looting places. The artist becomes an anthropologist of the street drifting among the streets of the city. This city cannot be Rome or Venice—there the paths are long established and entered into the scheme of sightseeing; it must be a city unburdened by memory and history.

Izabela Łęska does not mention the situationists—Raoul Vaneigem or Guy Debord (Vaneigem, 2006; Debord, 2014), but it is obvious how close she is to the situational art of "overthrowing life", i.e., the art of walking around the city as the art of wandering, drifting or the art of using language as art, of repeatedly reciting old tropes in different places. Can these 36 black and white prints of digital drawings and descriptions of walks in A4 format constitute a portrait of a modern human walking, wandering, a modern walker, an urban poacher? The author rightly says that walking is as natural as breathing. Certainly, this cycle may well be a subjective image of a city-territory over which the body never fully reigns.

Fourthly, in the case of Sylvia Jakubowska-Szycik's work, *Kingsize/Transformation*, we are dealing with yet another "picture"—an installation made of plastic figures. These figures resurrecting the childhood memory of "lead soldiers" are "sculptures" of children's heroes of fairy tales, computer games, but also "sculptures of time". The figures were painted black, their colors were "dimmed", and often also the shapes, i.e., the memory of the surface. Figures flooded with aluminum, imitation—in the process of representation—were deprived of their form. Have they also been deprived of their ability to act, i.e., to create memories? Does time work like a growing, shapeless mass that deprives a thing of direct memory of the event and place? It is also important that the installation acts as a "chameleon", adjusting to different configurations of the environment, varying according to the context of the place. This truly is a situational memory.

By using the category proposed by Luigi Payerson, I would say that in the case of Sylwia Jakubowska-Szycik's work we are dealing with the art of "formativity" rather than "form". The term "form" is misleading, because of the multiplicity of meanings which turns out to be vague and there is a risk that it will be understood as a simple opposite of "matter" or "content". Form is a "whole", perfect in harmony and "unity" of law in coherence, "adequacy" of the part and the whole. "Form" thus understood, forgets about the dynamics, the process, the time of becoming, formation, and deformation. We should therefore speak of the dynamic character of "formativity", for which not so much is "to be a result" or to achieve the "goal" of formation is important, but the "act" itself, which is a movement of production, devoid of knowledge of where it begins and where its ends (Pareyson, 2013).

Fifth, finally, I stand before architectural images, which invite the viewer to reflect on the fluid relations of power, the apparent "strength of the strong" and the relative "weakness of the weak", i.e., with "open politics" and not just "vision politics" but also real policy. Realistic politics is an attempt to regain "objects" for another view, for another experience, and for another activity. Agnieszka Mastalerz's work *Untitled* (*Remote Control*) is a series of thermograms depicting places where, as the artist says, "influential decisions are made". Hence, we have the thermic images emerging from the fog, depicting the Sejm building, the Constitutional Court, the Ministry of Interior and Administration, the Chancellery of the President of the Council of Ministers, the District Court in Warsaw, the Garrison Command Building in Warsaw, the former seat of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, the Boleslaw Bierut Palace in Natolin, and the Warsaw Villa of Jürgen Stroop.

These are no longer "mobile images"; memory records after body movements, or even images of a bad past or personal art history, but works that are a work of heat and cold, hot and cool, strictly thermal work. The temperature of images—their coolness or hotness, insignificance and importance, influence and impotence—attempts to reverse not only the panoptic relations of power but also real power or real domination, and changes the direction of vision, which is closely correlated with thermal radiation. We do not see the thermal death of the world, but rather the reversal or dislocation of thermically marked places. These works are a kind of night vision, and the viewer is armed with night vision devices that allow "seeing the importance". Thermography records the heat radiation emitted by physical bodies, but this is really about heat as an indicator of domination and power (Foucault, 1977). The thermal imaging camera makes it possible to see "influential objects" with "limited availability". We do not know whether perception itself takes away from the "influential objects" their importance, or their influence.

