

EPILOGUE

After School ... School once more?

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Afterschool, released in 2008 could simply mean 'School's Over', like the title of a report published in the same year by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, a European Commission Joint Research Centre: *School's Over: Learning Spaces in Europe in 2020: An Imagining Exercise on the Future of Learning*. What the movie would show, then, is not what happens outside regular school time, but what is happening *to* school under the current digital conditions. With this I refer to the fact, first, that not only literal inscriptions (i.e. texts made out of letters) but above all audiovisual inscriptions which reproduce the sensual and perceptual are available on an unprecedented scale and on the basis of individual choice (e.g. what Robert is finding on Youtube) and, second, that an increasing number of people have the means to contribute their own inscriptions (so-called user generated content, including Robert's video).

The film seems to indicate that what is happening *to* school is apparently that it is no longer able to further the experience of 'reality' taken in a strong sense, i.e. in the sense that something can become of interest, 'inspire life'. How to breath? How to find the air, the 'inspiration' you need to live? There are of course the girls that are dying despite and because of the drugs they use, and they die desperately trying to catch a breath. But there is also Robert's heavy breathing when he is sitting in the office of the director, where the 'realness' of his fighting with his roommate is obliterated (by reducing it to a mere consequence of personal troubles) and where he finds out that the psychologist-counselor has in fact passed on to the principal everything he had tried, with great difficulty (and under the promise of confidentiality) to express and to

articulate to him about the way he experienced the world. So, how and where to catch one's breath? The film seems to suggest (by its form as much as by its content) that the answer is to be looked for in a re-invention of 'school' as time to think and be attentive. And that this is only possible by enabling (and experimenting with) a new 'grammatization'—to use the words of Bernard Stiegler (2009)—of our experiences by the digitally audiovisual.

Indeed, on the one hand the film suggests that the condition of finding no breath and losing a sense of the real is precisely related to the increasing presence and availability of the audiovisual reproduction of so-called 'real' experiences on the internet, and thus on the screen. Rather than giving and opening to a 'real' world, this condition seems to heavily obstruct or even to prevent the experience of reality (in the sense that these reproductions on the screen cannot arrest our attention, nor move us). Robert seems to need the feeling of the cold water on his hands and his face, but also the hitting or spanking of his face (with the same hands) in order to find some experience of reality. And I assume that it is not too far-fetched to relate this to the increasing presence of practices which we witness in the world of youngsters today that, in the end, consist of inflicting bodily 'pain' (cutting or exhausting the body) in order to feel that one is alive.

But on the other hand the film seems to suggest, by both its form and its content, that this experience of reality (i.e. of sharing a world) and of 'being alive' today has to rely on a certain practice of the audiovisual itself, a practice that is, perhaps, a particular re-invention of school practice. On the level of the content we can note that the video that Robert makes of the two girls conveys a real experience, whereas the second, 'clean video' of the same girls made later on by other class members just contributes to strengthening the sense of un-reality and breathlessness. The experience of realness relates to the way Robert has made the video, i.e. the way in which he has chosen the sayings and doings he wanted to broadcast, and the way in which he used the camera to see what was happening in front of it, in order to recollect what there is to find and to hear. On the level of the form, it is precisely the way in which Campos' film itself is made which helps to interrupt a mere consumption of the audiovisual, and which invites us to think

and to see again. Consider in this respect the framing (there is always left parts of bodies, and of their activities and gestures outside the frame) as well as the sound (although one expects the boarding school to be a very quiet place, as it is located within large green parks, there is almost permanently a disturbing noise). Consider, furthermore, the (long) duration of shots (almost without any movement of the camera), the alternation between full screen and small screen, etc. This very particular and stylized 'discretization' (Stiegler, 2009) of the flux of images and sounds allows in fact time to think and to be attentive (i.e. it allows for making school). In this sense one could say that the issue to take to heart today is not to blame the new technologies for blurring the real/unreal difference, so much as to find (or support) ways in which precisely these technologies could contribute to generating the feeling of the real, or to realize the real, so to speak (i.e. to arrest our attention and move us). This probably forces us to think not only about the practice of 'making' (the side of user-generated content), but also about practices of receiving (of looking/listening) and about ecologies that allow such practices to be developed and exercised. Practices that might involve the invention of new disciplines (of the mind and the body) and the re-invention of old ones, such as the one to not watch cinema on one's own but collectively—to not watch cinema 'at home', but in a public space, and to always experiment with public articulations of what one sees, hears and thinks. Afterschool, in this sense, thus means re-inventing school.

However, there is the niggling worry that this pedagogic optimism is maybe too straightforward, and that the impressive analysis of our 24/7 economy, as analyzed by Jonathan Crary (2014), is right. He states that the idea of 'free time' spent exclusively as a time to study and exercise 'is outmoded. This time is far too valuable not to be leveraged with plural sources of solicitation and choices that maximize possibilities of monetization and that allow the continuous accumulation of information about the user' (Ibid., p. 53). It might be that we are now facing a process of 'relentless capture and control of time and experience' (Ibid., p. 40). *Afterschool* would then in fact point to the experience that seems to be the 'real' and only one for an increasing number of people today: that one has no time.

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