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**REPREZENTATION OF THE
HUMAN FIGURE
IN VIRTUAL SPACE**

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Summary

In this summary I will try to offer a sample of the multiple aspects of the material traversed towards the understanding of the virtual, a route documented in part in the text of this research. There are aspects of the virtual which are not extensively discussed in the body of the present research but which comports major importance in light of the all accelerating displacement of the public discourse towards the opposite end of the notion of signification, which motivates a somewhat different approach of the subject of virtuality on the basis of the characteristic social discourse of our modern times. Nowadays is maybe more present in our society than ever the shifting character of truth accused in the popular expression: Orwell might be astonished. In light of this verbal stereotype of postmodernity the conclusion I am after writing these words might be formulated as follows: the virtual space is this space in which we carry out our day to day existence and we ourselves can be understood as clumsy representations of our real human possibility.

Before we commence with our discussion it might be in order to place a confession, one of admittance of ignorance regarding the subject in the incipient state of the research, and also the evident incapacity to exhaust all and every aspect of knowledge that is implied in this generous, and, as I will try to demonstrate in what follows subversive subject due to its capacity to disturb the identification of the consciousness with the given reality. I will describe in a few words the reasoning that that led to the formulation of the title of this research, a title that in spite of its apparent lack of consistency on the first glimpse, has been proven to be a useful point of departure towards a special type of understanding not only of art and the creative intention, but also of the world we live in and of the understanding we have of it defined by the mental reflexes we reproduce day by day. The genesis of this title lies in its proximity to a type of development of image in the process of artistic creation that implies the use of digital technologies for 3D modeling in the preparing stages. This method that offers a preliminary viewing of the artistic intention is often used in the creative process, admittedly or not. Like other techniques of preview, crayon sketching or photo-collage that has been used as departure point in painting, this technique has also the ability to detour the artistic intention but this time not due to its simplicity and directness, but to its vast playground that comes with enormous complexity. The almost unlimited capacity for detail offered by the latest of these kinds of software invites the artist to

linger, and have the tendency to show the classical mediums of art as being unwieldy and out of date in contrast to the functions they present. In the same time the creative complexity can emerge due to the combination of different software and different editions of the same digital tool. For example the latest dedicated software presents the artist with the possibility of detailing the surface of tridimensional models comparable to the reproducing capabilities of the latest in digital photography, in the same time offering the possibility to combine the manual detailing using a vast array of digital tools with the stencil-like technique, using photographs or other images, that can be employed in a pictorial or sculptural approach as well on the same model. Concomitantly an obsolete algorithm of some superannuated software offers the opportunity to approach the process of creation in a gestural manner using the logic of the accidental. One outdated software offers the possibility to abuse it by the way of a derutated digital code in order to generate results similar to the way the gesture exists in painting and in sculpture, at the same time it offers a degree of control that is impossible to have around classical techniques thanks to the undo capability that can be accessed by the way of a simple command.

But talking about these kind of software we can't really talk about virtual reality unless the resulting product is destined to be introduced in a production pipeline at the end of which there is an immersive space, for example a videogame or another such context where virtual reality is implemented. Virtual reality is an advanced way of visualization which implies more than a simple 3d software, it appears as product of a specific technology capable of implementing an immersive 360 degree space which imitates the spatial relations and visual perspective that emerge naturally as a relationship of the real world and the human sense organs. This is the simple cause why in the formulation of the title of my research I opted for the term *virtual space* and not for the other one, the *virtual reality*. This option had been proven to be a happy one regarding the doors it had opened in the way of knowledge, but also an unhappy one because it had been followed by the realization that there is no discourse, be it in critical theory, philosophy, of any other justifiable verbal construct in common language where these two terms, the *virtual* and the *space* are used in conjunction the one with the other to form the symbolic construct of the *virtual space*. As I have shown in the body of the research we can talk about an augmented virtual reality as a technological representation, about virtuality as an alternative theory to the Aristotelian possibility, about virtuality as it appears in the common language denoting something illusory [or in some other way different from reality by way of a separate

