

CAPTURING THE MOVING MIND: AN INTRODUCTION (www.ephemeraweb.org/conference)

PERMANENTLY TEMPORARY WAR

“War is the father of all and king of all, and some he shows as gods, others as men; some he makes slaves, others free”, Heraclitus

“Today we are fighting a global war on terror”, G.W Bush July 11, 2005

We live in a global state of war. We don't live in sequential spaces of local wars and conflicts. War and conflict are no longer local. They are no longer states of exception. Rather, their state is indeterminate and hard to piece together. War is everywhere and nowhere. It does not confine or try to isolate. It rather wants to extinguish all borders and fences. It rather wants to see human bodies spread out on the same plane, for them to be at its direct disposal, some time cutting down the possibilities of their movements, some times opening these up. In the end, its aim is to give direction to movement, to find it a function and to identify its origin. It aims to give coordinates to movement.

In this permanent state of war, a new kind of system of control is spreading around the globe. War is the permanent and principal mode of being of this system, even if its explicit military, political, social, legal operations vary. In this war, we may distinguish two frontlines or lines of force through which we may begin to understand it. Yet these lines are entangled with one another; they are weaving a new form of power.

The first of these lines is external. In the external war we may still see the formal (nation) states even if the condition of independent states and their ability guarantee the safety of their citizens is weakening continuously. The loss of this capability to sustain the safety of their citizens means the beginning of the war, a constitutive war, a war which is shaping the coming forms of life. Therefore, if we wish to create a new safety, a new justice, we cannot start with the existing institutions of state, not from the human dignity, the respect for others and other such categories, but we must start with the state of lawlessness, the state of statelessness, the state of anomy, from the state of those who don't have a state for their protection, of those who may and who can create something new.

This external war is in operation to control the movements of human masses and populations. On its foundation it is a biopolitical conflict in which the brutal practices of World War II (camps, genocides, torture) are realized merely as humanitarian tragedies without any moral or political rage. This war is not external because it would be directed outside the so called western world. It penetrates equally the human bodies in the west by organizing and disciplining them and their power and powerlessness. It is external because it is directed at the human body, which is in this war absolutely without any protection by the law, because it is the mere powerless object of manoeuvres, as the desperate actions of suicide bombers tell us.

The second line is internal. It is the line of development of the new system of control and the respective form of power which departs radically from the state-form. This war does not aim to control human bodies in space. It is in operation to control the possibilities of human action, to control the human intellect and communication, to control the movement of minds. It operates with what we can do, say and think. This new “power over life of the mind”, that is, power over the use of brains, language and communication is not only “western” even if it is characterized by the transformations in the social and political relations in western countries. These changes may be characterized as the transformation towards the societies of controls.

The emerging societies of controls are being legitimated by a particular fundamentalist and extreme right-wing ethos. This fundamentalism does not express itself as open racism even if talks about the clash between civilizations. It does not express itself as open racism, as the priority of the “aryan race” or apartheid. It does not focus on the external features and properties of people, but on what they think, on what they believe and on what they might do. It expresses itself as the spreading out of suspicion and distrust and as the organization of strict tacit models of behaviour and thinking. In such fundamentalism, for example a

“terrorist” differs by definition of a “jew”. Whoever behaves “abnormally”, rebels or just is suspicious in regard to the behaviour required for “state safety” – for example in defending the elementary civil rights – can be perceived as at least a potential terrorist and he or she must therefore be eliminated and disarmed even before he or she has done anything. In other words, the possibilities of his or her action must be controlled. The control of possibilities means above all the control of thought and movement, the control of thinking, action and movement. We are on our way to the religious state where the difference between thought and action has disappeared.

