What is the relationship between contemporary digital media and contemporary society? Is it possible to affirm that digital media are without sin and exist purely in a complex socio-political and economic context within which the users bring with them their ethical and cultural complexities? This issue, through a range of scholarly writings, analyzes the problems of ethics and sin within contemporary digital media frameworks.
Without Sin: Freedom and Taboo in Digital Media

LEONARDO ELECTRONIC ALMANAC, VOLUME 19 ISSUE 4

VOLUME EDITORS
LANFRANCO ACETI & DONNA LEISHMAN
EDITORIAL MANAGERS
SHEENA CALVERT & ÖZDEN ŞAHİN

Copyright © 2013
Leonardo, the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology

Leonardo Electronic Almanac (LEA) is produced by Passero Productions.

Reposting of this journal is prohibited without permission of Leonardo/ISAST, except for the posting of news and events listings which have been independently received.

The individual articles included in the issue are © 2013 ISAST.
Music Technology
B.M., M.M., Ph.D.
Including a new 3-Summer M.M.
Immersive Audio, Computer Music, Informatics,
Cognition, Recording and Production

Music Composition
B.M., M.M., Ph.D.
Concert Music, Jazz, Film Scoring,
Electro-Acoustic, Songwriting

• Study with a premier faculty who are active in the local and international music field, including Juan Pablo Bello, Morwared Farhood, Phil E. Galdston, Paul Geluso, Tae Hong Park, Kenneth Peacock, Agnieszka Roginska, Robert Rowe, S. Alex Ruthmann, Ronald Sadow, David Schroeder, Mark Suozzo, and Julia Wolfe
• Work within a large and enriching university environment in the heart of New York City
• Have access to state-of-the-art facilities including the James L. Dolan Music Recording Studio, one of the most technologically advanced audio teaching facilities in the United States
• Collaborate with an outstanding variety of department performance groups, along with choreographers, visual artists, writers, filmmakers, and scholars in other fields
• Take advantage of special courses offered abroad and during the summer

Visit www.steinhardt.nyu.edu/music or call 212 998 5424 to learn more.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>POST-SOCIETY: DATA CAPTURE AND ERASURE ONE CLICK AT A TIME</td>
<td>Lanfranco Aceti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>WITHOUT SIN: FREEDOM AND TABOO IN DIGITAL MEDIA</td>
<td>Donna Leishman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>LIKE REALITY</td>
<td>Birgit Bachler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEDIA, MEMORY, AND REPRESENTATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE</td>
<td>David R. Burns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>DIFFERENTIAL SURVEILLANCE OF STUDENTS</td>
<td>Deborah Burns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>ANA-MATERIALISM &amp; THE PINEAL EYE: BECOMING MOUTH-BREAST</td>
<td>Johnny Golding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DANCING ON THE HEAD OF A SIN: TOUCH, DANCE AND TABOO</td>
<td>Sue Hawksley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>“THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THIS, SALLY...”</td>
<td>Ken Hollings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>COPYRIGHT AND DIGITAL ART PRACTICE</td>
<td>Smita Kheria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>CURATING, PIRACY AND THE INTERNET EFFECT</td>
<td>Alana Kushnir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148</td>
<td>PRECARIOUS DESIGN</td>
<td>Donna Leishman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>SEDUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES AND INADVERTENT VOYEURS EFFECT</td>
<td>Simone O’Callaghan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198</td>
<td>ANONYMOUS SOCIAL AS POLITICAL</td>
<td>Kriss Ravetto-Biagoli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>236</td>
<td>CONTENT OSMOSIS AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SOCIAL MEDIA</td>
<td>Don Ritter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>268</td>
<td>RE-PROGRAM MY MIND</td>
<td>Debra Swack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>280</td>
<td>THE PREMEDIATION OF IDENTITY MANAGEMENT IN ART &amp; DESIGN</td>
<td>Sandra Wilson &amp; Lilia Gomez Flores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>295</td>
<td>PORNOGRAPHY, ALTERITY, DIVINITY</td>
<td>Charlie Gere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>316</td>
<td>DO WE NEED MORALITY ANYMORE?</td>
<td>Mikhail Puzalik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>322</td>
<td>THE ECONOMIES OF LANGUAGE IN DIGITAL SPACE/S</td>
<td>Sheena Calvert</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Post-Society: Data Capture and Erasure
One Click at a Time

“Oh, in the name of God! Now I know what it feels like to be God!”

Frankenstein (1931)

They must have felt like gods at the NSA when they discovered that they were able to spy on anyone. What feels ridiculous to someone that works one else knows or can know about ‘you.’ If only with digital media is the level of ignorance that they discovered that they were able to spy on any- for ‘you’ to know what ‘your’ neighbor has been up with.

This otherworldliness – this being an alien from another world – has increasingly become the characteristic of contemporary political discourse, which, detached from the rest of society that takes the form of isolation. This isolation is, in Foucauldian terms, none other than the enforcement of a voluntary seclusion in the prison and the mad house.

Paranoia, narcissism and omnipotence, all belong to the delirium of the sociopaths, who push towards the horizon, following the trajectory set by the ‘de- ranged minds.’

It is for the other world that the madman sets sail in his fool’s boat; it is from the other world that he comes when he disembarks.

This otherworldliness – this being an alien from another world – has increasingly become the characteristic of contemporary political discourse, which, detached from the reality of the ‘majority’ of people, feeds into the godlike complex. Foolishness and lunacy reinforce this perspective, creating a rationale that drives the belief or faith that their lives are in good hands, that of the state.

Nevertheless it speaks of a ‘madness’ of the politician as a category. A madness characterized by an alienation from the rest of society that takes the form of losing. This isolation is, in Foucauldian terms, none other than the enforcement of a voluntary seclusion in the prison and the mad house.

The prisons within which the military, corporate, financial and political worlds have shut themselves in speak increasingly of paranoia and fear. As such the voluntary prison within which they have sought refuge speaks more and more the confused language that one may have imagined to hear from the Stultifera Navis.

Stultifera Navis towards its destiny inexorably, bringing all others with them.

In order to discuss the present post-societal condition, one would need first to analyze the cultural disregard that people have, or perhaps have acquired, for their personal data and the increasing lack of participation in the alteration of the frameworks set for post-data.

Having segregated themselves in a prison of their own doing, the politicians look at all others as being part of a large mad house. It is from the upper deck of a gilded prison that politicians stir the masses in the lower decks into a frenzy of fear and obedience.

This disregard for personal data is part of cultural forms of concession and contracting that are deter- mined and shaped not by rights but through the mass loss of a few rights in exchange for a) participation in a product as early adopters (Google), b) for design status and appearance (Apple), c) social conventions and entertainment (Facebook) and (Twitter).

Big data offers an insight into the problem of big losses if a catastrophe, accidental or intentional, should ever strike big databases. The right of ownership of the ‘real object’ that existed in the data-cloud will become the new arena of post-data conflict. In this context of loss, if the crisis of the big banks has demon- strated anything, citizens will bear the brunt of the losses that will be spread iniquitously through ‘every- one else.’

