

# Producing Eccentric Space Democracy at All Cost and the Indisciplinary Participant

## Part I Democracy At All Cost

It is telling that in Miessen's latest book *The Nightmare of Participation* that he commences with a quote from Slavoj Žižek, the very embodiment of a nightmarish figure upon the discipline of philosophy:

*"One of the most disgusting things is when what you secretly dream about is brutally imposed on you from the outside. We have a nice name for a realized dream: it is called a nightmare."*

If the original monograph is the description of a nightmare, a realized intrusion, then this post-production publication could be read as a nightmare squared – the intrusion of an intrusion. Yet, it is an invited nightmare, to brutally impose ourselves within the framework initiated by Miessen, to provoke its very contours. What this book attests to is a spirit of agonistic participation. A form of participation where we invited authors convene on a common ground to debate and contest the articulation of a given rhetorical framework or stage. What this book does is to render citable through a plurality of voices, the nightmare that constitutes participation. But does that mean we are merely invited to resonate, in disagreement or in agreement, its flows, reproducing its discursive validity within a given territory of knowledge production, reverberating as it were, its contents through quotational and proximal reference?<sup>1</sup> Quite possibly. Yet citation, as Samuel Weber notes, is not simply that which is quotable, but includes a double (both/-and) etymological resonance of the word. Citation originates from the Latin root '*citare*': to set in movement, yet is simultaneously included within the juridical order, as arresting movement (as in a traffic violation citation).<sup>2</sup> As such, it seems only apt to qualify this text as an excursus, as a trajectory of divergence from its conceptual origins, that lays

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<sup>1</sup> Groys, Boris. *Art Power*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008, p. 117.

In *Art Power*, Boris Groys has argued that a positive or negative review of the work of the artist/author is irrelevant. What matters is that attention is given (where and how lengthy the discussion are the only qualifiers), the decision on the part of a critic or commentator to write at all on an artist/author and their works is already a mode of validating the practice of an artist/author.

<sup>2</sup> Weber, Samuel. *Theatricality as Medium*. New York: Fordam University Press, 2004, p. 45.

down points of interruption and other criss-crossing paths through this labyrinth of dialogue surrounding participation. It is thusly my intention to arrest and diverge the 'realized dream' of participation already set in motion, and secondly to put into movement other, augmented trajectories of the agents of participation implicated in the discussion through an expanded figuration of Miessen's nightmarish protagonist *par excellence*, the uninvited outsider.

*The Nightmare of Participation* is introduced with a confrontational line of thought: that sometimes 'all inclusive-democracy has to be avoided at all cost'. But is this statement really a critical provocation at all? Does the chastising of 'democracy' not risk falling into the trap on the right and the left concerning the hatred of democracy? It is true that the very word democracy has seen better days and is perhaps worse for the wear, but when outlaying methods of conflictual participation it is also necessary to contest the very reading of the word itself. The struggle of politics is a struggle for sensibility, including meaning in language, so it is here where I would arrest Miessen's equation between the avoidance of democracy and non-consensual participation. The equation, rather, needs to be fundamentally inverted and read as a beckoning call precisely for participation *as* democracy.

In order to unpack this inverted equation between non-consensual participation and democracy, it is worthwhile to take a brief detour through the particular socio-political constellation to which Miessen responds. The regime of consensus against which *The Nightmare of Participation* is set, has been identified as depoliticization, the social turn of politics and the postdemocratic across the fields of political theory and philosophy. In the most rudimentary sense, the regime of consensus concerns the 'victory' of a liberal-democratic apparatus for political/social organization after the 'defeat' of communism, embodying the oft-repeated slogan from Margaret Thatcher, where there is 'no alternative'. This perceived 'victory' was so utterly commanding, for the theorist Francis Fukuyama to declare an infamous 'end to history'; not that there would no longer be any events per se, but that the historic struggle for political structures was finally over. The alternative-less plight of politics amounts to a form of politics stripped of politics. In this

regard, politics has been reduced to a management tool of the social, doing away with future scenarios and other modalities of (co)existence, politics reduced to “the art of steering the ship and embracing the waves, in the natural, peaceful movement of growth.”<sup>3</sup>

