

# Digital Aesthetics: A Symbolism of the Body and a More-than-Human Mode of Enquiry

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New developments in digitalisation and especially technological innovations in terms of the use of Artificial intelligence often reinstall an anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism by diagnosing a transhumanistic technooptimism or technosolutionism that claims to even be able to “reverse-engineer extinction via AI” (Zylinska 2020: 40). Zylinska calls this the “Anthropocene Imperative: a call to us humans to respond to those multiple crises of life while there is still time” (ibid.). The current attempt by the European Union to regulate so-called high-risk systems of AI displays a similar paradigm:

AI should be a tool for people and be a force for good in society with the ultimate aim of increasing human well-being. Rules for AI available in the Union market or otherwise affecting people in the Union should therefore be human centric, so that people can trust that the technology is used in a way that is safe and compliant with the law, including the respect of fundamental rights.<sup>1</sup>

This guideline emphasizes the ‘human-centeredness’ as the all-encompassing norm that frames these regulations. The ‘human’ must be protected by all means from a harm that could potentially be caused by an unsafe technology, in this case by a form of Artificial Intelligence. While this aligns with the EU’s responsibilities of protecting its citizens from harm – on a political level -, the concept of ‘human’ is also problematic in an onto-epistemological perspective. Rosi Braidotti (2013) indicates the fact that “Not all of us can say, with any degree of certainty, that we have always been human, or that we are only that. Some of us are not even considered fully human now, let alone at previous moments of Western social, political and scientific history”. (1)

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<sup>1</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:e0649735-a372-11eb-9585-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:e0649735-a372-11eb-9585-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF) (p.1) (21 January, 2024).

She further says: “We assert our attachment to the species as if it were a matter of fact, a given. So much so that we construct a fundamental notion of Rights around the Human” (ibid.). The above-quoted European Artificial Intelligence Act is one attempt to construct a fundamental notion of ‘Rights around the Human’ and therefore makes a hard cut between ‘the human’ and ‘the technology’ or ‘the machine’ – a diagnosis that falls behind well-established insights of Feminist Science and Technology Studies. Already back in 1991, Donna Haraway questioned the dualism between human / animal on the one hand and machine on the other. She called this a “leaky distinction” (152). An anthropocentrism, however, leaves this dualism intact and focuses only on one side: the human. By reading the guidelines for a regulation of AI above, it becomes apparent that it contains several judgements about technology that inform and infuse this anthropocentric perspective: one reads about trustworthiness or risks<sup>2</sup>. This alludes to a humanist conception of an individual, that is (or should be) autonomous, is able to judge something as trustworthy or risky and therefore is guided by reason, wisdom and rationality. It is an “aesthetics (as a mode of philosophical enquiry)” (Fazi 2029: 3) that perceives digitalisation, computation and technology as something wholly other, something not-human that can be perceived by means of human aesthetics. This is a problem, because this mode is nurturing the paradigms of human exceptionalism mentioned above. There are warnings about a “data colonialism” (Couldry / Mejías 2019: 83) where “corporations act as colonizers that deploy digital infrastructures of connection to monetize social interactions, and the colonized are relegated to the role of subjects who are driven to use these infrastructures in order to enact their social lives” (86). It may seem paradoxical to criticize the human-centeredness as one possible reason for marginalization and this new form of colonialism and not rather a lack thereof (of human-centeredness). I refer again to onto-epistemological critiques of the concept of the ‘human’ that had been used over history to exclude marginalized people from the realm of humanity. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (Skafish 2009) analyses the construction of anthropology’s subject and hints at the fact that its founding patron could be Narcissus who always only perceives himself in the Other. Therefore, Viveiros de Castro can highlight the concept of the human as inextricably intertwined with the non-human that lacks what the human has: “An immortal soul? Language? Labor? The Lichtung? Prohibition? Neoteny? Metaintentionality?” (43). He is referring to several Western philosophical, anthropological and sociological discourses who have been used to conceptually marginalize people and even deny them the status of ‘human’. In this case, those non- or not-completely-humans can easily be exploited in terms of “Robotic” (Hu 2022: xiv) work. Those are ‘clickworkers’, mainly situated in the

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2 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:e0649735-a372-11eb-9585-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:e0649735-a372-11eb-9585-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF) (p.1) (21. January, 2024).

