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Bartleby the Discourse Hunter. On a certain form of non-critique

KEYWORDS

Bartleby, the study, critical discourse, resistance

ABSTRACT

In article I engage the Bartleby. His strategy, resistance and the relation to the dominant language are treated as a radical critique of discourse. Bartleby can show us a different style of critique that is coherence with paradigm of the study. My analyzed is located on the field on the philosophy of education and should be understood as developing of mentioned paradigm.

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The goal of the article is to propose a theory, that Bartleby (Melville 2009a)¹ is an example of a radical critique of discourse, free of the issues of commentary and psychoanalytical attempts. Although the two latter attempts constitute a sort of reproduction, a reinforcement of the power of a certain discourse, Bartleby's strategy is of a radical breakaway; not only does it reduce the discourse to a fruitless rambling, but also to its silencing, fading away into silence, the death of power. The "I would prefer not to" phrase is not only a specific form of passive resistance – an expression of the lack of dedication in the very protest – it's a magical formula that deconstructs the structures of discourse.

Bartleby is mentioned, with increased frequency, regarding the reflection upon education, as a character or an example of the opposition towards the paradigm of development learning in a biocapitalist society, as a person who haunts the current system, while opening and giving an example of studying (Lewis 2013, Lewis 2014; Vanhoutte 2014; D'Hoest, Lewis 2015). Showing Bartleby's practice as a cri-

¹ As some notions may get lost in translation, I also provide original fragments if necessary. (Melville 2009b).

tique of discourse and unveiling his attitude towards the dominant, monetised language (Reed 2004), is simultaneously a commentary and an expansion on the studying paradigm. In the light of the following interpretation, it becomes clear, that attempts to combine, negotiate between teaching, learning and studying are the results of a misunderstanding, regarding the specifics of the new paradigm. This way, the fragment below may be regarded as an indirect critique of the notions proposed by Derek R. Ford (Ford 2016).

The Haunting

Bartleby's appearance at the office, initiates a series of events, gestures that lead to a gradual decay of the given reality. At the first level of description, the history is as follows: The team of office staff is joined by an additional scrivener. The employer places him in the space of his own office, separating himself from the scrivener with a screen and separating him from the rest of the staff with a sliding door. At first, Bartleby produces good-quality work, however without enthusiasm. One day, when the employer asks him to proofread certain documents, he hears "I would prefer not to" in response. From that moment, the saying would increase in frequency, becoming a reply to almost every question and request from the employer. Bartleby refuses not only to perform additional work, but work in general. He refuses to work as well as to comply with employer's requests, to respond to questions regarding his origin and further, to participate in life as it is.

The first description outlines the three ways of further reading. First, the way of expressing resistance – the curious formula "I would prefer not to"; second, a certain expansion of refusal; third the unspoken "astonishment", the reaction of the employer and by Bartleby's colleagues. The second reading would focus on action, and these three ways would be led together, although not necessarily in parallel. Therefore, the second reading is multiplied, entangled in a series of re-readings and a (re)montage of gleams, as well as negotiating with unfamiliar maps.

Deleuze indicates ten visible uses of "I would prefer not to", that work as tactical movements, expanding and reinforcing the results of the refusal:

The first instance takes place when the attorney tells him [Bartleby – editorial note] to proofread and collate the two clerks' copies: I WOULD PREFER NOT TO. The second, when the attorney tells Bartleby to come and reread his own copies tête-à-tête. The fourth, when the attorney

wants to send him on an errand. The fifth, when he asks him to go into the next room. The sixth, when the attorney enters his study one Sunday afternoon and discovers that Bartleby has been sleeping here. The seventh, when the attorney satisfies himself by asking questions. The eighth, when Bartleby has stopped copying, has renounced all copying, and the attorney asks him to leave. The ninth, when the attorney makes a second attempt to get rid of him. The tenth, when Bartleby is forced out of the office, sits on the banister of the landing while the panic-stricken attorney proposes other, unexpected occupations to him. (Deleuze 1998, pp. 69-70)

The above-listed focal points determine my pursuit while engaging in the architecture.² It seems, that the essential element is the initiation of the whole process, which logically consists of intensification and spreading rather than faults, cuts or metamorphoses. It is also essential to indicate the eleventh, not mentioned by Deleuze, use which is the last move, allowing to clarify the entire strategy and what seems to be the aim of resistance.

