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ARTIGO

## EXPLOSIONS OF SEPP<sup>1</sup>

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### **Abstract:**

This is an attempt at recovering Marx's subterranean influence in the theoretical developments of the "Materialities of Communication" colloquium. It is argued that the colloquium "Materialities of Communication", in revisiting the Marxian concept of materialism, produced a "de-marxialized" version of materiality as an alternative (and reaction) to the excesses of the postmodern culture of interpretation. However, the de-marxialization of the concept ultimately meant depriving it of its political critique, making of it a politically innocuous tool. Lastly, it is suggested that rewiring the concept of materiality with its critical origin opens up a whole range of possible investigations.

**Keywords:** Materiality; Marx; Gumbrecht; Kittler; Technopolitics.

### **Resumo:**

Trata-se de recuperar a subterrânea influência de Marx na produção teórica que se movimenta a partir do colóquio "Materialidades da comunicação". Argumenta-se que o colóquio "Materialidades da comunicação", na tentativa de revisitar o conceito marxiano de materialismo, produziu uma versão "de-marxializada" da materialidade como alternativa (e reação) aos excessos de uma cultura pós-moderna da interpretação. No entanto, a de-marxialização do conceito significou, em última instância, esvaziá-lo de sua crítica política, fazendo dele uma ferramenta politicamente inócua. Sugere-se, por fim, que reconectar o conceito de materialidade à sua origem crítica abre toda uma gama de possíveis investigações.

**Palavras-chave:** Materialidade; Marx; Gumbrecht; Kittler; Tecnopolítica.

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Back in 2013, I came to Stanford as a visiting PhD student to develop my thesis under the supervision of Hans Ulrich “Sepp” Gumbrecht. Luckily for me, that year – and I’d like to believe not by sheer coincidence – Sepp’s seminars were responsible for gathering a very special group of people (Marcelo Rangel, Alex Martoni, Thamara Rodrigues, Dau Bastos, Philipp Engel, Tom Winterbottom, Florian Klingner, Mira Törneman and Adam Wickberg, just to mention a few). Amongst the more thrilling seminars from that period (apart from the *Philosophical Reading Group* meetings – or, as Sepp would have it, his “cord line to thinking”), two come immediately to my mind: the seminar on Balzac and the one entitled “Explosions of Enlightenment”. The latter inspired the original title of my talk: “Explosions of Sepp” (on my way to the USA I could not help but wonder why did the organization change the original title, and the best hypothesis I could come up with was that the change was a precaution with Trump’s NSA: one can probably not make use of the word “explosion” with impunity anymore).<sup>3</sup>

Regardless, what I would like to do in my ten minutes is to explore a little bit the unexpected paths Sepp’s work has led me to by posing a provocation. 1987 has become such an important year – at least for a small part of our surviving community of humanities scholars – in part due to Sepp’s ability to write in such a way that stories become truly memorable. It was in 1979, in Yugoslavia, during a colloquium on “Functions of Fiction”, that – in a moment of preemptive nostalgia (saudade) triggered by a Brazilian friend (I’m thinking Luiz Costa Lima) as both of them gazed at the Adriatic sea – Sepp, as he tells himself in “Production of Presence”, decided to make it possible for a return to the city of Dubrovnik.<sup>4</sup> As the story goes, the return would happen through a series of colloquia that took place from 1981 to 1989, and reached its critical moment in 1987, the fabled year that gave birth to the “Materialities of Communication” colloquium. Now, one decisive step toward that development was the need to distance oneself from the relativistic effects (one could also call it hermeneutic effects) that became widespread ever since the crisis of the great narrative. The word “materialism”, at that point, made it pretty obvious – for the classic opposition to our relativistic-fueled culture of interpretation was (and in fact it still is) materialism, as weaponized by Marx. But Marx – and soon the fall of the Berlin wall and Fukuyama’s version of Kojève’s end of history (the 20<sup>th</sup> century Hegelian Cocktail Party, as coined by Timothy Snyder)<sup>5</sup> would attest to that – was phasing out. Deconstruction and

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<sup>3</sup> This article resulted from a talk given at the colloquium “After 1967: Methods and Moods in Literary Studies. In honor of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht”, which took place in Stanford University on February 2018. The original title was then changed by the organization to “Reverberations of Gumbrecht’s Work”.

