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This Face: a Critique of Faciality as Mediated Self-Presence

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In this paper I develop a concept of the face that begins with a simple idea: the face is that which withdraws from self-presence, thereby enabling the possibility of self-relation with others. The face is the *mark* of the self in the sense proposed by Walter Benjamin, as the medium that manifests the sign by withdrawing from it (“Painting”), thereby opening up possibilities in the materiality of the medium itself for future self-configurations unseeable in current forms of self-identity. This idea, I argue, leads to an *affirmation* of the self as other, as the self “to come,” opening up possibilities for critique from the place where the face withdraws. My aim here is to counter two tendencies in theoretical work: one in which the face is taken to be the sign of simple self-presence, and the other where, in its withdrawal from self-presence, the face disappears into a system or conceptual scheme, losing its singular specificity as *this face*, and hence its potential for being something other than what it is.

To make my case I offer an analysis of the conventional face-to-face situation of direct communication with another (the I-you relation), showing how it necessarily depends on a mediation that retreats as it makes this relation possible. I argue that this retreating mediation *is* the face in its withdrawal and hence resistance to self-identity and conceptual determination. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that the withdrawing face cannot be elided or sublated into an idea or material affect without losing sight of the fact that it happens. My argument counters the material-idealist concept of faciality proposed by Deleuze and Guattari as a “redundancy” within a field of pure material affectivity (*A Thousand Plateaus* 168). Instead, I argue for a situated *critique* (critical praxis) of the face opened to otherness in the finite place where it happens – ; as the mark of withdrawal from self-presence. To demonstrate this, I will discuss photographic work as a creative political art practice that makes a face appear as such, thereby enabling new self-relations motivated by renewed democratic concerns for global “matters of concern.”

I

The face is one of the most studied, drawn and reproduced features of the human body, offered as a portrait of the human soul and as a visible access to the innerness of the psyche. By looking at a human face we seem to come in contact with something intimate, undeniably true or real. The face presents itself as unmediated presence, a possibility of pure, direct experience of otherness, unaffected by words or symbols, a chance to step outside our own subjective world into the world of others to share experience in the immediacy of a *sensus communis* that transcends the subjective self.

It’s no wonder then, that the term “face-to-face” has become a signifier of pure communication – either an ideal to which all communication should aspire, or more critically, a false promise that

obscures the entangled context of mediation as the real condition of any communicative event. The term interface – the technological platform that facilitates communication – retains a sense of this possibility of pure communication in the presence of face-to-face interaction; the interface promises a seemingly transcendent space of common experience, where users can commune unhindered by the mundane bodily experiences of quotidian subjective life.

Much has been written about the interface as a facilitating platform for communication and media events, but what of the faciality of the interface itself? In what sense is an interface specifically a *face*? This question cannot be answered by appealing to the instrumental capacities of the interface itself, since to do so would be to presuppose the face as an already accomplished task in the *tekhnè* (the plan or calculation) that the interface enacts. Rather we need to think of what it is that a face makes possible, what *it* enacts. We must think of the face as a singular phenomenon: *this face* that I see before me as I think the “you” that it makes apparent. But what is this face before me – before the “me,” the “I” and the “you” that it makes apparent – that it *makes possible*?

For something to be seen there must be both a seer and a thing seen. Seeing always involves a self-reflection (a praxis) that grounds seeing in an act of seeing. [1] This means that I must also *see myself* seeing you when I see you. If I simply saw you there would be no reflection and hence no experience of an “I” to separate seeing from the thing seen. I would in fact be you. This is confirmed when we consider the limit case where I see myself reflected in the mirror: I always *see myself* as I see the “you” that I take myself to be. One cannot experience alterity as complete otherness, since to do so would be to wipe out the experiencing self – the “I” that relates to the other – thereby making the concept of alterity redundant. [2] To think the other as if it existed independently of the self is to elide the *place* of the self in the self-relation required for an experience of alterity. [3]

What this means is that my sense of “I” depends on a self-relation that can only occur by you and me *not* seeing each other directly; by a mediation that always comes between us. But this “coming-between” does not block self-relation, rather it makes it possible by a withdrawal that makes the self-relation happen. Self-presence is possible but only by a mediation that withdraws in the act of making it possible. In terms of the face-to-face situation, this mediation *is* the face – that which, by its appearing as such, makes the “seeing” of face-to-face communication possible but is itself *unseeable* – invisible in the seeing itself. [4] Furthermore, this invisibility of the face is not something that transcends the event of self-presence; it is not a “necessary condition” of the immediacy of face-to-face presence. Rather, the invisible face is an immanence that *marks* the event by withdrawing from it. [5] Its invisibility is thus not unseen, but a particular kind of visibility seen as a vanishing from the scene of self-presence.