The problem is therefore characterized by multiple levels of complexity that can overall be referred to as a general problem of ethics of data, interpreted as the ethical collection and usage of massive amounts of data. Also the ethical issues of post-data and their technologies has to be linked to a psychological un- derstanding of the role that individuals play within so- ciety, both singularly and collectively through the use of media that engender new behavioral social systems through the access and usage of big data as sources of information.

Both Prof. Johnny Golding and Prof. Richard Gere present in this collection of essays two perspectives that, by looking at taboos and the sinful nature of technology, demand from the reader a reflection on...
the role that ethics plays or no longer plays within contemporary mediated societies.

Concepts of technological neutrality as well as economic neutrality have become enforced taboos when the experiential understanding is that tools that possess a degree of danger should be handled with a modicum of self-control and restraint.

The merging of economic and technological neutrality has generated corporate giants that have acquired a global stronghold on people’s digital data. In the construction of arguments in favor or against a modicum of control for these economic and technological giants, the state and its political representatives have thus far considered it convenient not to side with the libertarian argument, since the control was being exercised on the citizen: a category to which politicians and corporate tycoons and other plutocrats and higher managers believe they do not belong to or want to be reduced to.

The problem is then not so much that the German citizens, or the rest of the world, were spied on. The taboo that has been infringed is that Angela Merkel, a head of state, was spied on. This implies an unwillingly democratic reduction from the NSA of all heads of state to ‘normal citizens.’ The disruption and the violated taboo is that all people are data in a horizontal structure that does not admit hierarchical distinctions and discriminations. In this sense perhaps digital data are violating the last taboo: anyone can be spied upon, creating a truly democratic society of surveillance.

These are some of the contemporary issues that this new LEA volume addresses, presenting a series of writings and perspectives from a variety of scholarly fields.

My thanks to Prof. Robert Rowe, Professor of Music and Music Education; Associate Dean of Research and Doctoral Studies at NYU, for his work in establishing this collaboration with LEA.

My gratitude to Dr. Donna Leishman whose time and effort has made this LEA volume possible.

I also have to thank the authors for their patience in complying with the LEA guidelines.

My special thanks go to Deniz Cem Öndüygu who has shown commitment to the LEA project beyond what could be expected.

Özden Şahin has, as always, continued to provide valuable editorial support.

Lanfranco Aceti
Editor in Chief, Leonardo Electronic Almanac
Director, Kasa Gallery

3. Ibid., 101.
INTRODUCTION

"Without Sin: Freedom and Taboo in Digital Media" is both the title of this special edition and the title of a panel that was held at ISEA 2011. The goal of the panel was to explore the disinhibited mind's ability to exercise freedom, act on desires and explore the taboo whilst also surveying the broader question of the moral economy of human activity and how this is translated (or not) within digital media. The original panelists (some of whom have contributed to this edition) helped to further delineate additional issues surrounding identity, ethics, human socialization and the need to better capture/understand/perceive how we are being affected by our technologies (for good or bad).

In the call for participation, I offered the view that contemporary social technologies are continuously changing our practical reality, a reality where human experience and technical artifacts have become beyond intertwined, but for many interwoven, inseparable – if this were to be true then type of cognizance (legal and personal) do we need to develop? Implied in this call is the need for both a better awareness and jurisdiction of these emergent issues. Whilst this edition is not (and could not be) a unified survey of human activity and digital media; the final edition contains 17 multidisciplinary papers spanning Law, Curation, Pedagogy, Choreography, Art History, Political Science, Creative Practice and Critical Theory – the volume attempts to illustrate the complexity of the situation and if possible the kinship between pertinent disciplines.

**Sherry Turkle's current hypothesis is that technology has introduced mechanisms that bypass traditional concepts of both community and identity indeed that we are facing (and some of us are struggling with) an array of reconceptualizations. Zygmunt Bauman in his essay “From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity” suggests that: One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure if where one belongs; that is, one is not sure how to place oneself among the evident variety if behavioral styles and patterns, and how to make sure that people would accept this placement as right and proper, so that both sides would know how to go on in each other’s presence. ’Identity’ is the name given to the escape sought from that uncertainty.**

Our ‘post-social’ context where increased communication, travel and migration bought about by technologies and Inadvertent Voyeurs for a further exploration of presence and intimacy).

Human relationships are rich and they’re messy and they’re demanding. And we clean them up with technology. Texting, emailing, posting, all of these things let us present the self, as we want to be. We get to edit, and that means we get to delete, and that means we get to retouch, the face, the voice, the flesh; the body – not too little, not too much, just right. 

Editing such a broad set of responses required an editorial approach that both allowed full expansion of each paper’s discourse whilst looking for interconnections (and oppositions) in attempt to distil some commonalities. This was achieved by mentally placing citation, speculation and proposition between one another. Spilling the ‘meaning’ of the individual contributions into proximate conceptual spaces inhabited by other papers and looking for issues that overlapped or resonated allowed me formulate a sense of what might become future pertinent themes, and what now follows below are the notes from this process.

**What Social Contract?**

**Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man.** (Thomas Hobbes in chapter XIII of the Leviathan)

Deborah Swack’s “FEELTRACE and the Emotions” and Krist Ravetton’s “Anonymous Social As Political” argue that our perception of political authority is somewhere between shakily towards becoming erased altogether. Whilst the original 17th century rational for sublimating to a political authority – i.e. we’d default back to a war like state in the absence of a binding social contract – seems like a over wrought fear, the capacity for repugnant anti-social behavior as a consequence of no longer being in awe of any common power is real and increasingly impactful. Problematically the notion of a government that has been created by individuals to protect themselves from one another sadly seems hopelessly incongruent in today’s increasingly skeptical context. Co-joined to the dissipation of perceptible political entities – the power dynamics of being ‘good’ rather than ‘bad’ and or ‘sinful’ appears to be one of most elusive of our prior social borders. The new reality that allows us to transgress and explore our tastes and predictions from a remote and often depersonalized position feels safer (i.e. with less personal accountability) a scenario that is a further exacerbated space vacated by the historic role of the church as a civic authority. Mikhail Pushkin in his paper “Do we need morality anymore?” explores the online moral value system and how this ties into the deleterious effect of the sensationalism in traditional mass media. He suggests that the absence of restrictive online social structure means the very consciousness of sin and guilt has now changed and potentially so has our capability of experiencing the emotions tied to guilt. Sandra Wilson and Lila Gomez in their paper “The Premeditation of Identity Management in Art & Design – New Model Cyborgs – Organic & Digital” concur stating that “the line dividing taboos from desires is often blurred, and a taboo can quickly flip into a desire, if the conditions under which that interaction take place change.”