<sup>4</sup> GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich. **Production of Presence: what meaning cannot convey**. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004, pp.3-4.

<sup>5</sup> “One of the claims that was made in various forms from, let’s say, 1988 to 2003 was that history is over. You know: from harmless cocktail party Fukuyama-Hegelianism to the toxic Texas variant in fashion after September 11, 2001. Either it’s goodbye to all that and so much the better now that we are all bourgeois liberals playing free-market croquet together; or else we croquet-playing people have never seen anything like this, everything is new, there are no precedents and therefore no rules — and so we can choose whose heads we will beat in with our croquet mallets. Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11? It

cultural studies were in, but deconstruction (and pragmatism) – by severing the connections between language and world – and cultural studies – for its hermeneutic trend to surpass the material reality of the objects towards the overly immaterial cloud those objects were meant do condensate – were never good enough to ground literature (or any art object, for that matter) in any material/or sensual concreteness. Materialism had, therefore, to be de-marxialized.

Back to Sepp's account on the "Materialities" colloquium: in "After 1945", Sepp tells how the Dubrovnik colloquia revisited "certain segments of our discipline's past to discover new orientations or renew projects left unrealized".<sup>6</sup> "The first three colloquium topics", he goes on to explain,

were academic institutional history, approaches to the problem of historical periodization, and the concept of "style." Then, in a slightly bolder move, we wanted to revisit "materialism" as the philosophical core of all Marxist theories. It was during the "materiality" debates that we sensed, for the first time, that some intellectual discontinuity was desirable. While few of the contributions and even fewer of the discussions really focused on the tradition of "materialism," a new vanishing point appeared that the cover of our fourth Dubrovnik volume described as "Materialities of Communication" – which we defined as "all those phenomena that contribute to the emergence of meaning without being themselves meaning-constituted." Based on this revised understanding of our project, the colloquium and its proceedings ultimately became one of the stages of an intellectual movement that has made "media studies" an obsession within the humanities at German universities to this very day. (A much more powerful and decisive influence in the same direction came from the early works of Friedrich Kittler — who, incidentally, attended most of the Dubrovnik meetings.) From that moment on, after the spring of 1987, we believed (or at least I did) that we had finally outlined the professional future of our generation.<sup>7</sup>

It is interesting to note that Friedrich Kittler took part in the Dubrovnik colloquia, and, more importantly, in the "Materialities of Communication" colloquium. One should remember that Kittler is usually credited to be the Marx to Foucault's Hegel.<sup>8</sup> To sum up: Kittler grounded Foucault's reading of epistemological

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doesn't matter; the old rules of cause and effect are defunct, we can invade anyway." JUDT, Tony; SNYDER, Timothy. "Unity and fragments: european history". **Thinking the twentieth century**. New York: The Penguin Press, 2012..

<sup>6</sup> GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich. **After 1945: Latency as Origin of the Present**. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013, p.187.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp.187-188.

<sup>8</sup> This comes from Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, not only an expert in all things Kittler, but also his student in Freiburg: "The question of how people operate upon media thus has to be complemented by the equally important question of how media operate upon people. Subsequently, discourse analysis has to be expanded as well as supplemented by media theory. Scholars such as Kittler, Bolz, and Horisch, as it were, played Marx to

movements (and discourse analysis) to the usually invisible media-technological conditions of production of knowledge. The perception of the material dimension of media, the insight that media are not only technological apparatuses, but also socio-historical, epistemological body-shaping devices, is – like Kittler himself has shown – utterly related to the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

Once the technological differentiation of optics, acoustics, and writing exploded Gutenberg's writing monopoly around 1880, the fabrication of so-called Man became possible. His essence escapes into apparatuses. Machines take over functions of the central nervous system, and no longer, as in times past, merely those of muscles. And with this differentiation – and not with steam engines and railroads – a clear division occurs between matter and information, the real and the symbolic. When it comes to inventing phonography and cinema, the age-old dreams of humankind are no longer sufficient. The physiology of eyes, ears, and brains have to become objects of scientific research. For mechanized writing to be optimized, one can no longer dream of writing as the expression of individuals or the trace of bodies. The very forms, differences, and frequencies of its letters have to be reduced to formulas. So-called Man is split up into physiology and information technology. When Hegel summed up the perfect alphabetism of his age, he called it Spirit. The readability of all history and all discourses turned humans or philosophers into God. The media revolution of 1880, however, laid the groundwork for theories and practices that no longer mistake information for spirit. Thought is replaced by a Boolean algebra, and consciousness by the unconscious, which (at least since Lacan's reading) makes of Poe's "Purloined Letter" a Markoff chain. And that the symbolic is called the world of the machine undermines Man's delusion of possessing a "quality" called "consciousness", which identifies him as something other and better than a "calculating machine". For both people and computers are "subject to the appeal of the signifier"; that is, they are both run by programs. "Are these humans", Nietzsche already asked himself in 1874, eight years before buying a typewriter, "or perhaps only thinking, writing, and speaking machines?"<sup>9</sup>

