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The Narrative Manipulation of Human Subjectivity: A Machinic Exploration of Psyche as Artificial Ready-Made

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The Narrative Manipulation of Human Subjectivity: A Machinic Exploration of Psyche as Artificial Ready-Made

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Résumé

Avec l'accélération de la production narrative au vingt-et-unième siècle, ainsi que les tentatives d'appropriation des moyens de production et des mythes collectifs par le marché, il y a lieu de questionner l'effet des nouveaux mythes sur la psyché humaine. L'ingestion persistante et soutenue de récits infusés de symboles capitalistes produit une mutation de la subjectivité humaine, dans un mouvement vers une certaine homogénéité. Par une relecture de la *Poétique* d'Aristote, la première section de cette thèse propose une vision politique de la *catharsis*, qui théorise le récepteur de toute narration comme programmable et pouvant être guidé vers des attitudes et des postures. Cette conception mène directement à une définition machinique du récit et la notion d'asservissement machinique, qui conçoit la subjectivité humaine comme engagée dans des processus de connectivité où elle perd certains fragments de son unicité. La troisième foulée de cette thèse théorise la société de contrôle de Deleuze et ses héritiers conceptuels, le capitalisme de surveillance et l'ectosubjectivité. Ces deux notions tentent de percevoir le régime de pouvoir du vingt-et-unième siècle, fondé sur les données personnelles et la standardisation de la psyché humaine. Finalement, le quatrième et dernier chapitre de cette recherche se penche sur la notion de vérité telle que décrite par Michel Foucault dans *Le Courage de la Vérité*. Dans la notion Grecque, et particulièrement son développement platonicien, de *parrhēsia*, Foucault identifie l'homogénéité d'une vérité basée sur une hiérarchie éthique, et son renversement par les Cyniques en animalité assumée qui ouvre de nouveaux territoires d'existence et de vérité. En somme, ce renversement nous permet de concevoir ce que serait une existence libre, hors d'un régime de vérité qui désubjective et rend homogène.

Mots-clés : Ectosubjectivité, Société de Contrôle, Persuasion Algorithmique, Asservissement Machinique, Parrhēsia, Agencement Machinique, Identité Numérique, Capitalisme de Surveillance, Catharsis Politique, Production de Subjectivité.

Abstract

With the acceleration of narrative production in the twenty-first century, as well as the attempted appropriation of means of production and collective myths by market economy, there is an increasing need to question the effect of these new myths on the human psyche. The persistent and sustained ingestion of narratives infused with capitalist symbols produces a transformation of subjectivity, which mutates from unicity to increased standardization. Through a rereading of Aristotle's *Poetics*, the first section of this thesis offers a political conception of *catharsis* that theorizes the receiver of narratives as programmable and guidable towards attitudes and postures. This conception leads directly to a machinic definition of the narrative and the concept of machinic enslavement. These concepts conceive of human subjectivity as engaged in processes of networking where it loses fragments of its unicity. The third chapter of this thesis theorizes Deleuze's society of control and its conceptual successors, surveillance capitalism and ectosubjectivity. Both these concepts attempt to theorize the reigning regime of power of the twenty-first century, based on personal data and the standardization of the human psyche. Finally, the fourth and final chapter of this research analyzes the notion of truth as described by Michel Foucault in *The Courage of Truth*. In the Greek notion of *parrhēsia*, and especially in its platonic development, Foucault identifies the homogeneity of a truth system based on a hierarchization of ethics. The reversal of this system by the Cynics into an assumed bestiality is crucial to this thesis as it opens new territories of existence and truth. In sum, the Cynic reversal permits us to conceive of a free existence, outside of a regime of truth that desubjectivates and homogenizes.

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Introduction

In the present, there is no way to know what kind of stories the first humans told, huddled together in the descending obscurity. Were they stories of the unknown forces that populated the dark? Feel-good reminiscences of past seasons or successful hunts? What aim did these stories have? Entertainment, personal relation-building, moral restriction of desire and foolishness, or ritual purposes? With the technologies and research procedures available today, one can only conjecture via archeological finds and their reconstruction with a modern perspective. If a scanner of past human energy would emerge from humanity's technocratic toils, maybe fragments of these primal stories would inform the modern age and forge a new relationship between humanity and the world it inhabits. For the time being, however, the original stories of humankind are concealed in layer upon layer of damp soil and stratified stone.

There is no consensus about what a story is or should be. Does it need to follow a formulaic structure? If so, what exactly are the authorized building blocks that compose a narrative? Structuralist thinkers such as Vladimir Propp, who wrote *Morphology of the Folktale* in 1928, believed in the formulaic structure of the narrative, as his book thoroughly emphasized. Propp's strict formula, highlighted in his erudite analysis of folktales, influenced the subsequent development of structuralism and narratology. On the other hand, if the spectrum of narrativity is opened to other media, such as cave art, tool-making and pottery, then the realm of storytelling opens up to a plurality of forms, media, ideas and gestures. Roland Barthes, in his 1975 article *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*, included in the category 'narrative' "myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, *drame* [suspense drama], comedy, pantomime, paintings […], stained-glass windows, movies, local news, conversation" (237). In other words, in Barthes' conception, everything that is the result of human endeavor and

interaction could be considered a narrative. To go even further, although this argument would exceed the limits of this thesis, the natural world could also be considered as 'narrative', in the beautiful metamorphosis of caterpillars in butterflies, in the slow and tortuous reaching of plants and trees towards the sun, in the telling striation of rock and the fragmentary remains of seas in arid deserts.

The storytelling faculty of humanity is a defining trait of our species because, through the use of tools and technique, humans willfully transform the world to create representations. Many scholars, such as Barthes, Mircea Eliade (1952) and Joseph Campbell (2008), have argued that narratives are integral to what constitutes humanity, that they evolve hand-in-hand with the evolution of humans from their quadrupedal ancestors, as a constitutive element of 'humanity'. Cornelius Castoriadis, quoting André Leroi-Gouran's seminal *Le Geste et la Parole,* even argues that the cerebral structures engaged in symbol creation are the same as those engaged in tool creation (Universalis, *Technique*), suggesting that creativity and representation are essential and intertwined aspects in the evolutionary leap of humanity. These anthropological considerations can lead us towards a questioning of the inherent bond between storytelling and the *technē* of storytelling, as I emphasize in the first chapter of this thesis. In other words, there seems to be a strong connection between symbols and images (representation or *mimesis*) and the conditions of their appearance in a network of inter-influence that frames their coming into presence (*technē*). Throughout this thesis, I explore this notion of inter-influence between representation and humanity, as well as the consequences of constant exposure to representation that is construed as truth.

Often in history books we read that the first written story emerged in Mesopotamia more than five thousand years ago: *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (for example, Bryson, 1996 & Andrews, 1998). On the one hand, the modern bias sometimes forgets that this narrative is the most ancient

discovered written narrative. On the other hand, considering *The Epic of Gilgamesh* as the first

written story is highly problematic because other, older texts have been discovered which,

following Barthes' theory, could also consist of narratives. For example, the Egyptian Pyramid

texts, created for the ritual purpose of passing from the living world towards the death world

(Allen, 2005), precede the *Epic of Gilgamesh* by almost a millennium. Can these ritualistic,

religious texts be considered as narratives? The guiding of a deceased soul from one world to the

next narrativizes the experience of death for the still living. Through this single example

handpicked from a multiplicity of similar texts, the difficulties of identifying the birth of fiction

in Mesopotamia and in general become apparent. The more we learn about the first fiction texts

from Mesopotamia, the more it is understood that they sprung from an act of collection more than

one of composition (George, 2003, Chapter 1). Even though it is often considered as a single,

self-contained unit, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is a collection of oral sources and written poems in the

Sumerian language, translated in Akkadian on tablets known as the 'original' text today. Several

different recovered tablets and versions of the myth of Gilgamesh exist which prove the varied

sources of the story (George, 2003). Thus, the essence of the oldest extant written narrative is the

result of a profound metamorphogenesis of elements such as old legends, religious beliefs,

questions about human nature and existence, cultural contexts and available media of expression.

The written form of the narrative was never a uniform and conventional text distributed in

identical copies all around Mesopotamia. In a similar fashion, the current version of the Christian

Bible is believed to have been crystallized through the passage of time and multiple conventional

modifications (Lenzmann, 1968). As a result, the fixed text read and studied today is but a

fraction of what Christianity consisted of in its first decades, as archeological findings of gnostic

gospels in Egypt further ascertain (Meyer, 2009).

Narrativity, even in the Aristotelian sense of an imitation assembled as a coherent whole, can be found in animal societies and prehistoric humanity: the pointing of a finger that shows a large pawprint on the ground signifying danger to a youngling emerges as an imitation of a received warning from the older individual. This series is the assembling of narrative elements in a coherent whole: pawprint, danger, pointing, fleeing. The snort of a deer upon the sight of a predator alerts the entire herd who, from the passing of knowledge from elders or the experience of a near-death experience, all flee with haste. It is possible to argue that these simple, prehistoric or animal gestures are in certain ways narrative. Similarly, is the story of a successful hunt, passed from generation to generation, a narrative or a historical fact? Where should the line be drawn? As another example, paleolithic handprints in caves are more than simple drawings. They are the inscription of a presence. Not only the echo of a technicity in paint, but also of the presence of a human, wanting to inscribe his or her experience in space and time.

It is my desire to argue that all human gestures are narrative, but a work of theory such as this thesis cannot comprehend the entirety of human expression. As an entry point into the study of narratives, I begin my research with a study of Aristotle's seminal elaboration of narrative theory in his *Poetics*, in order to springboard towards further study of twenty-first century narratives[1]. There was a drastic shift in narrative development after the twentieth century, which saw the apparition of new forms of art, based on naught but the free expression of human psyche and a total freedom. Surrealism, Dadaism, Cubism all had in common the will to break down the rules

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[1] Of course, Aristotle does not use the words 'narrative theory', but I would argue that his *Poetics* is the earliest extant work that attempts to theorize the production of literary texts and frame this production in a somewhat structuralist framework.

and create anew. This fracture in representational art fragmented the very notion of narrativity and representation. The marketable and democratized art of Marcel Duchamp or the proto-marketing of Salvador Dali, among other examples, can be considered as forms of *technē* in accord with the new logic of the capitalist market: the everyday object and the cult of the personality imbued with almost sacralized importance. In the decades that separate us from Duchamp and Dali, news broadcasts, mass-mediation and advertisement have appropriated a portion of the space of narrativity, producing a new set of rules that attempt to bound artistic and narrative creation. Today, a Picasso is sold for Millions of dollars and artists become television personalities while poets struggle to find an audience and philosophers are forced to become historians.

Most of the hypotheses and ideas I have outlined so far will be put to the test in the present work through a minute discussion of what a narrative is, and the elements that condition its materialization in the world. My objective in this thesis is to propose a new definition of narratives as complex machines that are used in the twenty-first century as a prime apparatus of power over human existence. This theorization surfaces from an in-depth study of Aristotelian narrative theory, post-marxist machinic philosophy, post-structuralist definitions of power and finally truth as a multivalent yet dominating regime of power.

In Chapter 1 I analyze the Greek concepts of *poiesis* and *technē* as they relate to the narrative theorization of Aristotle in his *Poetics*. It is striking that Aristotle developed a conception of *mimesis* that echoes the composite nature of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. My reading of Aristotle evinces the concept of narratives as the assemblage of multiple textual and non-textual components, such as is transparent in the extant forms of the Sumerian epic and Homeric texts. My reading of Aristotle's *Poetics* brings a modern lens to an ancient text to extract the idea that it is not necessarily comedy, tragedy or the epic that the philosopher writes about, but rather *poiesis*

and *technē*. In my view, the art of *mimesis* is based on these two founding concepts: *poiesis* as the source of production and the finished product itself, and *technē* as the organized corpus of technical knowledge that permits the emergence of the *poietic* product. On a macroscopic scale, this thesis is not concerned with narrative theory as an analysis of the forms of narration and their constitutive components. Rather, it is concerned with narratives as a single medium in a cacophony of mediation that network with human existence: economy, social relations, geography, cultural and religious context, etc. This conception of the networked medium speaks directly to Harold Innis' theory of communication as a cross-pollination of everything that constitutes the world. His discussion of mediation in Mesopotamia and Egypt is a lucid and innovative conception of media as the networking of human and non-human elements in a given environment. This chapter will provide me with a conceptual framework: the definition of narratives as an assemblage of components in networking. This framework will serve to build towards the machinic exploration of Chapter 2 and the subsequent notion of narrative power over human subjectivity.

In Chapter 2 I move from Ancient Greece to (post)modernity to bring my theory of narrative media in the realm of post-marxist machinic philosophy. Through a study of Karl Marx's and Félix Guattari's writings on machines and machinic assemblages, I theorize narratives as machines in a whole environment of control that aims at subjecting human existence to dominant discourse, ideology and consumerism. The concept of environment of control leads directly to Chapter 3 and its discussion of power and control through the writings of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. While Marx, in his *Grundrisse*, already theorized machines as exercising power over human laborers, Guattari's notion of machinic assemblage goes one step further in theorizing humans as belonging to the same plane of existence as objects, signs and nature. For the French philosopher, humans are engaged in relational networks with a multiplicity

of other machines (symbols, natural objects, cultural traits, pre-verbal affects and percepts, etc.) in machinic assemblages that are connectable environments. This democratization of the place of humans in the world leads to the concept of machinic enslavement, hinted at by Guattari and Deleuze but thoroughly developed by Italian philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato. Indeed, if humans are not overlords imposing their wills on everything non-human, then they are vulnerable to the pressure of the other machines in their environments. Machinic enslavement theorizes the desubjectivation of human individuals through the replacement of their pre-subjective strata by ready-made artifacts. Affects, percepts, desires and other such pre-verbal intensities are the *locus* of the exercise of capitalist power through their serialization via mass-mediation. In this conception, humans are subjected to mass-mediation daily, in an overcoding of their pre-subjective strata that, according to Lazzarato, leaves them in the pseudo-sleep of consumerist zombies (Lazzarato, 2014, 89). But there are still ways to resist to this desubjectivation, as Chapter 4 emphasizes. Lines of flight zip away from the power-imbued constructs of mass-mediation and capitalism, namely through the valorization of alternative ways of life and the reversal of the logocentrism of mass-mediation towards a life based on natural cycles and the natural strata of human subjectivity.

The machinic theorizations of Marx and Guattari lead directly to Chapter 3 and its study of forms of power, namely discipline and control, and how they attempt to codify daily human existence. The shift of regimes of governmentality from discipline and its enclosed systems (prison, church, army, school) towards control and its opening of the boundaries of power was theorized by Gilles Deleuze in his essay *Postscript on Societies of Control* and his book *Foucault*. His concept of societies of control is the guiding thread of Chapter 3, because it theorizes how the explosion of the boundaries of power introduces the ubiquitous modulation of human subjectivity through the flowing and manipulable circulation of information. In the

context of the increasingly ubiquitous regime of algorithmic manipulation of human subjectivity, namely through targeted advertisements and personal data mining, the object of control becomes to produce approved iterations of human beings that fit the dominant postures, ideologies and discourse. A careful study of an advertisement campaign for 6/49 lottery provides an exemplification of how control permeates the fabric of daily life through the circulation of information, in this case through a narrative/advertisement. In the final section of Chapter 3 I explore new ideas in governmentality, namely the concepts of surveillance capitalism and ectosubjectivity. The former theorizes the commodification of human personal data towards private and public profit-making and surveillance. The latter, on a microcosmic scale, theorizes the excavation of human subjectivities by algorithms and data mining towards the implantation of ready-made postures, ideas and affects. Both these concepts attempt to theorize the contemporary practice of personal data mining and the production of ready-made subjects. They open the door to further research on algorithmic governmentality, the excavation and management of personal data, as well as the willful transformation of human individuals into serialized ready-mades.

Chapter 4 operates a radical break in this thesis. It consists in a point of rupture where it becomes apparent that the only options for humans are either the pseudo-sleep of dominant discourse in the form of truth, or its reversal in chaotic appropriation of the self. Whereas the first three chapters of the thesis discuss how narratives are assemblages engaged in machinic environments of imposed power, Chapter 4 offers lines of flight from these regimes of dominance. If this thesis discusses a problem, Chapter 4 provides the first elements of an answer.

Through a lengthy discussion of the concept of Greek *parrhēsia* (the practice of truth-telling) from Michel Foucault's last lecture at Collège de France, I provide two conceptions of truth. The former is in stride with platonic hierarchization of truth and *logos*. It is embodied in Socrates' veridiction based on ethical differentiation and proposes a model of the perfect *ethos* to

be followed in order for a life to be deemed true. The second conception of truth is embodied in the Cynic philosophers' reversal of logocentrism towards a life stripped to its bare essentials. This quasi-animality is a reversal of the impermanence of ethical and moral edicts versus the immutability of the natural essence of humanity. The Cynic appropriation of the natural essence of humanity is the key to a resistance to mass-mediated homogeneization. It offers a line of escape from the re-production of mediated postures, ideologies and affects. A case study of two characters from fiction serves as exemplification of the grimace reversal of ethical and logocentric life: Joker from the Batman universe and the prince from Dostoevsky's novel *Humiliated and Offensed.* Both characters embody a truth that negates ethics and *logos*. As such, they open new territories of unconcealment of truths which do not fit the mold but still have transformative power over the world. The powerful truth-telling of these characters are integral to building new territories of being. As a final point, this chapter ends on a discussion of Carl Gustav Jung's concepts of shadow and *enantiodromia* to pinpoint the *locus* of the reversal of truth in the darkest confines of human psyche. What becomes apparent is that logocentrism attempts to repress instincts, drives and primal emotions in profit of the vague concepts of reason and progress, producing the unfathomable result of the conversion of these repressed strata in new worlds of truth that emerge and shift the equilibrium of power and dominant discourse.

In summary, in this thesis I propose a new definition of narratives as machines engaged in networks with a plurality of other machines and machinic environments. Through a reading of Aristotle's *Poetics* and Marxist machinic theory, I formulate the argument that narratives can be used as an instrument of power over human subjectivity. The second half of this thesis questions the consequences of this imposed power and the lines of escape from mediated homogenization. A negation of logocentrism and a return to the natural essence of humanity is finally provided as

a hypothesis to build new territories in chaos, randomness and the instinctual kinship of humans and nature.

Before moving to Chapter 1 and my conceptualization of the narrative as a moving network, an operational definition of the machine must be attempted so as to frame the subsequent development of 'narratives as machines'. This introductory definition of machines is integral to this thesis as it frames narratives in the phylum of the machinic theorization from Chapter 2. In this definition, the narrative is conceived as engaged in a network of processual relationships with a multiplicity of other machinic networks; the concept of machine is here used as an imaged metaphor to bring to mind the universally connectable nature everything that constitutes the world: humans, nature, artifacts and, of course, narratives.

Here is my introductory definition of the machine: The machine is more than a mechanistic apparatus. It is processual, meaning that machines are networked with other machines, and this relational connection is productive (of meaning, of value, of mutation of the whole network or a single machine, etc.). There are organic machines, social machines, economic, semiotic, ideological machines. What is more, the environment of a given machine is more machines (Guattari, 1995); what surrounds a machine is more machines, such as the individual in a city is surrounded by his dwelling, his neighborhood, the city itself, etc. All these machines are engaged in networking on many scales: macrocosmic and microcosmic, spatial and temporal, contextual and universal. The consequence of universal networking is that the constant input-output connections are always producing new meaning, new subjects, new social semiotics or hierarchies. In other words, new mediations constantly alter the liminal machine of its network, producing a ripple effect of macro- and microcosmic scales.

This definition brings forth the image of a dark, Matrix-like machine-world, but this could not be further from my conceptualization. A tree, with all the vegetal elements that constitute its

treeness, can be understood as a machine because, for example, it mediates the life of a multiplicity of insects and animals, offers shade to a sunburnt human, and removes CO_2 from the atmosphere. Thus, it is networked in a machinic environment with the insects and animals, with the sunburnt human, with the sun and the moon and time and growth. Machines are not strictly mechanistic, they are everywhere and everything. In this vision, the natural world is a machinic environment where a multiplicity of connections is produced essentially, exactly like a city or deep space.

Another crucial aspect of my definition of the machine and its machinic environment is its redistribution of all that composes the world on the same ontological plane of immanence. Humans, animals, objects, artifacts, computer networks and nebulae are all machines engaged in processes of survival, meaning-production and/or movement, in networks of self-creation and destruction. In this conceptualization, Socratic ethics and Descartes' *cogito* lose their prevalence as the touchstone of human domination of the non-human world in profit of a redistribution of power to all categories of 'being'. Thus, narratives are just one more machine engaged in processual networks with other machines in endless redistribution. As Chapter 4 emphasizes, the introduction of chaos in machinic environments can be considered as a means of escape from dominant networking. It offers a potential to individually and collectively produce new territories of existence or, to use another vocabulary, new machinic environments.

In stride with my initial definition of machine, my argument in this thesis is that the forceful manipulation of narrative machines has altered the relationship of humans within their machinic environments by introducing artificial connections which redistribute power in worrying ways. Chapter 3 delves into this subject in depth, namely through the concepts of control, surveillance capitalism and ectosubjectivity.

The definition of machines given above is operational, yet incomplete. What is more, it is merely a metaphorical methodology that is limited in argumentative scope. Here, the machine is used as a metaphor to illustrate the inherent universally connectable nature of everything that constitutes the world. Harold Innis, as Chapter 1 discusses, argued along the same line without ever using the word 'machine'. Rather, he spoke of mediation, which is also a concept associated with networking and relationality. As the introduction of the section on machinic theory from Chapter 2 argues, multiple machinic conceptualizations have been theorized which all conceive of machines differently in relation with humans and the world. All these theories have strengths and limits. However, I have chosen to use and update Félix Guattari's concept of machinic assemblage because its strengths forcibly outweigh its limits. The essence of Guattari's idea is that everything is connected on an ontological level, an idea which speaks directly to the advances in relational thinking in the twenty-first century: about human minorities but also about the natural world, oceans, animals, plants and trees, insects, etc. To conceive of everything that populates the world as ontologically linked is a powerful statement that can bring forth social and political change. The first three chapters in this thesis argue that power has infused the ontological link between individuals and their environment, but there is definitely hope for new definitions of self and other in the reversal of *logos* analyzed in Chapter 4.

The use of this limited and preliminary definition of my machinic concept is to provide a framework in which to understand my vision of narratives developed in Chapter 1. My appropriation of the Aristotelian concepts of *mimesis* and *catharsis*, as well as my emphasis on *poiesis* and *technē* regarding narrative production will benefit from at least an introductory definition of machinic assemblages.

In Chapter 1, I delve into Aristotle's *Poetics*, in order to extract a definition of narratives that encompasses the machinic development to come in Chapter 2. Through a conceptualization

of *mimesis* as the result of the intertwined dual process of *poiesis* and *technē,* a new idea of

narrativity emerges which integrates the definition of machines provided above. As a second

point, my modernization of the concept of *catharsis* as "imagined reception" leads directly to

interface theory and the communication theories of Canadian scholar Harold Innis. This

theoretical framework finds its footing in Chapter 2, where it coalesces with machinic theory and

the potential domination of human subjectivity brought forth by the increasing artificiality of

machinic environments.

Chapter 1 - Aristotle's Poetics: *Poiesis*, *Technē*, *Catharsis* and Mediation

While the introduction to this thesis broadly defined the machinic regime that frames my definition of narratives, Chapter 1 theorizes narratives as *poietic* configurations aimed at producing effects on and alteration of the behavior and ideology of human receivers. The effect of reception is at the core of this thesis' analysis of the codification of daily life by narratives, because it emphasizes the willful design of this effect by the creator. *Catharsis*, as this chapter argues, has a much larger spectrum of action than the purgation of powerful emotions through *mimesis*. It is dependent upon the type of narrative that produces it, and can be reframed as the emotional response that produces an alteration in a receiver's inner disposition.

This chapter attempts to answer the following questions: What is a narrative? How do narratives engage with receivers to produce effects and alter their inner disposition? What is revealed by the imposition of a preconceived effect through narration? How is a certain configuration of space and time revealed through a narrative, and what is its effect on human becoming?

This chapter is divided in two major theoretical stages. First, a reading of Aristotle's *Poetics* offers an initial definition of narratives as configurations of multiple narrative fragments that produce effects on receivers. The concept of *catharsis* is vital in my theorization of the production of narratives as intertwined with the planification of an effect within the receivers. Second, this operational definition of the narrative extracted from Aristotle leads towards an inquiry into the concept of mediation through the works of Canadian scholar Harold Innis. Innis argued that media are engaged in processual networks of creation, meaning, production of individual and collective subjectivities, technological development, social evolution, etc. As such, narratives are considered as media within a tangled web of media, a definition that echoes

closely that of Guattari's machines. Innis' vision also echoes the conceptions of Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin. According to these thinkers, the function of art has shifted drastically since the industrial revolution, becoming more and more intertwined with the power processes of capital. This conception of the era of mass culture leads to my proposition of a composite definition of twenty-first century narratives, one that takes into account the acceleration and ubiquity of narrativity, as well as the networking of narratives with daily life, consumption and all aspects of human *habitus* (Bourdieu 1980). This definition, in turn, leads to the development of a machinic analysis of narrativity in Chapter 2.

Although attempting a chronology of narrativity is far removed from the object of this thesis, beginning a study of narrativity with Aristotle's *Poetics* seems somewhat arbitrary. As I have argued in my introduction, no one knows what the first narratives were like. The journey could start with what is often considered the first written narrative, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, or again with the six thousand years old Egyptian Pyramid texts. What constituted a narrative for humanity's ancestors? These questions are valid, as no true beginning to narrativity can be identified. As I have mentioned earlier, philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis argued, in the Universalis Encyclopedia article concerned with technique, that the human mental structures concerned with tool-making are the same than those concerned with symbol-making (Castoriadis, 2011). As such, storytelling and narrativity could be ontologically linked to the technical mastery of the world.

However, this thesis is not directly concerned with the inherent symbol-making potential of humans, nor the crucial passage of orality towards writing, two fascinating subjects, but rather by the effect of narrative production on individuals. As such, Aristotle's *Poetics* offers the first recognized piece of narrative analysis where notions of reception are (albeit indirectly) considered (Coste, 2017). In that regard, it is a touchstone of subsequent usage studies and affect

theory, and equips this thesis with useful tools towards studying the effects of twenty-first

century narratives on individual receivers. It must be noted that this chapter builds upon

Aristotle's concepts regarding the construction of narratives through a hermeneutical leap that

modernizes some of the philosopher's ideas. This study of the *Poetics* is a modernized reading of

its core concepts rather than a faithful reiteration. In occurrences where Aristotelian thought is

interpreted or modernized, a note or indication is often provided.

1.1.   Configuration and Modulation: Aristotle's *Poetics*

Aristotle's conception of the narrative is inscribed in its historical context; accordingly,

his theory could be expanded and modernized to encompass the ubiquitous nature of twenty-first

century narratives. For millennia, scholars and artists have reflected upon this text. The Islamic

philosopher Averroes, for example, expanded upon the *Poetics* by adding a moral dimension to

comedy and tragedy, an interpretation which was then accepted by the West and framed the

development of tragedy in the 16th Century (Kennedy & Norton, 1999, 54). Artists either applied

the rules from the *Poetics*, for example filmmaker Andrei Tarkovski in *Stalker*, or disputed them,

for example Victor Hugo in *Cromwell*. Nevertheless, it is evident that the *Poetics* have had a

tremendous influence on the development of narrativity in the West. Still today, it has relevance

as an evolving object of study. For this thesis, the most crucial element from Aristotle's text,

relating to my conception of narratives as machines, is the relation of *mimesis*, or representation,

in relation to the assemblage of plot, or *muthos,* as a construction that codifies the act of

reception. I conceive of *mimesis* as the externalization of an internalized world: every singular

mimesis is a node along a machinic phylum that precedes it, that will influence the nodes that

come after. This processual definition of *mimesis* echoes the overarching notion of *poiesis*, as I

discuss in the next subsection.

A methodological issue arises: by using Aristotle's theory of poetics as a starting point, does this thesis intend to study narratives or the theory of narratives? Aristotle's unfinished *Poetics* is a theoretical book, trying to circumscribe and fixate the aesthetics of the poetic genre. It is descriptive, but also programmatic: it intended to teach, or at least indicate, the proper way to create artworks such as tragedy, comedy and epics. This was in part because Aristotle acknowledged a weakening of purity in artforms in his own epoch (Heath, 1996, viii). Aristotle even argued that elements of the program he theorized could be applied as much to poetry as to painting or music (Heath, 1996, xii-xiv). Malcolm Heath, in his introduction to the *Poetics*, even stresses that for Aristotle the medium of imitation (versified language, music, paint) is subaltern to the imitation itself. Thus, what Aristotle seems to theorize is less the elements consisting in good poetry than tracing steps towards a poetics of *making*. As such, the distinction between a study of narrativity or a study of the theory of narrativity becomes useless as both are results of a process of becoming that precedes both the narrative and the theorizing.

Indeed, from this opening of the *Poetics* to other forms of art and also mimicry of animal noises and children's play-acting (Heath, 1996, xiii; Aristotle, 1996, 6-7), I derive an opening in the overall significance of the program Aristotle put forth. I argue that the study of tragedy, comedy and the epic conducted by Aristotle has not only the objective of creating an artistic framework but also, and more importantly, that of questioning the very processes by which a 'pure' artwork emerges. Thus, it follows my argument that it is *technē* and *poiesis* that are questioned here, and not poetry. It can be suggested that the three genres of versification analysed by Aristotle are but case studies of a more profound and philosophical concern with the conditions of coming-into-presence of art. Through this reframing of the *Poetics* as the elaboration of a larger philosophical concern with *technē* and *poiesis,* narrativity is redistributed from static formula towards dynamic process of making, inscribed in a technological and

philosophical phylum that continues its fluid metamorphosis to the very text you are reading at this moment. The following section further develops the notion of the *Poetics* as questioning *technē* and *poiesis*.

1.1.1. *Poiesis* and *Technē*

The concepts of *poiesis* and *technē* can be thought of as lenses through which to consider the program of the *Poetics* (Schafer, 1968, 135), as analytic tools to open the purview of Aristotle's theory to new horizons, towards a machinic conceptualization of the narrative. What are *poiesis* and *technē*, how are they similar and different, and how do they relate to narrativity? Like many Greek concepts, the translation of *poiesis* and *technē* towards other languages and other epochs can produce gaps in interpretation (Heidegger, 2017, 149). The ancient Greek concept of *poiesis* is often translated as 'producing', 'making', 'creating' and, more problematically, 'poem' and 'poetry' (Heikkila, 2008, 210) as well as 'production of works of art' (Universalis, *Poièsis*). On the other hand, the original Greek meaning of *technē* is veiled by the significative maelstrom imposed upon the modern use of words such as technique and technology. This saturation of meaning reterritorialized how *technē* is conceived in modernity, pushing it towards the semiotic regimes of machinery, skills to be learned and applied, apprenticeship, continuous learning, etc. What did *poiesis* and *technē* mean for Ancient Greeks? Why do I consider the *Poetics* as a study in *poiesis* and *technē* rather than a program for writing good poetry?

First, in the *Symposium*, Plato defines *poiesis* as the cause (*aitia, aition*) from which things that are not in-themselves, unlike living beings or natural objects, are brought into being (2004, 205b). Here, *poiesis* is the cause that springs production into action. As Fabien Vallos points out, the Greek verb *poien* signifies an externalization, a bringing-outside, a displacement

of worldly elements (2014). Thus, I conceive of Platonician *poiesis* as the internal cause or disposition of the producer that is expressed in the final product of the thing brought-forth into the world[2]. Here, *poiesis* means both the product in its initial potential as cause within the creator, as well as the product in its externalization towards materiality or presence in the material world. In this conceptualization of Plato's thought, *poiesis* is both the source of production (disposition) and the final product (Heikkila, 2008, 211).

In *The Nicomadean Ethics*, Aristotle defines *poiesis* as the disposition to make, accompanied by rules (1140a, 8-16). He argues that "every art is concerned with bringing something into being, *i.e.* with contriving or calculating how to bring into being some one of those things that can either be or not be, and the cause of whose production lies in the producer, not in the thing itself which is produced" (1906, 195). The disposition of producing, what Plato and Aristotle call the cause, is outside of the product itself, and informed by knowledge and skills that are part of *technē* (Giroux, 2000). *Poiesis* is identified by Aristotle as belonging within the creator rather than being a characteristic of the thing to be produced. It is an externalization of something that stirs within the artist that produces a new thing, or, as Fabien Vallos argues in his article *Oikonomia et Poièsis*, a redistribution of the elements of the creator's inner world into a new production, a new order (2014). In a way, *poiesis* questions presence in the world: of the

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[2] One must not be led astray by Plato's dismissal of art as a copy third-removed from the original Form or *eidos*. The *Symposium* does not directly discuss art in relation to *poiesis*, but does so as a metaphor for discussing Love and Beauty. *Poiesis* is not here considered by Plato as an artistic process, but rather as a process of production of things that are not in themselves (children, glory, Beauty, etc.) Thus, it is not discarded by Plato, unlike the majority of artistic *mimesis*.

producer, of the world as the producer envisions it and redistributes its elements, and finally as the world offers conditions of possibility towards a redistribution, concealing things to human perception and unconcealing others.

Plato's and Aristotle's notions of *cause* speaks not only of the final product in itself, but also of the initiation of the movement of making. The disposition of the artist, the thoughtful planning, 'calculating' and producing of, for example, an architectural work can be summed up in the preparation towards bringing something into being that was not in itself. In other words, *poiesis,* as I conceive of it, is both the potential as well as the design and production of a thing, its coming-into-being through this dual process of designing and producing. *Poiesis* is both the blueprint and the final product[3]. Going even further, Fabien Vallos, in his previously cited article *Oikonomia et Poièsis*, argues that art is a technical narrowing of the continuum of life (2014), something like an enframing of the spark of life into the bordered production of a work of art. That narrowing of experience into a work is a technical reconstruction, thus linking the concepts of *poiesis* and *technē* on an ontological level[4]. For the sake of exemplification, *poiesis* can be considered as a linear process in three steps: underlying potential, designing of the work, production. All three steps are guided by *technē*: the conditions of possibility of *poien* as the externalization of a world.

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[3] Martin Heidegger's concept of *der Riss* and its development into *Grundriss* in *The Origin of the Work of Art* (2008) speaks to a similar duality in production of art works.

[4] For further reading on the technical reconstruction of the real in a work of art, see the brilliant Thesis by Émile Mercille-Brunelle, entitled *Mémoire du temps vécu et poétique du temps sculpté dans La supplication de Svetlana Alexievitch* (2021).

In Ancient Greek philosophy, *technē* is a concept that intermingles theory and practice (*Epistemē and technē*, Stanford, 2020). It can be translated as craft or art, meaning specific skills that bring about, but is not limited to, material production. The concept of *technē* has a traceable evolution in Greek thought from production (including tools and weapons) towards efficient creation and finally the Stoician *hexis hodopoiètiké,* as the *technē* of existence (Castoriadis, 2011).

Technē is intertwined with *epistemē* in Greek philosophy because it concerns both a technical endeavor (the skillful act of material production or clever legislation in ruling a city) as well as the theoretical knowledge necessary to understand the physical laws of, for example, sculpture, carpentry or lawmaking. Some Greek writers, such as Xenophon, do not distinguish between *technē* and *epistemē,* having Socrates use both words interchangeably. However, from Plato onwards, and especially in Aristotle's work, *technē* and *epistemē*, although interconnected, belong to different realms.

In Plato's dialogues *epistemē* and *technē* are sometimes intertwined, sometimes differentiated. Their differentiation is most evident in the concept of knowledge of Forms (*eidos*) that is remote from the physical world and thus, evidently, far removed from craftsmanship and material production. In the theory of Forms *epistemē* is the knowledge of pure Forms, and thus is not engaged in any technical or craft-based execution. Whereas the realm of Forms is stable and not subject to change (*Symposium*, 211a-b), *technē* is often inscribed in a process of material coming-forth. Influenced as it is by evolving knowledge and the changing worldview and artistic perspective of creators, *technē* breaks from Forms to take concrete materiality. A vivid example of the link between *epistemē* and *technē* is in the example of the Demiurge creating the cosmos (*Timaeus*, 2000, 30c-d). In this passage, the Demiurge contemplates what does not change and creates the universe from this paradigm. The "unchanging paradigm is the intelligible animal that

contains all other intelligible animals" (Parry, 2020). Thus, the knowledge of the unchanging world of Forms permits the purest type of *technē*: the imitation of *eidos* in the material world. Knowledge, or *epistemē*, "is the ability to know the real as it is" (*Republic* V, 477b, in Parry, 2020) and *technē* relates to the configuration of the real in a material production. In summary, in Plato's work *technē* operates as a mediator of sorts between the immovable world of Ideas and the changing representations of the material world.

Aristotle's notion of *technē* emphasizes a notion that already appeared in Plato's work: the end, or function (*ergon*) of *technē*. In Aristotle's writings, *technē* relates to the disposition to make (*poiesis*), opposed directly to the disposition to do (*praxis*). As such, *technē* produces something that would not be in-itself (1140a1–20), whereas *praxis'* end is in itself and not externalized in poietic materiality. The end of *technē* resides in the thing produced, such as a work of art, equipment or tools, etc.

One aspect of Aristotle's theorization of *technē* that echoes with the present work is his mention of "the ability to form opinion (*doxa*) with respect to what is contingent" (1140a1– 1140b30, in Parry, 2020). The practical knowledge of the abstract real hinted at by Plato's Demiurge example is expressed here with anchors within reality. *Technē* can produce "opinions [that] are the basis for production" (Parry, 2020). Opinions are in direct opposition with the immutable world of Forms: they are changing, controllable, subject to external pressures and internal dispositions. Thus, *technē* is in constant motion towards new forms of expression. It consists on the one hand in the practical application of theoretical knowledge, and on the other in the transformation of this knowledge into a materialization in the conditions of possibility of an internalized world.

The process of *poiesis*, meaning both the initial movement of creation and the result of this movement in its finality, relates to *technē* in more than one way. Jean-Luc Nancy, a twentieth

century French philosopher and theoretician, considered *technē* as an essential component of what makes humanity, rather than the mere external instrumentalization of a goal (1999, 2). What that means is that *technē* can be understood as the ontological human potential of bringing-forth *poiesis*. A crucial element of Nancy's idea is that the actualization of this potential can be coerced to fit a certain mold or naturally mutate through external pressure (*doxa*, emergent technical knowledge, political environment). As the next chapters emphasize, there are external pressures upon *poiesis* and *technē,* especially in the digital realm, which attempt to frame the contents of poietic emergence. Whereas *poiesis* is the material movement of externalization (Vallos, 2014), *technē* is human virtuality guiding this movement to its conclusion in, for example, the work of art (Heikkila, 2008, 210). The ontological connection between *poiesis* and *technē* is found in the interplay between the thing produced as being (*poiesis*) and its essential createdness (*technē*). Its existence is determined by the conditions of presence inscribed within it.

In summary, in my reading of the concepts of *poiesis* and *technē* in Plato and Aristotle, the cause of the production of art and the final product consist of *poiesis*, but the skills, the artistic phylum, the knowledge integrated into the process of production amount to *technē*, the blossoming, underlying part of production that is separate from *poiesis*. The world opened by the work of art is opened by *poiesis*, but the world that offers the open space is *technē*. In other words, *poiesis* is always conditioned by *technē* (Giroux, 2000), it depends upon an internalized world that emerges (*poien*) in a material expression.

1.1.2. Mimesis and Muthos

This definition of *poiesis* and *technē* directly relates to two of the major concepts from Aristotle's *Poetics*. The first element of Aristotle's study of poetry is his insistence that all poetry is imitation. In stride with this notion, Malcolm Heath, in his introduction to the *Poetics*, argues

that the media of poetry are subservient means to the end of imitation[5]. The concept of *mimesis* is inscribed in a complex philosophical phylum in Ancient Greece, and as such should not be taken independently of, say, Plato's theories. What is more, Aristotle's theorization from the *Poetics* derives from his ideas on the birth of tragedy. A complete discussion of the filiation of Aristotle's definition of *mimesis* is not the subject of this work, and many scholars have already discussed the subject (Halliwell, 1990; Combe, 2015; Fabris, 2017). However, a few elements from Plato's theory, studied comparatively with Aristotle's development, can highlight the latter's original ideas on artistic creation.

Aristotle's definition of *mimesis* broke away in part from Plato's initial conceptualization in books III and X of the *Republic*[6]. In these works, Plato argued that art was an imitation third removed from the world of Forms, thus impure and disfigured. Plato's definition is static: copies are third removed objects that lack the ideal essence of Forms. Aristotle's theory of *mimesis* is dynamic and inscribed in the continuous transformation of the receiver. Paul Ricoeur, in *Time and Narrative*, argued that Aristotelian *mimesis* is a process ("opération") rather than a structure (1983, 69). This processual definition of *mimesis,* in my opinion, opens up the concept to networking with receivers and engagement with the world. Indeed, Aristotle's concept of *mimesis* conceives of representation as the arrangement of multiple narrative and formal elements, what I

[5] As does Giroux, 2000.

[6] There is much scholarly debate regarding the translation of *mimesis* into imitation (Heath, 1996) versus representation (Dupont-Roc & Lallot, 1980; Marchand, 1988, 214). Dupont-Roc and Lallot make the best argument, according to Paul Ricoeur (1983), claiming that representation is more adequate to encompass the dynamic configuration of mimesis.

call a configuration of nodes, engaged in networking between the conditions of possibility that spark *poiesis* and the technical externalization of this world in the work of art.

My vision of *poiesis* as the externalization of an internalized world can be theorized in parallel with Aristotle's concept of *mimesis* developed in his *Poetics*. Aristotle identifies three elements to mimesis: medium, object and mode (1996, 3). These mimetic elements are the building blocks of mimetic differentiation. The *medium* is the condition of possibility of a certain mediatic environment. This environment conditions the emergence of *poiesis* and, in stride with my conception of *mimesis* as externalization, dependent on the mediatic resources internalized by the creators. The *mode* of mimesis relates to the *how* of discourse within the chosen media, meaning how *mimesis* is conveyed to its audience: narration style, performance style, etc. The mode of *mimesis* is conditioned by the mode of reception, and it also emphasizes particular internalized forms of discourse and the fluidity of expression[7].

