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Just Because You Write about Posthumanism Doesn't Mean You Aren't a Liberal Humanist: An Interview with Gary Hall

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ABSTRACT

In this follow-up interview to his keynote lecture at the MeCCSA-PGN 2015 Conference in Coventry, Gary Hall discusses the processes of neoliberal subjectivation and the metricisation of the academy. Arguing that most media, communication and cultural studies critique tends to focus on the new, self-governing and self-exploitative subjects academics and students are *transforming into* rather than the scholarly subjectivities they are *changing from*, Hall maintains that both the new neoliberal model (associated with corporate social and mobile media) and the liberal humanist model (associated with conventional print-on-paper publishing) are involved in the subordination of scholarly agency and consciousness to the pre-programmed, controllable patterns of the capitalist culture industries. Taking in some of the open access initiatives with which he's involved, the interview addresses both Hall's account of the processes of neoliberalisation and his experiments with radically different ways of working and thinking as a media theorist and philosopher.

KEY WORDS

Liberal; Neoliberal; Human; Posthuman; Non-human; Open Humanities Press; Media Theory; Gutenberg; McLuhan; Foucault; Subjectivity

THE EDITORS: *You argue that most media scholars focus on the neoliberal subjects we are transforming into, rather than the liberal humanists we are transforming from. Could you explain the extent to which the former model continues to hold sway today?*

GARY HALL: I'm currently examining processes of neoliberal subjectivation as they relate to post-welfare capitalism and the sharing economy – transformations I'm analysing in terms of what I call *ubercapitalism*. But these processes of self-formation also affect students and scholars in media, communication and cultural studies.

One of the means by which such neoliberal academic subjectivation occurs is metricisation. As a result of the increasing *marketisation* and *managerialisation* of higher education, those of us who work or study in the university are being exposed to various forms of auditing, various quantification practices, various techniques and pressures to do with self-presentation, self-promotion and self-marketing, many of which have their origins in the cultures of management consultancy and Silicon Valley. This in turn has led large numbers of us to join for-profit academic social networks (e.g., Academia.edu, ResearchGate), and act like micro-celebrities. We blog, tweet and post about our work and about even our lives – about what we like, about what's happening with us – in order to establish ourselves and our individual authorial personalities as brands.[1] Now a number of media, communication and cultural studies scholars have written very powerfully about the stress, the depression, the exhaustion, the anxiety all the monitoring and measuring of our teaching loads, research outputs, grant income, citations, page view counts, download counts and so on is creating. And I'm interested in that too. But I'm also interested in what often gets left out of this picture: the subject position that is being adopted when we write and speak about the neoliberal transformation of higher education. It's a subject position that is, in effect, held up as some kind of solution, or at least preferable option, to the shift toward the entrepreneurial culture and quantified academic of neoliberalism *almost by default*.

To come at it from a slightly different angle: as critical media theorists many of us are only too aware that new media technologies – software, code, data and the related means of algorithmic measurement and classification, for instance – are involved in shaping our subjectivities and consciousness, our sense of self. Not enough attention is currently being paid, however, to the ways in which those media technologies that still play an extremely large role in structuring and arranging how we work as theorists, namely print-on-paper books and journal articles, are also involved in the formation of our subjectivities. So, yes, in my research I'm concerned with the new, voluntarily self-governing, self-disciplining and self-exploitative neoliberal subjects we are becoming. But I'm also concerned with the particular configuration of academic subjectivity and the related media technologies we are moving and transforming *from* on this account.

This is why I began my lecture at the MeCCSA-PGN 2015 Conference in Coventry by referring to Michel Foucault's 1980 interview with *Le Monde,* 'The Masked Philosopher'. In particular I wanted to draw attention to Foucault's remark in this interview that 'books, universities, learned journals are also information media'.[2] The reason I wanted to do so was to emphasise it's not just radio, cinema, television, newspapers, magazines and the internet that are media technologies: so are the books and journal articles we write, and the institutions we work and study in. They are instances of media every bit as much as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, and they also help to configure us as subjects. For me, this is something that's too often overlooked by media scholars when we think about neoliberalism, marketisation, or how we're being constantly monitored, measured, audited and assessed.