**The Free?**

The issue of freedom seems to be where much of the debate continues – between what constitutes false liberty and real freedoms. Unique in their own approach Golding’s and Pushkin’s papers challenge the premise that is implied in this edition’s title – that Freedom and Taboo even have a place at all in our contemporary existence as our established codes of morality (and ethics) have been radically reconfigured. This stance made me recall Hobbes’s first treaty where he argued that “commodious living” (i.e. morality, politics, society), are purely conventional and that moral terms are not objective states of affairs but are reflections of tastes and preferences – indeed within another of his key concepts (i.e. the “State of Nature”) anything goes as nothing is immoral and or unjust. It would appear that we are freer from traditional institutional controls whilst at the same time one could argue that the borders of contiguous social forms (i.e.

**Without Sin: Freedom and Taboo in Digital Media**

**Leonardo**
The usual culprits of time and space (or time as distinct from space and vice versa), along with identity, meaning, Existenz, Being, reconfigure via a relational morphogenesis of velocity, mass, and intensity. This is an immanent surface cohesion, the compelling into a ‘this’ or a ‘here’ or a ‘now’, a space–time terrain, a collapse and rearticulation of the tick–tack–ticking of distance, movement, speed, born through the repetitive but relative enfolding of otherness, symmetry and diversion.

Golding’s is a boldering proposition requiring a frame of mind traditionally fostered by theoretical physicists but one that may aptly summarize the nature of the quandary. The authors contributing to this edition all exist in their own ways in a post-digital environment, anthropologist Lucy Suchman describes this environment as being “the view from nowhere, detached intimacy, and located accountability.”

Wilson and Gomez further offer a possible coping strategy by exploring the usefulness of Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin’s “pre-mediation” as a means to externalize a host of fears and reduce negative emotions in the face of uncertainty. The imperative to create some strategies to make sense of some of these pressing issues is something that I explore in my own contribution in which I offer the new term Precarious Design – as a category of contemporary practice that is emerging from the design community. Precarious Design encompasses a set of practices that by expressing current and near future scenarios are well positioned to probe deeper and tease out important underlying societal assumptions to attain understanding or control in our context of sustained cultural and technological change.

**Embody**

In theory our deterritorialized and changed relationship with our materiality provides a new context in which a disintimidated mind could better act on desires and explore the taboo. Ken Hollings’s pummel “THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THIS, SALLY…” Faults, lapses and imperfections in the sex life of machines” – presents a compelling survey of the early origin of when humans began to objectify and try to live through our machines starting with disembodiment of voice as self that arose from the recording of sound via the Edison phonograph in 1876. Golding and Swack mull over the implications of the digital on embodiment and what it means now to be ‘human’ as we veer away from biological truth and associated moral values towards something else. Sue Hawksley’s “Dancing on the Head of a Sin: touch, dance and taboo” reminds us of our sensorial basis in which:

**Touch is generally the least shared, or acknowledged, and the most taboo of the senses. Haptic and touch-screen technologies are becoming ubiquitous, but although this makes touch more commonly experienced or shared, it is often reframed through the virtual, while inter-personal touch still tends to remain sexualized, militarized or medicalized (in most Western cultures at least).**

Within her paper Hawksley provides an argument (and example) on how the mediation of one taboo – dance – through another – touch – could mitigate the perceived moral dangers and usual frames of social responsibility. Swack raises bioethical questions about the future nature of life for humans and “the embodiment and containment of the self and its symbiotic integration and enhancement with technology and machines.” Whilst Wilson and Gomez go on to discuss Bioprescence by Shiho Fukuhara and Georg Tremmel – a project that provocatively creates Human DNA trees by transcoding the essence of a human being within the DNA of a tree in order to create ‘Living Memorials’ or ‘Transgenic Tombstones’ – as an example of a manifest situation that still yields a (rare) feeling of transgression into the taboo.

**Conclusion**

In the interstices of this edition there are some questions/observations that remain somewhat unanswered and others that are nascent in their formation. They are listed below as a last comment and as a gateway to further considerations.

Does freedom from traditional hierarchy equate to empowerment when structures and social boundaries are also massively variable and dispersed and are pervasive to the point of incomprehension/invalidation? Or is there some salve to be found in Foucault’s line that “Power is everywhere” and ‘comes from everywhere’ so in this sense is neither ‘an agency nor a structure’? Thus nothing is actually being ‘lost’ in our current context? And is it possible that power has always resided within the individual and we only need to readjust to this autonomy?

Conventional political power (and their panoptic strategies) seem to be stalling, as efforts to resist and subvert deep-seated and long-held governmental secrecy over military/intelligence activities have gained increased momentum while their once privileged data joins in the leaky soft membrane that is the ethics of sharing digitally stored information.

Through dissipative strategies like online anonymity comes power re-balance, potentially giving the individual better recourse to contest unjust actions/laws but what happens when we have no meaningful social contract to direct our civility? Its seems pertinent to explore if we may be in need of a new social contract that reconnects or reconfigures the idea of accountability – indeed it was interesting to see the contrast between Suchman’s observed ‘lack of accountability’ and the Anonymous collective agenda of holding (often political or corporate) hypocrites ‘accountable’ through punitive measures such as Denial-of-Service attacks.

Regarding de-contextualization of the image / identity – there seems to be something worth bracing oneself against in the free-fall of taxonomies, how we see, how we relate, how we perceive, how we understand that even the surface of things has changed and could still be changing. There is no longer a floating signifier but potentially an abandoned sign in a cloud of dissipation (or endlessly shifting) signification. Where once:

*The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the ‘social-worker’-judge: it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements."

There now is no culturally specific norm in the diffuse digital-physical continuum, which makes the materiality and durability of truth very tenuous indeed: a scenario that judges-teaches-social workers are having some difficulty in addressing and responding to in a timely manner, an activity that the theoretically speculative and methodologically informed research as contained within this edition can hopefully help them with.

Donna Leishman
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design
University of Dundee, UK
d.leishman@dundee.ac.uk
http://www.6amhoover.com
As perhaps Friedrich Nietzsche would argue… He has previously described “orgies of feelings” that are directly linked to our capacity to feel sin and guilt. “To wrench the human soul from its moorings, to immerse it in terrors, ice, flames, and raptures to such an extent that it is liberated from all petty displeasure, gloom, and depression as by a flash of lightning” Friedrich Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, trans. Horace Samuel (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), 133.

4. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (Charleston, South Carolina: Forgotten Books, 1976), Ch. XIII.
6. As perhaps Friedrich Nietzsche would argue... He has previously described “orgies of feelings” that are directly linked to our capacity to feel sin and guilt. “To wrench the human soul from its moorings, to immerse it in terrors, ice, flames, and raptures to such an extent that it is liberated from all petty displeasure, gloom, and depression as by a flash of lightning” Friedrich Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, trans. Horace Samuel (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), 133.
8. Consequential subsets within a disinhibited mind are dissociative anonymity (you don’t know me) and dissociative imagination (It’s just a game), which can lead to benign actions such as random acts of kindness or being more affectionate or potentially toxic (exploring more violent assertive sides of ones nature) and “other” behaviors.
"Becoming a child," Picasso was overheard to lament, "takes a very long time." Becoming Mouth-Breast takes no time at all.