Finally, the third and final way in which mimesis differentiates itself is in its *object*. Mimetic objects, according to Aristotle, are agents who "must be better people than we are, or worse, or of the same sort" (1996, 5). Here, 'we' can refer directly to an internalized world, to a certain value imposed upon human actions and how their mimetic counterpart relates to a pre-existing ethical or moral grid. The definition of the mimetic object changes somewhat when Aristotle starts discussing tragedy: "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses magnitude" (1996, 10). Here the notion of agents is abandoned for a *mimesis* of action, but again a value scale is imposed upon what constitutes a proper *mimesis*. If I

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[7] This can be further witnessed in Aristotle's explanation of the absence of name for some particular forms of textual discourse in the section dedicated to mode (6).

extrapolate Aristotle's conception of mimetic media, modes and objects, it can be argued that the internalization of what makes a good human (heroism, wisdom, virtue, political acumen, etc.) or a good action (protecting the nation, saving a city and its citizens, ruling well or courageous confronting of power, etc.) through cultural or ideological education is externalized in the creative action of *poiesis*. In other words, Aristotle's *mimesis* is a contextual representation that is networked with its imagined receivers.

Another crucial aspect of Aristotle's concept of *mimesis* is that it can produce something that never existed, it has a productive quality that is highly different from Plato's conception. Whereas Plato's *mimesis* was a mere copy, in the *Poetics* Aristotle claims that *mimesis* is not "what has happened, but […] the kind of thing that would happen, i.e. what is possible in accordance with probability or necessity" (1996, 16). Thus, the poet internalizes a world (cultural referents, moral scale, media, symbols) that then emerges in the creative act of *poiesis*, guided by the know-how of *technē*. What exactly conditions the 'probability or necessity' mentioned by Aristotle? Is the probability and necessity of *mimesis* the same in Ancient Greece and in Twenty-First Century Canada? This reflection opens the scope of Aristotle's mimetic theory to the idea of externalization of an internalized world and, in other words, to the unique quality and value of all *poiesis*. In stride with this idea, Aristotelian *mimesis* is not a copy, it is the production of something new, something not in-itself, that emerges from the externalization of the creator's inner world.

To further that reflection, the concept of *muthos*, or plot, can emphasize how *mimesis* is understood as a process of networking between an internal world and its externalization in an environment of reception. Aristotle defines *muthos* as "the organization of events" (11) and "the source and […] the soul of tragedy" (12). *Muthos* only concerns the organization of a narrative sequence. A painting or a sculpture do not showcase *muthos*, at least not in the way Aristotle

defines it. In other words, it is the structural way in which the events are organized within narrative *mimesis*. Dupont-Roc and Lallot define *mimesis* as « l'abstraction de la 'forme propre' et sa restitution dans l'œuvre produite » (1980, 158) or the abstraction of the 'proper form' (of events, people or myths) and its restitution in the produced oeuvre. The ordering of this restitution, or recreation of reality in a figurative work, is *muthos*. Thus, it is the configuration of the elements of *muthos,* alongside formal elements, that produce *mimesis*. *Muthos* is inextricably linked with *mimesis* because the former gives the latter its signification: *mimesis* is not a mirror of reality but an assemblage of facts that could happen, a (re)formulation of reality (Marchand, 1988, 112-113).

In the previous section, I developed a reading of the concepts of *poiesis* and *technē* as being engaged in relational networks. The co-creative relationship of *mimesis* and *muthos* manifests an analogous conceptual symbiosis. *Poiesis* and *mimesis* signify an initial movement, a cause for the creation process, but also the material result of the production process. For example, a tragedy is the movement of imitating the myth of Oedipus, but it is also the result of the configuration of *muthos* with formal elements (spectacle, voice, music, etc.) On the other hand, *technē* and *muthos* both include skills in bringing-forth *poiesis* and *mimesis*: the latter are dependent on the former. As an example, Aeschylean tragedy could not include three actors and scene-paintings as the technical conditions for these elements of *mimesis* had not been developed yet (Aristotle, 1996, 8). Without pushing this strictly explicative analogy too far, what remains apparent is that the inner world of the creator becomes other when it is externalized in materiality. The despair of Oedipus moves from a scene written for actors to an effect within each spectator: *catharsis*. Thus, a consequence of the act of creation is the transformation of an internalized world into an externalized expression of this world and an effect on the receiver of the configuration. A consequence of this externalization can be, as I discuss in Chapter 3, the

transformation of the internalized world of the receivers towards a codified, preconceived world that they ingest and internalize as a new serialized world.

In summary, *mimesis* can be thought of as the interpretation of an internalized world comprised of knowledge, historical and imaginary events, people, actions and symbols and its externalization into an environment of reception. In my exegesis of Aristotle's *Poetics*, *mimesis* is thus a process of mediation between the creator's perceived reality and a figurative representation.

My theorization of *mimesis* as the externalization of an internalized world brings forth notions of reception. The process of *mimesis* has at its core the act of reception because, according to Aristotle, it produces *catharsis*. *Catharsis* is the effect of tragedy on spectators, namely the purging of (and through) powerful emotions, such as the witnessing of Oedipus' downfall in Sophocles *Oedipus Rex*. In his article *Mimèsis et catharsis: de la représentation à la dénégation du réel chez Aristote, Artaud et Brecht*, Alain Bernard Marchand makes the argument that persuasion (in that case, *catharsis*) is produced by the systematic assemblage of narrative logic (113). He goes on making the case that narrativity is not an arbitrary progression of plot elements, but rather a causal structuration organized to produce effects on the receivers. What his argument means is that, as I argue in the next section, the act of creation is directly linked with the act of reception: it conceives and conditions it.

1.1.3. *Catharsis* and Interface: Conditioning Reception

In the eight book of the *Politics* (1944, 1341b), Aristotle mentions *catharsis* (κάθαρσις) in his discussion of the release of emotions brought by music and promises a more thorough

definition in the *Poetics*[8]. Unfortunately, this definition is not comprised in what remains of the *Poetics*, but for a brief mention within the definition of tragedy:

> Tragedy is, then, a representation of an action that is heroic and complete and of a certain magnitude—by means of language enriched with all kinds of ornament, each used separately in the different parts of the play: it represents men in action and does not use narrative[9], and through pity and fear it effects relief to these and similar emotions" (1449b; 1996, 27-28).

Thus, the coalescing of the different elements of tragedy, such as plot (*muthos*), representation (*mimesis*), literary devices (reversal, recognition, etc.), when assembled correctly, carry out emotional effects on the receivers. The emotions do not arise out of thin air, nor only through seeing pitiful or fearful things on stage, but rather "follows from the structure of the work in its essential nature" (Schaper, 1968, 136). Paul Ricoeur, in *Temps et Récit*, provides a similar argument: "[…] la réponse émotionnelle du spectateur est construite dans le drame, dans la qualité des incidents destructeurs et douloureux pour les personnages eux-mêmes" (1983, 87). As such, the emotional response of the spectator is designed into the work of art, as a consequence of, or resulting from, the quality of the artistic *mimesis* and *muthos*. In other words,

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[8] The interpretation of the concept of *catharsis* has been the subject of much scholarly debate (Gilbert, 1926; Schaper, 1968; Keesey, 1979 among others), namely to devise if the word refers to a purification or a purgation. This concern is here subsumed into the greater discussion of the effect of a designed work (of art) on the receiver.

[9] In the sense that it relies on acting rather than verbal narration to carry out the plot. See Bernays & Rudnytsky, 2004, p.319, for an additional translation.

the *catharsis* is pre-produced in the mind of the artist, in order to be produced in that of the spectator. In sum, I consider that in Aristotle's theorization, tragedy possesses within it the potential and, what is more, the objective of producing an effect on the spectator, of changing his or her inner disposition. The designer (tragedian, poet) crafts the work while keeping in mind the users and their reception of the work. Another intriguing aspect of the above quote is the word τοιούτων. This word, translated as "and similar emotions" (1932, 1449b) or "these and suchlike" (Bernays & Rudnytsky, 2004), is used when describing the emotions relieved by *catharsis*: pity and fear[10]. The use of τοιούτων hints at the openness of the emotions to be relieved from. It is not only pity and fear that can be produced by tragedy, but emotions *such as* pity and fear.

In stride with Eva Schaper's argument in *Aristotle's Catharsis and Aesthetic Pleasure*, it can be argued that *catharsis*, as an effect on the spectator, can be produced through any powerful emotion that emerges from a work of art. Schaper even claims that there is a possibility that Aristotle devised a *catharsis* of comedy, through laughter and joy, for example (1968, 136), but that this fragment is lost to us. The relevance of this opening up of *catharsis* to other emotional spectrums resides in its leading up to further questions about the effects of works of art on humans of all epochs, and how through a certain arrangement of narrative components (plot, reversals, convincing ideas, etc.) human emotions can be codified and designed in advance. This concept of the codification of affects is at the core of my machinic argument in Chapters 2 and 3.

For Alain Bernard Marchand, the codification of *catharsis* goes even further than simply exacting an emotional release. In his previously cited article *Mimèsis et catharsis: de la représentation à la dénégation du réel chez Aristote, Artaud et Brecht*, Marchand argues that

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[10] Literal translation from Liddell & Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* (1940) is "as such as".

catharsis is a purgative ritual destined at the institutionalization of representations of the forbidden: the ritual is the experience of the forbidden by proxy in order to purge the soul of any uncivil drives (1988, 109). This is what he calls the political conception of *catharsis*, and it is directly linked to notions of population government, of removing violence and vile drives by experiencing 'at a distance' such events and emotions. Going one step further, it could be argued that all narratives, in their willful construction, bear in them a code of conduct, what Deleuze called *mots d'ordre*, either as the main *telos* of the work or as subtle hints sprinkled throughout. These *mots d'ordre*, and here I want to emphasize one of the main arguments of this thesis, are often organized in such a way that they can codify or *produce* human actions, subjectivities and ideologies. Just like in Marchand's theory the Greek citizens are codified as "peaceful" or "purged" through *catharsis*, so too citizens of technocratic, mass-mediated societies can be codified as 'consumer', 'influencer', 'potential voter', 'white male between 24 and 40 years old' by the dominant narratives of their epoch. These notions are expanded further in Chapter 3, namely with the concepts of algorithmic governmentality and ectosubjectivity.

In order to be able to experience the release of *catharsis*, there is need for an understanding, even remote, of what is represented and the codes of representation. I can imagine a foreigner witnessing a Greek tragedy for the first time, with all its codes and cultural memes, and understanding nothing, laughing maybe when Oedipus walks from the palace with his eyes gouged out, when the remainder of the audience screams in pity and fear. It can be argued that *catharsis* has not failed, even if the foreigner's reaction is not necessarily what was designed by the tragedian. How do receivers decipher what is awaited of them in the act of reception of a work of art? The arrangement of *mimesis* through *muthos* can produce *catharsis*, given the right circumstances, but more importantly, the entire process of narrativity, from the idea in the mind of the writer to the reception by the spectator (and beyond) are nodes in a processual network of

constant connection. This notion brings the machinic definition offered in the introduction of this work to new lights by exemplifying its ramifications in a narrative context. Indeed, if narratives are machinic assemblages engaged in networking with other machines (social, biological, political, artistic), the artificial production of reception within *poiesis* will have consequences on whole machinic environments. One example of limited perspective is that tragedies were played out in a contest, with fame and honor for the winner. Every single time a tragedy was played, it influenced the acting out of the following dramas. If the first tragedy was of bad quality or badly played, the next tragedian might feel elated and comfortable, and the judges and spectators ready to appreciate a well-organized play. The opposite is also true. What I mean is that every node of expression along the line of the machinic environment 'tragic contest' influences the following expressions, in that case the successful or unsuccessful playing out of tragedies.

The definition of *catharsis* as being essentially designed within the act of *poiesis* echoes directly with the modern concept of interface. Artists design their narratives with various objectives in mind: pleasure for the readers/spectators, provoking critical thought, or surprise, or fear, conditioning a certain range of action, opinion or ideology, etc. The constant variable is that receivers are being subjected to the narrative configuration. I imagine the creator asking questions such as: How will the receiver react? How does this specific narrative element influence the *peripeteia*? Is this cultural reference too obscure? How does this specific configuration induce an action, or cements a moral code? In short, the designers of narrative configurations imagine the act of reception while creating the work of art. They open a space of reception within the space of creation. Thus, it appears that the process of reception appears *simultaneously* with the process of *poiesis*. In order to frame this notion concretely, a quick foray into the field of interface design can launch this thesis towards a more contemporary setting. Through the notions of *imagined user* and *interface as locus of the experience of reception*, the

image of the creator and receiver engaged in a machinic network of cocreation leads towards an innovative vision of the narrative as codifier.

In her 1991 book *Computers as Theatre*, Brenda Laurel theorized the interface "as the thing that mediates between us and the inner workings of the machine" (xvii). Meaning that the interface has the role of smoothing the process of using the machine (in Laurel's example, a computer) for optimal experience. The initial model of interface proposed by Laurel looks like this:

Human   *Interface*   *Computer*
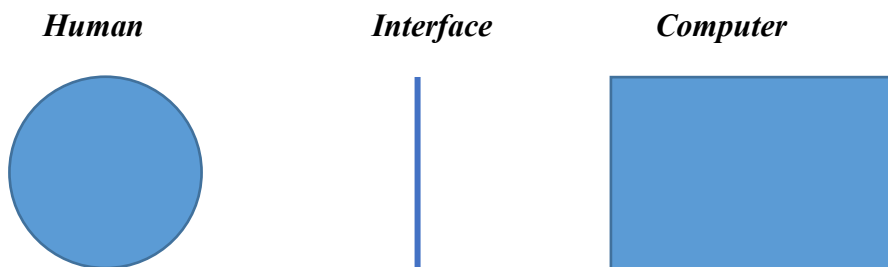
In this model the interface is placed between the computer and the human user. It is a built thing that acts as translator. Take the computer desktop, for example. The interface is the environment that recreates familiarity for the user by representing (*mimesis*) a physical desktop: trash can, folders, documents. The computer code, an opaque mathematical language, is 'hidden' behind the interface that guides the user and enhances the fluidity of the experience. So, in Laurel's definition, the interface is a mediator between machine and human. Something that renders intelligible the underlying code birthed of *poiesis* and *technē*.

However functional, this first definition offered an incomplete account of the machinic processes at play: how can a thing mediate a singular and mutable human experience? What kind of a thing is an interface? Laurel herself identified the flaw of her initial offering. While directing an Atari seminar in 1990, she reflected:

In order for an interface to work, the person has to have some idea about what the

computer expects and can handle, and the computer has to incorporate some information

about what the person's goals and behaviors are likely to be. These two phenomena – a

person's 'mental model' of the computer and the computer's 'understanding' of the person

– are just as much a part of the interface as its physical and sensory

manifestations. (Laurel, 1991, 12-13)

What is made apparent is that the interface is not a thing in-itself (Heidegger, 2008, 147)

that mediates or translates human experience of a machine. It is not a natural object, nor a simple

tool. It is a machine, designed to operate a connection between human user and informatic

machine. We have here a very simple exemplification of the type of machine this thesis is

concerned with: the interface as a machinic connector between a human-machine and a

computer-machine, the ensemble composing a machinic assemblage. Thus, the interface is a built

thing that is useful, an equipment in Heideggerian terminology, designed to codify human

experience of machines. The interface is a construct. Furthermore, it must internalize an image of

the human user. As Laurel puts it, the computer has an *understanding* of the future user[11]. In this

view, *poiesis* is always concerned with its future unconcealment in the person of the receiver or

user.

Let's make this definition applied to narratives, keeping in mind the important caveat that

this is a modern uprooting of Aristotle's ancient theories. The writer of a tragedy, to return to the

Poetics, has a mental model of the spectators that will witness the play. For example: Athenian

citizens, versed in Greek mythology and legends, subject to react strongly to powerful emotions

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[11] For a more detailed analysis of computer-based user-designer relationship, see Bardini, 1997.

such as fear and pity. When designing the narrative elements of the tragedy, the writer incorporates cultural references and structures the story according to the pre-existing codes of the genre. When Sophocles renewed Greek tragedy and indirectly forced the exile of Aeschylus, he did so only by building upon what his predecessor had done, introducing new elements of spectacle to vanquish and win the contest (Aristotle, 1996, 8). In other words, Sophocles redesigned the *locus* of the experience of tragedy for his public, showcasing how optimizations in the interface can revolutionize reception. Jump more than two-thousand years in the future to the twenty-first century, and this notion is directly applicable to the optimization of social media platforms, customized advertisements and adaptable algorithms. The adaptability of narratives today is built-in to follow the acceleration of mutable trends and reduced attention spans. The ergonomics of interface design have as *telos* the perfect implantation of web platforms in the daily lives of users, so that the codification of their habitus is unbeknownst to them, or at least as fluid as possible.

In summary, the processes of design and material execution of a work of art is simultaneous with the artist's imagination of the reception process. Thus, reception is conditioned through the creation of certain postures of reception, *good/authorized* receptions (one that agrees with the artist's imagination). For example, according to Aristotle the proper reception of well-made tragedies is *catharsis* based on pity and fear, not laughter.

With these considerations in mind, the interface cannot simply be considered a thing that mediates the human experience of the machine. It is not simply a filter built over the underlying code or a veil that would cover its numerical core, although hiding the code is one of its primary function. It is also a guiding tool for the users, a codification of reception that modifies the relationship between artwork and human. A more complex model of the interface is required to encompass the imagined user:
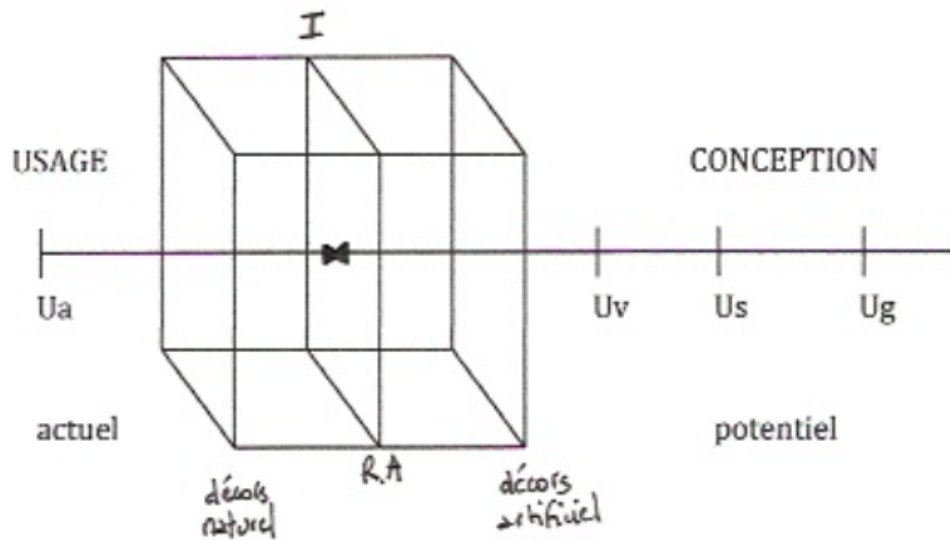
This model, created in 2017 for a different project, introduces a more complex definition of the interface[12]. In this model there are two main axes: conception and usage. The interface, signaled by the capital 'I' above the model, has surpassed the state of mere thing. It is the *locus* of experience. On the left-hand side, the actual users enter the interface (the computer desktop, the projection room of a movie theater, the book, the postnatural environment[13]), with their preconceived notions, hopes, current moods, inner dispositions, etc. On the right-hand side are situated the 'potential users', imagined by the creators of the interface and possessing imagined skills in interpretation. As it appears in this model, the interface is the meeting place between the actual and potential users. The success of a certain interface is determined in large part by the

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[12] This model was designed specifically for Montreal multimedia company Moment Factory, and can be found in: Desrochers Ayotte, 2017.

[13] Ibid., 120-129

adequacy of the actual users with the potential users. The further away the imagined user is from the actual user, the less sense the interface will make, the less likely it is to seamlessly mediate the user's experience. The end result of a faulty interface is the failure of engagement from the actual user towards the work of art. Incomprehension, boredom and frustration replace wonder, excitement as well as the potential for codifying fragments of the user's subjectivity.

The Athenian *theatron*, with the rows of seats built into the mountain facing the main stage, with the *skené* producing ambiance and permitting costume changes, the solitary writing becoming a flurry of voices reciting in verse, singing, reacting to the actions of the play: all this is the moment of meeting between conception and usage, all this is the connection of machinic assemblages (writing, spectating, weather, mythology) into a singular event fixed in space and time. The interface is the meeting place between a plurality of machines in a spark of life that is experience.

But what does this all mean in regard to the main argument of this thesis: namely that narratives have the power to codify human existence? The introduction of interface theory in the study of Aristotle's *Poetics* exemplifies how users can be produced by narratives. The designers of twenty-first century capitalist narratives (marketing firms, algorithmic businesses, social media) introduce into their narratives a version of the human user that they desire. However, in that case the user is not only imagined, but also *created by* the narrative. Many thinkers, among them Theodor Adorno, Félix Guattari and Jean-Paul Sartre, conceive of similar notions in their works on subjectivity production, a subject further developed in Chapter 3. An increasing portion of content production, in the twenty-first century, does not answer the needs of the public, but rather integrate its own desires into users who start to genuinely feel these needs as their own (Adorno, 2005, 79). One striking example of this phenomenon is the manipulation of voting intentions in the 2016 American Presidential elections through social media propaganda. Through

Cambridge Analytica, the personal data of millions of individuals was illegally harvested on

Facebook in order to create profiles of voting intentions or, to use the previous vocabulary, to

create potential users of the voting interface. After a minute analysis of the user profiles, the

individuals were targeted with content according to a grid of voting intentions. Die-hard

Republicans and Trump supporters were fed triumphant images of their future leader, while

undecided voters received lots of information about Hilary Clinton's corruption. The illegal

harvesting of the personal data of millions of individuals was then transformed in power of

influence over voting intentions and, according to many experts and writers, led to the victory of

Donald Trump in the elections[14].

This example emphasizes how content producers and power-infused institutions can

create their desired users, slowly but surely, by incorporating clues as to the proper posture of

reception, by manipulating information and producing gestalt narratives often polarized in

dogmatic opinions. The focus on Hilary Clinton's *political* corruption in the 2016 Presidential

elections is a manipulated truth that, on the one hand, produces the desired effect of changing a

voting intention on certain receivers, and on the other hand disregards Donald Trump's *economic*

corruption[15]. In other words, in this example social media were used both to understand the

potential users and to transform the ideology and actions of a percentage of the actual users who

went out to vote.

To conclude this section, what becomes apparent in the borrowing of interface theory is

the designing of reception within the act of *poiesis*. In this dual process, integrating imagined

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[14] For more reading on the subject, see Rosenberg et al., 2018 and Lewis and Hilder, 2018.

[15] See, for example, Berzon, 2016 and Fahrenthold, 2016.

users into the interface becomes a political action of subjectivation. An individual is crystalized under the name 'receiver'. In addition, by hierarchizing reception between proper and improper postures, creators grant the full experience only to a small portion of users. In the fear of being cast out on the margins of reception, users compete to fit the mold and receive in the 'proper fashion', conforming to the preconceived notions of how a user should behave, artificially produced by narrative designers. As I have discussed in the example from the 2016 Presidential election, the manipulation of information can have real-world effects and codify how reality is experienced and perceived. Through certain conditions of possibility and affordances in interpretation integrated within reception, receivers produce their own fetters by conforming to the designer's image of the perfect user, in part from fear of being marginalized in unknown territories of reference, or are manipulated, with varying degrees of success, by the orchestrated organisation of information and its pretense of truthfulness.

1.2. Mass-Media: Harold Innis and Swarming Mediation

Following my study of narratives in the context of reception, an analysis of mediation and the forms that twenty-first century narratives take can further the understanding of the processes of subjection at play within narrativity. As I argued in the previous sections, the plurality of elements (myths, moral code, music, verse, language, spectacle) that Aristotle identifies as constitutive of poetry in general, and tragedy in particular, crystalizes into a composite at the moment of reception for the reader who reads or the spectator in the theatre. It is important to emphasize that this composite, if read or played at a moment removed from its initial imagined reception, will be similar yet different, as both the reader or spectator, the context of transmission, the psychological condition of the actors, all will have evolved in the timespan between both performances. For example, a modern reading of Greek tragedy or Homeric poems

is far removed from the creators' imagined reception. If I attempt a preliminary relation of this idea with the initial definition of machines given in the introduction of this work, it can be said that both the organic machines of actors and spectators, the artistic machines of music, text, staging, and the social machines of symbolism, myth-making and political environments are in constant re-production. They are in a network of constant redistributions. For example, if news of the distant defeat of a local army, or the desecration of a temple, came to the Greek city on the day of a tragedy being performed, this redistribution of political environment would codify the reception of the spectacle in a different way than it would have if nothing of the sort had happened. In that case, both receivers and performers would be in different subjective dispositions. Narratives are always dynamic both in what they signify and how this signification is received and interpreted.

The same dynamism is of course applicable to narratives of the twenty-first century. The announcement of a steep rise in oil prices redistributes the reception value or economical profitability of a brand-new advert campaign for pick-up trucks. A leak of personal data in a financial institution will be re-'discovered' *after* the quarterly revenue sharing for fear of a steep drop in shareholder revenue at a bad timing. News of a racist mass shooting in a certain country will transform the president's planned allocution the next day into political capital or true concern. Events in reality constantly transform both the performance of narratives as well as their reception. Thus, a narrative is not always received in the same fashion throughout the receiving audience.

What strikes here is that these examples of narratives are foreign to that of tragedy or epic poetry. Indeed, the present section offers the argument that not only pure artforms that follow Aristotelian rules are considered narratives, but rather every single element of human communication and practice in network with its machinic environment. In other words, narratives

are constructed things made of components (narrative, symbolic, political) that are not limited to stories or written texts. By drawing from Harold Innis' theory of communication, a new definition of the narrative is proposed, that will then be applied to theorize narrative ubiquity in the twenty-first century.

It takes something of a conceptual leap to reframe all the elements enumerated by Aristotle in his *Poetics* as networked media rather than elements on a checklist that define, say, tragedy. Usual conceptions of the medium, such as Roman Jakobson's model of language (1960) and Shannon's and Weaver's cybernetic model of mediation (1963) take into account a sender and a receiver, as if a medium is an empty vessel through which language, speech, electricity, etc., moves without it influencing, transforming or changing the content that passes through it. Reduced to their simplest expression, both these models look something like this:

<u>Sender → Receiver</u>

Here the arrow represents the medium through which the sender communicates with the receiver. Jakobson, in his 1960 text *Linguistics and Poetics*, theorized the codification of the content that passes through the medium, whereas Shannon and Weaver theorized the encoding and decoding of the content to fit their computer-based model. Both ideas are highly similar: communication emerges from one subject towards another subject, and is codified to flow fluidly in the used medium (voice, print, computer interface). So that the spoken words from an individual to another, for example, have meaning only in their contextualization and arrangement in specific speech patterns destined by the sender for the receiver. This vision of the medium is reductionist because it does not account for its transformative power. However, it must be noted that in the Sixties, computerization and the ubiquity of communication was not what it is today. However, years before Jakobson's and Shannon & Weaver's theorizations of the medium, Canadian scholar Harold Innis had already published his vision of the medium that broke from

traditional, language-based sending and receiving towards a politico-economical swarming of mediations. Whereas Innis uses the word mediation, his theory is applicable to narratives understood as connectable segments of larger machinic environments. This section will analyze Innis' theory to frame a concept of narratives as engaged within a plural network of constant mediation that encompasses all that constitutes humanity.

Innis was a Professor of political economy at the University of Toronto, who was active as a writer from the 1920s to the 1950s. He developed many innovating concepts in economy and communication studies, among them the staples thesis, that theorized Canada's culture, economy, history and traditions as having emerged from a few staple products of trade, among them fur, lumber and fishing (Easterbrook & Watkins, 1978). Another crucial concept brought forth by Innis is monopolies of knowledge, a notion that predates and presupposes Foucault's influential notion of power-knowledge. The concept of monopolies of knowledge theorizes how knowledge in human society is monopolized by an intellectual elite that produces and distributes it to the uneducated masses. Although unstable, power is exercised through the willful monopolization of knowledge, its manipulation and distribution as 'reality' (Innis, 1986). One vivid example of monopolies of power is how the clergy in Québec in the early twentieth century recited mass in Latin, thus keeping the sacred words away from the faithful. What is more, at that time most priests in Québec recited a tridentine mass, meaning that they would not face the assembled believers, instead reciting with their backs to them[16]. This image exemplifies Innis' concept of monopoly of knowledge as the control of knowledge by the elite.

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[16] Radio-Canada, 2020.

Innis' theory of communication was an innovative rethinking of mediation that prefigured the conceptual leap of thinkers such as Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida. Innis' theory is centered around media as networked conditions of possibility for human progress, and emphasizes "the significance of communication to the rise and decline of cultural traits" (Innis, 2008). His books *Empire and Communication* and *The Bias of Communication* are erudite inquiries in the social impact of communication. They argue that media have a transformative power on every aspect of human society, that they are the driving force of a society's cultural and social evolution. For Innis, everything is a medium: rivers, soil, weather, clay tablets and papyrus, vernacular language in the Middle Ages, etc. His conceptualization of the medium is innovative because it integrates media in an assemblage of heterogeneous elements that compose, and are composed by, society. In essence, it understands media as both the affordances of a certain civilization's development (terrain, natural resources, cultural phylum) as well as what these affordances end up creating (culture, rituals, traditions, economy, trade). Thus, the medium is not considered as a simple vessel of communication, such as a boat is the vessel of transportation or a pipe the vessel of water. Innis proposed a model that broke free from the anthropocentrism of language towards a more ubiquitous and democratized conception of networking and inter-influence. The linguistic and cybernetic visions of the medium as a vessel for language or electric current is trashed in favor of a dynamic, network-based conception, where the medium has in itself a transformative power on human actions and the rise and fall of cultures and societies.

The usefulness of Innis' pioneering communication theories towards rethinking narratives lies in his definition of media as engaged in productive processes of civilization development and mutation. Since in my conceptualization narratives are machinic assemblages engaged with other machines in relational environments, Innis' theory engages with this idea in the strictest sense. His explanation of mediatic networking emphasizes how twenty-first century narratives have a

coercive impact on humans. In his theory of communication, Innis proposes the possibility to reconsider media not as a vessel but as everything that constitutes a certain environment as well as the networking potential within it and in its periphery.

In his essay *The Bias of Communication*, Innis' central focus is "the social history of communication media", as Marshall Soules emphasizes in his article *Harold Adams Innis: The Bias of Communication and Monopolies of Power*. Innis is concerned with how communication media influence the emergence and evolution of human civilizations, social processes and the exercise of power. Innis theorizes the cocreation of human civilization and communication, an interdependence of both processes towards the emergence of a certain human society. In his discussion about the emergence of new media, Innis wrote:

> We can perhaps assume that the use of a medium of communication over a long period will to some extent determine the character of knowledge to be communicated and suggests that its pervasive influence will eventually create a civilization in which life and flexibility will become exceedingly difficult to maintain and that the advantages of a new medium will become such as to lead to the emergence of a new civilization. (2008, 34)

This rich quote contains three crucial elements.

First, communication media influence the development of human societies by enframing the knowledge made available as well as providing a time-space bias that frames social evolution. This mediatic bias either strengthens or weakens cultural perpetuation depending on its ability to enframe evolving knowledge. Second, new media have a transformative power on civilizations. From the instability of the initial medium over time and its inadequacy in managing the acceleration or mutation of the affairs of the society which it birthed, new media emerge that are vital in the constant evolution of civilizations. For example, radio and newspaper became obsolete in a world where travel and industrialization accelerated, creating a need for the

telephone and television which emerged from this instability. A new type of society was produced by this major mediatic change. The third element made apparent in Innis' quote is the determination of the character of knowledge by the prevalent media. This determination emerges on one hand from mediatic bias, and on the other from how the media itself has a productive power: of transformation, of knowledge, of codification of human experience. In the example of the emergence of telephone and television, knowledge and communication were deeply influenced by these new media which altered how humans interacted, but also the type of knowledge they consumed and how it was presented to them.

One of the main goals of Innis' essay is to showcase how civilizations have an inherent bias when they emerge and evolve, based either on space or on time. The concept of bias relates to how mediatic choices from civilizations tend to codify their evolution. In his introduction to Innis' *Empire and Communication*, editor David Godfrey defines the concept of the bias of communication:

> For Innis, the organization of empires seems to follow two major models. The first model is militaristic and concerned with the conquest of space. The second model is religious and concerned with the conquest of time. Comparatively, the media that have supported the military conquering of space have been lighter, so that the constraints of long distances could be lessened. Those media that supported theocratic empires had relative durability as a major characteristic so that they could support the concepts of eternal life and endless dynasties. (1986, ix)

Media have transformative powers over the civilizations that prioritize one bias over the other. In Godfrey's definition, media have the potential of slanting a culture's evolution towards militarism or religion, and conversely the evolution of theocracy or militarism slants the subsequent mediatic choices. In this view a balanced civilization would put equal emphasis on

each bias, but, as Innis' analysis highlights, such is rarely the case. In addition to a civilizations' initial bias, an additional level of bias appears in the act of studying ancient civilizations: a scholarly bias based on the initial mediatic choice of the ancient civilization. For example, as Godfrey pointed out, civilizations with a time and continuity bias seem to have a favorable bias towards religion and a negligence of problems of space such as social and political administration of large territories. This slant thus biases scholarship, driving scholars to consider said civilization as strictly oriented on religion with scarce interest for anything else (Innis, 2008, 34). The civilization's concerns about civil justice, economy and territory management will be put aside in favor of a slanted analysis producing a shallow interpretation instead of a complex networked interpretation. Thus, a mediatic bias dating thousands of years influences how future scholars will study civilizations and codifies how this society is written as part of human history, with a high degree of imprecision.

In *The Bias of Communication,* Innis studies the history of communication media from Mesopotamia to the newspaper in 20th century America, by way of the emergence of the printing press in the Middle Ages. In Innis' vision, media are not only written media (papyrus and clay) nor their content (moral or judiciary codes, records of transactions, epics). As I have pointed out earlier, for Innis, the category 'media' comprises things such as food and the availability of nourishment for citizens, calendars, weapons and methods of knowledge propagation or censorship. Media are engaged in relational networks that constitute the cultural, social and economic characteristics of human civilizations.

Innis' analysis of the emergence of writing in Egypt and Mesopotamia (2008, 34-37) highlights the interplay between media, as well as their transformative potential. He focuses on the medium of writing: papyrus for the former and alluvial clay for the latter. The entire notion of bias (time for the perduring clay and space for the easily copyable and transmissible papyrus) is

Innis' analytical angle, but what is relevant towards my conception of narratives is the interplay of multiple media in providing conditions of possibility for bias. For example, Innis writes about Mesopotamia that the constant and irregular flooding of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates created the necessity for local government of city-states rather than a large empire such as Egypt. Indeed, the diffusion of orders and unification of culture was highly difficult on a territory often fragmented in regional enclaves. Innis argues that the territory itself created conditions of possibility for the development of Mesopotamian city-states, but also for the written medium[17]. Indeed, the choice of the freely available alluvial clay as the medium of writing had a transformative effect on alphabet: "The difficulties of writing on moist clay led to the disappearance of pictographs and the emergence of conventional signs or formal patterns of cuneiform. The stylus was developed in relation to the demands of clay" (2008, 36).

Here Innis proposes that the chosen medium of writing produced transformations in the writing itself, by morphing the alphabet into a form that could better fit the conditions of possibility of the clay tablets. But changing the alphabet also changed how Mesopotamians thought, by increasing their capacity for abstraction, mathematics and, in direct consequence, economy and wealth. Wealth, in turn, led to jealousy, conquest, with subsequent delegation of authority to military kings rather than priests, then invasion and occupation by Semitic invaders (Innis, 2008, 36). This cause and effect chain implies a complex network of transformation that begins at the territory's resources and temperature irregularity that created the possibility for clay

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[17] The name Mesopotamia signifies "between two rivers" (Savard & Dussault, 1966, 27). In the name of the region the interplay between the territorial conditions of the emergence of this civilization and language is abundantly clear.

to be used as a medium. This interaction between the land, the development of abstract thought, economy, religion and militarism, all the way to the fragmentation of the initial civilization under foreign invasion is one fragment of the mediatic network of ancient Mesopotamia. Again, the modern bias makes it seem quite simple, but the change occurred over millennia in a complex web of interaction, and does not prove at all that Mesopotamia, for example, abandoned religious rituals and beliefs in favor of wholesale militarism.

This example of the transformative ubiquity of mediations in Innis' thought circles back to Aristotle's definition of poetry. If I take Aristotle's definition on a microscopic scale, every single element constituting, say, *Oedipus Rex*, has transformative effects on the others. Music, verse, plot, imitated action and narrative devices (recognition, reversal) are all media, imbued with their own mutations in time, interconnected to form the composite *Oedipus Rex*.

On a macroscopic scale, *Oedipus Rex* is engaged in networking with other media such as the context of its reception (played in an Athenian *theatron* in the fifth century BCE or read in the quiet of a room in 2022), the scholarship built around its themes and context (Freud's 'Oedipus complex' chief among them), the weather (the delay, cancelation or modification of the play because of rain or winds), and so forth. The Oedipus complex, derived from the Greek myth and applied to parent-children relationships by psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, is one example of the machinic networking of narratives. How does one read Sophocles' play today without thinking of Freud's theory[18]? Most people interested in Greek tragedy will know of the love-hate triangle that made the fame of psychoanalysis. Thus, it has the potential to frame the reading of the play by

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[18] Fortunately, some brilliant contemporary thinkers have succeeded in reading the Oedipus myth without the lens of Freud's complex. See, for example, Vernant & Vidal-Naquet, 2006.

revealing its theme before opening a single page; it can change the modern reading of the play, removing the initial cathartic design towards a simple story about incest[19].

The revealing potential in the act of reading *Oedipus Rex* is imperfect in that it does not open up the world of Sophocles and his contemporaries but rather the world of twenty or twenty-first century readers, their concerns, doubts and moods. By adding a media (Oedipus complex) to Sophocles' play *Oedipus Rex*, the reception of the narrative has been altered. This is but one example of imperfect revealing: someone can be ignorant of Freud's theory and read *Oedipus Rex* in 2022, but it remains that the universe of reference that this hypothetic reader will come from will be foreign to Sophocles', that he or she will read a play designed to be acted out on stage, that some cultural references and the traditional filiation of tragedy itself will be lost. In short, the conditions of possibility for mediatic engagement are always becoming other, transformed by incessant connection with new media, new practices and new universes of reference.

In summary, Harold Innis offered a conception of the media that broke away from traditional sender-receiver models and accounted for the inherent interconnection of all components of human civilization and even the natural world. Additionally, Innis emphasized the change one medium can have on entire human civilizations. This notion, brought back to a microscopic scale, can be interpreted on a similar level as *catharsis*: the reception of a new

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[19] Interestingly, even Sophocles' interpretation of the story of Oedipus was a 'modern' reframing of an ancient myth that spoke of fate towards a new myth concerned with purification through suffering (Illich, 1988, 73-75). As it is, every narrative is infused with layers upon layers of meaning in constant networking and re-production.

medium, in the form of a tragedy, an advert or a social media trend, has the power to potentially alter the world into which creators and individuals harvest their inner order.

Harold Innis' vision of the medium has deep connections to Félix Guattari's notion of machinic assemblages, as I emphasize in the beginning of Chapter 2. It is evident that the dominant narratives of the twenty-first century are highly different from those of Aristotle's epoch. However, the framework that has been set in this chapter has direct applications towards contemporary forms of narrativity such as advertisement, news broadcasts or social media discourse.

1.3. Conclusion – Acceleration of Twenty-First Century Narratives

In this first chapter, I theorized narratives as the internalization of a world and its externalization in *poiesis*. The product that emerges from *poiesis*, an accumulative configuration of plot (*muthos*) and semiotic referents (*mimesis*, mythology, social clues) has been theorized as essentially designed towards its reception. Through the reframing of interface theory towards *poiesis*, the inherent codifying of the experience of reception was brought to light.

Narratives are just one machine in the machinic megafactory that is human civilization. Through a foray into Harold Innis' theorization of the medium of writing in Mesopotamia, emphasis was put upon a democratized vision of media both as the enframing of knowledge in certain mediatic conditions as well as the conditions of possibility of the emergence of new media. These new media, in Innis' thought, provide humans with a more accurate scale of human interaction with nature, technical objects, history and its own innovations. In other words, everything is a medium whose use or emergence is conditioned by the use or emergence of surrounding media. For example, the perennial plants of Canada are built to survive winter, they are networked with temperature variation: their inner order is configured according to a certain

mediatic environment. It can be imagined that if Canada would progressively become an equatorial country, the inner order of these plants would have to mutate in order to survive their new mediatic environment. The climate alteration of the coming decades poses this problem of adaptation to mediatic environments with urgency. The relevance of Innis' theory for this work is in what could be called the machinic cross-pollination of media: the interaction between the emergence of a medium and its influence on other mediatic emergences, transformations, extinctions. In Chapter 2 the notion of machinic assemblage goes even further in its theorization of everything (bodies, signs, non-living objects, socius) as machines in relational networks of production.

Now that narratives have been defined and discussed, it becomes apparent that the categories studied by Aristotle have somewhat fallen out of favor. In the twenty-first century, tragedy, comedy and all forms of poetry have been mostly pushed aside by the cacophonic semiotic assemblages of capitalism. Advertisement, news broadcasts, social media drama and the constant noise of television, radio and streaming programs monopolize a large portion of human attention to a point where novels, poetry and philosophy, almost the entire culture industry is struggling to morph into a business[20]. The smartphone has become an extension of human limbs, granting McLuhan's book title *Understanding Media: Extensions of Man* spooky foreshadowing and creating new afflictions related to this apparatus, such as *text neck* and sleep deprivation

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[20] For data on the increase of social media usage, see Perrin, 2015. For data on time spent on various media (average of almost 11 hours per day in the United States), see Molia, 2020. For a philosophical musing on the transition of the culture industry towards a business model, see Adorno, 2005.

induced by blue light. The slow process of mediatic replacement that accompanies human social

evolution has accelerated to the point where it becomes difficult for humans to keep up. Social

media are one example of such an acceleration. Whereas in the past one could call Aunt Gertrude

once a week to ask news of the family, now Gertrude posts ten times a day on Facebook. This

vulgar example, multiplied by the number of relatives, friends, acquaintances and pure strangers

that populate social media feeds, illustrates the increasing acceleration of mediatic noise. And

that is not counting other social media, traditional media that insist upon having a piece of human

attention, advertisement and other sources of noise. One can ask the question as to the changes in

human beings that such rapid mediatic mutations produce.

