Controlling the Multitude

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abstract

The constitutive political problem in the 'knowledge society' or 'knowledge economy' is basically the same as it was in the industrial capitalism: how to govern, organize and control the labour force. What has happened in the last decades is that the concept of labour force has lost more and more of its physical and biological aspects. It has detached from its specific uses or ends and become, paraphrasing the famous expression of Marx, a real abstraction. Today, the labour force is primarily a mental category. And it is impossible to organize, control and locate mind through the place it belongs to and thorough the deeds it does. The mental labour force does not have strict spatial and temporal (linear) coordinates. This forces contemporary capitalism to develop 'new kinds of tools (that) characterize the digital era: tools of mind' (John Zysman). These new tools focus directly on the elementary faculties of humans and not on their performances or products. New tools of mind are developed to increase the efficiency of the elementary faculties of the human mind and to control the use of these faculties. As tools of mind they have to respect the abstract reality of the human mind, its spatial boundlessness and its temporal endlessness (nonlinearity). They have to be abstract, but at the same time these new tools have to have real efficiency to guide and control action and reasoning. This article takes the concept of commonplace as a model to the new tools of mind and tries to unfold some of the basic aspects of this linguistic real abstraction in the 'knowledge economy' and the 'mystical interconnection' it has with the sensibly-concrete that counts only as the form of appearance of the abstractly general.

Introduction

The change in the concept of the labour force, its transformation from biological category to abstract mental category, has grave consequences to the fundamental political question of how to organize modern society. If the basic political problem during industrial capitalism and Fordist society was physical control of labour force in definite places like the factory and its (biological) protection in the Welfare State, in the 'knowledge society' this problem is how to govern and control a labour force that is mental, immaterial and communicative and exists only as knowledge in time. To control boundless, amorphous and restless mind, modern capitalism needs to occupy its whole environment. It is not enough to define the norm and exception or draw the line between what is included and what is excluded, because in the 'knowledge economy' and in the production of knowledge it is impossible to decide in anticipation what is essential and what is not. It is not enough to judge the mind as mindless, when it has become the creative and generative principle of production. The vagueness of knowledge

production means that the *arkhe* of organizing in contemporary economy is *deficit of information.* It is from this deficit of information that the new methods of organizing and controlling work and production grow in contemporary society. Using the expression of Gilles Deleuze, they do not mould action, but they model it. This means that new tools of the mind are basically mimetic or imitative in their nature. What characterizes mimetic behaviour or imitation? Above all: deficit of information. Imitation begins where information ends. Mimesis or imitation does not find its expression in any specific activity but in the absence of specific activity or information. If mimesis is defined as the deficit of information, then mimetic action and the mimetic methods to organize and control this action grow out of the crisis of transmitting information. In this sense we could even speak of 'mimetic tools' that are able to organize and model action and knowledge on the level where the action or knowledge have no specific information content.

The shift from the physical labour force to mental and immaterial labour force is above all important because it restructures our entire political system and its organization. But it is important also from the point of view of power. By opposing the traditional disciplinary concept of power and the concept of control, it is possible to say that power operates on a particular action and subject in space. Its target is the physical or biological human being. Power seeks its justification and its function from a particular institution (the factory produces, the hospital takes care of illness, research is done in the university). Control instead operates on the bare conditions of action. It targets the possibilities of life (both corporeal and incorporeal) in general. Control avoids committing to any particular institution and seeks its justification rather from public opinion and ethical right. That is why media and communication in general (and not the information content) are in such a central position in control societies. As a consequence ethics or the morally right replace formal law and its institutions, which functioned as the corner stones of modern democratic societies. Control is power which withdraws from the institutions and unfolds onto society. In other words, the crisis of the institutional legitimacy does not mean the end of the exercise of power but the multiplication of its forms and its penetration of the entirety of life. Control is exercise of power as a 'mental attitude' which has become public opinion. It is not at all necessarily disciplinary or, as Gilles Deleuze says: "Highway is not a means to hold anyone in place, but by building more highways the means of control become multiplied. I am not saying that this is the only purpose of highways, but they may be driven endlessly and 'freely' without never becoming held up, and still you are all the time in total control" (Deleuze, 1989). In juridical terms the distinction between power and control is this: whereas power operates within the juridical order in a normal state, control operates in a permanent state of exception without institutional legitimacy and without determined and recognizable task or limit.[1]

