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Politics and poetics of "post-truth": *transimitation*

The 'end' of truth and the persistence of "post-truth"'

How to understand this new, ugly term? How to think of the "post truth"? How can art encounter this situation?

The term 'truth' itself has never been understood and I believe that there is no such a thing as the 'truth' and philosophy from its inception failed to grasp it. Art in its turn made endless versions of the so-called "the real' which is accepted as the truth.   In fact, it is more interesting to look at this question differently as an event of truth. In this case there is something that precedes this event of truth and something that comes after. Alongside this I would say that truth is taking place either before or after the event of "'truth" and in this case the concept such as "post-truth' is convincing. One may also think that we are talking of the fiction of truth, the situation when "the world is (a bad) theatre", where all the actors, that are ourselves, don't understand how it is possible to find out about truth in the fiction?[1] I would prefer to repeat after the post-Kantian philosophy, we act in relation to the truth *as if* there is one.[2] The biggest achievement of all knowledge in search of truth is that there is only one truth: the understanding of the world and its subjects is possible only because the understanding of the world is always incomplete, because human is always in default and the world itself appears to us partially. The essence of being is in its being non-essential. Any theory built upon this is true, because it is an attempt to improve the world and to escape the heavy burden of the conventional belief in 'perfection'.

From passivity to the act of becoming

The notion that with the capacity of simulation images take subjects further away from the representation towards the imitation. If conventionally images of culture are understood as the imitation of nature, then new technologies that employ "the recorded memory"   imitates time.[3] It leads to the convergence of the subject into the object or what is called 'affirmation" by Adorno.[4]

In his lecture given at the Vienna Kulturbund in 10th of May 1935 Husserl spoke of 'the crisis as a pathological sickness of which the dominant characteristic is a fall into passivity (Passivitat). [5] However in both, in the early 'objectivist' and late 'philosophico-historicist' (or the teleological sense, question of 'telos') cases Husserl wanted to find an answer to the question of the lost contact of people with the sense of their activities, of their mode of knowledge. In this loss is an answer to Husserl's search for essences is also found: the subject is not the matter of the biological origins or transcendental consciousness it is the matter of individuation which includes both imperfection and intention to strive   toward perfection. The world itself is not perfect, which is given to us and it is in crisis. In the light or rather twilight of Husserl's vision and a close reading of the work of philosopher Bernard Stiegler for the last ten years I have become very interested in the relationship between the time and image, that reveals the truth of being. My late work, both philosophical and artistic, consists of working out the possibility by taking on the precarious yet contested notion of 'imitation' (from the Italian *imitiari: making images).* [6] Any possibility of the discovery of 'truth' is not in images, but making images, which always takes one back to the 'beginning'. The problematic situation is provided by the long-standing claim of modernism's 'cutting off with the past" and the denial of access to the past. The past, however, is potentially open, including but not exclusively for contemporary art. It is also denial of access to unrealised projects of the past. Projects that continue to dominate the art world until now point to this possibility, like the project of 'relational aesthetics' which consists of the recent art which is made out and of the relation to the social production, which means that art summarises the lived experience of the past, which was never established. Another aspect of today's art is evoking the socially marginal and symbolically central with the hope that bringing these experiences from the margins to the centre would restore truth as a Zeitgeist.

I would like to divert this theory and to insist that it is not the lived experience, but a *non-lived* experience which activates one's own life, which is the life of the other and this life is only available by technical means as a recorded memory and if there are essences they can be found in what never came to existence, what is absent. Not knowing this means not knowing how to think of the absence of the lost dimension of the time. To make an attempt to learn from the non-lived experience in order to create a new memory of the past and the future (and most importantly to escape to fall prey into nostalgia, which is very dangerous, as well as to escape a blind schematization) in order to provide a new artistic industrial model of the "post-truth"'.

The proliferation of technics provides more is-orientation and passivity to grasp events. There is, often, an automatic acceptance of everything taking place without having any knowledge of it. On the other hand the representation ceased to be caring, taking care in the light of the twilight of the crisis of sovereignty which is inseparable from power: it is failed on the both end of the spectrum: political power which is not capable to represent any longer and the aesthetic power-that is the power of individual, have not yet found a new industrial model. This aesthetic power is always in crisis if it doesn't realise itself as 're-presentation –in- use' of the collective memory. We live in the situation of the speeding up of the chaos and therefore in the situation of the entropy that makes the question of the *trans*: like in translating, transforming etc. How can art encounter this situation? Making images takes place at the point of not knowing what to think, when there is an object of truth that is totally absent. It takes the place of non-existing thought and inevitably leads to the "'thought-image".[7] The question here is not whether all involved with making images, such as artists for example, are thinkers or not, nevertheless they provide different degrees of imitation. The imitation is in fact emulation for bringing into the full consciousness what is the unknown object. This is the point that makes imitation interesting as it is the act of becoming. In other words the imitation is an act of desiring to know what one doesn't know how to think of the unknown. It is also the function or the technical basis of images as defined by Levi-Strauss: images are good to think with.[8] Once the imitation shifts towards thinking it becomes translational, constantly sliding and never having any beginning or the end. To imitate means to translate at the point of the impossibility of truth.

