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Virality in virtual. Introduction in viral theory

Summary of the thesis

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PART III – VIRAL AESTHETIC

Summary

Keywords: viral, virality, computer viruses, anomalies, digital culture, (in)security, cybo-avatarisation, cyberspace, information and data, semantic web, web 2.0, internet culture, contagion, machine.

Our research is centred on the subject of viral theory and we try to establish an introduction to these analysis in romanian culture. Also, one of our most relevant goal is to recover the viral signifiance through three filters: socio-cultural element, data culture or tehno-informational paradigma and viral aesthetics. The hypothesis of our phd is represented by current situs in an era of (in)security and paradigmatic flow. This kind of situation *in-between* or *in-passage* creates the possibility of invisibility, which opens the door for the *capture*. An entire culture is affected by this attempt to catch a moment or a capture of flow. The action is related with the *print screen* when you try to catch something which is moving on the screen with an accelerated speed. We talk about a true flow of data and information when everything seems to be indexed into an universal archive and we play the role of the analyst. We must to re-interpret the world in this new situation, where information was reduced to data, in a post-strusturalist manner. This possible reduction argues not a simpification or clarification, similar with the predictions of semantic web, but a regular archiving of data. Placed in the data stream, we are able to discover the transitions of man-machine coupling and the re-signification of subject condition/ his (re)constitution in cyberspace. *Everything is put in connexion with everything*, and this thing seems to be the first element of subject constitution starting. In fact, the subject (re)constitution start in connection, not in the action of prosthesis. Our analysis moves forward and touches the paradigmatic flow of information-data couple. We are agree with the affirmations about the society of risk and we developed the tech-virality into the flow of data. Not just technology or exponential growths are implied here, but the entire culture and his products. Viral phenomena are generally applied, in our case, and this represent the possibility to discuss about how virality transgress his own state. A new paradigm presents the simptoms of an economy of attention, where the gazes are directed

to the nosiest element. What moves inside an archive represent the viral element, but our aim is to recover his dual face: the pathogenic – epidemiological face and the benevolent and creative face.

The first part represent an reconsideration of subject (re)constitution in cyberspace. This is the socio-cultural filter of our analysis, started from the virtual space habitation and the man-machine ensemble. With de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation mechanisms centred in current discourse, we make an interesting inversion: the machine extends to the real space, în reality. So, sunject is situated in front of the monitor and starts the virtual (re)constitution. He takes some virtual faces in the process of interfacing with machine, but the entire process is not a kind of cyborgisation, because we say that there is no clear temporal boundarie between cyborgisation and avatarisation. In fact, our conclusion is that the process of virtual (re)constitution is presented as a cybo-avatarisation, human as cyborg and avatar (we prefer *virtual subject*) in the same time. Of course, here we are faced with a phenomenological situation, because the subject (re)constitution can raise the problem of solipsim or isolationism. The solution is given in chapter I.6: Viral Cyberfriend: face-à-ecran-à-ecran-à-face. We modify the levinasian schema face-à-face by the transgression in cyberspace and the man-machine coupling inclusion. So, the new schematism becomes: face-à-ecran-à-ecran-à-face and everything is re-symbolized. In these new relations of virtual faces, intermediated by the screen (see the screen metaphor), we can discuss about an entire network, an opened and social network. Our interest is not to maintain the speech around futuristic post-human or trans-human paradigm, but to analyse how it works the relationships construction in cyberspace, a space without a space, and how connection becames a viral phenomenon.

The second part expose the techno-informational paradigm, as we call it, that characterize the informational – data flow. In the open network every system is vulnerable and we take Fred Cohen's theories about that and put together with Jussi Parikka's work. We are agree with the data archiving and the solution given by media archeology, but we must to avoid the radical reduction to simple data in a post-structuralist way. There is a chaotic univers in front of the subject cybo-avatarisation and we must to think to indexing data not in a static way, but being in the stream or in the flow of data, which propose a continuous changing. The virus ontology is discussed in a close connection with the transitivity, the first element of viruses contagion and spreading in the network, and his media turn. Also, we make in this section a distinction between viral pathogenity and Viral

2.0, as we call the benevolent virus action and his situs. The virus as epidemiological element is seen as a bad object, a malicious, self-reproductive and self-autonomous organism which is capable to infect the entire network and affect his functionality. We examined the virus as a machine autopoietic and allopoietic in the same time, due his spreading and his replication which give further more mutations. In this system the mutation is very important because involves a virus transformation and his replications propose another replications in a continuous circle of replicating without redundancy. The cybo-avatarisation action is placed in this kind of flow and the virtual subject is (re)constituted without any restrictions in the vulnerable and opened network. In fact, our analysis follow the first virtual subject traces in cyberspace: the user is de-constructed and we find his first manifestations in virtual space – his faces and his writing (écriture) as a trace. Each of two elements is a *corpus of cod* or a set of code lines, oscillating between visual and invisibility. The metaphorical code involves the possibility of switching between among several semantic units or semantic interpretations. This thing seems to be a very powerful tool for virtual subject determination or his freedom of expression limitation, meaning manifestation. We placed this research in the field of the next exponential growth: Web 3.0 or semantic web. This viral trend can be defined like an clarification of chaotic Web 2.0.

