Speed!

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'The concept of post-Fordism is invented for that which dawns as the future – a linguistic hereafter that seems to stand obtusely at the exit from the past, knocking timidly at the door of the future because its old home no longer exists.' Thus Hans-Christian Dany, describing the threshold from Fordism to post-Fordism in his cultural history of amphetamines published by Nautilus-Verlag Hamburg in 2008. And just as the 'linguistic hereafter' has been peering round the corner into the future now for a pretty long time, obtusely if not without curiosity, so the linguistic labels for the social transformations taking place since the late 1960s have gone on multiplying: post-industrial society, service society, information society, network society, cognitive capitalism, knowledge economy, and so forth. No matter what the perspective, however, it is the acceleration, pace and speed of the currents flowing through it that define the quality of the 'future' whose door we have long since passed through.

It is not by chance that Dany's book is titled *Speed*. Social transformations are also central to the changes of function and use of the cheap drugs known in their users' slang by that name. 'Speed', in its narrower, drug-related sense in post-Fordist capitalism, no longer implies, as in the preceding century, an *ambivalent* acceleration, conditioner for the pressures of professional life and resistant medium of new subcultures. In an astounding process of disambiguation it is increasingly found only on the affirmative side, although now more strongly as an element of caring for self. Controlled intoxication is more and more part of a well-ordered relation to self, where getting high and consciousness-raising are deliberate means of self-effectivization. In the cocktail of neoliberal-governmental modes of subjectivization the 'speed' family of drugs has become one of a host of components in a generalized style of self-government.

'Speed', however, by no means refers any longer exclusively to drug use, but increasingly to all areas of production and reproduction. And in the sphere of production it not only concerns the acceleration of material work processes but also, and above all, the immaterial terrain of the cognitive, the communicative and the affective. Dany describes this in detail with reference to a proto-post-Fordist avant-garde that was already moving into the new era 40 years ago: Andy Warhol's *Factory*. In this factory – much as in the completely different political contexts of the *fabbrica diffusa* conceptually formulated by Italy's operaist theoreticians and put to the test in the struggles of the *Autonomia* at the start of the 1970s – the time and space of its subjects are diffuse. As 'pioneers of the new work' they have no permanent collective workplace and know nothing of orderly Fordist time. And they no longer produce things but atmospheres: 'The majority of those present are involved in activities that aren't immediately recognizable as work and mostly look like the opposite, so that some think it's a party.' This new form of employment is no longer based on the separation of work and free time, achievement and leisure, factory and home, sobriety and drug consumption, but on the blurring of the formerly clear-cut boundaries between these areas.

Speed shakes off its more or less intentional marginality and becomes central to post-Fordist production, extending far beyond peripheral drug use as dependence on all forms of acceleration, especially dependence on being attached to accelerated communication and information technologies. And in this dependent attachment the components of the

apparatuses traditionally referred to as machines and our own machinic subjectivizations intermingle. Just as we adopt the modes of functioning of the technical apparatuses that we operate and that operate us, so the apparatuses adopt our skills, technology and knowledge. It is as if we had simply gone a step further in the incessant process of becoming machines, from a Fordist-industrial osmosis with the production line to a post-Fordist-informational osmosis with computers. And just as the nineteenth-century view of machines as something like the extension of our arms was reductive, so too now there is the simplistic view of the computer as prosthetic brain. Involved here is not just a one-sided extension of the human body or the upgrading of the human being by a machine, but as ever a flow of machinic currents that permeate things, people and socialities alike.

Once the acceleration of these currents tends to infinity, however, and that moreover on the basis of a machinic desire driving us, grave consequences ensue for living and working conditions. Some of the worst excesses are the outsourcing of material dirty work to the global peripheries, recent interrelated forms of sexist and racist exploitation, and the development of new pathologies specific to the full-speed subjects in the era of precaritization. But machinic desire, as a producer of wishes, also has a revolutionary side. In combating the new subjectivizations, the new atomizing forms of individualization, it is no use simply turning one's back on machines, or wrecking them, or throwing clogs in the works. Nor are the current patterns of dealing with sociality any help, the yearning for a state that parcels social space and for a closed community are losing all meaning. What we must rather ask is: What are these machines in which accelerated-accelerating singularities can link up together instead of returning to the identitary vessels of community and rasterization by the state apparatuses? What is the nature of this new irrepressible link among these singularities that cannot be understood in terms of homogenizing cohesion? How and where do offensive accelerative strategies emerge, as traffic and concatenation, *linked by the absence of any link*?

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Tags

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