*Harmonistan* is Miessen’s tongue-in-cheek name for this regime of consensus, and although eliciting a chuckle upon reading, is anything but harmonious. What is at work in the regime of consensus is the totalization of various peoples, places and functions into a unity of a single space indistinguishable with the population and its distribution, to the exclusion of any remainder. Consensus has nothing to do with a common agreement of policies of an expert government, yet permeates and petrifies the normative symbolic order or, to the violent segregation of that which is supernumerary, to that which is otherwise possible. The stultifying presupposition of consensus is that the people, *the demos* are already given (consensus is whole), that their communities are established, and their modes of speech are concordant with their roles, functions and disputes. Within the normative symbolic order, what the regime of consensus sets up is an impotently myopic vision: that we have attained resolution in regards to the fight over political structures, yet the condition of this resolution is that we only can have what we have; in the words of Alain Badiou, consensus is the fusing of what *is* with what *can be*.<sup>4</sup> To downplay the inherent violence of this totalizing consensus is a dangerous gesture, both in theory and in practice, for to do so prohibits the political subjectification of that which is excluded, of the part that has no part in the normative structuring. The regime of consensus cannot even conceive of a representable barrier of exclusion, nor of the processes of division in its totalizing view, as a result, the delineation of a supernumerary is completely absent from common sensibility, from the *sensus communis*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rancière, Jacques. *On the Shores of Politics*. trans. Liz Heron, New York: Verso, 2007 (original French, 1992), p. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Badiou, Alain. *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*. trans. Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens. London: Continuum, 2005, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Rancière, Jacques. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. trans. Julie Rose. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p 116.

To conflate consensus with ‘all-inclusive democracy’ reifies this violently negligent presupposition of totality, of wholeness, of the congruency between the population (the accountable, the surveyable) and the *demos*. Now in fairness, the general tone of *The Nightmare of Participation* seeks necessary and admirable strategies to combat such a regime of consensus, through the intrusion of uninvited intervention, yet the stakes of rhetoric involved in such a project, cannot be unquestioned. Words are not innocuous. The suggested avoidance of democracy alluded to through the book, in order to instigate other modes of appearance (of architecture, art, people, interactions, policy-making, pedagogy and so forth), is a commonly held opinion from the both the right and left. The beaten up notion of democracy as that associated with mediocrity, watered down solutions, majority rule, rampant populism coupled with mass individualism, passivity, and the reproduction of the status quo; is explained as a form of governance riddled with bureaucratic procedures, unable to propel substantial change or novelty. What we are reduced to on both sides of critiques on democracy is an imbrication of democracy with an order of governance, a form of governance that can be instituted (even viciously imposed), and a form of governance synonymous with certain states known simply as ‘democracies’. In these instances democracy becomes identical to systems of law, expert guidance, protocols of management and even designates certain geographical regions, to the subordination of democracy as a universal potential power of the people. Daniel Bensaïd captured these doubts projected at democracy quite acutely when quoting Tocqueville from 1853: “I accept the intellectual rationale for democratic institutions, but I am instinctively an aristocrat, in the sense that I contemn and fear the crowd. I dearly love liberty and respect for rights, but not democracy”.<sup>6</sup>

Tocqueville’s statement is emblematic of an ongoing hatred or deep mistrust of democracy (from Plato to Churchill and beyond) that has been duly traced by Rancière, who resuscitates this bloodied term from the shackles of ordered governance. Fear of the crowd is nothing new, for the crowd is inherently unbounded, and it is here where we see Plato’s critique of democracy: that the limitless wills and demands of the people (the excess drives of the *demos*) must be contained to conform to the wills of an expert

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<sup>6</sup> Bensaïd, Daniel. *Permanent Scandal* in *Democracy in What State?* New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, pps. 16-43.