Criticism, Escapism, Market

I ask again: What links the crystallized images of the Shoah, the futuristic manifesto of personal art, the

"wandering" pictures of a non-native city, "dimmed" figurines set up on the virtual battlefield, and the thermographic collection of influential objects? Perhaps it would be easier to surrender and capitulate, and not to ask about the common denominator of these five works. Perhaps it would be easier to say: They are not connected, and the only commonality in their nature is the "community" of separate denaturation processes. But it is not true; what links these works is the "community" of the new "sad critique", the melancholy of post-critical art. All these works correspond to the question: How do artists, being thrown-in-the-world "objects" of global economics, coexist with the contradictions of a market reality?

Certainly, in the societies of "late modernity" or "affective capitalism", techno-capitalism, or anarcho-capitalism, art penetrates everyday life. On the one hand, artists use advertising aesthetics, and on the other hand consumer culture draws on artistic strategies. The boundaries between high and commercial art become fluid. Art is still perceived as a space of critical reflection with a potential for action (Berlant, 2011). Hence, the question is: Is art always equipped with critical potential? What is criticism today? Is it an attempt to reach the "conditions of opportunity" of the emergence of social phenomena, or is it a criticism of ideology and new mythology? Can one still talk about the Polish school of critical art?

Anda Rottenberg in an interview with *Kultura Liberalna* [*Liberal Culture*] put forward a thesis on the abandonment of committed art. The departure from critical art toward escapism is, according to Rottenberg, characteristic of the younger generation of artists, and shows a disturbing resemblance to the decline of the avant-garde movements in earlier years. The Polish art historian states roughly and categorically:

> [...] the critical movement has already passed into history. Young artists are doing something else, and many are trying to meet the needs of the market, most of them are turning their heads away from reality. I am a little afraid because it reminds me of the end of the avant-garde, which was operating actively in the 1920s, and in the 1930s it was virtually no longer significant. Throughout Europe, surrealism began at the time, that is escapist attitude towards what was happening in the real world, in the street, or a return to classical forms. It was an escape from reality and the same thing is happening today. One either goes into the flicker of optical art and enjoyment for the eye, or into surrealism. (Rottenberg, 2016)

Anda Rottenberg, in order to consolidate her thesis, cited the expositions of the 9th Berlin Biennale, which, with their escapism, would give the spirit to the decline of the critical current.

So I ask again about the possibility of criticism today. And I answer immediately: Critique assumes distance. Criticism is possible only when the critic-artist feels autonomous from the corrupt outside world. Criticism is possible when the eye is not yet corrupted, when the brain is incorruptible. In the days of "late capitalism" and "digital surveillance" of every, even the most intimate sphere of our lives, does the concept of the "external" still exist? Have the eye and brain not been bribed and corrupted long ago? Maybe modernism with its statement that criticism is possible is a thing of the past because also the comfortable category of "distance" has become a thing of the past. The concept of the "external" certainly facilitates the emergence of critical thinking about the surrounding reality, but it is possible only if the faith of the irreproachable "interior" is preserved. This concept assumes the existence or possibility of the existence of "other worlds" lying outside of the one in which the subject functions as a function of his or her eye and brain (Czubak & Kozłowski, 2012).

Today it has become difficult for any external, isolated enclave to exist, which would allow an artist with an eye and brain to produce a "critical picture". Previous ideas of cultural policy have become obsolete because they assumed a "critical distance". In the techno-capitalist era, there is no possibility of settling or extracting raw materials in new, undiscovered areas, because they do not exist. Sealing of the structure of our late-capitalist world is synonymous with the disappearance of the category of the "external" (Didi-Huberman, 2017, pp.

249-261). Technology has become not so much a synonym of anomia today, but rather a condition of all socialization. So what not so much "is" critical attitude but "can still be" (Foster, 1985; 2015)?