The separation between thinking (belief or religion) and action (state) formed the two foundation pillars of modern democracies, which have collapsed in the age of the war against terrorism as the controls focus not so much on the actual actions in space but in the possibilities of thinking and acting in time. The ease at which the so called western states are moving back to the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* (“whose the region is, his religion”) that dates back 400 years, makes one confused. As Prime Minister Blair said after the attacks in London, "Our determination to defend our values and our way of life is greater than their determination to cause death and destruction to innocent people." And G.W Bush adds that “the attack in London was an attack on the civilized world. And the civilized world is united in its resolve: We will not yield. We will defend our freedom”. The destruction of the state governed by law takes place as a kind a mass psychosis where it is thought that punishment for thinking concerns only others and that there are two different laws, one for “us” and one for “others”. But when the central principles of constitutional states fall down, they fall down for everybody and not only for “others”: for muslims, for immigrants and for “others” in general. This displacement within modern societies – and the transformation towards the “fundamentalist” religious state – does not seem to be so much a reaction to “external” state of affairs. Rather, it is a reaction to the “internal” development of societies, especially to the birth of the new social subject, the “brain worker”, but with the methods and models of the old (industrial) society. This is so at least in so far as we consider the changes in the world of economy and production. The ayatollahs are much more closer than in Iran.

Movement without cause is the origin of restlessness and commotion. It compels power outside of its castles. When movement has many directions and possible meanings, when we don’t know where we are and where we are going, one must start to grope, to touch, to experiment. Or we can say, like Deleuze, that we then need to draw towards infinitely varying “abstract levels” and turn poetic. Now we are escaping to every direction, escaping far from equilibrium and harmony. People unroll, flow and spread without the limitations of direction, origin and meaning. Only such unrolling, flowing and spreading unfolds movement and desire. Or, thinking can advance, move and touch only when it takes meaning to its collapse, far beyond society and its requirements.

When thinking has become material and productive, when thinking is directly productive and directly changing the world, we must try to find a positive and constructive chance in the war against intellect. We do not find it by rebuilding the independent castles of thinking and politics, and even less from the clash between civilizations or from the fundamentalist state. It is quite enough that we see, feel and experience the problem in our own skin. Only a problem opens a possibility for an experiment which defines anew the relations between thinking and acting, art and science and through that the new forms of political and social action. As Deleuze said: “History is not experimental, it is just a set of more or less negative preconditions which make it possible to experiment with something beyond history”. Our task is not so much to interpret the present war, its reasons and objectives, but to experiment and experience something that traverses the regime of war, to experiment and experience new possible forms of action, production and politics.

CAPTURING

Deleuze writes in his great article “Postscript on control societies” about the transformation that takes place from the temporal and spatial succession characterizing (industrial) disciplinary societies to control societies which instead of constraining into a space (enclosure) and organizing temporal successions operate by continuous modulation of time and space.

The institutional models of enclosure and internment of disciplinary societies, so well analyzed by Michel Foucault, the disciplining exercised on human body and spirit, the particular knowledges (e.g. psychiatric knowledge) which born in these may be understood as the invention of the factory. In a factory immaterial labour and manual labour, planning and execution, communication and production were separate and had their own spaces.

What does a factory in fact do? Above all, it assembles a stage which gives spatial unity and coherence to time, place and action.

What characterized a factory was a unity of space. In certain places certain actions were carried out and different places were connected in a coordinated way. Specialization penetrated not only factories, but also schools, homes, hospitals. The workplace was a kind of mould which made the worker interiorize the norms of the economy as movements of his body. Each particular place, each link in the chain had beside it a watching space which controlled that in each place there was performed what there was supposed to be performed and time was not wasted on anything irrelevant.

What commanded the factory was temporal unity. The workers were present at the same time. What were important were timetables, determined tasks were to be carried out at externally determined times: work, lunch break, rest etc. Timetables were means of discipline by which time was divided and sold gradually. The productivity of bodies and their movements was scheduled, like enclosed in a kind on time mould.

What governed the factory was the unity and consistency of action. Given tasks were dependent on each other and they managed one by one.

The spatial unity gave birth also to its own forms of resistance: booze hidden in the machine, extended coffee breaks, "illegal" communication among workers, gravitation to the blind spots of control etc.

