

Chaos TM and the Aesthetics of Active Passivity

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The global society, born from the contingent spread of capital over new physical territories (Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia), is not the result of capital spread over certain geo-political lines (states, etc.), but of disappearance of the very borders of these territories/states. The new territories are not at all physical, but fields of science, communication technologies, cyberspace, art and culture, and, last but not least, the human body. These territories allow the reproduction of capital primarily onto the social field. Globalized societies are therefore a result of the new logic of power reproduction that in such way obfuscates and makes the effects of capital pretty much relative, but not less dangerous!

The logic of flexible power (in the sense of supranational political organizations being strongly connected with so-called free market and culture) spreads over the whole social field and is at the same time local and global; it operates simultaneously. This allows that mechanisms of crisis creation (from war in Iraq to riots in Paris suburbs) get simultaneously uncovered with mechanisms of crisis "solution," carried out by the same power bodies that caused the crisis in the first place. It is exactly this bipolar mechanism that is the "creative" potential, which results in nothing else than in a mere reproduction of this same power, of its own logic. This claim brings us closer to the notion of chaos, which, as suggested by its own "name," opposes law and order; it is, as such, simultaneously, creative and destructive.

This new situation although pretty simple to comprehend, is yet passionately undermined by imposition of concepts like civilization clash, "axis of evil," battle for democratic values and etc.; it inaugurates not only a completely decentralized shape of global power, but reproduces concepts of power embodiment, which are no longer tied only to centralized forms of law, order and the Constitution, along the centralized state repressive apparatuses, but, on the contrary, to communication protocols of power negotiation (within global power matrix) realized through mass communication and/or networked societies.

The dominant paradigm of the networked society is that of inclusion/exclusion. On the level of self-legitimization of State-which-is-

working-hand-into-hand with multinational-corporations, as a tool of extension of the state of exception, exclusion, is part of the binary paradigm holy man/dead man (Homo Sacer); as developed by Giorgio Agamben, the State, according to Marx, “as the executive bureau of global capital,” realizes itself by practicing the monopoly over bare life, with its suspension (in the First World) or by its termination (in the Third World).

Therefore, it is necessary to analyze production of paradigms of inclusion and exclusion, which allow chaos not only to be created but as well suspended!

Death Inc.

I will present three most exposed ways or levels that illustrate the creation of chaos, and its suspension. These processes are made objective, i.e., truthful with the help of info-communication technologies (ICT) and cultural codes.

The first is the subtle colonization of areas already hit (or to be in the future) by natural catastrophes or armed conflicts with the aim of their reconstruction. The current US president administration, according to Naomi Klein, created an Office of Coordinators for Reconstruction and Stabilization, which aims to develop wide plans for periods after conflicts. This body included in its overview an additional of twenty five countries, which are currently not experiencing any kind of conflict (Klein: 2005, thenation.com). It seems that more and more parts of the World are becoming possible sites for “active reconstruction” by well known players: profit consultancy firms, building consortiums, big non-government organizations, UN’s offices and international financial institutions (Klein, 2005; thenation.com).

USA’s secretary of state Condoleezza Rice stated, immediately after the Tsunami (in Southeast Asia) in January 2005 that this is “a great opportunity” that opens way to profit *pretty well*. (Klein, 2005; thenation.com).

This kind of disgusting statements should not be seen simply as controversial, they are in fact part of the method of functioning of the whole industry of humanity, which, on one side, masks the investments by first capitalist states in these underdeveloped areas with its oversized propagation of “help” to lower classes (even in the form of cancerous “humanitarian” food, as it has been the case in the Bosnian war), and, on other side, simultaneously, it allows the formation of a sterile distance from “the savages” far away, which receive, nevertheless, in the end some help. The industry of humanity with its “help” policy produces a “high class” in the endangered area (that conducts as well the distribution of “help” on a local level). The industry of humanity therefore does not really help any one in the end, but serves as an empathic buffer zone, which increases the significance of “help” mostly for the First Capitalist World’s populations that are providing it. “Help” serves to measure the global

(tele)presence of international institutions of humanity industry within specific region.