Capitalist signification has permeated the environment of art. The pure work of art

theorized by Heidegger is either veiled or disappeared; it's been auctioned, sold and hanged in a

paying museum. In the public sphere, meaning the closed-environment of distributors authorized

by capital (Fuchs, 2011; Zuckerman, 2014), only a small portion of what is produced is made

available. It is pop music. Hollywood and Disney. Google, Facebook, Amazon and their

outstretched tentacles. It is the circulation of serialized signs and production of generation after

generation of loyal consumers. The mother shows her kids old Disney movies or their identical

remakes (in content, not technique), distributing the semiotic universe of princesses, Manicheism,

male heroism and the triumph of good over evil[21]. One has to search long and hard to find niches

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[21] The fact that in the twenty-first century Disney has begun to include diversity in their new

productions, and to attempt to modify older productions towards political correctness, is not as

much an indication of the improvement of the narrative fate of marginalized groups as much as

of independent art and philosophy that resist the gravitational pull of capitalist (re)production.
These niches definitely exist and emerge regularly as nodes of resistance in the saturated realm of
(re)production, but they are overshadowed by the cacophony of authorized and replicated
mediatic art.

In more than one way, the receivers of 21st century narratives often self-replicate the
semiotic environment available to them, thus occupying both the roles of consumer and workers
(Dujarier, 2008). Through such processes, contemporary narratives occupy a large portion of
their receiver's subjectivity, and in Chapter 3 I explore how this monopoly often times transforms
the receivers into mere outputs for dumping a mass of content that codifies the receivers' actions
and perceptions. If 21st century narratives are so remote from what Aristotle had at-hand twenty-
five hundred years ago, it follows that the effect of contemporary narrativity on receivers differs
from tragic *catharsis*. However, I argued that the *Poetics* was a theorization of *poiesis* and *technē*
rather than a formula for writing good poetry. So even though advertisements and social media
are far removed from tragedy and epic poetry, the same configuration of textual and signifying
components is designed towards producing an effect on the receiver. Chapter 3 theorizes that one
of the main desired effects of advertisement, news broadcasts and mass art is the codification of
daily life towards the serialization of human subjectivity.

The next chapter of this thesis defines how the concept of machinic assemblage allows for
a better understanding of media ubiquity in the 21st century. By reframing human subjectivity on

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the integration by the capitalist machine of narrative production of social and political trends and
ideals towards consumption.

the same plane of ontological existence as machines, objects, signs and universes of reference, the interdependence of all machines in a specific network can aid in theorizing narratives as transformative of human subjectivity. Leaning on Innis' theory of communication, if humans are considered as mere media, then their alteration through media is ubiquitous and fluid. If all machines are the same, then all machines are transformable. Thus, if a machine, say a specific narrative, constantly emits the same signs, or if it introduces a new sign, it opens or closes fields of machinic possibility for the production of new identity territories. As such, narratives are primary sign emitters that constantly redistribute human subjectivities in the configured semiotic territories of capital, consumption and homogeneity.

Through an in-depth study of Félix Guattari's concept of machinic assemblage and a case study of Philip K. Dick's science-fiction novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, I propose a definition of human subjectivity as a machine engaged in processes of networking and ripe for the picking for capitalist serialization.

Chapter 2 – Machinic Assemblages and Machinic Enslavement in Mediation

In Chapter 1, I developed a conception of narratives as configurations of a multiplicity of elements which produce an effect on receivers. Through my modernization of the concepts of *poiesis* and *technē* from Aristotle's *Poetics*, I have suggested that narrativity is the crystallization of a network of media and practices, engaged in networking and co-production of meaning. In my view, every story is a composite that prefigures the process of reception. Meaning is derived from the multiple points of tension and connection between media, cultural background and practices, social distribution, economy, artistic or cultural or religious or ritualistic traditions, creating an event fixed in the space-time continuum of its inception and whose signification evolves as everything around it (human civilization, ideology, truth regimes) changes. The present chapter speaks directly to this interplay between the narrative as a machine and the spaces of in-betweenness where networking between all these social, cultural and mediatic elements occur, as well as in the reception of the stories by the masses: the contemporary and posterior 'readings' of these machinic narratives[22]. My research emphasizes how a single narrative is inscribed in machinic assemblages both through ontogeny (its inner consistency and relations of alterity) and

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[22] French philosopher Paul Ricoeur argues in *L'unique et le singulier* that the only interest of hermeneutical studies is the study of reception: "[…] ce n'est pas l'intention de l'auteur qui compte, mais ce que les lecteurs lisent." (p. 32) Although there is something to be gained from considering the standpoint and intent of the producers of content and stories, this thesis will follow the tradition of 20-21st century political philosophy and focus on the individual and/or collective reception of said stories and its a(e)ffect on subjectivity.

phylogeny (its place in the evolution of its 'species'). This theoretical framework prefigures Chapter 3, in which notions of control over human subjects via narratives are analyzed in depth.

The concept of machinic assemblage, developed by French philosopher and psychanalyst Félix Guattari, offers a relevant perspective to further the understanding of the politics of storytelling and how the various media intertwined in relational networks within it distribute both power and resistance simultaneously. In the twenty-first century the networking of communication and content production has accelerated to vertiginous speeds, creating a constant snowstorm of data to be consumed by limited human brains. Narrativity has been largely uprooted from artistic practice to become the dominion of advertisement, mass-mediation and consumerism. Art still exists, the written word has not died, humans are not all automatons answering the subversive commands of overlords ensconced in hidden golden thrones. However there has been a shift in the dominant semiotic regimes of narrativity, one that permeates the codification of daily life and accelerates unwaveringly.

As an answer to this swarm of daily mediation, I have chosen to work with Félix Guattari's concept of machinic assemblage. This methodology emphasizes the universal networking of all elements of the world and, as such, has the potential to redefine human ontological relationship to our environment and to others. It must be mentioned that my choice of Guattari's machninic methodology to theorize the universal connectability of narratives and humans is made with full acceptance of its strengths and weaknesses. Multiple other machinic methodologies have been created and used throughout the evolution of human technology, all with their own possibilities and limitations. In order to put my methodological choice in perspective and begin unraveling the machinic concatenations of twenty-first century narratives, it can be useful to ponder upon two examples of machinic methodology which I deliberately have not chosen for this particular thesis.

The first example is the mechanism of Kepler and Galileo, inherited from the Enlightenment, that founded modern science. This methodology suggested that the entirety of the material universe was an immense machine, submitted to machinic laws. The laws could be deduced or induced and fit comfortably in a coherent, cosmic equilibrium. The strengths of this methodology are that it permits the elaboration of a whole spectrum of scientific methods and ideas, which follow the precepts of a mathematical and coherent universe in which humans have a primordial role as decipherers of the governing laws. This methodology founded the natural sciences and although they themselves have limits and caveats, it is undeniable that they are essential to the evolution of humankind, especially in improving quality of life, medicine and understanding a portion of the laws of the natural world. The main shortcoming of this methodology is its determinism: if everything, from galaxies to human bodies, is submitted to a fixed set of mathematical laws, the potential for human agency and the expression of human unicity is disregarded in favor of a structural and comforting clockwork universe[23]. What is more, the refusal of chaos (both cosmic and human) renders this deterministic methodology subject to fragmentation at the slightest nudge of un-calculable behavior[24]. To summarize, although traditional mechanism produced a framework for the natural sciences to evolve, its determinist approach to the universe and its negation of the unique, chaotic and random elements within it produce a hierarchical structure in which some components of the world (humans) dominate

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[23] The weaknesses of mechanism are developed in more depth by Henri Bergson in *L'âme et le corps* (2011) and *L'évolution créatrice* (2007).

[24] A stunning book on the subject of chaos and its threat upon classical natural sciences is Christophe Letellier's *Le chaos dans la nature*.

others (natural world) with rationality and order. The appearance of chaos theory in the nineteenth century hints at a renewal of traditional mechanics to encompass randomness; however, its common mistake is to encompass chaos as a disturbance in the system rather than a constitutive component of the universe.

A second example of a machinic methodology which is both productive and deficient is Marshall McLuhan's and Friedrich Kittler's view that technology in general, and machines in particular, are extensions of human bodies and/or extensions of the human *technē*, taken strictly as tool-based technique. In other words, that media and machines are strictly extensions of humans into objects. McLuhan even titled his magnum opus *Understanding Media: Extensions of Man*. This machinic methodology is described and discussed by scholar Alexander Galloway in his book *The Interface Effect:*

> All of this now in the light of day, I am in a position to identify more clearly the conservatism of Kittler, who on this point finds a confrere in Marshall McLuhan. By conservative I mean the claim that *techne* is substrate and only substrate. For Kittler and McLuhan alike, media mean hypomnesis. They define media via the externalization of man into objects. Hence a fundamentally conservative dichotomy is inaugurated – which to be clear was in Plato before it was in Aristotle – between the good and balanced human specimen and the dead junk of the hypomnemata. Contrast this with an alternate philosophical tradition that views *techne* as technique, art, habitus, ethos, or lived practice. Such an alternate tradition is what was alluded to previously, through the contrast between media (as objects or substrates) and practices of mediation (as middles or interfaces). Indeed it is ironic that Kittler hews so closely to Heidegger, as Heidegger was one of the philosophers who best understood both aspects of *techne*. (2012, 16)

To rephrase Galloway's thoughtful explanation, Kittler and McLuhan both have a conception of media that situate the relationship of humans with media as the externalization of a productive power into reified objects. In lieu of mediation as a living practice and as the creation of an ontological link between humans and what surrounds them, their view considers media as mere tools to be used rather than as networked poietic composites that possess inner coherence. What strikes me as a force of this theory is how, by segregating humans from objects, one can have a deepened perspective on technological changes and their effects on human society. What Galloway fails to mention, at least in this segment of his book, is that McLuhan, as an example, saw technological change as integral to the modification of human society and relationship to others. As such, the 'conservative' vision of Kittler and McLuhan has the potential, as a methodology, to question social change by focusing on the bigger picture rather than upon the intertwining of human and media. The failure of this idea, in my humble opinion, is that it considers the changes as effected upon society rather than on human subjectivity. As Chapter 2 argues, even Marx surpassed the mere notion of tool as extension of human will and technique in favor of a conception where machines possess the power to produce and/or modify human subjectivity. In other words, mediatic conservatism has the potential to question how media produce big movements of social change, but lack the microcosmic attention to the individual and collective effects of media on the human psyche.

As a final point regarding methodology, I have chosen the machinic methodology of Félix Guattari because of its strengths, but that does not mean that its limits are unbeknownst to me. The weaknesses of this approach, based on universal connection, is the difficulty of extracting specific nodes of interaction. Indeed, if everything is connected on an ontological level, finding a crucial point of expression, meaning or political power is tremendously difficult as everything around it coalesces into innumerable connections and mutations. If everything is a machine with

no control upon the connections it suffers, how is power exercised and/or resisted? Although this methodological limitation is quite real and problematic, I believe that through the close-study of specific events, artistic productions or human expressions, the path towards a hermeneutical understanding of the surrounding network can be found. From this understanding, the processes of power and resistance, of love and hate, of meaning-production and artistic expression, can be observed and intuited. For example, the readings of fiction narratives from Chapters 2, 3, and 4 will interrogate specific powerful nodes of artistic production in order to attempt a better understanding of the political ramifications in their close networks. Thus, the primordial limitation of universal connection, namely the disappearance of specificity between various machines, can be reduced to a hurdle to overcome rather than an unsurmountable obstacle.

To me, the strengths of the methodology forcefully outweigh its limits. Its primary quality is the powerful political redistribution of all that exists on the same plane of existence. Through this reterritorialization, one can see the world as a democratized sphere of interdependence and co-creation[25], and offer a conception of experience removed from the materialism of the previous methodologies I have studied above, namely mechanism and *technē* as mere externalization of human power. I firmly believe that through Guattari's methodology one, without falling in utopianism or the negation of racial and social discrimination and violence, can redefine one's relationship to other humans and the natural world. Such a methodology has the potential to provide humanity with the philosophical tools to question and open new pathways towards change. If we consider everything (nature, humans of all backgrounds and identity, symbols,

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[25] The same methodology of universal interdependence is applied by some researchers in the natural sciences, namely John Lovelock in his Gaia Hypothesis. See Lovelock, 2000.

gods, machines, affects) as equal, then prevalent notions of hierarchy, violence, discrimination and destruction of ecosystems make no sense. To conclude, I chose this methodology with a full knowledge of its shortcomings and potential, as a metaphor of universal connection between everything that constitutes the world, and in hopes of providing my research with an egalitarian and de-hierarchized perspective. As a final point, it must be mentioned that this notion of universal connection is so ancient as to be unassignable to one thinker. In his introduction to *The Six Books of Proclus on the Theology of Plato*, Thomas Taylor discusses the interplay of the components of the universe in relation to Platonic theology. He quotes George Berkeley's *Siris*:

> Such is the mutual relation, connection, motion, and sympathy of the parts of this world, that they seem, as it were, animated and held together by one soul: and such is their harmony, order and regular course, as shows the soul to be governed and directed by a mind. It was an opinion of remote antiquity that the world was an animal. If we may trust the Hermaic writings, the Egyptians thought all things did partake of life. The opinion was also so general and current among the Greeks, that Plutarch asserts all others held the world to be an animal, and governed by providence […]. Iamblichus declares the world to be one animal, in which the parts, however distant each from other, are nevertheless related and connected by one common nature. (11)

It follows that the concept of universal connection between the elements composing the universe is as ancient as philosophy itself. It is argued, namely by Algis Uzdavinys and Pierre Hadot, that occidental philosophy, in its original inheritance from Orphic rituals, was seen as a way of life that had as object the ascent of the philosopher towards the divine light of the One[26].

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[26] On this subject, see Algis Uzdavinys' *The Golden Chain*.

Although my own vision is much more limited in scope and ambition, the undertaking of a study

of twenty-first century mass-mediation through the ancient scope of universal ontological

connectability can lead to a renewed openness to alternative views of the world and respect for all

that surrounds us.

Having defined my choice of machinic methodology, I will proceed with the elaboration

of a coherent framework in which it can flourish. In the present chapter I study the

reterritorializations of human narrative production in Western capitalistic societies through the

concepts of machinic assemblage and machinic enslavement in order to question fluctuations in

the forms of narration as well as point towards their effects on subjectivity production. Through a

minute analysis of philosophical forays in the concepts of machinic assemblages and machinic

enslavement, a theorization of the disembodiment of the experience of human life in constant

mediation emerges and leads towards Chapter 3.

Hand-in-hand with this theoretical exploration, I proceed to a case study of Philip K.

Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* to exemplify how Dick represents machinic

enslavement by a cacophony of mediations, control over human affect and framing of individual

enunciation. In his novel Dick represents mass-mediation as a set of devices which replace core

elements of regular human life: mood-regulation, individual affect, and opinions. Through the

semiotic regimes of mood organs, Mercer boxes and non-stop television broadcast, the

protagonists of *Do Androids…* are desubjectified, their unicity as subjects is disembodied to be

redistributed amongst an ersatz group-consciousness that is as larval as it is fake. What is more,

they are driven to re-create their shackles as a gesture of survival when one of the machines with

which they network is destroyed, emphasizing their enslavement to the artificial subjectivity

which was produced by their machinic environment. This case study provides this thesis with a

fictive exemplification of the processes of machinic control, exaggerated to fit the setting of a

science-fiction book but still powerful and precise as to the ramifications of the political power of machines. This powerful node of artistic expression suggests that humans are engaged without their consent in machinic enslavement, and can offer a realist, yet caricatural portrait of twenty-first century narrative production.

2.1. Machinic Assemblages

2.1.1. General Definition

Félix Guattari was a French thinker who was primarily concerned with individual and collective subjectivity, as well as the nodes of tension between homogenesis of knowledge, discourse and ideology and heterogenesis of resistance, new modes of being in the world and recreating oneself as a new subject through self-actualization. While his writings alongside French philosopher Gilles Deleuze are highly quoted and studied, his own contribution to the field of political philosophy is sometimes overlooked. However, several of his concepts have found anchors in real world occurrences and political events, namely the transformation of capitalism into a semiotic machine that secretes its own universes of signification (Lazzarato, 2014).

The concept of machinic assemblages similarly transcends the theoretical landscape to attempt a real-life reframing of the place of humans in the material world. Guattari's philosophy is concerned with molecular processes of individuation and their relationship to the molar institutions of power. For him both levels, molecular (individual, pre-individual) and molar (institutions, collective assemblages) are engaged in constant relationships of redistribution. One effect of molar strata is the production of models to emulate, of roles to be played by human individuals within a society (man, woman, worker, student, etc.). On the other hand, molecular intensities (self-positioning, affects) concern what is not (or rarely) perceived by molar

agglomerates: impressions, self-posturing, intimate relationships and non-verbal communication, among others. For Guattari and his philosophical colleague Gilles Deleuze, the molar and the molecular are in constant tension, a tension which is made apparent in neuroses, schizophrenia, and in general disassociation between the roles of civilized humans and their self-position in territories of existence (Deleuze & Guattari, 1971, 12-15).

This tension between an interior (molecular processes) and an exterior (molar agglomerations and institutions) is untangled in the present chapter through Guattari's concept of machinic assemblage. I offer an analysis of how narratives participate in the networking of a multiplicity of machines (social, biological, ideological, etc. *ad infinitum*) and how this networking makes itself *visible* at certain points of space and time. The *locus* of the revealing produced at these specific space-time nodes by machinic assemblages is, in some cases, the/a human subject. In fact, narrative revealing, in the Heideggerian sense of the unconcealment of a concealed potential, reveals subjects as being in part produced and codified by the assemblage in which they are engaged[27]. Since this thesis is concerned directly with the effect of contemporary forms of narration on human subjectivity, the transformation of pre-individual (pre-verbal, pre-representational, pre-affective) strata is emphasized by a thorough discussion of the concept of

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[27] See Heidegger, Martin. *The Question concerning technology*. Garland Publishing. 1977. In that text Heidegger develops his theory of technology as a revealing of the potentiality of nature. This revealing cannot be but historical, inserted in a context where it is an *event* that will then mutate towards other semiotic regimes: serialization, obsolescence, marginal use, kitsch, etc. The same can be said of storytelling as the *technē* of one aspect of *poiesis*: it makes visible a graspable potential at a given space and time, that is resolutely temporary and fluid.

machinic enslavement. Machinic enslavement is a direct effect of contemporary machinic assemblages that redistribute the pre-individual strata of subjectivity towards homogenization and strips agency away from the human subject.

But what is a machinic assemblage? It must be noted that Guattari's vision of the machine is not mechanocentric nor guided by a scientific paradigm. At the outset of his essay *À propos des machines…,* he quotes Pierre Lévy's ambition to "try […] and break down the ontological curtain between being[s] and things" (1995). What that means is on the one hand to open up a conceptual landscape to conceptions of the machine that are not purely mechanistic but also ontological, and on the other to consider machines as containing fragments of subjectivity and agency, what Guattari calls protosubjectivity.

The simple version of the definition of machinic assemblage is that everything (from biological beings to non-living objects, signs, affects, social constructs) is a machine enframed in various machine-like arrangements that create relational networks. Through processual networking with other machines and machinic environments, human subjectivities can be produced, re-produced and harvested like crops towards analysis and reproduction.

Machinic assemblages are networked environments that enable relational connections between subjectivities and objects, phenomena and other living beings. The most relevant aspects of the concept for this thesis relate to the complex ontogenetic and proto-subjective strata of the assemblage, the spheres of affects, pre-individual impressions, symbols and desires. In Guattari's conception of the machine, non-human machines possess ontological nuclei, something akin to the unconscious or soul in human machines, which permits networking with humans and can open the way for machinic enslavement, but also for a redefinition of the innate link between humans and their world.

Two distinct examples can help with understanding the critical stance taken by Guattari regarding machines, as a matter of introduction to the concept of machinic assemblage. The first one is the plow, one of the most basic and widely-used machines in the world. The second is this very thesis, and engages more radically with the theory to come.

A plow is a tool that has evolved from handheld pieces of wood to automatized mega machines that can turn the earth for hundreds of miles in a single day (Rehkugler, 2011). One might venture the statement: plows have evolved. But how so? On the one hand, the megamachines of today's agriculture are descendants of the handheld plows of the first days of agriculture. The various evolutions of the plow along its lineage are identifiable, namely through archeology and art history, and refer to the phylum of the plow, meaning its belonging to a particular species of tool/machine. Guattari refers to these ancestral characteristics as phylogenesis: that which in a given machine points to its machinic predecessors. On the other hand, each iteration of the plow possesses what Guattari calls ontological insistence. These nuclei of insistence make plows what they are, define their relationship with their environment, and finally are the locus of networking with other machines within assemblages. In other words, the ontogenetic sphere of the plow engages with economy, environmental conditions of possibility, the creation of patents and the subsequent hierarchization of technocracy, hunger and famine, etc. These connections and affordances are the core of machinic assemblages: meaning, possibility, potential are all activated through the interaction between multiple machines in a network. Without a field and crops, there is no need for plows. Circling back to my reading of Aristotle's *Poetics*, and looking ahead to my readings of fiction examples, the internalized world that emerges upon the act of *poiesis* is the ontological node of the poietic object. A narrative has a lineage based in the internalized world of the creator (phylogenesis) as well as a unicity as a coming-into-presence as a given poietic object emerging in a given context (ontogenesis).

This very thesis can be taken as a second example of a machine engaged within machinic assemblages. This example is more critical and leads towards the theoretical development to come because a written work is obviously far removed from mechanicity and traditional views on the machine compared to a plow or similar tools. This thesis is a machine made of constituent parts such as words, ideas, scientific and vernacular language, philosophical concepts, style, grammar, errors and typos, interpretations, misinterpretations, etc. Although the phylo/onto dyad should not be forced upon analyses for its own sake, as an example I consider this thesis' place within, say, narrative theory, post-marxism, post-structuralism and French theory as its phylum, and the overarching idea that narratives contribute to the codification of human life as its ontological nuclei of insistence, its (for lack of a better word) innovation. But there are other strata in the subterranean, almost imperceptible vaults of this thesis. These fragmentary components are pre-subjective, meaning that they are not enunciated in the words of this written work, nor identifiable in the bibliography or footnotes[28]. They are impressions made upon the writer or the reader, affective responses and sublimed affects, failed attempts at expressing an idea, the muted cry of anguish at an impossible sentence, the violent abstraction of an idea. In the section devoted to machinic enslavement, these pre-individual (or, in the case of this thesis, pre-written) fragments are theorized as the *locus* of machinic control. Through the manipulation of these fragments, something I theorize in Chapter 3 as the extraction and implantation of human ectosubjectivities, the enunciative agency of a machine can be torn to pieces and redistributed

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[28] Although it must be noted that footnotes, in their fragmentary and incomplete nature, can sometimes hint at pre-enunciative and non-verbal impressions and can alter the reception of the main text.

towards new realms of expression. In this case of machinic control, the ontological insistency of a machine is negated and overcoded into a homogenized simulacrum of free-will. As an example, in the 2016 Presidential election, the manipulation of voting intentions modified the freedom of the action of voting towards a pre-defined and codified gesture of controlled behaviour. This thesis, by a manipulation of its almost imperceptible pre-representational fragments, could be operationalized towards a totalitarian discourse, for example, disfiguring the original meaning of the work while giving it a new life in a new machinic assemblage, however poisonous.

Having offered an initial and general definition of this thesis' conceptualization of machines, two theoretical explorations pave the way to notions of control and serialization: Karl Marx's discussion of automated machinic systems in the *Grundrisse* and Félix Guattari's theory of machinic assemblages from his essay *On Machines*. From these two redefinitions of machines as belonging to the same plane of existence as humans, through a deconstruction of the anthropocentrist subject-object hierarchical scale, these two thinkers lead directly to this thesis' concept of machines as possessing the potential for the exercise of power over humans.

2.1.2. Marxist Machines

The machinic conception of Karl Marx prefigures Guattari's subsequent development in that both redistribute power among humans and machines. In his unfinished notebooks collected under the title *Grundrisse*, Marx theorized machines (especially "automatic systems of machinery") as the most adequate form of fixed capital: the integrated means of labor that permit surproduction and causes the obsolescence of the human worker by serving capital itself (1993, 692-695). In his conception, machines are still mechanic, they are not yet transformed into processes such as in Guattari's assemblages. But there is still an important redistribution of power in the sphere of human-machine relations that prefigures the post-structuralist machine.

Three main elements emerge from Marx's conception of the machine and lead directly to

Guattari's later theory: machinic power, science as the organizing force of machinery, and finally

the disintegration of the subject/object dyad.

 Machinic power becomes visible in the redistribution of the role of the worker in the

factory. Marx wrote:

> The worker's activity, reduced to a mere abstraction of activity, is determined and
> regulated on all sides by the movement of the machinery, and not the opposite. The
> science which compels the inanimate limbs of the machinery, by their construction, to act
> purposefully, as an automaton, does not exist in the worker's consciousness, but rather acts
> upon him through the machine as an alien power, as the power of the machine itself.
> (1993, 693)

 It is the machine that regulates the labour of the worker, and not the opposite. The worker

does not activate machines or tools anymore, rather "it is the machine which possesses skill and

strength in place of the worker, is itself the virtuoso, with a soul of its own in the mechanical

laws acting through it" (1993, 693). In other words, the sphere of skilled labour has drifted away

from human workers to become the dominion of machinic systems. The human worker has

become a "watchman" (1993, 705), monitoring the work of the machine and intervening only to

fix mechanical issues or to service the machines, in other words to recalibrate the machinic

system which replaces human labour.

 Thus, human workers are enslaved to the machines to which capital bounds them. Their

agency in production, the handiwork or *technē* of manual labour is replaced by automatized

processes which they are subservient to: "The hand tool makes the worker independent – posits

him as proprietor. Machinery – as fixed capital – posits him as dependent, posits him as

appropriated" (1993, 702). Through a complex process of mimetic domination of natural

processes and their subsequent transformation in science and machinery which replaces human labour (1993, 705), workers become appropriated by the process of capitalist production, becoming mere cogs in the machinic system of production.

As a second important aspect, Marx points to the fact that science becomes apparent as the force of the machine in the automatic action of the component parts of machinery. Science exercises power over human workers through that force, by replacing them as producers. A surprising assertion, however, is that the worker "inserts the process of nature, transformed into an industrial process, as a means between himself and inorganic nature, mastering it" (1993, 705). In Marx's conception *technē* mutates from handiwork in production towards skill in transforming nature into a device for enframing and dominating nature. Similarly, it can be inferred that human intelligence as science mutates from handiwork in production towards skill in transforming itself into a device for enframing and dominating itself. Intelligence becomes a force towards dominating both nature and humans through appropriation. Marx argues that ingenuity has shifted from factory work towards the production of fixed capital as a means to increase production profitability (1993, 706-707). Science, in its increased application to the production of means of labour (machines) rather than manual labour (tools), produces the appropriation of the workers through dependence to machinic systems and loss of manual skill. Capital, in summary, produces the conditions of human subservience to machinery (and capital) by appropriating the force of human intelligence against itself.

The redistribution of the role of human workers and their enslavement to machinic systems by the application of science against itself emphasize a reterritorialization of the subject/object dyad. Although still mechanistic, Marxist machines open a new spectrum of human networking with natural objects and artifacts of human creation, a spectrum that negates the primacy of human subjects over objects, that smoothes the borders between things and

beings. Here, the worker is not a domineering subject acting on a machinic object in a relation of production. On the contrary, machines reveal humans to themselves and redistribute their position in the spectrum of power as subordinated to machinic processes. The human becomes a cog in the wheel, a single component part in the machinic process of labour, and one machine in the plurality of machines that constitutes the factory megamachine. This idea of the human subject as appropriated by its environment through science, mechanisms and labour can appear surprising, in a neoliberal capitalist system where individualism and self-entrepreneurship is lauded and promoted. However, must it surprise us that the semantic field of the word subject, from its Latin roots, is that of subjection and subordination (Oresme, 1968)? The notion of subject can thus be thought of as possessing unicity and agency as a human, or conversely as being ontologically subjected to something (a body, a social structure, etc.)

By theorizing the human subject (worker, consumer or reader) as subjected to the machinic pressures of their environment, a relational regime of being emerges which prefigures Guattari's concept of machinic assemblages. Marx's conception moves human expression and production from a dominating standpoint (the tool user) towards a subservient or relational standpoint (monitoring, servicing). Since I understand subjectivity as a plural fragmentary substrate in constant redistribution, as does Guattari, humans can be thought of as, on the one hand, a mere cog in the wheel, and on the other as susceptible to be overpowered by their machinic environment.

In summary, in Marx's conception the human worker is already a machine in liminal networking with other machinic assemblages to which he or she is subjected: class struggle, capital, scientific development, transformation of labour. The workers are redefined towards new territories of ontological distributions. To further the understanding of this redistribution of power and its networking within a machinic environment, in other words to propose the notion of

the inherent subjection of human subjects to a multiplicity of processes, a study of Guattari's machinic assemblage paves the way to a redefinition of narratives as machines of subjection.

2.1.3. Guattarian Assemblages

Guattari, in the later stages of his philosophical journey, developed the notion of a machine articulated with humans in environments of production and signification, what he called *machinic assemblages*. His conception of the machine echoes Innis' theory of mediation: in both theories all the elements of a given environment (socius, economy, natural affordances, beliefs and myths, signs, etc.) connect to form this environment's mediatic/machinic context; the emergence of new elements or conditions of possibility can trigger mutations of the environment by the creation of new media/machines. In the example from Marx's *Grundrisse*, the introduction of a new media (automatic systems of machinery) in factories produced the conditions of possibility for the resubjectivation of human workers as subjugated by the machinic regime of labour rather than possessors of technical knowledge in tool use. Thus, the emergence of a new media transformed the whole assemblage and redistributed power and agency throughout.

Guattari developed his vision of machinic assemblages in a short essay entitled *On Machines*, where he proposed, following Pierre Lévy, to tear down the iron curtain between beings and things by reframing the interplay of humans and machines (Lévy, 1990). It must be emphasized that his vision of the machine is not mechanistic, although mechanic machines are also part of machinic assemblages. Rather, it considers everything that possesses a nucleus of ontological affirmation as a machine: humans, animals, signs, socius, economy, dreams, narratives, etc. As such, humans are machinic beings (made of cells and organs (micromachines) which have inner consistency and functioning) engaged in machinic networks with a plurality of other machines. In Guattari's theory, the networking spectrum of human beings with their world

is opened up to non-human living beings as well as non-living processes, non-verbal and pre-verbal expression, objects and artifacts, and so forth. An important aspect of Guattari's theory is that networking between humans and their machinic environments occurs in the proto-subjective strata of affects, desire and fragmentary subjective components. As the section on machinic enslavement analyses, these proto-subjective strata are primordial in formulating inner territories of identity and enunciation. Their manipulation and subjugation can create individual and collective disfunctions, which alter the equilibrium of the assemblage.

In order to problematize Guattari's concept of machinic assemblage, a long quote from his essay *On Machines* can initiate a definition of the concept and problematize how it engages with the present study of narratives:

Let us begin at the most simple, and already more or less established idea: that the technical object cannot be limited to its materiality. In *technē,* there are ontogenetic elements, elements of the plan, of construction, social relationships which support these technologies, a stock of knowledge, economic relations and a whole series of interfaces onto which the technical object attaches itself. From this, we can establish a link between a modern type of technological machine and the tools or the actual pieces of the machine, and think of these as elements connected to one another. Ever since Leibnitz, the concept of an articulated machine has been available, which one would qualify today as fractal, with other machines which are themselves made up of infinite machinic elements. Thus the machine's environment forms part of machinic *agencements*[29]. The liminal element of

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[29] The translation of the French concept *agencements machiniques* is somewhat problematic. Some translators use the word *agencement*, as is the case here. However, most scholars use the

the entry into the machinic zone undergoes a kind of smoothing process, of

the uniformization of a material, like steel which is treated, deterritorialized and made

uniform in order to be moulded into machinic shapes.

The essence of the machine is linked to procedures which deterritorialize its elements,

functions and relations of alterity. Hence it will be necessary to speak of the ontogeny of

the technical machine as that which makes it open itself to the exterior.

Alongside the ontogenetic element is another dimension which is phylogenetic.

Technological machines are caught in a 'phylum' which is preceded by some machines

and succeeded by others. These proceed by generations - like generations of motor cars -

with each generation opening the virtuality of other machines to come; and particular

elements within these machines also initiate a meeting point with all the machinic

descendants of the future.

The two categories of ontogenesis and phylogenesis applied to the technological object

allow us to make a link with other machinic systems which are

not themselves technological. In the history of philosophy, the problem of the machine

has generally been regarded as secondary to a more general system -that of *technē* and

technique *(la technique).* I would propose a reversal of this point of view, to the extent

that the problem of technique would now only be a subsidiary part of a much wider

machine problematic. Since the 'machine' is opened out towards its machinic environment

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word *assemblage*, which I have preferred for sake of clarity and because of its widespread use but

which, in my opinion, negates the implied pre-existing relationality and dynamism-to-come of

the French word *agencement*.

and maintains all sorts of relationships with social constituents and individual

subjectivities, the concept of technological machine should therefore be broadened to that

of *machinic assemblages.* This category encompasses everything that develops as a

machine in its different registers and ontological supports. And here, rather than having

an opposition between *being* and the machine, or *being* and the subject, this new notion of

the machine now involves *being* differentiating itself qualitatively and emerging onto an

ontological plurality, which is the very extension of the creativity of machinic vectors.

(1995, 9-10)

The first step in unfolding this quote is a framing of the previously mentioned notions of

ontogenesis and phylogenesis, respectively the development of the individual and the global

evolution of a species and its transformations. Guattari argues that machines have ontological

nuclei, meaning that a machine is the accumulated result of its space and time production or

revealing through its constituent elements (plan, technical knowledge, production possibilities,

main d'oeuvre, etc.). The machine is defined by its use while at the same time informing its use:

it will enter semiotic regimes of serialization and obsolescence, depending on its ontological

placement in the larger machinic network of need, refinement and progress. All the elements of

the machine, technical and other, are individual pieces that connect together to form the existence

of the machine. The machine is opened to external influence, to alterity: Guattari even identifies

the essence of machines in their openness to an exterior. In other words, if machines are

considered temporary composites informed by the space-time disposition of *technē*, of economic

needs, of ideological or social pressures, it is necessarily open to mutation through the influence

of the other machines in its network. This is what Guattari calls the smoothed liminal borders

between machines. There is cross-pollination that informs production of new ontologies for a

multiplicity of machines engaged in fluid relations and tensions. Every machinic networking is the mutation of all machines engaged in the network on an ontological level.

The phylogenetic aspect of Guattarian machines is concerned with the global evolution of a species framed by historicity and the crystallization of a space-time in a technological *event*. A given machine, for example a plow, is engaged in relational networks with the plows of history, from the very first tool used to turn the earth, or even the human hand, all the way to the ultra-mechanized, massive machines of the twenty-first century. Each historical iteration of the plow is informed by the plows of the past and informs the plows of the future. Past mistakes can be fixed, new durable materials created, ancient designs reappropriated in new light. Phylogenesis is the emergence of a new iteration of a given machine in a new environment of emergence. This concept leads to considering all machinic revealing as *events*: they consist of composites emerging forth into the open, producing themselves from all of their virtualities. In an interview with Jacques Pain, Guattari formulated a similar argument: "[t]he relation between the inside and the outside of a machinic system is not only the result of a consummation of energy, of the production of an object: it is equally manifested through genetic phylums. A machine rises to the surface of the present like the completion of a past lineage, and it is the point of restarting, or of rupture, from which an evolutionary lineage will spread in the future" (1996, 267). Notice here that Guattari identifies machinic emergence in reality as having the potential for continuation or rupture with the phylum. This innate potential for rupture frames my reading of truth-telling and of resistance in Chapter 4. Phylogenesis is the emergence of a machinic subjectivity (a synonym for a machinic ontological nuclei of insistence) in a given space-time continuum: as soon as it is brought forth it has changed and is being resubjectivated again and again and again… As soon as it appears it disappears again towards its virtual iterations through networking with other machines and new environments. The next machinic emergence, may it be mechanical, social,

individual, etc., will have morphed, will be different, sometimes to the point of unrecognition, with the previous machine along its phylogenetic line.

It is crucial to underline the interrelation between ontogenesis and phylogenesis. The simple example of the plow will suffice to emphasize how both concepts are undifferentiated in machinic assemblages. While economic needs, evolving practices of agriculture and technological refinement inform a given plow, past and future plows also inform economic needs, evolving practices of agriculture and technological refinement. On the one hand, ontogenesis is the mutation of the ontological frontiers and individual elements in an exchange between individual machines, creating the potential for transformational networking. Phylogenesis, on the other hand, is the ensemble of the past, present and future virtualities of a given machine. Each machine is one point along the non-linear chronology of its species. Its becoming has a productive character because it produces a present that will instantly be a past and will inform the future. As such, the transformations happening in a given present through the networking of ontological fragments has power, or at least influence, on future machinic concatenations.

The inscription of a machine in a phylum codifies, through its ontogenetic nuclei composed of *technē*, alterity and potential, every single other machinic emergence across the machine's environment. In the case of narratives, the artificial proliferation of machinic emergence by capitalist or anarchist groups, for example, could cause the adherence to a certain set of ideals or, conversely, wholesale refusal. Thus, the cross-pollination of a given machine with multiple other machines within its machinic environment has the potential to enforce power and/or foster resistance, because the creation of narratives is the artificial production of a machine, the insemination of phylogenetic lines with artifacts imbued with configured ontogenetic components. Considered in this fashion, narratives are machines generated artificially from phylum, configured with knowledge and signification in the form of ontogenetic

components and inserted into new territories of existence, new phylum, new virtualities. In summary, every machine created today is also one point along the phylum of its species, producing constant mutations of ontogenetic nuclei and thus redistributing said species in the larger network of the assemblage. The result is the cross-pollination and mutation of ontological machinic nuclei (affective, signifying or pre-signifying) in a chaos of constant change and mutual information. This creates an ontological plurality, a constant redistribution of semiotic regimes at the core level of all machines.

One innovative aspect of Guattari's machinic conceptualization is that machines have a productive character that is other than strictly mechanical or capitalistic. Machinic assemblages have the potential to produce or manipulate machinic subjectivity, form nodes of homogeneous or heterogenous production (of subjectivity, of content, of opinion…), foster resistance or promote subservience, etc. Machinic assemblages are often engaged with dominant semiotic producers, such as Capital or scientific discourse, not because their structures compel them to, but because a plurality of semiotic machines are imbued with these discourses. The assemblages thus carry the surproduce of capitalist semiotic overcoding. Capital is nothing, merely a sign used to define an agglomeration of morphing practices and ideologies. At the same time, it is a megamachine, an environment where thousands of machines collide, infect or are infected, battle and mutate. Capital does not produce narratives or signification itself, rather the stories are *about* capital, or rather about fragmentary practices of capital consumption or capital production in an instantaneous space and time where the story needs to be produced. These narratives are machines engaged in the machinic environment of capital, either reinforcing practices or ideology or attempting to form new territories of existence, with a few absolutely indifferent to the environment in which they emerge. In the 21st century, in most strata of occidental societies, capital is a dominant semiotic producer. The amount of narratives that emerge within capital's

machinic network to concatenate with human subjectivities, the economy and social hierarchies is deafening and difficult to navigate. This cacophony brings about subjective saturation and machinic entanglement, two states that I discuss in more detail alongside the concept of ectosubjectivity in Chapter 3. The manipulation of storytelling by the assemblages linked to capital, visible in various narrative forms such as advertising, news broadcasts or algorithmic content on social media, is the subject of the next section.

2.2. Machinic Assemblages and Storytelling

2.2.1. Capital as a Semiotic Producer

The concept of machinic assemblage relates to storytelling in a variety of ways. Work is not the only human activity which has lost its hands-on, usage-based and voluntary character. It is not the only human activity where machinic entanglement has begun gnawing at the human pedestal. Other activities, such as consumption (of content, of goods, of a certain lifestyle) and circulation (automotive, overseas, cycling) are now more than ever codified by machines that have become indispensable. Even evanescent and ageless experiences of the world, such as love, hate, ideology and faith can be informed and even generated by machines of opinion production like news broadcasts, social media and mass-mediation. Marx considered automatic machines as the most refined version of machinery (1993, 693), and it seems that the automatization of human subjectivity in machinic assemblages is increasingly ubiquitous. The abstraction of human endeavor by machines speaks to an emaciation of subjectivity in the current hyper-technological age, a subjection to new dominant regimes of semiotic production; an enslavement to the machinic production of the self (He, 2017). In *The Molecular Revolution*, Guattari argued that capitalism "launches (subjective) models the way the automobile industry launches a new line of cars." (1977, 95) Human subjectivity has become one produce of Capital, generated through

automatic processes of serialization, constant mediation and overcoding of pre-individual strata.

Like any other consumption product, it can be molded according to the needs of the market and

the availability of resource. As I have mentioned, the artificial production of human subjectivity

is not an immutable process. Nodes of resistance, namely through chaos and the refusal of the

ideals of capitalism and industrialization or the revalorization of a life based on natural cycles,

permit the opening of new territories of self-invention, as Chapter 4 discusses.

Narratives are one *matière première* from which subjective models are formed.

Accordingly, they show symptoms of increasing automatization. In fact, it seems as though

machinic storytelling (suggested content, advertisement, algorithmic social media) has almost

replaced works of art (poetry, theater, novels) as the dominating forms of narrativity in the

twenty-first century. The 2020 pandemic showed how culture, at least in Québec, was inferior to

the general concern for 'the economy' (Tremblay, 2022). While American megabusinesses such

as Walmart and Costco were open for business, theaters and cinemas were closed off, with barely

a plan for their reopening. Notwithstanding the urgency of survival and necessary items of

consumption during a pandemic, the focus on general economic concerns above all others

emphasized how the capitalist system was based on continuous consumption and non-stop

production. With sarcasm, one might ask: What is the importance of a poetry reading compared

to being able to buy consumption products? The pandemic, at least in Québec, did not leave any

doubt as to the importance, or lack thereof, of 'culture' for governing bodies. Advertisement,

news broadcasts and social media narratives, on the other hand, are trying their best to usurp

human attention with continuous diffusion of easily consumable content and discourse on human

needs. Some scholars even argue that the machinic processes of narrativity have become

consumable power (Fuchs, 2011).