Perhaps the postcritical attitude assumes a "pragmatic" attitude towards reality. It seems that Latour's concept of criticality, based on the idea of "renewed empiricism", refers to pragmatic attitudes, because it focuses not on matters of fact, but on matters of concern. A critical artist submerged in reality cannot completely distance himself, so he only tries to "justify", "point out", "redefine", and sometimes "copy" it. If the image of the world takes on the character of a nearly-totalitarian system, which is global techno-capitalism, then the "movements of resistance" or "revolutions" are inscribed in its immanent dynamics. Taking the form of criticism or revolution becomes fruitless when they are an integral part of the internal logic of the system. Perhaps the only thing that remains is the concept of a general strike, in which strikers are united forces of the eye and brain (Latour, 2004).

Criticism in the Field of Immanence

Let us take a second look at the notion of "criticism". It seems that the contemporary artist finds themselves in a tragic "either-or" entanglement. A critical artist is either faithful to immanence, and thereby he is not a transcendental critic, or he is a transcendentalist and a pure critic, whereby he is no longer faithful to immanence, therefore life. Is there any way out of this dilemma?

Certainly to think means to create, therefore creativity is the best and only form of criticism. The mere fertility of thought is critical. Criticism, that results from impotence and is poisoned by resentment, is neither criticism nor creativity. Criticism is work that results from joy and humour, and thus from the affirmation of life. The new task of the critic comes down to the question: how not to poison with venom, but deal blows. It seems that post-critical art is inextricably linked to capital, since it is the first and progressive theoretical procedure; it avoids both the formal conservatism of inductive natural sciences and the material conservatism of dogmatic metaphysics. Criticism is, first of all, a philosophy of production. Post-critical thinking either liquefies the opposition between empiricism and its conditions of possibility, changing it into open propagation of intense layers, or breaks the abstract layout of this opposition, trying to bring to an end the critical program, i.e., to replace the cult of logical identity with the immanent continuity of the world of life.

The post-critical artist who remains in the field of immanence, therefore, does not underestimate or exceed anything and instead remains faithful to life. However, one should ask: What is this excess and what is this life? What is criticism in the field of immanence? Is it just an affirmation of an existing constellation or a situation? Is the very imaging of life still capable of an act of resistance? Is the art understood as documentary, and therefore the pure art of reportage enough? What could be an act of resistance for an artist in the field of immanence? Would the act of resistance be an act of creation? If so, creation of what? Would this be the creation of images that would be in the state of passage through life, creating planes or even lines of immanence? Finally: Would such passage allow criticism of what is seen? Or, this very passage through the immanence of life only creates something like "ontological inspection", "lustration of things" in the form of maps and diagrams? If art is neither an external criticism, nor a reflection-contemplation, what is it at all? What is an artist in the world of immanence? Is he the discoverer of new ways of folding, resonating, detuning, and attuning ways of being in the world?

Eva Illouz formulates an interesting opposition to the paradigm of pure criticism (Illouz, 2007). Criticism, in her opinion, should leave room for a surprise, for something that will surprise and catch us unaware. Criticism can no longer be a comfortable and safe occupation of a total point of view. There is no direct

continuity between the various social spheres and they do not have to reflect one field. Immanent criticism is a critique that already knows its limits, but also finds its new developments. Criticism is most powerful when it departs from purity and establishes itself in specific cultural practices of ordinary people. Immanent criticism is "impure criticism" that attempts to balance between various activities or institutions corresponding to human desires, no matter how they may seem spoiled (pornography or comics), and those activities and institutions that seem to us ennobling (classical music and high literature). Criticism in the field of immanence does not assume in advance that it has a secret a priori access to knowledge about the values and practices of emancipation or repression. The emancipatory or repressive significance of a given practice is never given in advance; it emerges in the course of producing unintentional and hard-to-predict consequences of these practices. Criticism in the field of immanence is the realization of the policy of discomfort associated with the risk of acting in an unpredictable and opaque world.

