

Individual Paper Submission for the IAPH conference 2014

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Don't put up a brave front!

Thinking Queer Anarchies: in Between, at the Edge, without Borders

I) Introduction

In recent years feminist philosophers and queer theorists have elaborated various concepts to deconstruct gender, sexual, bodily, racial and national identities as well as they elaborated different options to rethink multiplicity. Nevertheless all these deconstructed and multiple “identities” are still at risk to be exploited even by feminist and queer politics. The political goal of feminists e.g. to free women from their suffering often goes hand in hand with racist and islamophobic ideas and some queer organizations are continually sympathizing with nationalistic ideas while arguing for gay and lesbian rights as Judith Butler has pointed out in her speech at CSD 2010 in Berlin.

In our presentation we would like to focus on the socio-cultural multiplicity of our time understanding it particularly as a chance. Every instrumentalization of a social, cultural or gendered group, even used as a tool for resistance and in the purpose of e.g. freeing women, establishes again a hegemonial perspective and identity. We understand resistance legitimated through the reference to *one* suffering group not as an appropriate way to radically deconstruct normative conceptions within societies. Decentering resistance and desidentifying (a term used by Judith Butler) with hegemonial groups thus becomes a central ethical question for queer-feminist movements and politics. It is an important aspect of those queer-feminist perceptions that they refuse to think only *one* critical point as starting point for social change. In contrast resistance can be thought in terms of a queer-anarchist project, distinguished from more or less classical concepts of philosophical anarchy through the adaption of the deconstruction of the subject, such as Jacques Derridas image of an “arché without archonts” e.g. expresses it. Thinking a queer arché means thinking a force that may not fully be instrumentalized and subordinated, a force that remains intangible: accepting the living as something eluding: anarchy of becoming.

In our presentation we would like to think and develop experimentally and poetically a perception of feminist and queer anarchy that is based upon the ontological openness of spaces being the condition for bodies of becoming. Spaces therefore are not exclusive geometrical entities, nor terminated and defined places. Spaces grow, expand and run riot like the living itself. Spaces are open for bodies and bodies are open (spaces) for bodies to come. Following Luce Irigarays rethinking of Aristotle on place and interval we would like to think queer-feminist anarchy as a

project that understands social change and feminist political intervention as *new forms* of border-politics, which do not exclude, haunt and kill others, but create spaces of openness, of being with, of being in contact – open porous. This project asks for new styles of textual practice.

II) Intervention

It's a sleepless, wakeful world. Pulsating. Isn't this fishy?!

Cities glow, all – horizons lose their significance in front of gleaming skylines; there the big values are located; market values, surplus values and excesses of values; charged with dissipated phantasy; we miscalculate with the impossibility of capital, because we believe in its possibility.

We are hardly able finding an ending, not to mention the beginning; we are working, we are investing and capitalizing, we are applying, inventing and storing, we are prospering and privatizing, we are linking and connecting, we are posting, networking and wheezing, we are online, we procrastinate, we are building emergency corridors and -rescue funds. We work, although there is no more work left. We are running ourselves into the ground constantly.

We are exhausted and depleted. It's a sleepless, wakeful world. Pulsating. Like a living body?! Isn't this fishy?!

Ài Wèiwèi stands in China with a gas mask. No air. No desire. But a lot of noise and malodor.

“It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness,” as Karl Marx puts it.¹

It's a sleepless, wakeful world. But is it pulsating?! Breathing?! Like a hare?! Chest is pulsating, going up and down. In fast motion the process of decay looks confusingly similar to the process of living and breathing.²

The rot starts at the top ...

... or does it start from tail or dick? Having the carving knives ready to hand. A hit. A sting. A cut. Bit by bit we are separating the relishable from the rotten. There is the risk of infection. Locked up and locked out. No porousness.

¹ Karl Marx: A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Preface, 1859

² In einem Film von Christoph Schlingensiefel, der im Rahmen seiner Parzifal-Inszenierung in Bayreuth projiziert wurde, sieht es zunächst so aus, als ob ein Hase atme, aber es ist die Verwesung, der Prozess, die Bewegung der Zersetzung – im Zeitraffer – die den Körper hebt und senkt... „Der Hasenverwesungsfilm im Bayreuth war natürlich auch so ein Transformationsvorgang. Das, was man im Zeitraffer sieht, dieses vermeintliche Atmen des toten Hasen ist eigentlich ein Verwesungsprozess: [...]“ Zitat aus Christoph Schlingensiefel: Ich weiß, ich war's. Hg. von Aino Laberenz, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, Köln 2012, S. 130.

Amputations are numerous. With a saw or with border fences. With asylum-cards and barbwire. Whose foot is allowed on which ground – dry foot or wet foot policies – which is the name for a special regulation policy for immigrants from Cuba in the United States.