Before the first use is applied, we are introduced to a description regarding Bartleby's work. He is overly engaged in his duties, working continuously and processing an intense amount of documents, day and night without a pause. Contrarily he seems absent at his work as "he wrote on silently, palely, mechanically". (Melville 2009b, p. 11). Bartleby resembles a machine: he needs no rest, he is able to withstand twenty four hours of labour, he continually accepts the provided documents, processes them in a steady rhythm, without a hint of engagement in his doings; in a sense the content of his work seems irrelevant. The lack of dedication is symbolised by the paleness³, which may be related to the motif of work taking out the life from a human being, making him a machine, while decomposing that which is human. The paleness, the mechanical rhythm, silence, all properties of a machine, build a feeling of uneasiness, they taint the curious nature of Bartleby's work with a hint of gloominess, rendering the lawyer incapable of enjoying the observed phenomenon. In a brief moment it appears that his work is not creative, not for a poet, requiring a bland lack of dedication, a sort of mechanical repetitiveness. "It is a very dull, wearisome, and lethargic affair (...) to some sanguine temperaments, it would be altogether intolerable." (Melville 2009b, p. 11). The machinelike nature of the scrivener's occupation is explained by the very mechanical work of

² On the mode of reading as immersion and getting lost within the architecture (Benjamin 2011). The mode of reading, as straying, slowly penetrating, modifying the map, seems to be linked to the writing spirit preferred by Melville, where writing becomes a happening, a journey through the unknown (Bianchi 2011).

³ „(...) he wrote on silently, palely, mechanically" (Melville, 2009b: 11)

copying and proofreading documents. The unusual paleness⁴ of Bartleby, visible during his occupational duties, is neutralised, to finally explode, initiating a slow, underground process of destruction.

The owner is convinced that, while he gives an order-instruction, the Bartleby-machine would accomplish the task by the push of a button, he would absorb the paper and initiate his rhythmic mode of lifeless malfunction. As the production fails to start, and Bartleby responds contrary to expectations: "I would prefer not to", the lawyer repeats the instruction, convinced that it might have been unintelligible, that Bartleby might have not heard him, or maybe his own intellectual powers deceived him, so that it wasn't the machine's fault, but the lack of proper initiation. "I repeated my request in the clearest tone I could assume; but in quite as clear a one came the previous reply, "I would prefer not to"" (Ibidem, s. 12).

The first "I would prefer not to" is a moment of the copy-machine's malfunction and the initiation of a new mode of proceeding, or more precisely: a malfunction, imagined by the repeated "I would prefer not to", spawns new results. Bartleby becomes the sower of chaos and destruction (Schultz 2011, p. 597-588; Deleuze 2016a, p. 124-125). So far, the "destruction and chaos" have not revealed their full power yet. It is simply a tremble, that precedes the earthquake to come.

Both Bartleby's visuals and the way of articulation reveal something inhuman, both the exceptional and the very sober character of the scrivener. The employer-lawyer claims that "had there been anything ordinarily human about him, doubtless I should have violently dismissed him from the premises. But as it was, I should have as soon thought of turning my pale plaster-of-paris bust of Cicero out of doors" (Melville 2009b, pp. 12-13).

The mechanical character of malfunction is visible in the second use, a few days after, when Bartleby is being called for a mutual examination of the copies he made. This time, the lawyer-employer attempts to engage in a discussion with his insubordinate employee. He, however, continually responds with "I would prefer not to", as if "some paramount consideration prevailed with him to reply as he did" (Ibidem, s. 14). It is as if something controlled him, as if he were subject to a different power and could not act according to the reasonable arguments presented by the employer. Simultaneously, that which haunted Bartleby, also struck the lawyer. The lawyer is deprived of confidence, his powers of reason begin to tremble and

⁴ The paleness of Bartleby is seen in various contexts, particularly referring to something deprived of life, but also something that cannot be introduced to the world contract words, with a greater state of things. In the attempts to understand Bartleby, he compares him to the bust of Cicero, a wall, being a gentleman, madness and even death.

their frailty is revealed. Unsure, whether justice and reason are on his side, he turns to other employees, looking for assistance.

The employees take the employer's side, the side of the dominant rationality, although their attitudes are hinted with negative affectivity. Aggression, at first hidden in venomous comments, increases, as the work of Bartleby spreads. During the continual uses of "I would prefer not to", the destructive effect intensifies, as well as the aggression and madness, spreading over not only the lawyer, but also his employees.