The new division of labour and the emerging new technologies and organizational forms of production that originate from the transition (from physical to the mental labour force) has to be found in the parting of two general lines of research. The first developed in the horizon that Foucault (1979) called 'biopolitics'. From the

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1   This seems to be one, almost self-evident result of Agamben's books on *Homo Sacer*, see Agamben (2003).

biopolitical conflicts of the last two centuries emerged a new form of power over life and its technologies to govern living as such. The second concentrates on the human being as 'rational' being, as a knowledge creature and a linguistic animal, who is able to produce and create meanings without any pre-established commission or order. From the basic organizational principles of modern societies described by Foucault, that is, controlling and governing the labour force as a productive physical body in a definite space (factory, office) through discipline (disciplinary power) and guarding it's reproduction in the welfare state (biopower), we are moving towards new organizational principles that try to govern and control the *labour force as mental entity*. Instead of creating physical or biological boundaries the new form of power emerging from actual 'mental politics' tries to create mental boundaries and mentalities. New technologies and sciences that focus on humans as rational beings move into the terrain of the politics of mind or the politics of sense. They focus on the institution of sense, on the cooperation between minds and on the creation of subjectivity (or performativity). The conflicts proper to this boundless home-ground give rise to new forms of power over mind ('mental power'/power over intellect). This new form of power is arbitrary, contingent and devoid of norms and rules. It does not substitute biopower but rather deregulates it.

Breaking the 'genetic code of mind' and creating a potentially more docile or flexible and less expensive – amortizing the body with the help of the new biotechnology – human mind is one of the main promises of the new knowledge technologies. Industrial capitalism paid little attention to the psychological well-being of the worker, because it did not have any use for mental energies. Depression, lack of ambition, uncommunicativeness or timidity was not a problem as long as a worker was able to fulfill his assignments. Now the living human body is moving from the centre of production and creation into its periphery. It is substituted – apparently – by the disembodied immaterial mind, human being as a mind able to create sense, cooperate with other minds and create new meanings and forms without any preconditions. At the same time we are witnessing a kind of a forgetting of the productive body, or to be more exact: the human body that was at stake in the politics of industrial capitalism and in its greatest biopolitical conflicts is becoming depoliticized. In other words, in the 'knowledge society' or in knowledge capitalism, the human body is deprived of all the political rights that industrial capitalism was forced to concede to it. Human body, like machines, is only a cost that is to be amortized as fast as possible. When the body is denuded of all those rights that it gained because of its productive/creative power, it is now naked and armless, free to be exploited and manipulated in every imaginable way and without any juridical or medical protection. It is used as a mere living organism on a world scale.

When mind or spirit turns out to be the main target of governance use and user instead of production and producer seem to dictate the future of society. The passage from society of producers to the production of society has its echoes on different levels of contemporary society. It is possible to discern symptoms almost everywhere. Cynicism, greediness and opportunism are prevailing emotions and transform other people and the world into mere objects for use. The new middle class and society of services save us from class-conflicts. In philosophy and cultural studies critique of metaphysics and ontology dominates at the same time as people live one of the biggest revolutions in

their everyday life, in their habits, and are in desperate need of depth and perspective to orientate themselves in the world. Not to speak about critique of 'productivism' in the name of benevolent humanism, or political theory in which reigns a return to the models of classical antiquity (as a 'user friendly society', where it is the user, not the producer (technician) who decides whether a thing is good or not) and almost hysterical need to separate the political from society and economy (Arendt, Strauss). This turns it into pure decision making that is founded on 'universal values' or universal morality and not on an analysis of society.

Mental power tries to govern and control the immaterial and mental labour force by creating mentalities, attitudes and moods; or, in the philosophical terms, it operates on the level of being as such, on the level of what the person is, not what she does or says or what she represents. The new form of power does not need (political) action, meaning, information or representation to function. To fight against it with concepts like originality, authenticity or information seems to be in some ways a futile (and politically safe) enterprise. Mimetic or mass behaviour has been a kind of pain barrier to the critical theory of the twentieth century. Every time it has confronted imitation, or action that does not have any other sense than imitation, it has judged the action as mindless or negated it as impossible or considered it merely as a threshold that divides nature and culture/history, necessary and possible, life and politics, natural and human sciences.