This invisibility of the face – its withdrawal from sight in the very event of seeing – means that unmediated experience is not impossible; rather its possibility comes through a mediation that the experience must disavow at the same time. If the criterion for full, unmediated presence is direct seeing in face-to-face situations, then the face marks the site not of fulfilled presence, but, quite the opposite, of an emptying of presence – an *ecstasis* that opens the seeing self to an outside within the closure of the I-you relation itself. The face evacuates presence; it withdraws from the I-you relation into the “outside” of seeing itself, into an indeterminate otherness. The face, then, is not the interfacial platform on which an I-you relation is built but its absolute limit, the point at which the I-you relation dissolves into faciality.

By faciality I refer to a certain technicity of the face: its presence as a technical *infrastructure* grounded in specific face encounters through time and space. I have borrowed the term infrastructure from Rodolph Gasché as an “open matrix” (147) of “structurally nontotalizable arrangements of heterogeneous elements” (100). A technical infrastructure grounds the face in temporal and spatial visibility; it makes the face live on through technological mediation

understood broadly as the very possibility of communicative interaction between individuals gathered into formations of self-identity. As technical infrastructure, faciality is the face's materiality – its material support distributed through the technological transformation of face encounters over time and space. These encounters – the myriad events which constitute our own everyday lives – involve both power and freedom as the self's chance to renew itself in its relation to others; as the perpetual grounding of the otherwise ungrounded body in technical mediation. The face dissolves into faciality when it reaches the limit of what it represents – when it no longer identifies a subject but passes into otherness. In passing into otherness the face withdraws – folds back into its technical support, thereby retaining a capacity to move forward at the same time, but at the expense of self-identity. Faciality *as such* can only be experienced, therefore, as a technical obsolescence (a withdrawing or fading) that grounds the face in the ruins of self-identity.

The face does not mean my face or someone else's face. Face is not an appearance (for a self) that conceals something behind it. The face is not a mask, even in the sense of a mask that hides nothing. Rather the face is the fact of otherness *and in this fact a self is* (myself *as* face, in the possibility that I am for others). The face of the other is not another face, but face *as* other, thought strictly in its as-ness, without mediation. Being without mediation does not mean in the absence of mediation, nor does it mean pure unmediated presence; rather, it means being in or on the outside of mediation – being *with-out* what mediates.

As the fact of otherness, the face *grounds* the self in self-presence, constituting a basis for self-identity predicated on the I-you relation. However, in doing this, the face necessarily withdraws, so that the grounding of the self is also an *ungrounding*. The self is both grounded and ungrounded at the same time, a chiasmic movement that dissolves self-identity and opens to absolute possibilities. This openness is not an opening into groundlessness, but an *affirmation* of the finite self as otherwise, in resistance to what it already is. [6] If I am a face before I can be an "I" then this face that I am, this face-as-self, is always something that faces another *by withdrawing from it*. The self persists as a being-self, but only by *resisting* what it already is as an "I" in relation to a "you." In its faciality, the self withdraws from any identity assigned to it, and in this withdrawal marks itself as *a* face, as a singular, indeterminate event.

My attempt here to think the singularity of the face has uncovered a space of potential selfhood in relation to an other that always remains outside the I-you conditions of self-presence (the basis of speech as logos or discourse). This space constitutes the possibility of a beginning, or a beginning of the possibilities of forming new self-other relations that does not depend on already operating I-you relations defined by calculated selfhoods and determined by types and markers of identity. This space – the space occupied by the withdrawing face in its "invisible visibility" – is the limit of the self in its relation to an other, and hence the *chance* of the self as other.