Why is it so important to pay attention to the configuration of academic subjectivity we are transforming *from*? It's important because it's often very much a *liberal humanist* subjectivity; one that has occupied (at least until recently, and still does in many respects) a position of hegemonic dominance within the profession. It is this liberal humanist model of academic selfhood – especially as it is enacted in our inherited ideas of individual proprietorial authorship, originality, copyright, the fixed and finished object, the proper noun or name – that continues to shape our work as media, communication and cultural studies students and scholars, and that many of us still adopt as a basis for engaging *critically* with the forces of neoliberalism. Hence we continue to write long-form, sequential books and journal articles that we insist are treated as our individually authored intellectual property, and that we then proceed to publish in uniform, multiple-copy editions, under an all rights reserved or, at best, Creative Commons, copyright licence. Moreover, it is a model of academic subjectivity that comes with a related privileging of the values of academic freedom, of fundamental as opposed to applied research, of individualised rather than mass teaching (detectable behind a lot of the concern over the development of xMOOCs), and of the relatively autonomous public university whose primary function is education rather than the generation of financial profit.

I'm moving very quickly, but for me there's a real danger in this of us of going along too readily with liberalism's own belief that, with its notions of individual liberty, citizenship and human rights, it can speak on behalf of humanity. What is the danger here? Well, to paint it in the broadest possible strokes, it is this belief that has given 'liberalism' the right, the duty in fact, to impose its philosophy onto the rest of the world, leading to the 'civilising' missions of colonialism, economic imperialism, and capitalist neoliberal globalisation, whereby liberal norms and values are universalized and extended to the sphere of international relations, to the concealment of the mechanisms by which those who do not adhere to such ideas are excluded. From this point of view, to oppose liberal humanism is not to oppose a particular philosophy; it's to oppose human rights and liberty, indeed humanity and the human, per se.

THE EDITORS: *Could you say more about the relation between the two models of subjectivity: are they mutually exclusive or fundamentally the same (i.e., liberal and neoliberal)?*

I would say that the new form of self-governing, self-disciplining, self-exploitative neoliberal subjectivity we're referring to *is different* from the liberal humanist subject, but it's also *the same*. If liberalism is concerned with respect for individual liberty and the defence of human rights, including those of citizenship and property rights, together with the institutions that protect and preserve them (parliamentary politics, the police, the press, the law, etc.), what is *really* being condemned in many accounts of the *becoming business* of the public university is the way in which one form of liberalism is being intensified and transformed into another. Specifically, this is a neoliberal interpretation of liberalism, and of which among those liberal rights and values are most important: the unassailable rights of property and extension of the values of the free market and its metrics to all areas of life.[3]

Together with the failure to denaturalise and destabilise the liberal humanist model of academic subjectivity – *to confront and rigorously think through* our notions of individualism, human rights, property and so on (even though we understand that theory's questioning of liberalism often involves questioning the human and human rights too) – this

difference of *intensity* as much as of *kind* is arguably one of the reasons it's been relatively easy for the commodifying, measuring logic of *neo*liberalism to control our ways of acting and working as media, cultural and communication studies students and scholars. This logic is not so much going *against* the liberal values many of us continue to adhere to, as *intensifying* certain aspects of them. It's an intensification and transformation of the very liberal humanism many of us are in fact anxious to retain. Consequently, even when we're making a determined effort to resist or elude the processes of neoliberal subjectivation, we're doing so much of the time by behaving as if we are autonomous, rational, self-identical and self-present, individual, liberal humanist subjects – which means it's not that difficult for the forces of what we're calling neoliberalism to control and repurpose such actions on our part.