An undifferentiated argument without any identity, an argument that is only a copy and that is precisely for this reason impassable and impossible, has appeared under different guises. To mention but a few: Freud (1914) and his writings on narcissism, Arendt (1952) and the problem of banality of evil or the problem of totalitarianism, or to take one example from contemporary philosophy: the writings of Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1990). Not to speak of modern sociology or political science (Balibar, 1997). The best formulation of this impasse of critical thinking we find in Karl Kraus. Speaking of why he had not written anything about Hitler, he said: 'from Hitler nothing comes to my mind'. Hitler was so normal, so banal that even the most acute of minds could not find anything worth saying or writing about him. The challenge to critical theory confronted in narcissism, in banality and in irrational identification to myth is that of mass society and mimetic behaviour typical to it. Imitation is thought to be irrational because of blind identification (to myth, to image) for which it is impossible to find any rational reason, any common cause that would be possible to isolate from it. It is repetitious and childish and without origin. It is pure imitation, mimesis, and it does not give existence to a people in a political sense; it is an identification that remains outside rational communication. In other words, it could be said that the challenge comes from the presence of *multitude* in the sphere of social action. Multitude is completely differentiated and at the same time without differences/undifferentiated.[2] It

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2   On this, see Deleuze (1973). On the concept of the multitude, see Hardt and Negri (2001). In this book the concept remains somewhat unclear; see also Negri (1999). For the clearest political definition of the concept, see Virno (2002). Virno's little book is one the best analyses of the significance of the concept and the clearest summing up of its different aspects. Negri says in his interview book *Il ritorno* that the concept of multitude has different meanings: "First a philosophical and positive: The multitude is a multiplicity of subjects...The multitude is an indivisible multiplicity, an infinite quantity of points, a differentiated set, absolutely differentiated" (2003: 139). Secondly "the multitude is a class concept: the class of the productive singularities, the class of the workers of

does not have a common cause or specific community. However, it has a unity that is constituted in 'language as such', in the *commonplaces*, that form the nucleus of 'life of the mind', living and moving intellect (Virno, 2002: 27, 34).

The problem with mimetic or mass behaviour is fundamentally the deficit of information. It is impossible to control and guide mimetic behaviour with such traditional means as information or fear. What is needed is a 'persuasive technology' that can change what people believe and what they do in a way that no one knows exactly why she believes in this or behaves in that way. This is done by creating interactive machines, kind of cyber mothers that are tirelessly creating good habits.[3] How does this 'persuasive technology' or 'captology' function? To analyse some aspects of these new 'ethical technologies' I will use as an example the linguistic 'real abstraction' called commonplace and some of its negative or at least ambivalent aspects as fundamental nucleus of 'the life of the mind' and as the epicentre of that linguistic animal that is human being (Virno, 2002: 27).

Commonplace as a Model for Mental Power

A commonplace, like a self-evident argument or deed from which nothing comes to mind, does not transmit any information. It is a platitude, a banality without anything interesting in it. It is a totally explicated or unfolded fact. It does not add anything specific to a discussion or an action, but it is not necessarily mindless. On the contrary it manifests the basic structures of mind or intellect. A commonplace is without identity and without source. We accept it without discussing it, without asking any questions about its relevance or value, or we do not even notice it and tend to ignore it as such. It is something that 'everybody knows...' or nobody knows exactly its content. In this sense a commonplace is undeniable. The commonplace as undeniable has an important function in ordinary discussion. If you do not agree with the other discussants on some basic categories, if you do not have a common language, the discussion would never start. Without commonplaces a discussion would be a kind of meta-discussion about discussion, about the preconditions of discussion. This sort of meta-discussion takes place usually with children who want to know why something is said like this or why it is called like that. It reveals an infantile attitude. The discussion about discussion ends only when people who are discussing find an argument that is self-evident to both of them (They find the undeniable truth, the ground etc.). It is paradoxical that discussion and dialogue find their end precisely at the point where they should start as well as truth itself being something that is self-evident and obvious. In this sense a commonplace is a

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the immaterial labour. A class that has no unity, but that despite of that is the ensemble of the creative powers of labour"... "Third aspect: the multitude is a ontological power. It incarnates a dispositive that has a capacity to potentialise the desire and transform the world. Or better still: it wants to create the world as its own image" (2003: 140-141).