Global South, who serve new digital industries. As can be seen, this conceptual exclusion (in the concept of the human) is again deployed and displayed in digitalization. Therefore, this article follows this posthumanist and post-/decolonial critique that reveals the concept of the human as innately exclusive, Euro- and Western-centric. The conclusion is to find a perception and aesthetics of digitalisation that avoids this problem. Thus, this article strives to consider a new form of a mode of philosophical enquiry as an aesthetics that strips itself from a human-centeredness and tries to conceptualize a digital aesthetics that is able to grasp the idiosyncrasy of digitalisation and to overcome the duality between the living organic human on the one hand and the dead cybernetic technology on the other hand. Consequently, I first have to ask if an aesthetics that has been human-centred so far in the history of Western philosophy can possibly be transformed, made fruitful, in order to connect it with digitality.

I want to inherit from aesthetic theories by Sören Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche because both have, in their own way, criticized, reflected, and perhaps already deconstructed the history of Western philosophy. Nietzsche, in particular, can be read with Francesca Ferrando (2021: 48–49) as a source of inspiration for a philosophical posthumanism and a critique of anthropocentrism, which makes his thought fruitful for an essay that is to be about non- and more-than-human digital aesthetics.

In her article “Digital Aesthetics: The Discrete and the Continuous” (2019) Beatrice Fazi states that it is time to emancipate the concept of aesthetics from its human-sensory residue in order to arrive at an aesthetics that does not dwell on judgments or tastes, nor does it want to contribute to the reception of art, but rather plays out on the field of conflict between the discrete of digitality and the continuous of the analogue. In her opinion, this is based on two different ways of understanding and grasping reality (2). Before I scrutinize her arguments further, I want to have a look at one of my chosen inspirational sources for a theory of aesthetics. George Pattison (2006) tells us the following about Kierkegaard’s concept of grasping reality: “The reason that I cannot really say that I positively enjoy *nature* is that I do not quite realize *what* it is that I enjoy. A work of art, on the other hand, I can grasp, I can – if I may put it this way – find that Archimedean point, and as soon as I have found it, everything is readily clear for me” (Kierkegaard 1967–78: §117; cited in Pattison 2006: 78)

At first glance, then, Kierkegaard is concerned with continuity, with an aesthetic grasp of reality. To be able to grasp, to comprehend or to understand, it is necessary to find the Archimedean point, an allegedly safe and ‘neutral’ standpoint. This point is supposed to be an external position from which “a different, perhaps objective or ‘true’ picture of something is obtainable” (Blackburn 2005: 21). There is the famous saying that Archimedes once stated “that if he had a fulcrum and a lever long enough, he could move the earth” (ibid). I want to follow this metaphor of the Archimedean

point in a similar, maybe ironical way, as Bruno Latour does in his essay "Give me a Laboratory and I will Raise the World" (1983). There, he transforms this metaphor to a mode of enquiry, which I also want to do here. While Latour shows that dichotomies such as science vs. society or inside vs. outside collapse and it is rather adequate to speak of a lever that unhinges the world (he calls this process translation) (cf. *ibid*), I want to use this metaphor to find a new mode of aesthetics that renders the dichotomy between human and non-human or the living and the digital redundant. Kierkegaard says that "I do not quite realize *what* it is that I enjoy" (Pattison 2006: 78). The object of enjoyment, nature, is unfathomable to him. To fathom this, he needs to find a safe standpoint and a lever. This conception of aesthetics that Kierkegaard connects with art, is surely not the kind of aesthetics that Fazi has in mind, since she states that she wants to go "beyond traditional concerns with art" (2019: 2). Therefore, she considers it unsuitable to capture digitality. However, Kierkegaard's aesthetics could then become productive when he is intertwined with Nietzsche. The latter writes in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2006) in the chapter "The Dance Song": "Into your eye I gazed recently, oh life! And then into the unfathomable I seemed to sink. But you pulled me out with your golden fishing rod; you laughed mockingly when I called you unfathomable. 'Thus sounds the speech of all fish', you said. 'What *they* do not fathom, is unfathomable'" (Del Caro / Pippin 2006: 84).