Umbrella or Montage Turn

In critical art of the 1990s, artists undertook the problems of carnality and its entanglement in the context of power, and drew attention to the practice of human discipline in culture. Body games were performed by such artists as Katarzyna Kozyra, Zofia Kulik, Zbigniew Libera, Dorota Nieznalska, and Artur Żmijewski. The main object of critical art was the body. This body was imprisoned in various ideological apparatuses—state, religion, nation, medicine, practice of exclusion. The point of critical art was the disclosure of the exclusion framework, i.e., the removal of the body from the frame and the prison of power.

"The solar paintings" by Anna Palusińska, "futuristic applications" for creating art by Ludmila Kaczmarek, "wandering maps" by Izabela Łęska, Sylwia Jakubowska-Szycik's "dimmed figurines", and "thermal images" by Agnieszka Mastalerz are trapped in technology. The image is no longer an ordinary analogue image, but is a result of chemical processing, walking (leg movement), digital application, deformation, or finally recording of thermal differences in the environment. These are no longer images of the breakthrough of epochs—from socialism to capitalism or "liberalism after communism". These are the images of the time of anarcho-capitalism, affective capitalism, and techno-capitalism, in which "the object of criticism" is no longer the artist's exterior. It cannot be that, because there is no outside, "the object" is the artist him- or herself entangled in this new capitalism without end. "The great experience of our generation—wrote Walter Benjamin—is the discovery that capitalism will not die of natural death" (Benjamin, 2002, p. 667). It will not die a natural death, because it is powered by the strength of our bodies.

The technique is the montage technique. Criticism is a critique within technology. The images of Anna Palusińska, Ludmiła Kaczmarek, Izabela Łęska, Sylwia Jakubowska-Szycik, and Agnieszka Mastalerz are looking for the art of combining the montage of their own life with the narrative montage of the world. These paintings are assembly tapes or laboratories that assemble themselves—the "artist-object". This assembly is a documentary montage leading to "powerless" exposures. Montage is a direct picture of time understood as duration. Montage is also a composition, a combination of images, and an indirect picture of time. The brain and the eye are nothing more than an interval, a space between action and reaction: The brain and the eye work on tearing, sabotaging, striking. Critical art is the art of subject-object involved in critique, and it is the art of object-subject that contests itself because it already knows that it is not the second pole of the world, but it is part of the criticized reality that has no natural end in death.

What do all these changes within critical thinking mean? Terry Eagleton, in 2004, proclaimed: "The

golden age of cultural theory is long past" and perversely added: "Those to whom the title of this book [*After Theory*] suggests that 'theory' is now over, and that we can all relievedly return to an age of pre-theoretical innocence, are in for a disappointment" (Eagleton, 2004, p. 1). Here, I argue that this bitter diagnosis has never been more valid than it is today. The domination—in social sciences—of the paradigm of *Science and Technology Studies*, the multiplication of numerous new and never quite fragmented studies within cultural studies—not only *gender studies* and *animal studies*, but also *porn studies* or *game studies*, *disability studies* and general scepticism towards meta-theoretical considerations, caused the retreat from concepts and the withdrawal from the critical paradigm.

Today, we are close to making the claim that we no longer need theory and conceptual work whatsoever. The only thing we need is a "dense description" of the analysed fragments of reality. Before our eyes and with our permission, the description replaces the explanation. The redundancy of the theory means, at the same time, the redundancy of concepts from which the theory had been habitually built and from which it had drawn its explanatory power. As a result, concepts are "endangered species" today, as they are practically on the threshold of extinction.

The twilight of theories, of criticism, of exploration and concepts is the same thing. Genealogy, criticism, structuralism, deconstruction, and even discourse' theory are giving way to fields that are more practically, politically, and locally oriented to forms of cognitive activity such as Actor-Network-Theory. Contrary to this tendency, express concern that, if theory means a reasonably systematic reflection on our guiding assumptions, it remains as indispensable as ever. The justification for the need to refer to concepts must, however, involve finding their new place and casting them in a new role.