In his essay *On Machines*, Guattari wrote about liminal borders that permit entry and evacuation of machinic elements within machinic assemblages. Those sieves are traversed by continuous elements from other machines, fragments that carry signification or that inform the evolution of one machine and, by extension, all others in its network. Narratives are part of other narratives, and carry within them both signs from ancient stories as well as new semiotic mutations that produce a crystallized event of signification. Julie Kristeva's claim that every text is absorption and transformation of another text (Kristeva, 1969, 85) echoes phylogenesis and, more importantly, takes ominous proportions in the context of the automatized production and distribution of content, pointing to the receiver rather than the text as the one absorbed.

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, may they be the work of a single author or of a multiplicity, are composite constructions of initiation, history, myth, prophecies, didactic tales, etc. As such, the tales were wrought by the times in which they were produced, and they shaped the era of their readers. Similarly, speculative fiction in the twenty-first century is highly concerned with apocalypse and dystopia, two current themes that shape the collective imaginary and might shape human relationship to the world in the future, in relation with the current destruction of the biosphere and interpersonal and interspecies relationships (Wojtaszek, 2014). This interest in speculative fiction and its imagining of a better world saved from destruction, namely the solarpunk genre (Wieland & Wagner ed., 2017), speaks directly to the creation of new territories of expression which are marginal but slowly permeate machinic networks. The cross-pollination of narratives with the environment from which they spawn speaks to onto- and phylogenesis, but occurrences of the codification of the environment of emergence, in other words the overcoding of the nodes composing machinic assemblages, by narratives themselves are more and more common, namely in capitalist narratives.

The connectiveness of Guattari's machines to other machines and machinic vectors is directly linked to the notion of mediation as it was described it in Chapter 1. A specific medium, say a novel or an advert campaign, emerges from the conditions of possibility of its environment and context of emergence. It is brought-forth through the networking of the creator(s) with necessities of expression (artistic drives, economic growth), distribution media available, social and cultural climate, target audience, etc. However, when it is produced it does not stop networking, it informs future *poiesis*, transforms necessities of expression, or social climate, and so on. As I have emphasized with Innis' example of the development of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations, a medium is a medium of something. It has to produce meaning, progress, power, circularity, law and order, and so on. A medium produces something, leads an object or a subject from one state or position to another.

Narratives imbued with overcoding for future machinic emergences permeate the new forms of storytelling that dominate the landscape of capital: advertising, social media, algorithmic content, news broadcasts. These narratives saturate the available space of information consumption and plug human receivers directly into the machines they are connected to. Humans are thus constantly subjected to the dominant narratives of capital, labour necessities, ideological patterns and dogmatic truths. It becomes hard to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and to self-create a coherent existence that is removed from the pressing urges of mass-mediation. The next section studies the transformative power of narrative machines on human individuality.

2.2.2. Narrative Machines

Storytelling could be best understood as the assembling processes of machines, the opening of a space of tension between machines that produce a crystallization of a multiplicity of constitutive components in a given temporary space-time: a narrative. Even though Marxist

machines pointed to the interplay between machines and humans and offered a vision of human subjects as transformable by contact with machines, the relational networks are more complicated than domination on either side. Receivers are not passive human slaves bound to be destroyed by the oppressive machines of narration. Even though the overcoding of reception is becoming more frequent, capitalist narratives often fail at fostering the appropriate reception posture or triggering the correct subjective strata. For example, a failed advertisement campaign means that the receivers did not engage with the concepts at hand, but also that they have the power to refuse or refute any given narrative. On the other hand, the most successful narratives are the ones that connect with the underlying processes of consciousness, the protosubjective fragments of unconscious reflexes and drives, and thus guide reception before it happens. These occurrences are an exchange of ontogenetic elements from the phylum of previous narratives with the protosubjective elements within the receiver in a liminal networking that informs the receiver about the receiving posture to adopt. Such narratives, as I emphasize in Chapter 3, are the phantasm of all 21st century content producers.

It is interesting to reflect on the evanescence and short-sight of contemporary narratives compared to earlier iterations of storytelling. Oral epics or sacred texts, for example, had a universal aspect that transcended space and time to offer some kind of 'truth'; fairy tales had didactic motivations that can be pondered to this day. In the twenty-first century, religious believers still reach for their sacred texts for guidance or to renew their faith. Narratives, (especially those concerned with faith) might be mediated by new gurus or modernized by forward thinking members of the clergy, but the stories and teachings retain the same basic elements through millennia. In Christianity, for example, the myriad interpretations of sacred love stem from the same canonically accepted textual composition; through its flowering

virtuality, the New Testament opened gargantuan realms of phylogenesis for new machinic narratives and hermeneutical explorations.

By comparing the narrative of Christian love with an advertisement for a new computer, for example, one can ponder the apparent short-sightedness of the latter. The computer, or shampoo, or any other product or service, will become obsolete, be replaced by a better iteration or a new product altogether in a matter of weeks, months, seldom years. The advertisement, in our example, attempts to present itself as 'truth', even as 'a truth'. It is also concerned with a short period of time, the time of newness. Thirty seconds of allotted screen time before being replaced by another advert. If we move back to the previous reflection about the narratives produced in relation with capital, it becomes apparent that capital is concerned with instantaneity rather than duration. However, although the products and services change rapidly, narratives retain constant basic elements: consumption, representation of ideal life (or hair, or device, or trip abroad, etc.), improvement of one's existence, enticement. Is capital, as a source of narrative construction of reality, only concerned with instantaneity in appearance, but concerned more insidiously by the duration of practices and ideologies than specific products or services? Is capital, or any other semiotic producer of its magnitude, concerned with anything at all? Individual adverts are concerned with instantaneity, but other types of narratives, such as slogans, are concerned with universal signification. For example, the slogan of Nike is 'Just Do It'. It brings forth the question as to what is it that one should be doing. In truth, it does not matter one bit, because the universality of the slogan is its strength: it can connect with any individual expression and desire. Roger wants to go on more walks, the slogan encourages him. Jean wants to lose weight? Just do it. Even Arietta, who wants to write a book, might do it better with Nike shoes on. At least this is what, if we push the analysis to its limits, seems to be implied in the universal signification of the slogan. The instantaneity of a single advert, in this example, is

subsumed in the universality of an overarching narrative slogan that encompasses all of Nike's adverts.

In this discussion of machinic narratives infused with capital, one thing makes itself visible: a homogeneous sign regime based on constant storytelling, information saturation and universal signification exists in North America, transforming the borders between media, making them porous and overtaking numerous dissident voices in an oligarchic power grab (Fuchs, 2011). It seems that the products or services do not truly matter, but that it is the space they fill that is of import. Or rather, that the only product that is of any importance to capital is the human subject and how it reacts to content. Through the saturation of sensory output, narratives fill a void within human subjectivity with ready-made discourse and postures which promulgate capital's needs by converting desire into interest (Buchanan, 2008, 11). In the Nike slogan example, the desire to do something is transformed into a universal signifier for consumption. Desires or drives are narratively transformed into consumption potential.

Machinic assemblages can be understood as the primary *loci* of semiotic and subjectivity manipulation through the connections and cross-pollinations of narratives with other machines such as capital, cultural milieu, economic orientations, social background, etc., in an environment of interinfluence. The fact that advertisement, social media and news outlets channel a constant stream of narratives, sometimes on multiple media at a time, is a semiotic revolution that is accelerating at tremendous speed and frames human experience of daily life. Humans have the same characteristics as other machines: they are made of constitutive elements which are networked to form a coherent whole, they are engaged in processual relationships with other human machines and non-human machines, they evolve (or mutate) both individually and as a species by these incessant connections and redistributions. Narratives, as artificial machines inserted into the ontogenetic network of humans, have the potential to codify and transform

human subjectivity by reterritorializing the register of being in new semiotic territories. The ubiquity of the ontological manipulation of capitalist mass-mediation could thus alters human thought and practice with increasing speed. Such rapid mutations can be cause for concern, in the Heideggerian sense of a preoccupation of the future project of individual and collective being-in-the-world[30].

The concern evinced by the constant redistribution of semiotics and subjectivity is a concern for the increasing disembodiment of the self. Through the constant stream of information and content submitted to humans on a daily basis, one is slowly stripped of semiotic anchors or natural distributions (affects and percepts) that could permit renewed personal existential grasping (Guattari, 2018). The accessibility of mass-media content is so fluid and ubiquitous, and its information value so low, that humans do not have to reach for knowledge anymore: it is constantly being distributed with an ease of consumption that echoes the ethereal interdimensional advertisements of *Ubik* (Dick, 2007). Humans are presented with fragments of stories in news broadcasts and in social media, thousands of stories every day that barely touch upon the consciousness of the receiver but permeate the liminal borders of its ontological subjectivity. This process has been theorized by Italian scholar Maurizzio Lazzarato as machinic enslavement. The next section discusses the concept of machinic enslavement and its relationship with machinic narrativity.

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[30] For further reading on the concept of concern (die Sorgen): Heidegger, Martin. *Introduction to phenomenological research.* Indiana University Press, 2005. & Heidegger, Martin. *Être et Temps*. Gallimard, 1990. Chapter 6.

2.3. Machinic Enslavement

The concept of machinic assemblages theorizes the cross-pollination of media, humans, technology, signs and machines in a transversal, networked environment. Hence, machinic enslavement is not subservient to any structure or institution, but nonetheless codifies semiotic regimes and has the potential to produce the homogeneity of subjectivity and discourse. When Marx theorized the increasing subjugation of humans to machines, he claimed that the worker "inserts the process of nature, transformed into an industrial process, as a means between himself and inorganic nature, mastering it" (1993, 705). What I argued in section 2.1.2. is that it can be inferred from this quote that human intelligence, as a science, is also transformed into an industrial process that transforms itself into a device for enframing and dominating itself. Human intelligence, in this conception, becomes a scientific process of domination over nature and humans through their appropriation as means. Machinic enslavement, similarly, masters human subjectivity through its forceful insertion in machinic networks as a means for a plurality of effects: reproduction of ideology, consumption, propaganda, opinion formation, etc. This section delves into the effects and processes at play in machinic enslavement.

What are its *effects* on human subjects in the context of vertiginous fluctuations of storytelling? The concept of machinic enslavement is worth unwrapping because it presents humans as disembodied *by* the machine. It understands human subjectivity as possessing pre-individual ontological components (pre-subjective or protosubjective fragments) which can be enslaved by machinic processes, with the potential for conditioning or overcoding multiple strata of subjectivity. Thought of as a mechanism of power, machinic enslavement hints at the development of the next chapter, which deals with the control exercised upon subjects in the context of hyper-mediatisation and saturation of content.

Already in *Mille Plateaux*, published eleven years before Guattari's *On Machines*, Deleuze and Guattari theorized machines that were not only mechanic but also incorporated human subjects at their core, changing the regimes of subjectivity and subjectivation. They wrote:

> ...the axiomatic itself, of which the States are models of realization, restores or reinvents, in new and now technical forms, an entire system of machinic enslavement. This in no way represents a return to the imperial machine since we are now in the immanence of an axiomatic, and not under the transcendence of a formal Unity. But it is the reinvention of a machine of which human beings are constituent parts, instead of subjected workers or users. If motorized machines constituted the second age of the technical machine, cybernetic and informational machines form a third age that reconstructs a generalized regime of subjection: recurrent and reversible "humans-machines systems" replace the old nonrecurrent and nonreversible relations of subjection between the two elements; the relation between human and machine is based on internal, mutual communication, and no longer on usage or action... (1980, 458)

This vision of a relational networking between human and machine opens a different perspective than Marx's machinic power. Whereas in Marx's formulation the human worker is appropriated by the machine, in *Mille Plateaux* the machine is composed of a plurality of parts, humans among them. Similar to the concept of machinic assemblage, here a city is considered as a megamachine composed of human citizens, means of transport, work possibilities, friendships and love interests, social organization, disease, ruins, etc. In this conceptualization, the machine is not a means of production (Marxist fixed capital), but rather an assemblage engaged with other assemblages to form larger assemblages (machinic environment). The city, composed of the machines enumerated above (and others), is networked with other cities, the countryside, nation or culture identity, economic growth or decline, etc., to form a nation, province, state, or any

other form of geopolitical organization. Thus, the quote from *Mille Plateaux* prefigures Guattari's idea of the machine as affecting subjectivity and its reframing from motorized and mechanical to all-encompassing processes of human and machine networking, especially in the notion of mutual internal communication. It also echoes Marx's conception of humans as constituent parts of non-mechanistic machines (2011, 184-185), a node along the phylum of Guattari's conceptualization.

Another intriguing aspect of the above quote from *Mille Plateaux* is the mention of machinic enslavement alongside the notion of a shift in the ontology of machines as objects of usage towards machines as equal constituent of regimes of subjectivity. There is a conceptual rearrangement in Deleuze and Guattari's writing regarding human subjectivity in relation to machinic assemblages, towards a reterritorialization of machines and humans on the same ontological plane. This redistribution of power is crucial, because it negates the reigning cartesian dogma of subject of thought versus object of thought posited by the *cogito* (Heidegger, 2008, 324). In *Mille Plateaux*, the subject does not impose its will on objects, machines and nature, nor does the mechanic machine appropriate subjectivity; humans are considered as possessing the same machinic core elements as all the other machines of society, nature, economics, art, progress, and so forth.

Deleuze and Guattari theorize the deterritorialization of human subjectivity from anthropocentrism towards ontological relationality with beings and things that surrounds it[31]. The ontological nuclei of humans and machines are redistributed on the same plane of existence,

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[31] A similar redistribution of power occurs in postnatural theory. See for example Anderson, 2009.

creating new possibilities for redefinition of the self and of things as engaged within the same

processes, the same networks, the same abstract levels of activity[32]. Human subjectivity is acted

upon by the objects, machines, processes in close contact within machinic environments,

sometimes to the point of human subservience. This is what Deleuze and Guattari call machinic

enslavement.

Italian scholar and Guattari exegete Maurizzio Lazzarato defines machinic enslavement as

a regime of subjection which acts upon pre-verbal, pre-representational and pre-subjective strata

of human subjectivity through their overcoding: "In machinic enslavement, the individual is no

longer instituted as an 'individuated subject,' 'economic subject' (human capital, entrepreneur of

the self), or 'citizen'. He is instead considered a gear, a cog, a component part in the 'business'

and 'financial system' assemblages, in the media assemblages, and the 'welfare-state' assemblage

and its collective institution" (2014, 25). Machinic enslavement does not act upon individualized

persona (man, woman, student, worker, etc.) but rather on the level of the component. The

individual is leveled into statistical molds and manufactured as a means towards gaining capital

(Hacking, 2002; Zuboff, 2020). This phenomenon brings together Marx's machinic appropriation

of humans and the relational machines of Deleuze and Guattari: humans become part of machinic

processes in intercommunication, but power can be exercised upon their pre-subjective strata of

affect, desires and perception. Lazzarato pursues that thought when he writes:

> [n]ot only is the dividual *of a piece with* the machinic assemblage but he is also *torn to*
>
> *pieces* by it: the component parts of subjectivity (intelligence, affects, sensations,
>
> cognition, memory, physical force) are no longer unified in an 'I', they no longer have an

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[32] Deleuze & Guattari, 1991. Chapter 2.

individuated subject as referent. Intelligence, affects, sensations, cognition, memory, physical force are now components whose synthesis no longer lies in the person but in the assemblage or process (corporations, media, public services, education, etc.). (2014, 27)

The importance of machinic enslavement can be further understood through an analogy with the Jungian unconscious. In Jung's theory, "part of the unconscious consists of a multitude of temporarily obscured thoughts, impressions, and images that, in spite of being lost, continue to influence our conscious minds" (1968, 18). These pre-signifying affects and percepts, 'hidden' in the unconscious for potential emergence at different points in the future, influence the conscious minds both in their subterranean movement and the impression they produce in their emergence as dream, memory, vague impression, and so on. Lazzarato considers that machinic enslavement does not act upon the individualized self (consciousness) but rather on pre-verbal and pre-representational strata of subjectivity (unconscious) in order for humans to fit the schema of business and capital. Reflecting upon Jung's claim that obscured thoughts, impressions and images influence the conscious mind, I take one step further and conceive of machinic enslavement as the manipulation of these pre-signifying components of subjectivity towards overcoding their emergence in dreams, desires and vague impressions. In other words, machinic enslavement theorizes the governmentality of the human unconscious through the insertion of discourse in social, economic and semiotic machines and its codification of human pre-individual strata through networking.

The conjunction of the concepts of machinic enslavement and governmentality is emphasized by Gerald Raunig in his book *A Thousand Machines,* in which he attempts to bring machine theory in the realms of social action. Raunig writes:

Machinic enslavement, conducting modes of subjectivation beyond social subjection, is the government shadow-side of the potentiality even of advanced means of

communication. The dependency on machines is multiplied through the continual

attachment to machines. The high art of machinic enslavement interlocks a permanent

online life with the imperative of life-long learning and the irresolvable merging of

business deals and affects. (2010, 112)

In this view, capitalism can invest human affect through social machines: advertisement,

news broadcasts, academic structure and reforms, management of the art world. In a widespread

contagion, the machine of business infects the concatenations of machinic environments,

preproducing the reception of these assemblages. Since machinic enslavement, per Lazzarato,

acts on pre-verbal and pre-representational strata of subjectivity, when this corporate whirlwind

infiltrates pre-subjective affects, it has the potential to condition the transition of these affects in

their posterior subjective configuration (such as enunciation, creation or consumption).

Maurizio Lazzarato offers two explicit examples of how pre-subjective elements of

human psyche can be taken over by machines towards machinic enslavement.

The first example of the effect of machinic assemblages on subjectivity appears in

Lazzarato's book *Signs and Machines*, and concerns the driving of an automobile. He argues that

the driver of an automobile is guided by the machinic assemblages rather than guides it. He

writes:

When we drive, we activate subjectivity and a multiplicity of partial consciousnesses

connected to the car's technological mechanisms. There is no 'individuated subject' that

says 'you must push this button, you must press this pedal.' If one knows how to drive,

one acts without thinking about it, without engaging reflexive consciousness, without

speaking or representing what one does. We are guided by the car's machinic assemblage.

Our actions and subjective components (memory, attention, perception, etc.) are

'automatized,' a part of the machinic, hydraulic, electronic, etc., apparatuses, constituting,

like mechanical (non-human) components, parts of the assemblage. (2014, 89)

The human subject is part of the movement of the machine, as a constituent component.

He or she is desubjectivated and resubjectivated as part of the assemblage, on the same

ontological level as the engine, lights, wheels (2014, 89). Thus, there is a shift of power and

agency in the partial desubjectivation of the driver to fit in, or engage with, the assemblage.

While Marxist machines in the *Grundrisse* exercised direct power over the human worker by

their prevalence in production, Guattarian machines produce alterations in pre-subjective

regimes. Guattari defines this proto-subjective strata as "a function of consistency in the machine,

both a relationship to itself and a relationship to alterity." (Guattari, 1995) The machine's

relationship to alterity constructs the Other's reaction virtually in a dialogic relationship.

Lazzarato furthers this notion in his epilogue to Gerald Raunig's book *A Thousand Machines*:

"Machinic enslavement consists in mobilizing and modulating the pre-individual, pre-cognitive

and pre-verbal components of subjectivity, causing affects, perceptions and sensations as yet

unindividuated or unassigned to a subject, etc. to function like the cogs and components in a

machine" (2006, 3).

The human driver is thus resubjectivated as a cog in the automobile machine through a

redistribution of his or her pre-subjective elements, the ontological fragments which can

consolidate to produce a subjective whole. To rephrase the notion, machinic enslavement

produces new regimes of subjectivity through their constant networking with codifying machinic

assemblages. These new subjective regimes alter the essence of what it is to be a human subject

in that they force the resubjectivation of the human engaged in networking. Lazzarato argues that

"[s]ubjection operates at the molar level of the individual (its social dimension, the roles,

functions, representations and affections). Enslavement on the other hand operates at the molecular (or pre-individual or infrasocial) level (affects, sensations, desires, those relationships not yet individuated or assigned to a subject)" (2006, 1). The human subjectivity is thus both individually subjected to social codes through roles (man, woman, worker) and enslaved to pre-individuated or pre-representational machine-produced affects (Lazzarato, 2014, 25). By assigning his or her pre-individual strata to the automobile assemblage, the human driver, although still a subject in the sense of obeying traffic laws and vying for safe driving, becomes enslaved to the machinic assemblage of automobile circulation.

Similarly, enslavement to the machinic assemblage of mass-mediation can be understood as the overcoding of the pre-individual nexus of desire, sensations, affects and percepts, with the effect of conditioning how humans will engage in relationality with machinic assemblages. As I have mentioned, Nike's slogan plays the role of universal signifier in hopes of networking with as many individuals as possible. Consumption habits, opinions, doubts and reactions to stimuli can thus be conditioned and codified through the implantation of pre-signifying affects and percepts. Lazzarato's exemplification of television as such a process is illuminating. He argues that when one is interviewed, when one speaks through the television machine, he or she believes to be the subject of the enunciation (*sujet d'énonciation*) while he or she is really the subject of a statement (*sujet d'énoncé*) and that the words are recodified, analyzed, interpreted and transformed by the machine itself. He writes:

> At the end of the interview, you are the subject of the statement, an effect of the semiotics of the machine of communication, believing itself to be a subject of enunciation, feeling itself to be the absolute, individual cause and origin of statements, whereas in reality it is the result of a machinery, no more than the end point in the process. Your words are

folded over statements and modes of expression which are imposed on you and expected of you. Beneath the folds of your mental reality lies the dominant reality. Without being aware of it, you have slipped into the statements and expressions of the machine of communication. (2006, 2)

The interviewee's enunciation is replaced through the networking of the television machine with dominant discourse, technical manipulations (such as editing and sound manipulation), and what is awaited of his or her enunciation. When the interview is aired, the enunciation is not the interviewee's anymore. One the one hand, the technical manipulation of enunciation transforms it into a re-utterance of the dominant or desired discourse, and on the other hand the potentialities of discourse are pre-codified through constant redistribution of discourse (on television, social media, news broadcasts, advertisement). The initial enunciation is replaced with ready-made discourse that fits the codes of the assemblage. Foucault offers a similar idea when discussing confession in volume 1 of *History of Sexuality*:

> The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation. (1978, 61)

As with the televised interview, the confession is an enunciation which is pre-codified (by the rules of utterance and the vocabulary of penitence, by the power hierarchy of penitent and confessor, by the religious obligation to seek penance) and modifies the inner order of the person who enunciates. Through insertion within the machinic assemblage of confession or television, by speaking through the limited, pre-codified potential of enunciation, the person is redistributed as a 'good christian' or a 'good citizen'. On the contrary, the penitent who refuses to accept the punishment inflicted by the confessor or to confess at all becomes a bad member of the community, an outcast, and his or her voice will often be drowned by the agreeing masses. Similarly, in the machinic recontextualization of the television interview the words of the human subject can take multiple meanings and be construed as racist, derogatory, violent, or courageous, wise, visionary. It all depends on the interviewee's level of compliance with the codes of televised discourse and what the assemblage wants to say. In that example, the notion of enslavement is made apparent by the apparatus' power over the matter of enunciation. Human agency is literally enslaved to the technical and pre-signifying power of the machinic assemblage of television.

A striking effect of machinic enslavement is the smoothing of borders between human and machine, from which, sometimes, sameness emerges. In Lazzarato's example of the television interview, enunciation is indissociable from the apparatus' treatment of the enunciation. In the example of driving a car, the movement of the car is attributable to the machinic assemblage of automobile and human rather than any one component. In a similar fashion, in *A Thousand Machines*, Gerald Raunig discusses the book *The Third Policeman* by Flann O'Brien. In this novel, bicycles and human cyclists become indistinguishable one from the other: "[…] the more time a person spends on their bicycle, the more their personality mingles with the personality of the bicycle" (8). As in Lazzarato's book *Signs and Machines*, machinic

enslavement works on the basis that humans and machines, subjects and objects, are open

multiplicities inscribed in the same plane of existence (2006, 3). In *The Third Policeman* "there

are more or less precise calculations in relation to the question of to which percent this composite

and moving assemblage, this machine, is now a bicycle and to which percent it is a human being"

(8) and "there are bicycles with a high human portion, which obviously develop emotionality and

sexuality, and occasionally food inexplicably disappears when they are near" (9). Under a

comedic and absurdist sheen, O'Brien reflects on the increasing mechanicity of human movement

in relation with the justice and policing systems (hence the title). Interestingly, in this novel the

conjunction of humans and machines in assemblages confounds power structures, which fail at

circumscribing them into the ready-made categories of human and machine (Raunig, 2010, 9). As

such, the human-bicycle composites are unpoliceable, because their autonomous emergence

disrupts the dominant production of categories and the power structures of social identification

crucial to policing. This seizing of alternative power through machinic enslavement is a subtle

hint at the possibility for resistance within the power structure at hand through voluntary

immersion in chosen assemblages.

In summary, machinic enslavement is the networking of pre-individual, pre-signifying

and infrasocial strata of subjectivity through engagement with machinic assemblages. The effect

of machinic enslavement is twofold. On the one hand, it is the pre-codification of human

subjectivity by dominant discourse, and on the other it is the conditioning of subjective

emergence through the overcoding of pre-conscious affects and percepts. In contemporary, mass-

mediated occidental societies, this overcoding of affects and percepts by what Lazzarato calls the

business assemblage, examples of which are advertisement, news broadcasts and algorithmic

opinion guidance on social media (Fuchs, 2011), causes an emaciation of subjectivity. As an

example, if opinion is replaced by algorithmic suggested content, news broadcast or editorials which codify opinion for the receiver, the opinion-making strata of human subjectivity is reframed as a non-necessity. It slowly fades away as a vestigial appendix of consciousness. Machinic enslavement theorizes ready-made opinion, desire, affect, in other words ready-made postures of mass-media reception, as processes of overcoding of human individuation. As an example, some of the multiple effects of machinic enslavement on opinion-making can be the absence or imitation of opinion, or the mimesis of mannerisms and tone witnessed on the screen, or, in some cases, the critical resistance to codification. It is my argument that through machinic enslavement, subjectivity becomes more and more homogeneous, serialized, because of mass-mediation's potential for wide-reaching distribution of codes. Through this diffusion of ready-made postures, the reception of content can be devised in advance and even conditioned to fit molds, entering a regime of constant machinic concatenation in which human subjectivity becomes entangled. Circling back to the notion of interface studied in Chapter 1, the users are not only imagined by the content creators, but *produced* by the ever-renewed act of content creation through overcoding and enslavement.

Consumption is the reality of the twenty-first century; consciously it is a process made of an exchange of money for a good or service. However, in the pre-individual sphere it is a slow but steady codification of needs, representation of lifestyle through advertisement, influencers and the archetypal figure of the celebrity[33]. When humans buy an item, they feel satisfaction, but

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[33] Shoshanna Zuboff, in her brilliant book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, Chapter 3 in particular, discusses these notions in depth. Chapter 3 from this thesis will make use of Professor Zuboff's generous contributions to the study of algorithmic power in the twenty-first century.

they are oblivious to the slow alteration of their lifestyle, habits and needs that have built up their proto-subjective desire for said item. In other words, they fulfill a need which was not necessarily instinctual, or rather, it became instinctual after a process of implantation of the need within their subjectivity (Adorno, 2005, 76 & 88). The need for the item, as the voting intention example from the Presidential Election of 2016 has shown, was not a self-driven desire but rather a physical manifestation of the overcoding of pre-subjective stratas. It must be noted that consumption is but an example. There are many others, such as the propagation of scientific discourse and its rejection of everything not scientific or proven: psychics, extraterrestrials, alchemy, supernatural events, folk knowledge, etc. When one hears a folk explanation for an event, there is a noted satisfaction in disproving 'archaic' discourse and replacing it with a well-built, scientifically proven explanation. The fact that science has been wrong time and again does not matter in the moment of disproval because the machinic assemblage of science and logocentrism has overcoded, through the centuries since Ancient Greek thought, pre-representational strata of human subjectivity, redistributing the representational grid of *physis* towards a rationalized *logos* (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1983; Clement of Alexandria, 2012).

Concern for the future and marginalized discursivity is found in fiction often more critically depicted than in most scholarly, scientific or expert discourse. With the production and manipulation of subjectivity by machinic assemblages and the acceleration of mass-mediation in the twenty-first century, the concern lies in the extent to which subjectivity, desires and affects are codified to fit a homogenized mold. Will the future human condition consist in going from one task to the other like mindless sheep, living in a vacuum created by constant saturation of information? Is this imagined future in fact the present? Philip K. Dick, a writer whose books explore dystopian futures but also realistic fears of power institutions and the disembodiment of

subjectivity, offers in his novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* a pertinent example of the fragmentation of human subjectivity through machinic narratives. The pertinence of studying Dick's novel is how it offers an exemplification of the long-term effects of mass-mediation on human consciousness, especially in the example of the hallucinatory creation of a prophet in the last pages of the book. Mass-mediation in this novel is portrayed as an affliction upon human agency, and the interconnection of all media speaks directly to notions of machinic assemblage and machinic enslavement. In addition, it questions the notion of subservience to a homogenized mass and the possibility of escaping totalitarian truth regimes. In the next section I will close-read three iterations of media in this novel alongside the concepts of machinic assemblage and enslavement to further exemplify the effects of machinic infiltration in human subjectivity and their potential effects.

2.4. Machinic Enslavement in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

In Dick's novel, a human bounty hunter searches for escaped androids in order to exterminate them and rid a nuclear-ravaged Earth from their supposed threat. Under a thriller background, this science-fiction novel questions what it means to be human in the context of the constant mediation of subjectivity through apparatuses. Human characters mediate their experience of life via machines that alter their human identity, springing forth the question: what does it mean to be human? Three media exemplify machinic enslavement in this novel: mood organs, Mercer boxes and Buster Friendly's constant television broadcasts. These machines contribute to the enslavement of the human characters by conditioning their actions and mediating their experience of existence. By replacing human affects and desires with machine-produced simulacra, the media examples in Dick's novel showcase the power and effects of machinic enslavement on humans.

Dick's representation reminds of Marshal McLuhan's claim that "the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" (1964, 8). Human actions in this novel are directly conditioned by the mediations of narrativity and machinic necessity that define the very essence of being human. Thus, the characters are subjected to machinic enslavement because they are unable to define themselves as subjects without engaging with the assemblages. In other words, in this novel it is the machines that produce humans as subjects.

The first example of an enslaving medium is the mood organ, with which Dick opens his story. The mood organ is used by human characters to regulate their humor and start their day on the right foot. In the first scene of the novel, main protagonist Rick explains how the machine works: "If you set the surge high enough, you'll be glad you're awake, that's the whole point. At setting C it overcomes the threshold barring consciousness, as it does for me" (435). Rick negotiates with his wife Iran because she does not want to be awake. Her refusal is seen as a severe heresy. He walks over to the mood organ and hesitates between two options: "At his console, he hesitated between dialing for a thalamic suppressant (which would abolish his mood of rage) or a thalamic stimulant (which would make him irked enough to win the argument)" (435). The choice of mood and the setting of the dial remains the human's, but the hormonal changes become the prerogative of the machine. As such, Rick is conditioned by the moods he knows, those that might make him feel good, those that fit his schedule. There is a double-influence at play in the effect of the mood organ: the human subject conditions how the machine will affect him or her, but the machinic results on his or her subjectivity also condition future uses of the machine. Future resubjectivations in future space-times will be made according to past uses of the machines and how they redistributed the human's internal disposition. Thus, the change operated by the mood organ on today's humor is a machinic alteration of Rick's

subjectivity and how he will engage with the outside world (ontogenesis) and condition the future uses of the machine to regulate his mood (phylogenesis).

However, there is also the possibility for entropy: Rick's wife Iran experiments with the machine and discovers a setting for despair (437). She programs this setting for twice a month, what she calls her "[…] six-hour self-accusatory depression" (436). While mood organs were created to offer comfort, business-like attitudes and hopefulness towards life, useful moods for living in human society and remaining non-disruptive citizens, Iran resists the machine and seizes her agency by choosing to be despaired, by negating the positive effects of the machine, by using the machine against its designed use and recodifying her own self. In the first few pages of the novel there is a whole discussion of not wanting to dial a mood setting, and then of dialing a setting that makes one want to dial a setting (and refusal thereof). This sets the tone for the exploration of machinic enslavement in this novel since characters are driven by ready-made mediatic options: hopeful, business-like, happy, and so on. The setting for despair is found by accident, it is not advertised nor encouraged. The fact that Iran finally abandons the argument and lets Rick choose her artificial mood emphasizes the inevitability of the machinic mediation of existence in the context of mass-mediation and pre-codification of Iran's final acceptation.

Television broadcasts also exemplify machinic enslavement in Dick's novel, mainly through the silence that signifies their absence. Buster Friendly's broadcasts (both on radio and television) permeate the various settings of the story, ubiquitous as static noise throughout the novel's plot. When the broadcasts are interrupted, human characters feel a tremendous void. Iran's discovery of the despair setting of the mood organ happens in such an absence, when she mutes the television to avoid hearing a particularly annoying advertisement. She tells Rick: "At that moment […] when I had the TV sound off, I was in a 382 mood; I had just dialed it. So although I heard the emptiness intellectually, I didn't feel it. My first reaction consisted of being

grateful that we could afford a Penfield mood organ" (436). The silence of empty apartments is acknowledged by Iran consciously, but not felt, because the 382 setting of the mood organ, like a drug, impedes her from feeling affects. Iran's half-conscious reaction to the emptiness of silence echoes Jung's description of how the unconscious takes note of affects and percepts that are not consciously noted in *Man and his Symbols* (20-22): remotely, in a machinic and detached way. Iran's pre-individual strata registers the void because it is the habitual locus of machinic enslavement. Thus, when the television broadcast is muted, this sub-conscious strata reacts although her consciousness is still engaged in network with the mood organ. As a matter of fact, her first reaction to the silence is one of network with the machine: gratefulness for having the mood organ to mediate the void. However, the newly found pre-conscious realm of silence creates a new order where Iran regains agency as a human and discovers a previously unknown setting on the mood organ. This example shows how a disruption in mass-mediation of human subjectivity can redistribute pre-individual strata of subjectivity towards new realms of agency and creativity.

Another example of the effect of the absence of televised mediation is JR Isidore's reaction when he shuts off a government broadcast:

> Silence. It flashed from the woodwork and the walls; it smote him with an awful, total power, as if generated by a vast mill. […] It unleashed itself from the broken and semi-broken appliances in the kitchen, the dead machines which hadn't worked in all the time Isidore had lived there. […] Hence it assailed not only his ears but his eyes; as he stood by the inert TV set he experienced the silence as visible and, in its own way, alive. Alive! (447)

Silence seems to have a life of its own, it is a virologic infestation that creeps up whenever sound is not produced by the television or radio sets. This dramatic description of

silence can be thought of as the description of a shift from the semiotic regime of machinic

mediation to an absence of mediation, or a mediation through absence of mediation. The fearful

recapturing of one's own self. Isidore becomes a new subject, re-engaged instantly with the

emptiness of his apartment complex, the exodus from Earth, all elements that are sublimated by

constant televised mediation. Isidore is redistributed within the network of Earth's situation, with

the past (war) and the future (nuclear annihilation of the earth), whereas previously he was

inscribed in the continuous present of televised broadcast[34]. Similarly, when faced with silence,

Iran fiddled with the mood organ and discovered the setting for despair. Even though she still

mediated her experience through a machine, she created a new register of action through agency

brought by silence. These two examples emphasize that constant mediation through television

creates a codification of daily life, its noise is a lens through which life is experienced. In other

words, it is a reassuring sublimation of life on Earth made possible by the constant presence of

sound, of images, of machinic stimuli. An emaciation of the experience of the self through

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[34] It appears that the void created by the lack of noise permits a repositioning of Isidore's

subjectivity, a re-possessing of sorts that anchors him in his experience of the self. By recapturing

his sense of self in a space-time continuum (here and now, past-present-future), Isidore

experiences the Augustinian *distentio*, composed of three cognitive processes: memory,

observation, expectation (Augustine, *Confessions*, 2008, XI, 20, 26; Lequin, 2010, 39). When the

televised broadcast is active, there does not seem to be the possibility for the cognitive process of

distentio. An argument could be made, not without research and justification, that mass-

mediation has the potential to alter human perception of time.

machinic enslavement. Accordingly, the absence of noise creates a void that needs to be filled by something else: silence, thoughts, resistance.

The final medium that exemplifies machinic enslavement is the Mercer empathy box. Mercerism is the main religion in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* a belief-system that emphasizes empathy between human beings, dispersed around the solar system, through narrativity. This faith is embodied in empathy boxes that connect simultaneous users into a collective empathetic consciousness based on the suffering and toil of prophet Wilbur Mercer. Through a sort of Virtual Reality mediation, users accompany Mercer in a cyclic narrative. They follow his climb atop a mountain, feel his physical pain when rocks are thrown at him by invisible non-believers, feel a collective release of tension and sharing of empathy upon reaching the summit. The guiding points of Mercerism are integrated in a narrative ark that circulates along three settings: ascension, revelation, fall into the underworld. Humans interpret the events of their daily lives through these three settings.

In addition, Mercerism produces machinic enslavement via the sharing of all strong emotions. The empathy box is used both as a lifeline and a way to feel human through empathy. For example, when Rick buys a living goat and that he and his wife feel immense joy, she immediately wants to go 'fuse' with the empathy box to share her emotions with other humans. Iran argues: "It would be immoral not to fuse with Mercer in gratitude, […] I want you to transmit the mood you're in now to everyone else; you owe it to them. It would be immoral to keep it for ourselves." (557) This argument follows an intrinsic moral code that has been embedded as part of her subjectivity by those who constructed the Mercer experiment. She mediates powerful affect through the empathy box, fusing becomes a *duty,* something *owed* to other humans. Rick agrees that this argument is absolutely right, although he does not really want to fuse, so they go down in the elevator to fuse with Mercer in their apartment. Strong affects of

joy or empathy are not permitted to the individual in Mercerism, but must be shared with the collectivity. Rick later reflects that by sharing his joy with everyone he will lose it, giving it away to those who feel despair or sadness, disembodying his affect in profit of the assemblage. Iran is so deeply engaged with the machinic assemblage of the empathy box that she does not reflect upon her need to fuse. The need to mediate her affects is produced at the very moment when her affects cross the threshold of her consciousness. In other words, the codification of pre-individual strata of subjectivity that Lazzarato defined as machinic enslavement become visible when these strata emerge in consciousness. Thus, the overcoding of Iran's (and presumably all Mercerists') unconscious by the Mercer experiment become visible as the need to fuse produced simultaneously with affects.

When Iran does fuse, she becomes unaware of her surroundings, her face is described as 'rapt'. He consciousness has entered the machinic assemblage. Her desires, affects and emotions are shared with the machine rather than experienced. Or rather, Iran is programmed by her previous contacts with the machinic assemblage so that she cannot fully experience desires, affects and emotions in any other way than through the machine. She is tangled within the assemblage. Her pre-subjective fragments are codified by the machine, extracted and reintroduced to other humans within the human collectivity. In this instance, the feeding of strong emotions into the machine regulates highs and lows, keeping humans on an even keel. Through this monitoring, machinic enslavement codifies daily life and the powerful emotions brought by events, interpersonal relationships or, I can imagine, works of art[35]. All feelings are regulated by

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[35] This insistence on collective catharsis reminds of Walter Benjamin's notion of collective reception of cinema in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility* (2008).

the use of empathy boxes. Strong emotions are brought up or down to a neutral middle, equally redistributed throughout all the subjects of the assemblage so that every human has the same machine-produced affective mood. For every remaining disruptive inner disposition, that is, disruptive for the machinic assemblage of human civilization, the mood organ organizes chemical impulses to the brain to ensure a fluid, unproblematic society. Similarly, in Dick's novel *The Three Stigmatas of Palmer Eldritch*, Martian colonists in their squalid hovels participate in drug-infused hallucinations which bring them back to Earth, if only for a few minutes, in the pre-fabricated life of Perky Pat and her boyfriend Walt. This hallucination becomes a religion and the only psychological escape from the horrible fate of the colonists. Through this semi-legal drug, colonists are resubjectivated, through a collective hallucination of a blossoming and full-on capitalist Earth, as peaceful workers on foreign moons and planets.

The three media analysed from the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* are different in their material engagement with human subjects. One is a mood regulating machine, the other constant noise from televised broadcasting and the third is a connection with a hive-mind through a repeated narrative. The constituent parts of these three machines are different, they do not seem to serve the same immediate purpose. However, the ontogenetic elements of these machines are networked at a deep level in an assemblage with other machines in the novel's reality such as the exodus from Earth, the omnipresence of androids as Others, pollution and radiation, the morphing definition of being human, among others. For example, Mercer boxes have strong liminal relationships with the exodus from Earth because they create a hive-mind for

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Benjamin argues that cinematic reception codifies reception, thus removing part of the instinctive postures of encountering a work of art.

all humans around the solar system; they also have ontogenetic networking with androids as Others because they define the essence of what it is to be human. In addition, Mercer boxes are networked with Buster Friendly's broadcasts in their opposition one with another, in their desire for prominence as main medium for human experience. The broadcasts, in turn, are connected to the androids as Others because Buster Friendly is an android (he records 46 hours of show every day, radio and television combined); the broadcasts also have deep liminal cross-pollinations with subjectivity production, political opinions and habitus.

This representation of the interrelatedness of mediations in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* exemplifies machinic assemblages in that it shows how machines are interconnected in a tapestry of networking that is both fluid and transformative for every node along the assemblage. A majority of the interconnections between media can be identified, but there always remains some deeper, unknown mediations of mediations that occur in pre-subjective strata and can hardly be deciphered. Some of these sub-subjective connections can be the individual transformations produced by constant fusing with empathy boxes, or the chemical redistribution of the brain produced by artificial mood regulations. These proto-subjective reterritorializations can be hinted at, but remain both abstract and evanescent because they are always evolving along the phylogenetic non-linear chronology of machinic assemblages. One thing remains: machinic assemblages produce and reproduce subjects endlessly through the constant redistribution of machinic networking. The transformative effect of machinic assemblages on humans in *Do Androids…* leads directly to the concept of machinic enslavement because human subjectivity is the product of its exposure to a multiplicity of cacophonous mediations.