In a way, this is a repetition of what I just referred to with Kierkegaard. Someone is lost because something is unfathomable to them. The solution here is however not to find an Archimedean point from which to start fishing in the unfathomable and groundless ocean. It is the subject itself that is getting hooked with a fishing rod, which now could be imagined as the Archimedean lever, without a stable (stand)point. Nietzsche instead transforms this phallic appropriation of reality by letting life mock the subject of aesthetics, calling it to be a fish itself. It is therefore not the human subject holding the Archimedean lever, but life in which the aesthetic subject is about to sink. This movement of sinking into the unfathomable is the attempt to fathom the unfathomable. It is a movement of penetration. By gazing into life's eyes, life is to be invaded to grasp its reality. Yet, life is always letting this movement fail by pulling back the human 'fish' to the surface. Therefore, there is a double bind: On the one hand, the human subject has to acknowledge that it is merely an object of aesthetics by itself. Life is in control here, always hooking the human subject and preventing it from fathoming the unfathomable. On the other hand, the method of aesthetics is questioned in itself: While Kierkegaard said he is only to grasp something if it lies clearly in front of him, pulled out of the sea by the Archimedean lever, Nietzsche rather talks about a method of diving into the sea by themselves (which of course then must fail). It is therefore not the aesthetician who unhinges the world, comprehends it and deciphers it, but life catches the aesthetician with its golden rod, traps them and mocks them. Nietzsche goes on to say:

And when I spoke in confidence with my wild wisdom, she said to me angrily: 'You will, you covet, you love, and only therefore do you *praise* life!' Then I almost answered maliciously and told the angry woman the truth; and one can not answer more maliciously than when one 'tells the truth' to one's wisdom. Thus matters stand between the three of us. At bottom I love only life – and verily, most when I hate it! (Del Caro / Pippin 2006: 84)

The wisdom here stands for another figure, such as life itself. This paragraph describes a triangulation. There seem to be three separate but still tightly entangled parts of one entity: The philosopher of aesthetics, their wisdom and life. A conflict takes place between those three. While we have already scrutinized the conflict between life and the aesthetician, now a third party arrives: wisdom. In Gilles Deleuze's (1986) interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy we learn, how this triangulation might be constellated:

*Philosophos* does not mean 'wise man' but 'friend of wisdom'. But 'friend' must be interpreted in a strange way: the friend, says Zarathustra, is always a third person in between 'I' and 'me' who pushes me to overcome myself and to be overcome in order to live (Nietzsche n.d.:82 as quoted in Deleuze 1986: 5–6). The friend of wisdom is the one who appeals to wisdom, but in the way that one appeals to a mask without which one would not survive, the one who makes use of wisdom for new, bizarre and dangerous ends – ends which are, in fact, hardly wise at all. He wants wisdom to overcome itself and to be overcome. (5–6)

So here, we see that the philosopher as a friend of wisdom, who is a philosopher of aesthetics in our case, is triangulated by the three named aspects. Wisdom is usually addressed by the philosopher only as a means to an end: As a means to mask their 'true' intention which is the love of life. To tell wisdom the truth (as quoted above) is therefore a malicious movement, because it unmasks the philosopher and reveals them not as a friend of wisdom, but as a lover of life. The love of life, however, is dangerous and bizarre and not wise at all. We also identified the means of the mediation that triangulate the aesthetician, wisdom and life: will, covetousness, love, hatred and truth. In the end, love and hatred seem to win the conflict to be the preferred means to emerge the privileged relation: the relation to life. So there is another double bind: While we saw above that the method of aesthetics that tries to pull aesthetic objects out of the unfathomable sea is profoundly questioned, we now see that life, as the one that actually holds the rod and therefore destroys masculine aesthetics, is the object of the aesthetician's love. They love that which makes themselves an object of aesthetics – a fish – therefore make themselves something to be fathomed – by

life. Hence, an aesthetics that used to claim to be in charge of sensing, judging and tasting is made itself unfathomable.

