

On conditioning—through practices

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1.

Con-ditioning: to say-with, to talk-together. Or even to show-together, to put-together.

In any case, no doubt about the common. No doubt, implicitly, about plurality—maybe even diversity—about connections between differentiated singularities.

No doubt, consequently, about the articulation of two, at least apparently divergent tendencies: togetherness and difference—in a more specific way: contingency and contrast.

Con-tingency: the common-touch, the mutual contact. In a first possible modality, not as con-fluence but rather as in-fluence. In this case, we surpass, intensify the common by making use of the porosity of the membranes of contact.

Mutual touch penetrating, intimately participating “the other”, infiltrating, mixing up, hybridizing, contaminating—maybe minimally, maybe unnoticeably in the moment in which it occurs, maybe showing the results, rather the con-sequences, later.

Conditioning intimately, “from the inside”, we could say, becoming part (of the “inside”) of the bodies in touch, becoming (part of) the “other bodies”.

An invisible, silent, still, apparently motionless way of conditioning.

Osmotic conditioning, we could say. Transforming—if we still accept the difference—the bodies “in themselves” instead, or at least not immediately, their chronotopology, their situated appearance for one another and for “others”—others located in another, more distant, detached, we could say, otherness.

Subtle changes of tonality through micro-penetrations. The performance of contingency through in-filtration: slowly trespassing the felt we offer to our “outside”, to “the other”, to “the others”, finding ways—without actively searching for them—through the dense, but still permeable boundaries.

Transforming the whole situation without acting on the situation—is this not always the case with conditioning?—but on its sub-stance—we could say, meaning simply what stays-under—through the sub-stance of their contingent agents, through a re-sub-stantivation of their most intimate bodies, of their immanent flows—a mutual alteration of their ostensibly, “innermost” processes of embodiment.

Another possibility: mutual touch without getting into each other but operating on the opacity, on the resistance of the surfaces of touch. A more elementary, more immediate form of contingency: contingency through contact. Stopping, dwelling there, were the touch begins.

Resistant bodies—“Gegenstände”: standing against one another.

Touch, thus, inevitably as pressure. Impenetrable touch—touch itself being solid, dense, resistant against solid, dense, resistant bodies, or, more precisely, bodily boundaries, surfaced and surfacing bodies—bodies appearing and operating as surfaces, as plains of resistance.

Displacement, consequently, instead of penetration. Changes, of course, as the possible variety of transformation. Chronotopological variations: bodies stopping, accelerating, slowing down, changing spots, changing positions—altering (possible) trajectories.

Mutually, potentially, affecting the respective vectors, the ductus of each body-in-touch, their paths, the realization of accumulated inertia—of habits, of a lack of power to respond, we could say, initially, but actually a variety of response through the agency of accumulated, sedimented, routinized, embodied repetition—but also of projected and self-projecting wishes, plans, desires.

Saying-with, now, as performing pressure, as pushing—transformative pushing. Variations of air pressure, contractions and expansions of air molecules that connect bodies before the bodies touch each other—before they do it in an unmediated way, without air in between. Variations of air pressure that bring bodies in touch without possibly piercing them, remaining “outside”, in touch—maybe waiting, observing, listening to one another.

Variations of air pressure that do not turn into sound—into a commonly constituted phenomena—but press the bodies able to perform the transmutation: the constitution of the audible out of variations of pressure.

Listening, thus, now, as being pushed, as accepting, somehow, uninterestedly, the pressure—without letting it in, tensing the eardrum, renouncing its plasticity, blocking in order to make the connection, in another way, possible.

Assuming—dully, in a muffled way—the alien touch.

Without im-plication—without folding-in or folding-upon, but instead maintaining the rigidity that, in this case, enables the change, the realization of the common.

A cold commonness, we could say, a purposeless variety of communication—of making-together—with purpose: to make-together, to enable the common.

The constant variation of a disinterested mutual touch—“we don’t want to talk to each other”, we could say, “it’s not about that”, “it’s not about establishing a commonality”, “it’s not about anything”, “it’s not ‘about’”: it’s simply “with”, a radical and disinterested “withness”. It is simply happening—it is the realization of an unintentional touch—powerful, precisely, due to its lack of in-tentionality, of inter-est.

Pressure—moving, stopping, deviating, deforming—and infiltration as two varieties of realization of contingency—two ways of getting in touch, of conditioning through touch.

Contrast: not con-trast but contra-st. The densest formulation of opposition—of staying-against, of another, even harder, form of “Gegenständigkeit”. No way to get either into each other or in touch with one another, we could say, but, is it really possible to not get in touch? Is this possibility still given when someone (me, in this case) is regarding the entities we are talking about, the units that can be related to one another—that are already related to one another, at least, because I’m regarding both—that can talk to each other? Accepting for now the possible negation: connection, now, through difference, through distance, through a primary, maybe fundamental and even insurmountable distinction.

Conditioning, now, through the agency of negation: through not-being-in-touch, through a powerful affirmation of the negation of contact.