existence in thought], but there is no virtual space where these separate aspects of virtuality can be observed. In the same time virtuality as it can be thought of through its etymological root, i.e. *virtus*, *virtue* invites the student who searches for the limits of this notion to a creative approach. Although the point of departure that directed the research towards this area of theoretical knowledge is to be located more in the proximity of the digitally augmented virtuality, as it can be observed in the body of the thesis this aspect is shortly abandoned due to its simplicity in contrast with the more problematic aspects of the term. In relationship with the technological aspect the virtual appears only as a step forward in on the dotted line that carries through cavepaintings, pompeian ambiental murals, 19th century panorama painting, cinerama, futurama, sensorama, Omnimax Theater and Imax Dome, and now this once again total immersion promised by virtual reality. Placed in this verbal construction, in opposition as it is with the real, the virtual is deprived of its creative capability. One of the other aspects of virtuality is the way in which it appears in the postmodernist discourse, a place where mostly is present as some kind of unintended consequence and in the same time is treated mostly as a phenomenon not sufficiently identified as a notion of its own to be capable of existence outside of the discourse where it can be find. In this category we can place the mass-media analysis of Marshall McLuhan, the society of total surveillance of Michael Foucault, the problem of the floating signifier of Baudrillard, the lack of right understanding in the Derridian deconstruction etc. These discourses we have been referring are mostly situating themselves in a kind of self-imposed quarantine as they seclude themselves in an academic milieu and refuse to engage whit the social aspects of living. Of course, we won't deny the fact that these discourses all of them have at their basis one or another problem taken from the reality of the social. But most of the times they are contended with describing, with analyzing the problem, with dissecting its socio-cultural modes of manifestation. Very few of them propose to develop the subject around questions of practical action, they accept - even as they denounce - a status quo of social existence as inevitable even if it has been recognized as being deplorable in the same time. McLuhan enounces the equivalence of medium and message avoiding to identify the message-creator and its intention. Lyotard denounces the right to existence of the meta-narratives and welcomes the advent of a society governed by the interplay of micro-narratives, the equivalence of the Wittgensteinian language-games, and is doing so in a essay commissioned by the French government. Lyotard avoids discussing the moral aspect of the fact that notions like self-

determination, the freedom from military, economic or informational oppression, international conventions and the human rights are also filed under the heading of language-games. Representative for what Noam Chomsky calls our highly disciplined intellectual class is the way in which the dialog around this subject avoids the question at hand in place of which constructs immediately an artificial dialectical position by advancing the sterile argument that a negation of the meta-narratives in by itself a new meta-narrative. This is a typically main-stream intellectual and political move which aims to delegitimize in advance the real critical opposition by creating a virtual dialectical position which fulfills its role by keeping the dialog inside the limits of acceptable discourse.

Towards the understanding of virtuality we have to start by differentiating it from the Aristotelian possibility. The extraordinary implications emanating out of the creative thinking which Deleuze has brought to philosophy and art is located exactly in this difference, that he has placed virtuality in the very spot of Aristotelian *primus movens*, replacing it and negating it. For Aristotle the principle of causality defines all of existence as inevitable order, “*to know the cause is to control the effect*”. By originating the totality of existence from the capacity of the virtual Deleuze and Guattari presents a world in which from the start the future is open. A virtual *primus movens* means the liberty to be anything, anywhere, anytime through the creative capacity of virtuality.

The body of the research is divided into three major chapters. These cannot be seen as levels of depth in a thoroughgoing study as in an arborescent structure, rather present a rhizomatic image, term that itself is in fact proper to the discourse of virtuality and which describes a relationship between constitutive parts developed on the horizontal plane, a network-like relationship that permits participation for elements of different nature. In the first chapter entitled *The Posthumanism of Representation in the Virtual Space* this kind of approach offered itself naturally due to the multitude of different aspects of knowledge and expression where virtuality is located, the aim being the identification of as much of these manifestations as possible where they can be analysed in relationship with the virtual. Through the mapping of these different aspects where virtuality appears in language, in artistic representation, in medicine, in technology and in different combinations of these we cannot talk really about categorization or systematization of the gathered material, such a scholarly approach is outside of our intention