Circling back to Kierkegaard's conception of aesthetics that finds nature unfathomable, unlike art, which can clearly be revealed by using the Archimedean method of grasping reality, one can respond now to this that there is yet an inescapable love of life in this anthropocentric-idealistic form of aesthetics that Kierkegaard calls upon. The truth that Nietzsche's aesthete (articulated by Zarathustra) would almost confess to their wisdom (see quote above) is the truth of the living. Wisdom is in that case a metaphor for the mask of rationalism. As this mask is something to be addressed and to overcome (as shown above), this rationalism always already masks a love of life and therefore every rationalism contains traces of this love. In this way, an anthropocentric form of aesthetics is decentred and another kind of aesthetics is made possible, one that knows no standpoint in the outside, no Archimedean point in space, but which itself is always caught, hooked, fished, and whose methodology of fathoming an author's intention is mocked. Kierkegaard says: "I see the author's whole individuality as if it were the sea, in which every single detail is reflected. The author's spirit is kindred to me. . . The works of the deity are too great for me; I always get lost in the details". (Kierkegaard 1967–78: §117; cited in Pattison 2006: 78)

It seems here that he conceptualizes the methodology of fathoming the unfathomable as an unfathomable ocean, of which only individual reflected points of light can be grasped, but never the whole picture. At this stage, an aesthetics of the digital can now be connected here, an aesthetics of the disparate, the discrete. There appears to be the option to see the entire individuality of the author while at the same time one gets lost in discrete points of light as details. This kind of aesthetics tries to fish dry the sea, but only has a golden fishing rod at its disposal, which always gets caught on its own clothes when it is cast.

With Nietzsche, it is this snagging, this entanglement between the individual and the whole, the indivisible individual part and the divisible whole, that could be named the "breakdown of the principium individuationis" (Tanner 2003: 875). In *The Birth of Tragedy*, he describes how the reconciliation of the contradiction between the two principles of the Apolline and the Dionysiac are synthesized into an artistic phenomenon as the "dream artist" and the "ecstatic artist" (Tanner 2003: 849). This is Nietzsche's aesthetic theory: he describes how in the "Dionysiac dithyramb, man's symbolic faculties are roused to their supreme intensity" (Tanner 2003: 883). He calls this "symbolism of the body" (ibid.) and thus transforms a representationalist symbolism of the mouth, the face, and the word to a rhythmic symbolism of the dance (cf. ibid.). Angèle Christin speaks of the complicated dance between researcher and algorithm, which is characterized by deception and manipulation (cf. Christin 2020: 912). The two principles of the Apolline and the Dionysiac – dream and ecstasy – emerge here. Those unite in this complicated dance to form a symbolism of the body, thus enabling an aesthetic of the world that tears apart the principle of

the individual, divides it into small pieces that dissolve in the sea of the whole (that is unfathomable as such) and reflect individual points of light, each of which in itself tells the story of the whole.

