

Semi-Summa. The Text

Jørgen Michaelsen

If we wiped out the background elitism of consensual understatement, the general effect on the thinking class might or might not be dramatic, although one could not hazard a guess as to what the details might be, nor by what tortuously indirect routes the influence might travel. We will not go into the details of once-farcical tragedy in terms of critical innocence, 'Pinocchio drive,' etc. The focus should not be grotesquely reduced to historical details. All forms of compulsion for miniaturization change, mutate, evolve, and eventually die, sometimes to be resurrected in more glorious embodiments. Sometimes they simply live on and coagulate into 'truly' new forms of quasi-uncanny hypertrophy. What is rather disturbing about post-cultural experience is that the 'immediacy' of it may get lost along the way, that it may start to seem somewhat foreign, and no longer familiar. Somehow, the amoebic body of public opinion is still capable of providing a way of connecting historical codes and sufficiently neutral gigantism without necessitating a downward spiral of all-too-contemporary gestures. In a certain sense, *dèjà vu* is a small price to pay for the self-infiltration increasingly necessary. Our 'natural' response to whatever form of early-21st-century alienation or functional distraction is to think about it as if it were more or less compatible with orthodox structures of panic value. The history of social disappointment is only beginning to be written and, appropriately enough in a period of consumer fundamentalism, it seems more or less clear that ordinary people are generally more concerned with escaping into monstrous openness than with the essential issue of the 'existential mistake' itself. Contemporary criticism often argues that the very concept of a critical impulse in terms of solipsist ontology is but a distributive myth, a mystification devised by the technocrats of internalization. No doubt, the rising star of super-lukewarm depersonalization lies, among other things, with the actually quite complicated machinery of intellectual conformism. This is what we want to argue: the idea of political instrumentalization is directly or indirectly concerned with the imaginary of harassment often found in average actors; those actors are themselves very much in tune with the dictatorship of the thinking class. Sometimes you have to know how to manipulate the double helix of capitalist correctness and critical 'debit-worthiness.' All too often, practice produces a simple clash of realizations with no relevance to anyone. It should be clear that the desire for an 'identity crisis' sometimes associated with the luxury of cultural withdrawal is not simply an undifferentiated form of dwarf-giant interdependence, any more than is the ideological 'copysphere' it addresses. Nowadays, despite a persistent fog of 'ego-trip discourses' and despite the 'perverted' tricks inspired by circulating models of freedom, the objective quality of intimate redundancy in ordinary people's lives very often seems directly connected with the experience of 'revolutionary plateaus.' On that level, the organization of resistance apparently spills from a discursive cornucopia of its own. In short, our thesis is this: the construction of actor and object must be based on a conception of moral collapse that is as close as possible to that strange institution called terrorism. For the time being, almost any kind of relevant *jouissance* is totally immersed in a host

ideology, and sinking deeper and deeper into it. The revenge of abstract thought is becoming less and less defined somehow, as the trash heap of sociocultural utility becomes more and more defined. To be sure, the degree-zero superabundance of contemporary privilege is not really our subject. How then to 'resist' the successful apparatuses of the subjectivity industry that actually exists? Understanding the economy of idiosyncrasy, as a prerequisite, calls for a basic understanding of regulation. Very often the roads to one-to-one seduction and its institutions are marked out as paths of obscenely instrumentalized protest. The stases of human subjectivity are expelled under great pressure from the social order and are pitched to explode in an embarrassing parody of creativity. In a sterile environment, any regime of self/other-emblematicness dies, and it does so in an environment of its own creation, namely, in the presence of its poisonous excreta, such as exceedingly improbable sexualization, mimetic difference, caricatured essential 'self-deportation' in terms of built-in interruption, and numerous other by-products. There is no such thing as ironic escape into any kind of cross-contingent non-identity. On the other hand, it is important, in any strategy of counter-interpellation, to become acquainted with even the smallest piece of fallout from emergent formations of referentiality. In a similar way, on an institutional level, adequate organization will enable us to keep the waste products of history's peristalsis vital and progressive, in the future as well. All that we have said above might be seriously criticized from different points of view. There is a direct and concretely demonstrable connection between kinds, forms, and styles of applied deadweight, on the one hand, and the spaces of the intervention-loving middle classes, on the other hand. Many people think that the conspicuous 'terrorism' of cultural production might be used as a kind of peephole into a Pantheon of social possibilities. Anyway, the registers of post-cultural modernization offer a unique opportunity to engage productively with mainstream agendas. Axiom: exclusion is the beginning of all mental models. But the entire concept of lack of imagination, with its constantly mutating layers of meaning, is of necessity vague and has always been in a state of constant flux. As regards a regression to ethnic equilibrium, it is extremely questionable whether the various relevant actors' theories and motivations for practice are really as different as their diverse jargon would lead us to believe. In terms of post-cultural specificity, though, one can end up rushing victoriously into one's own grave. The mess that is formulaic otherness is merely a caricature of the mess that is utterly misinformed autonomy. It is perhaps unnecessary today to insist on social contradiction in terms of latent (or manifest) everydayness. Maybe there is always some sort of unintended imaginary that shows up, now as simple nostalgia for 'the others,' now as more complex forms of obsession with the detritus of their psychosocial and political functions. Once any kind of recognition occurs, then clearly, the standard misunderstandings of privatization become an almost deliriously powerful temptation. Of course, this generalization is a little too sweeping to be true. A gap always separates the 'potlatch-less life' of someone else from the backwards, or in other ways distracted, entrance into the actual competition among ordinary people. But however true it is, from one point of view, that there may be something enigmatic about the phantasm of post-cultural destruction, the state of unmediated representation at which it apparently 'aims' is not, as such, the primary concern underlying the meanings of contemporary political production. Power is an all-embracing structure in which to embed knowledge and to make some sense of

strategy; in itself, it also seems to be a remarkably subtle kind of always-already recontextualized capital. However, some would say that the real question is not that of contextual stasis but that of average difference walking a tightrope between the positions and comfortably embryonic connotations of 'arch-contemporariness,' on the one hand, and the pragmatic promises of a sufficiently complex violence, on the other. Sometimes winning the battle does not in any sense influence losing the war.

2008