CLARIFICATION.

In a meta-literal sense, the Pineal Eye is the mythical step-creature of that biological entity found in the brain; namely, the pineal gland. From antiquity forward, up until René Descartes’ writings on it in the 1640s, this gland was often categorized as the site for sensual perception, a kind of guilt and shame shallow pit-seed of consciousness; an arena, as it were, where the fore-visioning of future events – not dreams, but real, not-yet-to-have-happened-but-someday-would-happen, unfolding, predictable, REAL events – were supposedly deposited, or as we might say today: archived.

By the time Descartes got a hold of the gland, he re-fashioned it as a ‘synthesis’ of sorts – a double-helix synthesis which named the Pineal Gland as both site (as in terrain) and sight (as in vision-image) where the body and the mind’s ‘eye’ came together, and were enlivened, fashioned, quickened as it were, with a ‘soul’ or even ‘the’ soul. This was a place where memory, knowledge and the senses intermingled and became one; became one, that is to say, in the carnal, sexual-sensual sense of the word; and, perhaps more to the point, became knowledge in all aspects of the intellectual and inventive, dipped in a wild, bio-degradable substance. This was not an innocent conceptual move. The Pineal Gland was re-incarnated as the bio-instrument, which, according to Descartes, directly allowed for the animal passions – those wild, consuming spirits – to rear up, like “a very fine wind,” or rather, a very lively and pure flame.

And so it was that the Pineal Gland at the base of the skull became that most rare of rare beasts: the living ‘mind’s eye,’ the sight line of a conscience and a consciousness, a vision and a voice. A gland-organ-interpretive-visual-aurality that could whisper to you in that judgmentally irritating kind of way ‘no, no, no: I wouldn’t do that if I were you…’ whilst simultaneously picturing what might happen if you did the reverse or, indeed did nothing at all. This was a mind’s eye ‘picture’ both substantively, that is, materially immaterial (read: mental, spiritual) and at the same time aggressively, willfully, sensuously, ‘real’ (read: carnal). A living, breathing guilty and shamefaced present-tense ‘imaging,’ thinkable, comprehensible and within one’s grasp, though only by virtue of its re-presentation of a synthetic unity of Spirit and a beastly carnality – neatly shelved in the archives of the Pineal Gland.

Ana-materialism & the Pineal Eye provides a landmark interpretation of materialism, representation and the image using the Cartesian conceit of a pineal gland and its voracious sexually embedded appetites. Developing the argument via Georges Bataille’s re-invention of the pineal gland as an all-seeing, all devouring, (pineal) eye, Johnny Golding borrows this move to envision a different analytic approach to digital forms of ‘matter’ and artificial forms of ‘life.’ From her critical engagement with Bataille, Gilles Deleuze and Judith Butler, Golding shows why the tools provided by these modern, contemporary and postmodern approaches to philosophy, image, the body, indeed representation cannot fully explore, let alone develop these new forms of reality/ies except by retreating into traditional binary divides between male and female, good and evil, mother/child and so forth. Ana-materialism and the Pineal Eye introduces a much needed understanding to oddly cathected sensualities, multiversal realities, digital imaginaries with no weight, no volume, no spatiality, but ‘somehow’ making sense, and with it, creating matter, ethics, art.

Ana-materialism & the Pineal Eye: Becoming Mouth-Breast

Visual Arts in the Age of Algorithmic Reproduction

by

Johnny Golding
Professor of Philosophy & Fine Art
Director, Centre for Fine Art Research (CFAR), Birmingham Institute for Art & Design, Birmingham City University.
johnny.golding@bcu.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Ana-materialism & the Pineal Eye provides a landmark interpretation of materialism, representation and the image using the Cartesian conceit of a pineal gland and its voracious sexually embedded appetites. Developing the argument via Georges Bataille’s re-invention of the pineal gland as an all-seeing, all devouring, (pineal) eye, Johnny Golding borrows this move to envision a different analytic approach to digital forms of ‘matter’ and artificial forms of ‘life.’ From her critical engagement with Bataille, Gilles Deleuze and Judith Butler, Golding shows why the tools provided by these modern, contemporary and postmodern approaches to philosophy, image, the body, indeed representation cannot fully explore, let alone develop these new forms of reality/ies except by retreating into traditional binary divides between male and female, good and evil, mother/child and so forth. Ana-materialism and the Pineal Eye introduces a much needed understanding to oddly cathected sensualities, multiversal realities, digital imaginaries with no weight, no volume, no spatiality, but ‘somehow’ making sense, and with it, creating matter, ethics, art.
ANA-MATERIALISM AND THE PINEAL EYE

Before moving off this point, there is something that needs to be underscored about this re-presenting, this iteration of the ‘is’, now able to ‘show itself’ (at least in the mind’s eye of the Pineal Gland). It wasn’t just any kind of ‘is’; just any kind of mental image emerging within (or even being ‘on’) one’s mind. It was a sensuous, sexual, carnal, animal-spirited materiality of an ‘is’ in all its fabrications of the ‘to be’ (as in ‘ought to be’: i.e., materially moral; as in ‘will be’: i.e. materially predictive; as in ‘would be’: i.e., materially conditional; as in the past predictive ‘once upon a time’: i.e., materially subjunctive or that of the muddy pluperfect).

With all its pitfalls – and there remain many in this slightly mad Cartesian appropriation of anatomical materiality to the picturing / expressing of the senses – a rather crucial, but surprisingly under-theorized (and/or completely misrecognized) conceptual move is initiated by Descartes. For what now is at stake is the entry of very new, very specific and very different analytic logic than that of its pre-Cartesian forbearers and post-Enlightenment thinkers. It marks the initial move to re-stage materiality and its relation to an object, subject, spirit, indeed representation itself, as an immersive economy, no longer prefiguring the image or produced by image. Rather, this materiality is a kind of ‘ana’ materiality neither ‘real’ nor ‘not-real.’ Despite this (or perhaps because of this), it figures the image and, in so doing, acts as an ontological ‘groundless ground’ for image, text, pleasure, art. One could say, along with a nod to Jacques Derrida, that the “truth in photo-image-graphy’ is precisely the cohering into the figure the “that which lies to hand.” In this sense the materiality of image (be it analogue, digital, mental) has little to do with the metaphysics of perception or understanding. It has even less to do with the technology/ies inherent in the production of said image – though, it is via technologies of production, immersivity and expenditure that this ana-materialism can best be conceptualized. Irrespective of which technology is used, ana-materialism calls forth a whole new ‘truth’ in representation, one that side-steps the Universal (and all this implies around totality, objectivity, identity) and instead stages the end-game as mid-game, or even as no game at all, especially if, the rules are meant to be broken. In “The Pineal Eye,” Bataille explains it this way:

The eye, at the summit of the skull, opening on the incandescent sun in order to contemplate it in a sinister solitude, is not a product of the Understanding, but is instead, an immediate existence; it opens and blinds itself like a conflagration, or like a fever that eats the being, or more exactly, the head. And thus it plays the role of a fire in a house: the head, instead of locking up life as money is locked in a safe, spends it without counting, for at the end of this great burning head is the image and the disagreeable light on the notion of expenditure, beyond the still empty notion as it is elaborated on the basis of methodological analysis.

