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Lethal Program of Culture vs the Whole of Presentation. Presentation of Body without Organs

Summary. The culture of signs is a recurrent term in philosophy. It does not allow mindless programs to win. Thanks to it, it is possible to put trust in model, holistic approaches rather than the linguistic determination of meanings. The process of departing from philosophical reflection, which has always been holistic, expressed with the diagram: ideas – notions – definitions, is here reversed. Presentations allow the return to ideas; ideas have more of the imaginary than the symbolic. The concept of the Body without Organs depicts a new form of sensualisation directed not at gaining permanent representations but at the possibilities of switching various functions of experience.

Keywords: Body without Organs, sign, semiotics.

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Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO. Connect, conjugate, continue: a whole “diagram,” as opposed to still signifying and subjec-

tive programs. We are in a social formation; first see how it is stratified for us and in us and at the place where we are; then descend from the strata to the deeper assemblage within which we are held; gently tip the assemblage, making it pass over to the side of the plane of consistency. It is only there that the BwO reveals itself for what it is: connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities. You have constructed your own little machine, ready when needed to be plugged into other collective machines.¹

A BwO is not owned, cannot belong to anyone, and therefore is the proper subject of cognition, the last creative individuality. We can observe the return of philosophy to semiotics, to the reflection on the arbitrariness of language. Semiotic concepts make language, not the subject using it, the only instrument of thinking. Language eludes both the subject and the object, as a name or a notion cannot be permanently attributed to a certain fragment of the world. Signs are in continuous motion, both objective and subjective, variable (diachronic) and invariable (synchronic), and language is a special system determining not only thinking, but also what is going to happen to the signified elements of matter, to our bodies, how we are encoded in reality, in a certain time and place.

In the Search of the Whole – Presentation

Practicing doctors often proved to be the best philosophers, from Sextus Empiricus to Paracelsus, through to Sigmund Freud. Discussion on the sign started a long time before the birth of semiotics, mainly between the Stoics and the Sceptics. Principally the sign was the symptoms of disease, read as the language of the body, which revealed a broader reflection on the relationship between language and cognition. Sextus Empiricus is a representative of late scepticism, a doctor and philosopher who was active at the turn of the 2nd and 3rd centuries in Athens and Alexandria. He belonged to the “methodological” school, which did not believe that the true causes of diseases could be found and therefore limited their scope of interest to the observation of symptoms. Sextus Empiricus claimed that any scientific evidence is bur-

¹ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, transl. B. Massumi, London 1987, p. 161.

dened with an error of *regressus ad infinitum*, i.e. an infinite regress.² If one wishes to prove any thesis, one has to make certain assumptions. Here we face quite a large degree of freedom, which however has to be accepted, because the elimination of preliminary assumptions leads to circular reasoning.

Should one want to designate the hidden and current reality (regarding the present and ourselves, as only such can be designated), one should preferably identify the systems in which it functions (i.e. language), rather than this reality itself. One cannot indicate disease “in itself”, but only an afflicted part of the body (today it is also possible to designate viruses, the genetic code, the DNA structure, but not disease itself), and in the same way it is not possible to point to good “in itself” and similar values. Disease as a dysfunction of the system, as something internal, a cause of itself, can no longer be localised; we have lost sight of the internal causes of system disorders. We are able only to recognise insignificant causes. We have lost the ability to show the functioning of the whole, its presentational model. Presentation is ideas and notions, edited into one image, constituting the representation (*se présenter*) of sense. The function of editing should not be understood literally, in the way it is seen in filmmaking, however many actions happen on a similar basis.

At the outset, I differentiate between presentation and representation. Representation is always either subjective or objective, and presentation oscillates between the two; it is “the movement of representation”. I concentrate on the possibility of “re-editing” this presentation. The process of editing, which starts “the machine”: subject-object, is a fundamental function of creating presentation, putting it together as a whole. Constituting individual and integrative operations on meaningful elements, it is not limited only to the juxtaposition and gluing together of different fragments. Editing as described in filmmaking – the meaning which I borrow here – includes in itself a whole range of operations between the subject and the object (even if it is assumed that this dichotomy is obsolete, it could be used on a purely operational basis), such as: framing, repetition, juxtaposition, blow-up, close-up, backlight, fast-forwarding, shortening, cutting, pasting etc. I will use several ways of understanding the function of presentation developed not only by particular thinkers, but in the process of cross-referencing.