Transimitation

In the first place imitation is the first contact with the exterior image, on the second it is the contact and engagement with the exteriorised image. It is a chance and the choice at the same time-one may accept it for the activity of "grammatization" or reject it completely to remain ignorant. [9] Another question arises regarding exteriorised images that are not related to one's experience as any exteriorisation is always the exteriorised other: how to *connect* things that are not *related* to each other? In order to include in this act not only imitation of the lived experience but also or mostly non-lived experience I coined a new term: *transimitation.*

It takes place when one doesn't know how to think when there is no model for imitation. Or rather there is a model for imitation, which is the model of lived, however if there is no model

for non-lived experience. It means that there is no technique which could motivate thinking. It is because 'technics precedes thought' and practice precedes theory. It is an on-going mistake to divide theory and practice, because this divide is not meant to separate technics from thought but to put them in their difference. It is practice which informs theory, but no other way round. It is motivated by the desire to know how to think and being directed towards the unknown territory-it is an act of learning how to know and how to think at the same time. Transimitation is questioning the whole history of the subject or the collective history and as such it is the responsibility of expectation. It is about taking position; modelling oneself on contemporary or on ancestors. Transimitation is another name for more religious term called creation.[10] Imitation is ungrammatical, transimitation is an on- going process of grammatisation. Therefore, I am not for or against imitation I am for transimitation. Transimitation generates and grammatizes what is discovered, the recovery of the lost. From this point it is interesting for me to further theorise transimitation as a technique of both perceiving the visible and grammatizing them. Coupled with temporal-imitational objects transimitation opens up the possibility for the act of cultural trans-mutation. It is the technique of grammatisation and acting out. Transimitation is an acknowledgement of the default and the need for endless translations via repetitions to increase the potential of memory and restore what is missing.

Three times, three forms of transimitation

I would like to give three examples regarding three situations or three vectors of transimitation; first; a triple synthesis of the non-direct image of time, the immaterial nature of the art and a new topology of non-places. It gives rise to a constant shift in the role of the artist, which necessarily changes alongside the rapid changes in the political and aesthetic spheres. It makes the task of intervening with images more difficult. This difficulty is expressed in Jean Luc Godard's 1976 film *Here and Elsewhere (Ici et ailleurs)*, in which its protagonists are shown passing in front of the camera while holding in their hands images of their choice. The camera is still, and instead of the movement of cameras we see people moving in front of them. In Serge Daney's words, 'no longer does the camera record things but people come bearing their images like a cross before an indifferent video camera, set up on the tripod, and it brings them into line, links one to the next'.[11] Filmed in Palestine in an attempt to rally support for refugees, Godard admits to not being able to find an organizing principle and instead asks: 'Why can't I find the right montage for these images?'[12] Yet, while

using still images or freeze frames, which his protagonists actually brought to the film set, tells us more about cinema's return to its reference point, photography. It translates the image of the 'impossible present' to the possibility of remembering the past, which is recorded in still images. Godard also understood that the saturation of images created a vicious circle that endlessly takes us back to beginnings. This vicious circle is a crucial aspect of working with images, and marks the shift from producing to translating. Translation becomes a new productivity.

Second: the narrative procedure and surroundings of art work overcomes the 'central' point: a picture itself. Ad Reinhard's black canvases, which he made from 1960 until his death in 1966, all of them measuring 157.5X157.5 cm are all made to simulate the impossibility of the narrative. "Empty"' canvases extend the narrative outside of the painting itself and provides the possibility for the viewer to participate in the process of the discovery of surroundings.[13] This narrative procedure involves the consistency of an artist in his choice of the use of the texture, pigments and the format which extends the artist's notion of the impossibility of the production when the "real"' itself has become a simulation. In this scenario these images made by Reinhard appear as non-familiar hyreglyphics the causes of which one cannot recognise. They are replacing writing (or the narrative that emerges from the surroundings) that we know and assembled together in order to bring another meaning/meaninglessness. Potentially it provokes the thought to enter into the composition of these images in order to re-activate passively hidden "real'. In this case the spectator participates in the work of an author, which is the only true relation to the object of art. In this work images stopped being objects but their active counterparts. Images are silenced or muted in order to avoid the monologue and instead become the dialogue between the artist and the spectator in order to reveal the 'truth' together. It is one possibility among other possibilities in the world of defaults and the imperfection: a post-truth as opposed to the 'truth' of the 'perfect' or sacred art which can be deciphered by highly specialised people.