The model based on the unity of time, space and action has been in crisis since the 1970's. This crisis is about the general crisis of the disciplinary society and its institutions (factory, prison, hospital, school, family). Perhaps the breakdown of the traditional nuclear family and the emotions, norms and models of behaviour that were Taylorized into it, has been the most convincing expression of this crisis. The breakdown of the nuclear family forces also changes into upbringing, education and the labour market.

The fall down of the model of disciplinary society has meant a passage from command to communication, from orders to participation and interaction of the ordered, from the prison to controlled movement at the highways (of knowledge), from the execution of determined tasks to surfing the net, from an assertive handshake to noncommittal cuddling. The walls of the closed institutions fall and indeterminacy, confusion and disorder penetrate into the spaces of factory and family where continuously varying "work posts" begin to form. We move from a closed, immobile and concrete factory to an open, moving abstract enterprise. Enterprise is continuous transformation and redefinition without stability, just like the work at enterprises is changing and precarious. It is not so much about flexibility or adaptation, but about modulation and varying. As Deleuze understood, we are moving from the rigid mould ("dress code") to self-decomposing compositions, to projects which are put together of heterogenous materials.

The modulation concerns now space, time and action. The borders of space disappear, they are continuously redefined, spaces vary and are in even within each other because of the new means of communication. The working time varies, the time of the actual paid work becomes undetermined and flexible of its borders, and also the working history becomes piecemeal. In the sphere of action the personal and the public (or what belongs to the company) start to commingle, the intensities of work and levels of commitment vary continuously and the commitments of the worker make work schizophrenic when the abundance of promises and the possibilities of keeping part irreversibly. And we could add to the list the modulation of the employment system itself and the increase of "movable parts" in salaries.

Behind these forms of modulation there is an essential factor which might be called the conflict or change of the subjective, personal participation and commitment: one needs to be interested in everything without

caring of anything. This is a question of the subjective attempt to control modulation in a way that one would not be left totally at its mercy. It is no surprise that the modulation of this subjective commitment has become the central working site of the new control systems, where they try to affect enthusiasm, remissness, motivation, difference, quitting, leaving, beginning of new and other feelings of commitment through different means ranging from therapy and medicalization to crude enforcement. On this site – where one is interested in everything but does not care about anything – we are fighting for our freedom, our “own time” and right to move.

According to Foucault’s thesis on the primacy of resistance, this site has two dimensions: the resistance comes first and it compels relations of power to change. Where there is coercion and power, there one finds resistance. To say “No” is just a minimal form of resistance, because resistance changes situations, it creates and recreates. First of these dimensions, from the 1960’s on, is the resistance of factory work which started to produce new forms and models of life; the second originates in the changes of the industrial mode of production and the requirements of the new development phase of capitalism.

As Foucault said: If power relations penetrate the whole social field, it is because there is freedom everywhere. That is, what in the Fordist industrial capitalism and its disciplinary mechanisms (and modern democracies) remained an area of freedom and resistance were brains, thinking and communication. They are now being penetrated by the mechanisms of power, the freedom of brains has to be minimized and their resistance must be killed. That is why, we can say that what is going on is also a war against intellect.

COOPERATION BETWEEN MINDS

Today, we are increasingly working with our brains and feelings. We live in a situation in which the determined spatial and temporal coordinates of work and production are disappearing. Intellect and thinking are central to production, but they are also determining the nature of our organizations – we even talk about intellectual organizations, learning organizations – and central to the renewal of our societies: only intellect seems to be capable of creating new in being able to stretch beyond what is existing and visible.

As such, the process of thinking is without a specific or particular place: you don’t see it except through its possible outcomes. It does not have a spatial existence and therefore it is impossible to constrain it to a certain space. Thinking may take place anywhere, there is no privileged space for it. It is movement that does not show outwards.

Thinking is without temporal succession. Its time is not chronological, but rather jumpy and wandering. Thinking may take place any time, there is no certain privileged time for it.