In saying this I'm aware those endeavouring to counter neoliberal subjectivation hold a range of political views and positions: Marxist, post-Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic and so forth. I'm also mindful of the fact that liberalism is a philosophy of many strands and varieties, some of which have indeed provided a means of opposing neoliberalism on occasion, and continue to do so. Still further, I'm conscious that, although they may share many things in common, liberalism and neoliberalism are not the same. Nor indeed is neoliberalism the perfect projection of a political desire: it's no more free of contradiction and ambiguity than capitalism itself.[4] If we return to Foucault, however, we find him arguing in *The Birth of Biopolitics* that 'liberalism' should be analysed, 'not as a theory or an ideology… but as a practice, that is to say, a "way of doing things"'.[5] When it is brought to bear on our own *ways of doing things,* this insistence on the importance of analysing liberalism *as a practice* can help us to understand something important, I think. For while many of us espouse explicitly anti-liberal and anti-neoliberal theories and philosophies in the content of our work – be they inspired by Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour or Karen Barad – we are liberals nonetheless by virtue of *how* we live, act and think in the world. Regardless of what theories and philosophies we *profess*, in our practice – in the forms our work takes, in the ways we create, publish and disseminate it, in our associated upholding of notions of individualism, individual rights, property and so on – we continue to act primarily according to a liberal humanist model of what it is to *be* and *do* as an academic. Put crudely, it's a model that forecloses an appreciation of the processual and relational nature of identity – of the human's co-constitutive psychological, social and biological relation not just to other humans, but to animals, technology and the environment as well as a whole host of other non-humans, objects, non-objects and non-anthropomorphic elements and energies – and instead presents the work of a writer or theorist as the original creation of an individualised, proprietorial human subject.[6] (For example, animals cannot own copyright, as we know from the recent case of the macaque monkey who took a famous 'selfie' photograph of itself.)

One of the things I'm therefore endeavouring to do in some of my work is experiment with different ways of acting, working, thinking and living as a critical media theorist. In this respect, my research is not so much concerned with coming up with a new theory or philosophy, something to rival new materialism, posthumanism or accelerationism, say, which of course is what theory traditionally tries to do. Instead, I'm interested in exploring different ways of being, different ways of doing things as a theorist.

THE EDITORS: *In the conference you also talked about the shift from a Gutenberg to a Zuckerberg galaxy. Could you elaborate on that?*

GARY HALL: What I was referring to is the idea that the development of the print codex book and the related requirement for closed spaces in which to read and write has had a fundamental role in the emergence of modern subjectivity – along with the associated notions of the rational liberal individual, linear thought (and the related long-form argument), critical reflection (the grammatical rules used in the production of linear written texts constituting a *test for reason*), and also the public/private distinction. The work of Vilém Flusser, Walter Ong and Bernard Stiegler should all be mentioned in this context. Without doubt, however, the most famous expression of this idea remains that of Marshall McLuhan.[7]

It is this Gutenberg galaxy, as McLuhan calls it, which is seen as having played a large part in giving us our sense of the private individual. Moving quickly again, this occured because once books became widely available thanks to the invention of the printing press, private spaces were needed in which they could be read and concentrated on: a study or 'room of one's own', to borrow the words of Virginia Woolf. The provision of just such a study area is one of the functions libraries have fulfilled: historically, they have provided the kind of quiet, private spaces for the reading of books that have helped to form our subjectivities, our sense of the individual, our sense of the difference between the public and the private.

Now, if the development of the print book has had a significant role in the emergence of modern subjectivity and consciousness, it follows that the ideas readers and writers have are *not* separate and distinct from the material apparatuses with which those ideas are physically created, published and circulated. Rather, we can see that things and words, body and mind, language and reality, the so-called *immaterial* and *material* are enmeshed here – to the point where the material qualities and properties of books form the environmental pre-conditions for the constitution of the ideas they carry and convey. (Although it's worth emphasising that they don't *determine* those ideas; not least because there are other forces and energies at work that are non-technological and media related. So this is not a theory of *technogenesis*, for me: it's not that human development has gone hand in hand *only* with technological development).