and in honest also of our competence. Instead we approached the material in order to identify the zones where different arias of discursivity appear to intersect with each other and create notable singularities. Some of these points of convergence are the cyborg, the schizophrenic individual as a conflicting plurality in itself, the dividual always ready to enter into different structural compositions, the assemblage, the desiring machine, the happiness machine as the ideal construct of the individual in a consumer society built and regulated by the spectacle, the medical clone, the esthetic clone, the cybernetic space, the autoerotic space, the monster, the hybrid identity, the transgenic identity, the techno-fetishism and others. All of these aspects of existence can be enumerated under the heading of *posthumanism*, a term that denotes the difference from a humanism understood as an anthropocentric discourse. If in an earlier time the human, meaning the white adult male appeared as the final term of the enumeration, these new identities, or rather nonidentities appear as overcome of this obstacle, either by their own choice as in the case of Donna Haraway's cyborg, or by the force of circumstances as in the case of Frederic Jameson's schizophrenic.

If the first chapter is dominated by concerns characteristic of the school of critical theory, in the next two chapters this gives way to a more difficult language due to the interest it takes in the problem of virtuality as such, of the way in which can be understood and used as a particular tool in understanding. Besides revisiting in more depth aspects of virtuality present in the writings of Donna Haraway, Slavoj Žižek and others, these chapters are marked by the ideas of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, ideas that put in a different light the multiple aspects that are contained in a philosophy of the virtual. Besides some returns and reevaluations of previously encountered aspects as virtual reality, becoming or assemblage, in the second and third chapters entitled *The Rhetoric of the Virtual Space* respectively *Imagination and Reality in Virtual Space* we followed the above mentioned authors in a effort to introduce in the understanding of the subject specific terms like multiplicity, articulation, the plane of immanence, the body without organs or essence and possibility as opposed to virtuality.

If in the moment of the formulation of the title of the present research the personal artistic preoccupation was dominated by the human figure and the [virtual] space appeared in the artistic approach and in the image itself as a kind of generator and shelter, a kind of inseparable

environment of the figure, the path taken along the above described lines has the defining capacity of presenting itself as a force capable of transforming the creative intention by reversing the position of the dominant. As much as the interest moves away from a postmodern discourse dominated by the figure of a human being abused by the mass-media and the technologic apparatus that tends to absorb it, by the diagrams and dispositifs of control and discipline that transforms its subjectivity or projects onto it a completely new and alien one, and thus redirects its attention to the absence of real human capacity, as much this absence projects itself onto the image to the point where it disappears entirely as a figure and we can only talk about it in the deleuzian terms or the *missing people*, as a human agent which as will or intention is absent. Moreover, in light of the more and more accelerated shifting, especially in the last decade of the global political discourse towards a delirious autopoiesis which is gradually evacuated of familiar universal values, a new human renaissance through the creative power of the multitude promised by the *new left* appears as definitively compromised. As such, the concrete, tangible result of a *major* discourse is revealed as a geological time that we can call *anthropolithic*, an era where the human presence is first and foremost apparent in the ecological disaster produced. The force of this major discourse is in such a way dominant that any opposition coming from a minor discourse risks throwing its source into illegality. The works present in the exposition by the same title as the research project are thus concerned with some of these aspects. Are taken up minor themes as ecology, the violence of the image, the complicity of the mediums of information.

The reproductive space of illusion is taking over the place of the productive real space. One definition of the virtual is as follows: virtual is that which is not real, but displays the full qualities of the real - in a plainly actual (i.e., not potential) - way. Is exactly the difference that Deleuze observes in the manifestation of the virtual as opposed to the potential. With regard to this definition we can observe that the effects of virtual can be positive but it can be negative as well. Under its positive capacity it can be used to effect the production of a reality the actualization of which is not defined and as such obstructed by the potentiality [in the Aristotelian example the potential of the acorn is obliged to be actualized in only one possibility, that of the oak tree, as such it does not present a new creation because the result is defined throughout by the premises]. Under the negative capacity virtuality is used to obstruct the