Nietzsche of course became all the more important to Kittler for, after having acquired a Malling Hansen typing machine, stating in a famous letter that "our writing tools are also working on our thoughts"<sup>10</sup>. According to Kittler, Nietzsche would be the first to realize, from experiencing the typewriter interfering with his

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Foucault's Hegel: they pulled discourse analysis off its textual and discursive head and set it on its media-technological feet". WINTHROP-YOUNG, Geoffrey; WUTZ, Michael. "Translator's Introduction: Friedrich Kittler and Media Discourse Analysis". In: KITTTLER, Friedrich. **Gramophone, Film, Typewriter**. Translated, with an Introduction, by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999, p.xxii.

<sup>9</sup> KITTTLER, Friedrich. **Gramophone, Film, Typewriter**. Op. cit., , pp. 16-17.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

writing, that humans are akin to information-inscription machines – to the point Kittler dubs him “the first mechanized philosopher”.<sup>11</sup> In fact, Kittler goes on to argue that in the “On the Genealogy of Morals” Nietzsche’s “elevated Malling Hansen’s invention to the status of a philosophy”.<sup>12</sup> “Writing in Nietzsche”, claims Kittler,

is no longer a natural extension of humans who bring forth their voice, soul, individuality through their handwriting. On the contrary: just as in the stanza on the delicate Malling Hansen, humans change their position – they turn from the agency of writing to become an inscription surface.<sup>13</sup>

Philosopher-turned-cyborg-Nietzsche’s intuition – “our writing tools are also working on our thoughts” – echoes, almost prophetically, in the first words of Kittler’s preface to “Gramophone, Film, Typewriter”: “media determine our situation”.<sup>14</sup>

However, although Kittler is more than happy to share his insight on Nietzsche’s typing machine, Marx is only barely mentioned in his two most famous books (“Gramophone, Film, Typewriter” and “Discourse Networks 1800/1900”). One can only wonder if this shunning away from Marx has anything to do with the demarxialization of materialism (a position that resonated, and this is precisely my claim, within the “Materialities of Communication” colloquium). The same is true with Sepp’s writings on *materiality* – although Sepp’s criticism on Marxian philosophy of history is all over the place,<sup>15</sup> Marx is only ever mentioned as a possible influence on Sepp’s *own materiality theory* in accounts such as the aforementioned quote from “After 1945”, regarding the project to “revisit ‘materialism’ as the philosophical core of all Marxist theories”. Alas, the criticism on Marxian philosophy of history seems to function as a *cover up tool*. In fact, I selected a few quotes from Marx writings so that we can actually get a glimpse of his *critical materiality*. Let’s start by a quote from the “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts:”

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 210. On the changes the use of the Malling Hansen machine produced in Nietzsche’s writing, says Kittler: “Indeed: Nietzsche, as proud of the publication of his mechanization as any philosopher, changed from arguments to aphorisms, from thoughts to puns, from rhetoric to telegram style. That is precisely what is meant by the sentence that our writing tools are also working on our thoughts. Malling Hansen’s writing ball, with its operating difficulties, made Nietzsche into a laconic”. Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. xxxix.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich. **Our Broad Present: time and contemporary culture**. New York; Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2014; GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich. **Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: on a hidden potential of literature**. Translated by Erik Butler. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012; GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich. **After 1945: Latency as Origin of the Present**. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013.