The haunting, as well as Bartleby's refusal, increases in power. The curious way of Bartleby's articulation influences the formal language. The lawyer notices that "Somehow, of late, I had got into the way of involuntarily using this word "prefer" upon all sorts of not exactly suitable occasions. (Ibidem, s. 27). This subliminal influence, the imposing of "prefer" onto the language, tearing it apart, making it bizarre and turning it into a cancerous mutation is not only forced on the employer. The lawyer notices, that even his employees, involuntarily, as if by coincidence, use the word "prefer". "It was plain that it involuntarily rolled from his tongue" (Ibidem, s. 28). Bartleby had twisted their tongues or even minds. Moreover, the very presence of the curious scrivener, encouraged the spread of gossip, that could undermine the social standing of the lawyer (Melville 2009a, s. 46-47).

The employer begins to realise, that his standing as a respected citizen and a competent lawyer is endangered. An escape begins, in which the motionless Bartleby, constantly holds the lawyer in his arms. He becomes a shadow, who is present even in exile. Despite locking him in the Tombs, an exile into the place of his origin, to a repressed, exiled aspect of reality, the lawyer remains in contact with him, through letters sent by the institution authorities or the constant haunting not yet rationalised. Committing betrayal (Deleuze 2016a, s. 134), the lawyer appears in the Tombs and attempts to comfort Bartleby to provide him with better living conditions. The response of the former employee, startlingly clear, cannot be explained with a psychological disorder: "I know you", "I know where I am" (Melville 2009b, pp. 45-46) in order to repeat his mad statement "I prefer not to dine to-day: (...). So saying, he slowly moved to the other side of the inclosure, and took up a position fronting the dead-wall". (Ibidem, pp. 45-46). Losing himself in silence and in death.

Disconnection of the phantom

As previously mentioned, the resistance of Bartleby is curious, a specific non-resistance, mostly regarded as passive resistance. I shall not analyse the wholesome character of the non-scrivener's strategy, or engage in debates over the subject.

It far exceeds the framework of the article. My interest lies in the matters of discourse. Instead of searching for the “essence” of resistance, I shall demonstrate its doing.

From the very beginnings, the curious resistance of Bartleby undermines the rationality of the employer, causing his mind to tremble. It is not simply a matter of a distortion of the cognitive powers, but also of questioning the entire social order, to which a certain mind adjusts, considering certain modes of thinking as rational. The trembling, distortion and unsettling, refer to the lack of foundations, to a repressed arbitrariness of both the rational and the social. A gap, created by Bartleby’s statement, places the lawyer in a dangerous state, opening a perspective unfitting for people of his standing. “For the first time in my life a feeling of overpowering stinging melancholy seized me. Before, I had never experienced aught but a not unpleasing sadness” (Ibidem, p. 23). Melancholy liberates the lawyer from the dominant social relations and at the same time opens him for an experience of fraternity: to entirely different relations and an entirely different reality. “Presentiments of strange discoveries hovered round me.” (Ibidem, p. 23). If he were to follow the path opened up by Bartleby, he would have lost everything, that constituted his subjectivity, that in turn constituted his self-belief, his belief in the world and the feeling of self-esteem. The promise is menacing. In a sense, Bartleby is not only a clearance (Deleuze 2016a, p. 138), a gate, but also a wall, that unveils the limitations of the lawyer (Springer 1965).

The analysis of the moments of the use, reveals the helplessness of the employer regarding his employee. From the very beginnings, Bartleby is in a privileged position at the office. Since the very haunting, the lawyer has noticed a certain similarity. He establishes a peculiar bond with Bartleby. The intimacy is phantom-like, as well as Bartleby, who is that which appears. Naomi C. Reed, among others, indicates the apparition-like nature of Bartleby, considering it to be a situation of haunting, that Bartleby acts similar to a ghost. (Reed 2004, p. 250). Jacques Derrida, in his analysis of the spectre, states that it is always a Revenant. It comes, seemingly, from both the past and the future, or more precisely, distorts the difference so its origin is not known. It is related to what was, but had not appeared in existence as well as to what may be, but does not exist, it is a form of obligation. It relates to, what “could come or come back” (Derrida 2006, p. 48). The coming, return and a declaration, constantly undermine the current. Therefore, the spectre opens the reality, becoming a promise. The spectre approaches us, unsettles our thought and encourages us to act. Being plurality and dividing into a legion of spectres, it remains in a relation to the haunted – “the specter first of all sees us” (Ibidem, p. 125). Regarding this context, the lawyer is being haunted by himself. What frightens him and drives him mad, what he must

face, is himself or, rather that, what he could become. The remains, a thing repressed. Additionally, something that does not fit into the framework of reality.