Therefore I ask: What does this post-critical turn mean for art and philosophy? What does this capture of criticism by the forces of immanence mean? What could criticism be in a world devoid of critique? And what could this turn mean *for* and *in* the social sciences that no longer wish to fulfil the requirement of reflexivity, instead giving in to the requirement of active and distributed materialism (Latour, 2005)? For social sciences, that is, for new goals and methods of critical theory, which change this philosophy at all? In social sciences, that is, within its realm, which equips the term "critique" with new meaning in these fields?

Deleuze and Guattari remind you that what defines thought in its three great forms—art, science, and philosophy—is always confronting chaos, laying out a plane, throwing a plane over chaos. But philosophy wants to save the infinite by giving it consistency: It lays out a plane of immanence that, through the action of conceptual personae, takes events or consistent concepts to infinity. Science, on the other hand, relinquishes the infinite in order to gain reference: It lays out a plane of simply undefined coordinates that each time, through the action of partial observers, defines states of affairs, functions, or referential propositions. Art wants to create the finite that restores the infinite: It lays out a plane of composition that, in turn, through the action of aesthetic figures, bears monuments or composite sensations. The three thoughts intersect and intertwine but without synthesis. Art, science, and philosophy, therefore, become a kind of umbrella that allows us not to defend ourselves against chaos but rather as a plane that we put on chaos. My only hope is that the umbrella in the form of art, science, and philosophy against chaos will not become, in the future, a defensive umbrella against all forms of critical thinking.

Mechanosphere or a Just Image

Is there any way out of this situation? Could the concept of criticism and critical thinking be saved?

Deleuze in a pre-death text entitled *Immanence: A Life* writes, "transcendental is not transcendent", but he also writes, "transcendence is always a product of immanence"; finally he writes: "The transcendental field is defined by the plan of immanence and the plan of immanence by life" (Deleuze, 2005, p. 28). For the transcendentalist this last confession is rather difficult to comprehend because for him, this transcendental field constitutes and defines immanence and the division into immanence and transcendence itself. The philosopher of immanence, however, is not a philosopher who orders nature, but he is also not an ancient sage who submits to nature. "The transcendental application of intellect—writes Deleuze in Kant's critical philosophy—[...] simply comes from the fact that the intellect neglects its limits, while the transcendental application of reason instructs us to cross the limits of intellect" (Deleuze, 1984, p. 25). So it seems that thinking in Kant style about Deleuze, and especially by Kant from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, means thinking not so much "together with Deleuze" but rather "over Deleuze"; it means rather thinking with Kant and against Deleuze, using formulas and schematisms from *Critics of Pure Reason* for understanding Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze, in his dissertation on Kant's Critical Philosophy, calls the doctrine about the enemy. I would say, then, that it would be a kind of "trickery" if in our thinking about Deleuze's work we demanded a reference to the work of his enemy—Kant's transcendentalism.

The authors of *A Thousand Plateaus*, in the key passage of the text, firmly state that "[t]here is no biosphere or noosphere, but everywhere the same Mechanosphere" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 69). Today, it is an important and not necessarily obvious claim. What does it mean that there is only a Mechanosphere? Does it mean that there has never been purely "biological evolution", since "evolution" is technics, nothing but the technics of life (Ansell-Pearson, 1997)? Is evolution a technique of selecting instruments of life? Is technics a set of tactics for living-objects? Perhaps technology counts here as "the pursuit of life by means other than life". Certainly—evolution involves learning, certainly—in nature there is invention, and therefore: technics. Surely—artifice is a part of nature. But what would this mean from a wider perspective? Does this "machine driven turn", of which we are a part, not result in the usual expansion of the mechanism into areas usually identified as "biological" or "social", "institutional" or "organic"? Is the "machine driven turn" not just a counter-reaction to the former "language turn" and the not yet outmoded "animal turn"?