government, of those who know better, of those who are privy to knowledge. By equating democracy with a system of expertly delineated limits, what is at stake is a fundamental shift from the very unsettling force implied in the ‘-cracy’ of democracy, to an ‘-archy’ (of oligarchy, monarchy) that is some form of legitimated, *grounded* power.<sup>7</sup> This is not merely a linguistic issue, but the very limiting of the limitless, which strips democracy of its political thrust and is conceived as a structure to contain the implicit excess of wills and drives of the people. The hatred of democracy is thusly that a ‘good’ democracy is one that can successfully contain, stabilize, subdue and repress the inherently unstable and excessively demanding demos.<sup>8</sup> The hatred of democracy is a doubly directed one; on the one hand it is directed at the increased instantiation of limits by government (totalitarianism), and on the other hand, the hatred is directed at popular participation in public affairs itself, which is portrayed as irresponsible, individualistic and consumer driven (mediocracy, media driven)<sup>9</sup>.

The call to avoid an ‘all-inclusive democracy’ in the *Nightmare of Participation* reveals an accord with the hatred of democracy itself. And here in lies a central point that demands arrestation before proceeding on this excurses. What needs to be avoided at all cost is not democracy, but its very equation as a totalising instrument of cohabitational, structural limitation and popular mediocracy. For it is in the hatred of this particular apprehension of democracy where politics disappears, being usurped into the category of a given ordering, the disappearance of which is the specific critical axis around which Miessen’s ‘agonistic’ stance on participatory intervention revolves. If participation is called upon to unsettle given modes and protocols of operation, instigating *other* conditions of possibility, this commendable portrayal of participation can go by no other name than the enactment of democracy, assuming the vital force of the ‘-cracy’ (*kratos*) in all of its augmentative capacity in agonistic relation to the settlement of the ‘-archy’ (*arkhe*), or that which rules and distributes a given order.

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<sup>7</sup> Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Finite and Infinite Democracy* in Democracy in What State? New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> Rancière, Jacques. Hatred of Democracy. Trans. Steven Corcoran. New York: Verso, 2006, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Rancière, Jacques. *Democracies Against Democracy* in Democracy in What State? . Interview with Eric Hazan. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 77.

Now why is this participatory gesture of augmentation and unsettlement an enactment of democracy? What is this calling *for* democracy at all costs that we are alluding to here? If democracy is no longer figured as a legitimate state of a parliamentary or social system (a grounded, ‘-archy’), it is rather a happening, a doing, constituted by the impetus (-cracy) of the people (demos). The ‘-archy’ we are speaking of here, is not pejorative in any sense, it is simply a normative structure; in the parlance of Rancière this goes by the name of ‘police’. This ‘-archy’ is constituted by a given organization of bodies as *part-of* a community, coupled with the administration of places, operations and functions proper to the population and its parts. The ‘-archy’ is sustained through the distribution of the sensible wherein ways of living, being and co-existing operate through a certain perceptibility, to the exclusion of that which is imperceptible (in French the expression is ‘*partage de sensible*’, with ‘partage’ denoting that which is both shared and that which is divided). The allotment of parts and roles is based on a particular allocation of spaces, temporality and modes of operation that delineate the common, or the topology of the normal, the *sensus communis*, and the ways in which individuals may par-take in that distribution.<sup>10</sup> The ‘-archy’ of the distribution of the sensible is aesthetic in nature, contingent as it is on what is seeable, sayable and what makes sense where, by whom and when. Yet this inherently unequal structuring of the ‘-archy’ is upheld by a paradoxical equality that can be succinctly formulated as such:

There is order in society because some people command and others obey, but in order to obey an order at least two things are required: you must understand the order and you must understand that you must obey it. And to do that, you must already be the equal of the person who is ordering you.<sup>11</sup>

This equality at the root of all ‘-archy’ is not to suggest equality is some sort of flattened hierarchical (harmonistan-like) goal, but rather a truth, a universal, an axiom at the core of all constellations of human co-existence. Equality is pure potential; it is the utter, shared capacity sustaining the imbroglio of aesthetic conditions that delineate a given sphere of social operations. It is this potential potency (-cracy) of equality where politics happens, in the very testing out of this contingency of equality buttressing the ‘-archy’.