Thinking is messy: thoughts don’t add up consistently, they don’t proceed with a clear and clean order or logic. They are ruled rather by a quite different principle, like in the famous library of Aby Warburg, where while looking for a certain piece of work one finds another which then opens entirely different perspective to what was thought before. In this sense, thinking is characterized by a kind of “dyslexy” rather than a taxonomy. Thinking is a talent of sense. It is a simultaneous use of many senses and not some sort of supremacy of one sense over others. What is important is the understanding of moving and changing compositions.

What is central in the “knowledge society” is brain work, intelligence and its use, or something which could be described, following Gabriel Tarde, as “cooperation between minds” or as cooperation, action and movement in brains. This cooperation is without spatial existence, it is not guided by temporal succession and it does not proceed consistently. What is important to cooperation between minds is not an individual genius, a determined subject to be located, but the general intellect, the collective intellect. The pinpointing of the subject to a particular body always threatens the movement of the brains. The brain workers do not form a compact social class with a spatial existence. Because of their indeterminacy, mobility and spatial invisibility they are a continuous threat to authorities and pre-existing borders, norms and limitations. One

cannot reduce brain work to pre-existing knowledge, already codified knowledges, to that what we already know and have already said. It takes place before any visible or audible performance in space.

The cooperation between brains is not only the target of control and organization, a mere object of political operations. Rather, it has become the actual (and invisible) stage of politics, a form of political relation and the only origin of productivity, the “place” of creating something new. On this invisible force field, the political struggle and production mix together like when the value of the companies is no longer in the fixed capital, in the machines and equipment, patents or software, but in the cooperation of the brain workers, in the surrounding society where intellectual action is spread everywhere, intellectual action which invents new (needs), recycles old into new contexts, to form new forms of life. On this plane the central question of politics is the use of life, brains and the entire society: free use of brains, freedom of the cooperation between minds and ability to set problems; or, the use of brains for solving an already existing, and already set problem. It is on this field of political conflict, where the fight for the free use of human minds is being fought, that the new forms and practices of power emerge. These new practices have very little to do with the methods that were based on the unity of space, time and action and they might be best described as “power over life of the mind” or “arbitrary power”.

From the perspective of the traditional methods of organizing and controlling work, like wage and fixed capital, the cooperation between minds is problematic because of its spatial, temporal and operational indeterminacy: the separation between work and non-work and between thinking and the material result of thinking is difficult, and even more, these separations in fact tend to prevent the actual taking place of thinking (like in forcing thinking to a preformed result, or by preventing the movement and combination of thoughts).

What is controlled are no longer tasks determined to particular spaces, tasks carried out in certain times or the consistency of performed actions. The new controls have changed into phases and are based on the relation between the objectives and the results. Their simple aim is self-valuation, self-control and accountability: have I achieved my objectives, have I reached my level? Or have I once again failed? The continuous accounting and self-valuation is flexible and bendy. Now the objectives and actions vary. This continuous modulation replaces the inflexibility and direct control in wagework. Self-valuation returns, thinks back and organizes memory into facts, it turns it into history, by giving past events their place and meaning. This remembering is not always a pleasure like when done under the threat of unemployment.

The freedom of the flexible and bendy work is controlled freedom. The worker needs to control herself and her commitment to work. Now the fallow times, the coffee breaks and other breaks from work, which earlier formed the times of resistance and freedom, are monitored by bad conscience and the feeling of “not doing enough”, not gone to work enough. What were previously the moments of joy and freedom, the joy of not having to work, have suddenly and surprisingly turned into moments of sorrow and deprivation. There is no longer the boss, there are no longer the constraints of the physical and spatial hierarchies: the worker must learn to work by herself.