For not only the five senses but also the so-called mental senses – the practical senses (will, love, etc.) – in a word, *human* sense – the humanness of the senses – comes to be by virtue of its object, by virtue of *humanized* nature. The *forming* of the five senses is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present.<sup>16</sup>

In this early insight from 1844 Marx already paves the way to a techno-materialistic understanding of the process of production of the *human senses*. This step of course is a fundamental one for untangling *alienation* from the Hegelian, early-romantic, idealistic nest in which it was conceived. But it is still interesting to note how, in Deleuzian-like fashion, Marx does not fail to include our very human *affects* (which Marx calls “mental” or “practical” senses) in the rows of techno-political production. More importantly, it sheds light on the following postface to the second edition of “Capital”, which, by the way, curiously became more known for the typical bravado displayed by Marx while criticizing his intellectual rivals than the materialist, concrete – almost Flusserian<sup>17</sup> – conclusion it presents:

My dialectical method is, in its foundations, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly opposite to it. For Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of ‘the Idea’, is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought.<sup>18</sup>

Much more to the point is the following insight from the “Grundrisse”, in which Marx comments on the material preconditions that allowed for the existence of Greek thought as we know it (in fact, Marx not only suggests Greek thought sprung to life from its material counterpart, but he seems to tie both things in a way that makes of Greek thought entirely dependent on the material preconditions responsible for its production):

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<sup>16</sup> MARX, Karl; ENGELS, Friedrich. **Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto**. Translated by Martin Milligan. New York: Prometheus Books, 1988, pp.108-109.

<sup>17</sup> Compare with: “There is no thinking that has not been articulated through a gesture. Thinking before articulation is only a virtuality, which is to say, nothing. It is realized through the gesture. Strictly speaking, there is no thinking before making a gesture”, in: FLUSSER, Vilém. **Gestures**. Translated by Ann Roth. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014, p. 24. The anachronism is not far-fetched: one should note that, in “Gestures”, Flusser struggles not only with Marxian philosophy of history (vis-à-vis his blueprint for a general theory of gestures), but also with Marxian materiality – see, for instance, the chapter “Beyond Machines (but Still within the Phenomenology of Gestures)” and the appendix, “Toward a General Theory of Gestures”.

<sup>18</sup> MARX, Karl. **Capital: A Critique of Political Economy**. Volume One. Introduced by Ernest Mandel. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin Books, 1976, p. 102.

Is the view of nature and of social relations on which the Greek imagination and hence Greek [mythology] is based possible with self-acting mule spindles and railways and locomotives and electrical telegraphs? What chance has Vulcan against Roberts and Co., Jupiter the lightning-rod and Hermes against the Credit Mobilier? [...] What becomes of Fama alongside Printing House Square? [...] From another side: is Achilles possible with powder and lead? Or the Iliad with the printing press, not to mention the printing machine? Do not the song and the saga and the muse necessarily come to an end with the printer's bar, hence do not the necessary conditions of epic poetry vanish?<sup>19</sup>

And lastly, there is this quote from the second chapter of *Capital*, “The Process of Exchange”. While Marx is addressing here the commodity, it seems to suggest – in a tone that now surely sounds Agamben-like<sup>20</sup> – apparatuses imprint themselves on our own bodies:

Commodities cannot themselves go to market and perform exchanges in their own right. We must, therefore, have recourse to their guardians, who are the possessors of commodities. [...] Here the persons exist for one another merely as representatives and hence owners, of commodities. As we proceed to develop our investigation, we shall find, in general, that the characters who appear on the economic stage are merely personifications of economic relations; it is as the bearers of these economic relations that they come into contact with each other.<sup>21</sup>

Commodities, by the way, have even their own language, a fact Marx highlights all the time in “Capital” chapter one: “we see”, goes on Marx in a particularly obvious sentence,

that everything our analysis of the value of commodities previously told us is repeated by the linen itself, as soon as it enters into association with another commodity, the coat. Only

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<sup>19</sup> MARX, Karl. **Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy**. Translated with a Foreword by Martin Nicolaus. London: Penguin Books, 1993, pp. 110-111.

<sup>20</sup> For whom apparatuses are “[...] literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and – why not – language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses – one in which thousands and thousands of years ago a primate inadvertently let himself be captured, probably without realizing the consequences that he was about to face”. See AGAMBEN, Giorgio. **What is an apparatus and other essays**. Translated by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> MARX, Karl. **Capital: A Critique of Political Economy**. Op. cit., pp. 178-179.

it reveals its thoughts in a language with which it alone is familiar, the language of commodities.<sup>22</sup>

This Marxian inversion is counter-intuitive. It makes of bodies media of expression of apparatuses. The “language” of commodities is easily mistaken by simple, “natural”, human relations of exchange. From that perspective, the famous opening sentence of “Capital” could easily be read in the following manner: “In societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, bodies express – in fact, bodies become – the language of commodities”.