A fitting climactic example of machinic enslavement in this book, and quite different from Lazzarato's examples, is Buster Friendly's revelation that Wilbur Mercer does not exist, and

that his constant struggle to get at the top of the mountain is in fact an actor's portrayal of that narrative. In short, that the empathy boxes are a fictitious narrative and not a representation of Mercer's struggle nor the embodied reliving of this struggle through technology. This revelation has the potential to destroy the current state of being-in-the-world, based on a circulatory exchange of empathy and powerful affects between humans, towards a violent resubjectivation. It is, after all, the revelation that the religion on which all human life is based is a lie. On the contrary, however, humans keep believing in Mercerism even though it is proven fake. Rick even reaches out to Mercer at the end of the novel, in his moment of greatest struggle, and Mercer responds! They engage in a conversation that anchors Mercerism in Rick as a human embodiment through *mimesis*. Indeed, Rick, encouraged by what is probably an hallucination of Mercer, recreates the false prophet's climb atop a mountain and faces a (somewhat unclear) revelation. This revelation through narrative and physical *mimesis* is a result of machinic enslavement: the self is so accustomed to merging with empathy boxes in order to feel proper empathetic affects, that their severance from the medium could cause a total lack of natural empathetic responses. How then would the human subjects distinguish themselves from androids or nuclear-handicapped 'specials'? Empathy is the basis of a whole system of belief in the supremacy of humans over androids, and power is fruitfully exercised. If humans do not feel empathy anymore, they are resubjectivated in the same plane of existence as androids and other creatures. A terrible reterritorialization, violently shorn by the human characters in the novel. Thus, when cut off from his previous belief in Mercerism, Rick's subjectivity creates an ersatz Mercer that guides him on in his struggle. The pre-verbal, pre-representational and affective strata of Rick's subjectivity coalesce to artificially produce Rick's life-changing experience in the desert. This re-production of a real Mercer (albeit hallucinated) from the ruins of the fake Mercer is a tremendous exemplification of the overcoding of human pre-subjective strata and the

conditioning of the organization of subjectivity. Rather than redefining himself as a human being freed from worship, Rick creates his own guidance but gives it the shape of a well-known machinic assemblage. He has been so accustomed to following the credo of Mercerism that his unconscious re-produces this credo as an external hallucinated object.

Lazzarato's argument that machinic enslavement works on pre-individual and infrasocial strata is here illustrated by the terror of resubjectivation at the threat of severance from the machine of Mercerism, and the re-production of Mercerism from within Rick's subjectivity. The organization of subjectivity that constituted the 'human' category in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* was directly linked to the merging of human affect with the empathy boxes. The mediations of subjectivity produced by empathy boxes recodified pre-subjective strata by altering affects, desires, emotions, impressions, symbolism, percepts, etc. Without the boxes, humans would mutate into something else, something considered atrocious, something subhuman. A powerful ontological fear of renewal permeates human characters in Dick's novel: they refuse to enter new machinic concatenations when they learn that Mercer is a fake, and instead re-create Mercer from their own unconscious. The thrownness into the world that would demand the rejection of Mercerism is too violent a reterritorialization. It would demand a breaking away from years of machinic entanglement with Mercerism and the redistribution of affects, desires and pre-subjective impressions. In short, the fear of freedom from the machinic realm triggered the defense-mechanism of consciously living a simulacrum. The subject, in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, is enslaved to the machinic entanglement of mass-mediation. The codification of pre-subjective strata becomes apparent in the emergence of consciousness, such as in Rick's hallucination of Mercer that guides him towards a solution to his inner struggle. In a similar fashion, Theodor Adorno, when studying mass culture, argued that "imagination is replaced by a mechanically relentless control mechanism which determines whether the latest imago to be

distributed really represents an exact and reliable reflection of the relevant item of reality" (2005, 64). The replacement of imagination or, in other words, the human symbolic function, by machinic components leads directly to the subject of Chapter 3: Control.

2.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, through the concepts of machinic assemblages and machinic enslavement, as well as an analysis of Dick's novel, a sample spectrum of narrative networking has emerged. The Marxist concept of machine, integral to this thesis and a phylogenetic ancestor to Guattarian machinic assemblages, redistributed humans on the same ontological plane as machines, moving from an anthropocentric model of object domination towards a democratized, smoothed plane of experience and bidirectional influence. What is more, Marx theorized the machine as exercising power over human subjects. The Guattarian perspective opened up Marx's machinic conception to understand machines as more than factory mechanisms, as an environment of social processes, semiotic planes, narratives, economy, desire, in short everything engaged in relational environments of concatenation and interinfluence. The constant networking of humans with social, technological and truth machines in the twenty-first century led to the concept of machinic enslavement as the appropriation of pre-subjective strata (affects, desires, pre-verbal intensities, symbols) by machinic semiotization. Guattari's claim that "Capitalism is a semiotic operator", integral to Lazzarato's book *Signs and Machines,* hints at the development of the third chapter of this thesis, where control over human subjects in the context of machinic entanglement will be further analyzed.

The machinic concepts raised in this chapter are not strictly applicable to science-fiction novels, however visionary. In the present context of fragmentary or ideologically slanted news broadcasts, staged reality shows and empty media humans consume every day, willingly or not,

understanding the notion that the media is layered, hiding message upon message, is crucial. The Mercer experiment in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* was a simulacrum, but it still defined the essence of being human, before *and* after its falsehood was revealed. A simulacrum can become as real as an event or object in space-time, creating an alternative plane where it coexists and is engaged with processual networks (Massumi, 1997). In other words, falsehood can integrate machinic assemblages as reality. The reality represented by advertising, social media, news broadcasts and other ubiquitous mediations of daily lives are such simulacra that create an alternative plane from fragmentary identity components, opinions, events, impressions and affects. A television advertisement for a perfume that shows beautiful people living lavishly in awe-inducing locations creates a semiotic connection with the receivers, it forms an image in their brain to which they might return, in phantasms, dreams or imagination. As another example, an advertisement campaign for the new iteration of the iPhone saturates human consciousness for a few days through ubiquity in mediatic stimuli, possibly implanting a need for this product, or the next, within pre-subjective strata. The algorithmic guidance of ideology concerning a political subject through the presentation of a certain dogmatic point of view in multiple iterations of social media posts frames the possible responses and cements previously implanted stance on similar subjects. To rephrase this argument, the emerging regimes of 'truth', in twenty-first century machinic assemblages, are codified by the machines through which they are networked. They then influence the entire machinic network in concatenation. For instance, the Trump propaganda in the 2016 Presidential elections, or the propaganda of anti-vaxxers in the Covid pandemic, influences a whole machinic environment which is saturated by a certain 'truth'. The modification of opinion or of postures and action through these truth regimes can lead to machinic enslavement and control.

These examples speak to Adorno's aforementioned argument that imagination is replaced with ready-made machines which dictate how symbols and images will be brought towards consciousness. The alternate reality simulated through an advertisement agency has nothing to do with the product itself. It produces an ersatz plane of existence that is a promise of where the product will lead the consumer. As such, it overcodes affective territories of the receiver's pre-subjective landscape by showing impossible, machine-produced symbols and distributing them as real. The end result of such overcoding of pre-subjective fragments is the creation of a subjective conveyor belt moving towards homogenization of ideas and actions.

The alternate realities created by advertisement or social media are not fantasy lands. They are the everyday layering of images and symbols, signs and machines on human subjectivity. The occidental acceptance of world hunger and famine, when international cooperation could solve these issues[36], illustrates how machinic enslavement can lead to individualism and neoliberal *laisser vivre*. The machinic assemblages of mass-media and the appropriation of storytelling by advertisement and news broadcasts tend towards controlling the subjectivities of humans and bending it by feeding it constant information, even contradictory information. It is as in Orwell's *1984*, where all archive of past wars is erased in profit of a new war which has always been raging, at least in official discourse. Similarly, celebrities' opinion or

[36] In an article in *Science et Vie* magazine (Gougis, 2020) an article boasted that massive efforts are being undertaken to connect Africa and Southeast Asia to the Internet, as 40% of the world population is not yet networked. The fact that massive efforts to relieve world hunger, disease and poverty are blatantly overlooked in profit of Internet is bewildering, but not surprising when one considers the potential for new users, data, advertisements, etc.

advice frames their follower's ideology, to the point of ventriloquism (Cooren, 2010; 2014). The

transformation of human individualities into mimetic machines is cause for concern. The third

chapter of this thesis develops the idea of control over human subjectivity via storytelling and

mass-mediation through the conceptual tools of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze.

Chapter 3 - Control and Production of the Subject in the 21st Century: From Discipline to Control

Chapters 1 and 2 operated a theoretical leap in approaching narration from the perspective of Aristotelian poetics in direct networking with Marxist and post-Marxist theories of the machine. I extracted from this theoretical framework a new conception of the narrative as a machine composed of representational and formal elements (plot, language, cultural referents) engaged in relational networks with other machines in a machinic assemblage. Thus, narratives have both ontological consistency (or unicity) and relations of alterity with other machines, among them human subjects. The machinic assemblage in which a narrative emerges is transformed by this emerging media, and all the machines in the assemblage oscillate and are changed through contact with it. Human subjectivity is one such machine that is constantly submitted to the pressure of emerging narratives. In the present chapter I study the process of subjectivity production through the emergence of narrative machines in the context of twenty-first century mass-mediation.

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx claimed that "the relation between human and machine is based on internal, mutual communication, and no longer on usage or action" (1993, 458). With the omnipresence in daily lives of information machines such as computers, smartphones and algorithms, this notion becomes even clearer as communication between humans and machines have become increasingly complex and life-altering. The present chapter, which discusses the exercise of power in the form of narrative control, analyzes this "internal, mutual communication" and how it is manifested in the manipulation of human behavior and core values in the context of new and emerging media. The concept of machinic enslavement, developed in the latter half of Chapter 2 and defined by the overcoding of pre-individual elements of human

subjectivity through machinic networking, is of great importance to this chapter because control, theorized by Deleuze, is based on a similar regime of pre- or post-subjective annihilation of individuality in a simulacrum of freedom.

This chapter starts by tracing the path of forms of power as theorized by Foucault and Deleuze. Although their survey of historical power is not exhaustive, it sheds light on the shift from violent and bloody sovereignty towards modernity and its subtle exercise of human subjugation. Whereas Foucault had discipline societies emerge from the end of the 18th or beginning of the 19th century onwards, Deleuze identified a shift in power regimes in the late twentieth century, from Foucault's discipline societies towards what he called societies of control. The shift from discipline to control is the focus of the first section of this chapter, with a special interest on the ubiquitous character of control and how it constantly modulates (rather than molds) human existence. Subsequently, I conduct a case study of an advertisement campaign for 6/49 lottery tickets to exemplify how, through a carefully constructed narrative, capital overcodes affects and pre-conscious strata of subjectivity to replace subjective fragments with ready-mades.

Both these analyses open onto a study of algorithmic micro-targeting and how this new regime of power goes even further in controlling the pre-subjective and pre-affective strata of human subjectivity. Then, the notions of ectosubjectivity as a self outside the self, as well as the serialization of behavior and affects via the overcoding of pre-subjective strata, will be developed in depth to exemplify the replacement of human subjectivity with ready-mades. Ectosubjectivity is the result of the harvesting of fragments of an individual subjectivity by control apparatuses (such as algorithms, location services, transaction tracing) in order to be interpreted and then replaced with ready-made artificial affects. The replacement of subjective fragments is the core process of control towards producing serialized individualities and what I call the conveyor belt

of post-affective autonomous existence. The concept of the homogeneization of subjectivity guides my reflection towards Chapter 4 and its theorization of truth as a time-perfected control modulation that can be reversed through chaotic enunciation.

3.1. The Narrative Codification of Daily Life

In a text that came late in his philosophical journey, entitled *Postscript on Societies of Control*, Deleuze described a shift in the dominant regimes of power from societies of discipline towards societies of control. Discipline had been theorized by Foucault about twenty years earlier in his 1975 book *Discipline and Punish* as the power regime which succeeded to feudal sovereignty. Deleuze, in turn, identified a new shift in the twentieth century with the invention of personal computers, mass-mediation and the dominion of neoliberalism. This shift from discipline to control is the lens through which I pinpoint modes of subjectivation, of production of human subjects, by narrative organization. Deleuze's *Postscript* relates directly to Guattari's concept of machinic assemblage from *On Machines* published in the same period: the theorization of the shift from enclosed discipline to free-flowing control entraps human subjects within a mass-produced assemblage that encircles his or her daily life with no apparent boundaries, in connection with other machines in a staged simulacrum of agency.

As this section emphasizes, power, either in discipline or control, is identifiable in the effect it has on human subjects. Power does not emerge from a meta-entity (the State, Banks, Police) but is rather a morphing ensemble of practices and signs that coalesce to produce meaning and alterations of subjectivity. Deleuze argued the same in his book *Foucault*: "Les institutions ne sont pas des sources ou des essences, et elles n'ont ni essence ni intériorité. Ce sont des pratiques, des mécanismes opératoires qui n'expliquent pas le pouvoir, puisqu'Elles en supposent les rapports et se contentent de les 'fixer', sous une fonction reproductrice et non

productrice" (1978, 82). Power does not emerge from institutions. They barely fixate a certain form of power in a given time and for a finite period. That is why the symptoms of power appear with the most visibility in the affected subjects. Several similarities exist between the two regimes of power theorized by Foucault and Deleuze, such as the subject as the primary object of power processes. However, the differences between discipline and control emphasize the subtlety of the latter, especially in the concepts of modulation and orbit.

3.1.1. Power: From Discipline to Control

From the very first paragraphs of the *Postscript*, Deleuze emphasizes the transitory nature of models of power. Societies of control, in his view, are replacing what Michel Foucault had proposed as the dominant model of power in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries: discipline. In stride with this idea, control is but a transitory stage of power, one that emerged with personal computers and the opening up of the boundaries of power to all aspects of human existence, a stage that will be slowly replaced by a new form of power: algorithmic (Desrochers Ayotte, 2020; Rouvroy & Berns, 2013), surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2020) or something else entirely.

Foucault, in his book *Discipline and Punish*, identified a shift in regimes of power around the late eighteenth century from what he called sovereign societies towards societies of discipline. The sovereign societies exercised power over its subjects through death and torture, as well as the spectacle of these necropolitics (Mbembe, 2008). The sovereign was a vengeful figure of authority (Foucault, 1975, Chapter 2) which punished the body of the criminals. At the onset of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault gives a lengthy discussion of the torturing of Robert-François Damiens, failed regicide, in 1757: quartering by horses, burning of body parts, dropping of steaming oils, lead, pitch and resin on the condemned, etc. The execution of Damiens, however

cruel, elaborate and haphazard, illustrates the sovereign event of atonement for a crime through suffering and death. Foucault's description of torture and execution is quickly followed by the detailed schedule of prisoners in 1838, less than a century after Damiens violent demise (1975, 12-13). In this shift towards a different power regime, all the moments of the prisoners' daily lives are organized, from sleeping hours to meals and forced labor. The law document Foucault exhumed is a management of the bodies and minds of the prisoners, with an increased importance given to the latter. Indeed, Foucault emphasizes the disappearance of torture (1975, 14) and the appearance of the notion of social rehabilitation of the criminal (1975, 26-29). In sovereign societies, the body of the condemned was the locus of the punishment; torture was imposed to criminals as a proof of sovereign power (59). One vivid example is found in the first page of *Discipline and Punish*. Not only is Damiens tortured excruciatingly for attempting to kill Louis XV, but there is particular attention given to the hand which held the knife: "sa main droite tenant en icelle le couteau dont il a commis le dit parricide, brulée de feu de soufre" (9). The burning of the hand is highly symbolic in that the punishment directly coincides with the crime. The knife hand is the symbol of Damiens culpability and the *locus* of his expurgation.

The shift Foucault identifies in penal systems is localized as a symptom in the apparatus of punishment. As I mentioned, whereas in sovereign societies power was exercised over the body of criminals, the early nineteenth century saw the body being abandoned in profit of the souls of the condemned. Notions of cleansing suffering and *merum imperium* (1975, 59) gave way to notions of reinsertion, healing and teaching. Whereas sovereign societies considered criminals as harming the figure of the sovereign, discipline societies considered criminals as inserting chaos within society (1975, 17; 21; 29; 58-59). The condemned becomes a collective burden, a social responsibility and the punishment has the aim of reinserting the criminal successfully in society. Societies of discipline, Foucault argued, shifted the event of punishment

from torture in front of the masses as exercise of sovereign power towards rehabilitation of the soul through teaching and care. The body, not totally ignored in this relocalization of power, is immobilized in prison and subjected to a daily routine which regulates its activity so that the soul is wholly prepared for its molding. This shift from body to soul is also a shift in discourse. Guilt is not seen as a sin to be purified through pain, but rather as a spiritual defect to be healed from. This pastoral attitude remains very active today in the shepherding of human subjectivity through mass-mediation. The artificial creation of a work schedule based on eight-hours a day, five days a week, which regulates the activity of human individuals and takes up the majority of their energy, uses the same pattern as Foucault's recounting of the schedule of prisoners: subjugation of the soul through programmed activity of the body.

The result of the shift in power regime from body to soul is a shift in the penal system itself. From the scaffold to the closed doors of the prison, a whole structure of guilt and punishment transitioned towards what Foucault calls the "pouvoir de juger" (1975, 30). This judging power refers to the shift from destruction of the criminal's body to assessment of the criminal's soul and management of his physical and spiritual being through institutionalized imprisonment (1975, 14; 18; 234). Foucault was not oblivious to the fact that some elements of sovereign power remained deeply rooted in penal systems. The death penalty, for example, remained as a spectacle (1975, 15) for a chosen few, and remains even today as sovereign power over the condemned's body. But in Foucault's conception power is a transitory ensemble of phenomena. Its forms change and are difficult to locate; they are diffuse and ungraspable as unique phenomena (Deleuze, 1978, 34). In fact, by correlating the human soul and the new judging power of the penal system, Foucault proposed a new vision of power: an action upon an action that brings forth functions such as "inciter, susciter, combiner" (Deleuze, 1978, 36). Power becomes more diffuse, less apparent than in sovereign societies:

Il faut plutôt admettre que le pouvoir produit du savoir […]; que pouvoir et savoir

s'impliquent directement l'un l'autre; qu'il n'y a pas de relation de pouvoir sans

constitution corrélative d'un champ de savoir, ni de savoir qui ne suppose et ne constitue

en même temps des relations de pouvoir. Ces rapports de «pouvoir-savoir» ne sont donc

pas à analyser à partir d'un sujet de la connaissance qui serait libre ou non par rapport au

système du pouvoir; mais il faut considérer au contraire que le sujet qui connaît, les objets

à connaître et les modalités de connaissance sont autant d'effets de ces implications

fondamentales du pouvoir-savoir et de leurs transformations historiques. En bref, ce n'est

pas l'activité du sujet de la connaissance qui produirait un savoir, utile ou rétif au pouvoir,

mais le pouvoir-savoir, les processus et les luttes qui le traversent et dont il est constitué,

qui déterminent les formes et les domaines possibles de la connaissance. (Foucault, 2015,

288-289)

Thus, the shift in the penal system from direct power over the body to assessment and

management of the criminal's soul is also a definite shift in how power circulates among bodies,

institutions and social entities such as the family, the factory, the church, the prison, etc. Accordingly,

Foucault theorized these enclosed environments as the primary *locus* of discipline: the prison, of

course, but also the family, the school, the barracks, the church, the factory, etc. These closed systems

produce molds: a good student, a model worker, an honest citizen, an exemplary prisoner. An

important innovation of Deleuze's theorization of control is the shift from *mold* to *modulation* that

succeeds in permeating daily life and all its variations rather than being fixed in the closed spaces that

spawn them.

Furthermore, from the quote above it appears that in Foucault's vision, knowledge and power

are engaged in relations of co-presence and co-creation. He puts the emphasis on the interaction

between power and knowledge: the production of knowledge via power regimes and the establishment

of power relations through constituted fields of knowledge. In addition, the humanist idea of an omniscient subject creating knowledge by its activity (research, knowledge, production) is dismissed in profit of a plurality of co-creative processes. Already in the theorization of discipline, the downfall of the anthropocentric Subject is apparent, a slide that continued with post-structuralism and continues today with the fragmentation of the very notion of individual human subject as a fixed entity. For Foucault, power and knowledge are engaged in co-creation through the networking of new objects of knowledge and the processes of power they engage with. This co-creation also engages with human subjects and produce the modalities through which the objects and symbols of daily life are perceived and received. In other words, relational processes rather than subjects or objects, produce fields of power and knowledge. As the next section highlights, these relational processes can produce subjects, and alter how they perceive other subjects or the objects with which they interact in existence.

Power is defined by Foucault as an action upon an action (Deleuze, 1978, 36). This notion is crucial in the concepts of discipline and control because an action is inhibited or produced through another action. Power acts upon individual and collective human actions, it orients and frames the boundaries of behavior and experience according to dominant values and ideology, capitalist and political interests, socio-political context, cultural values, and so forth. What differentiates discipline and control is, on the one hand, the environment where power is exercised, and on the other the increasing diffuse character of power compared to enclosed discipline. In both theories the threat of being witnessed and punished is omnipresent. While in discipline it consisted in a watchful eye (God, parents, military officers, prison guards), in control the threat is wholly other. It takes a randomness and diffuse character which produces an ever-present threat. If in discipline one could leave an enclosed space to alleviate the pressure of watchfulness, in control this threat is ubiquitous and permeates all spheres of daily existence.

3.1.2. Societies of Control and *Mots D'ordres*: Modulation and Orbit

Gilles Deleuze, in the latter stages of his philosophical career, theorized a new conception of power that overtook Foucault's vision of discipline. He developed this conception in three specific works: an interview with Toni Negri called *Contrôle et devenir*, a 1987 conference given at the FEMIS concerned with cinema called *Qu'est-ce que l'acte de creation?,* and finally a short but rich essay entitled *Postscript on societies of control*. The latter work is directly focused on control as an emerging regime of power, and expanded Deleuze's vision of power as an all-encompassing network of random and diffuse control. Two of Deleuze's concepts are of particular interest because they strongly differentiate from Foucault's conceptualization: modulation and orbit.

As I discussed in the previous section, Foucault's theorization of closed control institutions (such as the prison, the school, the barracks) in his book *Discipline and Punish*, conceived power as exercised within the borders of enclosed systems. On the contrary, Deleuze conceived of power as having crossed over the boundaries of enclosed systems: "ultrarapid forms of free-floating control […] replaced the old disciplines operating in the time frame of a closed system" (1992, 4). In this view, processes of control become ungraspable and all-encompassing; they are embedded in social organization, from the household to the highways, even in monetary systems and the stock exchange. In societies of control, castigation precedes punishment, it is "distributed throughout the brains and bodies of the citizens" (Hardt & Negri, 41) as an ensemble of moral edicts through a saturation of communication and recurring symbols. Punishment is rarely necessary because control is imposed before the transgression: control becomes a code inscribed in human subjectivity that informs social evolution and hierarchical worth.

Discipline produced molds such as worker soldier, student, prisoner, believer. The enclosed systems of discipline were in fact systems of molding where the good citizen was the one who resembled the mold as acutely as possible. The organization of such systems could produce a never-ending stream of discipline environments: school, factory, church, family, prison, barracks. Most areas of daily life were spent in these enclosed spaces that molded behavior, values and workforce. Control, on the other hand, operates through modulations: "Enclosures are *molds*, distinct castings, but controls are *modulations*, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point" (Deleuze, 1992). Modulations are much more fluid than molds, they undulate and constantly create the need for adaptation, both for the sieve and the individual. As such, the human of control is orbiting these constant modulations, changing in accordance with the fast rhythm of the mutations of the sieve, with the ever-present risk of random punishment. This constant alertness is the source of much anxiety, for the human of control is constantly on the lookout for condemnation and punishment. The integration of castigation inside human brains that Hardt and Negri wrote about in their book *Empire* is also the integration of a random fear of punishment. The randomness of punishment produces an effect of constant alertness which is the attitude of the prey. Franz Kafka wonderfully detailed the opaque randomness of control in his book *The Trial*, in which the protagonist is condemned over an unknown crime and fails to receive an explanation, or a rationalization, for his condemnation. Randomized punishment and unclear moral edicts implanted in human brains cause an anguish that resembles the crisis of Edvard Munch's *Skrik*.

Control can be defined thus: *Modulation of the life environment of humans which leads to alteration of behavior, habits, perception and relations to self and others, with the insertion of ubiquitous randomness in punishment*. As I have previously mentioned, Deleuze considered

human subjectivity as the rapidly changing material manifestation of a continuous movement between an inside and an outside (1990, 238). Subjectivity is a sieve, which sometimes lets itself be witnessed, grasps some elements of the world outside itself and is engaged in a process of constant becoming. On the one hand, human subjectivity is vulnerable to outside pressure through the saturation of its senses with power-infused communication and the constant threat of randomized punishment. On the other, a more insidious pattern emerges in the interiorization of the moral postures saturating the outside and the pressure of relentless exposure to dominant discourse, as well as the slouching in the face of ubiquitous castigation. In other words, the interior which Deleuze talks about withers from sustained contact with the power-soiled outside and leaves scarce space for individual thought patterns and agency.

This definition of modulation as the constant adaptation to a morphing sieve leads to the concept of orbit. Deleuze wrote: "The disciplinary man was a discontinuous producer of energy, but the man of control is undulatory, in orbit, in a continuous network" (1992, 5-6). This concept of orbit speaks directly to the notions of modulation and sieve. Since the modulations of societies of control are "in constant variation" (1992, 5), humans must constantly adjust their orbit in order to remain attuned to the demands of society. This renewed adjustment defines life in societies of control: status and comparison with others, self-consciousness, sustained alertness to any variation that could send one to the terrifying margins. Anyone who refuses to constantly mutate to follow the random patterns of control is automatically marginalized, a relegation process which classifies some humans as less than human: drug addicts, anarchists, psychotics, artists, philosophers, and so forth. Thus, humans are pulled by the gravitational pressure of dominant discourse and power-infused communication in network with the processes of subjectivation which orient daily life: wake up, eat, drive, work, eat, work, drive, eat, sleep and repeat. This

absurd model made of networked processes of subjectivation keeps subjects in orbit around the outside pressure of *keeping up*[37].

The example of photo radars illustrates the new regime of power emerging from societies of control, as well as offers a glimpse in the inner workings of modulations of human behavior. Prison, the discipline apparatus *par excellence,* operates in a closed environment where power is exercised over the bodies of the prisoners through incarceration, daily planning, watchfulness and punishment of misdemeanor. The notion of panopticon, theorized by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, embodies the constant exercise of power in closed systems as constant watchfulness. Photo radars, on the other hand, explode the boundaries of enclosed spaces to bring punishment in the open air and directly in the realm of daily existence. An important caveat of the example of photo radars is that they emerge from governmental mandates, unlike the other examples of control apparatuses from this chapter (algorithmic social media and targeted advertisement, among others). However, as I pointed out earlier, the *locus* of emergence of power matters less than how it modulates human behavior and/or ideology. Thus, the example of photo radars, albeit remote in its source from private data mining, produces the same enframing of human existence and habitus, and illustrates the ubiquity of control.

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[37] Already in 1942 Albert Camus decried this model as absurd in *Le mythe de Sisyphe*: « Il arrive que les décors s'écroulent. Lever, tramway, quatre heures de bureau ou d'usine, repas, tramway, quatre heures de travail, repas, sommeil et lundi mardi mercredi jeudi vendredi et samedi sur le même rythme, cette route se suit aisément la plupart du temps. Un jour seulement, le 'pourquoi' s'élève et tout commence dans cette lassitude teintée d'étonnement. » (1965, 107)
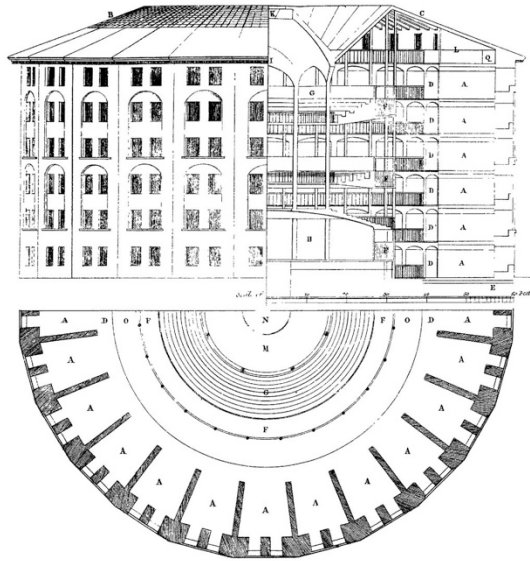
Panopticon from Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, (182-183)

The introduction of photo radars in the beginning of the twentieth century in Québec led

to their wholesale distribution on the territory. These apparatuses operate openly through a

sampling of a "number or administrative numeration that indicates [one's] position within a

mass" (Deleuze, 1992, 5), in this case the license plate which identifies a car and its owner. The

control system samples the driver's identification number encrypts it and sends it to a police

officer who then judges if all the elements of a fault are aligned[38]. Elements of randomness

appear clearly in the treatment of this data. First, the speed limit on Québec highways is 100

kilometres per hour. However, it is a well-known fact that police officers start handing out tickets

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[38] https://www.transports.gouv.qc.ca/fr/securite-signalisation/securite/radars-photo-surveillance-

feux-rouges/Pages/radars-

photo.aspx#:~:text=Le%20Code%20de%20la%20s%C3%A9curit%C3%A9%20routi%C3%A8re

%20pr%C3%A9voit%20qu'aucun%20point,et%20exploitants%20de%20v%C3%A9hicules%20l

ourds.

at around 116 km/h, varying depending on their zeal and the reigning politico-economic context.

The threshold at which photo radars are programmed is unknown: whether it is stable or changes

according to some algorithm or governmental will is uncertain. In this respect, a high level of

randomness characterizes this apparatus as its modalities are unknown. Furthermore, if, for the

sake of exemplification all cars on the highway drove at 130 km/h for a whole hour, would the

photo radar punish every single one of them? Its mechanical potential is, like all machines,

limited. Thus, it would be impossible to sample every single car. This brings forth Deleuze's

notion of randomness, as the precise modalities of sampling and punishment are both unknown

and variable. Some drivers escape the punitive apparatus depending on context, time of day,

algorithmic programming, etc., while others are not so lucky.

The threat of punishment also connects with Deleuze's notion of sieve because it alters

the rhythm of movement of humans on the highways. Deleuze said about highways that they

multiplicated the means of control and that one could drive in an endless circle without being

enclosed but while being controlled (1987, 6:27 to 6:36) [39]. In fact, there is an uprooting of

agency by the control apparatus that modifies behavior: if one drives above the limit, he or she

might be controlled and punished. Thus, most people alter their behavior to escape punishment,

aligning a part of their subjectivity according to the prescribed laws and regulations. To circle

back to Lazzarato's concept of machinic enslavement, human drivers, already resubjectivated as

part of the machinic assemblage of the automobile, need to modify their behavioral pattern to fit a

machine within the assemblage: the codes and laws of the road. More and more, the initial human

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[39] For a different vision of highways that echoes elements of Deleuze's vision see Cortazar &

Dunlop, 1983.

subjectivity is subjected to the pressure of increased mediation and uprooted in profit of artificial moral edicts, mandatory actions and ideological constraints. The constant adaptation to new machines which promulgate new rules is the uprooting of subjective agency towards a homogenized and smoothed mass.

The result of such a process of modification of behavior is one of serialization, in that case the homogenization of driving speed and habits. Of course, this example is quite simple and straight-forward, but some control processes, such as narration, are much more fluid and difficult to grasp. However, the simplicity or complexity of control processes do not impede the modification of behavior that results from such processes. As the following section emphasizes, even simple narratives can lead to a major alteration in behavior, habitus and even ideology and political practices.

As a final point, the gravitational pull of control puts modern humans into orbit, subjectivating them according to insubstantial yet powerful modulations. Through constant communication and apparatuses of behavior alteration, the processes of control produce a certain type of homogenized humanity which corresponds to the dominant model. This homogeneity organizes life around a work schedule that takes up the majority of existence. Maurizio Lazzarato, in *Signs and Machines*, calls the result of this forced subjectivation "pseudo-sleep" (2014, 89). This zombification only breaks off when a disturbance occurs. In the case of driving it can be an accident, something in the car's path or the shocking behavior of a reckless driver. But, to extrapolate on Lazzarato's example, disturbances in the pseudo-sleep of the subway-work-sleep model, such as the loss of a job or the reading of a particularly virulent pamphlet, can cause an awakening. Albert Camus, in *Le mythe de Sysiphe*, called this the collapse of the stage set: the moment when one comes to the realization that programmed human existence is worthless and pathetic.

That is why societies of control strive to eliminate disturbances as much as possible. Humans, like the automobile drivers, are more or less automatized as part of the machinic assemblage of capital and organized civilization. Any disturbance could shake the equilibrium of the assemblage, and thus the possibility for such occurrences are eliminated. The communicative saturation of narratives is only one machine that makes up the constant noise which attempts to drown out any possibility for disturbance or agency, just like Buster Friendly's endless chatter drowned out the terror of remaining on a ravaged and abandoned earth in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* In other words, the creation of pseudo-sleep is made possible by the droning lullaby of constant communication and work-sleep-repeat. Guattari suggested that "in modern-day capitalism, this is how every apparatus and institution operates" (Lazzarato, 2014, 90).

Control is not based in being, quite the opposite. It is what Agamben calls a pure governmental activity, a process of processes. In *What is an Apparatus*, he wrote: "Le terme dispositif nomme ce en quoi et ce par quoi se réalise une pure activité de gouvernement sans le moindre fondement dans l'être. C'est pourquoi les dispositifs doivent toujours impliquer un processus de subjectivation. Ils doivent produire leur sujet" (Agamben, 2007, 26-27).

As I have emphasized, photo radars are an apparatus of control that modulate human behavior. As Agamben points out, societies of control need to produce their subjects, as they are not something that is in itself, but rather an action upon an action, a pure governmental activity. However, if societies of control need to produce their own subjects, they need first to annihilate existing beings through desubjectivation. There is a pressure on humans to become desubjectivated as beings and resubjectivated into workers, taxpayers, in other words into consuming zombies. The assemblage of discourse networks, monetary gratification, archetypal advertising ideals, and a myriad of such power processes and semiotic fragments produces the necessary gravitational pull for societies of control to produce their subjects and thus function.

Apparatuses such as the photo radar or the communication network of the twenty-first century are inscribed in the necessity to subjectivate humans, to control behavior, emotions, drives and affects. With a mass of serialized individuals, disturbances would disappear or, more insidiously, would be incorporated into the narrative of control. As such, even major disturbances are engulfed by the dominant narrative as if it were part of it. News broadcasts, presidential discourses and opinions are then presented as truth whereas they only produce the circulation of dominant narratives in various shapes and forms. In stride with this argument, Shoshanna Zuboff claimed in a 2019 interview, in the wake of the publication of her book *Surveillance Capitalism*, that the goal of big data companies' "now [was] to automate us. [Their] processes are meticulously designed to produce ignorance by circumventing individual awareness and thus eliminate any possibility of self-determination" (Zuboff & Kavenna, 2019). She claimed that surveillance capitalism was nothing less than "a direct intervention into free will, an assault on human autonomy" (Zuboff & Kavenna, 2019). In other words, a stripping of agency through mass-mediation and the negation of human individuality.

Photo radars are only one element inducing the pseudo-sleep of control. The constant communication of advertisement, social media, talk radio, news broadcasts and televised programs are other powerful apparatuses of subjectivation. The next section examines one particular example of advertisement as a process of control: an advertisement campaign for 6/49 lottery. This advertisement campaign ties in directly with societies of control and one aspect identified by Deleuze: orders or *mots d'ordre*. This case study exemplifies a somewhat dwindling regime of control that is slowly being replaced by a new regime often called algorithmic governance or surveillance capitalism. Section 3.3. inspects and analyzes this new shift in governmentality to lead towards the concepts of ectosubjectivity and serialization.

3.2. Case Study: You Should Buy a 6/49

3.2.1. The Object of Study

The object of this short case study is an advertisement campaign for a Québec lottery called 6/49, produced in 2016 with the objective of increasing ticket purchases for the millennial age group in Québec[40]. Its use of orders as well as the narrativization of daily existence within the borders of a consumption product highlights how societies of control produce subjects and alter their behavior, leading towards the subsequent elaboration of the subject as subject of and subjected to narratives in the next section (3.3.1.). Although it illustrates with accuracy how control operates in society, the example of 6/49 is still framed in the older media of television and radio. Section 3.3.1. bridges the gap to encompass how advertisement and targeted content has emerged as the dominant media of narrative control.

To begin with, the slogan of the lottery campaign is "You should play 6/49". The choice of words is important here for it does not say : "You could play 6/49", or "We would like you to play 6/49", and not even close to "You are free to make your own consumption choices, but you could, if such is your choice, play 6/49 and have a minuscule chance at winning some money." On the contrary, the word *should* is an order, and points to a potential improvement of the condition of the receiver through buying a lottery ticket. Failure to do so could then result in a

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[40] https://www.commb.ca/fr/case-study/youshouldplay649/ . The justification for needing this specific advertisement campaign on the Canadian Out of Home Marketing and Measurement Bureau website is the loss of market shares for lottery 6/49 in profit of Lotto Max lottery, created in 2009.

spoiled potential, a missed opportunity. The word *should* is what Deleuze called a *mot d'ordre*, similar to the hockey coach who screams "Change up!" or the military general who screams: "Aim, Fire!" Its objective is the production of a compulsive obeisance in the receiver, analogous to the flinch of the prey. For Deleuze, information did not amount to anything else than orders: information of what one must think or at least pretend to think. He said "[q]uand on vous informe on vous dit ce que vous êtes sensés devoir croire. En d'autres termes, informer c'est faire circuler un mot d'ordre" (Deleuze, 1987, 0 :50 to 0 :56). Information is the circulatory system of control (1:52 to 1:56), it defines control in that it is the currency used to annihilate human subjects and coerce them into obeying hidden modulations. Orders are coercive, they point to subjects the posture to adopt. When the advertisement orders "You should buy a 6/49", or in other instances "Buy one get one free", "Come meet us at our Montreal store", "Think Different", "Just Do It", there is production of a compulsion to obey. The strength of the compulsion seems to equal the level of insertion in the machinic assemblage of a given *mot d'ordre*. Company slogans and advertisements are pristine example of orders as they often contain a requirement of action on the part of the receiver. In that context, Foucault's concept of power as an action upon an action (Deleuze, 1978, 36) takes all its meaning. The consumer is not strictly the public of the advert, but more importantly he is produced as consumer through the advert. The consumer has work to do (Dujarier, 2008).

The adverts for Lotto 6/49 are small stories in which luck is ubiquitous. The most unexpected and seemingly impossible events happen, such as finding a needle in a haystack, and operate a direct mental link in the receiver to the similar possibility of winning the lottery. All skits from this campaign show how the real world is full of happy chance, and thus try to convince the receiver that this worldly chance leads to success in playing lottery. In this fashion, the content of the advertising campaign, through its organization in a small narrative, strengthens

the feeling that it is possible and advantageous to buy lottery tickets. Two examples emphasize how the narrative organization of these adverts contributes to a compulsive consumption in receivers.

3.2.2. Two Examples of the Narrativization of Luck

First, finding a needle in a haystack[41]. The premise is quite simplistic: a farmer lifts a haystack and finds his wife's needle. His conclusion is "Faut j'prenne un 6/49": I *have* to buy a 6/49. This very short skit operates on the level of popular culture. The expression "It is like trying to find a needle in a haystack" means that something is impossible, with a minuscule chance of success. The reversal of this maxim in the advert consists in the narrativization of impossibility as possibility in human existence. It is quite known that the chances of winning the lottery are infinitesimal, one in 200 million according to one Forbes article from 2016[42]. However, through the creation of a narrative based in popular culture and a famous saying, Loto-Québec attempts to make receivers forget this fact. Just like the farmer who miraculously finds a needle in a haystack, anyone can win the lottery. What is more, you *will* win the lottery. That is why you *should* play.

The second example of a skit from the "You should play 6/49" advertisement campaign consists in the honest mechanic[43]. A woman visits the mechanic because she has a weird sound in her engine, the mechanic says it's only a loose screw and will not charge her for it. Again, this example plays on popular culture, because mechanics have the reputation to overcharge and find

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[41] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fr2yDsHOu7w Q

[42] https://www.forbes.com/sites/vanessamcgrady/2016/01/08/powerball/?sh=21e40da57065

[43] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dCTdDYR86Q

problems where there are none. As such, her luck is so immense and impossible that her reaction is to go directly buy a 6/49. Again, the insertion of the possible *in lieu* of the impossible is an attempt at framing human existence and altering behavior, because any time something improbable happens a link will be produced artificially in the receiver's brain towards lottery.

Other examples from the campaign: the lost dog found by a Vermont farmer, nobody in line at the passport office, the unidentified fart in the elevator, the medical file mix up, the toasts that fall peanut butter side up, coming face to face with a peaceful skunk, speaking perfectly at the same time, a cat that plays *Rise of the Valkyries* by walking on a piano. Several of these ideas are part of popular culture, especially the toasts hitting the floor on the unbuttered side and the peaceful skunk, in addition to the main examples mentioned above. The insertion of popular culture in narrative organizations aimed at the consumption of a product, paired with the *mot d'ordre* 'You *should'*, hints at manipulative attempts towards the human psyche in the hopes of consumptive obedience.

All the narratives of this advertisement campaign play with daily human existence to insert a dose of miraculous chance and hint at the possibility of winning the lottery. Leaving aside the fact that a government-owned company spends taxpayer money to have taxpayers spend more money, it appears evident that the manipulation of behavior towards an almost impossible occurrence does not profit the consumers but rather the company. In some of these skits, the reaction of the characters to whom an incredible event has happened mirrors how Loto-Québec hopes the receivers will act. The farmer who finds a needle in a haystack exclaimed: "I have/need to buy a 6/49". The French expression "Il faut que" is even stronger than have/need, it speaks to fate, to an unshakeable obligation to the world, to destiny. Hence, in the campaign itself the attitude to take is showcased to the receivers. Through mimesis, the creators of the ad campaign

attempt to have receivers reproduce the behavior seen on screen. The next subsection goes into the effects on receivers in more detail.