The second is the suspension of the Constitution through mobilization of science for the creation and justification of growing technological surveillance of population of the First Capitalist World (see the example of the infamous American Patriot Act – which practically suspends the Charters of Democratic Rights). As emphasized by Hardt and Negri, *»When the state of exception becomes the rule and when war becomes the permanent state with no end in sight, then, traditional distinction between politics and war gets blurred... war itself becomes a permanent social relation.«* (Hardt and Negri, 2005: 12).

This permanent social relation is in correlation with the de-territorialized effects of war that, among other practices, results in the surveillance of the first world population. We had opportunities to see many examples of these »treatments«. During the Republican convention in Madison Square Garden in 2004, the New York police held for three days with no explanation more than three thousand demonstrators into a wired space of an asbestos infected building on pier 57 in the New York docks. At the same time, the majority of media did not report that people were imprisoned on pier 57. As well as in other numerous cases of police repression, the transfer of enormous power to the state repressive apparatus results in the systematic practice of suspension of rights to have ANY protest (does not matter how much maybe naive this argument could be).

Not to mention the case of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib concentration camps, which would require much more space here?

To contribute to a thesis of mobilization of science for global capital need, I can propose two main aspects. One is covered by militaristic projects, like the one created by Pentagon agency DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, whose project Arpanet, eventually resulted in Internet as we know it today...), or projects as the one known under the name *»Seeing Battle Zones«*. It is a system of mass surveillance of movements in urban environments of first world cities, which implies that this sector of operations is not exclusively reserved for the third world countries. The second aspect presents far more sophisticated mobilization of science into law, economics and culture sectors that provides the rights to access to informations, or present a suspension of such rights. I mean here all the sophisticated protocols that are attached to copyrights, software patent initiatives in the European Union, future patents on parts of the human genome, etc. This means that in the future we won't only be forced to buy licenses for software operation systems, but also we will find ourselves in situations where corporations will sell us licenses for the usage of ourselves in the sense that multinational corporations will patent their rights on certain information on certain parts of the DNA sequence and to which the public access will be denied. This highly dangerous menace to human kind as species of course is not openly present in the public sphere, mostly because of the so called Public Relation services.

The third is part of the machine of media negotiations of meaning, adjustment and processing of “styles” within Public Relation services (which include the whole mainstream media machinery, as CNN, Fox etc.). Let’s just recall the case from 1997, when Fox sustained the biotechnology company Monsanto, and did not present (being supposedly under Monsanto pressure) the investigative report on growth hormone Posilac and its cancerous effects on humans. These fast processed and adjusted information, raw data and images from the (battle) field, so-called embedded journalism that covers anti-globalist demonstrations from police side – present apparatuses of sterilization of information. This third level not only produce ways that “allow” us to “objectively” accept methods of direct exclusion of (dangerous or critical) social practices that oppose the way of easy capital spread, but allow a naturalization of these “post production” practices through numerous police/detective/spy/crime scene investigation/forensic etc., TV shows.

The boom of number of secret police and forensic style TV shows today is compensation for the real incompetence or for the lack of will to prevent the 9/11. The “humane” faces of many police actors are as well the “compensation” for more and more repressive laws and extreme police outlaw services. These TV shows make exclusion (in the sense of separation, repression and destruction) objectively necessary. The 9/11 presents, pace Baudrillard, the outcome of the role of God, which became suicidal and declared the war to itself. This Baudrillard’s claim that 9/11 was a kind of declaration of war by the West to itself has to be read along his sentence that says that the horror of dying in the Twin Towers is inseparable of the horror of living in them (Baudrillard, 2003: 10).

Or, as Jean Luc Nancy argues, the claim that the world is being destroyed is not a hypothesis: it is a fact by which every thought of the world is being fed; however, we don’t know any more what it means to destroy, and we don’t know as well which world is being destroyed (Nancy, 2004: 20).