Who is allowed to stay somewhere with his or her feet, who is allowed to move along, who is with whom in contact at the new place, in which community – what are the new orientations?

A world in pieces and bites. Controlled and guided by tail, dick and head. Phallic and cephal. Stiff and strong. Stay where you are! Or: become as we are! If you leave, if you come, if you migrate in or out or cross, if you drown near the Italian coast ... Oceans, lakes and rivers, desert, woods, mountains – elemental surrounding – sky: Trespass at your own risk! Its called Border-Management or regulated migration.

“Exactly! Indeed we are part of reality, and if we don’t recognize this fact, we are absolutely irresponsible. We are productive reality. We are reality, but this part of reality means, that we have to create another reality”, Ai Wèiwèi says in an Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist.

Shoes off! Starting from now thinking has to take place barefoot! Barefoot policies! Let us wade through waters, walk across sharp, spiky and rocky sand, let us fly, and let us snake through bushes; let us think and create new borders; think and create a zone, which we are able to touch without dying: borders, which are no longer the end but the possibility of a beginning! Don’t put up a brave front!

Let us think things without head and tail, without head and dick. Let us think corpus and anarchy. A wild fantasy. Let us think anarchy, whose vitality neither come from the ideologic-intellectual nor from the omnipotence of a self transcending subject. Let us think polymorphous perverse powers. Powers which do not lead to the primacy of head, capital, phallus and border. Powers which do not erect anything, which do not norm or control.

Let us think open bodies and open spaces. Other forms of connectedness. Other forms of contact, which do not imply displacement. Another castration. A-cephallic. Without center. Without watchtower.

Without top and bottom. Without outside and inside. Without without.

In secret hollows one might lose oneself. But maybe wings grow or webs between the toes ...

Let us break down the borders, which we have erected around us in concentric circles! Borders of nations, unions, continents. Even borders of bodies; set through marks, measurements and Dispositifs.

Stop obeying! Let us jeopardize the entities of the almost same; let us deconstruct identities, which are always identities ... against.

Crossing borders must not be prohibited any longer!

Anarchy needs to get an ontological possibility! Anarchy should not be the matter of one, oneself, only one! Anarchy should stand up to being. Let us make anarchy a matter of being, a matter of everyone and no one, a matter of radical addressing, of multiple, ferine, rampant demands. Let us think the absence of authority – which does in no case mean thinking the absence of a force, or power.

Arché without Archonts – or: arché beside, with, around, in between, through, outside or underneath the residences of the Archonts, crossing the Archonts residences. Archonts are the ruling officers, bureaucrats, caretakers of regimes. Archonts had been and still are – as Derrida reminds us –“accorded the hermeneutic right and competence”, “they have the power to interpret the archives”.³ That includes all archives, even those bearing the impression of the question: How to live together? This intersection “of the topological and the nomological” is characterizing the archontic function. “The archontic power, which also gathers the functions of unification, of identification, of classification, must be paired with what we will call the power of consignation.” This leads to serious consequences: “Consignation aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration.” “There is no archive without the arranged spatialization of a place of impression.”⁴

Place of impression: Here we are; here is the state too, national state, precisely: territory, bounded, defined, isolated, enclosed, closed, locked, landscape to be mapped, furthermore single organism – with head, which organizes, and tail, which waggles. In between: a torso, or rest, container of organs, precisely: obeying, executing departments, et cetera.

The rot starts at the top. Let us therefore not think an arché of the archonts any longer. Arché, representing a power, which calls beings into being; arché that is the ultimate beginning. But also:

³ Derrida: *Archive Fever*: S. 10

⁴ ebd.: *Waschzettel zu Dem Archiv verschrieben. Eine Freudsche Impression*, ohne Angabe der Seitenzahl.

the ultimate regime. Let us instead think a wild and queer arché. A power of transgression, a power to flood the banks, a power of becoming, an outrageous power, overwhelming, not to be stored and organized, a power which does not manage and administer, a power which does not only draw from the already existing. Let us think a Queer arché – that means creating without denial, a power to give history a new future in the sense of an-arché, that means: a power which is not instrumentalized, controlled, tied and trimmed. Queer Anarchy is about: unavailability. The recognition of the living as a fugitive power: Anarchy of becoming.

The radical unavailability of that power makes it freely rove around. Forces it to cross institutions and organs. It's most vivid potentiality is to shatter, cross – queer – and shake institutions as well as organs. Neither it is impossible to build up a state with that power, nor is it possible to found a bureau of Anarchy. It is not an institutionalizing power.

Thus, we have to think – necessarily – different bodies, spaces, anarchist and chaotic spheres of the being-with and the inbetween.