This modulation model of control is of course not present everywhere, and it does not destroy model of enclosure. We could rather say that whereas the modern power always received its “reason” or legitimation from a particular institution and its task (factory produces, hospital takes care of illness, state protects labour force, army wages war, research is done in a university), the new controls avoid committing or fixing themselves to any particular institution and its task which would set limits and tie and slow them down. The new form of control and organization has no permanent external reason or foundation like law, norm or a particular task within which it would function. It operates without institutional legitimation or its logic and foundations seems to change from day to day: it is power without *logos*, that is, arbitrary power or pure power, power without any permanent relation to law, to norm, or to some particular task. Its relation to any particular reason, task or meaning is arbitrary (or we can put it also like this: International legality” (Kuwait 1991), ”humanity” and ”human rights” (Somalia 1993, Bosnia 1995, Kosovo 1999), “enduring freedom” (Afganistan 2001), “fight against terrorism” (Iraq 2003).

The arbitrary nature of modulation means that whereas the modern power always received its legitimation as a means toward a particular end (factory produces, hospital takes care of illness, state protects labour force, army wages war, research is done in a university...), modulation is never simply a means toward an end. In other words, the arbitrariness of modulation cannot be understood by approaching it in relation to ends that it as a means attempts to achieve, but rather its arbitrary nature means power as pure power, power as power without reasons or ends. The analysis of arbitrary power cannot therefore be about identifying a power which is just a justified or non-justified means towards this or that end, but which is in no relation to ends at all and operates “in some other way”.

The arbitrariness of arbitrary power is therefore not a result of some intrinsic character which would distinguish it for example from modern power, that is, from means that always have an end or some institutional context or particular legitimation (from means that receive their “reason” or legitimation from a particular institution and its task) but from its arbitrary relation to these. This is how the concept of modulation opens the nexus between the floating currency (the floating signifier) and the generic human capacities (intellect, perception, linguistic-relational abilities) as means of production, that is, the nexus between the era when the faith in the sign (or in any external reason directing action) is lost and the production of wealth in modalities that cannot be thought or understood by the concepts of modern economy.

It is precisely this loss of faith that distinguishes arbitrary power from despotic power and the overcoding of meaning characteristic to it. In the Postscript to the Societies of Control Gilles Deleuze says that the changed conception of “money” perhaps best explains the transformation from disciplinary societies to those of control: whereas discipline was always related to molded currencies having gold as a numerical standard, control is based on floating exchange rates, modulations, organisations of the movement of currencies. In short, it tries to follow or imitate movements and exchanges as such, paying no attention to their specific contents. The knowledge economy is the continuance of capitalism without a foundation, and arbitrary power is its logical form of organization.

But this is also to say that modulation is not simple and oneway control. It concretizes also the strive for freedom, the need to get rid of closed spaces in which all the action and movement (whether physical, intellectual or emotional) is partitioned and in halt. The disciplinary society was characterized by limitation of the movement of bodies, partitioning and concentration of thinking, contraction of expressing feelings and emotional world. Through modulation and variations people are trying to take over their own lives and create new experiences, expand their relations and thereby their power and ability to manage in the world. It is about relations of force between freedom (the extent, autonomy of relations).

MOVEMENT, OR, ORGANISATION WITHOUT ENDS

What are we doing here, on the train? Maybe trying to organize movement, a cooperation between minds? A movement from an individuated animal to a pack of wolves or a multiplicity? A performance of movement?

For sure this is an experimental organization and an organizational experiment, which deals with movement without reason or origin. Movement is surely at issue here. But not a false movement, a representation of movement, a new kind of representation of movement, but rather movement in action. This is a question of producing with the project a movement capable of affecting mind outside all representations; it is a question making movement itself our project in a way that it moves the minds without mediations and representations; a production and invention of vibrations, whirlings, rotations, gravitations, dances, leaps... which directly touch the mind. Such is the problem of movement that would directly touch the soul, that would be that of the soul. This is about how Deleuze defines the “highest theatrical problem”.

And perhaps this is all about theatre. A theatre of the future. There is something artificial here, something constructed, composed and organized, something performative, out of which a recomposition perhaps becomes possible: a recreation, an enrichment of the world (like enriched uranium), a proliferation of not just forms but of the modalities of being. Something very childish. But, as Benjamin says, perhaps we need to rediscover our childish experience in order to move forward politically.