So, what we get in the end? We get chaos as a totality of crisis spread on social, political and individual levels mixed with a number of wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa and wrapped with bird flu, the rise of fascism in Europe, terrorism all around the world, etc. Chaos is as an institutionalized potential, a threat that justifies not only wars, exploitation, repression and similar, but the production of life itself; populations are seen as the mere conductor of power. If we agree that any relevant positioning today, especially in culture, has to be the positioning against the Empire, as a name for a supranational power that is made as triangle model of “sovereign” states, global capitalist organizations and global free market, then chaos has to be seen as a tool which prevents, suspends the very potential of positioning against the Empire.

Monopoly

In the case of recent protests in France, via CNN we had an opportunity to hear comments that “plain” French people support the protests, but

condemn the “vandals” who use mass gatherings to present their own agenda and to openly attack the institutions of power. “Vandals” as elements that opposes the “democratic” possibilities of demonstrations are to be found on the opposite side, against masses of students, which were worried only for their private status within the free market system of labor exploitation. “Vandals,” as the obverse side of otherwise “peaceful, civilized” protests, are seen as an obstacle to partial solution of problems, set up by the “civilized” protestors. The suspension of the destructiveness of “vandals” shows that partial demands are creative only for the system itself, which creates the crisis in a first place.

To make it even more clear, Empire’s democratic regimes not only need acceptance, secured through mechanisms of voting and the mass media support, but even more they need fragmented “protests” which, by pointing out short circuits in the system even more calibrate and reconfirm the flexible power of the capital itself; here it is not about some DeVilpeine’s or US administration government, it is about democracy in general. If needed, they all will in the end suspend the law in order to get rid of the “vandals.”

The key question is of course, WHO has the monopoly to produce chaos, i.e. to profit from its evolvment or the way how to resolve it?

When Hardt and Negri claim that war has become a permanent social relation, then, in the context of a chaos contextualization, I can state that war has become one of the manifestations of institutionalization of chaos, i.e. of a monopoly over it, reduced, as well, to a permanent social relation. Chaos, as permanent social relation (as we can term the current situation in Iraq, being confronted with the horror of the Western passivity), is in fact a radical illustration of the flexible power of global capital to establish monopoly over the definition of a threat (terrorism) and over the way to successively monopolize it, as a model for relativisation of chaos, created by capital itself. This does not only imply technological surveillance of the population with help of info-communication technologies, and the mobilization of science for corporate needs, which results in depoliticization of culture, but all have far more dangerous consequences. It creates monopoly over meaning of communication codes, changing surveillance within contemporary biopolitics into a “bioveillance;” in such a situation a population becomes the very conductor of processes that make things objective, as they supposedly “are” in the realm of global capital.

Metaverse

When Marina Grzinic suggests that reality should not be read over fiction, but fiction over reality, then in the context of contemporary glorified influence of technology for “freedom” gaining, we see a clear parallelogram in which capital flexible power (from physical world) is being transformed through info-communication technologies (ICT) in a platform for creating an illusion of involvements in “democratic” processes. This illusion of participation heavily conducted through cyberspace, as a

reversal of what is going on in reality, can be precisely understood through what Grzinić further elaborates as the role of museums in the context of contemporary arts; she suggests a reversal of the standard neoliberal question, “if contemporary art needs museums?,” into “do contemporary museums need art at all?”. (Grzinić, 2005: 110)

It is important to acknowledge the dynamics of overproduction of concepts like “creativity,” “cultural production” and etc., because we don’t only witness to the strategy of (non)positioning of “creative cultural scenes” (for instance in South East Europe) by the ruling class in these regions, but we witness to subtle strategies of imposition of the condition of “interactive passivity,” that reduces the political, and contributes to the overall fragmentation of the social. All what we get, as a result of this process, is the aesthetization of processes of inclusion and exclusion, of on’s and off’s that are deterritorialized by new info-communication technologies.