Third: the faulty incompleteness, the crisis of sovereignty and the inhuman overcoming the human. In Chris Marker's film "*Cat listening to music*" (1988), the cat is filmed sitting on the piano, where the pianist is absent. Instead there is a soundtrack of the piano music in the background. The first impression is that the cat is listening to the music. Soon one realises that the cat is completely ambivalent to the music and contemplating something absolutely unknown to us. The image of the cat here is very powerful; it is an image of the "thinker", whose "thoughts" are impossible to know. Nevertheless, one realises that the thought

"'entered" into the image of the cat in the film is the thought of the other. It creates a dissonance between the non-human animal, whose 'thoughts' are totally unknown (as it is not known if cats ever think?). The human in default and the image of the animal perfectly reveals this truth; the human is powerful only in the default, when he/she demonstrates the imperfection, a very fragile nature of being. In this piece of Marker the thought is inscribed in images and they became 'hieroglyphics' changing next to each other to create the story of the cat and the music to show the faultiness of the human.[14] It also shows how art has lost its aesthetic power in front of the political power and points to the lost sovereignty of the human and hopelessness of his/her art. It questions the sovereignty, which is in itself by default. It is like Batallie's account of the man being totally fragile in front of the bison, depicted in Lascaux cave. [15] Here I would like to recall what Batallie termed in relation to the cave painting as the 'intellectual realism', which evokes the reality, which is not accessible to the human. The human is hopeless. The only way to handle the situation of the unknown from something already known is to translate any situation with the help of memory of the known. The human is doomed to dwell in 'intellectual realism', which means the access to perfection is denied and impossible. The only way is to perceive the move towards freedom through the imitative nature of subjects, which shifts into a trans-imitative technique. This is the technique of both grasping and translating.

Transimitation as the intellectual realism of acting out

The disillusionment of the myth of perfection evokes the politics and poetics of post-truth. We live in the time of disillusion where as an alternative we find even more illusions. And the hope that in the past things were better is immediately lost as soon as we return back to it. The future is possible only as an act of repairing the loss, to transimitate to become the other, to 'act out' from the passive state to the active mode. Otherwise in times when AI (artificial intelligence), surrogate parenting, gene editing, fake news, and decaffeinated tea replaces 'the real' by marginalising it even further towards hyper-simulation, chances of the survival of art is very slim. The hope is however, there are images with their history that provide a chance and the choice.

Transimitation is an act (ivity) of reproducing (by translating) the new industrial model based on a time-image. Transimitation as the entropic act provides the possibility to combine images with the thought as the only model to grasp the (post) truth.

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[1] One may also think of Michel Foucault saying: "I have never written anything other than fictions" quoted in *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy* ed. Morris and Patton, Feral, 1979

[2] The post-Kantian philosopher Hans Vaininger insisted that reality falsified by logical fictions. See H. Vaininger, *The Philosophy of 'As if': A System of Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind,* Kegan Paul, London, 1954

[3] "Recorded memory" refers to everything that is memorised by culture by using technical means-from museums and libraries to all the personal memories stored in books, albums and now on the data. Recorded memory connects the past and the future and in its present use it provides discourses and confusions, which is a very healthy activity for the ill society.

[4] T.W. Adorno, Subject and object, in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader,* Editor(s): Andrew Arato, Eike Gephardt, Continuum, 1997

[5] Edmund Husserl, *Vienna lecture*, 1935

[6] This project also includes a critical revision of modernism's attitude towards 'making art' which provides a core of the modernist argument. In order to look contemporary an artist abandons everything resembling traditional. I realised that on this basis the technics (from the Greek *techne*) has motivated the modernist thinking and not the other way round. From this point I have become increasingly interested in the question of "technics", differently from ones interested in technologies as it being something new. My diverse argument is absolutely opposing it: it is not a question of something new defines art, but it is the question of understanding technics and taking a position in relation to it. Bernard Stiegler and his notion of 'technics precedes human 'means that one needs to learn to become and in this sense any artwork in the age of hyper-industrializationis providing new industrial models to challenge the violence imposed upon "silent majorities" by capitalism, which controls technics and through technics subjects.

[7] The term is borrowed from Giles Deleuze.

[8] This is an allusion to Claude Levi-Strauss's similar sentiment.

[9] Grammatization is the term used by Bernard Stiegler and refers to the linguistic basis of any event.

[10] As an atheist I was always concerned to find another term for 'creation'. Besides, the term has become too narrowly defined as making a car or arranging flowers also called creating and always associated with a mythical gift from God or nature. Trans-imitation (not so perfect term) points to artist's being not only "gifted' but also being conscious of this "gift" and not only critical but also clinical.

[11] Serge Daney, 'From Movies to Moving', *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton and Charles Esche (London: Tate in association with Afterall, 2008), 335.

[12] Jean Luc Godard quoted in Serge Daney's 'From Movies to Moving', op. cit., 336.

[13] In her book *The Perfect Spectator* Janneke Wesseling also points to this work of Reinhard as an example of participation and reception, rather than pure perception. See Janneke Wessling, *The Perfect Spectator: The experience of the Artwork and reception Aesthetics,* Waliz, Amsterdam, 2017, p.13

[14] Borrowed from Adorno who approached images as texts, that lose their meanings and they are like 'hieroglyphic writings" the meaning of which is difficult to recognise.

[15] Georges Bataille*, Prehistoric Painting: Lascaux or the Birth of Art,* Skira, 1994