II

The experience of unmediated presence defined by an encounter with the face is a major philosopheme in Western thought since Hegel, setting problems for self-overcoming in the split between the self and other that the encounter enacts. I have suggested that arguments about technological mediation in which the face is understood as a construction of technological processes (*tekhnè*) are insufficient because they presuppose a self-other relation that constitutes the mediation itself – a relation that still has to be accounted for. We still need to understand mediation itself as a face – a face that withdraws, and in this withdrawal a self exists. In the face's withdrawal, the self becomes grounded in what it already is, but only insofar as this is-ness is grasped resistively as a residual element of the withdrawing face.

In what follows in this section I propose a brief critique of Deleuze and Guattari's influential concept of faciality. My aim here is to show how Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the face, while offering clarifying analysis of faciality as absolutely other, nevertheless lacks critical purchase on the encounter itself – the event of the face. Deleuze and Guattari's work is a *pre-critical* attempt to

open up the transcendental field of faciality as groundless otherness. Their work is thus limited to a safe analytical description of this field (safe because what it sees is seen well in advance, in the pure gaze looking out from the perspective of absolute otherness). Instead I propose a *critical praxis* of specific engagements with face encounters as grounded critique (discussed more fully in Section IV). Grounded critique opens itself to absolute possibilities by risking its own ground in self-reflection.

In their book *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari develop a philosophical analysis of the concept by drawing on specific philosophical gestures (Descartes, Kant) as exemplary for modern thought. Their aim is to create concepts out of the gestures by submitting them to their immanent conditions of possibility; to the field of conceptuality through which they operate. In one such exercise, they develop a concept of the other, providing the following scene:

Let us proceed in a summary fashion: we will consider a field of experience taken as a real world no longer in relation to a self but to a simple "there is." There is, at some moment, a calm and restful world. Suddenly a frightened face looms up that looks at something out of the field. The other person appears here as neither subject nor object but as something that is very different: a possible world, the possibility of a frightened world. Here then, is a concept of the other that presupposes no more than the determination of a sensory world as condition. On this condition the other appears as the expression of a possibility. (*What is Philosophy?* 17)

Here Deleuze and Guattari locate an initial philosophical gesture in the phenomenon of a problematic self-other encounter, adding to the long line of such gestures from Descartes to Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and Derrida. In Deleuze and Guattari's scene, the encounter is described in terms of a "field of experience," which is in effect a *pure* field of experience; that is, one emptied of any conceptual determination by the elimination of the subjective self. Deleuze and Guattari ask what does an encounter with this pure field of experience bring forth; what does it make possible? Their answer is an *other* in the irruption of a frightened face. Deleuze and Guattari's empirical gesture (the privileging of the sensible as the primary site of knowledge) means that the other does not exist outside or behind the experience, but emerges from the experience itself. The other is an *experience* of otherness, experienced as "the expression of a possibility."

Deleuze and Guattari do not want to relate this experience to a self; they do not want to invoke otherness in relation to self-experience, self-consciousness or self-awareness: "we will consider a field of experience taken as a real world no longer in relation to a self but to a simple 'there is.'" This field of experience, as a "simple 'there is'" comes prior to any self in its relation to the other, so that what we're left with is a field of pure otherness. We can clarify this issue more fully by referring to Deleuze's discussion of the transcendent Idea in *Difference and Repetition*. At one point he posits the possibility of the "transcendent exploration of the Idea" (204) as pure difference; that is, as a transcendent field in which the opposition between self and other is pluralised into pure difference. This "pluralisation" of opposition replaces the negativity of the "not" (not-being, not-I, not-self and so forth) with a positivity of singularities. In effect, this procedure opens up the possibility of a pure transcendent field of otherness that dispenses with the self as self-consciousness; that is, a field of pluralised differences suspended in the Idea yet grounded in singular positivity at the same time. [7]

However, as I will shortly demonstrate, this field is not simply a field of otherness in the complete absence of any self, but a field that transcends the self as the absolute condition of selfhood. Furthermore, this field is not provisional, virtual or possible, but a "real world," or "there is," a world directly accessible to experience. Deleuze and Guattari thus lay claim to a special insight – a pre-critical analytical gaze disencumbered by self-reflection, and close to Spinoza's God-like vision of the absolutely real. Their concept of the face and faciality needs to be understood in

terms of the possibilities of the self opened up in transcendental analysis which gains *direct access* to faciality as a real world event, thus reversing the usual procedure of transcendental analysis which, since Kant, surrenders the God-like gaze of absolute knowing in order to begin with a critical moment of real world indeterminacy – in the openness of a possibility that cannot be known in advance.