3   There is a new science called 'captology' that uses 'persuasive technology' to guide people towards good, for example when a customer scans his supermarket club card, there is a program compares purchase data with a database of recommended daily nutritional intake. The system then mails out coupons to encourage customers to fill the gaps in their diet. If I'm not getting enough selenium, for example, I might receive a coupon to save half a buck on a can of Brazil nuts (Fogg, 2002).

starting point for every discussion. It is something that we already know and to which we are not able to add anything. It is common to all and starting from this *something in common* we can develop specific arguments and we can argue with others. However, the something in common does not have anything to do with shared values, common cause or common language. Quite the contrary, it refers to that which can only be repeated, and as repetition it demonstrates the crisis of meaningful communication: repetition is necessary only in its relation to that which cannot be substituted, it deals with irreplaceable singularity (cf. Deleuze, 1968: 7).[4] What is common in commonplace is the irreparable difference or non-communicability in the agreement.[5]

In classical rhetoric the general preconditions of discussion or argumentation are called 'commonplaces' (*topoi koinoi*). Common (or general) places are, according to Aristotle, points of view that are generally accepted. It is possible to apply them to different kinds of arguments (in physics, politics, law, etc.) and utilize them in any field of knowledge. As Aristotle says:

> I mean that the proper subjects of dialectical and rhetorical syllogisms are the things with which we say the regular or *universal Lines of Argument* (*topoi koinoi*) are concerned, that is to say those lines of argument that apply equally to questions of right conduct, natural science, politics, and many other things that have nothing to do with one another. Take, for instance, the line of argument concerned with 'the more or less'. On this line of argument it is equally easy to base a syllogism or enthymeme about any of what nevertheless are essentially disconnected subjects-right conduct, natural science, or anything else whatever…. The general Lines of Argument have no special subject-matter, and therefore will not increase our understanding of any particular class of things….By special Lines of Argument (*topoi idioi*)I mean the propositions peculiar to each several class of things, by general those common to all classes alike.[6]

However, no one becomes an expert in any field with the help of them, because these commonplaces or self-evidences have nothing to do with any specific argument. They are the most general logical and linguistic schemes or preconditions necessary for the possibility of every single speech act. Specific places (*topoi idioi*), on the contrary, are idiomatic or proper to every single discipline and to each genre of rhetoric. We use them when we talk with our friends, parents or colleagues. In these idiomatic phrases or places the ethos of the community in which we belong finds its expression. Contrary to the idiomatic expression commonplaces do not have any community. The common places we use in discourse are the place of more or less, the place of contrariness, the place of reciprocal relations and of proportional relationship between the terms.[7] Commonplaces or categories never manifest themselves as such. We do not speak about more or less in general, but always about more or less of something. Common places constitute the foundation of our reasoning, but as such they do not have any specific meaning. These places are common or public because everybody needs them in order to

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4   Paolo Virno refers to the connexion that Benjamin saw existing between children's eagerness to imitate and the technical reproduction of art and new modes of perception (2002: 31).

5   In the introductory part to his *Communitas*, 'Nothing in common', Roberto Esposito tries to show this paradoxical nature of the word community meaning of the word 'community' uncoiling its etymology.

6   http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.html

7   See Virno (2002: 25-31), Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), and Mortara Cavalli (1988: 78-79). On the general importance of rhetoric in contemporary society, see Meyer (1993).

construct a meaningful discourse. However, today the popularity of expressions like 'learning to learn' seem to prove that commonplaces can also manifest these categories as such on the level of discourse and we seem to understand their (abstract) meaning.