Now, how does that resonate with that ambitious desire – expressed by Gumbrecht in “Production of Presence” – of a renewed materiality, dating back to the 1980’s:

The move toward “materialities of communication” had opened our eyes to a multiplicity of fascinating topics that could be subsumed (at least approximately) under the concepts of “media history” and “body culture”. Our main fascination came from the question of how different media – different “materialities” – of communication would affect the meaning that they carried. We no longer believed that a meaning complex could be separated from its mediality, that is, from the difference of appearing on a printed page, on a computer screen, or in a voicemail message.<sup>23</sup>

It was Foucault, in his famous speech “The Order of Discourse”, who defined his age as one that struggles continuously to overcome Hegel; tragically, so goes Foucault, as soon as one thinks Hegel’s already in the rearview mirror, he shows up again in the next corner.<sup>24</sup> I think that the 21<sup>st</sup> century has already put us in condition to redefine that metaphor: since the end of the Cold War, we have been playing hide and seek with Marx. Like quicksand, though, the more we try to overcome his thought, the more we find ourselves surrounded by it. The “Materialities of Communication” colloquium, in its attempt to revisit Marxian materiality, offered then a de-marxialized materiality as a way out of a culture of interpretation (or, to put it differently, our very *postmodern* culture). In fact, Sepp himself suggests this renewed take on materiality – which he shapes in the concept of *Stimmung* – as a “third position” (the other two, as mentioned earlier on, being Deconstruction and Cultural Studies): “I believe that literary studies, as a site where intellectual forces combine, risks stagnation for as long as it remains stuck between these two positions, whose contrasts and tensions can cancel each other out. To overcome such dangers [...] we need ‘third positions’. The German word *Stimmung* [...] gives form to the ‘third position’ I would like to advocate”.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>23</sup> GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich. **Production of Presence: what meaning cannot convey**. Op. cit., pp. 11-12.

<sup>24</sup> FOUCAULT, Michel. “The Order of Discourse”. In: YOUNG, Robert. **Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader**. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, p. 74.

<sup>25</sup> GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich. **Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: on a hidden**

However, de-marxializing materiality ultimately meant undressing it of its political critique, making of it a politically acceptable (and by that, I mean politically harmless) tool. In that sense, the “Materialities of Communication” colloquium promoted the very thing it wanted to confront in the first place: it contributed to abstraction by severing the material from its concrete, politically embedded, background. In other words: the move toward materialities brings to the foreground the recognition that different media affect our bodies differently (producing, of course, distinct meaning complexes from each interaction), but pushes to the background the critical realization that the different ways media affects our bodies are far from random developments. If we are to fully consider the implications of such background, it becomes all the more important to recall the Marxian insight that connects the socio-economic structures to the production of each particular media in the first place.

Rewiring materiality with its political economy critique opens up a whole range of possible investigations. For instance, the recognition that technologies are body-programming tools, and not merely – as would have it McLuhan – extensions of the human body, already contains in itself the potential question of what politically relevant forces emerging from our socio-economic background are accountable for the development of said technologies.<sup>26</sup> This critical instance makes possible to see how those technologies/apparatuses had a role to fill in the development of liberal/modern subjectivity (I’m thinking newspaper, mobile phones, notebooks, tablets, etc. – thus extending the Foucaultian concept of apparatus in the fashion of Agamben). It also opens up the way for an innovative critique of ideology: apparatuses seem to be utterly related to the process of anesthetization of the senses via excessive sensorial stimulation (an argument developed by Susan Buck-Morss in her essay “Aesthetic and Anaesthetic”).<sup>27</sup> The final result could very well be, as proposed by Agamben, our contemporary process of desubjectification.<sup>28</sup> In that

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**potential of literature.** Op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> This realization, by the way, makes possible a very actual reading of Kant and his third critique – we should remember that for Kant the genius is someone who can “tune” bodies to trigger the right mental state that characterizes beauty: “Die Kunst des *schönen Spiels der Empfindungen* (die von außen erzeugt werden), und das sich gleichwohl doch muß allgemein mitteilen lassen, kann nicht anders, als die Proportion der verschiedenen Grade der Stimmung (Spannung) des Sinns, dem die Empfindung angehört, d.i. den Ton desselben, betreffen”. See KANT, Immanuel. **Kritik der Urteilskraft**. In: WEISCHEDEL, Wilhelm (Org.). Immanuel Kant, Werkausgabe, Band 10. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974. “§51: Von der Einteilung der schönen Künste”. On McLuhan, see MCLUHAN, Marshall. **Understanding Media: the extensions of man**. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: MIT Press, 1994.

