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ANTI-TERROR VARIETY

METHODOLOGIES OF CULTURAL ANALYSIS

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The events of September 11, 2001, when '19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al-Qaeda hijacked four airliners and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States' which resulted in the collapse of the World Trade Center, massive destruction and loss of thousands of lives within a few hours (Online 1), shook the world, shattered the illusion of security and led to the U. S. proclamation to fight global terrorism. In 2002 – 2003, artist Chen Shaoxiong offered his two video-installations *Antiterrorist Variety 1 and 2* as his commentary on the reaction of the government, suggesting that 'trying to find technological solution to every possible problem including international terrorism' while neglecting 'the question of people's humanistic education and psychological maturity' is ridiculous (Online 2). However, his message does not seem to be heeded since Islamic fanatics continue to terrorize the world, now aiming at Europe, but the official response after recent attacks in Paris when 'French gunmen killed 17 people over three days of terror' (Tom McTague, 2015) is still along the same lines: 'new legislation will be required to enable the agencies to continue to intercept phone calls and access the content of electronic communications' in order 'to ramp up internet surveillance powers to prevent terrorists from plotting atrocities online' as suggested by Mr Cameron (ibid.). The problem is that instead of attempting to understand the roots of terrorism and working on prevention of the development of terroristic attitudes and mindsets the officials are continuously preoccupied with fighting against the consequences of a failure to recognize the value of life and what it means to be human resulting from the existential contradictions between space imposed and place to belong. In order to investigate possible reasons and solutions for the growing network of worldwide terrorism, theories and articles on the connection of urban influence and social psychology by Michel De Certeau, Walter Benjamin, Jean Baudrillard, Lao-Tse, Matej Jaššo, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Michel Foucault, Plato, Carl Gustav Jung, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse will be explored.

M. De Certeau begins his chapter *Walking in the City* with taking his readers to 'Manhattan […] the 110th [top] floor of the World Trade Center' wherefrom the city of New York is visible below under a 'totalizing eye' as a panorama – 'a "theoretical" (that is, visual) simulacrum […] whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices' (1980: 91-3). But in the age of the World Wide Web there is no need to go anywhere to access a bird's eye view or 'walk' along the streets of any city on the globe: there are *GoogleEarth* and thousands of pictures and videos available on the Internet – the modern eye of power that enhances like never before the sense of artificiality of everything in the world. If W. Benjamin complained about the decay of aura in 1936 (223), then today the world sometimes feels to be completely stripped of it. As J. Baudrillard writes, 'the whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer itself anything but a gigantic simulacrum […] never

exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference' where even the 'Idea of God' is substituted with 'this omnipotence of simulacra' (1981). So, the city compared by Erasmus to 'a huge monastery' (M. De Certeau, 1980: 93) can now be rather likened to a massive market hive where everyone is on their own not to contemplate the beauty and worth of life but to participate in the theatre of exchanges destitute of personal stories in order to feed the system of simulations. But as M. De Certeau notes, 'where stories are disappearing […], there is a loss of space: deprived of narrations […] the group or the individual regresses toward the disquieting, fatalistic experience of a formless, indistinct, and nocturnal totality' (ibid.: 123). The soul of the city as the souls of its inhabitants tends to dissipate in the parade of exchanged identities rooted in transactions instead of true interaction.

