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Lectio Praecursoria: Speculation on Artistic Research and Performance in The Context of Immanent Capitalism

TERO NAUHA

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CROSS SECTION

Honoured Custos, Honoured Opponents, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The written part of my doctoral research “*Schizoproduction: artistic research and performance in the context of immanent capitalism*” has a structure resembling an architectonic scheme of a building. The cross section serves as an introduction, whereas the two floors of the building present the artistic works of the research and the theoretical context. Then, there is the foyer and the exit—places for reflection, speculations and critique, departure and arrival. The metaphor of a building has two functions, where firstly a drawing of a building is a theoretical scheme; and secondly, a building has a finite nature, like text. Due to this finite nature, there are thus infinite amounts of virtual attributes which cannot be articulated. That is why it is so much easier to criticize or to define through negation, rather than to articulate something affirmative. A research project ought to have a critical position, but rather than critique it is an articulation.

We need to ask whether in our research it is the building—the architecture proper—or the scheme that we focus on? On one hand, we may regard theory as a set of scaffoldings, which are manoeuvred away after construction has finished, and on the other hand, we may reflect on the volumes, proportions, movements, ideas, and ideologies of a building. If we value only the final and concrete object, then we regard practice as creation, expression, or innovation, but ignore speculation or conceptual articulation. In that case, theory is like a manual which is needed in order to learn a skill, but of course there are those who never read the

manual. The question remains: why would an artist need to spend her time with theory and also bother herself with the strenuous labour of writing?

The position of an artist researcher is not quite a pragmatic one, where the artist would presumably only use theory to stake out positions for ideas or presumptuous endeavours. It is rather more like a position where she feels unease with the notion that we do constantly speculate and theorize in both practice and life, whether we are researchers or not. Any decision we take, a theory has already chosen our way. A speculation is not only a half-baked discursive hobby for an artist, but is in actuality an essential part of artistic practice.

Eight years ago I began a slow process of tinkering with my own tools and methods, concepts and postulations. Out of confusion, irritation, and revolt, I searched for a reason for practice in the context we live in. I had an inclination to research an artistic practice aligned with the transformation from industrial modernism to contemporary forms of labour. This period we find ourselves in has several names and concepts, from cognitive capitalism and post-Fordism to affective labour and neoliberalism—just to name a few. In my research, I have tinkered with another concept, ‘immanent capitalism,’ which I will briefly present in this lecture.

I wanted to produce a critique and research for the possibility of making resistance through artistic practices. In 2007 I started to work with my doctoral research supervisor—doctor of economics Akseli Virtanen—in a group called General Intellect, which consisted of a number of social and political theorists in Finland. There I started an assessment and theoretical inquiry of a post-structural theory connected with schizoanalysis as developed by Félix Guattari, Jean Oury, and Gilles Deleuze in the 1960s in the psychiatric institution La Borde, in the Loire valley, France. At first I had a need to understand and try it out to then later on produce a critique and departure from the method—which paradoxically turned out to be the non-method of schizoanalysis. Thus, my research aims toward developing a thought and practice wherein the economy in the last instance of immanent capitalism—that is, the hegemony of capitalism and the presumed shortage of alternatives—is proven to be an illusion. This has been my aim. It is not exactly what I’ve succeeded in accomplishing, but I have been able to produce instead a critical capacity to undermine the call of immanent capitalism in artistic research.

FIRST FLOOR: PRACTICE AND THEORY

I remember sitting in a train carriage waiting to leave from Katowice to Warsaw, after my first workshop in Bytom in 2012. I felt despair and anxiety. I was having a hard time applying Guattari’s schizoanalytic apparatus to the workshops I conducted in Bytom and to the materials I had collected. In these workshops I had set a fairly rigid system for the participants, and had created a metamodel for interpretation and analysis, but my theoretical postulations had become translucent and

lukewarm during the workshop, leaving me confused. I was faced with a crisis: was theory nothing more than a pretext to justify actions under academic conditions?