Bataille’s notion of expenditure, in concert with the pineal gland of yesteryear, forms the all-seeing fevered-eye, imbued with a material, carnal knowledge that creates the basis for ‘a something’ or ‘an elsewhere’ which, by its very definition, weighs less than nothingness, is faster than the speed of light and deeper than a black hole. One could say, further, that this ‘ana-materialism’, in part born of Cartesian gentility and rude-boy poetics, steals Bataille’s concept of an expanded immediacy that cannot be divorced from its object/ subject/ sense/ sensibility. In so doing, it simultaneously side-steps Hegelian dialectics, Lacanian triangulations of the real, symbolic, imaginary, Butler’s performative non-essentials and even Deleuze’s “mouth-breath” (a point to which I will return momentarily).

When the seemingly non-existent (social) agency of materialism no longer remains wedded to dialectical totalities, speculative reason, or, as the newest kid on the fashion-block would call it, speculative realism; when the seemingly empty materiality of, say, the digital image, no longer is tossed on the dunghill of ‘virtual reality’ or ignored altogether; when all this comes to pass – as it has already done given the ephemeral code drifts of the late 20th / early 21st centuries – then it would be fair to conclude that materiality is made manifest, i.e., becomes ‘present’; through an iterative and immersive expenditure steeped in the immediate terrain of morphogenic logics. This neither-nor (ana-) materialism marks out the boundaries of a method and the content of the ‘image-field’ as a radically discontinuous economy – libidinal or otherwise – and it does so without leaving a (the) trace.

To state the point somewhat differently: on the back cover of Jean Cocteau’s The Difficulty of Being, one of the reviewers recounts the famous house-burning-incident when a reporter nonomonously asks Cocteau the same question he has asked over and again to all his interviewees on a monthly basis. “What single item would you take from a burning house?” Apparently, and without hesitation, Cocteau retorts: “I would take the fire.” And that is precisely what we are taking from an inflamed, burning metaphysics. To re-quote from Bataille above, now in the context of an ana-materialism gently removed from its pineal gland embodiment: “and thus it plays the role of fire in a house,” though this time it does so, outside the House.

The Problem with Universal Cesspools and Self-Reflexive Logics (or the importance of becoming Mouth-Breath)

In the late 1970s, 80s and 90s, one of the ways used to combat the sterility of metaphysics (not to mention, life itself) was to inject into its crippling hold on representation, identity, sexuality, and art a more messy approach, a kind of ‘fuzzy logic’ often relying on shock and awe, the sexually dirty, the problematic and the cruel. A little blood, a little urine, an orgasm or two, not to mention, cannibalism went a long way to disrupt the otherwise self-sealing pronouncements (read: concepts) on what or who could be considered ‘female,’ ‘male,’ ‘queer’ and so on. Deleuze and Butler were two of the more well known anti-essentialist post-structuralist-modernist and/or postmodernist thinkers to engage this particular strategy, though it is far to say that the latter did not venture quite so markedly onto the more indispensable arenas of bodily pleasure as mentioned above. I want to take some time, now, to discuss the one aspect in each of their work, respectively because despite their committed political and philosophical stance around non-essentialism, both fell back into a path that brought them (though in different ways) right back to the very thing they were fighting.

In the latter sections of his Logic of Sense, Deleuze speaks of the “universal cesspool” of life: where, re-capturing Melanie Klein’s work on psychoanalysis, he presents two types of ‘surface’ structures: the simulacra and the zone, the former of which inhabits and expresses the drives within the unconscious; the latter, which inhabits and expresses those of ‘real-time’, albeit patchwork, events. While perhaps crucial as a way for Deleuze himself to inhabit psychoanalysis without losing site of his own, quite profound, insistence on sexuality/ies, sensuality and indeed all the senses for a methodological framework to grasp/ inhabit ‘difference’ and with it, a completely different kind of identity, politics, aesthetics and theory. I would like to venture that this part of the Logic does not represent his finest hour.

Following a somewhat potted history of Sigmund Freud’s originary phases (oral, anal, oedipal), Deleuze suggests that the infant-child latches onto the love-
object-breast-mother and begins to suck. Oh to recall the pleasure in that suck! (And for all still sucking – especially on cigarettes, but also other interesting projectiles, one knows precisely of what pleasure one speaks). We are at the entrance of The Mouth-Breast: one of the most lovely, first moments of synthetic unity/identity – and non-separation, security, wholeness – constitutive of the meaning of life and, simultaneously, life itself (where meaning of life equals pleasure; and where life itself equals sustenance/security).

The suck continues, and one devours. Steadily, force-fully, aggressively. Possessively. Until two things happen: (1) the mouth-breast’s digestive track kicks in and the psychic life of the mouth-breast unity starts to enter the mouth-anus phase; and (2) the breast is (eventually) removed from the mouth of the child-other and, depending on a number of circumstances, its return is delayed (child-mouth is satiated; breast-love-object is tired) or even removed altogether (love-object/breast-mother-other is dead or maybe just sad-distic; age and circumstance of child-mouth is too old, etc.). Enter the problem, the deep trauma problem (oral phase) from which the child-mouth may never recover. Hence, and from the point of view of this child-mouth, of the need to devour obsessively, maybe even to cannibalize so that, in any case, the pleasure of the suck can be prolonged for long as possible and, if lucky far into adulthood and onward to the grave.

This need-dependency-addiction-strategy-tactic (call it what you will) involves an excremental ‘gift’ linked to and/or emerging from the anal orifice, which, now, is part and parcel of this originary sucking pleasure. The child-mouth-breast also now capitalizes on the pleasure, as Deleuze so tactfully puts it, of that ‘abominable mixture’ of excrement, anality, and the suck. (Parenthetical remark: May I now remind all of you who may need reminding that, as a consequence, both the mouth-child-other and the love-object/breast-mother-other are actively, simultaneously, engaged in this tango-cannibalizing-suck, though for rather different reasons). “Orality.” Deleuze observes, “is naturally prolonged in cannibalism and anality, in the case of which partial objects are excreta, capable of exploding the mother’s body, as well as the body of the infant.”

Explosions aside, he continues with this solemn, if somewhat judgmental, prediction of a mouth-breast-turned-mouth-anus:

The bits of one are always the persecutors of the other, and, in this abominable mixture which constitutes the Passion of the nursing infant, persecutor and persecuted are always the same. In this system of mouth-anus or aliment-excrement, bodies burst and cause other bodies to burst in a universal cesspool.