A transcendental analysis cannot presuppose the self as an already constituted entity (an *ipseity*), but must describe its conditions of emergence, its very possibility. And in this regard, Deleuze and Guattari's scene of the irrupting face is exemplary. However, in presenting this "calm and restful world" of experience rudely interrupted by the looming face, Deleuze and Guattari are asking too much: by excluding the self they are obliged to let it back in again. This re-inscription comes in the form of an appearance: "The other person appears here." The face is not simply a face, a simple "there is," as they propose, but something that makes another person *appear*. [8] Now, an appearance cannot be an appearance for itself, but must be an appearance for someone, a self who sees it as a face of an other. Deleuze and Guattari describe this possibility in the following way: "the other person *appears here* [in this face] as neither subject nor object but as something that is very different." In "appearing here," the "other person" must be an appearance for someone, another self in its relation to this "other person," but a self that is "very different" from a subjective or objective self. This self that appears, neither subject nor object, is another *being* in relation to the being that the face is. The self for which the face appears is part of the being-in-relation of beings in general or, as Alain Badiou has written, the "being multiple" (*Theoretical Writings* 170) of singular being related in a field of appearances. [9] But since Deleuze and Guattari have specifically excluded the self from the field that they are describing, what status does this self have if it cannot *be* a self? The self here must be a self held in suspension, in the possibility that the face announces, as "the expression of a possible."

But we still need to account for a stubborn fact: the fact that the other person "appears here," and hence in no other place. This appearing here; this deixis of the face as an appearance for a suspended self, means that the self must already be present to the other, must already be in some sense the possibility that the other announces. What this scene presents is not simply the "concept of the other that presupposes no more than the determination of a sensory world as condition," but *this* face that "appears here" to a self, in an already grounded encounter, recounted in words in this book, in my reading of it, as an example of the very possibility of the "concept of the other." The concept carries with it its necessary grounding in an "expression of the possible" *which is that very possibility*.

In their example, Deleuze and Guattari describe an experience of the face as if it had already withdrawn from the self, in the pure experience of otherness. However, what we have seen is not a completely withdrawn face, but a face in the act of withdrawing from the self, in the "frightening" prospect of otherness, prepared for flight. [10] Deleuze and Guattari's frightened face can be seen as the fleeing face of Dasein *but looked at from the perspective of the other*. The face's withdrawal into "the possibility of a frightened world" must also be, then, the self's own fact: its finite possibility as a singular self, here, at this place, confronted by the looming face. The self *is*, but only insofar as this is-ness is made possible by the presence of a looming, frightened face looking otherwise. What it makes possible then is not something that might come in some future time, but something *that has already arrived*: a finite self exposed in the singularity of the "there is."

In withdrawing from the self, in allowing the self to be, the face does not collapse into an abyss of nothing, but disappears into the oblivion (forgetfulness) of faciality: the barely visible technicity (*arche*-text) that makes a self possible in its "vanishing" or retreat from the scene. This *arche*-text – text as (ungrounded) ground of self-presence – is the "open matrix" of technicity (the resistive play of signifiers) that both supports and undermines the system of philosophy (transcendental analysis) that we encounter in Deleuze and Guattari's book. A critical praxis engages with the face in its withdrawal from the self, *here* in this instance, but against the grain of Deleuze and

Guattari's analysis and the system that it outlines, as the finite possibility of a new self yet to be related to an other.

III

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of faciality can be understood in terms of what Deleuze calls "reverse Platonism," or the reversal of the order of the Idea and its actualisation. In Platonism, the Idea transcends the actual whereas in reverse Platonism the Idea is an immanent event within the actual itself: "Events are ideational singularities which communicate in one and the same Event" (*Logic of Sense* 53). In an event, "each 'thing' opens itself up to the infinity of predicates through which it passes, as it loses its centre, that is, its identity as concept or self" (174). *A Thousand Plateaus* offers a description of faciality in terms of what the authors call an "abstract machine," as an immanent event inhabiting actual "concrete" faces. The concrete face is "engendered by an abstract machine of faciality" (168) or set of globalised energy-information relations that specifies particular kinds of subjectivities in localised sites of subjectification: "the abstract machine of faciality assumes a role of selective response, or choice: given a concrete face, the machine judges whether it passes or not, whether it goes or not, on the basis of the elementary facial traits" (177). And "it is faces that choose their subjects" (180). The purpose of an abstract machine is "the computation of normalities" (178). The abstract machine is a *system* in the Hegelian sense as the Idea becoming itself in material actuality. [11]