However, we can now be said to be in the process of leaving the Gutenberg era and moving instead into what I was teasingly referring to as the Zuckerberg galaxy. Of course we don't yet know what form the latter is eventually going to take. What we can say is that, at the moment at least, our world is dominated less by the print codex book, and more and more by the kinds of digital networks and mobile media that have been made possible by the development of the internet, computers, laptops, smart phones and the cloud. In my talk I illustrated this change by taking as an example the library at Coventry University. What's noticeable about the Frederick Lanchester Library, as it's called, is that it's undergone something of a redesign. It no longer has so many small, enclosed, quiet spaces of the kind that used to be quite common in university libraries. (Often they were provided in the form of carrel desks, a design originating in monasteries.) Instead – and in line with a lot of contemporary libraries – the Lanchester is now much more open. It's often quite noisy too. Of course, students are still going there on occasion to read a print book by themselves in private, much as they might have done in decades past. But when students are in the library these days they're often sitting around together on sofas and at large open tables, they're chatting to friends, they're working on group projects, they're texting on their phones, they're downloading digital combinations of print and other media onto their tablets. So the library no longer offers a clearly maintained (and librarian policed) boundary between the private and the public to quite the extent it used to. Nowadays, as a space, it's too networked, it's too digitally connected, for that to be appropriate, or even possible. A lot of the teaching in the Media department here at Coventry (which is where this interview is taking place) is likewise

based on responding to this emerging new world of dynamic digital information and data: of user-generated content, of crowd-sourcing, of grassroots political movements and so forth. It's now much more concerned with opening the university up, just as the library is being opened up in the 21st century, so as to make the courses we teach, as well as the rooms and buildings we teach in, much less rooted in the print paradigm.[8]

Coming back once more to the idea that media help to shape (but do not determine) our subjectivities, a number of thinkers associated with theories of the non-human, the posthuman and the postanthropocentric are striving to develop this idea still further. Put very briefly, their contention is that if the media we use today are different from those of the Gutenberg galaxy, if the material forms with which we create ideas are changing, then so must be the ideas themselves, meaning that our human subjectivity and consciousness is changing too. It is this argument that I was trying to think through at the MeCCSA-PGN 2015 conference. On the one hand, we have the transition from the Gutenberg galaxy of the print book to a new space of networked digital information and data flows, and the way in which the latter is transforming our subjectivities and sense of self, not least by means of algorithmic forms of state and corporate surveillance. And on the other hand there is the fact that one of the main ways in which even antihumanist and posthumanist theorists and philosophers are attempting to understand this shift is by writing print books and journal articles about it. The question for me is this: if we *are* in the process of moving to a post-Gutenberg world – if the internet *is* a 'game changer' in this respect, as some are claiming it is – to what extent can we understand this change by continuing to act as if we are still living very much in the world of Gutenberg, replete with the latter's emphasis on the book, privacy, and the rational, liberal, individual human subject? How can we understand visual media such as photography, film, television, video, 3-D technology and augmented reality in the age of Megaupload, BitTorrent, Wikileaks, 4chan, Anonymous, and even YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp, together with their implications for our inherited ideas of the named author, the sovereign proprietorial subject, intellectual property and so on, if we insist on continually writing commercially copyrighted, linearly organised, bound and printed paper codex books and journal articles about them?

THE EDITORS: *You're very active in the field of open access publishing. Could you tell us about your motivation for being so?*

GARY HALL: As I say, variations on the narrative that sees us moving from an era of written and printed communication into a 'universe of technical images', as Flusser calls it, have been provided by a number of theorists and philosophers.[9] But if this is the case, rather than concentrating on writing even more commercially copyrighted, linearly organised, bound and printed codex books about it, might it not be more appropriate for us to try to understand this post-Gutenberg universe by acting as though we *are* indeed living through a long process of transition from one era to another, whatever form the latter may eventually turn out to take?

It's from the performance artist Stelarc, perhaps more than anyone else, that I've learned the importance of engaging with media technologies as things we think *with* and not just *through* or *about*. In his talks and lectures Stelarc takes great care to emphasise that he doesn't feel he can explore how different developments in technology are altering our understanding of the body and the human unless he is able to achieve his often extremely difficult to realise performances with robotics, medical procedures, cybernetic systems and the internet; unless he actually has, for example, an extra ear surgically constructed, positioned as an additional bodily feature, and able to 'broadcast RealAudio sounds to augment the local sounds that the

actual ears hear', and perhaps to 'whisper sweet nothings' to them.[10] At the same time, Stelarc is aware that in doing so, he is merely offering his own – albeit rather unique, some would say physically quite extreme – contribution to that long tradition of artists, writers and philosophers who have stressed the importance of understanding our relationship to media and other technologies *performatively*. It is a tradition that includes Friedrich Nietzsche, who claimed that 'our writing tools are also working on our thoughts'; Ludwig Wittgenstein, who commented that 'I really do think with my pen, because my head often knows nothing about what my hand is writing'; and William Blake, who in his poem *Jerusalem* observed that 'If Perceptive organs vary, Objects of Perception seem to vary'.[11]

