

Metamedia Metaformance

Metahuman Technologies: Undoing anatomy in capitalism of affects

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[draft]

SHORT ABSTRACT:

I will propose a critique of the accounts of the moving body that pervade both classical-modern-contemporary dance traditions and information-communication-control society, in order to propose some possibilities for a radical redefinition of corporeality, aesthetics and politics both in relation to dance, the other arts and nature-culture at large, within a *Metahumanistic* project of resistance to capitalism of affects in which, through subversive reappropriations of control technologies, an amorphous, post-anatomical body is produced that exceeds cartesian-logocentric-humanistic paradigms, redefining the body as relational process and reworking all of its normative categories.

LONGER ABSTRACT:

I will propose a critique of the paradigms of the moving body that pervade both classical-modern-contemporary dance traditions and information-communication-control society, which reproduce specific cartesian-logocentric-humanistic conceptions that deal with framing-distance-exteriority for the production of the spectacular-hiperreal and of the dualism object-subject as well as fictional-objective. The parallelism between the stage and the ubiquitous camera-screens of media culture will acquire new light understood in terms of perceptual anatomies that reproduce the cartesian split between subject and object, thus producing both as political fictions. This becomes even more problematic in the field of HCI, where interfaces tend to assimilate bodies into a regime of affective production that we will call the *Panchoreographic*, where movement becomes a key paradigm for understanding its mechanisms. Dance-technology appears thus as a realm in which, rather than limiting us to use the given technologies, we may subvert them and the regime they perpetuate.

The body, understood as relational process, is subject to endless *Amorphogenesis* through a redefinition of the relational technologies that constitute it. This is part of a non-utopian *Metahumanistic* project for resistance to capitalism of affects' apparatuses of violence and assimilation. *Metamedia Metaformance* is the process of redefinition of relational technologies, which include perceptual anatomies, that redefine the given limits between disciplines and perceptual categories in a neverending process of emergence. Proposing the notion of *Intrabodies* rather than Interfaces and a *Meta-kinetic* art-research instead of dance-choreography, we propose to show the crucial role of relational movement for the radical redefinition of the entire humanistic-logocentric-cartesian conception, in a movement away from the stages (and audiences) of spectacular control society and from linear time-space.

Examples will be given of the *Microsexes-Microdances* projects of Reverso and other Metahuman Technologies in which through reappropriation of technologies of control society the sensory anatomy is transformed towards a *Post-anatomical body*, and with it the conditions of possibility of regimes that operate through identification and form. A *devisualisation* and a *politics of the amorphous* where bodies move in ways that are irreducible to representation-mapping-identification-signification, undoing the constitutive limits of gender-sex-race-class-form-identity categories of control.

Perceptual technologies and the production of the cartesian subject-object divide

How is it that the cartesian, humanistic and logocentric subject-object divide has come to be in terms of the articulation of sensory anatomies?

I will focus on some of the technologies that are bound to this genealogy. In particular technologies of vision and the camera-screen paradigm.

Since the XV century specific uses of the camera obscura gave birth to a realistic paradigm of representation in painting. This has developed further through the photographic camera, film and with the ubiquitous proliferation of camera-screens in information society.

Fixed framing, distance and exteriority to the observed, centralised perspective, clear focus and "correct" exposure time have become normative and standardised parameters, indeed conditions of possibility for the very notion of objectivity in representation.

Fixed framing relates to the faciality of the humanist subject, where the camera acts as an extension of the eyes, fixed in the face that represents the subject as an abstract, disembodied and rational mind. Distance allows to situate oneself as exterior to the observed thus making the divide subject-object possible. Centralised perspective accounts for humanism's anthropocentrism and universalism and for space as extensive reality. Clear focus allows the mapping and representation of the object exterior to the subject, its subjection to control. "Correct" exposure accounts for the fiction of real and linear time, of the present as an instant between past and future.

I will argue indeed that the production of the subject and the object as pervasive political fictions relies upon the sensory standardisation induced by the proliferation of these parameters of the technical image, without which the subject-object divide, and its related dualisms (mind-matter, soul-body, culture-nature, mental-physical, virtual-real, artificial-real, masculin-feminin, heterosexual-homosexual) would not be possible.

This political fiction, this paradigm permeates all of scientific enquiry and lies in the foundations of information-communication-control society at large.

Perception and the art disciplines divide

The obsolete notion that we have 5 senses which work independently pervades not only the arbitrary divisions of the art disciplines, but society at large.

Visualisation and control

Visualisation is a long-standing control technology that has evolved in the midst of, and foundational to, imperialisms of diverse kinds. The attempt to subject all of reality to

control, (which is more present than ever in media and simulation culture), is the intentionality which lies behind the production of technologies of visualisation.