Talking-with, saying-with, even more silently now. This time not due to a radical intimacy but, on the contrary, to a gap, to the realization of distance—of an in-between. Paradoxically, we could say, a connecting in-betweenness, bringing in touch what it separates—like water between islands. In-betweenness, thus, now, as conditioning agent.

It is now the agency of the gap, of the absence, which enables conditioning, which conditions—which says, which talks-with. It is a “void in the center” which is now the agent of this conversation—of this turning-together.

Not by providing the space for the units to be in touch, to realize, to perform the touch. Not as a condition of possibility for them to realize their agencies, but acting itself, turning them—to one another, against each other, in divergent directions. Talking with them, with both, simultaneously—in this simultaneity is probably the source of its agency—and subsidiarily, as an unintended side effect, bringing them to talk, to condition the situation they share—unwillingly—the situation they co-constitute through adopting their respective positions, through the actualization of the void that joins them by separating them, by keeping them asunder—a negative construction of the common.

2.

I record. I use machines to register alterations of my environment: alterations of air pressure, of light.

The machines register them. I use machines to register them: not what I hear, not what I see—not sounds, not images—but only perturbations of my environment—while hearing, listening, seeing and watching, or not.

The machines and I are in a different relationship to the not-I and the not-machine, and the relationship between the machines and I begins to close the circle, we could say. And this difference, constituted as concept—although not only conceptually generated—is the first interlocutor, the first conditioning agent.

I address the process of recording departing from this fundamental difference: I hear, listen, see and watch—the machines don't. But I depart also from a commonality—established as well as a conceptual construction—between the machines and I: neither of us represent reality.

A conceptual network of conditions, therefore, is there before I begin to record.

Conceptual conditions originated in the field of recording through practices of registering, of editing, of facing recordings—my recordings, recordings of others—and also in another field of practices, in other medium: in the medium of language, performing different practices of reading and writing.

I think this conditions through recording—performing specific practices of registration with specific technologies in the auditory or in the visual medium. I inhabit the network of conceptual conditions by generating, inevitably, a new network of constraints determined now by the chronotopological structure of the process of recording, the machines I use, and the very specific

way I activate these conditions—the specific series of actions I performed, simultaneously conditioned and conditioning the structure of intentions—a subnet of conditions—related to the process of recording and its results.

I think conditioning through practices: I think conditioning through the generation, activation and performance of conditions.

I inhabit fields of contingent agencies by acting in certain ways.

I participate in contingent infra-structures of constraints engaging, therefore, unavoidably, with a process of emergence of sense, of continuous transformation of my surroundings—all kind of presences conditioning the self (or selves) underpinning the subject of this sentence, the always capitalized “I” at the beginning of this phrase—into co-herent, significant, viable environments—viable for the selves to and with which they appear.

I think, therefore, through practices. Practices that think—thinking practices: thinking as practices, or better as practicing—and therefore I think the conditions of the practice that think.

Is the displacement of the agent, of the instance that performs its agency, from the subject, the “I” of the former paragraph, to its practices, or better its practicing simply a rhetorical gesture? Maybe this shift was originated as such, as a rhetorical gesture, or better through a gesture of writing, a move of my fingers on the keyboard—I am writing, now, on my laptop—but the observation—a slow, detailed observation not controlled by a strong intention of writing something concrete, something determined or even pre-determined, even not an intention of “getting to a point” but rather to disclose, to open up a field (not an intention of saying-something but rather of saying-with)—this artifact generated through a specific practice in a specific medium allows me now to consider its validity—its validity outside of the flow of writing: its ideal validity, we could say.

This is the operative core of the practice of writing I’m performing right now: an exploratory essaying—a trial, an attempt, an approach to an issue without knowing (in which direction I should proceed and I am proceeding, nor what is happening and what is going to happen, nor

even what is going to be the next word, the next sentence, the wideness of the space between this and the next paragraph on the surface on which they will appear).

I write. I perform practices of writing—specific ways of actualizing the conditions of possibility provided by the medium of language, by language as medium. “I condition my thinking on conditioning through writing,” we could say. But to say this—to write this, to be more precise—would be wrong since it implies a thinking foreign to writing, foreign to the practice I’m performing right now—a recurrent Cartesian echo of a disembodied and thus not-practicing thinking entity, simply, we could say, the expression of a cultural habit. Instead: “Through writing I think conditioning”—still not good enough, not dense enough, not exhaustive enough. Maybe this: “performing thinking as writing”. Or better: “Performing thinking-as-writing, I—the actualization of my embodied self through thinking-as-writing, this thinking-as-writing thing—am addressing conditioning” which means that I am setting conditions—organized signs appearing on the screen of my laptop that, as I already know, will reach you as formalized ink on paper—for us (me and you) to address this issue we call “conditioning”.

(As you see, the medium—language—actualized through the practice I call “exploratory essay” is collapsing—is showing its limits and, therefore, is showing itself, is loosing its opacity.)

Thinking conditioning through practice: thinking as productive practice—as the generation of organized signs providing conditions to address a specific issue, in this case “conditioning”.

And as a particular case, thinking conditioning through aesthetic practices: setting conditions to destabilize, to disclose a subject-matter—to provide conditions for new stabilizations, for alternative de- and, especially, con-notations.