Norman Springer indicates, that the lawyer is not a cold-blooded capitalist, a vulgar, dull entrepreneur who loves money above all, but an educated individual that is aware of moral issues (Springer 1965, p. 410). Dan McCall shows, that we are dealing with an individual that has not yet adjusted to the soulless capitalism, as he continues to pay Bartleby, despite him doing no work whatsoever (McCall 1989).

One may assume that the lawyer becomes helpless towards Bartleby, due to an internal conflict, taking place at the very core of his subjectivity. The conflict had been constituted by a struggle between ethics – the Christian mercy and capitalist pragmatism. As if those two discourses, taking parallel positions in the individual, started to block their own effects; the motionless stance of Bartleby would unveil the immobilisation of the lawyer.

Henry Krips indicates, that “I would prefer not to” is a statement that introduces an upper class language register to the office. His statement is a reference to principles different than the market, money based principles. Bartleby’s actions are therefore tolerated, as he conducts entirely legal practice in the company of the gentlemen (Krips 2012, s. 311). Simultaneously, this reference includes a certain exaggeration, a theatrical artificiality, a peculiarity that prevents any reaction based on both capitalist and gentleman relations. “Bartleby is gentlemanly *in a cadaverously way*.” (Reed 2004, s. 250). He twists both realms and uncovers both discourses. During the reading, one can see, that the lawyer relates to both registers, failing each time. The non-scrivener does not make a selection between the two given ethics, two world views, placing the subject in a conflict between rivalling systems of value, but rather, he indicates their complementary and void nature. The void nature of power and the frail nature of subjectivity: the limitations of a given subjectivity.

The lawyer presents himself as a firm, calm and a merciful individual, he is a good Christian and a successful entrepreneur. He is a serious and a respectful gentleman: as are coins. He is the hard currency, acknowledge by both the market and tradition. He is an individual, fully integrated into the established order, successful and optimistic. As Springer indicates, the lawyer is certain of his understanding and managing in the current world. He knows the value of labour and his work is being rewarded with both money and social standing. Bartleby shows the limitations of such subjectivity, he stands as a wall before the lawyer. He senses something in the non-scrivener, that transgresses the boundaries of his world and its understanding, he feels the unfamiliarity and otherness, impossible to comprehend (Springer 1965). Bartleby, not only causes the lawyer

to flee his office, but also to not attend church on Sunday. He deconstructs his definition of reality, humanity, evades all attempts of locating, directing his gaze towards the wall. The helplessness may not be a result of the intimacy, but the unfamiliarity, from the lack of ability to tame, to subject and to place in a framework. Bartleby is not working properly. His responses are incoherent with the rules. The non-scrivener twists the language and leads to its boundaries, empties it of its entire sense directing at silence. The lawyer may only neutralise the particular actions, try to save the language, the ability to articulate, that he finds meaningful, treating the quasi-articulations made by Bartleby as a manifestation of insanity.

The Deranged Spectre

The story of the lawyer, refers Bartleby to madness on numerous occasions. A case of a mental disorder seems like the only viable way of explaining his actions. The distribution of discourses and the silence are regarded as a subjectivity disorder.

Bartleby defined as melancholic assumes a defined position regarding language. For the sick, language seems unfamiliar. Silence is an effect of disease. Andrew Solomon in his tale of battling depression states: "Once you cross over, the rules all change. Everything that had been written in English is now in Chinese (...) I could not manage to say much; words, with which I have always been intimate, seemed suddenly very elaborate, difficult metaphors the use of which entailed much more energy than I could possibly muster." (Solomon 2001, p. 57, 60). The facts observed by Salomon regarding himself, is in the opinion of Julia Kristeva, one of the most severe disorder symptoms, that unable existence. She introduced the characteristics of melancholy language, which could be related to Bartleby's way of speaking without effort. **"His way of speaking immediately seems evasive, insecure and laconic, almost silent: it is spoken with a belief that the speech is false, so it is spoken without attention, it is spoken without belief"** (Kristeva 2007, s. 48). The mistrust towards language, constitutes the inability to subject self to what is symbolic, to the **law of the Father**. Overly attached to the own inarticulate self, one is unable to enter the objective (**Ibidem**, s. 18), integrate into the established order and enter the plane of communication and production. Only after the act of matricide, one becomes an entity and a member of the universal community, introduced to the fatherly tradition and the comforting influence of law. It is not possible for a melancholic, faithful to a utopian view, to be transferred into the logic of

equivalence, in turn becoming somewhat of an absolutist and choosing death instead of compromise.