So what are the implications for us, as media, cultural and communication studies students and scholars, of the theory that is being rehearsed here: that our performances with media technologies exist in an enmeshed, processual, intra-active relationship with our thoughts and bodies? Well, for one thing, it means our thoughts do not pre-exist this relationship. Once again we can see that they are created at least in part by the 'tools' we use to express them, as well as by the performance of doing so, including that part of the performance that involves the physical human body. But what it also means is that if these tools and performances change – if as a culture we switch from writing predominantly with a pen to communicating increasingly with a typewriter, networked computer keyboard, or Bluetooth-enabled tablet touchscreen – then so do our thoughts.

What it certainly *does not mean* is that we all now have to sign up to Facebook, Twitter and Google Scholar so we can try to understand our post-Gutenberg world by learning to think *with* these corporate media environments (and not just about them). It doesn't mean we have to go along passively with the transition from the printed codex book to networked digital information and data flows. But neither does it mean we should be acting today as if we can somehow replicate the conditions of the Gutenberg galaxy – especially its quiet, private spaces where an individual could concentrate on reading and writing books without having their thoughts disturbed by a constant stream of communications from the outside world. (I'm thinking here of Jonathan Franzen sealing up the port on his laptop that enables him to connect to the internet so he can write his great American novels, or Nicholas Carr moving to the mountains in Colorado where there is no cell phone service to produce his books about how the internet is damaging our brains.) Indeed, one of the main points I want to make is that, when it comes to our ways of being and doing in the world, these two culture industry-dominated systems for the creation, publication and dissemination of knowledge and information – what we might crudely characterise as the classic 'closed' system of print culture and the newer 'semi-closed' system of corporate social and mobile media – are not so very different in this respect. Instead, I'm motivated more by the idea of taking some of the tendencies associated with this transition and *giving them* new inflections that are different to both the neoliberal *and* the liberal '"way of doing things"'.

THE EDITORS: *You have helped found and run a wide variety of open access initiatives, such as the journal* Culture Machine, *Open Humanities Press (OHP), and the two Liquid Books and Living Books About Life series. Could you say a little more about them? And do you have any plans for future developments?*

GARY HALL: The above idea of taking some of the elements, dynamics and potentials associated with the transition from the Gutenberg galaxy of the print book to a post-Gutenberg space of networked digital information flows and *giving them* new and different

inflections would be one way of understanding what it is we're doing with some of the projects I'm connected to: not just those you mention specifically, but also more recent projects such as *Photomediations Machine*, *Photomediations: An Open Book*, and after.video.

So Open Humanities Press is a scholar-led, non-profit, open access collective dedicated to making works of contemporary critical thought openly available worldwide on a free, *gratis* basis.[12] Launched by Sigi Jöttkandt, David Ottina and myself in 2008, this networked, multi-user collective currently consists of nineteen open access journals (including *Culture Machine*), and to date has published approaching thirty 'traditional' open access books. But OHP also has two more experimental series – Liquid Books, edited by Clare Birchall and myself; and Living Books About Life edited by Clare Birchall, Joanna Zylinska and myself[13] – which feature books that are published on a free, *gratis and libre* basis so that their 'readers' are able to edit their content, rewrite, remix and reversion them.