The abstract machine of faciality is not a universal system (an Idea) that determines the subjectification of the self-as-face, but a univocal systematisation (an immanent ideation) that disseminates faciality across a field of experience. [12] Becoming-self then, is not a movement from an indeterminate sense to a determined self-identity (the self does not evolve or come to be from some embryonic state). Rather, becoming-self is precisely the reverse: a movement from the determination of self-identity secured in current modes of facialisation, to the self as indeterminate singularity: the "black hole of subjectivity" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 168). The self is a *subtraction* from the determinations of the abstract machine of facialisation: a resistive singularity of pure sense, where "all referents are lost, and the formation of man gives way to a new, unknown element, to the mystery of a formless, nonhuman life" (*Essays Critical and Clinical* 77).

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of faciality floats in the Idea; in the groundlessness of pure otherness that calls for a grounding in the concretion of the actual. Now, in proposing faciality in this way, Deleuze and Guattari reject both the Hegelian "negation of the negation" in which the self becomes what it is by a negation of the not-self as other, and the Kantian moment of self-reflection in which the self becomes what it is through a spontaneous self-beginning. That is, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the self is *pre-critical* in that it does not refer to a critical moment where the self becomes grounded in self-reflection. Rather, the self "becomes" from the groundless Real of an immanent ideation, rendering it incoherently singular ("a new, unknown element ... the mystery of a formless, nonhuman life"). Deleuze and Guattari replace Kantian and Hegelian critique and its problem of ground (what are the grounds of the self – under what conditions can a self be?) with a reverse Platonism, drawing from Spinoza, Leibniz and Bergson, concerned with the becoming ground of the self, subtracted from the groundlessness of a "purely formal Real" (Gabriel and Žižek 12). [13]

I have indicated that through Deleuze and Guattari's own example, as well as the example offered at the beginning of this paper, the face cannot be thought except through an experience of a face, at the moment when a face appears as other. My point here is that this experience is always grounded in its fact – in the unavoidable event of its occurrence, and is thus thoroughly implicated in a critical moment of indeterminacy. Instead of a pre-critical analytical gaze that begins from the ideational experience of the face (the face as abstract machine) I begin from the experience of the face itself, embedded in particular events of faciality, responding *critically* to the indeterminacy it manifests and other ways of being towards which it points. This critical engagement with the event of the face begins strictly from the contingency of the event itself, in

the “there is” of the field of experience that Deleuze and Guattari invoke. But this “there is” of this field, this fact of experience, is not “simple,” as Deleuze and Guattari would have it. It is not a pure field of experience devoid of the reflective complexities of the self. Rather, as I have indicated in my reading of their text, it is *necessarily* inhabited by the possibilities of a self at the very moment of its exemplification; a self *must be* – must be in relation to the other that this field invokes, even if Deleuze and Guattari have explicitly ruled this out.

IV

The challenge is to engage in a critical praxis that *begins* from the place of self reflection, at the point where the self becomes indeterminately other, and from that place begin to think the possibility of a new self-relation in the indeterminacy of sense. To indicate how this might occur I refer to a series of photographs taken by the theorist-photographer Alan Sekula, published under the title *Waiting for Tear Gas*, and Philip Armstrong’s analysis of them in his recent book *Reticulations: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Networks of the Political*. The photographs document violent clashes between police and demonstrators that took place in Seattle during the 1999 World Traded Organisation summit meeting, while Armstrong reads the photographs in terms of a new kind of global politics – a politics of global visibility operating in “the space of the real” (216), making a new face of resistance visible in the global mediascapes of public life. Outlining the various failures of leftist political action in resisting global capitalism, Armstrong invites us to see Sekula’s photographs as an *affirmation* of the possibilities of resistance, mobilised by the photographs themselves.