<sup>27</sup> BUCK-MORSS, Susan. “Aesthetic and Anaesthetic: Walter Benjamin’s Artwork Essay Reconsidered”. October, Vol. 62 (Autumn, 1992), pp. 3-41, The MIT Press.

<sup>28</sup> See “What Is an Apparatus”. In: AGAMBEN, Giorgio. **What is an apparatus and other essays**. Translated by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009.

sense, the concept of *presence* – as introduced by Sepp in his book “Production of Presence” – begins to sound less like something that we can produce and a lot more like something produced – technopolitically – upon us. To paraphrase Marx in a most famous passage from “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”: apparatuses truly weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.

Finally, I would like to try and make a point of connecting – and problematizing a bit – this attempt at “re-marxializing materiality” with Sepp’s philosophy of history. Sepp’s intuition on the broad present – which, in many ways, is also shared by François Hartog – as a chronotope in which the present is flooded with the past while the future closes in as a dystopic catastrophe is not only a consequence of historicism, but it is also a direct result of the so called digital revolution and the development of technologies that frame, store and distribute our private information.<sup>29</sup> Outlining its expansion as technopolitical allows us to also understand our contemporary perception of time as a development of crisis in late capitalism. In reality, one could very well read – in the fashion of Fredric Jameson – Hegelian *Geschichte* as the *Geschichte* of Capital, the broad present (and the very postmodern ideas it actually embodies) being born at the very moment Capital becomes world.<sup>30</sup> In that sense, the uneasy sensation triggered by visions of a dystopian future is not only a product of apparatuses (films, video-games, virtual reality and so on), but also and at the same time the byproduct of a long line of economic crisis in Capitalism.

And here we are back to one surprising (at least for me) development of the “Explosions of Enlightenment” seminar. Back then, Sepp brought to our attention a specific sentence of Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics – as one of those rare moments Hegel addresses the limits of theory. I am talking, of course, about prose of the world – as the world that resists prose (a world that resists theory).<sup>31</sup> In a world that

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<sup>29</sup> See GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich. **Our Broad Present: time and contemporary culture**. Op. cit.; HARTOG, François. **Régimes d’historicité: présentisme et expériences du temps**. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2003.

<sup>30</sup> See JAMESON, Fredric. **Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism**. London and New York: Verso, 1991.

<sup>31</sup> “True, even immediate human affairs and their events and organizations do not lack a system and a totality of activities; but the whole thing appears only as a mass of individual details; occupations and activities are sundered and split into infinitely many parts, so that to individuals only a particle of the whole can accrue; and no matter how far individuals may contribute to the whole with their own aims and accomplish what is in line with their own individual interest, still the independence and freedom of their will remains more or less formal, determined by external circumstances and chances, and hindered by natural obstacles. This is the prose of the world, as it appears to the consciousness both of the individual himself and of others: – a world of finitude and mutability, of entanglement in the relative, of the pressure of necessity from which the individual is in no position to withdraw. For every isolated living thing remains caught in the contradiction of being itself in its own eyes this shut-in unit and yet of being nevertheless dependent on something else, and the struggle to resolve this contradiction does not get beyond an attempt and the continuation of this eternal war”. See: HEGEL, G. W. F. **Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art**. Translated by T.M.Knox. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975, Part 1, Chapter 2, Section C: “Deficiency of Natural

has become Capital, incoming threats from the future resonate, as I have mentioned, crisis theory – they are, in a way, the world that resists the system (or, to put it differently, a world that refuses to become system). Re-marxializing materialism would allow us, and that is my claim, not only not to be swallowed by anesthetic aestheticism – a given feature of the broad present triggered by what an Ernst Bloch inspired Sepp called “the simultaneity of the typologically non-simultaneous” – but would also provide us with the means to actually try more than just go along with a seemingly unstoppable process. This, of course, would demand of us the effort to produce ways of effectively sabotaging or disrupting the apparently natural development of technopolitical apparatuses.

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