That said, I should stress we're not attempting to completely rethink everything at the same time and to the same extent with these projects, as if with *Culture Machine* or OHP we've hit on a new way of doing things that's somehow capable of engaging with all of the issues we've touched on. Instead, we're operating more according to Jacques Derrida's notion of the quasi-transcendental, whereby the process of examining some concepts by necessity requires that other concepts are left unexamined. So, to provide examples of projects that are experimenting quite explicitly with books and learned journals as information media, Joanna Zylinska and Ting Ting Cheng's image-driven online journal-cum-gallery site, *Photomediations Machine* (a sister project to the *Culture Machine* journal), is exploring the process of moving from an era of literacy and grammatology to a post-literate era – what is already being called the visual web – and what this change means for theory.[14] Meanwhile Adnan Hadzi, Oliver Lerone Schultz, Pablo De Soto and Laila Shereen Sakr's collectively edited after.video, which OHP is publishing as part of the Liquid Books series, is doing something similar in the form of paperback book and video stored on a Raspberry Pi computer and packaged in a VHS case. However, rather than the still or photographic image – which is the primary concern of *Photomediations Machine* – it is focusing on moving images in order to rethink the book and theory 'after video'.[15] I won't detail them here, but other OHP projects are concentrating more on testing our concepts of individual (and individualistic) authorship, fixity, the finished object, property rights, copyright or piracy.

To this extent, one way of thinking of OHP is as a heterogeneous collective of theorists, scholars, librarians, publishers, editors and technologists, working in a non-rivalrous, non-competitive, non-dialectical fashion to explore and invent new models of creation, publication, circulation and ownership. However, rather than telling these different people exactly *how* they are to publish their work, say, by imposing one particular publishing model or one specific platform on them all, OHP is endeavouring to work with them to develop the means of doing so that they themselves consider to be most appropriate for their particular project, context, specialism, field or community. I know this is how some people have understood OHP, certainly: as trying to relate to what theorists and scholars want, rather than to what their institutions, libraries and funders want, as is the case with many government and research council-funded open access initiatives. From this perspective, OHP is opening up a space for the continuation of academic freedom, albeit in a radically different form from most of those with which we're familiar.

THE EDITORS: *Where do you feel your responsibility lies in terms of nudging people towards open access?*

GARY HALL: I realise this is probably going to sound odd, but I don't feel I have that kind of responsibility. I know you'd like me to speak about open access, and I understand why that is, given how much work I've done in the area, and that I've published a book about it and so forth. The fact is, though, while I really want to be helpful, I'm not sure how interested I am in open access – except to the extent it enables us to address, critically and creatively, the sort of issues we've been talking about. It's certainly not my intention to position myself as some kind of representative or spokesperson for open access by assuming responsibility for nudging people towards it, be it at a governmental policy maker, funding council, scholarly society, institutional, departmental or professional level.

If what I'm interested in is placing a question mark against both our neoliberal *and* our liberal humanist models of subjectivity, then it'd be naïve of me to expect that there's going to be a large, pre-existing audience out there I can appeal to; an audience that's ready and waiting for me to simply prod them into taking on board these ideas and their implications for our current ways of doing things, which as we have seen are largely (neo)liberal humanist in practice. You could even go so far as to say that, in denaturalising and destablising notions of individual rights, property, copyright and so on that we otherwise take for granted, my work is designed precisely to challenge a lot of the norms, values and practices around which any such wider audience might gather. (There are no legal anti-humanist or non-humanist alternatives to publishing on a copyright all rights reserved basis that are professionally recognised, for instance.) Consequently, we might think of such an audience, not so much in terms of Giorgio Agamben's 'coming community' or what, following Jacques Derrida, we could call *a community to come*, but as a *missing community*. This is another reason I'm interested in experimenting with ways of working and thinking as a media theorist that are not only engaged in *representing* or providing an account of the world, but *performatively acting in* or *intra-acting with* it too. Rather than endeavouring to speak *to* or *on behalf of* such a missing community, it seems to me we have to performatively invent the context in which such a community could emerge.

Creating such a missing community is what I'd suggest we're attempting to do with many of the projects I'm connected to, which include not just *Culture Machine* and Open Humanities Press, but also the Centre for Disruptive Media here at Coventry and its affirmative disruption of both neoliberal and liberal ideas of the humanities, the library, the archive and even the university.[16] Will we succeed? I'm not sure. It's reinflecting a phrase of Stuart Hall's, I know, but for me we have to work 'without guarantees', without any assurances that such a community will appear at some point in the future. Still, that's the kind of difficulty, contradiction, paradox even, I'm interested in living with and exploring. And this includes the paradox that's associated with my own inability to simply transcend the individualistic authorial 'I': both in this interview, and in my forthcoming publication of a traditional print book with only my name on it about the problems involved in authors producing books with only their individual names on them, even though I know this book, like this interview, is written by what for shorthand can be called the Others in me.[17] It's something I'm not entirely at ease with – and not just for the reasons we've discussed. (It's also partly why I began by referring to Foucault's 'Masked Philosopher' interview.) Nevertheless, I still take the decision to write such books and to participate in such interviews on occasion. For me, doing so can be another means of experimenting in a quasi-transcendental fashion with some of the multiple differential modalities of 'I' that are possible in our current context; and thus of again *giving*