3.2.3. The Effect on Receivers

In stride with the realization that receivers are supposed to mimic the characters from the adverts, it is pertinent to evoke and analyze the effects of this campaign on human receivers. The first and most direct effect of the advertisements is the codification of a part of daily life through narrative organization. Indeed, if luck is directly linked in the receiver's psyche with the possibility of winning millions of dollars in the lottery, whenever a lucky event happens, the compulsion to buy lottery tickets, or participate in other such chance events, will strike the individual psyche. With the avowed objective of increasing ticket sales[44], the machinations of penetrating daily life are made apparent through even a short study of a few examples of this ad campaign.

If I may introduce personal experience within scholarly research, a personal anecdote brings more weight to the points just made. At a restaurant I once threw a lime in my drink to entertain relatives. A quite trivial gesture, no doubt. However, the lime fell perfectly on the side of the glass, as if a patient bartender had delicately inserted the pulp to increase the drink's beauty. All of a sudden, two aunts exclaimed at the same time "6/49!" The entire table was then filled with laughter and the recounting of their favorite story from the ad campaign. A chance event, barely worth mentioning, had brought forth a strong reminiscence of the advertisements, had linked luck with the 6/49 lottery. In other words, the advertisement campaign had succeeded in permeating my relatives' psyche and producing an unconscious link between luck and the

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[44] https://www.commb.ca/fr/case-study/youshouldplay649/

lottery, even in contexts far removed from the campaign or games of chance. The mimetic

compulsion produced by the ad campaign was so powerful that it emerged from their

unconscious towards their conscious thoughts and verbal articulations. What is more, they did not

frown at this occurrence, but on the contrary laughed and enjoyed this psychic connection.

Deleuze's concepts of modulations and orbit work in a concrete control context. The

chance-modulation of daily life is saturated (overcoded, in Deleuzoguattarian vocabulary[45]) by

the lottery advertisement on television, radio, newspapers and social media. Through a saturation

of this advertisement in a short period of time (say, twice every day for a few weeks), the receiver

is exposed to various iterations of the same pattern: luck = winning the lottery. Thus, when a

lucky event occurs, this overcoding is activated to bring to consciousness the idea of lottery, of

winning millions, of helping out others, of buying a dream car, etc. This is what Guattari called a

modelling of subjectivity, which he claimed was the direct effect of advertisement (2018, 477).

Through an overcoding modulation of the concept of luck by televised exposition, the receivers'

psyche produced new cognitive links between a concept and a product. This, as section 3.3.2.

concerning ectosubjectivity expounds, is the intended insertion of an artificial cognitive fragment

in the receivers' psyche in the objective of having them consume a product or adopt a posture.

The concept of orbit is also relevant in the context of the constant modulation of human

subjectivity. The human subject is orbiting the modulations of his daily life, ready for one

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[45] See for example *Les modes de production de la subjectivité*, in *Qu'est-ce que l'écosophie?*:

« […] la subjectivité, échappant de plus en plus aux procédures de formation et de modélisation

traditionnelles, est de plus en plus tributaire de l'instrumentation par les mass-médias » (278).

See also *L'Anti-Œdipe*, pp.237-238, for an application of overcoding to incest.

modulation or another to activate in his consciousness: chance, lust, desire (for another human, an object, a privilege), money, love. All these instinctual elements, and more, are plugged directly into the machinic assemblage of capital and power, which through years of overcoding have come to replace, with varying levels of success, the essential instinctual values[46]. The human subjects thus produced orbit the artefactual black hole of consumption and ideology, their psyches ready to activate at the slightest nudge. The example of the lottery advertisement campaign emphasizes the insertion of artificial subjective fragments within daily human existence in order to produce mimetic reactiveness and compulsion. This is how control operates: the production of subjects through constant modulation of subjectivity. It must be mentioned that individuals who have never seen the advert will not be submitted to the artificial "luck = winning the lottery" pattern. Similarly, individuals who are profoundly adverse to the idea of buying lottery tickets, who refuse to give more money to the government or who do not have money to spare will not be submitted to the activated patterns: they are not in orbit around this machinic compulsion. Again, the level of insertion of a given subjectivity within a machinic assemblage seems to delineate the potential for power to be exercised on said subjectivity.

To conclude this short case study, the 6/49 advertisement campaign is one example of the manifold narrative manipulations to which humans are subjected. Advertisement is one of the many forms taken by power to alienate the masses and codify its existence. Here, the compulsion to participate in the event of consumption is metabolized in the activation of unconscious

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[46] The question of deciding if chance, love, fear and other instinctual affects have essences will have to be postponed, but opens a whole realm of contemplative reflection if one considers the intended replacement of these essences by mass-mediated ready-mades.

implanted affects. Years and years of subjective modulation can produce ready-made subjects whose potential for agency is highly questionable. As I explore in the next section, now that personal data is available for extraction and interpretation, the time-gap between the implantation of the ready-made affects and the moment of psychic activation (consumption, ideological cementing, or economic posture, etc.) is increasingly reduced. Resisting to this pressure, in light of the examples studied above, appears to take the form of refusal to engage in power-infused machinic assemblages. However, how can one discriminate between machinic assemblages? Where are the lines of flight? Chapter 4 attempts to answer these questions, or at least to open pathways towards new territories of existence.

A question arises: What exactly are these fragments of subjectivity which are implanted into human receivers? If, and such is my argument, humans are infected with ready-made affects that replace instinctual responses to events and information, what processes of subjectivation are at play which strip subjects of their unicity? The answer, at least a tentative one, can be found in the concept of ectosubjectivity, developed in 2020 for the first time in my essay *Defining ectosubjectivity: extraction and implantation of protosubjective fragments* in the journal *Sens Public*. The following section starts by defining the new regime of power that emerges from algorithmic extraction and implantation of data, namely in the AdSense model, and moves on to explore the concept of ectosubjectivity in an attempt at framing how power now operates on the pre-subjective strata of humans.

3.3. The Algorithmic Turn and Ectosubjectivity as Ready-Made Subjectivity

3.3.1   Surveillance Capitalism as an Emerging Regime of Power

As I have emphasized in the previous sections, control produces subjectivity through the modulation of instincts, constant communication and coercion via *mots d'ordre*. However, the

example of the advertisement campaign for 6/49 lottery is somewhat foreign to the emerging

power regime based on algorithmic governmentality and data extraction. There is a manifest

rearrangement in the power regime that permeates human existence, in North America at least,

moving away from control and its modulation of subjectivity towards a system that *produces* its

own subjective register. This power regime has many names, algorithmic governmentality

(Rouvroy & Berns, 2013), surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2020) or ectosubjectivity (Desrochers

Ayotte, 2020). This algorithmic turn, based in large part on the capitalist necessity of personal

data mining, is slowly emerging as the dominant process of power over human bodies and minds

in the twenty-first century. Through an appropriation of the means of control and a rearrangement

of the role of humans as consumers, this new regime of power infiltrates subjectivity to *produce*

affects, percepts and actions, rather than react to these three core elements of human agency. It

must be noted, however, that the modulation of instincts that was characteristic of control

remains a powerful aspect of power, as a new regime never replaces the old but rather morphs

into existing processes of power in a slow metamorphosis.

The characteristics of the emerging regime of governmentality is its fluidity and basis in

an ethereal world. Whereas control broke down the boundaries of discipline into free circulation,

data governmentality emerges from a whole other world, that of the internet. The presentation of

virtual and politicized internet worlds as reality brings about a dehumanization of the

phenomenological processes of cognition (Striphas, 2015). The private and profitable nature of

these digital territories brought about, beginning around the year 2000, the algorithmic turn

where personal data became the main currency of companies wanting to strengthen their

positions online and, more importantly, survive in the increasing cutthroat world of venture

capitalism (Zuboff, 2020, 73-74).

Shoshana Zuboff, in her book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, describes the shift in the business model of Google that is characteristic of the introduction of large-scale information capitalism in the internet world. She argues that, at first, Google used the behavioral data of users to improve search results and user experience in a type of social contract based on mutual exchange, but that venture capitalists put more and more pressure on the company to generate "sustained and exponential profits" (74). The extraction of behavioral data used to improve user experience caused a surplus, what Zuboff calls the behavioral surplus, that became the touchstone of a drastic shift in Google's business model. The role of the behavioral data changed utterly, the social contract model of Google's initial existence was destroyed in profit of the introduction into the advertising market of hierarchized and analyzed user data as potential (75). Advertisement became the primary focus of Google's business model, because the tools and machines developed by the corporation permitted them to excavate more and more personal data, and thus start analyzing behavior towards increasing advertisement targeting. The "knowledge produced through the profiling" (Rouvroy & Berns, 2013) became the raw material for a new version of capitalism which had its basis in the ethereal internet world.

The consequence of this new regime of capitalist power was the necessity of increasing the flow of data extraction, a phenomenon Shoshana Zuboff calls the "excavation imperative" (87). She argues that the "extraction imperative meant that the raw-material supplies must be procured at an ever-expanding scale" (87). The necessity for the acceleration and proliferation of excavation processes forced Google to reverse the use of its Search engine, the initial heart of the corporation. As such, the improvement of the Search engine is directly linked to the improvement of means of control and personal data extraction, making human users enslaved, through its ubiquity, to the excavation process. In other words, the transformation of Google's business model from a user-based social contract to an advertisement-based model, from the embryonic

AdWords to the ubiquitous and ever-extending tentacles of its successor AdSense, founded a

power regime based on the extraction of personal data as raw material. The constant need for

increased excavation, and the imitation of the business model by an increasing number of

corporations and governmental entities makes of human life an experiment in machine learning.

As a final point, Shoshana Zuboff's definition of surveillance capitalism in the opening of

her book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* is a fitting launching pad towards the concept of

ectosubjectivity, which theorizes the individual effect of data extraction:

Sur-veil-lance Cap-i-tal-ism, n.

1. A new economic order that claims human experience as free raw material for hidden

commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and sales; 2. A parasitic economic logic in

which the production of goods and services is subordinated to a new global architecture of

behavioral modification; 3. A rogue mutation of capitalism marked by concentrations of

wealth, knowledge, and power unprecedented in human history; 4. The foundational

framework of a surveillance economy; 5. As significant a threat to human nature in the

twenty-first century as industrial capitalism was to the natural world in the nineteenth and

twentieth; 6. The origin of a new instrumentarian power that asserts dominance over

society and presents startling challenges to market democracy; 7. A movement that aims

to impose a new collective order based on total certainty; 8. An expropriation of critical

human rights that is best understood as a coup from above: an overthrow of the people's

sovereignty. (Zuboff, 2020, v)

While this definition is a lot to unwrap, it offers a startling jolt of understanding into the

author's argument. Surveillance capitalism uses human personal data as raw material, extracting

it without caring for consent, in the objective of generating revenue by analyzing the data and

prophesizing on it. Zuboff uses an expression to describe the role of human subjects within this

system: "users were no longer ends in themselves but rather became the means to others' ends" (88). Her expression signifies that revenue from Google does not depend directly on user consumption or traffic, but rather from the advertisement companies scraping to be the highest bidder on the presumed best market shares[47].

 The result is twofold. First, humans are desubjectified as mere potential market shares, and thus their decision rights and privacy are disregarded. Zuboff describes the chilling process of the dehumanization of user rights in Chapter 3 of her book:

> The scientists thus make clear that they are willing-and that their inventions are able- to overcome the friction entailed in users' decision rights. Google's proprietary methods enable it to surveil, capture, expand, construct, and claim behavioral surplus, including data that users intentionally choose not to share. Recalcitrant users will not be obstacles to data expropriation. No moral, legal, or social constraints will stand in the way of finding, claiming, and analyzing others' behavior for commercial purposes. (80)

 Humans are not considered as possessing decision rights, Google does not follow a pre-existing moral, legal or social framework, and data, even hidden or intimate data, is pumped through the server to enter the market. This dehumanization leads to my second conclusion from Zuboff's crucial research: the void within human subjectivities that is created by the extraction of behavioral data is filled with ready-mades that are forcefully implanted in pre-subjective and

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[47] This claim might be surprising, but with the ubiquitous of Google's search engine and sibling companies, its ubiquity makes it impossible not to divulge personal information. The removal of the notion of consent also contributes to decrease privacy, decision rights and encryption (Zuboff, 2020, 80).

infra-social strata through targeted advertisement, ideology and other behavioral coercion. This brings back Lazzarato's notion of pseudo-sleep. Humans who, like the characters in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, are saturated with the constant noise of targeted and suggested content, become enthralled by the noise and forget the sound of silence. This pseudo-sleep has the tendency to lead to the standardization of behavior, which in turn can lead to an increase in behavior prediction, which then leads to better market shares and the capitalist glorification of homogeneity.

3.3.2. Ectosubjective Fragments as Ready-Mades

The concept of ectosubjectivity can further the understanding of the effects of this emerging power regime on human subjectivity. The modulation of human instinctual elements (desire, love, hunger, libido) is only made possible through the extraction and implantation of subjective fragments inside the manipulated human individualities. These fragments are ectosubjective, meaning that they take shape outside of human subjectivity before being implanted as serialized ready-mades. Ectosubjective fragments are proto-subjective, meaning that they are less than a whole yet still have a nucleus of ontological consistency (Guattari, 1993). This ontological consistency enables the rewiring of human individuality towards serialized behavior and habits. Ectosubjectivity, to schematize with simplicity a complex and mutating process, has three chronological steps. The first is extraction, the second implantation and the third consists in the activation of ectosubjective fragments in human subjectivities.

First, extraction corresponds to the activity of web platforms that mirrors human activity. I have illustrated Google's initial evolution towards the model of necessary excavation, necessary because the vast majority of the corporation's profit is generated through it. When humans navigate web platforms, every single behavior and intimate data they generate or store is

extracted, passed through machine-learning algorithms and interpreted. Ectosubjective fragments are produced by the uprooting of human subjective fragments through this process of constant extraction. The extracted behavior or data consists of, among other things, web usage data, consumption habits, ideology, location services, credit card tracing. The coalescing of these fragments in an interpretative whole outside of the original individualities is ectosubjective, meaning it exists outside of a human subjectivity. As a hypothetical example, "millennials are not likely to be racist" is an interpretation that could be derived from Google searches or Facebook statuses in 2020. This generalized interpretation from data extraction exists outside of individual millennials. As another example, if I buy *Mein Kampf* or consult the profiles of right-wing groups on Facebook, even for the sake of research and not ideology, the algorithms will produce knowledge about me through the extraction of this data. Depending on the web platform, customized content can become available to me without my permission, content which will either attempt to reinforce or weaken my perceived right-wing ideology. As Roger McNamee puts it, "[t]he metadata that Facebook and others collec[t] enabl[e] them to find unexpected patterns, such as 'four men who collect baseball cards, like novels by Charles Dickens, and check Facebook after midnight bought a certain model of Toyota,' creating an opportunity to package male night owls, who collect baseball cards and like Dickens for car ads" (McNamee, 2019, 68-69). However farfetched McNamee's example seems, it cannot be more accurate. Machine-learning algorithms try and interpret behavior and personal data, in most cases with the objective of selling advertisement market shares that will appear profitable to interested companies (Zuboff, 2020, 88). However, some issues appear in the interpretation of the extracted data that leads to the prevision of market shares.

A major problem with ectosubjective extraction appears when one considers the absence of interpretation about intent, accident and manipulation. As my example of right-wing groups

emphasized, it is not because one clicks on something that he or she is interested at the level of ideology or consumption. If, for a research project, I wanted to survey the tone of user publications on right-wing Facebook groups, I would have to click on a lot of content without having any interest in being convinced of the righteousness of their ideology. Thus, my extracted profile would consist in part of my interest in right-wing ideology. McNamee's example highlights this problem. The extraction and implantation of the category "male night owls, who collect baseball cards and like Dickens" towards producing targeted advertisement is so precise that it cannot realistically speak to all the members of this group. Similarly, individuals or groups could manipulate web usage data on a large scale by creating fake profiles and identities (in other words, bots) in order to weaken algorithmic governance. Some hacker groups, for example, are interested in fostering chaos in network systems rather than acquiring profit or information. Thus, algorithmic generalization of intent is one of the main hurdles for the precise implantation of ectosubjective fragments that can successfully alter behavior and habits. Furthermore, the time gap between extraction and implantation can impede and disrupt algorithmic persuasion. A consumption desire, behavioral habit or opinion can change between one séance of web navigation and the next. These examples showcase the problematic frailty of adaptive algorithms in their attempts at creating a fixed model for subjectivity from one or several of its ectosubjective fragments. The algorithms have the tendency to negate the singularity of ectosubjectivities: fragments are considered as totalities (Guattari 2018, 280). The redistribution of knowledge in the excavated subjectivities takes the form of mediation: content, adverts, propaganda, social media personae, etc. These mediations cannot but be imperfect, non-adapted and homogenized, because they consider subjectivities as static and are ruled by monetary hierarchical choices of what content will be distributed by the platforms. Thus, the algorithms think the users (Vitali-Rosati 2018), think they think the user correctly and, accordingly, try to act

upon a representation of the user generated from the interpretation of ectosubjective fragments. What is problematic in that regard is that when the mediations are implanted back into the initial subjectivity, it has already moved on to new becomings. Whereas the information distributed is static in its interpretation of ectosubjectivities, human subjectivity is in constant movement towards new territories of being.

What is, however, the algorithmic solution to this problem of interpretation is forceful convincing through overcoding. Some targeted content can be thoroughly convincing and through constant exposure to this content some people can be convinced or coerced into ideology, consumption, and alteration of behavior. The trial and error process becomes less and less haphazard as more information is collected on a person through web usage and, unfortunately, through other, more devious ways[48]. A human opinion can evolve slowly in time, while mass-mediation keeps bombarding humans with content, suggestions, opinions and artificial drives. The result is the sustained external pressure on a pre-existing, artificial behavior or opinion by mass-mediation towards a pastoral herding of subjectivity. If the time gap between extraction and implantation is reduced to mere nanoseconds, the risk for corporations of seeing subjectivities escape their grasp through mutation or refusal to participate is avoided in part. But if the user is modelled according to the whims of the web platforms he or she visits, the risk of subjective

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[48] For example, Google had 'forgotten' to include the integrated microphone in the blueprint of one iteration of the Google Nest, meaning that it could listen in to owners of the smart-home apparatus without their knowledge. More information: (https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-47303077 & Zuboff, 2019)

evolution is reduced to a minimum. That is why implantation of ready-made subjective fragments is so crucial to algorithmic governmentality.

The step that follows the extraction and interpretation of ectosubjective data is the implantation of artificial protosubjectivities in the harvested individuals. When data mining occurs and data about one's web usage, consumption habits or ideology is harvested by the algorithms of web giants, a gap opens up, an event I call *infra-subjective absence.* A fragment of subjectivity has been stripped away from its original vessel, leaving this gap which is quickly filled by a ready-made ectosubjective fragment. The implantation is often in the form of targeted advertisement, vouchers for rebates or 'buy one get one free', special offers, ideological quotes or inspirational maxims. In other words, algorithmic persuasion. Facebook's choice to discriminate between what users see and don't see on their timelines is the evidence of algorithmic manipulation (Hill, 2014). Implantation is the mass-mediation of ready-made ectosubjective fragments and their internalization by unknowing humans. These ready-mades have the role of replacing original affects that determine an individual's reaction to external stimuli and internal emotions. Through the modification of instinctual core values, human subjectivities are modulated according to dominant discourses, and react to life the way they are *intended* to.

Since I've discussed it in depth, and although it is not as actual as the new regime of algorithmic governmentality and, accordingly, does not work as well on humans, the example of the 6/49 advertisement campaign can be of help to understand the three steps of ectosubjectivity. In this advertisement campaign, Loto-Québec identified the 18-34 years old group as potential target after analyzing data regarding their consumption habits. Then, the advert campaign was created to target them and implant psychic links between lucky events and the lottery. For the sake of schematization, a chronological timeline of the 6/49 campaign can exemplify how ectosubjective fragments are extracted and implanted. In the advertisement, only a small portion

of the receiver's subjectivity is affected, but with strong effect. As I have emphasized in the concept of modulation, the chance-modulation of the human subject is overcoded with trivial lucky events which are then paired with a *mot d'ordre*:

1. Data mining for a special group to target (extraction)

2. Identification of the 18-34 group, creation of the campaign to target said group (algorithmic interpretation of the extracted data)

3. Reception: Character on television finds a needle in a haystack (implantation)

4. The character arrives at the conclusion that he should buy a lottery ticket, implying that he will win (implantation of the link between chance and winning the lottery)

5. The *mot d'ordre* appears on the screen in big bold letters: YOU SHOULD BUY A 6/49 (implantation in its clearest manifestation)

6. Saturation of this content over a span of a few weeks produces the psychic connection between product and luck, redefining the initial psychic perception the receiver had of luck (psychic activation of ectosubjective fragment)

This schema, repeated several times in the span of a few weeks, saturates the receiver with a link between any lucky event and winning the lottery. Thus, chance events might trigger the reminiscence of the advert campaign, sometimes even unconsciously, and produce an action: consumption, mere thought, refusal. But even refusal engages with the implanted ectosubjective fragment because it gives it weight and power. By negating the force of algorithmic persuasion, one does not impede but rather reinforces it by triggering the implanted ready-mades. The result of such a triggering will be the constant presence of mind of the object of the refusal, which leads to complaints to a friend, family member or coworker, which in turn will trigger the implanted ready-made and cause a reaction in the receiver of the complaint.

The example of the lottery advertisement campaign emphasized with clarity how a homogenized ectosubjective fragment (the direct link between lucky events in daily life with buying lottery tickets and winning millions) was implanted into human subjectivities to replace the older individual networks of luck. With the enormous amount of data that is extracted constantly about daily web usage, credit card tracing, GPS location and myriad other such examples, the amount of ectosubjective fragments which are added, layer upon layer, to human subjectivity can barely be fathomed. This layering of artificial affects endeavors to hide the essential human self, values and affects. Its aim is to produce a serialization of opinion, behavior, drives, dreams and ideas. To think that an individual desire or opinion can be artificially produced is a terrifying, yet totally observable reality[49].

The third step of ectosubjectivity is the activation of the ready-made fragments within a human individuality. As was emphasized several times, the activation of ectosubjective fragments to alter behavior and habits is how power is exercised in the twenty-first century: modulation of human psyche by the injection of subjective elements in human subjectivities through mass-mediation and algorithmic persuasion. Individual instincts are proto-subjective fragments which power attempts to serialize, for they have the power produce a natural chaos rather than predictable homogenized behavior. Ectosubjective fragments, like toys or cars on a conveyor belt, emerge from the multivalent factory of discourse to be implanted into human subjectivities and reinforce the gravitational pull of compulsive obedience. The activation of the chance-modulation in human subjectivities generated by the advertisement campaign for 6/49 was the

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[49] For more reading about the effect of mass-mediation on humans, see Malamuth & Check, 1981; Ohme, de Vreese & Albaek, 2018; Garfin, Silver & Holman, 2020.

direct but artificial cognitive link between chance and lottery. When an ectosubjective fragment is implanted, it is activated at the slightest nudge, such as a slightly lucky event of daily life. Thus, the cognitive connections are de-individualized to fit what Guattari called subjective modelling (2018, 477).

What is the result of the extraction, implantation and activation of artificial proto-subjective fragments within human individualities? The way towards this answer is still unpaved and treacherous, yet it seems that the zombification of humanity is the apparent symptom of the constant external pressure of control. If serialized individuality is the result of the extraction and implantation of activatable ectosubjective fragments that replace instinctual affects, then does it not follow that aimless wandering and sudden overstimulation is the current human condition? Let us correlate this vision of human zombification with popular culture representations. In two of the most popular zombie narratives, *The Walking Dead* and *Last of Us*, there are zombies that were once humans that now wander, walking around with absolutely no purpose. Whenever a living human walks by, the stimuli of sound and smell makes them enter a terrible state of murderous and cannibalistic rage. The images below are taken from the first volume of *The Walking Dead* comic book and an article about Black Friday shopping by *People Magazine*.

The Walking Dead vol. 1

Black Friday shoppers, People Magazine, 2018

The similarities are bewildering, even with the knowledge that this superimposition of images is not fortuitous. Whereas the object of the zombies' drive is human flesh, that of actual humans is consumption products. This analogy strongly highlights the concept of 'activation of implanted ectosubjective drives'. In the case of Black Friday, the mass-mediation of amazing rebates, and the initiation of a yearly tradition for these special prices, produces the activation of

a consumption-drive that negates notions of safety, community, love and sharing. Just like the prey whose internal functions (lust, appetite, etc.) ceases whenever it senses a predator (Netflix's *The Mind, Explained*, episode 3), the flinch of subjectivation negates all instinctual drives in profit of a ready-made ectosubjective fragment. Infected with the virus of zombification, humans are subjected to the will of capital and ideology in societies of control and/or surveillance capitalism, with scarce hope of escape unless a complete reversal of ectosubjective conditioning is imagined. Those zombies fighting for televisions have been activated by the stimulus of Black Friday rebates, like the compulsion to eat, defecate or reproduce is activated in instinctual strata of subjectivity. It does not follow that all humans are successfully activated by a given stimulus. However, the sheer cacophony of mediation striving for human attention, juxtaposed with the human need for belonging, makes of capitalist ectosubjective fragments quite powerful tools in enframing human experience.

To conclude this section, consider the next advances in technology: automated cars, automatization of labour and services, artificial intelligence. If I only take the former for the sake of exemplification, it becomes evident that humans are less and less individuals and increasingly considered as controllable organic material. Lazzarato has claimed that driving a car is a desubjectivation of humans, a pseudo-sleep in which humans are resubjectivated as part of the machine. But what happens when humans don't drive anymore? When they enter coordinates and are subjected to the automobile's chosen route and driving patterns? This example highlights the manipulation that humans are subjected to currently on web platforms and how it is slowly evolving towards total zombification. From driver to mere passenger, the human subject's agency is reduced to its lowest level. The car, plugged into the modulations of control, will be able to follow a specific route to have the passenger consume advertisement, engage his appetite, be stuck in traffic and turn on the radio to help with boredom. From this slow progression from

individual to malleable organic material, there is but one step towards the acceptance of a scorched earth and the imposed exodus in space or on Mars. Is it not funny to consider that the primary developer of autonomous cars is Tesla, a sister company to SpaceX, the corporation that is currently planning the colonization of Mars? Instead of trying to fix humanity's current planet, gigantic companies are spending billions to try and colonize the solar system. The attitude of looking to the outside for answers, rather than inside, is typical of capitalism, science, religion and now ectosubjective modelling of individuality.

3.4. Conclusion: Serialization of Truth

This chapter described the transition from discipline to control to emphasize how narration plays an important role in modulating human subjectivity towards programmed behavior. Discipline operated by creating enclosed spaces which molded the humans evolving within: household, school, barracks, factory and prison produced good children, good students, good soldiers, good workers and good citizens. Punishment in discipline societies consisted in incarceration in order to work on the criminal's mind towards rehabilitation and reinsertion into society (Foucault, 1975, 26-29; 150). Control exploded the enclosed systems of discipline to become ubiquitous and unbound. Through constant communication and the alteration of human subjectivities, control operates its power without having the need to appear in closed spaces or powerful figures such as the avenging king of sovereign societies (Foucault, 1975, Chapter 2). An important difference in punishment between discipline and control is that in the latter punishment often precedes the crime. In other words, punishment is often not necessary because rather than molding individuals, control constantly modulates human subjectivity to influence behavior, affects and ideology.

Control is fluid and ubiquitous, it permeates narration, opinions, news broadcasts, human relationship to planet earth and to itself, individual and collective introspection, and so on. As such, it is responsible for several daily human actions and emotions, whether they know it or not. Through the serialization of what is considered as truth, control operates a distinction between adherents and heretics. This leads to polarization of ideology between good citizens and marginals. The Covid pandemic exemplified this polarization by throwing all skeptics in the generalized category of 'conspiracy theorists', fostering hate and discontent from the majority towards these oft-moderate skeptics. As I have mentioned twice already, Theodor Adorno, in *The Schema of Mass Culture*, theorized this mechanization of human subjectivity in the context of art production. He wrote: "Imagination is replaced by a mechanically relentless control mechanism which determines whether the latest imago to be distributed really represents an exact, accurate and reliable reflection of the relevant item of reality" (2005, 64). This process is the serialization of a regime of truth and the rejection of everything that does not fit in. The essential human processes of imagination and cognition are here replaced with automatized mechanisms of assessment and value, what Adorno calls the "technicized forms of modern consciousness" (2005, 96). Through the replacement of human affect by a value system integrated in the production of mass-mediation itself, the human receiver is redistributed as a mere vessel of consumption in lieu of his traditional place as subject-receiver. Thus, mass culture codifies human behavior and consciousnesses towards fulfilling the needs and whims of the market, making of them "objects that can be manipulated without further objection" (Adorno 2005, 93). This echoes a quote attributed to Bill Gates: "[i]n the future […] we will treat the end-user as we treat computers: both are programmable" (Kittler, 2006, 179).

As in Marx's conception from the *Grundrisse* described in Chapter 2, Adorno smoothes the borders between human subjects and machinic objects: human subjectivities seem somewhat

subservient to the codification of their needs and habits through the massively distributed objects of mass culture. Félix Guattari claimed that the collective equipments of power produced homogeneity, in direct relation to Adorno's claim that the "schema of mass culture now prevails as a canon of synthetically produced modes of behavior" (2005, 91).

This artefactual construction of truth can appear as a threat to human individuality. In fact, the perspective of losing all agency is one step away from the terror of zombification. How can one be sure of the truth of his or her own emotions, drives, ideas and opinions, if they are replaced, in part or totally, by ready-mades? Such is the essential difficulty of life in societies of control: truth and essence have become mass-produced affects. However, such a construction of truth has been at play since the dawn of Western philosophy, shifting this threat into the persistent state of human existence. Not that it should soothe the affliction of being stripped of agency, but on the contrary by looking at the past one can form an understanding of the present. The constitution of artificial regimes of truth which demand obeisance is constant in Western history. In stride with this idea, the fourth and final chapter of this thesis defines the modalities of truth-telling in Antiquity and opens up theorization to the reversal of this truth towards notions of resistance, namely in the Cynic philosophers and in the character of the Joker. Through an in-depth analysis of the processes of artificial truth production in Ancient Greece, we can circle back to a better understanding of the digitalized constructs of the twenty-first century. Chapter 4 asks the following question: If control produces artificial truth regimes and demands human adaptation to ever-changing modulations, how can one explore alternative modulations, self-produced agency and new territories of existence? Chaos, both as concept and practice, appears as the most direct route towards the resubjectivation of individuals into unprocessed humans.

Chapter 4 – Parrhēsia and the Reversal of Truth

Control, according to Deleuze, has broken the frontiers of enclosed systems to become a diffuse network of subjectivation processes that permeate everyday life. The previous chapter has argued that everything, from highways to shopping malls, advertisement, economy and the artistic industry are networked with a type of power that does not make itself readily visible but rather permeates human action and opinion. As such, questions on human agency arise: how can one break away from this all-encompassing and ubiquitous control? How can one resist yet still function in society when the core values of social development (progress, profit, self-worth) contribute in part to the furthering of control? Finally, what is considered true or false in this regime of ubiquitous control? In the latter stages of the previous chapter I have discussed the notion of emerging truth regimes which strive to manipulate human subjectivity and behavior through their propagation in mass-media. Humans in societies of control are subjected to the constant pressure of these artificial truth systems through advertisement, social media, news broadcasts and reality television, among others. The success of these new truths is not certain, it is dependent on the level of integration of an individual in its machinic assemblage. However, with the cacophony of mass-mediation in daily life, escaping artificial truths can become difficult. This chapter studies the characteristics of a dominant truth regime and how it can be overturned through chaotic enunciation and individuation. It is not directly concerned with twenty-first century mediation, but rather with how these mediations produce a system of hierarchized truth which can be reversed. Whereas the first three chapters identified the problems of narrative manipulation, this final chapter attempts to offer scholarly solutions to the issue.

Resistance has taken many forms through human history: guerrillas, terrorism, activism, pamphleteering, judicial procedures, manifestations. The student strike of 2012 in Québec

showed how a common purpose in resistance can assemble a mass of people from various backgrounds towards a single objective. This particular example led to mitigated results in the end (Nadeau-Dubois, 2013, 195-203), but a profound mark has been left upon the fabric of Québécois society. Similarly, the aborted terrorist act of Guy Fawkes in 1605, while ending in his torture and execution, left such a permanent mark on society that he was recycled as a symbol in the graphic novel *V for Vendetta*, and as a symbol of hacktivist group Anonymous. Guy Fawkes and his individual life are mostly forgotten, but the symbol of his resistance, the wound it left on the pristine surface of power, incarnated in his distinctive facial features in a mask worn by V and members of Anonymous, is still powerful to this day. These two examples bring about a crucial point about resistance to the monopoly of control over subjectivity: it is not the acts themselves, or the personas of the resistants that create the most powerful changes in human history, but rather the glimpse they offer of new territories of possibility. In other words, acts of resistance, or negations of dominant truths, have the power to open new worlds by wounding the dominant *logos* presenting itself as truth. Resistance opens the way for an alternative world or an alternative existence, that could consist in a manifestation of a deeper truth.

This relation of truth with human existence and its reversal is the analytical subject of this fourth and final chapter. Through a close reading of the final lecture in Michel Foucault's life, entitled *The Courage of Truth*, I undergo a reframing of life as *alethurgy*, as manifestation of truth which does not need a dominant *logos* to function. Foucault's analysis of the Greek concept of *parrhēsia*, or truth-telling, mutating from Plato's Socratic dialogues towards the *bios alethes* of the Cynics, emphasizes a primal bond between truth and practical human existence that has echoes up to contemporary existence and fiction. The character of the Joker, to which a section of this chapter is devoted, can be thought of as a modern embodiment of Cynic philosophy's reversal of logocentric truth. Although Batman always wins, the new territories of truth

unconcealed by the Joker wound the fabric of existence and bring about drastic change. The case studies of fiction narratives in this chapter are nodes of powerful networking between the processes of power and the potential for resistance and individuality. In each of the three examples developed below, the point of tension between dominant discourse and individual truth is emphasized as the primary conflict of human life. Thus, my study of Foucault's lecture in parallel with fiction examples from Kafka, Dostoevsky and the character of the Joker leads to the redefinition of human existence as embodied truth. This chapter leads to the final realization that, as embodied truth, human existence does not need artificial truth regimes to dictate behavior and opinion. This reframing of human existence is the opening of new territories of human enunciation and celebration of human agency.

4.1. The Modalities of Truth-Telling: Risk, *Epimeleia*, Socratic Veridiction

In the final lecture before his death, French philosopher Michel Foucault explored and expanded on one of his favored subjects of the latter stage of his philosophical career: the governing of the self and others. This final lecture, given in 1984 at the Collège de France, is entitled *The Courage of Truth*. In it, Foucault attempts to define a new mode of veridiction, or unconcealment of truth, namely parrhēsiastic veridiction. Through a close reading of Socratic dialogues alongside the Cynic philosophy's reversal of the concept of *true life,* Foucault emphasizes how the courage of truth unconceals new worlds, new territories of existence. The concept of *parrhēsia* is integral in order to grasp late Foucaldian thought, but even more so in order to question governmentality in societies of control, and finally to bring about new possibilities for existence outside of the reach of power.

Foucault, in the very first pages of *The Courage of Truth*, emphasizes his methodology for the study of *parrhēsia*:

Rather than analyzing the forms by which a discourse is recognized as true, this [the present work Foucault undertakes] would involve analyzing the form in which, in his act of telling the truth, the individual constitutes himself and is constituted by others as a subject of a discourse of truth, the form in which he presents himself to himself and to others as someone who tells the truth, the form of the subject telling the truth. (2012, 3)

This program shows a shunning of the traditional platonic hierarchy of truth in *logos* from the Republic in profit of drawing attention to the person speaking the truth and the conformity of his or her life to the truth (Gros, 2012, 351 & 355-356). This interest in the person practicing *parrhēsia* expands in a study of true life as *alethurgy* (manifestation of truth) rather than *logos*. The subject telling the truth is the *locus* of *alethurgy,* rather than the discourse that is uttered. Foucault draws upon Plato's *Laches* in order to demonstrate the importance of true life towards practicing truth-telling: it is not really the discourse itself that needs to be true, but more importantly the person speaking needs to be the location of truth itself. This true life is exacerbated and reversed in a grimace by the Cynics, which guides this thesis to its final textual analysis of the character of the Joker in Batman as a marginalized figure who manifests truth by his very existence, and offers the possibility of a new life and a new world.

This analysis of *parrhēsia* follows three specific nodes: the risk of speaking the truth in political context, the traditional modalities of truth-telling and their interplay with *parrhēsia*, and finally Cynic *parrhēsia* as reversal of true life and as challenging-forth a new world.

4.1.1. Parrhēsia: Etymology, Risk and Democracy

First, Foucault's lecture starts by defining *parrhēsia* in its etymological sense and historical context. *Parrhēsia* is a Greek concept which refers to the practice of truth-telling; it can be translated as free-spokenness, saying everything (*pan-rema*), telling all ((Foucault, 2012, 2; 9).

The notion of *parrhēsia* is first of all a political notion (Foucault, 2012, 8), as it engages two or more interlocutors in what Foucault calls "the game of *parrhēsia*" (Foucault, 2012, 12). It has a positive or negative sense depending on how it is used and in what context. For example, Aristophanes, Isocrates (1945, 125) and even Plato in the *Republic* (2004, Book VIII, 557a-b) use the word *parrhēsia* to define the chatterbox, the impenitent blabberer who says everything and nothing at the same time. In this sense, *parrhēsia* is pejorative, it is a sign of a speaker "who cannot index-link his discourse to a principle of rationality and truth" (Foucault, 2012, 10). In its opposite meaning, *parrhēsia* is the practice of telling all, but in the sense of "telling the truth without hiding any part of it, without hiding it behind anything" (Foucault, 2012, 10). There is a direct link between *parrhēsia* and truth. *Parrhēsiastic* unconcealment of the truth is what Foucault calls an *alethurgy*, a manifestation of the truth in discourse (*logos*). *Parrhēsia* is the practice of truth-telling, it is not a technique but rather a *stance* of clear unconcealment of the truth (Foucault, 2012, 14). This notion of stance echoes that of true life which will be developed later by Foucault in relation to Socrates.

Foucault identifies three modalities of truth-telling other than *parrhēsia*: prophecy, wisdom and *technē*. While a whole section of *The Courage of Truth* is devoted to these modalities of truth-telling and how they differentiate and coalesce in various events of truth, suffice here to present the general argument. Prophecy, to begin with, was never a clear uttering of truth; the need for interpretation is integral to prophecy. In addition, the posture of the oracle is one of mediation between the gods and men (15): he does not speak for himself but is the messenger of another voice (the gods').

In contrast the *parrhēsia*st, by definition, speaks in his own name. It is essential that he expresses his own opinion, thought, and conviction. […] the *parrhēsiast* […] does not speak in riddles. On the contrary, he says things as clearly and directly as possible,

without any disguise or rhetorical embellishment, so that his words may immediately be given their prescriptive value. The *parrhēsiast* leaves nothing to interpretation. (Foucault, 2012, 15-16)

Thus, one of the main contrasts between *parrhēsia* and prophecy is that the *parrhēsia*st speaks in his own name and without concealing his meaning while the prophet is a mediator between Gods and men whose words must be interpreted. A pertinent representation of this prophetic opacity is the television series *Vikings*, where characters often consult the oracle and never understand whatever answers they are given. They are never satisfied of the true sense of the prophecy and its meaning is never known until the prophecy has been fulfilled. Unlike *parrhēsia*, prophetic truth is always a concealed truth.

Foucault moves on to wisdom and the figure of the sage. He channels legendary philosopher Heraclitus, who shunned public life, because he felt it was useless chatter, in profit of playing dice with children and producing his oeuvre, of which only fragments subsist. Unlike the prophet, the sage speaks in his own name. However, he "keeps his wisdom in a state of essential withdrawal, or at least reserve" (Foucault, 2012, 17). He is not compelled to speak, to share his wisdom for the betterment of humanity; when he does, it is sometimes in concealing his true meaning. Diogenes Laertius notes that "Heraclitus wrote his Poem in deliberately obscure terms so that only those who were capable could read it and so that he, Heraclitus, could not be despised for being read by all and sundry" (Laertius, 1925, 413). The *misanthropon* of the sage contrasts with the *parrhēsiast's* duty, obligation, responsibility and task to speak: "[h]e has no right to shirk this task" (Foucault, 2012, 18). The *parrhēsiast* has the obligation to speak, even though sometimes it becomes a burden and can threaten his very life. Foucault gives the example of Socrates as the *parrhēsiast* who has the god-given duty to question men and tell them the truth

towards practical application to their existence, rather than "useless knowledge" about the being of nature and things (Foucault, 2012, 19).

Finally, Foucault evokes the third and final modality of truth-telling: that of the teacher or technician. The teachers or technicians "possess a knowledge characterized as *tekhnē*, know-how, that is to say, entailing particular items of knowledge, but taking shape in a practice and involving, for their apprenticeship, not only a theoretical knowledge, but a whole exercice" (Foucault, 2012, 24). The teachers and technicians shape truth through the act of transmission of their practical knowledge to future generations of apprentices. It is attached to a tradition and to a cycle of continuous transmission:

> This man of *tekhnē* would not himself have been able to learn anything and today would know nothing at all, or very little, if there had not been, before him, a technician (*tekhnites*) like him, who had taught him, whose pupil he had been, and who had been his teacher. And just as he would not have learned anything if someone had not previously told him what they knew, so, in the same way, he will have to pass on his knowledge so that it does not die with him." (Foucault, 2012, 24)

Here there is an obligation to speak that was not characteristic of the truth-telling of wisdom. The transmission of practical knowledge is a condition of the profession of technician, the duty of transmission is an integral part of the profession, of the knowledge itself. What distinguishes the technician from the *parrhēsia*st, and this is a crucial argument, is the notion of risk. The technician does not take much risk in transmitting his technical knowledge to apprentices: "Whereas, in the case of the technician's truth-telling, teaching ensures the survival of knowledge, the person who practices *parrhēsia* risks death" (Foucault, 2012, 25). This risk is the reason for Foucault's title *The Courage of Truth.*

I have underlined the main characteristics of *parrhēsia* in relation to the three additional modalities of truth-telling: speaking in his own name and with clarity, the duty and obligation of speaking the truth, and finally the concept of risk linked to *parrhēsia*. Foucault emphasizes the courage of *parrhēsia* because of the high risk that is involved with this practice of unconcealment of truth, especially in the political sphere, democratic or otherwise. By speaking a truth that is not that of prophecy, wisdom or *technē*, the *parrhēsia*st speaks the true discourse of *ethos*, or way of life. In section 4.1.3. of the present chapter, this notion of ethos is studied extensively. The *parrhēsiast's* unconcealment of *ethos* is a risk, especially in political spheres. One would imagine that democracy would be the ideal place for the practice of *parrhēsia*, since it is supposed to offer a freedom of opinion and grants everybody the right to speak their truth. In theory, democracy is supposed to be the system where everyone has a voice.