Why does Aristotle call them 'places' (*topoi*)? The reason is that, according to him, to remember a thing or a human being it is enough to remember the place where we can find it. It is not necessary to remember a person, to remember a place (a context) where she belongs is enough. Place is an instrument for associating ideas. It is a memory device, a device to control and guide memory. Without this device we get lost into the labyrinth of memory, where memories are mixed and stand without any order (in space). To remember the place where one belongs saves time from discussion and conflicts. The idea that Aristotle has is this: the one who controls memory controls time (life). It is clear that we accept common places or arguments that are obvious to avoid regression *ad infinitum*. The reason is that the regression ad infinitum, the endless discussion about the general terms of discussion *takes time* and it does not produce anything special. Discussion about discussion is pure waste of time. This means that we accept self-evidences in order to *save time* and in order to have serious discussion and real work that do produce meanings and things. The self-evident or obvious is in some ways also non-work and at the same time a precondition to work and to production.

To summarize some aspects of a commonplace, we can say that:
1. It is without *identity*.
2. It is *undeniable*.
3. It is *something in common*.
4. It is necessary for every discourse.
5. It orders discourse on a level that is not manifest.
6. It *saves time* for real discussion or production.

Besides these, a self-evident argument, a commonplace has other interesting features. Firstly, it does not *transmit any information*. It does not add anything to a discussion/conversation. It does not have any (information) value. When we accept a self-evident argument, we receive something that we do not need. It does not have any value to us. This brings self-evidence (or the idea of common or public places) near to the idea of *gift*. Secondly, a commonplace argument says only that which we already know. It repeats or copies that which is already known. It is *imitation*.

Making things Easy

The idea of saving time is one of the most important premises on which modern technology is constructed. The technology we use tries to imitate that which is common to us all in order to control time. It forces us to work and produce something using that which is common to us all, turning most generic and common human qualities to instruments of production. At first glance there is not much room for commonplaces, obvious, banal, repetition and imitation in contemporary society. They are like ghosts or shadows that everybody tries to chase away from discourse and from production to win some attention. However, production of self-evidences or obvious is not a marginal

thing in our society. Commonplace is not only an occasion from which discussion begins. It is not limited to the sphere of television talk-shows or to politics or commercials. It has nothing to with the media in its popular and limited sense. It is something that has to do with social (and economic) production in general, and it is intentionally produced.

The slogan of modern technology is 'make things easy'; people have to have easy access to modern technology. They have to use it without noticing why they do this or that. The message is that people do not want to waste time, they do not want to read huge manuals before they start to play computer games or to watch a film from their DVD player. They want their food already semi-cooked as well as they want their lives already lived. The idea is that a good product is consumer-friendly, meaning it does not take time and thought, hesitation or frustration to consume it. A good product is easy to accept without discussion and without contestation. It must be familiar, natural, commonplace and self-evident. When you take the thing in your hand you seem to know how to use it, even if you are seeing the item for the first time in your life. Production process has to create self-evidences, commonplaces and anticipated items, products that in a way contain already the experience of the user/consumer. This means that 'to make things easy' the modern production system has to create customs and habits, slogans and phrases, styles and ideas (it does not create concepts, even though commonplaces do look like concepts and smell like concepts, they are only copies of concepts. They lack the contradictory or paradoxical character of a concept). In short, the modern production process is basically production of (Aristotelian) *ethics*. To be more exact: *It is production of ethics as imitation*. (In this production of ethics the production process imitates philosophy and its power to create concepts). This means that commonplaces or 'public space' has become a product, something that is at the end and not at the beginning of production process (and something where repetition is copying). It is something that is present and manifest at the level of discourse and that can be separated from it as if it had a (information) value. From the necessary starting point of every discussion, to every interaction, it transforms into a goal and end as such.

Or to be more exact, production of commonplaces (production of ethics) is production of *general preconditions* to every discourse, action and knowledge. These general preconditions do not transmit any significant or meaningful information. It is impossible to learn them or teach them through their content. There is no sense in discussing their relevance or to contest them. It is only possible to copy, imitate and follow them. As commonplaces they constitute the grammar of all new modes of power, of all new systems of control and their focus is on time and on memory. What does this change, a kind of rhetorical turn in production and economy imply? Or, what actually happens when we accept a commonplace as if it were a relevant argument, as if it could transmit valuable information even though we already know its content and it does not add anything new to discussion? What do we actually accept?