Far be it from me to criticize Deleuze on account of his reverie for dirty sphincters love objects and foul-mouthed female entities brought to bear or even removed altogether (love-object/breast-mother-other is dead or maybe just sad-distic; age and circumstance of child-mouth is too old, etc.). Enter the problem, the deep trauma problem (oral phase) from which the child-mouth may never recover. Hence, and from the point of view of this child-mouth, of the need to devour obsessively, maybe even to cannibalize so that, in any case, the pleasure of the suck can be prolonged for long as possible and, if lucky far into adulthood and onward to the grave.

This need-dependency-addiction-strategy-tactic (call it what you will) involves an excremental ‘gift’ linked to and/or emerging from the anal orifice, which, now, is part and parcel of this originary sucking pleasure. The child-mouth-breast also now capitalizes on the pleasure, as Deleuze so tactfully puts it, of that ‘abominable mixture’ of excrement, anality, and the suck. (Parenthetical remark: May I now remind all of you who may need reminding that, as a consequence, both the mouth-child-other and the love-object/breast-mother-other are actively, simultaneously, engaged in this tango-cannibalizing-suck, though for rather different reasons). “Orality.” Deleuze observes, “is naturally prolonged in cannibalism and anality, in the case of which partial objects are excreta, capable of exploding the mother’s body, as well as the body of the infant.”

Explosions aside, he continues with this solemn, if somewhat judgmental, prediction of a mouth-breast-turned-mouth-anus:

The bits of one are always the persecutors of the other, and, in this abominable mixture which constitutes the Passion of the nursing infant, persecutor and persecuted are always the same. In this system of mouth-anus or aliment-excrement, bodies burst and cause other bodies to burst in a universal cesspool.

Far be it from me to criticize Deleuze on account of his reverie for dirty sphincters love objects and foul-mouthed female entities brought to bear or even removed altogether (love-object/breast-mother-other is dead or maybe just sad-distic; age and circumstance of child-mouth is too old, etc.). Enter the problem, the deep trauma problem (oral phase) from which the child-mouth may never recover. Hence, and from the point of view of this child-mouth, of the need to devour obsessively, maybe even to cannibalize so that, in any case, the pleasure of the suck can be prolonged for long as possible and, if lucky far into adulthood and onward to the grave.

This need-dependency-addiction-strategy-tactic (call it what you will) involves an excremental ‘gift’ linked to and/or emerging from the anal orifice, which, now, is part and parcel of this originary sucking pleasure. The child-mouth-breast also now capitalizes on the pleasure, as Deleuze so tactfully puts it, of that ‘abominable mixture’ of excrement, anality, and the suck. (Parenthetical remark: May I now remind all of you who may need reminding that, as a consequence, both the mouth-child-other and the love-object/breast-mother-other are actively, simultaneously, engaged in this tango-cannibalizing-suck, though for rather different reasons). “Orality.” Deleuze observes, “is naturally prolonged in cannibalism and anality, in the case of which partial objects are excreta, capable of exploding the mother’s body, as well as the body of the infant.”

Explosions aside, he continues with this solemn, if somewhat judgmental, prediction of a mouth-breast-turned-mouth-anus:

The bits of one are always the persecutors of the other, and, in this abominable mixture which constitutes the Passion of the nursing infant, persecutor and persecuted are always the same. In this system of mouth-anus or aliment-excrement, bodies burst and cause other bodies to burst in a universal cesspool.

Far be it from me to criticize Deleuze on account of his reverie for dirty sphincters love objects and foul-mouthed female entities brought to bear or even removed altogether (love-object/breast-mother-other is dead or maybe just sad-distic; age and circumstance of child-mouth is too old, etc.). Enter the problem, the deep trauma problem (oral phase) from which the child-mouth may never recover. Hence, and from the point of view of this child-mouth, of the need to devour obsessively, maybe even to cannibalize so that, in any case, the pleasure of the suck can be prolonged for long as possible and, if lucky far into adulthood and onward to the grave.

This need-dependency-addiction-strategy-tactic (call it what you will) involves an excremental ‘gift’ linked to and/or emerging from the anal orifice, which, now, is part and parcel of this originary sucking pleasure. The child-mouth-breast also now capitalizes on the pleasure, as Deleuze so tactfully puts it, of that ‘abominable mixture’ of excrement, anality, and the suck. (Parenthetical remark: May I now remind all of you who may need reminding that, as a consequence, both the mouth-child-other and the love-object/breast-mother-other are actively, simultaneously, engaged in
This kind of orality is a far, far cry from the language that has boundaries of representational logics. This oralness intensity of ‘becoming X,’ but it reinvigorated the very essentialism(s) she wished to vanquish around identity, politics, gender, sex and sexuality. Let us take a closer look at this charge.

One of the great advantages of feminism – and not just feminism, but of all the so-called ‘civil rights’ movements of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s as well as the 1970s, 80s, 90s – is that as both theory and practice (social movement), feminism emphasized the non-essentialism of biology. In so doing, there was a specific kind of ‘liberation’ based on a conception of what it meant to be ‘human.’ No longer did one’s genitalia or skin color (or class or disability or, eventually, one’s sexual orientation etc.) have anything to do with that trick very annoyed indeed. Annoyed enough to organize, annoy enough to fight, annoy enough to die for the (civil) right to have, as a given, a society based on non-essentialist versions of people, class, ethnicity, religion.

I present this thumbnail sketch of modern political theory (classical liberalism) not so much to suggest that this ‘self’ is conceived as sexed or not. As with one’s body differently from one’s contemporaries and from one’s embodied predecessors and successors as well... [Gender is thus] “a corporeal style, an ‘act,’ as it were.”

The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again.”

In this sense, the earlier, liberalist view of the individual as the source of one’s action(s) and self-willing subjectivity is exchanged, replaced, as a retroactive construction that, as Dino Felluga remarks, comes about only through the enactment of social conventions: “Gender cannot be understood as a role which either expresses or disguises an interior ‘self,’ but it names.” This belief belies two problems: first, a reintegration of Jacques Lacan’s real, symbolic and imaginary and with it, the insistence on the logic of castration (lack/phal- lus) as that which defines and defines the very core of sexuality itself, along with shame, guilt, need for recognition, in the form of the individual’s pre-
discursive will-to-identity, at the heart of ideological (Althusserian) interpellation.

So why would this seemingly rather liberated picture of the political, the real and the symbolic be so problematic, especially to those committed against essentialism at every turn? It is problematic because this retroactive construction of subject-formation requires the methodologies inherent in self-reflexive philosophy. Geoff Boucher, in his The Politics of Performativity, neatly sums up the problem:

Butler interprets the process of subject-formation through the lens of the philosophy of reflection. In so doing, she proposes that although agents are socially constructed through the cultural ascrip-
tion of multiple subject-positions, nonetheless, the intentionality behind these gender performances is driven by a desire for self-identity. She grasps the anticipation of identity effectuated by ideological interpellation as an ambivalent relation to author-
ity that precedes identity-formation, based on a combination of guilt and love. What this means is that Butler takes advantage of the paradoxes of the philosophy of reflection to reinstall the desire for recognition, in the form of the individual’s pre-
discursive will-to-identity, at the heart of ideological (Althusserian) interpellation.