Many years ago, André Leroi-Gourhan pointed out that it would be a parochialism to suggest that technics must be limited to humans since technical action is found even in invertebrates (Leroi-Gourhan, 1993). This means that technics is not exclusively human. Leroi-Gourhan says that in monkeys both the front and the hind hands are instruments of locomotion, but the front hand is strictly atechnical instrument. Locomotion using grasping distinguishes monkeys among primates, just as bipedal locomotion characterizes the apes. Pithecomorphism—structural resemblance to an ape—is therefore characterized principally by a postural liberation due to fourhanded locomotion. Leroi-Gourhan adds that the main difference lies in the extent to which the human being has exteriorized its memory in machines and apparatuses of all kinds. Our organs are extraneous to us—the plough, the windmill, the sailing ship; a computer keyboard can be viewed as "biological mutations" of that external organism which, in humans, substitutes itself for a physiological body.

In our world, still divided into a multitude of separate epistemic cultures (Knorr Cetina, 1999), we used to devise and export the methodological differences into the domain of the ontological, thus significantly separating the successive layers or regions of the world. We have divided the world into independent realms—that of inanimate matter, that of the realm of life, and that of the social. Our obstinacy in dividing the world was so great that we demanded clear threshold values for processes by definition and in general lacked

clarity, coherence, and measure.

Deleuze and Guattari rightly add that oftentimes "research on technology" mistakenly treats tools as existing merely for themselves. We speak of "technology" as if there also existed an independent, sovereign, delineated region of technological reality. In essence, however, technologies exist only in connection with the actions and forms of life that enable them to exist. There is no technology in the singular, and there are only a few technologies closely coupled with various forms of social and organic organization. To refer to the example borrowed from *A Thousand Plateaus*—"The stirrup entails a new man–horse symbiosis that at the same time entails new weapons and new instruments. Tools are inseparable from symbioses or amalgamations defining a Nature-Society machinic assemblage" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 90). This is the conclusion drawn by Deleuze and Guattari: "[A] society is defined by its amalgamations, not by its tools" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 90). This means that tools always presuppose a machine and a machine is always social before it is technical. The technical element retains an abstract, indeterminate character unless it is related to a certain tacit arrangement. In this sense, perhaps Lewis Mumford was correct in writing in *The Myth of the Machine*, that the origin of the machine age is not an industrial revolution, but the creation of a machine made of people (Mumford, 1967).

What does this mean for us? It means that in the course of our work, far from disparaging the role of technology, we should aim at rethinking the hypothesis according to which technology cooperates with the processes of socialization. In a sense, only technology has "always" been socialized. Friedrich Nietzsche argues that the technology was originally mnemotechnics, i.e., a cruel art of organizing memory impressions (Nietzsche, 2007). It is no different than the technics of Jacques Derrida, for whom technics are, above all, that of archiving. It determines not only the printing form or the printing structure, but also the "overprinted print content": *le pression de l'impression* (Derrida, 1998). The technique produces a distinction between what is printed and what is printing. The archive is therefore a work of technology. The ambiguity of Derrida's position stems from his claim that the archive must be both open to iteration and technical reproduction, as well as secured against them. I am not sure whether we even know how to meet this requirement. It seems that Heidegger's famous judgement on technology is key for Derrida. Therein, technology becomes the world's enframing, a composition, or a set: *Ge-Stell* (Heidegger, 1977). For Heidegger, technology sets nature, while for Derrida it reproduces the archive. Therefore, one of our tasks will be to rethink the problematic "perfection of technology", which seeks automatism, i.e., it creates a new organization of work, e.g., universal proletarianization and, simultaneously, common unemployment. Certainly technology brings the need to rethink a man without employment.