A crisis brings up an exception, and as Carl Schmitt (2005, 15) has argued in his *Political Theology*, “the rule proves nothing, but the exception proves everything.” So practice, especially if it is research driven, should never fit the norm nor should it be normative. A process produces knowing, which cannot be directly transmitted into discursive knowledge; a process is not an operation of fixing problems. The artistic research does not only take place in *phronesis*—intuition or in use of adopted skills—but rather also lies within crises, exceptions, and the capacity to articulate discrepancies, mishaps, and irresolvable conundrums. My argument is that practice and thought take place alongside the radical immanence of the unthinkable, unprecedented, and unknown. Research offers no solutions, but instead offers articulations, speculations, axioms, or operations. In moments of crisis, research can make steps ahead.

A contribution to knowledge is not produced by appropriating an already tested method, such as schizoanalysis. Knowledge is produced performatively in practice, in each particular context in order to comprehend the co-operative, collaborative, affective, and precarious conditions we face every day. From this perspective, knowledge production through artistic research is a theoretical, performative, and practical inquiry on the state apparatus, production, economy, the function of the family, relationships, subjectivities, non-human and a-signified matter. Artistic research is an investigation of arrangements and their collective enunciations, functions and operations. Artistic practice is a machinic construct working in conjunction with other social and political arrangements.

The artistic works contained within this research—performances, exhibitions, and videos—aimed to investigate these functions from different points of view and within different contexts. They articulated transformations from modernist industrialism to the post-industrial, affective, collaborative, and processual epoch of our contemporaneity. A central element of these artworks was a body regarded in respect to these arrangements and functions of immanent capitalism—that is *what can a body do?*

Artistic practice has attributes which are not exclusive from other machinic constructs. The determination in the last instance of economy, or *oikonomia*, is the foundation for the philosophy of capitalism, which in turn produces the world as an arrangement. The economy is the last instance, which constitutes knowledge and the ultimate milieu where our knowledge emerges. This philosophy articulates collaborations, project management, knowledge production, research and development. Capitalism is an absolute system, an arrangement and an operative without an outside. Therefore, a mild critique or analysis is not enough, since it would be only another decisional function within this arrangement, within this world. A critique of the functions and operations are necessary, but in my argument, it is the

immanence claimed by capitalism and the determinant economy, which must be regarded critically.

The immanence of capitalism is intuitive, and is founded on transcending operations of deduction, analysis, or reflection. The transcending immanence articulates the world of capitalism. In other words, capitalism is a system of exchange and economy, where all arrangements within this system are bound with these economic functions, such as exchange and flow of matter, or lines of flight and the need for sufficient reason. The capital form of thought, that is to say the philosophy of capitalism, is economic, sufficient and productive, which produces a world.

Here, a turn is taking place in my argument, where the immanence of capitalism is determined as *transcending* immanence—a world, but not the real, which is indifferent to these operations.

SECOND FLOOR: SPECULATION

Artistic practice is ‘schizoproduction’ in a world. It is an expression of the real, the radical immanence as a transcending arrangement. It is a collective articulation bound up with intricate relations and management of carnal, affective, and discursive matter. The present form of capitalism is based on relationships, collaborations, and processuality, and in this is altogether different from the industrial period of modernism in the sense of subjectivity, production, governance, biopolitics and so on. In both cases, the life of a subject is valuable, since it is a substratum of potentiality and capacity, creativity and innovation; and in both cases, a subject is produced with physical, mental, cognitive and affective capacities compatible with each arrangement. Artistic practice is aligned with a shift from modern liberalism to the neoliberal dynamic position of the free agent.

Such attributes have thus become so obvious that the concepts of ‘competence’, ‘trust’ or ‘interest’ are taken as given facts, instead of perceiving them as functions within an arrangement. It is not that neoliberal management has leveraged the world from its joints, but that it is rather capitalism as philosophy, which has produced this world, where neoliberalism is just a part of the philosophy. Therefore, the thought of the end of capitalism will always be speculative, since we may regard the world without capitalism in the same way as we may regard the world-not-for-humans, which may be a speculative one, also.

In this research I ask, as have so many before me, where is the place of resistance, agonism, and revolt in such a state? The more accurate question could also be: “why do people fight *for* their servitude?” (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, 29) – as Spinoza, Hobbes, Marx, Reich, Deleuze, Guattari and many others have asked. A practice and our thoughts must begin from this position, where the thought of a world-without-capitalism is a speculation, which can be considered only from

within the immanence of capitalism, one that still regards this world of capitalism as a product—*not* the real.

