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Every beginning is dividual

Introduction to DIVIDUUM. Machinic Capitalism and Molecular Revolution, Part 1

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Every beginning is dividual.
Just as the authorship of any book is divided, as all thinking always already stands on the shoulders of giants, who are obligated in turn to entire swarms of averagely tall people and allegedly negligible entities, as an intellect is inhabited by many ghosts, is never solely individual, everything begins in the raging middle of the dividual. The middle is raging, because in it things pick up speed, a stream overflowing in all directions, the opposite of regulated mainstream, mediocrity and mediation. The middle is not simply along the way between a beginning and an end; linearity and myths of origins are sucked into its maelstroms. The middle is dividual, because it implies parting the parts. Even if a “me” speaks here, this me has

never been entirely alone. Divided and dividing, this instituent me shares its becoming with many instances of beginning in the middle.

The raging middle of the dividual applies not only to writing and speaking, the text-machines, the academic machines, the literary desiring machines. The body machines, the social machines, the revolutionary machines, the abstract machines, and their mutual con- and disjunctions also meet and separate in the dividual middle. Beginning in the middle, not at a point, but rather on the line. Drawing the line and being drawn by it, balancing on it in the midst of struggles. Four types of writing, and the beginning not only of writing is found in the middle. As in the case of Kalle Ypsilon.

After winning the election for state parliament, the candidate appears before the press, expresses her thanks and declares that social democracy is here again. Kalle Ypsilon stands behind her to the right in the row of supporters, as her life partner and closest advisor, sweating a bit and with his tie loosened, completely captivated by the moment. Machinically, he speaks the candidate's words along with her, initially with reserve, then with increasing vivacity, co-phrasing every emphasis, even anticipating the waves of applause. Word for word, in perfect accord, lip-syncing the candidate, he hurls the text toward the cheering audience. He stands so close to the candidate in the double brightness of spotlights and camera flashes that probably everyone notices – the press photographers, the journalists, everyone present, but also and especially the many television viewers following the first appearance of the election winner live. The only one who does not notice is Kalle Ypsilon, who continues speaking along with high concentration and enthusiasm – not bereft of his senses, but obsessed by many ghosts.

Authoritative writing is based on a paradox that is obscured especially because it is omnipresent. On the one hand it posits a beginning, a start that desires to be at the beginning. It is *a* beginning, and the subjective figure of this beginning is the author-individual. To be able to simulate a beginning as absolute, this individual has erased the multitude from which it comes, its molecular multiplicity, the many parts it shared before positing itself as undivided and indivisible. At the same time, and on the other hand, with finely tuned cross-references, quotations and proofs, the authorial individual establishes a lineage, a vertical connection to forefathers, back to an origin which appears far prior to all becoming that spreads out here and now. The filiation, the reference of the son to the father in a graduated sequence is nothing other than a molar parody of the erased multitude. The lineage is intended to strengthen the myth of the authorial individual, and it is paradoxically also proof that the authority seeks to be not only a beginning, but also always already there, a beginningless cause, "natural authority."

This "natural authority" as lineage and line of origin is seated next to and above the beginning of individual authorship as *auctoritas*. It claims authority implicitly or explicitly as a hierarchical positioning, molar reterritorialization, vertical linearity. A ladder that does not stand on the unstable floating ground of the middle, freely reaching up into the sky, but instead reaches from the ground of its origin straight to the wall. The authorial writer-individual stands on the last rung of the ladder facing the wall, pushing the ladder onto the ground with stiff feet, raising the ladder up to the wall with cramping toes. The ladder of lineage wants to be held against the ground of its origin and against the wall of what it has to show at the same time, to embody the origin and the *spectaculum* of the individual face.

Filiation, “natural authority,” spirit of possession and anxious greed for letters domesticates text production, reduces the possibilities of content and form and compulsively striates modes of writing. As the corset of writing is pulled tighter and tighter, even the last wish for a different text is suffocated. Its place is taken by an insatiable desire for names and faces. They are the central function of authoritative writing, which arranges, subordinates, overcodes the text and its multiplicities. With face to the wall, name inscribes itself in the whiteness of this wall.