new, non-dialectical inflections to certain tendencies associated with both our neoliberal *and* liberal ways of doing things.

Hopefully, all this explains why I continue to work in a university, despite all the stress, anxiety and exhaustion associated with it at the moment. I do so because the university is one space – it's not the *only* space, art is perhaps another, but it is *one* space – where we have a chance to do things differently. Where we can raise these kinds of questions. Where we can explore and experiment with new ways of doing.

This interview was prepared and transcribed by the editors of this special issue, and conducted by Francien Broekhuizen and Poppy Wilde in September 2015.

Endnotes

[1] In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Michel Foucault writes of the neoliberal '*homo oeconomicus* as entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings' (Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978-79* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 226).

[2] Michel Foucault, 'The Masked Philosopher', *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 1* (New York: New Press, 1997) 326.

[3] There is a related emphasis in neoliberalism on privatisation, on deregulation, on low taxation for the rich, on weakening the power of the trade unions, and on reducing to a minimum the role played by the state, the public sector and the welfare system it is also important to mention in the context of this interview, given it is being conducted for, and by, postgraduate students. For not only is the degree of individual risk and debt carried by the majority of people today currently being enlarged as a result of governments continuing to pursue such neoliberal policies, it is also being extended into the future. In the UK the latter is happening most notably in the form of the student debt created by the introduction and subsequent tripling of tuition fees. If the latest estimates are to be believed, many of today's undergraduates will owe around £50,000 pounds by the time they graduate.

[4] Nor is the concept of the individual always and everywhere the same. For a discussion of some of the differences between the individual, the person and the subject as they occur in the history of philosophy, see Roberto Esposito, *The Third Person: Politics of Life and Philosophy of the Impersonal* (London: Polity, 2012).

[5] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978-79* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 318.

[6] Chantal Mouffe, mobilising the work of one of liberalism's most trenchant critics, Carl Schmitt, goes so far as to insist that the 'methodological individualism which characterises liberal thought precludes understanding the nature of collective identities' (Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005) 11).

[7] Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).

[8] For more on the 'open media' teaching at Coventry, see Pauline Van Mourik Broekman, Gary Hall, Ted Byfield, Shaun Hides and Simon Worthington, *Open Education: A Study in Disruption* (London:

Rowman and Littlefield International2014); and Lou McGill and Tim Gray, Open Media Classes at Coventry University, July 2015, http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6069/1/JR0041_OPEN_EDUCATION_REPORT_V3.pdf.

[9] Vilém Flusser, *Into the Universe of Technical Images* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). For a reinflection of Stiegler's version of this narrative, see Gary Hall, '#MySubjectivation', *New Formations*, number 79, Autumn, 2013.

[10] Stelarc, 'Extra Ear', *Stelarc*, http://stelarc.org/?catID=20229, accessed January 6, 2016.

[11] Friedrich Nietzsche, in F. Nietzsche, *Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1975 – 84), pt. 3, 1: 172; quoted in Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 208; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) 17; William Blake, *Jerusalem*, Book II, chapter 34, quoted in Marshall McLuhan, *The Guttenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 265.

[12] http://www.openhumanitiespress.org.

[13] Liquid Books is available at: http://www.openhumanitiespress.org/books/series/liquid-books; and *Living Books About Life* at: http://www.livingbooksaboutlife.org.

[14] www.photomediationsmachine.net.

[15] http://after.video/assemblages.

[16] http://disruptivemedia.org.uk.

[17] Gary Hall, *Pirate Philosophy: For a Digital Posthumanities* (Cambridge, Massachussetts: MIT Press, 2016, forthcoming), 17.

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