In surveillance societies such as ours, cameras still need to have the fixed framing, distance, perspective, focus and exposure that allows for an object to be identified as such and be subjected to control.

The production of the subject as something distinct from its environment relates directly to this long tradition of control, which is however challenged increasingly from the most diverse perspectives going from quantum mechanics, symbiogenesis or enactive cognition theories to posthumanist critique: all of these question the possibility to place oneself as an exterior observer and stress the way in which we are part of immanent relations which are indeed productive: from the atomic and molecular through the bacterial and cellular, to the social and planetary, we are effects of relationalities happening at multitude of interrelated levels. Quite contrary to what the humanistic dream attempted to make us believe, with its tales of autonomy, superiority and free will.

What control is it possible to exercise upon something that we are part of and which is constitutive of what we are? Arguably, in order to exercise control it is necessary to place oneself, however fictional and problematic this may be, outside of the controlled. Since this can never be really the case control is continually failing, and life is exceeding its boundaries in always unexpected movements. There is our only hope.

From the camera-screen to the stages of spectacular society

Paradoxically the same framework that constitutes the viable limits of objectivity are those that constitute the possibilities for the fictional. No wonder that reality and fiction are increasingly confounded in spectacular society, where technical images become hyperreal, as Baudrillard suggests, i.e. more real, indeed politically, than whatever is outside them, while reality seems to hover on the edge of the invisible.

Behind the apparent liquidity of media culture and web 2.0, ubiquitous interfaces and camera-screens are reproducing frontiers and barriers, those of the cartesian subject-object divide, where every subject connected to a terminal assumes the tragic (and delusive) erasure of the body's specificity for the sake of the abstract mind, which thinks of itself as capable of transmitting universal signifiers and meanings.

The notion of information itself, as Katherine Hayles points out, relates to this pervasive attempt to erase corporeality. Yet, if according to enactive cognition, other cognitive theories and phenomenology, consciousness is the effect of bodies moving in relation to other bodies, i.e. the effect of relational movements, whatever we call the mind cannot be other than bodily.

The architecture of theatres, concert halls, auditoriums and cinemas, with their centralised perspective and their framing of the stage is equivalent to the camera-screen, where the spectator is placed, sitting at a certain distance from a fixed framing,

a distance that safely allows to identify, in this case, the limits of the fictional, and to place oneself problematically outside it.

There is no dancer behind the dance

In classical, modern and most of contemporary dance traditions, even those which abandon the architecture of the stage, the distances and framings of this architecture of perception are still shaping the experiences and understandings of the moving body, as it is seen from an outside. Indeed it shapes the experiences and body knowledges of dancers and choreographers, through technologies as widely used as the mirrors in dance schools and studios, which allow the dancer to approach the external view of the spectator and work for its sake.

Placing oneself as a mind that owns a material body is already problematic, if we acknowledge the mind to be an effect of the body in motion. Western dance traditions are thus mostly assuming the dancer as subject that owns a body, that can be external to it, or look at it from an exterior.

Centralized perspective, along the technology of writing, has ideally *placed the subject along the time-line*, has produced the fiction of linear time and real time. Similarly it has allowed an interpretation of space as extensive objective reality. Choreography draws upon the fiction of linear time and of movement as discreet and repeatable. Movements within a certain *scale* as suited for the framework of the stage or of the screen.

In his famous sculptures for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, called *The Matter of Time*, Richard Serra confronts us with his account of *sculpture as time*, but more importantly he shows how linear time ceases to exist when cartesian perspective is no longer there. What dimensions of movement could we experience if we stop holding to the cartesian grid, let the subject dissolve, and let the body enter other scales of a non-linear time-space that emerges from the relational movement itself?

If we stop holding on to the body as possessive rational subjects there is some chance that it will start to dance in unexpected dimensions where there is little space-time left for the humanistic subject.

Transcending the subject helps us to transcend the machine as well: discourses on interactivity for instance care a lot about defining consciousness as that of a rational subject, while AI projects haven't the faintest idea about how a musical mind-body works, or that of a visual artist, or of a dancer-choreographer.

Interactivity, *understood as the movements of the relational body*, is transformed every time that relational technologies are displaced. There is no need to introduce reactive systems and parameter mappings, and if we do, then create relations!... without subjecting them to meaning and control. Invent new embodied forms of intelligence that defy the tyranny of reason!

Capitalism of affects: interfaces and the panchoreographic

One of the reasons why movement is a crucial paradigm to understand power as it operates through us in contemporary capitalism is that bodies are increasingly choreographed by interfaces and globalised media that shape our perception and therefore our modes of relationality.