In the logic of authoritative writing, the failure of the Social Democratic candidate is not found in any political alliances that are false because they are too radical, but rather in that she does not manage to establish a distinguishable, individual authorship. She can no longer rid herself of the ghosts of the election machine she invoked. Where the author is no longer distinguishable, there is an even greater desire to produce an undivided author-subject, even if in reception. The question of the face behind the masks, of the identity behind the many layers, is a repetition of the desire for the father behind the son. Where production does not reveal names, reception works on the construction of a lineage. The initially inhibited, misplaced, in/visible co-author Kalle Ypsilon, shadow-man, human teleprompter, only seems to appear at the wrong moment and in the wrong place in the bright spotlights. From the perspective of authoritative writing, Kalle Ypsilon is the true author, the one who – unwittingly – reveals his authorship as ghost writer, the authority of the man behind the woman. And then it is all too easy for other uninvited ghosts, commentators in the mainstream media and, following them, the many posts in social media, to attack the candidate, to deride her as a female politician who cannot even come up with the simplest political platitudes by herself. This reading insinuates: “The woman can’t

even talk, but next to her is a man who tells her what to do." Ventriloquist doll, marionette, dummy, in their gender asymmetry all these images are a specially gendered variation of the principle of lineage, which has taken over molecular multiplicity. In the logic of authoritative writing there can only be one author, as significantly distinguishable as possible, and his name in this case is Kalle Ypsilon. Even if he is not the master in his house of ghosts, an individual, but by no means autonomous, Kalle's appearance is read under the auspices of authoritative writing. Where the undivided author-function does not come to light by itself, it is produced.

The second type is that of communitarian writing. As a mirror counterpart to individual-authoritative writing, it emphasizes common authorship. Counter to the liberal ideology of the individual and its moral evisceration of collectivity in the lineage, communitarian writing seeks to emphasize the General Intellect, common authorship, collective cooperation, from which not only knowledge and text production start. Here it is the community that is at the beginning, the communitarian-collective writing against individual-authoritative writing. Com-munitarian writing, however, must provide a *munus*, a tribute, make a sacrifice, in order to communally overcome the authoritative individual. Something is lost in sublating the author in the community. The individual author is threatened here by a very specific death, also a different death from the one foreseen by Foucault and Barthes forty, fifty years ago. Whereas poststructural interpretations affirm polyvocality, the multiplication of voices, proliferation of authorship, the author of communitarian writing is in danger of perishing in the whole, the unity, the uniformity of the collective. The *munus* of communitarian writing sinks the undivided-indivisible individual in the all-one.

Communitarian writing includes legal-type texts, political announcements, calls for solidarity, manifestos, but also more complex text formats that not only invoke the whole, the all-one, but also reproduce it in their form. Throwing out the baby with the bathwater here by abandoning the individual-one for the all-one also means losing the singular-one. Communitarian writing seeks to overcome individuality, and in so doing it runs the risk of weakening the manifold styles, the obstinacy, the specific nuances of theoretical and poetic architectures. The collective-communitarian type of writing gives rise to impreciseness, generalizations and standardizations. The community as beginning and as end devours not only the authoritative individual, it devours the singularities, too.

Authoritative and communitarian writing share their beginning at a uniform cause and their aim at a uniform goal. The one and universal substance determines the one author and the many units of communitarian writing. And in the end, the communitarian may perhaps be just as authoritative as the individual in a different way, by positing the community as the beginning, in the filiation of the community in reference to the construction of its prehistory, in the valorization of the name, now just a brand, a collective name. Just as natural and individual authority drives the many into the white wall, so does the communitarian with the singular.

Out of the mirroring problems of authoritative-individual and communitarian writing, the question of a different writing arises, which erases neither molecular multiplicity nor specific singularities. Is it possible to imagine contrasting the individual less with the communitarian, the collectivist, the community, and instead with the positive of the negative that is linguistically depicted with the concept of the in-dividual?

In search of dividual writing, my gaze falls first on its dark side, the third type, which I would like to call a type of interactive and activating writing. The becoming-machinic of capitalism implies a process of the increasing obligation and self-obligation of the parts to participate. This imperative of involvement, engagement and self-activation marks the entanglements and comprehensive valorizations in machinic capitalism, without clear boundaries between reception and production.

Already on what appears to be the purely receptive side of the text, there is an attempt to make exploitable the potentials of readers as consumers in the digital age of the book. In electronic reading machines, e-books and e-readers, technical platforms obtain extensive information about the readers' behaviors in relation to individual readings and modes of reading. This machinically readable data is significant for a continuum of exploitation, from the anonymous collection of big data to automatized-personalized advertising. Amazon meanwhile knows more about me than the state. I probably still buy the most interesting books in small, radical or obscure bookshops, but the mainstream books I look at online and sometimes order from Amazon should be sufficient to compile an ample profile. Were I able to use Kindle, even my personal notes could be stored electronically and would be visible for Amazon. This would yield, in typical market research jargon, my "reading behavior." Research into reading behavior is the invention of the glass reader – Amazon knows how much of a book someone like me reads, how fast someone like me reads it, which passages someone like me highlights, which passages someone like me euphorically comments on, where someone like me halts, and much more.