The third part offers some analysis about viral products in cyberspace as aesthetic objects. We discuss the possibility of an viral aesthethic, primed in the middle of viral culture. Our arguments start with the dualism software-art in the case of the net.art mouvement. Even if Alexei Shulgin said that Web 2.0 represent the end of net.art, we are convinced that still exist an entire debate regarding the boundaries between art and software. We think that this one still alives inside the viral aesthetics, where we can analyze the bad objects in art and how an artistic product becames viral. The more relevant example for this kind of analysis is represented by the transgressive art. The transgressive object is placed in passage, in between of his own becoming. We can't talk about a static moment of his evolution, but just about a capture of his mutations. Darko Maver project is analyzed both from the point of view of transgressive art and the point of view of software culture. The methods used for built the entire prank are composed by tactical media, software products, trangressive art, the viral marketing, the paradigmatic flow in aesthetic and the first network openings in the late '90. Darko Maver represent a true model for viral aesthetics and early the Web 2.0 functionality. His manifestations are syimptoms for an

epidemiological contagion: the virus itself, the spreading, the network affected and the mutations. Where *everything is connecting with everything* it is not so hard to insert a virus and observe the effects of this infection. Our analysis move forward and take the example of objects manifestations in the cyberspace. So, the (em)bodiement as (in)corporation in the video games is like the cybo-avatarisation processuality. The character waits in cyberspace as a *body-without-organs* and the extern action or flow upon him is given by cybo-avatarisation or the gamer connection to the game space. Gazira Babeli (analized in chapter III.2 – (Em)bodied code: self construction in SL) represent a good example for machine extension into reality. We re-think this situation through the symbolic turn made by human-machine couple. The human extension in cyberspace is replaced by the machine extension in reality. Gazira Babeli gives interviews, participates to real exhibitions with her products and sells in real life custom objects with her signs. Also, the *body-without-organs* is represented by the *source-code,* which is fully accessible to gamers. Now, the subject is (de)constructed in front of this (em)bodiement and then he is (re)constituted in connection. We talk not about an anxiety of connection, but about an anxiety of deconnection, when the subject is forget in real space. For this situation computer games gave the solution: the mobility game, realized with mobile devices and wireless connexions.

Our research is connected with international trends and the current cultural paradigms. Jussi Parikka talked in 2007 about *Digital Contagions* and his solutions was centred on media archeology. In 2013 Parikka insist for a current mutation of what represent today media, which will be translated into an archive. We say that our aim is to encrypt data into code and then to decrypt the archive for understand the viral mechanisms. We are now in the position of an analyst who interprets the entire flow of data in the cyberspace. Here, in this dynamic hyper-archive, are designed the (in)security and subject (re)constitution. The virus ontology gives us the symptoms of how it works the contagion in cyberspace. The noise give up being the infection announcement or accidental epidemiology, although Joseph Nechvatal placed the immersion into noise in the center of his analysis. The noise became the sign of visibility at Nechvatal and he makes some references at Parikka's work. The contagion theory is approached by Tony Sampson in his struggle to resuscitate tardean theories together with deleuze-guattarian ontological world. Our research primed Sampson's theories about virality in the stage of social construction in cyberspace. The social network in virtual space is analized in connexion with contagion theory. Virtual nomadism is adjusted with virtual interrelation, which means that the map

is (re)territorialized or discovered in connection and relation. The data flow makes us to discuss about being in the stream and the references are centred on Lev Manovich. The distinction between *being viral* and *becoming viral* is understood into the flow or into the passage. Manovich proposes a return to software analysis as fundamental element of our culture.

Our thesis succeds to open the research horizon of viral theory with three niches: the socio-cultural thematization, the tehno-informational paradigm and the viral aesthetic. Each section involves various references: Manuel Castells's informationalism, Fred Cohen's analysis on computer viruses, viruses as autopoiesis and allopoiesis machines (See Maturana & Varela), the spectator theory, the code as metaphor, the semantic web, viruses as semi-autonomous machines (principles of automata on Von Neumann) and many others. The second achievement is given by the turn in human – machine couple: the human extension is replaced by the machine extension. The analysis was made in the first part of our thesis. The third success of our research is represented by cybo-avatarisation concept, wich means that there is not a clear distinction between cyborgization and avatarization. The prosthesis and the virtual interface are designed in the same time in connection. The first part is finished with this analysis and continued with the data flow and the subject (de)construction. In this section, an important element is given by the (in)security and the anomalies contagion. Our contribution is the analogy between cybo-avatarization and the virus symptoms or the epidemiological mechanism of spreading. The last part brings a new contribution of our research: the viral aesthetic conceptualization. Our attempt is a difficult one because we try to propose a paradigmatic situs in the context of a continous changing. We think that our research opens some interesting fields of analysis that must be continued by future works. The analysis of bad objects in aesthetic start to be published on ifilosofie.ro project. Also, we intend to continue the research and publish our results, especially those that represent our apport on viral theory or viral philosophy (viral philosophy is proposed by Jussi Parikka).

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