Capitalism of affects is this conglomerate of technologies aiming at the production of the desires and affects of consumers-subjects. That affects are not an offspring of the free will isn't something new. Marketing technologies are about producing desires and desiring subjects.

Following philosopher of science William James we may understand affects as *effects* of bodily states, and these in turn as effects of modes of relational movement.

Choreographies disseminate affects at every level. By *panchoreographic* I refer to the diffuse set of globalised technologies that distribute discreet choreographies and affects in the bodies.

Amongst these, interfaces, moving images and music are some of the most significant nowadays, without disregarding transport technologies, urban planning and many others.

Stereo systems centralize our hearing while commercial music disseminates standardised affects through a reduced repertoire of musical styles and forms. A ubiquitous and immersive bodily architecture: the *panacoustic*.

Interfaces, as mediations between the face that represents the abstract subject, and the machine, are *per se* reproducing humanism's erasure of corporeality and assuming the universal abstraction and exteriority of the mind.

They absorb us in their movement parameters and cause-effect relations, while HCI attempts to visualise non verbal communication "in its entirety" trying to subject once again the whole of reality to control.

Fortunately reality has the capacity to escape any system of control, since it is embodied and specific, it doesn't obey universal frameworks, cannot be reduced to them and is impossible to anticipate in its emergence.

Yet it is true however that the implicit mechanisms of control of affective capitalism, disguised as they are behind façades of liberation and technopositivism, are incredibly effective in assimilating us into unprecedented apparatuses of global violence of which most of us are complicit, knowing or not, in our daily lives (the wars of coltan -the precious metal we have in our phones and computers- in Africa, are just one example, , the climate change is another).

Anatomy and control

Cartographies of the body have, within the best of humanistic traditions, fulfilled a number of reductionisms in our embodied experience.

It is striking for instance that such broadly overwhelming and oppressive frameworks as sexual identities are derived from the reductionism and measurement of genital anatomies in the newborn, which leads to the assignation of a binary sex or an intersexual status, whereby genitalia are classified according to their functionality within normative reproductive heterosexuality.

This gives us just a faint idea how strongly human(istic) anatomy is shaping the social body, as theories on the Body Politic suggest.

In order to map the body one must have an exterior perspective to it. What happens if we abolish that condition? What happens if in our experience the body becomes amorphous, and yet is still moving, alive and present?

Presence vs. identity

Presence is not to be confounded with identity, much as though in information society it is. We may produce accounts of presence that do not rely on identity whatsoever. Indeed in our daily experience we go through many moments in which we don't operate through identity, we don't assume an exterior position. When we sit in front of the sea, or of a sunset, or wonder in the woods we don't identify, we get lost in the endless and amorphous movement of waves and clouds and leaves. (Unless we are an expeditionary scientist from some of our imperialistic journeys of discovery and conquest).

The relational body in metahumanism - metabodies

Metahumanism proposes an approach to embodied experiences in terms of their relationality, their inbetweenness, to understand reality and ourselves, not as two independent entities, but as mutually constitutive and transformative relational processes, thus emphasising the meaning of "in betweenness" that the prefix Meta also had in ancient Greek. In proposing the Metahumanist Manifesto, both Stefan Sorgner and I felt that this prefix was more to the point than the prefix post- since our point is in the relational, or starts there, leading into the amorphous.

Every technology is a relational technology, is articulating or setting to motion of modes of relationality. We have seen what modes of relationality Cartesian technologies of information society puts into motion: exteriorities and borders hidden behind façades and rhetorics of connectivity, that are the condition of possibility of identification and form as instruments of control.

The metabody is the relational body, one that is not located here or there, but is constantly moving in the relationality of forces and affects. Reality is thus an

unquantifiable field of metabodies in changing and constitutive relation with one another.

Metamedia Metaformance - relational technologies

If we intervene in the modes of relationality being aware that this will transform us and that to which we relate - it will displace and eventually dissolve the identifying border -, we may work through all of the given anatomies, cartographies and forms through which we usually structure our experience.

This includes or starts with a reworking of our sensory apparatuses, the relational technologies *par excellence*.

The process of reworking relationalities at different levels is what I call a *metaformance*, which exceeds the dualisms of spectacular control society, and goes beyond perspectivism to introduce immanentism: we are never exterior to that to which we relate, we are never exterior to the relationality itself.

Arguably some of the artworks that have been called performances could be understood in terms of metaformance, since they were reworking relationalities at different levels (of the body in its capabilities and potentials, of the relation to the audience, etc). Even the most apparently non-procedural works of art can be reviewed under this light. It is tragic in this sense that the notion of artistic object, so suitable to markets, has pervaded discourses on art for so long, while I am almost certain that many painters, for instance, have experienced their work as a neverending relational process.