In spite of the outlined ambivalence of technology, in this series of meetings we want to talk about a "techno-social amalgamation" produced by a combination of technology, socialization, and life. In other words: We want to talk about the original unity of technology and socialization, which in the act of secondary division is separated into two or three separate domains. Perhaps, for this reason, we will have to test the hypothesis according to which the true opposite of Deleuzian mechanism is not technocracy, but neo-humanism, together with different versions of liberal ethics and their abstract recycled humanities. It cannot be ruled out that even the politics of deconstruction proves to be reactionary here.

Does this mean, however, that we are to reject everything related to the human-machine opposition, the human's alienation in the machine? Or, rather, are we supposed to willingly proclaim Deleuze's statement that "there has never been a fight with the consumer society" because there has never been a "consumer society"

(Deleuze, 1995, p. 19). Should we, therefore, accept that it is "consumption" that is missing and that there is still a lack of "artificiality"? Should we demand that the desire and the machine become one? It would be perhaps somewhat surprising in the context of the contemporary clamour of post-political cybernetics and the domination of affective or cognitive capitalism. We do know that television invented measures of "technical perfection" harmonizing with the aesthetic and intellectual banality, if not sheer stupidity. How do you find the right place between fiddling capitalism for its ability to dismantle tradition, hierarchy and organization and its critical and unambiguous condemnation for the power to expropriate, annihilate, and transform every form of life into digital dust (Land, 2011)? We remember the words from the film *Metropolis* (1927) directed by Fritz Lang: *Komm! Esist Zeit, der Mensch-Maschine Dein Gesicht zu geben!* [Come! It is time to give the man-machine your face!] Can a man-machine demand a face for him/it-self?

Bernard Stiegler, in a book markedly entitled *States of Shock. Stupidity and Knowledge in the Twenty-First Century*, writes about the conditions of technological shock, and about the fact that technology not only causes trauma, but it also allows its exploitation and dissemination (Stiegler, 2015). Stiegler describes the reason after information technology bombardment; he describes the state of stupidity (*betise*), thoughtlessness (*impense*), immaturity, madness, and non-reason (*deraison*)—all being the faces of poverty of reason, in a word—a state of stupor in the technical environment. The technologies of both intellect (and its autonomy) and stupidity (and heteronomy that hinders thinking) create a new psycho-power. Of course, it is psycho-power understood as a new political technology in the sense that which Michel Foucault talked about technologies of power, placing them next to technologies of production, technologies of signs systems, technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988, pp. 16-49). Let me emphasize: The challenge is not only bio-power, but psycho-power, i.e., the power over mind and brain.

For this reason, this psycho-power, or "cerebral power" should become the privileged object of our thinking. Stiegler writes something extremely interesting to us, namely that "socialization of technology" has been achieved through "generational change" because only a new generation—a generation abandoned by its parents—was able to ultimately socialize technology. What does it mean? This means that becoming an adult in techno-capitalism has been fully mediated by technology and there is no other socialization like socialization within technology. Other forms of socialization seem to be obsolete.

So in what sense can we talk about the maturity of technology, about its adulthood? The same Deleuze who proclaimed the unity of the machine and life, in one of his remarks in the volume *Negotiations*, concludes (in a paraphrase) that "technology is nothing" if it does not serve previously adopted objectives which cannot be explained on the basis of technology itself. Deleuze, turning to Jean-Luc Godard, adds that "today the screen is no longer akin to a window or a gateway, but an information board" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 76). Deleuze resigns himself to the suggestion that the war on "digital images" is not about "a just image" (*image juste*), but "just an image" (*juste une image*); since "just images" always adapt to prevailing meanings. Deleuze is close to formulating a thesis on the subject of the domination of "cerebral images". I believe, however, that we should not stop at this diagnosis and that we ought to ask the question: What does it mean "to live on the screen", which has meanwhile become an "information board"? Does this not mean that today tele-technology enters in the theological phase, i.e., the phase of disturbing self-agitation, and even self-temporalization, as a self-moving screen? Tele-technology today asks: how to set oneself in motion. Tele-technology pretends to be *perpetuum mobile* or Spinosian *causa sui*. Moreover, having raised such a concern, is the problem of reproductability not the key object of our analysis?