Excess and Meaning as Synonyms

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari claim that excess and meaning are interrelated; in today’s culture they have become equivalent. They construct a kind of theory-rhi-

² J. Pelc, *Wstęp do semiotyki*, Warszawa 1981.

zome. It is a network whose most distant points may directly communicate with each other, a network without supreme control authorities coordinating its components at the level of local connections – everything simultaneously and on one level. Deleuze says that capitalism restores artificial “territoriality” through various beliefs or forms which it is impossible to incorporate in hierarchy. They all become equivalent and equal because efficiency supersedes all other values. All moves are good when they allow something to be done more efficiently. According to Karl Marx, it is not the pursuit of obtaining use value that is a constitutive feature of capitalism, but rather the unlimited pursuit of multiplying exchange value. The goal of the capitalist is not to gain a one-time profit, but to perpetually earn profits. Therefore, the market is a battleground over the speed of exchanging goods for money. This battle continues in the conditions of a constant mismatch of supply and demand, which creates the movement of constantly deviating prices. Capitalist production could not exist if goods were effectively sold according to their real values. At this point, the double-bind appears – under the same brand and at the same price, different things are sold and different things are bought.

Reaction to the speed of the exchange of goods and meanings is a cultural fetishism. Everything possesses its exchange value, everything is in movement. According to Pierre Bourdieu, symbolic goods are entities with two faces: goods and meanings. Their actual symbolic value and market value are only relatively independent from each other. Producers’ strategies span between two boundaries (in reality unattainable): a complete and cynical subordination to market expectations and absolute freedom from the market and its expectations. Hence two types of economic logic: the “anti-economic” economy (e.g. of art) and the pursuit of quick success or quick sales.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s theory of capitalism and schizophrenia is a development of Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis. In his theory of discourse, Lacan defines the discourse of the Capitalist (*le discours capitaliste*), which is a distorted discourse of the Master (*le discours du maître*). *The Master can never collect “the excess (surplus) of bliss”, which is formed where the meaning is produced.* The Master represents “platonic love” and remains the Master until he enters into a relationship with the disciple and until he wants to keep the pupil for himself, which this desire always causes involvement in a personal relationship. In capitalist discourse we regain the connection between the subject and the object of desire; “bliss” (*jouissance*), which is always excessive, here becomes estimated and valued. The abstract Master (e.g. the market) tells us what to desire and how. The subject who desires can be practically satisfied by “just anything”. This causes the process of the production of objects of bliss (added value) to be strengthened; in capitalism it is unlimited.

It is not a question of experiencing desire as an internal lack, nor of delaying pleasure in order to produce a kind of externalizable surplus value, but instead of constituting an intensive body without organs, Tao, a field of immanence in which desire lacks nothing and therefore cannot be linked to any external or transcendent criterion.³

Program and Diagram

The main function of the programming of systems is the following: if you do this and that, you will achieve this and that. The program is a sequence of instructions which describes the execution of computations in accordance with the rules of a language. One can distinguish two areas of the language of programming: the part containing the code – composed of the instructions controlling processor actions; and the part with the data – composed of the data used and processed by the program. Systems are programs; they can program anything which becomes part of them according to their rules. The program that wins is the simpler program, the most effective one. Capitalism as a system is able to “appraise” anything; e.g. it estimates an individual's body. If the body can be divided into organs, its value rises. For instance, it is possible to appraise the process of treating a given organ afflicted with a specific disease, or a procedure of organ removal for a transplant.

The BwO – a presentation and new system of the functioning of the body – rescues our individual bodies. Here is a positive dis-organisation: the body which is not divided into organs, and not exchanged for another body. Its value is priceless. Paradoxically, such a body simultaneously rejects and retains its past. Sigmund Freud doomed us to replicating the past, because the body is subject to the inertial force of oblivion. We are always “an embodied symptom of our own personal history”.⁴ This is achieved also by the paradoxical overpresence of the body in the thought of the end of the 20th century. The true aim for the 21st century is to reflect on this overpresence, rather than repeatedly reorganise it, and to remove a single body from the system, rescuing an individual from the mindless system.

Interchangeability cannot be placed outside the system any longer. It is incredibly difficult to discover the positive side of the system, therefore many interpreters read Deleuze's idea as Nietzschean radicality pushed to the limits of profanity and absurdity. Is it really so radical? It is more to draw attention to one of the most disturb-

³ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, op. cit, p. 157.