Metaformance puts the relationality in the forefront of investigation, though we could say, like Picasso, "Je ne cherche pas, je trouve", since the contingencies in metadisciplinary work are so great that we are often more imbricated in opening us a way amidst the jungle of things we encounter and have little time to look for other.

Metaformance is metamedia, since it operates in the conditions of possibility of media themselves not trying to define another fixed sensory anatomy, but in an endless *amorphogenesis*, where new potential media emerge.

Intrabodies

Understanding the body as relational movement, abandoning the dualisms and political fictions of the society of control, forces us to rename and rethink our technologies.

Whereby Interface doesn't suit any longer, since we are not mediating between a mind and a machine, but within different fields of forces of the relational body, and therefore: *Intrabodies*, mediations within the metabody, or relational body.

The dualisms artificial-real and virtual-real, doesn't sustain any longer within a body and a reality that we understand in terms of affects and relational forces. The affects

displayed in the screen of the computer are no less real than those we have in a physical sexual relation, though they may be of a different modality.

Undoing anatomy - Amorphogenesis

What happens when we intervene in our sensory anatomy, in our relational technologies? The field opens wide: we are no longer within the framework of representation, operating in the contents: we are working on the framework itself, and it is there that eventually modes of experience emerge that do not rely on the tyranny of content, meaning, identity and form any longer.

Undoing sensory anatomy can bring with itself an undoing of anatomy at large, since we cannot think anatomy without the sensory frameworks that allow us to recognise it, draw it, map it.

Also, undoing anatomy should not be for the sake of introducing a new anatomy in the place of the old one. If we enter the realm of the amorphous we may linger there at our wish.

Amorphogenesis is the condition through which relational bodies move outside the realm of form - and we do that all the time - never sedimenting into form.

Undoing normative categories - anatomy and sex, form, identity

Implies opening up sensory anatomies, away from the fixed point of vision.

Dissolving linear space-time

Implies mobilising plastic senses of space-time emerging from movement.

Meta-kinetic art-research and the dissolution of disciplinary divides

The approach to movement I have presented clearly exceeds the borders of the dance discipline, and challenge its foundations at different levels. This requires us to rethink our field of research-creation. If we want to exceed the given scales and perceptions that have produced an account of the dancing moving body and of choreography as discreet repeatable movement along the timeline, if we want to politically gain awareness of the ways in which movement disseminates through us as a weapon for neoliberal regimes, we need to have a broader metadisciplinary field of work that for the time being I will call *meta-kinetic art-research*, or the research-creation that deals with relational movement at every thinkable level, and into the unthinkable...

This leads to the reworking of transdisciplinary collaborations, already difficult in technopositivist times, and into metadisciplinary realms, where we cannot even anticipate what potential disciplines and media will emerge in the process.

Some Metaformance projects

Microsexes

<http://www.reverso.org/microsex.htm>

Transforming Proprioception - *Otherception*

Metahumanism

www.metahumanism.org

I presented the Metahumanist Manifesto at the posthumanism Conference in Lesvos in september 2011 together with my colleague, the german philosopher Stefan Sorgner. Meta- is used in its double meaning in ancient greek, not only as "coming after" but especially as "in between" thus stressing the relational.

ETP

www.reverso.org/ETP.htm

Presence without Identity

Jaiser 1.0

<http://www.jaiser.info/>

Unintelligible affects

Devisualise

http://medialab-prado.es/article/desvisualizar_proyectos_seleccionados

A call for projects as part of the activities of my research group at Medialab Prado in Madrid, called Cuerpo Común (Common Body) as part of the laboratory of Social Commons.

Conclusion: Resistances, subversions in the margins, and Dance-tech's crucial strategic place - not a utopia, but an experimentation in the present towards an unknown future.

What I have proposed to you is not a utopia for a transhumanist future but is inscribed in the resistance tradition of posthumanist critique. It is not about a utopian vision for a world without identity, form, gender, sex, violence or control, but a set of strategies in the present that may diversify our horizon of possibilities to rethink and transform reality and ourselves.

One may hope that some of us stop having a slavish attitude to technopositivist forces, limiting us to "use" whatever's given and gain a more ruthlessly guerrilla-like approach into subverting technopositivist roots.

It is clearly a marginal endeavour, one against all driving force in economy and power nowadays, and its future is uncertain. Yet we need to preserve and foster a sense of radical experimentation, one that is not already committed to producing certain results, one that resists framing in any given structure, one that we cannot even name, or that we don't want to name, or that we may name differently each day.