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<sup>10</sup> Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. trans. Gabriel Rockhill. London: Continuum, 2004, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Rancière, Jacques. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. trans. Julie Rose. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p 16.

Politics here is reformulated as a *doing*, a *force* rather than a thing or structure – it happens when those who have no part re-assert and test out the contingent equality through which the inequal distribution of the sensible operates. Politics, as such, is instigated by that which is supplementary (the demos), by that which doesn't quite fit, nor is common-sensically understood in the normal configuration of the community (the population). Politics shifts the symbolic ordering of the '-archy', whereby the population and its parts are confronted with a supplement to its very structure, with "what had no business being seen, and [making] heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise."<sup>12</sup> If Miessen's participatory agent *par excellence* is sketched as an 'uninvited outsider', (s)he is the very embodiment of this supplementary appearance, for it is in that which does not quite belong, the part-with-no-part, where unsettlement and reconfiguration can take place. This taking place of politics in relation to the '-archy' is so by way of a supernumerary impetus, the force of '-cracy', that is identical with the *doing of democracy*.

## II. The Indisciplinary Participant

By arresting the call to avoid democracy in the discussion of participation, inverting its course as it were, towards a beckoning call for its very enactment, it is worthwhile to proceed on an excursions of the uninvited outsider, Miessen's central protagonist, in order to carve out speculative paths as to how this character comes to deploy a democratic impulse. This excursions is by no means exhaustive, but meant to outline exploratory modes of participating, with certain figurations that may be useful in describing the characterization of participatory gestures, their attitudes and positioning.

In *The Violence of Participation*, Miessen's second part of the trilogy on the subject, Tirdad Zolghadr raised an important point in framing these participatory discussions, especially in relation to politics. The acknowledgement that he made, when we frame the

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<sup>12</sup> Rancière, Jacques. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. trans. Julie Rose. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p 29.

capacity of art or spatial interventions to produce novelty, or new spaces for thinking and doing, thereby redistributing sensibility of the ‘-archy’, is a rarity to say the least. This statement is entirely accurate and infuses the discussion with a much needed humility, but politics, or democracy itself is also an exceptional and fleeting event, contingent as it is not only on the participants themselves, but also the network of relational, contextual and historical conditions within which an aesthetical situation is instigated, not to mention the role of chance. It is extremely difficult, in theory and/or in praxis to produce these sorts of affects of unsettlement we have been discussing. That said we should not merely give up at its potential production, as grandiose, happenstance or ephemeral as it may be, in the words of Beckett, to try again, fail again, fail better. What is at stake here is not the rewriting of justice-making policy within the ‘-archy’, but rather the ways in which those contingencies reinforcing the ‘-archy’ can be rendered experiential, and thusly opening up relations of perceptibility. In a further passage in *The Nightmare of Participation*, Zolghadr challenges the notion of the ‘uninvited outsider’, again, I think rightly pointing out that us actors, fully implicated within the realm of cultural production (for lack of a better term), are not in fact outside of anything. We may occasionally be an architect working on a pedagogical platform rather than a building, but we are wholly inside a particular grammatical set as to how to discuss, familiar with rhetorical conventions, modes of articulation, networks of actors, modes of presentation and so on. Miessen’s defence of this position, is quite interesting, and calls for a less Romantic (his words) connotation of this figure of the uninvited outsider. By calling for sets of skills beyond disciplines, beyond certain professional circles, or rather traversing through them, he is actually calling up a figure, which could better be described as *indisciplinary*. Without the Romantic overtones of the uninvited outsider, I shall prefer to position these following characterisations as belonging to that of an interdisciplinary participant, as (s)he who wilfully neglects categories of knowledge, whilst twisting and transforming, disciplinary conventions.