However, Foucault pinpoints two main problems with the practice of *parrhēsia* in democracy, hinting at its impossibility. The first issue is that *parrhēsia* is the right for everyone to speak their minds and offer their truth as the Truth. In such a system "there are as many *politeia* (constitutions, governments), as there are individuals" (Foucault, 2012, 36; Plato, 2004, VIII, 577b). In stride with the definition of Control from Chapter 4, the elaboration of a multiplicity of different person-states is the total opposite of the elaborate serialization of human subjectivity that is the objective of societies of control. Rather than homogeneity, the democratized use of *parrhēsia* as freedom of speech produces a chaotic multiplicity. The second issue with *parrhēsia* in democracy concerns flattery and pleasing discourse. Foucault channels Plato's image of the Ship in Book VI of the *Republic* to illustrate how the democratic city's rulers and citizens will listen to flatterers and not *parrhēsiasts*: "[…] who will be listened to, approved, followed, and loved? It will be those who please the people, say what they want to hear and flatter them. The others, those who say or try to say what is true and good, and not what pleases

the people, will not be listened to. Worse, they will provoke negative reactions, irritation, and anger. And their true discourse will expose them to vengeance or punishment" (Foucault, 2012, 37). Socrates also points to this risk of speaking the truth in the political arena when, in the *Apology*, he claims that, had he participated actively in the political world, he would have been dead long before (Plato, 1920, 31d-e).

Summarizing his argument, Foucault argues that *parrhēsia* can take two forms in democracy: either it becomes the chaotic freedom of multiple truths and self-government which threatens the system of democracy, or it is the courageous act of telling the truth with the risk of opening a rift at the heart of a specific rule, which also threatens philosophy. His conclusion, then, is that *parrhēsia* "[…] has no place in democracy" (Foucault, 2012, 38). What is made manifest is that truth cannot be thoroughly practiced in a ruling political system (democracy, tyranny). Thus, only the margins of these dominant systems can be opened up to the practice of *parrhēsia*. As I develop in section 4.2.1., Foucault identifies the Cynic philosophy of reversal of truth as the *locus* of *parrhēsia* in Greek civilization. It is from the margins, in the true life of marginalized, almost animalized beings that truth takes its most profound manifestation. In other words, resistance opens up a world of possibility for truth which confronts the dominant systems and discourse.

As a final point, the risk of *parrhēsia* resides precisely in the receiver's openness to the game of *parrhēsia*. In fact, this receiver can be undermined by the true discourse of the *parrhēsia*st, his authority, virtue or *ethos* questioned and put to the test. It is a difficult game to play, thus the high risk involved for the truth-teller. Interestingly, this conceptualization of interlocution differs totally from Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, where the imagined or real interlocutor defines the utterer's message. Speech, in Bakhtin's theory, is already conditioned by the receiver's imagined reaction in a never-ending chain of alteration (Lazzarato, 2014, 192).

It is the imagined act of reception that shapes the configuration of discourse, just like in interface design the designer imagines his receiver; it does not necessarily reflect the utterer's inner order but rather how he perceives his interlocutor or the context of enunciation. *Parrhēsia*, on the other hand, is an essential truth that refers to a particular situation or object of discourse. The ideal *parrhēsia* does not alter its course, whoever the receiver might be. These two different speech acts contradict and through this opposition the understanding of the particularity of the concept of *parrhēsia* can be improved. Foucault adds this important notion to the game of *parrhēsia*: "And if the *parrhēsiast's* truth may unite and reconcile, when it is accepted and the other person agrees to the pact and plays the game of *parrhēsia*, this is only after it has opened up an essential, fundamental, and structurally necessary moment of the possibility of hatred and a rupture" (2012, 25). Thus, the emergence of truth is made possible by the dialogic space opened up by the *parrhēsiast's* risk of his/her own life and the general risk of rupture in dialogue.

In the next section a close reading of Kafka's short story *In the Penal Colony* serves to exemplify both the impossibility of truth-telling in a political context as well as the inherent risk for the *parrhēsia*st.

4.1.2. *In the Penal Colony*: the Risk of *Parrhēsia*

As I mentioned previously, Franz Kafka is the novelist of alienation, of marginalization. His short story *The Metamorphosis*, for example, describes the transformation of a normal human being into a cockroach, and the psychological consequences of this metamorphosis on the protagonist's inner order. As another example, previously cited, his novel *The Trial* emphasizes how bureaucracy disembodies human existence into a system where individuality is shorn in profit of a homogenized set of rules. In other words, Kafka writes to question human relationship to others and to self in the context of systemized power. His powerful *oeuvre* shakes the

foundation of human relationship to the world, and as such is an important node of narrative networking which we can use to question truth-telling and dominant *logos*. As another important argument for the choice of this short story in particular, the integration of the condemned into the machine of execution mirrors perfectly my conception of Guattarian machines and how humans are disembodied as parts of the machine. Multiple machinic levels are at play in this short story, the most important for the present chapter being the integration of the explorer into the machine of power struggles and the attempted manipulation of his truth-telling potential.

The impossibility of *parrhēsia* in democracy and its inherent risk is highlighted in the short story *In the Penal Colony* by Kafka. In the short story, an explorer visits a penal colony on an island where an officer showcases an execution mechanism platonically referred to as "the apparatus". As I illustrate with examples from the texts as well as notes from unpublished versions of the story, there is an impossibility for the explorer to speak the truth without risking his reputation or physical safety. Through this close-reading of *In the Penal Colony*, the inherent risk of truth-telling is exemplified. Both the new governor, who is against the apparatus, and the officer who wishes the survival of the execution procedure ask the explorer to speak in his favor, but the explorer refuses. The refusal and impossibility of engaging with society, as well as the alienation of the protagonist from society or political power are highly characteristic of Kafka's work. In addition, this inherent inadequacy from the explorer echoes the alienation of the parrhesiast in democratic or tyrannical governments. He is compelled to speak by his own status as parrhesiast, even though the result may harm him. In the end, the refusal of the explorer to use *parrhēsia* is an act of resistance to the pressures of society, and his escape from the colony illustrates his desire to remain outside the conflicted *ethos* of the island and its government.

To begin with, in Kafka's story the apparatus and the officer both symbolize the old power regime of the previous governor. Executions have been almost totally abolished in the new

regime, which causes the ire of the officer who sticks to the old rules and has just recently

condemned a prisoner to death. The explorer was invited to this execution by the new governor

himself, yet the governor is absent. The only people present are a soldier, the condemned, the

officer and the explorer. The officer showcases the apparatus as the sum of the previous

governor's knowledge and genius, a wonderful machine that kills in twelve hours by revealing to

the prisoner his own fault, almost as an epiphany (Kafka, 1996, 61). The procedure consists in

writing, in an obscure script, the condemned's crime on his very skin until the work is completed

and the condemned dies. The epiphany comes at the moment of death, when the obscure script is

understood by the dying man in a final atoning moment. Throughout the story the officer

complains of the new regime and about how the golden age of executions is long past. This is

seconded by the apparatus breaking down during the start of the procedure and the officer's

mental breakdown at the end of the story.

  Witnessing the cruelty of the procedure, the explorer is taken aback and wonders what he

should do or say. The officer's attempts at convincing him of the worth of the apparatus and the

procedure are somewhat enticing, but mostly he does not want to interfere in the colony's affairs.

After all, what could he say? The explorer reflects:

> It's always a ticklish thing to interfere in someone else's affairs in some decisive way. He
>
> was neither a citizen of the penal colony nor a citizen of the country it belonged to. If he
>
> wished to condemn the execution or even prevent it, they could say to him: 'You're a
>
> foreigner, keep quiet.' He would have no reply to that, but would only be able to add that
>
> in this case he didn't even understand his own motives, since he was traveling purely with
>
> the intention of seeing things, and by no means that of altering other people's legal codes,
>
> or the like. But matters here were truly very tempting. The injustice of the proceedings and
>
> the inhumanity of the execution couldn't be denied. No one could assume that the traveler

was doing anything self-serving, because the condemned man was unknown to him, not a compatriot and in no way a person who elicited sympathy, The explorer himself had letters of recommendation from high official sources, he has been welcomed here with great courtesy, and the fact that he has been invited to this execution even seemed to indicate that his opinion of this court was desired. Moreover, this was all the more likely since the governor, as he has now heard more than explicitly, was not partial to these proceedings and was almost hostile to the officer. (Kafka, 1996, 62)

Before anyone asks the explorer to engage in *parrhēsia* to further their cause, the difficulty of political *parrhēsia* is made evident in the text. On the one hand, the explorer is against the torture and execution of the condemned man, and against the proceedings in general. The letters of recommendation and courtesy with which he has been welcomed in the colony are also mentioned, as is the negative opinion of the new governor on the execution procedure. From this point, *parrhēsia* could be possible since it flatters the governor's opinion and does not impede the explorer's visit on the colony. It does not go against the grain and break the cordial welcome he has enjoyed until now. However, the explorer still refuses to take position or exercise his powerful truth-telling. He is torn away from these reflections by a shout from the officer, who is frustrated by the condemned man's vomiting upon the felt gag being inserted in his mouth.

One important aspect of the position of the explorer is that as a foreigner, he is in a widely different stance than the traditional Greek *parrhēsia*st who had to be a male citizen of adult age with proper education. The explorer is a foreigner, yet his *parrhēsia* is highly valued and requested by the governor and officer both, in quite convincing fashion. Scholar Seloua Luste Boulbina, in her essay *La colonie: une conjuguaison kafkaïenne*, argues that the explorer is a witness, an absent outsider (*tiers absent).* While this absence is highlighted in the explorer's final refusal to engage in the politics of the colony, it remains that his opinion is desperately needed

for the colony to evolve towards a new regime. As such, the absent outsider is vital to the future

equilibrium of the colony. Postcolonial considerations on this topic could lead to further

reflection on the role of explorers, scholars and foreigners in relation to colonial regimes in

general and their decolonization, but for the moment it only serves to point to the importance of

the explorer's opinion and practice of truth-telling.

Throughout the short story the officer adds layer upon layer of blame upon the new

governor for the breaking down of the apparatus: "'All the governor's fault!' yelled the officer,

beside himself, shaking the brass rods in front, 'my machine is getting befouled like a stable'"

(Kafka, 1996, 63). Yet, for all his anger and obliviousness to the progress of the colony, the

officer is no fool. He understands the desire of the new governor for reform and how he will use

the explorer towards his goal of destroying the validity of the execution procedure. The officer

articulates the problem this way:

> I was near you yesterday when the governor invited you. I heard the invitation. I know the
>
> governor. I immediately understood his purpose in inviting you. Even though his authority
>
> may be great enough for him to take steps against me, he still doesn't dare to, but instead
>
> he wishes to expose me to your opinion, that of a highly esteemed foreign visitor. He
>
> worked it out carefully; this is your second day on the island, you didn't know the old
>
> governor and his philosophy, you are prejudiced by European points of view, perhaps you
>
> are an opponent on principle of any kind of capital punishment, and of this kind of
>
> execution by machine in particular; furthermore, you observe that the execution is
>
> performed without the participation of the public, in a dismal atmosphere, on a machine
>
> that is already somewhat damaged – now, taking all this together, thinks the governor,
>
> wouldn't it be quite possible for you to consider my procedure incorrect? And if you
>
> consider it incorrect […], you won't keep silent about it, because you must trust your

tried-and-true convictions. Of course, you've seen and learned to respect many peculiar

customs of many nations, and so probably you won't come out against the procedure as

openly as you might do at home. But the governor doesn't need that much. A hasty word,

merely a careless word, is enough. It doesn't have to be rooted to your convictions, if only

it apparently suits his purposes. I'm sure he's going to question you as shrewdly as

possible. And his ladies will sit around in a circle, pricking up their ears; you'll say

something like 'In our country the judicial procedure is different' or 'In our country there

are punishments other than capital punishment' or 'In our country torture was used only in

the Middle Ages.' Those are all remarks that are just as correct as they seem self-evident

to you, innocent remarks that do not impugn my procedure. But how will the governor

take them? I can see him, the good governor, immediately pushing his chair aside and

dashing onto the balcony, I can see his ladies pouring after him, I can now hear his voice –

his ladies call it a voice of thunder – as he says: 'A great Occidental explorer, sent to

investigate judicial procedure all over the world, has just said that our old traditional

procedure is inhumane'. (Kafka, 1996, 65-66)

This quote emphasizes the role of the explorer as *parrhēsiast* and the immense power

linked to the practice of truth-telling in cementing or destroying *status quo*. Both the old regime

and the new desire the explorer to speak in favor of their ideology. His proclamation on the

validity (or lack thereof) of the execution procedure will have the value of truth and shift the

balance of power in the colony. The officer is clearly a marginalized character, one that sticks to

the old ways and negates the new progressive regime of the actual governor. The final of the

story, when the explorer goes to the tavern and faces the supporters of the old regime, points to

the fact that a numerous faction is still loyal to the dead governor. As such, the explorer's public

approval of the procedure has the potential of reversing power to the old ways through social

upheaval. In both cases, the explorer's *parrhēsia* is a powerful tool, but one that the explorer will refuse to use.

Directly after having imagined the new governor's train of thought and attempts at manipulation of the explorer's *parrhēsia*, the officer tries in his turn to operationalize the explorer's faculty of truth-telling towards furthering the old governor's agenda. He endeavors to bring the explorer to the margins to foster discontent and chaos within the new governor's regime and keep the specter of the old regime afloat:

'And now I request of you: help me in my dealings with the governor!'

The explorer wouldn't let him continue. 'How could I?' he exclaimed, 'it's altogether impossible. I can't help you any more than I can harm you.'

'Yes you can,' said the officer. With some alarm the explorer saw that the officer was clenching his fists. 'Yes, you can,' the officer repeated even more urgently. 'I have a plan that can't fail. You think your influence isn't enough. I know that it *is* enough. But even granting that you're right, isn't it still necessary to try everything, even measures that are inadequate, in order to preserve this procedure? So listen to my plan. To carry it out, it's necessary above all for you to conceal your opinion of the procedure as much as possible in the colony today. […] Tomorrow in the government building, under his chairmanship, a big meeting of all the top administration officials will take place. Naturally, the governor has managed to turn such meetings into a show. A gallery has been built that's always full of spectators. […] I'll stand up and make my report on today's execution. A very brief speech, nothing but the report. True, a report of that nature isn't customary, but I'll make it. The governor thanks me, as always, with a friendly smile, and then he isn't able to restrain himself, he seizes the favorable opportunity. 'Just now,' he'll say, or words to that effect, 'the report on the execution has been made. I would merely like to add to this

report the fact that the great explorer whose visit, which honors our colony so immensely, you all know about, was present at that very execution. Our meeting today is also made more significant by his presence. Now, shall we not ask this great explorer for his opinion of this old, traditional style of execution and of the proceedings that lead up to it?' […] The governor bows to you and says "Then, in the name of all assembled here, I pose the question.' And now you walk to the railing. […] And now finally comes your speech. […] In your talk you must mustn't keep within any bounds; shout out the truth; lean over the railing; roar, yes, roar your opinion, your unalterable opinion, at the governor. (Kafka, 1996, 67-68)

The explorer is brought in the games of power against his will, both by the governor and the officer. It must be emphasized that in this short story the explorer fits some important elements of the description of the *parrhēsiast*. Multiple times there is mention of the explorer's honesty, truth, strong opinion, true and tested convictions, etc. The explorer, having travelled by and large and thus accumulated comparative opinions of his native Europe and the nations of his travels, has opinions that are, at least in the context of the story, irrefutable. His truth is *The* truth. He is also described as honest and fearless (Kafka, 1996, 68), two characteristics of the *parrhēsia*st described by Foucault. The risk of telling the truth is evident in both the governor's and the officer's demands of truth-telling. On the one hand the risk of encountering the wrath of the officer, who looks about to burst in rage at every moment, is a risk for the explorer's safety. The explorer's flight from the island, chased by the old governor's loyal subjects, also illustrates this threat. On the other hand, the risk of losing his favorable position as an important guest by helping the officer is a risk on the explorer's reputation and relations. In both cases, by telling the truth the explorer encounters risk, emphasizing the difficulty of engaging in political *parrhēsia* described by Foucault (2012, 37-40).

The reaction of the explorer to the officer's plan is the denial of his power as *parrhēsiast*. It is not a burden he wants to carry. He knows his truth-telling power will lead either to the discomfiture of the officer and the silent supporters of the old regime or to the soiling of his own reputation and the fracturing of the current power regime. The explorer's silence is a sign of resistance to the insistent demands upon his *parrhēsia*, a voluntary marginalization of his agency. With all his knowledge, he falls back on the truth of the sage, one of *misanthropon* and withdrawal, and lets the political games of the colony play out without his interaction. This resistance to the operationalization of *parrhēsia* is a very important moment in literature, as it emphasizes how powerful one's agency can be. Opposed to the helplessness of the protagonist in Kafka's *Trial*, the explorer's refusal and silence are traces of a deeper understanding of new territories of truth.

In an alternate, unpublished ending, Kafka writes about the reveries of the explorer that if a boat had traversed the sand to pick him up, he would have left the island on the spot, threatening as he departed to **raise his voice** in his home country against the judicial practice of apparatus execution (Kafka, 2000, 1111). This alternate ending emphasizes the power of the explorer's truth-telling and his refusal to engage in political *parrhēsia* anywhere other than his home country, where the risks might be lessened. His flight, coupled with his threat, makes of this unpublished ending an example of the seizing of one's own *parrhēsia*, contrary to succumbing to its operationalization by others. Another imagined ending sees the explorer transforming into a dog and running around in a frenzy (Kafka, 2000, 1111). This animalistic reversal, from respected truth-teller to frenzied animal, echoes the Cynic reversal of truth that I discuss in the following sections.

The published ending sees the explorer barely escaping the island as he is chased by the ghastly followers of the old governor. Whatever truth the explorer would have decided to utter,

he would have ended threatened by one of the two warring groups. His silence is a total refusal of engaging in the game of *parrhēsia* and the restitution of agency through inaction. In Kafka's text, political truth-telling is wholly impossible because of the high risk for the person of the *parrhēsiast* and the difficulties of altering power regimes through truth, however powerful. The question that arises is: how and in what context can one tell the truth, the truth that does not please or flatter, the difficult truth which requires the courage of *parrhēsia*? Foucault points to philosophy as the site of *parrhēsia*, but in the contemporary context of societies of control, which operationalize advertisement, social media and entertainment narratives, media that rarely make use of the space of philosophical discourse, what space is there for truth-telling and where can one find it?

Fiction gives us plenty material to ponder upon the limited possibilities for countering the dominant, controlling truth of political life. In Kafka's short story, the explorer decided to stay silent as a political gesture of resistance. His refusal of enunciation is the refusal of uttering operationalized discourse. As another example, the figure of the Joker, a personification of the archetype of the trickster, speaks a truth that takes the form of a narrative yet counters the dominant truths embodied in the figure of the Batman. The Joker does not generate his own agency through silence, like the explorer in Kafka's story, but rather through chaos. This subject is discussed in depth in the section devoted to the Joker. For now, however, the contrast between Socratic *parrhēsia* and Cynic *parrhēsia* is integral to foster an understanding of how truth is directly linked with constructed *ethos* since Antiquity and how its reversal produces new territories of existence.

4.1.3. Parrhēsia as Producing Subjects: Care of Self and Ethical Differentiation in

   Socrates

The dialectical practice of truth-telling that is *parrhēsia* does not revolve around *logos* or

rhetorics, but rather around a *praxis* of truth, an *ethos* or way of life. Even though until now, in

Foucault's argument, truth has been linked in the traditional platonic fashion to *logos*, the French

philosopher takes a drastic turn in his study of Plato's dialogue *Laches* to emphasize how

alethurgy, the manifestation of truth, is in fact embodied in existence. The notion of true life, of

bios alethes, is introduced by Foucault to lead towards his concept of ethical differentiation and,

further down the line, to the reversal of *bios alethes* by Cynic philosophy. The present section is

concerned with the steps of Socratic veridiction which lead to ethical differentiation.

Foucault opposes two platonic dialogues in their aims and how they initiate specific

branches of Western philosophy: the *Alcibiades* and the *Laches*. While the former concerns

metaphysics in the proving of the existence of a soul separate from the body and the importance

of contemplating this soul to reach the truth (Foucault, 2012, 126), the latter founds the notion of

bios alethes, or true life, as an integral principle of truth-telling in the conduct of a true life which

enables *parrhēsia*. In other words, Foucault argues that the *Alcibiades* founds metaphysics while

the *Laches* founds ethics.

 This differentiation between metaphysical and empirical *parrhēsia* is thoroughly

embodied in the concepts of ethical differentiation and Socratic veridiction. The veridiction based

on true life is introduced by Plato in the *Laches* through Socrates' dialogue concerning *ethos* as

the point of emergence of *parrhēsia*. What is more, rather than the governing of the *polis*, now

the individual psyche of the citizens is the objective of truth-telling, thus breaking away from any

political objective: "[…] *parrhēsia*, while being organized around the principle of truth-telling,

now takes shape in a set of operations which enable veridiction to induce transformations in the soul" (Foucault, 2012, 65).

It is important to stress the following points. With the development of this chapter so far – on the one hand, the criticism of democracy as difficult site for *parrhēsia* and, on the other, the valorization of personal *ethos* as a chosen site for *parrhēsia* –*parrhēsia* is not just, as it was in Euripides, a privilege, the exercise of which is inseparable from the honorable citizen's freedom. *Parrhēsia* now appears, not as a right possessed by a subject, but as a practice whose privileged correlate, whose first point of application, is not the city or body of citizens which has to be persuaded and led, but something which is both a partner to which it is addressed and a domain in which it is effective. This partner to which *parrhēsia* is addressed, and this domain in which it is effective, is the individual's *psukhē* (soul).

There are three main differences brought forth by Plato in the *Laches* concerning *parrhēsia*, the sum of which Foucault calls Socratic veridiction. First difference: the object of truth moves from the *polis* to the *psukhē* as the essential correlate of *parrhēsia*. Second difference: the objective of this truth-telling, of this *parrhēsiastic* practice now oriented towards the *psukhē*, is now not so much useful advice in particular circumstances, when the citizens are at a loss and are looking for a guide who may enable them to escape danger and be saved, but rather the formation of a certain way of being, a certain way of doing things, of conducting oneself as an individual. The objective of truth-telling is therefore less the city's salvation than the individual's continuous *ethos*. Third difference: this double determination of the *psukhē* as correlate of truth-telling, and of *ethos* as the objective of *parrhēsiastic* practice, means that *parrhēsia*, while being organized around the principle of truth-telling, now takes shape in a set of operations which enable veridiction to induce transformations in the soul (Foucault, 2012, 64-65) Exactly like the discussion of algorithmic government as the production of subjects in Chapter 3,

in Foucault's analysis of ancient truth *the subject is produced by an ethical value system* which determines the worth of an individual's correlation with said model. To pursue Socratic veridiction is to adhere to a set of principles that dictate one's behavior and core values.

As Foucault emphasizes, *parrhēsia* shifts radically from a counselling practice in the *polis* towards its emergence in the individual subject and its effects on the improvement of individual psyche. Going even further, the transformation of the individual soul subjected to *parrhēsia* becomes the objective or the result of this practice. This crisis of *parrhēsia*, as Foucault calls it, is embodied in the *parrhēsiastic* practice of Socrates and the three steps of his veridiction process, which leads to the concept of *epimeleia* (care of self) and, by extension, true life as a new site of *parrhēsiastic* emergence. Socratic veridiction is composed of three distinct steps: *Zetesis*, *exetasis* and *epimeleia* (Foucault, 2012, 82). Through these three steps, Socrates' ethical model emerges as *parrhēsia* and transforms his interlocutor's psyche towards *bios alethes*, or true life. These three steps can lead us closer to the concept of true life and, in the next section, to its reversal by the Cynic philosophers contemporary to Socrates.

First, Socrates was supposed to have received a mission from the gods in the form of a prophecy: "No one is wiser than Socrates" (Plato, 1920, 31e; Foucault, 2012, 83). Socrates, unlike the traditional attitude towards oracular speech that consisted of interpretation and expectation of realization, submits the prophecy to the test by investigating its truth. This investigative quest is *zetesis*, the first step in Socratic veridiction: "He undertook a search, and once again this does not consist in interpreting, in deciphering. It does not involve producing an exegesis of what the god might have wanted to say and might have hidden in an allegorical form or in a half truthful deceptive discourse. The investigation Socrates undertakes aims to find out if the oracle told the truth" (Foucault, 2012, 82). This is a challenging of the oracle's truth-telling in a test that will last until his very last words in the *Phaedo*. Socratic *parrhēsia* does not emerge

from a traditional, reliable source but rather from the toil of constant investigation of the discourse and *ethos* presenting itself as truth.

The second moment of Socratic veridiction, which differentiates from traditional, logocentric veridiction, is *exetasis*, subjecting to examination. It follows *zetesis* closely in that it is the putting into action of the investigative drive. Socrates goes around comparing his soul with that of other people around him from all walks of life, in order to validate or invalidate the oracle's prophecy:

> And finally, this *exetasis* involves not only testing souls about what they do and do not know about things and themselves, but also comparing these souls with Socrates' soul. Socrates, who modestly went to check whether the oracle really spoke the truth when it asserted that he, Socrates, was the wisest of men, and who tried to show, to emphasize his own ignorance before the supposed knowledge of others, finally appears as being in fact the person who knows more than others, at least in that he knows his own ignorance. And this is how Socrates' soul becomes the touchstone (*basanos*) of the souls of others. (Foucault, 2012, 84)

Socrates' soul becomes the ethical model to follow, and transformations of the soul of others will take the philosopher's as model.

Finally, the third moment of Socratic veridiction is *epimeleia*, or care of self. The final aspect of Socrates' god-given mission is the transmission of the concern for one's *ethos* to all his interlocutors. This practice of truth-telling has a different aim than political *parrhēsia*: "This other aim is in fact to see to it that people take care of themselves, that each individual attends to

himself [as] a rational being having a relation to truth founded on the very being of his soul. And in this we now have a *parrhēsia* on the axis of ethics[50]" (Foucault, 2012, 86).

However, and this is where I disagree with part of Foucault's interpretation, the relation to truth in ethical *parrhēsia* is not, as Foucault claims, based on the very being of one's own soul but rather on the touchstone of an ethical model, in this case Socrates' tried-and-true soul. Foucault writes about the care of oneself that consists the objective of Socratic truth-telling:

> Oneself in the relation of self to self, oneself in this relation of watching over oneself, is [first] defined by *phronesis*, that is to say, practical reason, as it were, reason in practice, the reason which enables good decisions to be taken and false opinions to be driven out. Second, oneself is also defined by *alētheia* inasmuch as this is what will in fact be the index of *phronesis*, what it is pegged to, what it looks for, and what it obtains; but *aletheia* is also Being insofar as we are related to it, precisely in the form of the *psukhē* (soul). (2012, 86)

In the wake of the establishment of Socrates' soul as the touchstone of truth, how can truth be Being in the nature of the soul? If the soul must follow a prescribed behavior and core values, thus modifying its inner order, how can its essence be rooted in Being? What is more, if

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[50] Let us ponder for a few moments the fact that one of the first Greek philosophers, Thales of Miletus, verbalized the same notions of self-knowledge as Socrates, but with a superior dose of wisdom. He claimed that the most difficult thing was to "Know Thyself" and the easiest, "To give advice to someone else" (Barnes, 2001). On the opposite spectrum, Foucault argues that Socrates made a career out of the easiest of all things, providing advice. The jump from advice on a particular *ethos* and the control of mass-mediation is quite witnessable.

truth is "Being in the nature of the soul", how is it possible that "false opinions" need to be "driven out"? This gap in interpretation from Foucault in the notion of *epimeleia* and its relation to the transformation of the soul is strange, but serves as a focal point of departure from truth as Idea towards truth as construct. In fact, the establishment of a certain ethical hierarchy, which controls the monopoly of accession to truth, speaks directly to the integration of subjective drives in mass-mediation, a subject I covered in Chapters 2 and 3. The notion of truth-telling, in the context of Socratic veridiction, is not the accession of the soul to a hidden realm of pure truth, but on the contrary the modification of one's inner order to fit a molding which leads to *a* truth.

In summary, the concept of ethical differentiation results from the three steps of Socratic veridiction. Through the transformation of one's soul towards concern for care of self, the prevalence of true life over all other forms of existence creates an *ethos* which permits and codifies the emergence of *parrhēsia*. This hierarchization of ethos, according to Foucault, founded a philosophical tradition of stylistics of existence which lead on to Christian asceticism (Foucault, 2012, 159; 287). As a final point, Foucault claimed that "[t]he courage of truth must be exercised in the form of a non-political *parrhēsia*, a *parrhēsia* which will take place through the test of the soul. It will be an ethical *parrhēsia*" (Foucault, 2012, 90). Through this form of practice of truth-telling, human existence was constituted as an aesthetic object linked directly with truth. This inherent connection of truth with existence is what characterized Cynic philosophy and its reversal of Socratic *parrhēsia* in hopes of a transformation of the world. But before plunging into the depths of the Cynic grimace, it is crucial to understand the traditional modalities of *aletheia* (truth) as emphasized by Socratic veridiction, namely unconcealedness, unalteredness, straightness and immutability.

4.1.4.   Modalities of Truth-Telling: Traditional *Aletheia*

The concept of ethical differentiation follows a hierarchization of truth traditional of Plato's thought but innovative as a direct ordering of the psyche and behavior of humans. The people who have the right to practice *parrhēsia*, according to this principle, are those whose life is irreproachable according to a specific model of truth, in that case the platonic ideal of a life of contemplation and moral vigor. Foucault defines the principal modalities of this traditional model of truth in four specific points: unconcealment, unmixity, straightness and immutability. These four modalities of truth, put forth very schematically by Foucault in an attempt at circumscribing the complex concept of *aletheia*, characterize truth in "classical Greek thought" (2012, 218).

First, *aletheia* (truth) is constructed as *a-letheia*; *a* is a negative prefix, while *letheia* refers to *lethe*, something concealed in the fog of forgetfulness. Thus, what is *a-lethes* is un-concealed (Foucault, 2012, 219). On the contrary, all that is untrue or false is that which is concealed. Truth is not apparent in the world, it must be unveiled. Second, "that which is not added to or supplemented, which is not mixed with something other than itself" (Foucault, 2012, 219) is true. Something that is incomplete in itself cannot be true, for it can be concealed by the absence of the foreign element that completes it. Third, what is straight is *alethes* (true), "this rectitude is the opposite of twists and turns which precisely conceal it" (Foucault, 2012, 219). It is important to note that rectitude and straightness coincide with the notion of true life. In other words, the straightness of truth is the conformity to a certain code of morals or given rules. Finally, the fourth modality of *aletheia* is immutability. If something is unconcealed, unmixed and straight, it does not change and thus its truth is unchanging. These modalities of truth concern human existence and the conduct of oneself, in the concept of *bios alethes* for example, or in modes of action. Foucault adds:

Moreover, this notion of truth, with its four meanings, is applied to *logos* itself, not to

logos understood as proposition, as statement, but *logos* as way of speaking. *Logos alethes*

is not just a set of propositions which turn out to be exact and can take the value of truth.

Logos alethes is a way of speaking in which, first, nothing is concealed; in which, second,

neither the false, nor opinion, nor appearance is mixed with the true; [third], it is a straight

discourse, in line with the rules and the law; and finally, *alethes logos* is a discourse which

remains the same, does not change, or become debased, or distorted, and which can never

be vanquished, overturned, or refuted. (2012, 220)

 In essence, the four modalities of truth found in classical Greek philosophy produce

conditions of possibility for a hierarchy of truth, a restrictive pantheon that excludes much in the

way of truth. Truth is here understood as something that is obtained through a formulaic

hierarchization of *logos* and *praxis*. There is no space for becoming or mutation of truth, in a

similar line to Descartes' concept of the soul in his *Méditations* (1967, 401) which has the quality

of truth in its immutability, but wholly unlike a pre-Socratic thinker such as Heraclitus, who

claimed the primal law of *physis* was change (Barnes, 2001, xxxix & 52). Thus, there seems to be

a shift somewhere in the history of Greek philosophy between the two following paths for truth:

indiscriminate becoming and hierarchical codification of immutability.

 There is an interesting note from editor Frédéric Gros at the end of Foucault's diatribe on

the four modalities of truth: "In the manuscript Foucault constructs another meaning for truth,

which he abandons (passage crossed out): '*alethes* is also contrasted with what is only reflection,

image, shadow, imitation, appearance; that which is adequate to its essence, which is identical, is

alethes'" (219). Gros elaborates on this note in his course context to *The Courage of Truth*:

We can see why, when he had compiled the different 'meanings' and 'values' of the truth,

Foucault, after having established the themes of the unconcealed, the pure, the straight,

and the sovereign [immutable], abandons, crossing it out in the manuscript, the theme of the 'identical' or 'same' that he had first recorded as one of the major traditional meanings of the truth – and which is in fact at the heart of our philosophical culture. But precisely in 1984 he wants to emphasize that the hallmark of the true is otherness: that which makes a difference in the world and in people's opinions, that which forces one to transform one's mode of being, that whose difference opens up the perspective of an other world to be constructed, to be imagined. (2012, 356)

 So Foucault voluntarily left out the fifth modality of truth he had theorized, namely sameness, wanting to focus solely on otherness as the possibility of producing alterity in new worlds, what Guattari would have called new existential territories. This removal of a category of truth speaks volumes to the immanence of Socrates' and Foucault's philosophical truth. In the act of unveiling the modalities of truth, Foucault concealed one major aspect of truth, sameness, in order to present his truth in the form of a lecture on philosophy. What this example of manipulation of truth emphasizes is its malleability as an immanent object created of man. Circling back to the very first chapter of this thesis and my discussion of the creator of an artwork as wanting to produce an effect on a receiver, we can argue that all truths are manipulated fragments of discourse which have the objective of producing an effect. In this case, Foucault's removal of sameness as a traditional modality of truth had the objective of putting emphasis on the otherness of truth. But in doing so, he manifested the immanent character of worldly truth as a mere malleable artifact. Foucault argued, in the previous section, that truth is Being in the nature of the soul. I would tend to agree with this sentence, except his definition of truth is wholly immanent, at least in this particular lecture. Truth, in this context, is a reasoned and ordered modelling to be followed. On the contrary, I feel strongly that the soul Plato was concerned with does not contemplate earthly truths but rather essentially pursues a more

transcendent route. We can infer, from our previous discussions on machinic enslavement and ectosubjectivity, that earthly truths are infused with power and coercive *mots d'ordre*, just like Socrates' exhortations to live a 'true life'.

As another point, it seems to me that sameness, in relation to the essence of truth, also has a specific role to play in the production of new worlds, in the recognition of the other as other and as identical at the same time. Hence its removal from Foucault's lecture is the stripping away of togetherness in truth. Indeed, it is in the recognition of the other as same that a possibility of change emerges, at least in the realm of human relationships. This recognition of sameness is exemplified in the forthcoming example of Batman and the Joker united in laughter at the end of *The Killing Joke*. In fact, an other that is only other lacks the critical conjoining of spirit to grasp upon a common truth and produce new warrens into otherness. Although otherness is the core of the relationship of truth to untruth, especially in the hierarchies of platonic thought (material reality *versus* Forms), sameness is the recognition of a partnership in life. This recognition of sameness in an other strengthens the bond of fellowship that enables the production of a communal new world removed from individual egotism.

This reflection leads me directly to Foucault's theorization of the Cynics as operating a violent reversal of the traditional modalities of *aletheia*, as a grimace upon the face of truth that permits the unconcealment of new worlds, of other possibilities for *bios alethes*.

4.2. The Cynic Reversal of True Life and the Joker as Alethurgy

4.2.1.   Cynic Reversal of Aletheia

The four traditional modalities of *aletheia* enumerated by Foucault (unconcealedness, unmixity, straightness and immutability) produce the conditions for ethical differentiation and hierarchize truth from untruth or, in other words, the world of material reality and the world of

Forms (Gros, 2012, 355). Although traditional truth is important to understand the Socratic

method, Foucault also devotes a large amount of space to a discussion of the complete reversal of

the four traditional modalities of *aletheia* by the Cynics, foremost among them Diogenes. The

reversal of the modalities of *aletheia* is crucial in Foucault's elaboration of true life and notions

of transformation of the world at the peril of one's life and reputation. This reversal demands

courage and is not without risk for, as Foucault points out, Cynics have been marginalized from

ancient Greece all the way to the latter stages of the Middle Ages (2012, 196-201). In fact,

Foucault defines the Cynic as a marginalized figure, an outcast that exists on the fringes of

society and philosophy: "The Cynic is the man with the staff, the beggar's pouch, the cloak, the

man in sandals or bare feet, the man with the long beard, the dirty man. He is also the man who

roams, who is not integrated in society, has no household, family, hearth, or country […]"

(Foucault, 2012, 170). In other words, the Cynic represents the archetypal outcast, one that

chooses to live in the margins and refuses the trappings of traditional life in society and,

accordingly, the model hierarchization of truth and *ethos* that comes with it.

This refusal of traditional social life is the essential declaration of truth of Cynics.

Through a life devoid of useless satisfaction or comfort, their own version of a true life, the

possibility for the manifestation of truth (*alethurgy*) is made possible. This "general stripping of

existence and opinions" (Foucault, 2012, 171) to the most essential aspects of human life is what

permits Cynics to reveal the truth. In fact, Foucault argues that "[i]n this West, which has

invented many different truths and fashioned so many arts of existence, Cynicism constantly

reminds us that very little truth is indispensable for whoever wishes to live truly and that very

little life is needed when one truly holds to the truth" (2012, 189-190, bottom note). In other

words, the stripping down of existence reveals a new kind of truth, one distinct from Socratic

bios alethes which was based on ethical differentiation between the truthful who lived a virtuous

existence and all the others who did not. There is the same kind of differentiation in Cynic true life, but here virtue is found in the refusal of all the trappings of traditional life, the bareness of essential, almost animalistic, existence. The common denominator of truthful existence is the recognition of the animal nature of man and the stripping down of existence to its essential elements.

Cynicism is not satisfied with the Socratic homophony between a certain *logos* and a life conforming to the principle of that discourse. Instead, it links mode of existence and truth in a much more vital way: "It makes the form of existence an essential condition of truth-telling" (Foucault, 2012, 172). Through the practice of existence as a testimony of truth, rather than existence conforming to a discourse, Cynicism infuses every movement, ingestion, defecation, word uttered, etc., as manifestations of truth, as *alethurgy* (Foucault, 2012, 180). Everything, without exception, becomes a manifestation of truth. In short, Cynicism removes the veil of *logos* upon existence to present truth in its shocking, essential bareness.

This reversal of Socratic true life from life conforming to discourse towards life itself as the manifestation of truth is the first half of the reversal of *aletheia*. The second half is the reversal of the traditional modalities of truth: unconcealment, unmixity, straightness and immutability. Cynicism operates a powerful reversal of these four modalities while, it is important to note, keeping their essential connection with truth. It does not break away from traditional *aletheia* only to mock, but rather in order to present a more essential, purer form of truth. Cynics reversed unconcealment, unmixity, straightness and immutability into a grimace of social life which proved the existence of an essential truth, the Cynic true life.

Unconcealment becomes nakedness, both literal and figurative, in Cynic existence: Diogenes was said to masturbate in public, as he claimed all appetites were natural and thus must not be concealed. The reversal of unconcealment into scandalous nakedness brings forth the

question of nature and morals: "Now, the Cynics say, can there be anything bad in what nature wills and in what she has placed in us? And conversely, if there is something bad in us or if we do something bad, is this not because men have added to nature with their habits, opinion, and conventions?" (Foucault, 2012, 254). Thus, all that is natural in human existence must not be shunned, but rather unconcealed in manifestations of truth. This reversed unconcealment questions the very fabric of the discourse of morals that prevailed in Greek culture.

The second modality of truth, unmixity, becomes purity in the sense of desires and drives. Whereas platonic unmixity concerned all that could contaminate the soul with disorder (i.e. the material world), Cynic unmixity concerns all that can shackle human existence and impede its autonomy and self-sufficiency. Cynicism produces an indifferent life, one that is not bound to anything that may make it dependent on external or uncertain elements (Foucault, 2012, 256). Thus, unlike Socrates who, in Diogenes words, wore sandals (what a luxury!) the Cynic lives an unalloyed life of poverty, both physical and material. He does not join in feasts, nor depends on power or money to exist. Crates, for example, gave away all his riches with not a spared thought when he became a Cynic (Laertius, 1925, 91). The reversal of unmixity happens when self-sufficiency and autonomy become "a life of ugliness, dependence, and humiliation" (Foucault, 2012, 259). Again, the scandal that arises out of ugliness and humiliation reverses the traditional notion of unalloyed life: instead of a life of independence, the refusal of everything social produces a dependence that leads to slavery. One who possesses nothing often ends up being possessed (Erikson, 2007, 637-638). The seeking of dishonor (Ingalls, 1962), as another example, is used to showcase the fatuity of the traditional frameworks of honor: Diogenes was hit on the head with a stick and, instead of being struck with dishonor, he answered "Next time I will wear a helmet" (Foucault, 2012, 261). There is no ego to bound the purity of the Cynic, he becomes as pure, in regard to truth, as the stray dog or the discarded waste. The Cynic reversal emphasizes

that dishonor is nothing but a construction of *logos* which has no value towards the pursuit of truth.