The above-mentioned view on Bartleby is shared by Leo Marx. His proposal treats the entire history as a metaphorical presentation of the life of a writer in a capitalist society, and the non-scrivener, as an alter-ego of Melville. The previously mentioned, separating the employees from the employers, present behind the window, in which shadow Bartleby finally sinks into silence and death, that wall becomes a significant metaphor. Marx notes, that Bartleby is close to regarding writing as art, with his denial being related to writing as an occupation. Denial to examine texts, is a denial to subject self to social relations, the common usage of text (Marx 1953, p. 609). The malfunction of the copying-machine is referred to the wall. Bartleby would constantly gaze upon it. The wall almost serves as a completion for the words "I would prefer not to". The non-scrivener is being nearly overwhelmed by the wall, it's the wall shade that renders him unable to write. Focusing on the wall is related to the awareness of limitations that bind the writer in a capitalist society. However, the fate of Bartleby, as interpreted by Marx, is a fate of an individual unable to the circumstances and destroyed in result of focusing on the boundaries. The wall proves destructive to every individual who obsessively tries to penetrate it. (Ibidem, p. 622). The mistake of Bartleby lies in the fact, that while gazing upon the wall, he separated himself from humanity. In result, Wall Street seems entirely artificial; that is why he dies, like a writer, to no audience. (Ibidem, s. 626-627).

Considering the above logic, the non-scrivener is not a clearance not a spectre, breaking away the pieces of reality, but an individual who is unable to adjust and negotiate with the social. He is a danger to the established order, a danger to the very existence, and the lawyer-therapist is the one able to show us the proper path, the one who attempts to save Bartleby – unfortunately to no result.

The subversive aspect however, is not included in the above interpretation. The interpretation describes Bartleby as a radical critic of discourse, equipped with a particular method, but it also strengthens dominant discourses; placing the non-scrivener in the existing social structure on formal margins, imprisoned as an insane vagabond.

The scope of power

Bartleby does not share his story. His fate, characteristics and attempts to help us understand this most curious of scriveners, are given to us by the lawyer, his employer. The eyes become the instrument of cognition.

What my own astonished eyes saw of Bartleby, *that* is all I know of him, except, indeed, one vague report, which will appear in the sequel (Melville 2009b, p. 2).⁵

That, which his “own astonished eyes saw”, “*that* is all he knows of him”. The reference to sight, namely that “*that* is all” that was seen, may be regarded as a guarantee of the narrator’s reliability, as nothing is being added beyond what was seen, beyond what he saw, no gossip involved. In this way he would be regarded as an individual representative to the Cartesian-enlightenment, subjectifying sight (Swoboda, p. 12). Simultaneously, it may indicate a subjectivity, a certain unavailability of Bartleby. He appeared before the lawyer’s eyes in a certain way, presented himself in a particular manner. He was not simply a general object of sight, but of “own” sight. Just once, an “unclear relation”, following Bartleby’s fade into obscurity, to radically distance self from the power of sight. Only after his death, a report appears in order to make Bartleby visible again. The relation, vague, almost spectral, makes the scrivener visible again, an appearing, spectral sign, deprived of subject, a relation to existence but only elements circulating post-death. (Reed 2004, p. 264). Even though the eyes are unable to catch sight of the individual, the words on Bartleby are still manifested.

Both aspects, the objectivity of sight, and the subjectivity of particular eyes, are intertwined: a privileged mind overlaps with the privileged perspective of the beholder. The lawyer is a manifestation of the authority that establishes the objectivity of the capitalist social order. He is the exponent of capitalism, and the boundaries of views, his perception, implicate the boundaries of a capitalist society.