### The Ignorant Participant

The plight of the ignorant comes to mind when figuring our interdisciplinary participant, particularly in the guise of three historical characters: Socrates, Elizabeth of Bohemia and Joseph Jacotot. With Socrates famous statement: “I know that I know nothing”, he of course did not mean that he actually knew nothing, but felt that all knowledge (or wisdom), begins with a presupposition of ignorance, in order to intensively question opinions and that which one *thinks* one knows. Knowledge begins with a sense of wonder, and not that of (perceived) mastery. In taking to the agora to (uninvitedly) question prominent Athenians, his particular method of revealing inconsistencies in respondent’s answers, was a wholly relational and theatrical one – a living philosophical enquiry with interlocutors, whether they liked it or not. What has become known as Socratic dialectics, was never a written philosophy, but always a performative one instigated in relation to the givenness of people’s thoughts. In this sense, and as pointed out in Carson Chan’s epilogue to *The Nightmare of Participation*, Socrates fancied himself as a philosophical mid-wife, himself ‘knowing that he knows nothing’, but rather bringing others beliefs and epistemology to the fore, challenging them and seeking to reveal logical dissonance. It is in this regard where blind spots within disciplinary knowledge(s) can be confronted and intervened upon, opening up questions from other perspectives, revealing specific limit conditions in thinking and approaches to situations of knowledge. We can thusly deduce two rules for our Interdisciplinary Participant, following the example of Socrates: assume that one does not know; and deliver knowledge from spaces and people through unprovoked questions.

As René Descarte’s correspondent for seven years (until 1640), Elizabeth of Bohemia, a curious aristocrat, followed the progress of the theories of the separation of mind and body, seeking an understanding of the most advanced thought of the day, known as Cartesian Dualism. As a curious non-expert, who was unbound to mathematical logic, she provoked questions (and gaping holes) in Descartes theory based on the actual experience of living itself: If the mind and body are indeed separate, how do they relate and interact with one another? If these two entities can be logically separated, in theory that is, how are we to mediate this with our experience which is continuous – with the

mind and body seemingly acting in concert in our everyday lives? Her questions, embedded in humble, perhaps overly modest language, are still very much alive today, known as embodiment studies, an ongoing field which examines precisely these experiences of mind-body interaction in *practice*, that is in consonance. By asking, polite and simple questions of the expert intellectual, Elizabeth of Bohemia brought these lofty theories down to earth by asking for concrete, experiential answers to abstract rhetoric. The lesson we can infer from this master/lay-woman correspondence in regards to the Indisciplinary Participant: Question the knowledge of experts, even naively so.

The ignorant schoolmaster, Joseph Jacotot, who has served as the most influential figure upon the thought of Rancière, revolutionised conventions of pedagogy while in exile during the Restoration. His method, known as ‘Intellectual Emancipation’, tangibly confirmed that illiterate parents could teach their children how to read, and, in the process, demonstrated that knowledge is not necessary to teaching, nor is explication necessary to learning.<sup>13</sup> In conventional pedagogy, the schoolmaster’s task is to reduce the gap of knowledge between him/her self and that of a pupil, yet, paradoxically, in order to achieve this goal, a gap of ignorance must always be recreated, establishing new instances of ignorance. Within such a model, the pupil is not simply the one who does not yet know what the schoolmaster knows; the pupil is also the one who does not know what he does not know, or how to come to know it. What this never-ending pedagogical game of cat and mouse (of contracting and expanding separation in knowledge) entails, is the constant lesson that ignorance is the opposite of knowledge, that knowledge is not an amalgamation of fragments of information, but a *position*.<sup>14</sup> The distance played out in the interaction of knowledge positions is sustained by the unending practice of the schoolmaster jumping ahead and re-instating the gap – this is the ultimate lesson of such a progressive pedagogical logic: that there is one who possesses the knowledge of the contents of ignorance, and one who does not. The ordered form of pedagogical activity outlined above, reinforces its own point of origin: that of the inequality of intelligence.