Vicky Kirby (2011) speaks of the harmony of the whole in the fragmentary (25). In her book *Quantum Anthropologies. Life at Large* (2011), she draws a connection between linguistics, language, forensics, figures, mathematics, information and data. By referring to the example of forensics that has only a fleshless skull at its disposal and is nevertheless able to reconstruct the face by using statistical data that is seemingly unconnected with this individual, she identifies an “uncanny structuration” (30) between sense, ideality, subjectivity and objectivity. By elaborating on Jacques Derrida’s work about Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology, she shows, that there is a strange relation between individual perception of the world on the one hand and “lived coherence of a corporeal geometry that can ‘join the dots’” (29) on the other hand. Therefore, objectivity is always haunted by subjectivity or – to say it in other words – “the origin is already alive with what has yet to come” (30). A strange inversion takes place of a scientific stance that sets the real as the sphere that converges towards the ideal. This inversion leads to the Derridean notion, that there is “an original (worldly) writing through whose radical interiority the referent presents itself” (46). Therefore, there is only a radical interiority, no lost origin or ideality that presence strives to reach. The whole, the origin, the ideal is always already within the fragment, within the referent, within the signifier. This notion is a transformation of a phonocentrism (38) that privileges reason and ratio over body and materiality. An original worldly writing however acknowledges that the split between cogito and being is not something that must or can be reconciled to eventually be able to face Nature as such, where the real and the ideal merge into each other, but is something that is originally divided without an exteriority: “There is nothing outside of the text” (47). By this analysis, Kirby is able to overcome human exceptionalism, since human language, perception and conception of the world relied on this very separation between representation and truth, reference and concept or signifier and signified. Instead, “‘The human’ would certainly be a unique determination, yet ‘one’ whose cacophonous reverberations would speak of earthly concerns” (39). World is therefore ‘earthly’, not human.

I believe that the symbolism of the body I referred to with Nietzsche captures this transformation. Kirby says: “The world’s communion with itself would involve giving itself to itself; a *datum* of ‘presents’, blinking in the wonder of its *own* openness and generosity” (37). Each digital datum I want to imagine as being involved in this self-giving of the world to itself as radical interiority, which is in my view a radical materiality and bodily performance that could be imagined as original worldly writing or bodily symbolism and therefore as a digital data dance. This dance of digital data points who are fragments of the whole would each already tell the story of the

origin and the future ideality. However, a dance has no purpose, no aim, no telos but invites to blink in the wonder of its openness and generosity.

I want to think digital data points as reflections in the sea of chance, as Deleuze is interpreting Nietzsche:

Only a dicethrow, on the basis of chance, could affirm necessity and produce 'the unique number which cannot be another'. We are dealing with a single dicethrow, not with success in several throws: only the combination which is victorious in one throw can guarantee the return of the throw. The thrown dice are like the sea and the waves (...). The dice which fall are a constellation, their points form the number 'born of the stars'. The table of the dicethrow is therefore double, sea of chance and sky of necessity, midnight-midday. (Deleuze 1986: 32)

I want to imagine the digital data points as the digits on a dice's surface, a constellation that form the number "born of the stars" (ibid.). The stars in the sky of necessity are reflected in the sea of chance. The idiosyncrasy of this temporality is therefore not chance serving necessity by anticipating a necessary specific number that a series of dicethrows will converge to in the future. What is now possible to think instead is the entanglement of chance and necessity by looking at one single dicethrow which truly makes it possible to affirm multiplicity in unity – the multiplicity of one dicethrow.

The number-constellation is, or could be, the book, the work of art as outcome and justification of the world. (Nietzsche wrote, of the aesthetic justification of existence: we see in the artist 'how necessity and random play, oppositional tension and harmony, must pair to create a work of art' (Nietzsche n.d. as quoted in ibid)). Now, the fatal and sidereal number brings back the dicethrow, so that the book is both unique and changing. (ibid.)

As discussed above, Nietzsche's concept of aesthetics is about art that supersedes the anthropomorphic aesthetics of representation and perception, but instead sets a symbolism of the body. Now, as can be seen in the quote above, another aspect is stressed: Art and aesthetics are always an intertwining of randomness and necessity, tension and harmony, a play that is played by the world and existence. So in Nietzsche's way, aesthetics is still about a justification, while Fazi wants to overcome "the traditional tenets of the discipline [of aesthetics, JSt], such as beauty, taste and judgement" (Fazi 2019 : 2). However, in Nietzsche's way, aesthetics is stripped of its teleological aspect that makes aesthetics "aim (...) to record and take account of [relations] through the sensible" (Fazi 2019: 3). Nietzsche makes it possible instead to welcome an aesthetic temporality that is based on a play.