⁴ A. Skibiński, *Homo significus. Autorozprawa o poznaniu-języku*, Warszawa 2003, p. 253.

ing phenomena of our times; namely, to the fact that the concern about the mind decreases in inverse proportion to the interest in corporeality. At this point we get to the paradox described by Peter Sloterdijk in the book entitled *You Must Change Your Life*, which suggests that today the mind is treated as a muscle subject to exercise. This assumption is not totally wrong. However, it has not been examined so far if such an understanding of the mind causes more damage or brings more benefits.

The BwO – a Diagram of Ideas

The concept which represents resistance to the tendencies to program the body and mind is the concept of the BwO, which is not only a metaphor of a new way of treating corporeality, but presentation of the whole spectrum of ideas connected with the original notion of corporeality – *hyle* – introduced to philosophy by Melissus of Samos in the 5th century B.C. as an idea of the body in a broad sense, and later narrowed down to matter. Mental experience is fully corporal. Not only does this concern classical medicine, but also various training programs which may be dangerous to those who undergo them. The Body without Organs, as this odd construct is called by Deleuze and Guattari, who borrowed the term from playwright Antonin Artaud, the father of performing arts, is a description of a new way of experiencing the world, a new form of sensualisation aimed at switching various functions of experience rather than gaining permanent representations (gathering useless knowledge).

Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty promoted the disfigured body. A special role was played by *parole* without *langue*, e.g. the corporeality of breathing, common to actors and the audience, a muted voice or silent scream. Artaud put emphasis not so much on the voice as sound. Paradox therapies work on a similar basis. The theory of paradox was developed by Victor E. Frankl – it is especially effective in therapies for anxiety and obsessive disorders. The strategies of these therapies are based on the therapist's recommendations being perceived by the patient as contradictory (at least at the beginning) to the aims of the therapy. This is done to create a paradoxical situation. Paradoxical instructions directed at the patient – such as: think negatively, moan and complain, or be passive – are instructions which command symptomatic behaviours and encourage the symptoms. They may provoke violent resistance to the experience, connected with the mechanisms which generate the symptoms. Frankl's paradox therapy requires a sense of humour.⁵ Its application

⁵ V. E. Frankl, *Homo patiens. Próby wyjaśnienia sensu cierpienia*, transl. R. Czernecki, Z. J. Jaroszewski, Warszawa 1998, p. 143.

is possible only with people who are able to maintain a distance from themselves and the world, e.g. from their own body (therefore it is exceptionally effective with phobias, anticipatory anxiety and sexual impotence⁶). Paradox enables a special interplay between the body and consciousness, which are simultaneously the same thing and something completely opposite.

The human being, as a symbolic animal able to use language, can also use any other tool in a similar way; e.g. the body: through changing the function of organs (including for example apparatus of movement, like limbs) – painting with legs, walking on hands etc. Sometimes people with the use of organs and limbs not suited to a given function achieve more than those possessing “proper” parts.

Individual Bodies and Social Organism

We possess individual bodies and the social organism does not belong to us. It is worse if we let our bodies be changed into an organism. Then we immediately stop owning our body. A particular corporal unit does not constitute a BwO yet, but only a stratum of a BwO, which will either allow creation, i.e. sublimation, or force them into specific forms, functions, relationships and hierarchical organisations in order to squeeze useful work out of them. Then the strata become, according to Deleuze and Guattari, shackles, fetters. We are unceasingly layered by social systems, as showed by Michel Foucault, for example. Since the invention of the clinic, we have been observing a progressive medicalisation of corporeality. It manifests itself, for instance, through developing medicaments not only to cure illnesses, but also against the inconveniences of life: medicines for concentration, wellbeing, providing energy when the body cannot provide it. The most important consequence of the birth of the clinic as a system of treating the body is specialist doctors, each dealing with different organs, and through a particular organ appropriating the rest of the body, including the mind. Such an appropriated body is not an organised body but the body-organ.