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<sup>13</sup> Ross, Kristin. *Introduction. The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. By Jacques Rancière, trans. By Kristin Ross. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991. vii-xxiii.

<sup>14</sup> Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. trans. Gregory Elliot. London: Verso, 2009, p. 9.

The looping force of the playing out of inequality goes by the name of stultification. The counter-position to the endless playing out of stultification comes by way of a reconfiguration of ‘intellectual emancipation’ passing through Rancière’s axiom of equality, which goes by the authentication of the equality of intellect. Such a statement does not invoke the “...equal value of all manifestations of intelligence, but the self-equality of intelligence in all of its manifestations.”<sup>15</sup> Just as in the process of learning one’s mother tongue, the ‘ignorant’ and the scientist who develop hypotheses, both operate by translating signs into other signs, proceeding by comparisons and examples in order to convey and transmit their intellectual trajectories, all the while digesting what other intelligent beings are trying to convey to them. Through the equality of intelligence, knowledge is no longer a type of expert position maintained through the stultifying logic of transmission from the schoolmaster-to-ignoramus, but rather knowledge is formulated as a poetic, imaginative labour of transliteration, which formulates the core of intellectual emancipation. Jacotot’s lessons for our Indisciplinary Participant are: to assume the equal capacity for intelligence; to assume the capacity for self-instruction; and continue translating questions and dialogue, compare and contrast these knowledge fragments.

### The Participant as Xenos

When discussing figurations of an ‘outsider’ as a participatory actor, we are unavoidably entering upon the discursive territory on the foreigner. It is here where we can draw from the fruitful etymology of that which is foreign, from the Greek origination contained within the concept of ‘xenos’. The meaning of the Greek word ‘xenos’ has a triple signification, which is often obscured in our English variant of foreigner, which can be outlined as such:

- a) Xenos, of course does refer to a foreigner, but is someone outside a particular community, with no clearly defined relationship;
- b) Xenos as an Enemy/Stranger

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<sup>15</sup> Rancière, Jacques. The Emancipated Spectator, p. 10.

c) Xenos as a guest friendship (as opposed to Philos, the root of philosophy, referring to local or known friends)

What this triple signification of xenos signifies, is an inherent uncertainty or ambiguity as to the status of an unknown person, this being the quintessential characterisation of a both/-and relationship, seeing as xenos can be neutral, threatening or friendly, perhaps even simultaneously. Xenos can only be properly understood in the context of 'Xenia', the Ancient Greek protocol for obligatory hospitality, illustrated through several myths where Gods making appearances as humans (Mercurius and Jupiter) test a given community in their enactment of xenia, by seeking refuge as strangers. Those mortals who enact xenia are rewarded by the Gods (an old couple, Philemon and Baucis), and that majority who did not, are punished by rejecting the quasi-religious duty to enter into a relationship of reciprocity with those who are unknown.

In *Of Hospitality*, Jacques Derrida reflects on xenos, as, in particular, one who questions, and asks about others, as a result xenos can disturb the reign of normativity through a world that is strange and unfamiliar. In conventional hospitality, (what Derrida calls conditional hospitality) when xenos knocks at the door and enters the home, they do so under the unspoken rules of the host, in this way xenos is held hostage to the laws of the host. If xenos does not respect the laws, then the reciprocal relationship subtended by the laws of conditional hospitality will be breached and the relation, severed. In his description of unconditional hospitality, that is hospitality with no invitation, with no condition to adapt to the rules of the host, the guest/host dynamic finds itself in an inverse power arrangement than that found in conditional hospitality. Through this hierarchical inversion, where the guest becomes a host and a host becomes a guest, a type of conceptual violence emerges, in that the self is interrupted, from the outside: "... the master of the house is at home, but nonetheless he comes to enter his home through the guest—who comes from outside. The master thus enters from the inside *as if* he came from the outside. He enters his home thanks to the visitor, by the grace of the visitor"<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Derrida, Jacques. *Of Hospitality*. trans. Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000. p.