This belies two problems: first, a reintegration of Jacques Lacan’s real, symbolic and imaginary and with it, the insistence on the logic of castration (lack/phal- lus) as that which defines and defines the very core of sexuality itself, along with shame, guilt, need for recognition, in the form of the individual’s pre-
The Big Ask

Now, maybe this double-sided problem is just not a problem. Maybe after all these years of fighting against the stupidity of thinking that all things penetrative is ‘male’ and all things ‘lacking,’ female, and no matter how many times one bangs their pretty little head against the proverbial brick wall of essentialism – no matter what form it takes – this sexist enactment is ‘male’ and all things ‘lacking,’ female, and no matter how many times one bangs their pretty little head against the proverbial brick wall of essentialism – no matter what form it takes – this sexist enactment just won’t go away; well maybe it’s just time to hang up those red ruby slippers, those ‘over the rainbow’ dreams and go back to Kansas, with or without the dog. Maybe, after all these wild debauched years, I’ve just been carried away with trying to explain what happens when I sniff out the uncharted paths in a manner according to my custom, especially when night stealths towards day: the stillness of air! The light! The dew! The quietness of tone! The possibil-

If that isn’t reason enough to grasp with impunity this strange ana-materialism, and even more peculiar ‘mouth-breath’ and run with it into a wholly different epistemological field, then perhaps this last set of re-

SYNTIA WITH AN ‘S’ (AND THE REALITY OF ALGORITHMIC REPRODUCTION)

On May 20, 2010 an announcement by the J Craig Venter Institute in Rockville Maryland heralded the generative birth of the first man-made, single-cell organism, which they duly named ‘Synthia’ (with an ‘s’). It had been sequenced from the genetic code of Mycoplasma genitalium, the world’s smallest living organism, found primarily in cattle and goats. Global reports flooded over the web and other communica-

This deepy superficial heterologic ‘knowledge system event,’ fractal in nature, infinitely regressive, and ag-
gressively successful in its virility, to make meaning ‘take’ place births/invents complexity as eternally re-

Distant cousin to the fragment, which can be distin-
guished by its relation to a concentrated ‘whole’ or ‘to-

tality’ (as in a piece of a pie, % of a, a thesis/antithesis of a synthetic unity and so on), this ‘slice,’ this surface ana-material dimension, with no underlying structure or Archimedean point, pre-figures the figural as the ‘being-with’ singular plural as Jean-Luc Nancy would name it, of an ‘inoper-

true that this replication (and what it produced) might not be seen quite at the same level as when Dr Fran-
kenshtein’s Monster’s finger trembled as a sign of life on his laboratory table – this replication held all the same terrors/jubilations /ethical conundrums – and promises – of that 19th century shout: ‘IT’S ALIVE! IT’S ALIVE!’

In the beginning there was the Word. And that word was: Synthia.

The important point about Synthia is not that – or not just that – ‘she’ would be heralded as a monster in single-cell form. It is not even that her emergence, or for that matter, the emergence of bot-learned deci-
making, augmented realities, dark matter, the uses and abuses of Dolly and her cloned sisters before her, ‘always already’ put into question the very rub of what constitutes a ‘she,’ not to mention the very meaning of being ‘alive’ and whether one should or should not play Creator. It also put into sharp relief the very ontologies through which one might grasp this most modern of post-postmodern conditions. For this seemingly innocent little event generally called Synthia was in fact a paradigmatic sea-change, a grounding event birthing a certain kind of knowledge system, whose very meaning, indeed whose origins (if this be the right word) would emerge less from the semiotics of signs and signifiers, phalluses and lacks, and more from a simple re-iterative algorithmic co-
gency, a simulacra deeply coded in the she-wolves of myths and founding civilizations.

This important point about Synthia is not that – or not just that – ‘she’ would be heralded as a monster in single-cell form. It is not even that her emergence, or for that matter, the emergence of bot-learned decision making, augmented realities, dark matter, the uses and abuses of Dolly and her cloned sisters before her, ‘always already’ put into question the very rub of what constitutes a ‘she,’ not to mention the very meaning of being ‘alive’ and whether one should or should not play Creator. It also put into sharp relief the very ontologies through which one might grasp this most modern of post-postmodern conditions. For this seemingly innocent little event generally called Synthia was in fact a paradigmatic sea-change, a grounding event birthing a certain kind of knowledge system, whose very meaning, indeed whose origins (if this be the right word) would emerge less from the semiotics of signs and signifiers, phalluses and lacks, and more from a simple re-iterative algorithmic co-gency, a simulacra deeply coded in the she-wolves of myths and founding civilizations.

This deepy superficial heterologic ‘knowledge system event,’ fractal in nature, infinitely regressive, and aggressively successful in its virility, to make meaning ‘take’ place births/invents complexity as eternally returning simulacra, without ever getting beyond, beside or inside ‘herself.’ It is a whole new soaring, this multiply inhabited single-celled will to power, this newborn Zarathustra, forging a slice-minutiae of expression with no absolute roadmap, marker, or destiny. Deleuze pre-guessed this move as a “reverse Platonism,” a kind of simulacrum of sense. Jean-François Lyotard shaped it as figural; that is, as a kind of “lesson in darkness, like the paintings of a blind man” – the very ges-
ture required to make imagelessness gather momentum, materiality and, in its wake, come alive.
developed one of the most sophisticated encyclopedic logics on contemporary (that is to say, modern, life) which put at its root the fundamental position of uncertainty and change without getting ‘outside’ the system. He did this in part by way of a subtle positioning of negation, one that was established in such a way that allowed for synthetic reason and with it, synthetic unity to express at its very core, the process of becoming/immanence/transcendence. But, however sophisticated these moves, the dialectical system did this by privileging an abyssal present; that is, one which could never ‘be inhabited’ analytically, politically, aesthetically, ethically, algorithmically or otherwise. This is because not only did ‘the now’ slip away as soon as one tried to grasp it; but the very ‘territory’ of the present resided in the deep cut/exclusion middle of logical contradiction, the totality of which, in producing the kind of ‘synthesis’ that it did, could only point to grand narratives, as the grounding of its Truth.