Language is bound by the territory of its use. Thus, its panchrony (territory) does not lend itself to examination. As Alfred Korzybski used to say: “The map is not the territory”. Each relationship (interpersonal or within language) requires knowledge of many codes, many maps, which overlap only partially, and also refer to an inaccessible territory. “The map is not the territory” – this famous quote from Alfred Korzybski, the originator of general semantics, in contrast to the semantics of

⁶ Ibidem.

linguistics, is used e.g. by Gregory Bateson, when he writes about discriminating between the map and the territory.⁷ Korzybski presented the concept of a cognitive map as reducing the complexity of the territory which it refers to. Both the map and the territory are dynamic structures and may develop independently until they cease to overlap.⁸ The map constitutes a condensation of many presentations. Such an establishment of the concept of reality in Western culture results from the adoption of the Kantian paradigm, which assumes the autonomy of the mind. Reality began to be mentioned only when the notion of rationality became settled, as was stressed by Jean Baudrillard.⁹ Reality is a map whose borders (edges) are virtual. The drama of realising something consists in discriminating the territory of sensuality through ready-made maps of moving around the contemporary world, which ignore the eternal reference and source of presentation (the territory of sensuality) – the body.

Therefore, as Deleuze and Guattari wrote, one should “sense the movements of possible deterritorialisation”¹⁰, find new connections, draw a diagram against the programs. Predicting the behaviour of the programs which modify their own code while operating is difficult. However – after discovery – it strikes us with destructive simplicity. The diagram, on the other hand, is an outline, a geometric shape, some simplified representation, mostly pictorial, of certain ideas, structures, relations and statistical data used for the graphic representation of knowledge. Thus, the diagram seems simpler than the program, but is a dangerous illusion of the synchrony and accessibility of data at a given time. A BwO is creative as a diagram, not a program; incorporated in small, private machines of individual bodies, ready to work and experiment when we, the subjects, will be willing to do so.

The concept of the BwO enables the transgression proposed by the authors of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* to be understood beyond the fundamental oppositions of the symbolic (*S - Symbolique*), the imaginary (*I - Imaginaire*), and the real (*R - Réel*). These three spheres of language (abbreviated by Lacan as S-I-R) determine their adoption by a particular user. The symbolic sphere is composed of universal rules, the system; the imaginary consists of individual rules connected with the history of the assimilation of meanings by a language user; and the real is data related to the most biological sphere of their corporeality. The BwO represents “real

⁷ G. Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Chicago 2000, p. 187.

⁸ I. Trzcińska, *Obraz, mapa i hybryda. Kulturowe aspekty przedstawiania świata*, “The Polish Journal of the Arts and Culture” 2013, no. 8.

⁹ J. Baudrillard, *Słowa kluczowe*, transl. S. Królak, Warszawa 2008, p. 39.

¹⁰ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, New York 2004, p. 193.

freedom" on condition that it is not limited and manipulated by technology (the most contemporary rule of our functioning in the world – the freed S), that it develops freely (the freed I), and that it constitutes a corporal, sentient equivalent of "the schizophrenic episode" (the freed R, the sphere of instincts). In a way, it is a testing ground for experiencing the complexity of communication.

Sublimation as Positive Deformation

In contrast to the body, which we know as the receiver of stimuli, the BwO is positively deformed. As Hayden White would describe sublimation as the only possibility of "winning life", inscribing Sigmund Freud's concept of drives in Algirdas Julien Greimas's semiotic square – the deformed body is a fiction which we build by ourselves over the course of our lives. However, it is not only a narration but also a holistic fiction based on the perpetual hierarchisation and reevaluation of functions. A well-incorporated instinct is determined by the sum of its effects, by "positive" deformation, instead of neurotic and fruitless repetition. This is the lesson that White learns from Freud. The "positively" deformed body is creative, and corporeality should be understood structurally, not physiologically. Freud's theory of drives offers, according to White, a taxonomy of psycho-somatic types and their plots. The four main plots which the drives are exposed to have a structure of: (1) repression, (2) sublimation, (3) turning round upon the subject and (4) reversal into an opposite.¹¹ These four structures present possible relations between the form and content of the drives themselves. Repression and sublimation produce the negation of the form, but not of the content: turning round upon the subject, i.e. transforming the subject into an object, and reversal into an opposite, indicate the change of the content. White uses the Greimas square to describe the semantic field, which can also be called the field of fictionalisation, and placement of the body in relation to the norm. And in the square he inscribes the instinctual relationships between the form and the content. Thus, sublimation is on the side of fiction, and repression on the side of simulation. Sublimation assumes the shape of a positively deformed body, and repression – a body which is sick, weak and overwhelmed by the system (of disease, insanity, language). Sublimation means creativity, adaptive abilities etc.; repression is marked by negative features (disability, weakness etc.). The two remaining strat-

¹¹ H. White, *Ciała i ich fabuły*, transl. M. Wilczyński, in *Poetyka pisarstwa historycznego*, eds. E. Domańska, M. Wilczyński, Kraków 2000, p. 354.