„Isn't it desire, which takes us from the very elemental to the most sublime?!“⁵ This is how Luce Irigaray puts it in her *Ethics on Sexual Difference*. Space, that means extensiveness up to infinity. Infinity is immanent to space. Space is precisely not the exclusive geometric place, where the regime of the one is ruling. Space is not the place where you find only one place for one individual and space is furthermore not the place that creates borders of war, aggression and suppression. Suppression is alien to space. Because space is expanding, growing, mushrooming, sprawling. Space is extending – like the living itself, from which you cannot separate space. If space is doing something, then space is spacing. Space is inter-spacing, which means space is convivial. Space lets things and living beings become and grow, it lets them in. Space also ex-spaces, that means it opens itself, it opens for everything coming in. Space also opens itself for things not appearing in space. Space sometimes is a void, somehow.

Space and bodies are intertwined, they are simultaneously in the process of becoming. Space and bodies are both radically open. Like pores and voids. Space is neither bordered or circumscribed nor is space unbounded. There is no space without boundaries and there are no boundaries without spaces. They are folded into one another, they are folded apart. Space – is exactly a limit, a border or a boundary taking place. Space excesses itself into space at the very edge of its limits. The excesses of borders are space. Therefore the space between bodies, things, nations, communities,

⁵ Luce Irigaray: *Der Ort der Zwischenraum*. In Dies.: *Ethik der sexuellen Differenz*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1991, S. 67.

words, books, fragments, cultures, cells, countries, regions, states, dwellings et. cetera is an excessing space.

The Inbetween space between bodies, between sexual, living, human, animal, symbolic, constructed and deconstructed bodies, public and private bodies, between bodies of parliaments and bodies of the faculty of law, between territorial bodies et cetera – this gap between bodies enables movement and changing. Only within the Inbetween movement takes place. Thus, the inbetween becomes the space of desire. It is only at the first and most fixating glance that things seem to remain in their position in space, that bodies seem to remain in their place in space, that places remain placed in space, that dwellings remain fix in spaces. Luce Irigaray unmasks this fixating and localising glance. First and foremost *in* movement and *in the course* of continuous transitions, displacements, migrations, driftings, correalations – what we call space – take place: the spatialization of the inbetween. This is how the place, the very position in space trails off its assumed consistency, its insistency and *réstance*, as Derrida would have put it. Place loses thus its demand, where one has to be.

Space in between, this is precisely:

The radical spatialization of being with. Being-with is complicated. It is the being-with of those who are radically different, of those who are others – in danger of being split, organized into hierarchy, normalized and arranged. In danger of being taken over by fatal alliances of power. In danger of being identified and identifying again and again. It happened and still happens that LGBTIs are influenced by the phantasm of the freedom of a state or of a specific culture and start acting racist and xenophobic. „Any minority has to make allies among those who are subject to arbitrary and devastating forms of state violence in particular.“⁶ Therefore it is important to understand anarchy as alternative form of border politics. Résistance. Thinking a queer mode of being together, which does not exploit identities, which does not antagonize identities against each other, but desidentify. Thinking a queer mode of being together means becoming and staying alive, open, versatile, porous. Here queer border politics might find their place, if they preserve their ability to excess.

⁶ Vgl. Judith Butlers Rede am CSD 2010 in Berlin, in der sie den Preis für Zivilcourage ablehnt, sowie das Interview mit Judith Butler *On Anarchism* geführt von Jamie Heckert, in J. Heckert and R. Cleminson (Hg.): *Anarchism & Sexuality: Ethics, Relationships and Power*. Routledge, London/New York 2011.

Short Biographies

Esther Hutfless is lecturer at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Vienna and she is psychoanalyst under supervision within the Association “Wiener Arbeitskreis für Psychoanalyse” in Vienna. Her main teaching and research areas include: Phenomenology, Deconstruction, Feminist Philosophy, Ontology, *Écriture féminine*.

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Currently she is working on a research project with the title “Opening hours or the time of bodies: Sketches of a Philosophy of Extension”.

Elisabeth Schäfer is currently affiliated to the Department of Philosophy at the University of Vienna. In 2012 she finished her dissertation thesis on Jean-Luc Nancy’s thinking of a new Ontology of Touch (passed with distinction).

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She is the author of *Die offene Seite der Schrift: J. D. und H. C. Côte à Côte* (Vienna: Passagen, 2008) and she has co-edited (with Bernd Bösel and Eva Pudill) *Denken im Affekt* (Vienna: Passagen, 2010) and (with Sophia Panteliadou) *Gedanken im freien Fall: Vom Wandel der Metapher* (Vienna: Passagen, 2011). Recently she co-edited (with Esther Hutfless and Gertrude Postl) a volume on Hélène Cixous’ “Laugh of Medusa” entitled *Das Lachen der Medusa: Zusammen mit aktuellen Beiträgen* (Vienna: Passagen, 2013) which includes the first German translation of Cixous’ famous essay and other related articles.

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