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De-definition of media

A telegraphic postscript

Éric Alliez

In my view, the question raised by this short and sharp Dossier concerns the relationship of the 'regime' of German media philosophy to the contemporary philosophy involved in its major operation: the de-definition of media. This is shown, immediately, by the very uncommon notion used by Professors Lorenz Engell and Bernhard Siegert: *not* 'Philosophy of Media', but *Media Philosophy*. (Note, in the very title of the IKKM – the International College for Cultural Research and Media Philosophy – the *mediate* presence of a Cultural Research philosophically distinguished, by the grace of the coming 'and', from Cultural Studies). The telescoping is in fact so im/mediate – between the de-definition of (mass) media, classically understood as means of production/control (i.e. *creative reproduction*) of social representations, and contemporary philosophy, defined by the de(con)structive critique of representation – that the extensive cultural intensification of the latter becomes the reality condition and the *ontological purpose* of media philosophy as such.

Nevertheless, a mediation, and more precisely a mediation between the cultural extension and the ontological intensification, is needed to *realize* the media-philosophical plane. Once it cannot immediately be politics – and this point engages the German identity/alterity of this media philosophy, in so far as it cannot play the Guattarian post-media card as a local answer to the biopolitical crisis of philosophy qua philosophy (whatever its 'thousands' of re-actualizations may be)¹ – it must go through the radical cultural sociology named ANT, whose oxymoronic form (Actor/Network Theory) will *tense* the whole process in a constructivist deconstruction of the subject/object time-space of representation. We move from the historical 'subject constitution' (Siegert's Foucauldian centred detour) to the network 'thingness of things' (Engell's Latourian decentred tour) – with Groys playing the insider outlaw part, when he regresses to *Media Theory/Cultural Studies* doxa better to restage an avant-gardist servant/server *Aufhebung* of the mediatic subject.

On the one hand, Actor/Network Theory is invested in its maximal contemporary philosophical 'complexity', problematizing from the semiotic-performative turn the heterogenetic engineering of an essentially relational materiality. However, on the other hand, following the topo-logic of our three texts, media philosophy projects itself as *the* AFTER ANT,² in the very movement where it invests and historically redefines power relations as the *medium of the media*, translating ontological montages into aesthetic operations. This *aesthetic translation* is de facto the 'fundamental' mediating process for the media-philosophical logic, which will consequently investigate film (Engell), painting (Siegert) or sound poetry (Groys) as an *ontological laboratory*.

*anlogo bung
blago bung
blago bung*

At this ontological level of experience, the philosophical de-definition of the media depends on a political de-definition of aesthetics, which affirms the very contemporary complex *standard* of German media philosophy. This is closer than we could have expected to a certain kind of Guattari-Effect, *if and only if* the translation of the political de-definition of aesthetics into a meta- (or para-) aesthetic re-definition of politics is – at any cost – *verboten*.

Notes

1. See Félix Guattari, 'Vers une ère post-media' (1990), published in *Chimères* 28, Spring–Summer 1996; http://biblioweb.samizdat.net/article.php3?id_article=26.
2. Following John Law's formula, 'After ANT: Complexity, Naming and Topology', in John Law and John Hassard, *Actor Network Theory and After*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1999, 2004.