egies, turning round upon the subject and reversal into an opposite, are variants of the negation of the main terms: sublimation and repression.¹²

We have individual bodies and the social organism. The plane connecting the two may be a presentation of the BwO – the field of experience used both by the individual subject and the history of social thought. The organism is not a BwO, but a stratum on the BwO, a new form of organisation, a structure capable of harnessing the social organism and language and making them work for its benefit. The social organism resists and tries to create “we” from the BwO.¹³ Deleuze and Guattari recommend caution towards every “we”. The organism is a “we” of the organs. There is the possibility of cancer developing. The organs take over the function of one diseased organ which made itself independent from the undivided body and become “we”. The BwO is not “we” by any means. It is a diagram to be drawn, a system ready to be dissected. The BwO is independent from the function, not subordinate even to the function of life; it is function for itself, irony put into action, distanced from language, which it treats as the body. When the body is divided into organs, which are organised and subordinate to other systems, it has not only a limited possibility for movement and creation, but is also prone to the canceration of tissues.

We still have not answered the question of why there are so many dangers, and so many necessary precautions. It is not enough to set up an abstract opposition between the strata and the BwO. For the BwO already exists in the strata as well as on the destratified plane of consistency, but in a totally different manner. Take the organism as a stratum: there is indeed a BwO that opposes the organization of the organs we call the organism, but there is also a BwO of the organism that belongs to that stratum. Cancerous tissue: each instant, each second, a cell becomes cancerous, mad, proliferates and loses its configuration, takes over everything; the organism must resubmit it to its rule or restratify it, not only for its own survival, but also to make possible an escape from the organism, the fabrication of the “other” BwO on the plane of consistency. Take the stratum of significance: once again, there is a cancerous tissue, this time of significance, the burgeoning body of the despot that blocks any circulation of signs, and prevents the birth of the asignifying sign on the “other” BwO. Or take a stifling body of subjectification, which makes a freeing all the more unlikely by forbidding any remaining distinction between subjects. Even if we consider given social formations, or a given stratic apparatus within a for-

¹² Ibidem, p. 355.

¹³ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

mation, we must say that every one of them has a BwO ready to gnaw, proliferate, cover, and invade the entire social field, entering into relations of violence and rivalry as well as alliance and complicity. A BwO of money (inflation), but also a BwO of the State, army, factory, city, Party, etc.¹⁴

Organised bodies instantly succumb to mad processes of profit and exploitation.

Conclusions

The culture of signs is a recurrent term in philosophy. It does not allow mindless programs to win. Thanks to it, it is possible to put trust in model, holistic approaches rather than the linguistic determination of meanings. The process of departing from philosophical reflection, which has always been holistic, expressed with the diagram: ideas – notions – definitions, is here reversed. Presentations allow the return to ideas; ideas have more of the imaginary (I) than the symbolic (S).

The new presentation of the body as the BwO depicts a new way of experiencing the world, a new form of sensualisation directed not at gaining permanent representations (gathering useless knowledge), but at the possibilities of switching various functions of experience. The BwO is the subject in the model of the world where it is possible to move around, the world which can be changed. The body should not be organised (in terms of knowledge), but hierarchised (in terms of language) and transferred to a diagram; we should stop the destructive program heading towards cognitive abstraction, or from the perspective of semioticians – the myth, which consists in elevating a given function and turning it into the only and natural value.

The diagram is better than the program for an individual body – a language user. It constitutes a cut on the axis of synchrony and enables way to be made for the examination of a function which, confirmed by the choice (consciousness thereof), will become a strengthened state of the body, an attitude of a given individual, and also will act as resistance against the culture capitalistically programmed for change (constant movement of the value generating profit, which operates in every system).

The BwO may be imagined as the mind incorporated in place of the Cartesian paradigm: “I think, therefore I am”. At most, it fulfils Lacan’s paradigm: “I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think”. The BwO gives an individual body and the life of that body a value according to the system of beliefs built mainly due to

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 162–163.

learning about one's own limitations. The limitations of the body which we create ourselves against the independence of the organs.

At any rate, you have one (or several). It's not so much that it preexists or comes ready-made, although in certain respects it is preexistent. At any rate, you make one, you can't desire without making one. And it awaits you; it is an inevitable exercise or experimentation, already accomplished the moment you undertake it, unaccomplished as long as you don't.¹⁵

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¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 149.