What Derrida is suggesting is that the self can only come to identify itself from that which is other, from that which is strange; the self can only know itself through xenos. When we translate this unconditional hospitality within the realm of ‘houses’ of knowledge, namely disciplinary discourses, can the figure of the indisciplinary participant as xenos, not also interrupt the ‘self-hood’ of disciplines, causing processes of re-identification, based on relations of strangeness? How would the architect, for example, as xenos help re-formulate the identification of the ‘self-hood’ of economics? The indisciplinary participant as xenos is a complex portrait, and arguably a speculative description, further complicated by the unwritten ‘rules’ by which xenos engages reciprocity with the host. What sort of ethics does xenos enact in relation to strangeness or that which has not yet been defined, that which is not known in advance?

### The Participant as Surplus Actor

If the indisciplinary participant is always uninvited, (s)he is thrust outside of conventional contractual arrangements (implicit or explicit) where a precise task or need is defined, and the solution, or service, outsourced to the most fitting candidate. The indisciplinary participant, is, in this sense, not hosted under the terms of normative economic relations, (s)he is always in surplus of demand. The ambiguity of tasks or imperatives to fulfil, are precisely what makes our actor an ethical one: (s)he is not bound to accomplish a delineated role, function or assignment, as is the case with fulfilling rigid moral requirements, (s)he is pursuant of an ethical trajectory, which can be succinctly summarized as an ongoing search for *a good life*<sup>17</sup> – keeping in mind Aristotle’s differentiation between ‘bare-life’ into which human-animals are born, and ‘good life’ (*eudaimonia*) as that which perpetuates and gives birth to the *polis*, and thusly, politics. What is at work within this indefinite quest for *a good life* is a process of self-authorisation in relation to the perceptibility of a demand, a demand that must firstly be heard. That demand may not be entirely logical, as it can arrive as a feeling, instinct or intuition to which a prospective indisciplinary participant responds in self-authorising

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<sup>17</sup> Virno, Paolo. *Interview with Paolo Virno*, interview by Branden W. Joseph, translated responses by Alessia Ricciardi in *Grey Room* No. 21 (Fall 2005), Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005, pps. 26-37.

fashion. Contained within the act of self-authorisation, is the root *auctor*, the author and authority, rooted in gestures of augmentation – those are acts that multiply, amplify, intensify, increase, enhance, or expand a given form or context. An architecturally authored intervention may, for example, intensify a certain experience of spatial sensibility or orientation; a poem may multiply the possibilities of meaning or sense-making in language. The interdisciplinary participant is one who authorises him/her-self (without invitation) to experiment and articulate enlarged possibilities for experience, and in the process, can unsettle given coordinates and functioning of normativity. This self-authorising process is not without great risk, for as an unwanted gift, that potential and proverbial thorn in the side of society, we must ask ourselves how that thorn makes an appearance, in which direction is it thrust and upon which soft spots does it scratch and make itself felt. Jan Verwoert has compounded the notion of authorising, beyond that of merely instigating a novel space, by including the following through and inhabiting of the discursive and/or aesthetic frameworks of ones making – to dwell within the coordinates of the concrete realities of what has been born.

The ethical call implied by ‘following through’ – denotes a fidelity to ones actions and the affects of ones authorial gestures. Not fidelity in the dogmatic sense of originary fixedness, but a fidelity to the metaphorical inhabitation of ones intervention, the capacity to both alter and be altered. The interdisciplinary participant enables a space/situation of relationality (textually, pictorially, spatially, rhetorically, etc), that is, the author produces affect, what I like to call contaminating imagination. To enact authorship, is thusly to initiate an ethical relation in a double sense: it is to self-authorise in response to the perception of a demand and it is to dwell within the substantial and conceptual coordinates of ones making, including the unforeseen network of interpretive interactions. If, as Simon Critchley postulates, ethical acts come as a response to the fidelity of a perceived demand,<sup>18</sup> then the interdisciplinary participant must also inhabit the space of demand produced through the act of authorship. Ethically speaking, the interdisciplinary participant is always listening for the demand, attentive to its whispers, and responsive to its reverberations as an echo, resonance or feedback.