By presenting themselves in the absence of meta-coding or explanatory framework, Sekula’s photographs invoke the raw “there is” of the Seattle clashes: the “*res gestae*” (217) of the event as an expressive fact marked on the photographic image itself – similar to Barthes’s concept of the *punctum* (*Camera Lucida* 27). The photographs “attest to the untechnical matter-of-factness of their visual description, their banal, almost dumb facticity” (226). They constitute a

“simple descriptive physiognomy” of the protests, one in which the “alliance” on the streets and the “new face” of protest are given visibility in ways that do not merely lend themselves to a narrative unfolding – There is no politics of representation either, in the sense that there is no attempt to represent the protestors and derive or deduce a politics from that representation. There is only an *exposure*, in which the demonstrators are presented in terms of their appearance and visibility – their “new face” or in which the relation within and between the demonstrators, police and WTO representatives comes into view. (217-218, emphasis added).

The images do not represent the Seattle event (they do not invite the viewer to see past them to some abstract idea of what the event means); rather they *expose* the event in a certain way, making a physiognomy – a face – come into view. This face appears in terms of a relation between forces whose rivalry erupts in a clash at *this* particular place and time. *This* face appears here at *this* moment, as the images themselves show us.

This face is not a metonym for a more general “face of resistance.” Rather it marks the place of resistance as “waiting” in anticipation of what is to come, not only for the tear gas signalled in the title *Waiting for Tear Gas*, but in anticipation of future events of resistance, future political acts and future gatherings of people in other contexts within the global mediascapes into which the images will eventually be disseminated: “they gesture toward the appearance of a people, in the sense that they expose a new face or in the sense that this space of appearance is simultaneously transformed into the space of exposure” (Armstrong 231). In their “lack of recognition and legibility in the ‘new face of protest’” (221), the photographs become “an enabling measure for rethinking a larger set of critical initiatives, in which the very constitution of contemporary political movements is debated and proposed, including the creation of new terms for defining this ‘new face’ of protest itself” (220). By exposing the Seattle demonstrations *as such*, they cut

through the dialectical power between the opposing forces of capital and anti-capital, offering instead a new possibility, a “new face” of resistance in the *res gestae* of the event itself for a “people to come.”

Here we can see the outlines of a certain democratic process characterised by dissensus: a creative practice of exposing a “gap in the sensible itself” (Rancière 38). By resisting aesthetic expectations of formal unity and symbolic recuperation into higher order meaning, the images fracture and fragment the event, opening it up to potentially new meanings and modes of engagement that would otherwise be denied in a strict dialectical struggle between capital and anti-capital forces. They become an “enabling measure” to debate what is to be done in a freely articulated way, “creating new terms” for political action. The images *democratise* the possibility of political action and resistance to global power by refusing totalisation themselves, by stubbornly remaining indeterminate and open to future reading, thought and action.

By democratisation I mean the process of retaining a certain freedom to think the being-together of individuals as part of a free *polis*; a process that requires the capacity to reflect on and risk current modes of self-hood and self-identity for an opened relation to otherness (see my “Democracy and Critique: Recovering Freedom in Nancy and Derrida”). Here we can draw on Chantal Mouffe’s call for a radical democracy based on the civic republican idea of “public goods” shared by individuals in a free *polis* (Mouffe 227-228). In civic republicanism, individuals are not related to one another by virtue of mutually recognised liberties (negative freedom) but by a constituting being-together oriented to commonly shared public goods (positive freedom). The photographs in *Waiting for Tear Gas* contribute to the formation of new political affiliations gathered around common global interests (e.g. environmental issues of deforestation and water conservation, third world poverty, religious and ethnic injustices, animal rights and so forth) now emerging as part of a global *polis* of politically motivated individuals and groups debating and formulating projects and responses to “public goods” shared by humanity-at-large. This new space is a space of positive freedom: freedom burdened with the collective responsibility to be; to affirm one’s being-with others as positive for being a self. It appears in-between the social identities and political affiliations of subjects already captured within the confines of liberal democracy and its compromise with global capital, enabling new identities and modes of selfhood to be brought into existence through renewed and redirected political debate and action. This being-brought-into-existence involves an orientation to public goods that become the “matters of concern” (Latour 231) around which new modes of selfhood can be formed.