But the importance of space has already been noted by Lao-Tse in Ancient China who emphasized that it is empty space that constitutes the value of places: 'The door and windows are cut out (from the walls) to form an apartment; but it is on the empty space (within), that its use depends. Therefore, what has a (positive) existence serves for profitable adaptation, and what has not that for (actual) usefulness' (11). M. De Certeau describes the phenomenon as 'transformation of the void into a plentitude, of the in-between into an established place' (1980: 127). Resultantly, according to M. Jaššo, 'The urban environment is a mosaic of values and pseudo-values whose influence on the formation of hierarchies of values of individual residents is unlimited' (2012: 90). Thus, the female function of 'soul making' recognized by G. Ch. Spivak as 'the imperialist project cathected as civil society-through-social-mission' (1985: 244) is embedded also in space, the Greek mother Gaya, which, modulated by social constructs and power relations, silently defines the frame of human life. As M. De Certeau observes, 'to plan a city is both to *think the very* plurality of the real and to make that way of thinking the plural *effective*; it is to know how to articulate it and be able to do it' (1980: 94). However, he indicates that 'the city, for its part, is transformed for many people into a "desert" in which the meaningless, indeed the terrifying, no longer takes the form of shadows but becomes […] an implacable light […] created by a technocratic power everywhere and which puts the city-dweller under control' (1980: 103). M. Foucault's anonymous gaze of social and cultural constructs about the acceptable and therefore permissible dominates public and private space, framing and imprisoning individualities, filtering desirable and repressible forms of existence. But as M. Foucault states, 'In reality power is only exercised at a cost' (1980: 154).

As Plato noted in *The Republic* more than two thousand years ago, the soul and the city reflect each other therefore justice can be attained only when each citizen knows and follows his true vocation and strives for wisdom not war. According to C. G. Jung, at the center of free

society are 'human relationship [where resides] its real cohesion and consequently its strengths. Where love stops, power begins, and violence, and terror' (1983: 400). Consequently, it is no wonder that the feeling of placelessness that generates traumas of identity in the simulacra of existence, where lives increasingly turn into mere statistics, resembling at best a computer game with a pre-set mission one is urged to adopt, results in different forms of social madness. The Frankenstein terrorists to whom the lives of their victims bear no other meaning than Machiavellian means are bred in the same cities of the world which idolize mercantile relationship at the cost of space and soul. Thus, the World Trade Centre crashed by the planes of terrorists is symbolic of the bonds of transnational control they are attempting to break in order to create space for their subaltern ideologies.

However, neither peace nor any kind of ideological paradise can be achieved by revolutionary means because, as H. Marcuse observes, they only result in exchange of 'one system of domination by another' (1967: 227). The problem of object relationships where, according to E. Fromm, 'modern man has transformed himself into a commodity' (1956: 97) cannot be resolved by attacking external enemies, rather, the space for freedom should be first sought within to be projected outside when found. Thus neither terrorists nor governments are likely to reach their aims as long as they restrict themselves to military means because the moral battle is to be fought inside of each individual for the victory to result in expansion of space where to plant one's dreams. The effects of simulacrum cannot be undone by technological means or weapons which only enhance the sense of an outside enemy – the Other that is an illusion. Therefore, J. Baudrillard like Ch. Shaoxiong questioned the efficacy of the Don Quixotic attempt to fight the consequences of the windmill of simulation already decades before the 9/11 tragedy: 'What can psychoanalysis do […]? What can the army do about simulators?' (1981). As C. G. Jung points out,

> Even the biggest armaments and the heaviest industry coupled with a relatively high living standard are not enough to check the psychic infection spread by religious fanaticism. […] We are faced, not with a situation that can be overcome by rational or moral arguments, but with an unleashing of emotional forces and ideas engendered by the spirit of the times (1983: 365).

So unless the 'organic needs for the human organism' are satisfied by 'the restoration of nature after the elimination of the violence and the destruction of capitalist industrialization; the creation of internal and external space for privacy, individual autonomy, tranquility; the elimination of noise, of captive audiences, of enforced togetherness, of pollution, of ugliness' (H. Marcuse, 1967: 232) there is little hope for overall equilibrium of the rational and emotional natures of humanity. As M. De Certeau suggests, it would be wiser to 'analyze the microbe-like, singular and plural practices which an urbanistic system was supposed to administer or

suppress, but which […], far from being regulated, or eliminated by panoptic administration, have reinforced themselves in a proliferating illegitimacy' (1980: 96). Rather than chasing terrorists to exterminate inhuman policies with equally inhuman methods, attention should be shifted to asking how to help individuals grow into Humans not monsters to dread.

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