The fact that Bartleby is presented through the eyes of his employer, proves essential. The narrator states, that it would only be fitting to tell his own story. “My employés, my business, my chambers, and general surroundings; because some such description is indispensable to an adequate understanding of the chief character about to be presented” (Melville 2009b, s. 2). The lawyer character as the one who sees, or rather who is being presented with Bartleby is crucial at various levels, as I previously mentioned: his settled standing, his conservative nature as well as the combination of registers and ethics all constitute the interpretation of the curious scrivener and his strategy. Equally important, fusing the ethics and registers, as a looking glass, is the market standing of the lawyer, as he is the employer.

The very beginning of the statement shows that the narrator is employing a language, indicating the possession of: “my *employés*, my business, my chambers” (Melville 2009b, s. 2). He positions himself above the employees who, as

⁵ “What my own astonished eyes saw, *that* is all I know of him, except, indeed, one vague report, which will appear in the sequel” (Melville 2009b, p. 2).

his property and slaves, define him as a person. His identity would be different, if not for his possessions. This possession-oriented overview treats employees as machines and assets, which is visible in their description, referring to their properties in regard to occupational capabilities and the benefits of their contribution to the office. As Schultz notes, it is the employer who perceives Bartleby as an item, a tool deprived of independent thinking, which does not mean, that the curious scrivener is a reflection of the employer's assumptions (Schultz 2011, p. 592). One could assume the very opposite.

Contrary to Marx, I assess that it is not Bartleby, who was unaware of the social construction of the wall, that the limitations were established by people, and that, once broken, a new life would be possible, but the lawyer who perceived the wall as something metaphysical, related to the very nature of the eternal reality. The lawyer perceives the limitations as something given, and their abolition, as an opening of the void, an insanity he perceives in Bartleby. Acknowledging the interpretation provided by the employer-narrator, we would be forced to assume the perspective of power, think within a dominant discourse and treat the silence of the non-scrivener as a strategy, as fading into death, or a denial of life.

Deleuze indicates that psychoanalysis is unable to grasp the maps of children, understand the "other language", but projects patterns, breaks roots and adjusts to official modes of speaking, while tying the left hand behind the back. "They have to put away their maps, underneath which there is no longer anything but yellowed photos of the father-mother" (Deleuze 2016b, s. 105). Psychoanalysis allies with power, it is the strategy of the lawyer: "the treatment" should help not only Bartleby, but also, if not more, his surroundings, personified by the narrator" (Paryż 2002: 227). The characteristics of the relation to language regarding melancholics by Kristeva should be interpreted in a similar manner.

Bartleby is located within particular social relations; he knows where he is. It is within this framework, that he conducts his terrorist activity. The wall, limitations and the dominant discourse are historical ripples, established structures. Therefore, this particular framework can be the field of considering Bartleby's denial. His withdrawal is not from the world, but from this particular world, not from the language, but from the particular formatted language and not from writing, but from particular forms and requirements of writing.

The universe of language in which Bartleby is located, and which Bartleby refuses, is the language of command, the language of management, of subjugation under the hierarchical structures, and market relations. It is a world of a total enterprise and of the workplaces of alienation. The language serves subjugation, it is an alienated language in which communication is no more than a guise

(Pospiszyl 2016, s. 111). Therefore, Bartleby refuses the language reduced to an instrument of support of a capitalist mode of production and life crippling, the discourses of domination. Silence indicates the reluctance towards fusing into this language, the language of the fathers, of domination, of the guise of communications, into the dominant structures, on which he turns his back in the name of life. It is a silence, as far as it unveils the meekness of prattle; it is insanity, as far as it unveils the paranoia of power; it is a wall, as far as it uncovers the walls that surround us...

The opulence of nothing

One should indicate, that points of contact, are at the same points of divergence. The attempts to explain Bartleby within various discourses prove fruitless. Bartleby is in a different place now. He is an employee, while not being one, he is a human, while not being one, he is alien, while being very close. "There is always something more with Bartleby, something extra, something that exceeds this or that thematization" (Beverungen, Dunne 2007, s. 173).

Bartleby's very existence is a critique. He resists the fatherly urge to control the language or control at all. Schultz states, that Bartleby thinks and acts outside the modes and the area defined by the supervisor (Schultz 2011, s. 593). Through his actions, apart from manifesting own elusiveness, he reveals the frailty of subordination, the uncertainty of each authority and the impossibility of a total dominance of a discourse. "Bartleby is precisely that moment, a moment where the machine of managerialism fails to assimilate that which resists it" (Beverungen, Dunne 2007 s. 178). If Bartleby withdraws from the dominant logic, the logic itself, in an attempt to subdue him becomes subject to transformation, reaches its limitations, unveiling the truth regarding subordination, as a clear "Obey" (Krips 2012, s. 314) and arbitrary violence hidden under every established order.