FOYER

In a foyer we may come across various kinds of paraphernalia that have been left there. We regard a foyer as a liminal space, a threshold, which both defines and distinguishes the exterior from the constructed interior space. It is in the foyer, or the corridor, where the book *Life: A User's Manual* by Georges Perec (2003, 3) begins:

“A life can most often be perceived only through those fragmented echoes, those splinters, remnants, shadows, those first moves or incidents or accidents that happen in what are called the ‘common areas,’ soft little sounds damped by the red woollen carpet, embryos of communal life which never go further than the landing.”

It is a room for the actors when they are not on stage, a truly spectral space for speculation, memory, and an advent.

The immanence of capitalism is a transcending immanence: a system, which produces a world as an arrangement, through a capitalist form of thought—the philosophy of capitalism—which is a philosophy of sufficient reason in which economy is the determination in the last instance, and not the real. We need to specifically regard that this world is not real. The world is a process, and in the words of Peter Osborne, it is a “geopolitical fiction” (Osborne 2013, 25). Aside from this reason, there is an unthinkable world that is not for humans. It is not the world in itself, *noumena*, nor is it nature, *bios*, but rather it is the world indifferent to and foreclosed from human thought, a foreclosed and radical immanence—the real—which is not open nor will ever be opening itself for human thought. It will forever remain void and unilaterally indifferent.

The radical immanence of the real is not an exception—analogous to the miracle in theology—but rather, it is an advent of the unprecedented unknown, where the lonely hour of last instance never comes. This radical immanence does not confer with ‘the new’ or with ‘the same’ and does not transcend through thought. It is matter in absolute movement, into which philosophy or *oikonomia* incorporates conditions, concepts, and operations. Now, a shift in thought is possible where the determination in the last instance would no longer be economy but rather a radical immanence of the real, as philosopher François Laruelle has argued.

And this is what I regard as the beauty of theory in artistic practice, where a shift in thought does not necessitate a shift in representative forms, but instead changes our perception. Where practice may be speculative and performative.

Can we, then, have practice alongside the radical immanence of the real? At first, we should regard practice as speculation, and then, to regard a body as

matter of the unknown, unthinkable and indifferent to subjectivity: a body of void indifferent to capital forms of thought and to the world. A speculation does not regard the real, that is to say, which is not for us, and not determined by the economy as the last instance. It is a practice, which regards bodies and objects as unthinkable matter, a practice of thought aware of its own transcending nature—articulated through being, the other, or the becoming, for instance. A practice of limited theoretical speculations, but not limited by the economy of thought, but by the indifference of the real. A speculative practice does not necessitate one thought should be more valid than the other.

EXIT

I used to think that if I were to consume and study enough theory, or practice my skills to become a virtuoso, then crystallized and streamlined articulations would simply emerge from within me. This confusion is a consequence of regarding practice in terms of sufficient reason—confusion, because a body is turned into a cog of operations: affective, discursive, and carnal. Here, a body emerges as an institution actualized in the world. A body may even become an exception regarded alongside the norm. It is a system bound with operations of decision, truth, fideism, and *oikonomia*—a sufficient body in correlation with the world.

Alongside this condition, a body remains void of content, indifferent and unprecedented. It is radical immanence, which remains indifferent to knowledge production and decisional operations, which transcend immanence into a liveable world of sufficient reason. From the movement of matter a body is actualized as a material form, which regardless remains indifferent to these operations.

If in radical immanence there can be no thought of the body, then the body can only exist as a speculative thought. It is not an event nor is it being experienced, but it is an advent and a void of experience—a body, which withdraws from experience and economy. I postulate that in performance art practice, an advent of the unprecedented is present—something we cannot witness without turning it into a decisional thought form or argument—but does not present itself. It is a constituted condition of a contingency. From this point of view, performance art is not a site of reflection, commentary, critique or innovation, which thankfully is virtuously being executed by journalists, politicians, stand-up comedians, and talk-show hosts. It is neither an exception nor a miraculous apprehension, but a generic and often strange advent of the real: a body or the world-not-for-humans. Therefore, I speculate that a carnal body is foreclosed from me. There are no methods, but only speculations, through which we can produce an enclave to articulate how capitalism is not immanent or whether *oikonomia* would be the determination in the last instance. A transcending immanence of capitalism is a form of occupation.

Through these speculations and experiments, I have confidence to articulate the indifference of the real and the body as foreclosed, radical immanence, in contrast with the operations of capitalism producing a world.

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