creativity or the real by replacing it with the virtual in the form of the illusion. This latter aspect is the one we are witnessing in the form of technological progress and the replacement of existence with its image in postmodernity. As the systematic promotion and daily reinforcement of the positive thinking represented by the affirmation of the given occupies the entirety of the informational spectrum through the mass media, this results in the narrowing of the universe of communication until it reaches the level of mechanical reproduction. What disappears is the critical thinking, the only thing capable of transcendence over the given reality. It results in a consciousness in which thinking is epurated from its creative rationality and its place is occupied by the mental graft interiorized as the correct habit of thought, where thought is not thought at all, instead is the form of the described mental behavior, the mimetic reaction of an in-existent self, in fact the reactions of the establishment itself which prescribes it, reproduced automatically by every individual. The tension between appearance and reality disappears, reality is prescribed and reproduced on the basis of this prescription and the illusion recreated by every individual occupies effectively the functional aspects of reality. Inside this virtual space the self is an illusion reproduced by the mass media in every biped vehicle, in the recipient abused into docility we call men.

In the dominion extended to the global even the existential space, security is represented not by peace, instead by the reverse of it accepted as the necessary form of manifestation of the world peace, permanent war. This is the way it might be understood the migration of contradiction from the sentence to the subject. The fact of the matter observed half a century ago by Orwell in the form "war is peace" is today simply peace. Or war. No matter which one of the terms is used, they do not have different values except maybe in rhetoric. In reality we find what Alliez and Negri calls "[a] theatre for a total war aiming at a total peace". What Marcuse in the 60's observes as lack of negation in the dialectical space today appears as a problem of space itself, because reality is found lacking of this space of antagonism itself. Negation in this unidimensional space appears as an aberration of the dialectical affirmative: war against war.

Postmodern man appears in this space as nothing else but its own hyperreal representation generated by the power to be what the use of the mass media, as the true human potential is effectively banned, erased completely from the collective consciousness together with the dissolving of that consciousness as a possible territory and the same time the territory of new possibilities. The human potential identified as real progress is replaced by the continuous

reproduction of the same moment in the happiness machine activated in every individual. Human time is stopped, all that it flows is the technological time of the machine that men become. Reality is short circuited in illusion, in a collective hallucination that we have been convinced that is better than reality, in any case it will protect us from our own potentiality. The human disaster in Matrix is not a distant threat that awaits us in the future, it has already happened and it continues to be valid in the present, only that the collective hallucination resembles more and more and for a growing number of users to some kind of nightmare. In such a virtual world resistance cannot mean anything unless first it means resistance in the face of the threat of the emptying of consciousness with the vanishing of the possibility. Is the permanent restoration of the space of antagonism employing the exercise of historical memory. Is what Jan says in *The Educators*: "For all revolutions, one thing is clear...Even if some didn't work, the most important thing is...that the best ideas survived".

Creative virtuality must be obtained by projecting a multiplicity of lines of flight, by forging alliances, monstrous pacts which generates mutations, creates subterranean shoots, rhizomes that offer evading paths out of the order of quantitative possibility towards the virtuality of qualitative transformation. Creative man, the productive human existence solely capable of reversing the reproduction of the image of men is defined as the capability of the virtual multiplicity through the pact, through the alliance, through the assemblage. Men needs to learn to live in the continuum of mobile duration and leave the segmentary immobile time, to understand directly through intuition and leave the artificial, indirect understanding of analysis. Analysis will never understand even the simplest action as a walk, because a walk is a assemblage. Man, path, landscape and the time of day makes this assemblage that enters the conscience unmediated through the intuition. A walk is a becoming in participation where man enters into alliance with the path, the landscape and the time of day, he leaves the categorical existence as being and becomes a walk. This is how we have to see the image of becoming in Deleuze's writings where man picks a line of flight, an exit point from Aristotelian categories, picks not God [who still exists in relation of verticality in the order of things and creatures] but the beast, the nocturnal alliance that makes him a werewolf and withdraws him from stone-still human time. And every child knows, except Freud - says Deleuze - that a wolf never comes in singular, he is a pack and he will not be defined by the subject but by the verb: wolfing.