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<sup>18</sup> Critchley, Simon. *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*. New York: Verso, 2007.

## The Participant as Producer of Eccentric Space

What is this territory of novel perceptibility (occasionally) produced by the interdisciplinary participant? What are these new topological conditions that have been affectively produced in the re-coordination of the given, of the normative?

The ‘-archy’ can be considered as a system within which diverse peoples, protocols, functions, roles, temporalities, places and materials revolve around a normative gravitational core (with a various degrees of affinity) called an attractor. The attractor, around which the normative inclines, is not a thing, nor an object but is sensed (as in the distribution of the sensible); furthermore, attractors are both outlined (mapped) by a given social ‘-archy’ and contained within an ‘-archy’, delineating a particular boundary condition of what can be seen, said, thinkable and doable. Attractors are dynamic and mutable both emitting and absorbing affectivity. Affective perturbations that destabilize or re-incline this normative pull can be envisioned as a process of decentering or *eccentricity* (*ekkentros*).

Eccentricity has fallen from its origins in the heavens, at first denoting a non-earth centred orbit in Ptolemaic astronomy, to the decentred notion portrayed above, and in common use today, eccentricity has more to do with whimsy, the slightly strange and that which is not-quite fitting in. With these three key attributes of eccentricity: whimsically off-beat, in inclined motion (and therefore generating other temporal rhythms), as well as de-centred; one can aptly deploy this descriptor to the novel perceptibility of the normative relationality to time, space, language and other bodies, ushered in and aesthetically instigated by the interdisciplinary participant. The production of eccentric space can be conceived as that (rare moment) of the affective sphere which decentres ones normative orientations and operations in relation to a given ‘-archy’.

## The Playful Participant

The production of eccentric space, the decentring of normative orbits, although outlined above in a serious and rather rational intonation is caught up in a drive of play. In the spirit of play, other uses of things, spaces, bodies, etc are rendered potential, reified structures of use are rendered contingent and wholly malleable, or twistable. The philosopher Giorgio Agamben cites the example of a child who transforms the function of a legal contract into a flying paper airplane; the child, as such disregards normalised, official use and transforms it into something completely other. Agamben describes ‘play’ as an act of entirely inappropriate (re)use; an act that can free and distract humanity from a steadfast normality, without simply abolishing it, or negating it. Through play there is a neglecting of the sphere of operations within which the object, place, function, person or role is (sensorially) embedded.<sup>19</sup> . To play is to make a new use possible, transforming the normal operations of things and our interactions with them. Considering that our everyday lived experience is one of appropriating cultural codes, incorporating them in our performance of the choreography of the quotidian; through play, one does merely re-appropriate normative conditions, but more importantly *inappropriates* them. It is through play, a practice of neglectful mis-use that the whimsy, and decentring capacity of eccentric space can be articulated.

Our incomplete portrait of the indisciplinary participant can now be combined into a brief character sketch. The indisciplinary participant is a self-assumed ignorant who asks unprovoked questions, challenging expert thought, whilst constantly comparing and contrasting knowledge, assuming an equal capacity for intelligence. The indisciplinary participant is a friendly, threatening, whimsical stranger, who shows up at your house unconditionally, causing self-re-identification from the perspective of that which is outside. The indisciplinary participant does not require master skill, yet authorizes him/herself with fidelity to a whispered demand to create an affective space in which common sense is unsettled, dwelling in the echoes of this novel reterritorialization. The indisciplinary participant poetically twists the grammar of shared sense, hosting a multiplicity of potential functions of space, time, language and image, playfully

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<sup>19</sup> Agamben, Giorgio. *In Praise of Profanation* in Profanations. trans. Jeff Fort. New York: Zone Books, 2007, pps. 73-92.

*inappropriating* space. The interdisciplinary participant is eccentric to say the least.