In the famous 1935 text entitled, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility* (*Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*), Walter Benjamin claims that it is the technical reproduction which, for the first time in the history of the world, emancipates "work of art" from its relationship with ritual (Benjamin, 2008, pp. 19-56). Due to technology a reproduced work of art is increasingly becoming a "reproduction" which again strives only to become yet more reproducible. In place of grounding of work in ritual there appears grounding of work in politics and technology. The "display value" (*Ausstellungswert*) of the work replaces its "cult value" (*Kultwert*). The "cult value" gives away the theological foundation of the work as well as its affiliation to the ritual and place. "Display value" marks the work with its publication and its lack of permanent setting. For Benjamin, the turning point in process of reproducibility is the emergence of reproduction of cinematographic works, directly grounded in the production technique. Before, in both photography and then film, "display value" defied the "cult value" in explicitly and directly. While a society overwhelmed and dominated by "display value" offers the individual a new right to constant reproducibility in the sphere of visibility, it refuses one the right to sleep and invisibility.

"Society of display value" is therefore—to refer here to the category proposed by Stiegler—"a society of the endless carnival of reproduction" which nowadays takes place within the screen-network (Stiegler, 2009, pp. 40-59). The new subject of mass reproduction finds itself "in front of the optical apparatus" in order to perform a "test", i.e., numerously exposing its image and thus verifying the value of its "own reproduction" for audience. The new subject acts and displays itself only "in front of the apparatus" and "for the apparatus" whereby providing living proof that every human being has an inalienable right to be filmed.

According to Benjamin, the importance of the cinema, with its exaltation of display value, results from the fact that it is only film—second to architecture—that is able to produce the subject of a simultaneous collective reception. The political power of cinema is the power to create a collective subject and manage its affects, hence, to let the humanity "come out of suppressions", exploding the unconscious, replacing class consciousness with the fascist subject, or yet merging mass reproduction with the reproduction of masses; cinema alone can finally redefine the image and the very optical unconscious and form anew the framework of what is visible. The latter is of utmost interest. I argue that there are strong reasons for re-reading *The Work of Art* of Benjamin, and that there are strong reasons we should try to rethink the very concept of reproducibility. What is it that differs the contemporary digital reproducibility from the reproducibility known to Benjamin? In what sense is man exposed to a "machine test" today?

Perhaps we should argue that the 21st-century digital networks disrupt the organization brought upon by the audiovisual apparatus which appeared already in the 19th century and spread on a massive scale in the 20th century through television to impose on the whole world a type of relationship comparable to hegemonic relations. In this context, it is impossible to separate the fate of "digital writing" from a "digital image". The stake of this project is therefore to create a "co-creative society", equipped with analytical thinking skills and which aims to move beyond the framework of a "society of display value". Therefore, it is about creating a situation that reproduces the objects of a simultaneous collective reception, i.e., a symbolic environment in the state of association, where socialization is performed by association and individuation. Perhaps, only with the coming of web network, particularly its auto-production, auto-broadcasting, and bottom-up indexing, a new process was released blocking the "fascist subject" from taking the place of "class consciousness".

We therefore ask: Are we part of the "society of display value" or a "co-creative society"? We ask: What does it mean to be part of such a society? We ask if the "society of display value" is identical to what we call

"networked society" here. And finally, we ask what is the self and "digital identity" in the era of "networked society". If—following again Stiegler—by a "society that is cross-linked" [*réticulaire*], we understand a society in which most individuals are inter-connected with all "in possibilities" and with some "in act", by means of a network that allows each person to take both the position of the sender and the recipient, is this situation a constellation of "universal control" in which the audiovisual industry has become only a "shortcut and bypass" of both educational, political, and commercial institutions; or are we witnessing here a constellation giving the opportunity to establish a "co-creative society", cultivating the analytical skills of co-creating and co-sharing, of both being together and being apart?

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