Returning to Fazi, we can also frame this play or dance of star-reflections on the surface of the sea of chance as a dance between the discrete and the continuous. Beatrice Fazi calls this, as already described above, “two conflicting ways of grasping and structuring the real” (Fazi 2019: 2) two kinds of aesthetics, wherein in turn the Apolline and the Dionysiac appear, as unmediated perfection on the one hand and ecstatic reality on the other (cf. Tanner 2003, 840). Fazi draws attention to the fact that aesthetics for Deleuze is related to an ontological continuity, a continuous variation. This, according to Deleuze, is life itself (cf. Fazi 2019: 3–4). Just as for Nietzsche the Apolline and the Dionysiac “as artistic powers [...] spring from nature itself, without the mediation of the human artist” (Tanner 2003: 840), so too for Deleuze life is unmediated, subjectless, and indeterminate. There is also an unmediated relationship to the sensual dimension in Deleuze, just as there is an unmediated expression of dream and ecstasy in Nietzsche. In Deleuze’s approach to aesthetics-as-aisthesis, the sensuous is central, but not necessarily tied to corporeality or subjectivity. Here, however, Fazi highlights the problem that in this perspective Deleuze always refers to continuity as the guiding principle of what makes new experiences possible. The discreteness of data points thus appears incommensurable to this (cf. Fazi 2019: 7). She criticizes attempts to read the digital as virtuality, as Anna Munster does in her opinion, in order to then also be able to consider it as ontological continuity according to Deleuze and include it in an aisthesis. As Fazi tells us, Brian Massumi rules out that the digital can be virtual, but problematically presupposes the analogue as superior to the digital (cf. Fazi 2019: 11–12). Instead, Fazi emphasizes that she also grants the digital – and here she agrees with Deleuze – the possibility of producing something new: Aesthetics concerns ontological creation. However, this creative potential does not lie in virtuality. She denies this because she fears that otherwise a separation will be made between the discrete operations of digital computers on the one hand and the continuity of lived experience on the other, which will then in turn be overcome by a kind of conjuring trick, but this again does not do justice to the peculiar ontology of digitality. Fazi describes digital computation as follows: “When machines compute, formally, they put a task into the finite and defined terms of executable instructions, the aim of which is to axiomatically determine consequences, or outputs, from validly symbolized premises (inputs).” (Fazi 2019: 14).

What is problematic about this is that Fazi reduces computation to so-called symbolic methods. In terms of so-called artificial intelligence, there is a much more sophisticated list of methods today, as Schmid et al. describe:

On the side of symbolic methods, techniques of knowledge representation and logical reasoning are prominent, while the side of sub-symbolic methods is primarily represented by neural networks and machine learning techniques. Yet, this traditional distinction is not comprehensive. [...]

[M]ore and more combined or hybrid approaches are coming to the fore, e.g. the entire field of hybrid learning. (Schmid et al. 2020: 427)

However, what I think also applies to sub-symbolic or hybrid AI methods is Fazi's observation that any aesthetics of the digital is an aesthetics of discreteness (cf. Fazi 2019: 14). What she now proposes is a centring of this formal-abstract character of computation as opposed to a consolidation of it in the name of theories of affect that would call the abstract formalism of digitality empty and cold. She wants to explore the extent to which this very formalism could be onto-aesthetic, productive, and generic, and the extent to which complexity could be found within formal abstraction (cf. Fazi 2019: 16). Fazi goes on to argue that for her, computation is not the same as life, the living, and the lived, and that computation cannot account for this. Here I would like to interject and present a different position. Fazi comes to this conclusion in part because she does not want to be accused of supporting totalizing tendencies of digital computation systems. If she were to argue that digital computation can do justice to reality and thus is not reductionist and all-explanatory, she would again be submitting to a regime of instrumental disembodied rationality. This is not her intention. However, she says that an indeterminacy inherent in the living could also be found within a formalism, and thus for a digital aesthetics the connection to the sphere of the generative-living is not necessary at all. Returning to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, however, I would now like to present that life need not be rendered as generative-creative. Kierkegaard states:

The person who has not circumnavigated life before beginning to live will never live [...]; the person who chose repetition – he lives [...]. Indeed, what would life be if there were no repetition? Who could want to be a tablet on which time writes something new every instant or to be a memorial volume of the past? Who could want to be susceptible to every fleeting thing [...]? Repetition – that is actuality and the earnestness of existence. (Hong / Hong 1983: 132–133)