Bartleby's practice, his contemplation or, more likely, the studying of the wall is something that could be referred to thinking as a critique of discourse. Deleuze notices, that thinking comes from the external, splitting the previously formed and functioning (as well a functional within the "fossilised" diagrams of authority. The exterior character of thinking, as an area of resistance, is not reduced to a reproduction of a dominant discourse. The work of resistance, not as a result of authority, but rather something primary to formation, is a work of sabotage, causing trembling and disrupting the work of the discursive machine up to the point of rendering it useless. Instead of an improvement of the discourse, we see the

practice of decay, constructing and mobilising new, different machines. Bartleby's approach, being a form of critical thinking, is a form of practice, where one transcends from one map to the other. The metamorphoses of space and discourse are also the metamorphoses of subjectivity (Deleuze 2004).

The nothingness, identified with Bartleby, is the boundary of knowledge, and discourse, it's a place of transgression to a different plane. This plane is not something defined, but rather pure potentiality (Agamben 2009; Lewis 2013; Lewis 2014), the abyss of life outside of the word of authority.

The death of discourse

Bartleby's critical strategy lies not in the analysis of the discourse in regard of deconstructing into particles, as some sort of a suspicious anatomy class. Instead, he proposes a double gesture. First, it is a gesture of parody, of unmasking drawing upon distortion and staging – Bartleby is intertwining registers, causing them to tremble. On the other hand, it is a gesture of withdrawal, breaking communications and the denial of participating in a certain discourse and accepting its rules. If the first aspect seems to be located within the discourse, as a certain mutation, which to a degree accepts its logic, modifying it at most, then the second aspect shows such premonitions as an unfounded illusion of the dominant. Additionally, one could say that Bartleby's gesture is a gesture of withdrawal, and all the twists and mutations are the actions of the dominant discourse struggling for total domination and the assimilation of Bartleby in its logic, placing him in the order of things, if only as an excluded individual. His critique, however, relies on being non-integrated and on the radical denial. It relies on not using of a given discourse. What the lawyer considered to be a dialogue, communication is nothing but illusion. Bartleby simply repeats, what he had formulated at the very end: "I know you and I do not wish to speak to you". The reluctance to speaking *to*, is a refusal to speak *in*.

"Will you tell me, Bartleby, where you were born?"

"I would prefer not to."

"Will you tell me *anything* about yourself?"

"I would prefer not to."

"But what reasonable objection can you have to speak to me? I feel friendly towards you"

He did not look at me while I spoke, but kept his glance fixed upon my bust of Cicero, which, as I then sat, was directly behind me, some six inches above my head.

“What is your answer, Bartleby?” said I, after waiting a considerable time for a reply, during which his countenance remained immovable, only there was the faintest conceivable tremor of the white attenuated mouth.

“At present I prefer to give no answer,” he said, and retired into his hermitage” (Melville 2009b, 26).

If the analysis and critique allow for the expansion of a discourse and constantly negotiate meanings in a field defined by the dominant, while the parody attempts to appropriate the modes of speaking, initiate mutations, as a transforming factor, then the radical denial puts discourse to death, sends it into obscurity and ceases to use it. Bartleby is not buried in death, he's the death of the lawyer, and the relations, laws and modes of speaking he represents.

From the authority perspective, Bartleby's strategy appears as insanity, an end to speech, the death itself. It appears incomprehensible. The strategy is also an overabundance of life, an untamed, unframed by the capitalist circulation, strength of life itself. It indicates the possibilities that are more than just an improvement within the functioning structures. Bartleby's strategies may be observed in the practice of contemporary social movements and the anarchist branches of syndicalism. I consider this clue to be significant for the understanding of the specifics of the discourse critique proposed in this article. To put it briefly, the critique is of practical character, related to constructing of different social relations regarding the strength of a being against dominant structures. It does not share an illusory view, that one is capable of negotiating different modes of life and usage within the functioning institutions, that support the dominant discourse. It leaves the (educational) factories to create nomadic educational machines and pirate networks – to die for this world and be born for another. Creating **clearances**, that may mesmerise even within the dominant.

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