1. We accept (or receive) the *person as such*. Not because of what is said but because of *who says something, who speaks*. In philosophical terms: we accept that something is, or being as such. We take the person into the discussion even though she has nothing to say. This is a kind of *communication of singularities* so dear to contemporary philosophy. The production of commonplaces (making things easy) is

production of personalities (brands) and personalization of production. And in the conditions of production of personalities and personalization of production the contradictions of the production process take a personal form: either as conflicts between persons or as conflicts within a person. In both cases conflicts do not have any communicative content. (It is not possible to argue about their content; and in the end they increase the importance of decision as a pure act of will).

2. We accept the person as one who has authority. A person whose intervention is accepted as if it were a relevant comment in a discussion, even though the intervention adds nothing new, has authority. Authority is a capacity to enter into communication and into a community without saying or doing anything special. In this sense 'making things easy', production of commonplaces, is production of authority. (It is not the death of an author we are witnessing, but the rebirth of an author and authority that does not say or produce anything, but is using, leasing and recycling things whose producers cannot be seen).

3. The commonplace or self-evident, as is said above, is undeniable. It is impossible to open it up and discuss or contest its axiomatic assumptions. It is *structured like a command* or an order. And a command is effective if it contains nothing to discuss about. A good command contains no information. If it raises objections or if it is 'unclear' it does not fulfil its function. A command is more effective the shorter it *takes time* (to understand it); in command the difference is between language and physical force, language and will disappears. A command that saves time or a command within which there is no time is strictly opposite to intuition that contains nothing else but time (and intuition is the 'form of communication' between singularities in multitude). This is where commonplace reveals its hidden kinship with banality (ban) and command (imperium).

'Making things easy', production of commonplaces, is production of goods or products that are structured like commands. It is production of 'you have to', production of a kind of Kantian moral imperative. This means that it tries to produce a sort of atmosphere in which you speak and work even if you have nothing to say or you are without a work. It creates humble and flexible personalities who are willing to learn and use every possible device, and who are always present for use. (Maybe the interest in Kant, basically in the concept of the sublime – in previous years also in the field of radical philosophy – has roots in the real changes in the production process. At least it is easy to see the affiliation between the notion of sublime and the Marxian notion of labour force as pure potentiality; sublime being here a sort of moral response or a moralistic reaction to the revolutionary potentiality of the labour force that has the virtual capacity to do 'anything whatever').[8]

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8   See Virno's beautiful summing up of the concept of '*erhaben*' in *Grammatica* (2002: 19-20). Freeman (1987) connects the Kantian notion of the sublime and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. The monster does not fit in to its skin, to its context and tries constantly to break out from it. This monster, wrapped up in a thin film that barely can resist its boundless force, that arises in the spectator mixed feelings of fear and enjoyment, becomes a central figure of virtue and generosity in 'the age of the masses'. To paraphrase Marx, in the concept of the sublime do find their expression all

4. A person who wants to be accepted as such, without anything to say, is counting on the good will of the others, on the belonging self. He or she wants to belong to the community even if there seems no reason for that. This means that production of commonplaces is also production of belonging, production of the societal or production of friendship or complicity that does not have any external reasons or internal differences. It is production of community as platitude or completely unfolded community.

To summarize: What is at stake in the production of commonplaces is production of general preconditions or places (schemes) for social cooperation, for speech, action and knowledge. These general preconditions direct and control action and speech as undeniable and authoritarian commands. They intermingle directly in the 'life of mind'. The general preconditions do not transmit any information (and they do not have any value as such, but only as 'options' or as 'mentalities' to control action). It is impossible to learn them on the basis of their content. It is only possible to imitate them, follow them. And you 'have to' (they are structured like moral imperatives) follow and imitate them if you want to survive. These general preconditions or commonplaces are the foundation on which new systems of control are constructed.

Conclusion: A Note on Imitation and Intuition

How to create something new if in contemporary society the most important thing is to follow and to be aware of what and how the others are doing and saying?

Since the end of the nineteenth century it has been quite clear that the dualistic solution that separates authentic and unauthentic, mind (language) and body is not a real solution but an expression of a problem. To philosophers like Nietzsche and Bergson the question was not to separate human sciences from natural sciences. They tried to overcome the dualism and to develop a vocabulary that could be used to describe both historical and natural phenomena. This had almost nothing to do with biologism or vitalism in the traditional sense because giving up the dualism between biological and historical life led also to the disappearance of the clear cut borders between them.