Life is entangled with repetition and repetition is outside the logic of temporal progression and crude creation. According to Kierkegaard, life thus does not generatively write (as long as repetition is chosen, which is living in his view). He further says of repetition that it is transcendent. However: "I have abandoned my theory, I am adrift. Then, too, repetition is too transcendent for me. I can circumnavigate myself, but I cannot rise above myself. I cannot find the Archimedean point" (Hong / Hong 1983: 186).

Here a circle closes, a repetition of the beginning of this essay occurs, so to speak: While I showed there that Kierkegaard configures his aesthetics of nature via the Archimedean point, which he sets as a prerequisite for the clear grasp of reality, he

refuses to do so at this point. Referring to Nietzsche, I already elaborated on the fact that the human aesthete is decentralized because life itself holds the fishing rod in order to move the world with it. As just explained, life is repetition, while repetition is transcendent. Is therefore also life transcendent? Rather, I discern a deconstructive shift here. Namely, there is a crucial difference from a transcendence that directs life toward a futurity or a beyond. According to Kierkegaard, “Repetition’s love is in truth the only happy love. [...] – it has the blissful security of the moment” (ibid. 131–132). If every future and also past is a repetition, then time condenses itself in a moment, congeals into a point that contains an infinity of possible worlds. However, it is not an Archimedean point in the universe, but the wound in which the golden rod of life gets caught. Just the refusal, the laziness, takes thus the repetition seriously, is love of life. To emphasize this conclusion, two other statements of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard can be compared. Nietzsche says about the laziness: “And he will also find the little god, surely, [...] he lies next to the well, still, with closed eyes. Indeed, he fell asleep in broad daylight, the loafer! Did he chase too much after butterflies?” (Del Caro / Pippin 2006: 83) With Kierkegaard, one could add: “[T]he person who chose repetition – he lives. He does not run about like a boy chasing butterflies or stand on tiptoe to look for the glories of the world, for he knows them”. (Hong & Hong 1983: 132) In Greco-Roman mythology, the little god is Cupid or Eros, the personification of love, who is usually depicted as an adolescent boy. Both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard allude to this here. Love here seems to be loafing, tired of the pursuit of glories. Paradoxically, however, it is precisely at the moment of laziness that love chooses life and repetition, because it then no longer stands on its toes to reach upward craning the neck toward a transcendence. Instead, from the position of loafing, resting or retraction, love is then ready for the dance to which Zarathustra compels the little god (cf. Del Caro / Pippin 2006: 83). This then allows for a rhythmic symbolism of the body that would not be representationalist, but rather repeats discrete moments and data points.

The formatting of the living as repetition is thus fruitful in connecting it to the aesthetics of discreteness emphasized by Fazi, because the living is not divorced from the digital. The living is not continuous-creative and the digital discrete. Rather, the living is also always already discrete and does not produce anything new, is recursive and iterative, and is able to affirm the moment, a punctuated time, as Jackson Jr. puts it, following Jane Guyer (cf. Guyer 2008: n.d.; cited in Jackson Jr. 2013: 27). The living thus becomes or is always already digital-formal-abstract-discrete and analogue-linear time is a digital space-time. My argument here is not that the digital overwrites and totalizes the living. Nor do I understand it in terms of a digital philosophy that posits digital or discrete codes as the core of physical complexity and therefore hegemonizes a deductive logic (cf. Parisi 2017: 80). Rather, through the approach of the symbolism of the body and the dance of repetition, I want to enable an ontology of the digital that does not have to make a distinction

between the sphere of the living and that of the digital, as Fazi does, in order to subsequently ask for a digital aesthetic. Rather, the living is always already intertwined with a digital via repetition; is connected with it in a common dance that would be an expression of an aesthetic that does not need an Archimedean point on the outside in order to grasp reality; an aesthetic that would not be creative-generic, but folded to a present discreteness.

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