With the move toward fractal philosophy, especially via Mandelbrot’s ‘set’, the present is precisely what is inhabited. A kind of dot in the hourglass of life, with the future, the past, and the elsewhere gathered via economies of circulation, planes of immanence and dimensional surface slices, the present emerges as the paradigmatic iteration of the ‘Zeta’. It is posed as the unsayable-something-of-whatever-that-is-replicating ’herself’ via an infinite feedback sequenc ing loop of $Z \rightarrow Z^2 + C$. This sequence-ing creates pattern; the pattern re-loops to create ‘synthetic unity’; the process is repeated. It is a process found away as soon as one tried to grasp it; but the very ‘territory’ of the present resided in the deep cut, excluded middle of logical contradiction, the totality of which, in producing the kind of ‘synthesis’ that it did, could only point to grand narratives, as the grounding of its Truth.

We stand in, or, more precisely, at, the reckoning. Caught in mid-run, whilst on the run, this ‘standing’ defies rationality whilst simultaneously encoding it at the very iteration of its repeatability. One is reminded of Martin Heidegger’s provocative claim that what constitutes ‘thinking’ is, to paraphrase Heidegger, a leap away from representation, which has served only to blind ‘rational man’ through an over-reliance on observation, deduction, and neatly placed observational scientism. Thinking is an active move toward non-representational dwelling.

Picture this: Having leapt into non-representational dwelling, materialism, mouth-breath embodiment, what do you suppose Hegel’s ‘rational man’ would make of his encounter with our warrior princess, Syntha? For make no mistake about it: it is only a matter of time when programmable learning will slip-slide into judgments, and our Turing Machine of yesteryear might well desire something more daring than ice cream with a cherry on top.

It’s a delicate game we are playing after all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


Permission to republish a slightly enlarged version here, is gratefully acknowledged. I would also like to acknowledge the working philosophers-artists group The Philosophers’ Salon in London, along with the post-graduate/post-doctoral/CFAR researchers in my Ph.D. Research Methods seminar at the School of Art, BCU and heir commitment to think materially differently, both sensuously-aesthetically and ethico-politically. They include: Barnaby Adams, Dr Sheena Calvert, Jakub Celgarz, Lauren Goode, Dr Stephen Kennedy, Hannah Lammin, Sarah Mann O’Donnell, Mattia Paganelli, Dr David Rubinstein, Dr Mark Walker, Grace Williams, Dane Worrall and, most crucially, Dr Lynn Turner.

REFERENCES AND NOTES


7. In a lay sense, think of an image on one’s iPod or ‘tablet.’ If one smashed open said PDA, one would not find 5,000 songs or all of one’s library of e-books sprawled across the floor. This does not mean for a moment, that the material reality of its contents ‘do not exist’ or, more important, are ‘virtual.’ Ask anyone who has lost their data after a hard right’s work. To put this on a more conceptual register, ‘not leaving a trace’ – or more significant, ‘not leaving ‘the’ trace’ (note to Derrida) – requires a set of conceptual moves and/or tools that must fall clear of time/space diagrammatical logos, transcendental/quasi-transcendental metaphysics and/or the eternally returning linguistic turns, incapable of nuanced, dimensional, immersive thinking so required for 21st century contemporary culture (or indeed, for any culture).

8. Centrally, ‘not leaving a trace’ – or more significant, ‘not leaving ‘the’ trace’ (note to Derrida) – requires a set of conceptual moves and/or tools that must fall clear of time/space diagrammatical logos, transcendental/quasi-transcendental metaphysics and/or the eternally returning linguistic turns, incapable of nuanced, dimensional, immersive thinking so required for 21st century contemporary culture (or indeed, for any culture).

9. See in particular Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, ‘6. The Barbarian Despotic Machine’ Anti-Oedipus (London: Continuum, 2004), 214, where, detailing the importance of nomadic/de-territorialisation, they expose the strategic efforts of the State to impose, coordinate or in some capacity generate, territorialism and ‘staying put’ as one of the most important moves an oppressive State can generate. ‘It has often been remarked that the State commences (or recommences) with two fundamental arrangements, one of which is said to be an act of territoriality through the fixing of residence... (There is no great change, from this point of view, when the State no longer does anything more than guarantee the private property of a ruling class that becomes distinct from the State.)’ A point to which Foucault, in his ‘Preface’ to their Anti-Oedipus, famously emphasized as a way to counter ‘all forms of fascism, whether already present or impending.’ Thus he urges: “Withdraw allegiance from the old categories of the Negative (law, limit, castration, lack, lackness), which Western thought has so long held sacred as a form of power and an access to reality. Prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over units, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe what is productive is not sedimentary but nomadic.” Anti-Oedipus, xx.


12. Ibid.

13. See in particular Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, ‘6. The Barbarian Despotic Machine’ Anti-Oedipus (London: Continuum, 2004), 214, where, detailing the importance of nomadic/de-territorialisation, they expose the strategic efforts of the State to impose, coordinate or in some capacity generate, territorialism and ‘staying put’ as one of the most important moves an oppressive State can generate. ‘It has often been remarked that the State commences (or recommences) with two fundamental arrangements, one of which is said to be an act of territoriality through the fixing of residence... (There is no great change, from this point of view, when the State no longer does anything more than guarantee the private property of a ruling class that becomes distinct from the State.)’ A point to which Foucault, in his ‘Preface’ to their Anti-Oedipus, famously emphasized as a way to counter ‘all forms of fascism, whether already present or impending.’ Thus he urges: “Withdraw allegiance from the old categories of the Negative (law, limit, castration, lack, lackness), which Western thought has so long held sacred as a form of power and an access to reality. Prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over units, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe what is productive is not sedimentary but nomadic.” Anti-Oedipus, xx.


17. John Locke, Two Treatises on Government (In the Former the False Principles and Foundation of Sir Robert Filmer and His Followers Are Detected and Overthrown; The Latter is an Essay Concerning the True Original Extend and End of Civil Government), London 1681, (New York: Bartleby.com 2010).


24. Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach (1845),” in Frederick Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 61-65. It could be said that the whole of Marxist theory can be found in these eleven theses, the last of which at page
65, famously states, “Philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point, however, is to change it.” (Italics in the original).


30. Further elaborated in Deleuze, “Twenty-Third Series of the Aion,” “Twenty-Fifth Series of Univocity” and “Twenty-Sixth Series of Language,” in The Logic of Sense, 162-67, 169-174; and 181-182, respectively.


34. G.W.F. Hegel, The Phenomenology of Spirit, Sections, 1-12, 16-20, 73-85; 148: 159-163.


36. Importantly, this is not to suggest that the present is ‘in between,’ like Samson holding apart the past and the future before the haircut. There is no such thing as an ‘in between’; at least as far as the present is concerned. A useful guide for novices to Mandelbrot’s work can be found at http://www.ddewey.net/mandelbrot/ (accessed March 15, 2013). For an earlier discussion of ‘Zeta’ and its re-enactment on the question of Time and certain forms of metaphysics, see also: Johnny Golding, The Assassination of Time (or the birth of ζeta-physics) in Deleuzian Events: Writing / History, eds. Harjo Beressem and Leyla Haarkamp, 132-145 (Berlin: LIT Verlag Münster, 2009).