The third modality of truth, straightness, or the 'straight life' of Socratic dialectics, was a straightness according to a certain discourse: an agglomeration of ethical models, laws, natural and human, customs, dominant morals and discourse, etc. As I pointed out earlier, certain ambiguity resides in this concept for if truth is indeed "pure, without otherness, perfectly identical to itself" (Foucault, 2012, 255), then the straight life cannot be an agglomeration of dominant customs or laws which can change through time. Either way, the seizing of this modality of truth by the Cynics is the *becoming other* of the straight life: the Cynic straight life is another life. Their straight life is one attuned solely on natural laws, and nothing else: "No convention, no human prescription may be accepted in the Cynic life if it does not conform exactly to what is found in nature, and in nature alone" (Foucault, 2012, 263). This ends up giving a positive value to animality and the animal world, a direct counterpoint to Socratic *parrhēsia* as the care of self (human self) and the humanism that followed with notions of humanity as an essential differentiation from the animal world through *logos*. Cynics, on the other hand, make of their adherence to the animal world a direct challenge to all other humans: "Assuming, in front of others, the scandal of an animality as a task for oneself is what the principle of the straight life indexed to nature leads to when this principle becomes the real, material, concrete form of existence itself. The *bios philosophikos* as straight life is the human being's animality taken up as a challenge, practiced as an exercise and thrown in the face of

others as scandal[51]" (Foucault, 2012, 265). Again, the notion of scandal, of shock-value, is

mentioned by Foucault as an essential aspect of the Cynic reversal of *aletheia*.

Finally, the fourth modality of *aletheia*, immutability, is reversed by Cynicism through

what Foucault calls the figure of the anti-king and his grimace of the Socratic *bios alethes*. The

traditional/platonic expression of immutable *aletheia* in true life is to be found in the concept of

sovereign life. Sovereign life has two major aspects that can be summed up as "care of self and

care of others". The former echoes the famous Socratic maxim of "know yourself" while the

latter echoes Socratic dialectics of the care of others through spiritual help and teachings. In

short, the sovereign individual (such as Socrates) is a beacon of light for all others around him, a

touchstone of *ethos*, an example and a teacher. What is more, immutability can also be

understood as the solid notions of citizenship, nobility and power. There is a concrete link

between sovereign life and monarchy, for example in Plato and in the Stoics, where the sovereign

philosopher teaches the monarch, or has the role of confident and advisor to the king. However,

the Cynics make the bold assumption that the Cynic himself is king. He is the real king, the king

without a crown who needs nothing to rule: no court, no floundering fops, no guards and no

kingdom. The kingship of Diogenes, for example, "is unshakeable and cannot be overturned,

since he needs nothing to exercise it" (Foucault, 2012, 276). The Cynic king needs no education,

military, political or otherwise, his "soul is not a cultivated soul: it did not have to acquire the

monarchy and the ability to be a monarch through education. The princely soul is such by nature,

without any *paideia*" (Foucault, 2012, 277). Contrary to other monarchs, the Cynic king has no

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[51] As such, Cynics represent an animalistic, primal part of humanity which reminds of C.G.

Jung's concept of the shadow, which is expanded further in section 4.2.3.

enemies, having vanquished all his inner demons, faults and vices. Finally, unlike traditional

kings, the Cynic king is not exposed to misfortune or reversal of fortune. He is king forever,

because he is king by nature and it is his soul and mode of existence that have the princely

quality of kingship. Foucault adds that the Cynic king is unrecognized, he is the king of derision.

In summary, the reversal of the modalities of *aletheia* in Cynicism is made apparent

through the dramatized scandal of their appropriation: nakedness for unconcealment, stripping

down to the bare essentials in place of unmixity, bestial simplicity in lieu of constructed morals

based on *logos*, and finally kingship of everything and nothing through princely soul rather than

the feeble rule of a given kingdom through heredity and education. Through the dramatization of

human existence and the reversal of the four modalities of *aletheia*, Cynicism reverses the

classical regime of truth, moving away from a logocentric view towards a view based on the

essence of existence in its most natural forms[52]. The Cynic scandal leads directly to the figure of

the Joker, which is the subject of section 4.2.2., by the chaotic and foul presentation of a difficult

truth:

> With Cynicism, we have a third form of courage of truth, which is distinct from both
>
> political bravery and Socratic irony. Cynic courage of truth consists in getting people to
>
> condemn, reject, despise, and insult the very manifestation of what they accept at the level
>
> of principles. It involves facing up to their anger when presenting them with the image of

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[52] George Bataille, in *L'expérience intérieure*, wrote : « On atteint l'extase exclusivement par la

dramatisation de l'expérience […]. Celle de l'expérience intérieure est l'intériorisation de l'être."

(22) The dramatization of the Cynics thus acquires a semi-spiritual quality that transcends simple

existence.

what they accept and value in thought, and at the same time reject and despise in their life.

This is the Cynic scandal. (Foucault, 2012, 234)

Thus, the objective of Cynic reversal is not simply to show the basest, most essential drives and wills of human existence, but also to propose a purer form of truth which produces conditions of possibility for new worlds of existence, all the while rejecting the dominant truths and practices of 'civilization'. Cynicism embodies a "combativeness on the horizon of which is an other world" (Foucault, 2012, 287). As a final point, Foucault notes that Diogenes' mission from the gods was to "*parakharattein to nomisma* (alter, change the value of the currency)" (2012, 239). One interpretation of this oracle is the etymological link between *nomisma* (currency) and *nomos* (law, custom). This would change the meaning of the oracle to 'change the customs', break away from traditional law. Foucault notes that "[i]t is very likely that this is how it was received and understood, whatever the original meaning of this expression" (2012, 242). Diogenes' embodiment of "[a]n other life for an other world" (Foucault, 2012, 287) in the embracing of a stripped down natural existence, showed that there was another truth than logocentric truth. His humiliation by citizens of Athens shows their shock at being confronted to a non-logocentric truth. The recognition of Diogenes as a human refusing all the trappings of social life is the shocking recognition of one's own inadequacy and adherence to false truths. As the next section analyzes, two characters from fiction also embody this grimace upon ethical life and the shock associated with this form of truth-telling: the Joker from the Batman universe and the Prince from Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel, *Humiliated and Offensed.* Through a reading of these two powerful fiction examples, I will strengthen the bond between marginalization from the accepted *logos* and *praxis* of civilization towards the pursuit of a divergent truth, based on instinctual and natural drives.

4.2.2.   The Joker and the Prince as *Alethurgy*

The Cynic grimace is the dramatization of human existence into a shocking display of the inadequacy of the trappings of social life and *ethos*, as well as the glimpse of more essential truths. Although my analysis of control in Chapter 3 showcases a gloomy state of affairs regarding *logos* and its overcoding of human affects, the Cynic reversal of traditional logocentrism can breathe new life in individual and collective regimes of power and truth. The traditional, capitalist and logocentrist opposition between human and nature, or subject and object, or again order and chaos, can be slowly brought down through the proposition that chaos and randomness are as vital to life as order, and that humans emerge and exist through and in nature. The reversal of opposition into juxtaposition illustrates a new territory of emergence for truths which logocentrism has hidden in the margins of social life.

A character from contemporary fiction that exemplifies the transformative power of the Cynic reversal is the Joker from the Batman universe. The Joker is a mysterious character whose mission, other than its manifestation in anarchy and violence, is completely obscure or even inexistent. His existence is devoted to unconcealing a truth which is difficult to understand, the truth of chaos and bestial violence. He is directly opposed to Batman, who represents order, justice and the *status quo* of a police-state. However violent and chaotic the Joker may be, in most media where he appears the character of the Joker follows a similar path: confrontation with Batman and the utterance of troubling truths, followed by a transformation of Batman's inner order. Joker's existence is a manifestation of a truth which otherwise can only exist in instinctual drives and affects. As such, it is a primordial representation that can inform us on how to integrate natural truths without the need for violence.

In the graphic novel *The Killing Joke*, by Alan Moore and Brian Bolland, the origins of the Joker are hinted at, albeit in haphazard and clumsy flashbacks. His most important purpose is

as a counterpoint to everything Batman stands for and represents. While Batman serves the law and is a symbol of hope for humanity, the Joker is on the side of uninhibited madness, lawlessness and violence. Although one expects Batman to always win, this graphic novel ends in irresolution, even hinting at Batman's descent into madness. Being a one-off comic, it is self-contained and its ending is absolute, meaning that it does not lead to any other work in the DC Universe canon. Thus, in this work, the unconcealment of a troubling truth leads to the awakening of Batman to new territories of existence. My choice of this particular iteration of the Joker is twofold. On the one hand, most representations of the Joker are fixated on the fight between Batman and Joker as primordial forces, focusing less on the inner struggle of truth which is the subject of this chapter. Contrarily, as this section argues, truth is the main subject of *The Killing Joke*. As a second point, Alan Moore, the brilliant writer of this graphic novel, is a vocal follower of Glycon, a Roman snake god from the 2nd century. It is no coincidence that he should be concerned with truth and untruth, as Glycon, who had a large cult in the Roman Empire, was rumored to be a mere hand-puppet. Yet the prophecies he uttered and the protection he offered were considered as real as the rain or the sun, just like the mass-mediated Mercer experiment was believed true even when proved false in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* In my research I was struck with how Moore manipulates the concept of truth in a variety of his works. Specifically, his insistence on presenting the narrativization of nuclear holocaust through mass-media in *Watchmen* and his innovative presentation of the Joker as a crazed yet vulnerable truth-teller struck me as pertinent towards my thesis questioning truth and marginalization. Although the character of the Joker has been reprised with success in movie adaptations in the past twenty years, I decided to stick with one single iteration of the character in order to provide a deep reading rather than surface examples in the limited space of this thesis.

In *The Killing Joke*, Joker embodies the chaotic enunciation of truth that Foucault described in the figure of the Cynic. He attempts to prove the thin line between sanity and madness, between normal life and one of chaotic violence. He uses Police Commissioner James Gordon to prove his point, producing a world of torment for Batman's ally in the form of a carnival ride. Joker tells Gordon: "So when you find yourself locked onto an unpleasant train of thought heading for the places in your past where the screaming is unbearable, remember there's always madness. Madness is the emergency exit… You can just step outside, and those dreadful things that happened. You can lock them away… Forever" (Moore & Bolland, 2016, 23). The notion of stepping outside of normal life, of sane life, directly echoes Diogenes' stepping outside of the life of a Greek citizen. There is a proposal, an extended hand towards a new territory of existence which shuns the traditional construction of truth.

Then, as he is surrounded by all the freaks of a typical twentieth century circus show, Joker takes the voice of an orator and proclaims:

Ladies and gentlemen! You've read about it in the newspapers! Now, shudder as you observe, before your very eyes, that most rare and tragic of nature's mistakes! I give you…the average man! Physically unremarkable, it has instead a deformed set of values. Notice the hideously bloated sense of humanity's importance. The club-footed social conscience and the withered optimism. It's certainly not for the squeamish, is it? Most repulsive of all, are its frail and useless notions of order and sanity. If too much weight is placed upon them… they snap. How does it live, I hear you ask? How does this poor, pathetic specimen survive in today's harsh and irrational world? The sad answer is 'not very well.' Faced with the inescapable fact that human existence is mad, random and pointless, one in eight of them crack up and go stark slavering buggo! Who can blame

them? In a world as psychotic as this… any other response would be crazy! (Moore & Bolland, 2016, 35)

The critique of normal existence is as stark and violent as Diogenes' refusal of engaging in the social theatre of Athens. The inadequacy of the "average man" is put forth with violence and chaos, and the truths uttered are difficult to refute. What is more, the result of the traditional existence is that one out of eight "average men" ends up in madness, the same madness the Joker was offering for free mere instants before. A parallel can be made with Diogenes' and Crates' shunning of riches: any man can lose everything and end up poor and on the streets. The difference is that through a reversal of traditional truth the Cynics and the Joker produce their own agency and chose this tortuous path for themselves. This is pure power, the choice of escaping the practice of ethical life in profit of a marginalized existence is the essential autonomy of agency. There is no ethical differentiation at play here, rather it is a refusal of any value scale that characterizes the Joker's reversal of truth. The new territories of *aletheia* are bare wastelands where no moral edifice conceals the sky.

The ending of the graphic novel is highly symbolic and emphasizes the power of the Joker's reversal of logocentrism and ethical, so-called, 'true life'. In the final pages Batman attempts to reach the Joker in the circus building, while the criminal talks to him through a microphone in a remote room. All the while, Joker argues for insanity, asking Batman to join him in the uninhibited world of chaos and violence. He claims "all it takes is one bad day to reduce the sanest man alive to lunacy" (Moore & Bolland, 2016, 40), and furthermore argues that Batman is as crazy as him: "Why else, would you dress up like a flying rat?" (Moore & Bolland, 2016, 40). He is right in devising that Batman had (at least) one bad day: the traumatic death of his parents that led him to train maniacally and become a costumed vigilante. In that fashion, both characters have striking similarities, and this is a foreshadowing of the ending to come.

What is interesting here is the sameness that emerges from the total otherness of the two characters. The roads they have chosen to follow are totally divergent, yet they meet again and again in the same conditions. Sameness, as Foucault refused to unveil, is a part of otherness. When Batman finally escapes all the traps laid out by the Joker and they come face to face in the rain outside the circus, he tells the criminal he doesn't want to beat him up. He is afraid they will kill each other, but that there is another way: Batman offers to work with the Joker, to rehabilitate him. In this moment, sameness emerges. The sameness that Foucault concealed from his audience concerning the classical Greek modalities of truth is the essential bond of two human beings engaged in a relationship. The criminal refuses Batman's offer with unconcealed sadness, apologizing and saying it is too late for him. For the first time in his history, and the last so far, the Joker's mask of hate and violence cracks to show vulnerability. Then, he smiles as he remembers a joke which has all the symbolic weight of the reversal of truth and ends the graphic novel:

> See, there were these two guys in a lunatic asylum and one night, one night they decide they don't like living in an asylum any more. They decide they're going to escape. So, like, they get up onto the roof, and there, just across this narrow gap, they see the rooftops of the town, stretching away in moonlight… Now, the first guy, he jumps right across with no problem. But his friend, his friend daredn't make the leap. Y'see… Y'see, he's afraid of falling. So then, the first guy has an idea… He says 'Hey! I have a flashlight with me! I'll shine it across the gap between the buildings. You can walk along the beam and join me!' B-but the second guy just shakes his head. He says… He says 'Wh-what do you think I am? Crazy? You'd turn it off when I was halfway across! (Moore & Bolland, 2016, 47)

Then, both characters laugh in unison, holding each other as they are progressively racked by uncontrollable hysteria. And this is how the story ends. One of the significations of the joke is that a different perception of existence than the commonly accepted one exists. The beam of light extended by Batman in his offer to help rehabilitate Joker can be thought of as the promise of a normal life. Joker's refusal, saying it is too late, emphasizes how his own chaotic truth has led him to rebuke traditional ethics in pursuit of a different path. Joker does not trust the social life of the average man, he knows that there is no hope for him either for rehabilitation or equilibrium in a standardized existence. In the joke itself, there is the possibility that both prisoners believe the light beam to be a solution to their escape, but that the issue relies on the confidence of the second prisoner in the first. There is no way back to an average existence when one has crossed on the other side. The trip to the asylum is a one-way trip. In this narrative madness and chaos is the other life, but in Cynic philosophy it was rather a stripping down of existence and a shunning of Athenian morals. Interestingly enough, in the movie adaptation of the short story, only Batman's laugh is heard at the end of the story; Joker's laugh slowly disappears. We could infer that Batman's continuous and solitary laughter, at the end of the movie adaptation of *The Killing Joke*, is his passing into the maniacal and chaotic world of the Joker, that the Joker's enunciation of his own truth has somehow moved Batman away from his pretense of lawfulness towards the freedom of chaos.

In George Bataille's book *L'expérience intérieure*, there is a "jaillissement du commun dans le rire." (1954, 11) The explosion of sameness in laughter is Batman's realization that he might be closer to Joker than he could have thought, that he already has one foot in Joker's world: disguises, violence, traumatic experiences, marginalized life. One interpretation is that Joker is but a product of Batman's imagination, a phantasm within his psyche where all the violence and chaos of his traumatic life is sublimed. This hypothesis takes even more weight

when taking into account the video game *Arkham Knight*, in which a deceased Joker inhabits

Batman's psyche, counsels him, mocks his efforts to fight chaos and engages in dialectics with

the vigilante throughout the narrative. In some ways, Joker is Batman's alter-ego, his shadow

self, personified in a monstrous and broken character. The Joker is function more than character:

he emphasizes both the contradictory nature of Batman's persona as well as the line of escape

from an *ethos*-centered existence. He attempts a reversal of the machine of justice and its

vigilantes against itself. Although his success is uncertain, considering the vague ending of the

story and its variation from graphic novel to movie adaptation, the devotion of Joker to the

unconcealment of an alternative truth is quite similar to the Cynics notion of true life as bare life.

Another character who embodies the shunning of ethical life and the removal of the social

mask in a disgusting grimace is the prince in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel, *Humiliated and*

Offensed. Dostoevsky, with this character, wanted to emphasize how humans can pretend to

follow the logocentric truth of the times while simultaneously reverse it in a twisted grimace. The

prince, the main antagonist of the story, is a character with an inner darkness akin to that of the

Joker. In chapter X of Part 4 of the novel, the prince takes the narrator to a bar where he gets

drunk while confiding in the young writer. Whereas in the previous three-quarters of the novel

the prince appears as a courteous and haughty figure, he then talks of removing his mask to show

his true self, a self wicked and twisted in what he himself calls a grimace. He boasts of his

disgusting habits with women, and of sending the husband of a woman he desired to a hospital he

owned by beating him for a ridiculous offense, after what he could enjoy the woman for himself.

He reverses morality to his own twisted profit by playing the game of morality to its bitter end,

until his mask is removed. What is more, he claims that if everyone let go of their secrets they

would all appear as he did, disgusting, grimacing decadents. He claims that morals are not truth

but rather comfort, and that for him, the code of morals is but a coat on the disgusting, naked

shoulders of truth. The prince gives a stunning example of the facticity of truth. He talks of a resident of Petersburgh who was somewhat of a Cynic, at least in the prince's opinion. This man wore a long coat of good fabric but was completely naked underneath. Hence, he appeared as a reputable man who dressed with distinguished taste, but once in a while, when he was alone with only one other individual, he opened his great coat to show the naked truth underneath. It did not matter who this poor witness was, woman, man, old and young; truth does not distinguish its victim. The image of truth as a coat upon the shoulders of the decadent chaos of humanity is striking in its clarity and validity, especially considering the Cynic reversal of logocentrism. This facticity of truth echoes the attitude of Diogenes and his shunning of traditional Athenian life: truth is not the construction of some moral edifice but rather the stripping down of all unnecessary embellishments. For the prince, truth is naked and often ugly. The example of the Cynic with the great coat emphasizes how truth hides itself behind beautiful constructs (ethics, morals, discourse) but is in fact a lot more primal and essential. Through a stripping down of truth, its essential value appears. Although the prince considers truth to be essentially disgusting and vile, I believe he confused his own inner order to truth, and saw it thus. Logocentrism is the Cynic's coat, but what hides underneath the coat is not necessarily truth, rather it is the flaccid and flapping veils with which individuals cover essential truth. Through an embodiment of the destruction of logocentrism, these veils are slowly removed, and the vigor of essential truth progressively appears.

What both the Joker and the prince express is the generalized existence of some type of crazy, bestial, Cynic-like portion of human individuality which searches for a world of expression but is impeded by imposed ethics and morality. The truth of human existence, in this conception, does not reside in ethics or *logos*, but rather in the interiorization of individual psyche and its attunement to the faint whisper of the primal truths within. Both characters, just

like Diogenes, oppose bestial chaos to the ordered modelling of logocentric truth. Both the prince

and the Joker are grasping at this primal truth, the former through violence and chaos, the latter

through decadence. Both characters are manifestations of an other truth, they are *alethurgy* that

reverse the traditional, dominant discourses about existence towards new realms of being. They

both produce a new truth which emerges from the deeper, darker side of human psyche, a part

that has long been repressed by logocentric society as being evil and vile: chaos, violence, dark

thoughts, but also instinct, spiritual mysticism, alchemy and magic. This portion of human

subjectivity that lives in darkness and embodies all that is repressed by logocentrism brings us to

the conclusion of this chapter in Carl Gustav Jung's concept of the shadow.

4.3.Conclusion: The Jungian Shadow Self and the New Worlds of *Enantiodromia*

This chapter presented two diverging versions of truth in Ancient Greece, drawing heavily

from Foucault's book *The Courage of Truth*. First, Socratic veridiction was based on ethical

differentiation, the notion of a true life with virtue at the forefront of *ethos*. This vision of truth is

highly logocentric in that it chooses a model (Socrates' virtuous soul) as a touchstone for all

ethical comparisons. A dominant model is offered which needs to be emulated in order to be

included in the hierarchy of ethical differentiation. The second vision of truth I studied was the

Cynic reversal of this logocentric truth in a more essential, more animalistic and stripped truth.

The refusal of logocentrism from the Cynics and its reversal in a grimace is not simply a rebuttal,

but the violent rejection of dominant discourses and hierarchization in favor of new worlds of

truth based solely on human existence in its purest essence. Finally, a short study of the Joker

from Batman and the prince from *Humiliated and Offensed* illustrated two manners of refusing

logocentrism. The former does so through violence and chaos, while the latter played the game of

social life, wore the mask of a dandy over the face of a decadent. This final section builds off the

advances made in this chapter to theorize how the concepts of shadow and *enantiodromia* can offer new territories of existence and a renewal of truth in the modern world.

To begin with, it is evident that the character of the Joker represents all that is dark in the human psyche. This portion of the psyche correlates with dark desires, repressed phantasms, dreams of violence and all that is opposed to the archetypes of morality as they circulate through society. However, it strikes as odd that the Joker is so relatable in the final scene of *The Killing Joke*. There is a truth, which he utters in the form of a joke, that transforms something in Batman; maybe the *Killing Joke* from the title of the graphic novel relates to the destruction of Batman's inner order, previously based on the primacy of justice, peace, good, and other such symbols. The Joker, while bathing in violence and demonstrating the darkness of the human psyche, also hints at a different truth, a different ray of light that resides in the heart of darkness.

The prince of *Humiliated and Offensed* is a lustful creature, while the Joker is an agent of chaos and madness, but both characters belong to the realm of anti-morality, of what Foucault calls anti-kingship. The narrator of Dostoevsky's novel is morally and physically repulsed by the prince's confidences: his truth is one of outcasts and criminals, yet in the material world he is a powerful and rich man. This contradiction is at the core of the present section that brings the present chapter to a conclusion in an opening towards new reflections upon the reversal of logocentric truth. How can one function in social life, obeying the codes of morality, virtue and law, while at the same time carrying inside a dark and ominous shadow? While the Joker is a caricature of total chaos, Batman is more ambivalent, haunted by a shadow that he represses in the name of ideals such as justice and the triumph of good over evil. The Joker can even be considered as a personification of his inner turmoil, a side of his psyche which could, at any moment, lash out in violence and crazed chaos.

Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung devised a concept which can answer this seeming duality of human existence embodied in Batman's ambivalence: the shadow. The shadow, in Jung's thought, is not conscious, rather it consists of a stratum of the self which is chthonic, concealed and repressed. In *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, Jung writes:

> The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. […] Closer examination of the dark characteristics–that is, the inferiorities constituting the shadow-reveals that they have an emotional nature, a kind of autonomy, and accordingly an obsessive or, better, a possessive quality. Emotion, incidentally, is not an activity of the individual but something that happens to him. (1979, 8-9)

The shadow is one of the components of the self, along with ego-consciousness, anima, and collective unconscious: "The self is the hypothetical summation of an indescribable totality, one half of which is constituted by ego-consciousness, the other by the shadow. The latter, so far as it can be established empirically, usually presents itself as the inferior or negative personality" (1992a, 107, note 66). The shadow consists of infrasocial elements of human subjectivity such as instinctual drives and affects, repressed desires and primal emotional responses and fears. It is often used by Jung as a counterpart to ego-consciousness, which amounts to framing the shadow in the unconscious realm. Jung biographer Claire Dunne adds that the shadow is the *locus* of the repressed, of things we do not like or do not know about ourselves or the world (2012, 106-107). The notion of *not knowing* is crucial in understanding the shadow because it speaks directly to primal and natural strata of humanity which are increasingly repressed in the modern world: instincts, direct emotional response to stimuli, collective affects, drives and desire, etc.

The shadow is a complex and morphing unconscious construct that cannot be understood as a receptacle or driving force for the purely negative side of human psyche, unlike the first, incomplete definition from the quote above (Jung, 1992a, 107, note 66). In the conclusion to his book *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, Jung defines the shadow in its ambivalence:

> Looked at superficially, the shadow is cast by the conscious mind and is as much a privation of light as the physical shadow that follows the body. For this superficial view, therefore, the psychological shadow with its moral inferiority might also be regarded as a privation of good. […] If it has been believed hitherto that the human shadow was the source of all evil, it can now be ascertained on closer investigation that the unconscious man, that is, his shadow, does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses, etc. On this level of understanding, evil appears more as a distortion, a deformation, a misinterpretation and misapplication of facts that in themselves are natural. (1979, 267)

Here Jung offers an interesting take on good and evil in relation to the shadow. Granted, the shadow is composed of a plurality of negative emotions, repressed desires or phantasms, parts of the human psyche that are scary and dark. However, upon further reflection Jung hints at the shadow as the *locus* of a disfiguration of natural human psychological factors into 'evil'. In other words, 'evil' would be a misinterpretation of the passage of an instinct or a drive from the shadow towards ego-consciousness. In a similar vein, my study of platonic logocentrism and its reversal by the Cynics can be understood as the Cynic embracing of the shadow as all that constitutes humanity: the light and the darkness, the animalistic and the civilized, the repressed and the expressed, etc. The Cynic dramatization was a caricature of this conjunction of opposites

in a Greek society that needed a reminder of their shadow counterpart. The marginalization and disdain towards the Cynics throughout history is the distortion, deformation and misinterpretation that Jung speaks about regarding the modern understanding of good and evil. The Cynic grimace is in fact a caricatural embracing of the shadow with all its ambivalence and primal force.

Jung's conception of the self is more nuanced than the Cynic grimace. For him, the self operates in a process of tension between opposites which coalesce into a definition of 'self'. In his magnum opus *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Jung wrote that "[t]he concept of the self is essentially intuitive and embraces ego-consciousness, shadow, anima, and collective unconscious in indeterminable extension. As a totality, the self is a *coincidentia oppositorum*; it is therefore bright and dark, and yet neither" (1992a, 108, note 66). The notion of *coincidentia oppositorum* was coined by philosopher and cardinal Nicholas Cusanus in the fifteenth century to define God. Cusanus, looking for a way to word his definition of God, had a mystic vision of a unity of opposites and coined the phrase to define how God works: "both a unity and a plurality, an infinitude and a finitude." (Webb, 2010) This ubiquitous and immanent view of God resulted in the coining of the philosophical concept of *coincidentia oppositorum* to define how one thing can be produced by the tension between two opposites. In Cusanus' case, the concept was used to offer a vision of God both as Creator and as creation, leaning towards Gnosticism in his vision of divinity within all elements of creation rather than an immutable overlord hidden in the sky. C.G. Jung, however, used the concept to define how the tension between polar opposites produced the self. In other words, the productive tension between the ego-consciousness and the shadow, between these two opposite polarities, sparks the self into being.

In my study of new forms of governmentality and machinic power, I analyzed the concept of machinic enslavement, which is the overcoding of pre-subjective affects and drives[53]. In addition, in my study of control I developed the idea that through the saturation of communication which defines the current mediatic environment of developed countries, human subjectivity was now produced as serialized ready-mades[54]. The concept of ectosubjectivity, in particular, describes in detail how individual human subjectivities are excavated for data and then artificially modified towards fitting a certain mold and certain postures of existence.

In that context, more and more content from the ego-consciousness is pushed towards the shadow: genuine emotional response, critical thinking and ideas, creativity, etc. Less and less unique individual personality traits or responses are authorized to emerge, in profit of homogenized postures and behavior, maybe even leading to the pseudo-sleep of zombification. The self has, in part, stopped being the ever-morphing result of the tension of opposites, giving way to the automatized activation of implanted artificial affects.

As an example, the reigning *logos* of good versus bad, noticeable in Hollywood movies, international diplomacy and mediatic ideology, places all the content that is driven away from the ego-consciousness and into the shadow in the realm of 'evil' or 'bad'. This is the misinterpretation Jung wrote about. Individual opinions are overcoded with ready-made dominant ideas. Disagreements are considered as toxic, advice as patronizing, love as a source of profit. Logocentrism, as I have represented it in this thesis, has the tendency to repress instincts, drives and primal emotions and replacing them with the vague concepts of reason and progress,

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[53] See Chapter 2, section 2.3. *Machinic Enslavement.*

[54] See Chapter 3, sections 3.1.1. and 3.1.2.

often producing the unfathomable result of the conversion of repressed strata in new worlds of truth that emerge and shift the equilibrium of power and dominant discourse. The saturation of the shadow through the repression of natural drives and instincts by mass-mediation can have the effect of producing an imbalance between human and nature, as well as transforming human subjectivity as a receptacle for 'forbidden' behavior and ideas, however benign.

The difficulties in knowing and using the contents of the shadow does not lead, however, towards total zombification, namely because of an ancient precursor of the concept of *coincidentia oppositorum,* namely *enantiodromia.*

Enantiodromia is a Greek concept that signifies the conversion of something into its opposite. It is seen as a natural phenomenon, and is attributed to Heraclitus, who claimed that everything eventually changes into its opposite (Colman, 2008). In fact, Jung even wrote that "Old Heraclitus, who was indeed a very great sage, discovered the most marvelous of all psychological laws: the regulative function of opposites. He called it *enantiodromia*, a running contrariwise, by which he meant that sooner or later everything runs into its opposite" (1966, 72). The regulative function of opposites has as a result the equilibrium of all things in the natural world. Heraclitus wrote: "Cold things become warm, and what is warm cools; what is wet dries and the parched is moistened" (Barnes, 2001, 70).

Similarly, the progressive dehumanization of human subjectivity by mass-media and new technology, upon reaching its pinnacle, will lead to *enantiodromia* and the prevalence of a more natural human existence. The progressive automatization of human subjectivity will strip away all the contents of ego-consciousness in favor of ready-mades, the former passing into the shadow as instinctual fragments. Upon the complete dehumanization of subjectivity, the instinctual and affective strata will keep reaching out from the subconscious towards the conscious, saturated as they are in the shadow realm. These basic human instincts, the most

profound of them being not the modernized and civilized ones but rather the animalistic, survival-based basic drives, will lash out and rekindle human subjectivity to a natural expression of true life. If the dehumanization of subjectivity becomes ubiquitous and dominating, the essential equilibrium of nature will act and balance human existence. Indeed, *enantiodromia* comes about whenever a process becomes too prevalent and powerful, as Jung noted: "this characteristic phenomenon practically always occurs when an extreme, one-sided tendency dominates conscious life; in time an equally powerful counterposition is built up which first inhibits the conscious performance and subsequently breaks through the conscious control" (1976, 426). In a similar line of thought, one might ponder how Planet Earth reacts to the destruction of its biodiversity and protective armor: hurricanes, forest fires and the desertification of the equatorial circle of latitude. Through *enantiodromia*, the destruction of nature by humans turns into the destruction of humans by nature.

To summarize, logocentric life, which today attempts to lead humans to neglect not only their unconscious life but also their own consciousness, will be fragmented at its pinnacle by the conflagration of *enantiodromia*, which will convert it into its opposite: a life centered on existence itself, stripped of cacophony, with peace and wonder at its heart. Through this process instincts will surface and affects will find shape again, producing an awe for the privilege and beauty of being alive. Simply, alive. And if, alas, the *enantiodromia* of human subjectivity does not happen with enough haste, it seems that the natural world, without pity, will destroy humanity before it can flee to other worlds in the natural, unforgiving yet indifferent process of perfect equilibrium.

Conclusion

This thesis has offered a new framework in which to conceive of narratives as instruments of power. Through a careful analysis of narration as conditioned by the context of its production, I proposed a machinic definition of narratives which leads directly to the modification of human subjectivity through a constant and cacophonic input of artificial and non-human discourse. This discussion led to a description and application of Deleuze's notion of society of control and its development in the concepts of surveillance capitalism and ectosubjectivity as the emerging regime of power of the twenty-first century. While these considerations are somewhat bleak and depressing, in the final chapter the reversal of logocentrism by Cynic philosophers, also embodied in the character of the Joker from the Batman universe, guided us towards hope in embracing the shadow-side and thus producing new worlds of truth which are untainted by dominant power regimes and logocentrism.

In Chapter 1, my theorization of the notion of *catharsis* as the result of the creator's imagination led directly to the idea of narratives as being an apparatus of power[55]. Indeed, the manipulation of narratives in the hopes of achieving an effect in the receiver is the basis for a willful control of human subjectivity. In tragedy, the desired effect was *catharsis*, the purgation of powerful emotions through identification with the tragic hero. Some researchers even formulated the idea of a political catharsis aimed at the institutionalization of the forbidden and the control of the population through the dramatization of taboo (Marchand, 1988).

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[55] For in-depth summaries of this thesis' chapters, consult the introduction.

If the effect of a given narrative on its receivers can be forethought, then the potential for alteration of human behavior and ideology is immense. The 2016 American elections emphasized the world-altering potential of a simple range of symbols repeated enough times to the right receivers[56]. Not only behavior, but actions which have power over the world, can be codified and guided towards profit for dominant corporations, discourses or political parties, among other examples. In summary, I argued that the effect of narratives on receivers is pre-produced in the act of *poiesis* itself. Interface theory has a concept for this notion, called the *imagined user*. Interestingly, a few centuries before this concept was coined, Nietzsche wrote about the imagined user in Chapter 7 of his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche contradicts Schlegel, who had seen in the Greek tragic chorus the 'ideal spectator' of the tragedy. In other words, Schlegel considered that the chorus was an ideal sample of the Greek spectators of tragedy. Nietzsche's main counterargument is that the true spectator is always conscious that he or she is witnessing a play, a work of art being played by actors, while the chorus considers the characters as real beings. In their interactions with the characters from the tragedies, namely in Sophocles, the chorus represents the people not as a mass of spectators but as a mass of characters within the realm of the narrative. Evidently, Nietzsche did not take into account the fact that *catharsis* is based in large part with the total engagement of the spectator within the play and the personal identification with the tragic heroes. In other words, the public is always part of the narrative, it codifies the playing out of the story both by its integration as imagined public into the act of *poiesis* and by its potential reactiveness at the moment of reception.

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[56] Rosenberg & Cadwalladr, 2018.; Lewis & Hilder, 2018.

The major point I want to make with this centuries-old dispute is about twenty-first century receivers. Schlegel considered the ideal public as the public which, like the chorus, does not know it is engaged in a fiction. In our current mass-mediated environment, Schlegel's idea brings up an interesting question: Are humans aware of the narratives that permeate their everyday lives? It can be inferred that for the corporations that attempt to align dominant discourse, the ideal spectator is in fact unknowing of the narratives he or she consumes on a daily basis. What the spectator sees as a benign advertisement can in fact be a behavior-altering narrative. Camus' expression in *The Myth of Sysiphus* about the stage set of daily life falling down to reveal a wasteland is absolutely relevant in the context of the willful dissimulation of narratives in the fabric of human existence.

The most important point Chapter 2 brought to this thesis is the concept of machinic enslavement because it theorizes the replacement of infra-subjective fragments of human subjectivity with ready-made discourse and postures. The machinic conception of narratives that was developed in this chapter suggests that narratives are machines engaged in relations of networking with humans and a multiplicity of other machines *on the same plane of existence*. Narratives are not situated in another world, the symbolic world or the closed book of works of art. Rather, they permeate daily life and influence the individual and collective evolution of humanity. The constant alteration and willful domination that constitutes machinic enslavement desubjectifies human subjectivity by integrating it in a machinic environment without consent. Similar to the example of driving a car, which is the desubjectivation of "an individual human" to fit the car assemblage and activate its various mechanisms, living the life of a North American worker is the same process of fragmentation into the pre-existing structure: daily life. Waking up, dropping the kids at kindergarten, enduring hours of commute, slaving off at a poorly payed job in hopes of climbing the ladder, commute, picking up the kids, rinse and repeat with some

variations. This model is followed without question as the pinnacle of human progress, and I want to argue that this sheepish acceptance is precisely because infra-subjective fragments inside human psyche, such as instincts of love, preservation, sanity, affects, are replaced with ready-made 'junk food' fragments that make us neglect human nature and health. Among these processed ready-mades are found progress, material wealth, career hierarchy, individual achievements, social status, etc.

Which leads to the development of Chapter 3 where the passage from discipline to control to the emerging regime of power based on algorithmic power was theorized and discussed in depth. The ready-made infra-subjective fragments that are implanted within humans in the hopes of serializing postures, ideology and behavior have largely replaced traditional methods of controls such as policing, imprisonment, or even the education of children by parents. With the announcement of a new social media built for children by Facebook and the proliferation of misinformation on Tik Tok, the pressure of raising children will leave the parents' shoulders, since their offspring will integrate the machinic assemblage of "connected human life" that corporations push as the ultimate goal. In short, machinic enslavement is characteristic of life in the twenty-first century, so much so that humans are often not aware of the deep-rooted implantation of infra-subjective machinic elements within their psyche. As Italo Calvino wrote in his novel *Les Villes Invisibles*:

> L'enfer des vivants n'est pas chose à venir: s'il y en a un, c'est celui qui est déjà là, l'enfer que nous habitons tous les jours, que nous formons d'être ensemble. Il y a deux façons de ne pas en souffrir. La première réussit aisément à la plupart: accepter l'enfer, en devenir une part au point de ne plus le voir. La seconde est risquée et elle demande une attention, un apprentissage, continuels: chercher et savoir reconnaître qui et quoi, au milieu de l'enfer, n'est pas l'enfer, et le faire durer, et lui faire de la place. (Calvino, 2013)

The final point of this thesis is highlighted in Chapter 4's analysis of the Greek concept of *parrhēsia:* truth and ethical hierarchy are in fact unstable systems that put all their strength in impeaching their reversal. When the Cynics, Diogenes in prow, simply devolve back to an animalistic life, to the bewilderment of the Athenians, the ease of the reversal of logocentrism appears. Although the paragraphs above are infused with irony, sarcasm and a deep dismay at the state of human daily life in the twenty-first century, an increasing number of people are reversing the model and producing their own territories of existence, namely through remote work, entrepreneurship, minimalism, veganism and zero-waste lifestyles, paganism, witchcraft, etc. As the Greek concept of *enantiodromia* illustrated, nature has a tendency to restore equilibrium whenever an extreme is reached. With the narrowness of the current human existence that is offered to North Americans (not to mention the lack of possibility for a large portion of society because of class, race, religion and other such factors nor the state of human individuality in third-world and totalitarian countries), the increasing tension on collective consciousness is reaching an extreme. Thus, the refusal of more and more people to fit in the proposed model, especially as new generations reach adulthood and witness its vacuity, converts a regime of dominant *logos* into a chaos of new practices and new territories of expression. Before these practices are reintegrated in the gravitational pull of dominant power, wonderful things can happen: works of art, new philosophies, new ideas of work and invention, a redefinition of humans' role in the world, a rekindled kinship with nature and non-human things and beings, among other miracles.

As a final word, the production of a machinic definition of narratives which encapsulates the dominant power regimes of twenty-first century North America permits the opening of a new spectrum of research into the infra-subjective manipulation of humans by control apparatuses. The individual effect of the replacement of infra-subjective fragments with artificial ready-mades

is often disregarded in profit of research about the machinations of big internet companies and the collective and social upheaval against them. Apart from the important final sections of Chapter 3 and 4, this thesis is no different as it focuses on the construction of the machinic environment in which humans are implanted rather than the effects of the implantation of artificial subjective fragments in the humans themselves. I sincerely believe that more research must be conducted on the alteration of human subjectivity by the bombarding of artificiality and non-human fragments, namely through mass mediation but also through ideological overcoding in the traditional media, the concepts of Progress and Science, the institutionalization of knowledge and the violent extraction of personal and intimate data by big corporations.

The domination of human instincts and primal subjectivity through narratives is an intricate process that is multiplied throughout a plurality of machines in networking with humanity. In his book *H2O*, thinker Ivan Illitch emphasized how the cementing of oral myths into writing produced the unimpeded destruction of collective mythology towards individual expression. As an example, he offers the myth of the Titan Mnemosyne, whose bubbling fountain collects the souls and histories of all beings in Hesiod's *Theogony*. In this book, heroes and demigods who drink from the fountain come to an understanding of the collective history of humanity from the fragments of souls concealed whence: what has been, what is and what will be. However, when Plato brought the Indian concept of metempsychosis (transmigration of souls) into Greek thought, namely in the *Phaedo*, those who drank at the fountain did not understand what has been, what is and what will be, but only the restrictive path of the previous lives of their own individual souls. Thus, Illitch identifies a shift in perspective, whose source he identifies in the alphabet, from collectivity to individuality (Illitch, 1988, 65-73).

Now that a large portion of individuality is stripped down and replaced with ready-made fragments infused with control, what new regime of relation to the self will emerge?

The vaporous world of the internet produces simulacra of individuality that strive to become real. Social media personae, as one example, acquire a life of their own in their circulation and autonomous production of postures, identification with other users, platforms and groups, and sometimes generation of content. My hypothesis, and my future research will refine and develop the idea that humanity is rapidly becoming its own demiurge. By creating a parallel world where humans' subjective shackles are mirrored by the theft of data, the free-flowing circulation of intimate information and the autonomy of user profiles, humanity has produced its own subjective annihilation in the physical world in profit of a world of vapors and electricity which could escape its grasp towards complete autonomy. With the rise of increasingly autonomous artificial intelligence systems and the available electricity of the universe, the relation to the human self shifts from individuality towards disembodiment. Thus, the remaining heroes of humanity, limping and feeble, who drink in the fountain of Mnemosyne will not discover what has been, what is and what will be, nor the past journey of their soul, but rather the emptiness of the void, sprinkled here and there with the binary code of the creation which led to humanity's absolute forgetfulness.

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