One central concept that surpasses the separation between nature and culture is imitation. And it is the concept of imitation that seems to have a special role in contemporary society. In imitation concepts like 'authentic', 'proper'/'property' or 'original' crash against a wall that they are not able to get through, because the imitator does not necessarily imitate something definite, but creates an appearance of the whole. Essential in imitation is the will to follow and anticipate the actions of the others according to a format or to an ethos/character. Imitation lies behind the vast scale of both theoretical and practical problems in contemporary society: from the irrational exuberance in the stock markets to artificial intelligence and fabrication of robots, from property rights and copyrights to genetic manipulation and cloning. The difficulty in

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the forces that the capitalistic mode of production and the ascending bourgeoisie liberated, the forces that do not fit in the context or skin of this production.

deciding what has value and what has not, what is real or authentic and what is only fabrication or rhetoric, what is information and what only looks like information, what is innovation and what is plain imitation, haunts science and scientists, lawyers and economists, business people and ordinary people, not to speak of political scientists, professional politicians and people working in the media. In fact, the modern media system or 'knowledge society' grows from *the crisis of transmitting information* (and not from the information glut). It is forced towards imitation because production of information is too expensive. This seems to lead towards a kind of outsourcing of the production of information and production of inventions.

However, the problem is not that of imitation versus originality or authenticity, or that of real information versus non-information or sense versus non sense. This kind of juxtaposition leads easily to a kind of a moral juxtaposition between imitation/use (intellect) and originality/production (body). It is just this cutting of the human mind from the human body that is going on in contemporary capitalism (the debate and confusion around 'intellectual property rights' reflect this tendency). To defend the rights of the human body against the new modes of oppression and exploitation it is necessary to glue the head back into the body. In other words, it is necessary to find tools that in some way help us to think beyond the classical modern concepts of meaningful information/action.

The notion of intuition helps at least to clarify the problem. It tries to conceptualise, in the modern context, the classical idea of experience: a doctor who has experience has the skill to see differences between two maladies whose symptoms or images are identical. Imitation (mimesis) is unification only on the basis of image (what something looks like) without any understanding and experience (without any contact). It is based solely on that which *we have in common* and it does not transmit any information. Intuition could then be defined as experience that does not have *anything in common*. It does not, like imitation, transmit any information and it has no place or it does not take place.[9] If imitation is something that saves time, in a sense imitation does not take time, then intuition is nothing else but time, as Bergson and Deleuze have insisted. It is a kind of a pure intellect without unification/unity, or an intellect completely 'distracted' (absent-minded) and completely dispersed. Intuition is a method to understand, to feel time, when imitation is a method to cut up or dispense with time. In short, intuition is the method to understand communication (unification) in the era of multitude (multiplicity), when imitation is the method to hinder (immunicate) communication.[10] Multitude does not have any spatial existence and it is without a common cause. Its relationship to the world is direct and corporeal, even though its body is language. This means that as a concept multitude surpasses the modern separation between body and

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9   On the problem, see also W. Benjamin's (2004) important essay on destiny and character.

10 Deleuze begins *Le Bergsonime* with the chapter 'Intuition as method'. Intuition is a method whose rigorous rules constitute that what Bergson calls precision in philosophy. The precision is achieved through determination of the conditions of the problems and through finding the variables according to which a given problem must be posed just in that way and not in other. One of the most important articles Deleuze has written on the communication between singularities may be 'A quoi reconnait-on le structuralisme' (1972). On the community/immunity, see Espostio (2002).

mind, nature and history, necessary and possible.[11] It is a concept that gives a voice to the real forces that work inside contemporary society but could not be grasped according to these separations.

We are not far away from commonplaces. If imitation is a kind of passive side of commonplaces, multitude ordered in space or straightened (explicated/unfolded) in time and turned into history, and if it marks the end of the process of differentiation and movement, intuition is the active side of commonplaces, folded time outside of history or the side from where the differentiation and movement begins (Simondon, 1992).[12] However, both imitation and intuition work without any reference to authenticity or meaningful information.

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11 On this discussion, see a new journal *Forme di vita* (2004) and its special issue on human nature, no.1, 2004. See also Virno (2003) and De Carolis (2004).

12 See also Virno (2002: 74-81), and of course the fifth chapter of Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*.

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