This “new face” of protest becomes real in its appearing *as such*, in the “space of the real” opened up to the future. In returning to the issues discussed in the first part of this paper, the photographs in *Waiting for Tear Gas* make the face of resistance appear as part of an infrastructure (an “open matrix”) of material affects and significations, but in such a way that it folds back into its technical support: into the “dumb facticity” of photographic materiality. In this case, identity fades into technical asignification or what Barthes calls *signifiante* (“The Third Meaning” 65), in a creative act of technical obsolescence (by refusing current aesthetic modes, the photographs retreat into their primitive photographic form). The photographs are thus a withdrawal from the event: they partake of the event by withdrawing from it, by *showing us* this withdrawing back into the nothingness of waiting within the photographic medium itself. They make the face of the other appear *as such*, in the *res gestae* of the event and in the photographs themselves. The photographs thus carry with them part of the event as an *affirmation* of the face as other, in the open indeterminacy of new forms of selfhood defined by potential political acts in resistance to dominant global order and power.

The photographs suggest a nexus between art and politics in terms of a critical praxis that *makes* a face appear. As a creative act, art exposes self-identity as a system (the system of identities that regulate who and what we are as subjects). The artefacts it produces become both documentations of resistance and affirmations of otherness, pointing to future ways of being-a-self occluded in

current modes of self-identity. As a critical praxis, art is able to make new relations appear as possibilities within sites of a renewed critical democracy. These relations are grounded in positive freedom: a common orientation to public goods which become matters of concern over which debate and action can take place, rather than the private pursuit of self-interest as is currently the case in Western liberal democracies.

V

Faciality (the mediation of the self-other relation) is not nothing – it cannot be made to disappear in the self-evidence of a pure experience of the other, but is itself the mark of this disappearing – its fact as a face, as technical faciality that always remains as material ground, as part of infrastructure. Faciality is not an abstract machine or ideational form whose immanence to the self constitutes the self's condition of subjectification, but the immanence in all modes of subjectification that releases a self for otherness. This immanence is defined by the finitude of the self, its relation to otherness engaged strictly in singular circumstances, as a critical reflection or praxis on what might possibly be. This praxis does not position itself transcendently on the side of pure otherness, but within the complexity of the self-other relation as it is experienced, in the “immediate” appearance of the other (to a finite self). This appearance marks the flight of the other away from the self into faciality, or the technical infrastructure that supports it by retreating from the scene. The face is the ruination of the self as self-identity, and in this ruination the possibility of a future self emerges. Creative acts of self-indeterminacy, such as those we saw in Sekula's photographs, draw attention to this possibility as well as making it happen through dissemination into public mediascapes.

A critique of the face as the withdrawal of self-presence needs to be located in specific instances of faciality, where the appearance of the face disturbs the self-evidence of identity. As I have argued, the face is not the site of self-identity: it does not signify a self in relation to an other in terms of an I-you. Rather, the face is the ground on which self-identity operates but which, in this very operation, withdraws into the invisibility of technical background that remains all but unrecognisable. The face “carries” the possibilities of a self back into itself, which is not an inward self-reflection, but a resistive affirmation – a becoming what the self already is – in its openness to what it can be, thought strictly from the finitude of where it is. This being-carried-back-into-what-it-already-is is the face drawing back into the mediation that makes it possible, into the “faciality” of technical infrastructure as open ground that ungrounds the self, making it possible to imagine a new self other than what it currently is.

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Endnotes

1. Praxis is a “doing” that *is* the very thing that it does: “Seeing, for example, is properly a praxis. In this praxis there is no opposition between seeing and having seen. Likewise, understanding is properly a praxis. But there is no opposition between understanding and having understood. At the same time we understand and have understood” (Taminioux 147). Praxis is not method. A method separates how it does things from the thing that it does. Methods have rules, calculations and procedures that can be applied universally in all instances. Praxis however is singular doing that reflects on what it does in the possibilities of how and what it should be. Method tries to eliminate risk by determining outcomes in advance, whereas praxis risks what it is in self-reflection.