As an example in the matter I propose Metaverse, coined by Neal Stephenson in his cyber-punk novel *Snow Crash* (1992). Metaverse is a virtual network that shows degrees of development of Internet located within the dystopian vision of USA in the near future. Metaverse that is populated by members of middle and high classes is accessible through public terminals as well to lower classes, but in these cases the social stigma is created because of low resolution of rendered avatars, virtual representations of users in the physical world, etc. In order to position oneself “well” in the social structure of Metaverse, it is needed, as Stephenson writes, to have an access to a privately owned terminal in the world where centralized governmental power is reduced to minimum, while the mega powerful corporations are those that fragment the geopolitical horizon. Although in *Snow Crash* we can as well access online projects like There.com, Second Life or Active Worlds and enter them for free, nevertheless we have to pay in order to become a citizen.

These claims not only ties Metaverse to technological improvements, but ties communicational coding protocols to cyberspace, while bypassing precisely the social reality. Stephenson in his novel sees these protocols as software which is used to control masses. But as we know that masses are not simply passive and not only controlled by some excluded entities, an interesting parallel to Nietzsche’s claim between the primordial “I want,” / “I will do it” and the actual freeing of a will, is possible to be established here (Nietzsche, 1990: 54). A parallel in between passive population, seen as not-able-to-liberate-themselves and active population, seen as not-wanting-to-be-liberated is established here, while we witness the evacuation of reality into cyberspace. Stephenson’s Metaverse is a situation in which actually nothing is going on (similarly to Grzinić’s “museums without art”), but to what lower classes still wants to be actively attached... Why?

As Nietzsche noted, the rebellion of slaves, to whom rights to properly react (by acting) has been denied, starts within a moral horizon with resentment. The “slaves” find compensation only in an imaginary revenge..., in turning of a gaze. This need to look outside instead to inside

is what belongs exactly to the realm of resentment (that needs an external stimulation to act); here action is basically reaction (Nietzsche, 1990: 32). Stephenson's dystopian Metaverse and today's cyberspace are these external worlds that institutionalize resentment; that is a reaction produced by active processes of chaos creation along with the propagation of its suspension.

A counter argument to what I stated above might be that the great majority of the world population does not even have an access to running water; therefore it is superfluous to mention the outcome of new information technologies in these areas. In short, they cannot be included into hi-tech surveillance networks, anyway. But, communicational codes under which surveillance (whether for military or corporation needs – it's hard to distinguish anyway) is seen, presented as something "positive," illustrate precisely the role of new information technologies in the global World.

For instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which only 6-8 % of population has an Internet access, the mass media recently announced that biometric passports and ID cards, that contain an amount of administrative and bio data of the bearer, will start to be issued. Aside the fact that Bosnian citizens need visa for almost every country in the world, which is likely not to be changed after the biometric passport system gets installed, this flagrant announcement of privacy breach – (that will be paid by citizens of course, because tax money goes in support of huge administrative apparatus and imbecile spectacles) –, is by the wide public seen as "modernization." It should speed up integration of the country into Euro-Atlantic institutions! It is exactly such "flexibility" of the population that opens spaces for future exploitations of individual rights. As a result, transitional societies will find themselves in a situation where reality will be excluded in such a measure that lower classes will be literally forced to live in the "underground," finding themselves fighting for those who created the chaos in the first place. This is a possible future scenario, of course, if they will wake up from ethnic based conflicts, and from illusions that they have an independent state, nevertheless upgraded with new information technologies (i.e. biometric passports).

The fantasy of prosperity hides, according to Jodi Dean, the ways facts and opinions, images and reactions, circulate through mass streaming; losing all their specificity, they appear as nothing else but contributions within an eternal processes of content streaming (Dean: 2005, 14-15). This change of messages into contributions is what Dean regards as the basic characteristic of communication in capitalism. However, I might add, that it is not only the conversion of messages into contributions that is the basic characteristic of networks in hyper capitalism, but it is as well the conversion of life itself to a contribution within communication protocols in global society; an issue which makes the stream of content running.

Chaos fragments into extremes the totality of social interactions; it simultaneously institutionalizes exclusion of unwanted resistances and includes Nietzsche's active passivity (slave morality) into reproductions of

power. Therefore, chaos is mobilized for the constant re-affirmation and reproduction of slavery to the machine of hyper capital(ism).

* Text edited by Marina Grzinic in collaboration with Sefik Tatlic.

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Short CV

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