Data that is machinically readable and collectable can thus recursively affect the production of books, of texts altogether. It is

possible, for example, to evaluate the collected data about passages frequently marked in e-books, or conversely about the points where reading is left off. The result on the production side is not simply that books that do not sell well are no longer published, but that authors are called upon to abridge books at points proven by data accumulation to be problematic or even re-write them. Individual attention comes into play once error on the part of the author has been democratically proven, when it ultimately becomes official that a significant portion of the readers give up reading a book I have written at a certain point. This information from Amazon's data holdings *operated by an automatic moderator* will be communicated for a fee by a start-up company to my publishing company, which will then approach me about it. Thanks to Amazon, in the future I may be requested to re-write just this one passage for the next English edition, abridge something here and there, maybe to prepare a short version altogether, which corresponds to about a quarter of the original text and is finally crowned by a spectacular title selected after surveying the readers – all of this, of course, on the objective data foundation of the "reading behavior" of "my" readers. And this, in principle, in an endless feedback loop and chain of ever new versions, which make the book appear to be an eternally unfinished work. From the slogan of the open art work it is only a small step to the Sisyphean nightmare of the now necessarily interactive author, who undergoes a new form of machinic subservience. Perpetually connected to the machine, the anonymous data-public governs over interactive writing.

The consumers can ultimately also be activated beyond these exploitation mechanisms and included in the middle of this processual co-writing. Experiments in this direction are already trying to probe the potential of co-writing readers on the Internet.

Electronic voting about the futures of protagonists of books and screenplays are only the first test arrangements that potentially make the interactive in-between of the production stream accessible for exploitation as well. In the combinations of interactive reading permanently connected to the machine and crowd-activating writing, both individual positions and collected data are made utilizable. Valorized, subservient General Intellect, which like its counterpart, the wired and data-ized body, cannot find rest and must always keep moving through the endless expanses of inter-activity.

The goal could be imagined as an inversion of the old improv theater: it is no longer the few actors on stage that become active in response to spontaneous key words from the audience, but rather the function of the author-actors is limited to animating the many to conduct and utilize themselves in co-writing, participation, self-guidance. On the basis of this valorization of the swarm, the surplus of visibility occasionally falls in the end on the individual author again, who then also receives praise for having activated the swarm, the mob, the many, and also for taming them at the same time. Enveloping, enclosing activation that undermines every excess, normalizes it, or votes it out.

How will, in machinic capitalism, the middle become newly noncompliant? The text-machines are not simply means to political ends, propaganda tools, objects of revolutionary subjects. Text and revolution, critical discursivity and social struggles, text-machines and revolutionary machines cannot be understood as being external to one another. If a new social composition emerges in disobedience against machinic capitalism, new concepts are invented, and the texts are recomposed. Yet these concatenations undergo shifts in their different historical and geopolitical contexts. The occidental medieval concatenation of textual criticism and

social machine, for instance, undoubtedly took place in a mode different from the counterpart of an economic power so difficult to grasp as that of industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century. The public intellectual of the late nineteenth and the twentieth century, from Zola to Sartre, was undoubtedly never entirely the heroic figure he imagined he was. Today, though, he is nothing more than a function of the media, an entirely subservient relic of the idea of the authoritative individual, which neatly fits into the respective media framework as soon as it is bid onto the public stage. Brave new world of philosophers in ever new poses of spectacular provocation and self-staging.

New challenges emerge when the position of the General Intellect, of a a mass, multiple and militant intellectuality, is negotiated today. The intellect that does not close itself off in the single author-individual, the intellect that does not sublate the flows of social knowledge in a communitarian, general, universal unity, invents itself in machinic capitalism as a transversal intellect. This intellect is transversal, because it emerges in traversing the singularities of thinking, speaking, writing, fabricating knowledge: a machinic-dividual stream of thinking that moves across the dichotomy of individual and community, permeates individuals and collectives, inhabits the spaces, things, landscapes between them and allows new forms of disobedience to emerge, new forms of noncompliance, new dissemblages.

For the typology of writing, this means designating a fourth and final type, that of dividual writing. Its beginning lies in the middle, and regardless of how solitary a process it may appear to be, the writer is never entirely alone. There is the aforementioned effect of "standing on the shoulders of giants," the fact that genealogical lines are dis/connected in all writing. Genealogy is not at all to be equated with filiation, with the differenceless reference to the

fathers, with the erasure of molecular multiplicity by the molar authority of lineage. Instead there is a hint here that the middle, into which every beginning sets itself, has never been an empty middle. No neutral vessel, but rather a middle, in which secret transactions happen, in which asymmetries spread out and dominant hierarchizations take place, as well as manifold empowerments. A diachronous and synchronous co-authorship of many in social space and in the a-linear depth of time has always been the basis of all writing. It is not only the real exchange among writers that plays a role, the mutual reading, commenting, discussing, the collegial critique, but also the exchange that is not or not yet completed, the wish production, the desire for the return and becoming of molecular multiplicity.