2. Levinas's attempt to think of the face as an idealised incarnation of otherness requires a sacrifice of the self to the other – a quasi-religious experience of transcendence-immanence with the other-as-God-in-me ("Beyond Intentionality" 112-113). Levinas's approach implies a non-critical attitude to the other, and hence leaves no room for the free reflective thought necessary for grounded critical praxis.
3. This point is made by Hegel in his phenomenology: the self as self-consciousness must recognise itself in the other: "â€ in the other [it] sees its own self" (Hegel, *Phenomenology* 111).
4. The problem of self-presence as a praxis of self-undoing – its paradoxical withdrawal in being presented as such – is traceable to a number of sources including Lacan's theory of the pure self-constituting gaze undone by the desire for the unattainable *objet petit a*; Merleau-Ponty's revision of Husserl's theory of phenomenal intention (*Phenomenology*) and his posthumously published notes on self-touching (*The Visible and the Invisible*); Derrida's deconstruction of Husserlian intentionality (*Speech and Phenomena*); and more recently Nancy's post-Hegelian/Heideggerian theory of ecstatic sense (*The Sense of the World, Being Singular Plural*) (see also Derrida, *On Touching*).
5. Benjamin proposes the mark as the ideal-material trace of the typographical sign: "The first basic difference [between the mark and the sign] is that the sign is printed on something, whereas the mark emerges from it" ("Painting" 84). The mark is a "surge of white waves" ("Painting" 83) or pure material pulse that opens experience to an absolute temporality (the collapse of the difference between the future and the past) by a simultaneous withdrawal from signification.
6. See Heidegger's discussion of ground in *Pathmarks* (134). Heidegger shows how ground can be understood ontologically as "abyssal," that is, as the ground of freedom. But this abyss of ground is not groundlessness; there can be no groundless being. Rather abyssal ground is ground opened out to absolute possibility. Freedom here is finite freedom burdened with existential responsibility to *be*, in the face of nothingness or absolute otherness.
7. This move by Deleuze and Guattari follows German post-Kantian idealism responding to Kant, especially the philosophy of Schelling, as a positive philosophy of the Absolute, employing a 'genetic constructivism' based on 'post-kantian generative ontology' (Toscano 120) rather than the negative dialectics of Hegel. This links with both Schelling's and Deleuze and Guattari's Spinozism (Toscano 118) and their "life philosophy" as developed for instance in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.
8. Deleuze and Guattari's field of subjectless appearances is drawn from Nietzsche's theory of perspectivism. See *The Will to Power*, #636 (339).
9. Alain Badiou clarifies what is meant here: "Appearance does not depend on the presupposition of a constituting subject. Being-multiple does not appear *for* a subject. Rather, it is of the essence of being to appear once it is admitted that, since a being cannot be situated according to the whole, it must assert its being-multiple with regard to the non-whole, that is, with regard to *another particular being*, which determines the being of the 'there' in being-there. â€ The essence of appearance is relation" (*Theoretical Writings* 170).
10. Here I am tempted to make a connection to Heidegger's *Dasein* in its struggle to be. *Dasein* (the self's originary possibility) is initially threatened with absorption into otherness (death); in order to escape this fate, *Dasein* must singularise itself by fleeing in the face of the threatening other (*Being and Time* 298).
11. Hegel's system relates to the necessity of the Idea as an "original synthetic unity [which]

must be conceived as a truly necessary, absolute, original identity of opposites" (qtd. in Gasché, *Tain* 28). Deleuze revises the Hegelian Idea so that the Idea becomes immanent-difference as event, as a "singular Idea of difference" (*Difference and Repetition* 26-27).

12. In his writings on film, Deleuze describes the face image in terms of its dislocation from the sensory-motor links of the perceiving body: "we find ourselves before an intensive face each time that the traits break free from the outline, begin to work on their own account, and form an autonomous series which tends toward a limit or crosses a threshold" (*Cinema 1* 89). Film is a disjunctive apparatus which links the perceiving body to image-material as "pure possibilities, pure virtualities" (105) in singular instances of "any-space-whatsoever" (109) spreading across a cinematic field. The film face can thus be located genealogically through space and time as a singular-plural material ideation, consolidating into a collective expressive identity: "directly uniting an immense collective reflection with the particular emotions of each individual [face]; in short expressing the unity of power and quality" (92).
13. See also Badiou (*Deleuze*) who points out that Deleuze's philosophy is classical, that is, pre-Kantian. He argues that for Deleuze, ground is what unifies singularities in "the absolute Unity of Being," or ground as absolutely virtual (45).

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