As in machinic capitalism knowledge production is valorized and writing is activated, we do not only have to deconstruct the myth of the genius, individual *auctoritas* as beginning, but primarily invent ways in which the now transversal intellect, writing as a dividual practice, as emancipatory, as not governed *in that way*, as not valorized *in that way*, can develop cooperations that are not compliant *in that way*.

"My condition," wrote Franz Kafka in the middle of a writing crisis in an early diary entry from 1910, "is not unhappiness, but it is also not happiness, not indifference, not weakness, not fatigue, not another interest – so what is it then? That I do not know this is probably connected with my inability to write. And without knowing the reason for it, I believe I understand the latter. All those things, that is to say, those things which occur to me, occur to me not from the root up but rather only from somewhere about their middle. Let someone then attempt to seize them, let someone attempt to seize a blade of grass and hold fast to it when it begins to grow only from the middle. There are some people

who can do this, probably Japanese jugglers, for example, who scramble up a ladder that does not rest on the ground but on the raised soles of someone half lying on the ground, and which does not lean against a wall but just goes up into the air. I cannot do this – aside from the fact that my ladder does not even have those soles at its disposal."

As long as the dividual machine Kafka imagines itself individually isolated in the writing crisis, it will remain unable to write. The individual Kafka is standing on the last rung of his ladder, which is itself standing on the ground and against the wall. Ground of origin, white wall of representation and the face of the author-individual. It is only the creation of the dividual machine, in which the ladder and soles, the bodies of the jugglers, the many components of the machine resonate and become dissonant, which allows grass to grow from the middle of the blade. A dividual machine, divisible and dividing. There in the raging middle of the dividual, no ground is needed, no roots, no floor, no walls holding the ladder, no walls showing faces. The body-machines, the social machines, the revolutionary machines, the abstract machines separate there and meet with the text-machines; that is where the dividual-abstract line emerges from manifold ghostly hands.

Kafka's diary from 1910 again: "But every day at least one line should be trained on me, as they now train telescopes on comets. And if then I should appear before that sentence once, lured by that sentence …" – the sentence comes from the dividual middle and is trained on and against the writer, who ends up in the cross-hairs, as a project, as projectile. It is multiplicity from which the sentence fires and is fired. The writer appears before the dividual sentence as though before a nameless court. The luring of this sentence is what lures the writer to write. Disbanding and bonding, stealing away and looking for a weapon, dis/connecting multiplicity

and singularity. In the confusion of voices, in the crowd of ghosts, a line can be drawn, a weapon can be found. And thus ends Kafka's last diary entry from June 1923, about the difficulties of writing again, about the "hands of the ghosts," when every word twisted in their hands becomes a spear against the writer: "The only consolation would be: it happens whether you like or no. And what you like is of infinitesimally little help. More than consolation is: You too have weapons."

Why have I kept my name? Not just out of habit, pure habit, not only to make myself recognizable to the point of unrecognizability, not only to reach the point where it is no longer of any importance whether I say me or not. With all the problems of the molar aspects of an authoritative introduction and its representative logic: the me that speaks here wants to be a line that divides the multiplicity it comes from and affirms it at the same time. No erasure, but repetition of multiplicity. Pseudonyms, multiple names, bifurcations and fictionalizations of the me, condividualities, all of that can occur so long the me does not make use of the fetish of the name. Leaving the posts, leaving no images behind, covering the tracks, betraying the name. But not in favor of anonymity, not into invisibility. Vanishing from the framework of organic representation, yes; erasing singularity, no.

"Machinically, he speaks the words of the candidate along with her." Machinic speaking-with, dividing-with, being-with, appending-with. Kalle Ypsilon is no author-individual, but a component of a dividual machine. And the Social Democratic candidate is no more just a marionette for which Kalle holds the strings than Kalle is a professional ghost-writer or a patriarchal ghost watching over the body of the candidate. A marionette theater that has lost the puppeteer pulling the strings, a machine with no machinist. Kalle and the candidate share not only everyday

family life, a household and a professional-political working life, but also a house with many ghosts. Divided, divisible, dividing dividuality that affirms and concatenates the parts instead of isolating and unifying them. Head through the wall, ladder through the floor. No one rules the multitude of ghosts, no Holy Ghost controls the many voices, no father governs the sons.