

Obituary

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Dear Ole Michael,

Finally, after a lot of travelling, I have returned home! As you know, I went to the AAG conference in Boston right after visiting you, and to New York then, but immediately after that I had a seminar with students outside Zürich. When I came back home, it was only to pick up my skis and go to the mountains for a week with my nephews - at first I only went, because I had promised it, but it took them just a day to change my sense of duty into a feeling of enjoyment.

So it is only now, that I can begin writing to you about what happened with my Obituary, how I condensed the discussions we had in your house to a presentation, and how it went at the AAG.

I think, it has turned out to be a very fruitful way of working, what we have done together: your model helped me to understand better what I mean, and my questions were - perhaps - a good test for your model. For the Boston presentation I kept the structure we had come up with: the first half of the presentation as a prepared, written lecture, and the second half, the one after the death of cartographical reason, as improvised performance. And in between these halves, a silence as long as I could possibly stand (which was still not very long!).

I think I told you that the session on cartographical reason would take place in Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, which was an ideal place for it, even if not many people came. The theme of cartographical reason, I believe, is right at the center not only of what we are struggling with in science, but also of what contemporary art is struggling with, and responding to, right now.

Cartographical reason - well, what I mean by it may have become a bit clearer since our discussions in Copenhagen and the Boston presentation. What I now call cartographical reason is a certain self-understanding of reason which was predominant in a particular time/culture (the life-time of this guy Cartographical Reason). Like any other form of reason, it was based on the act of distinction, but in this case, a distinction that was expected to be a solid reference for community building (for living together). To serve this purpose, it had to be a particular kind of distinction (one coming from one and only one place, a place outside; one eliminating time/change, be it the change within this place or the change of distinction-lines). It had to be a distinction which distinguished itself from itself, that is, cut itself off from its embeddedness in a passing, human existence. (Since the beginning, that was, very explicitly, the aim.) Speaking in the terms you proposed in your Walls book, I would call cartographical reason the self-understanding of reason in a time/culture which considered the doxa-field of {rhetoric, science, re-presentation...} as its basis, or basic ingredient as you called it.

So if this self-understanding of reason and foundation for living together has died, the lack of orientation, the search for ways to go on, not only individually but also communally, concerns contemporary art as much as it does us, not the least, because its death significantly changes the roles science and art play in culture (in fact, they are changing in front of our eyes!).

The three contributions to the session, Franco's Nature of Cartographical Reason, followed by Gunnar's Towards a Critique... of it, and then my Obituary, went together very well, and revealed important differences, but also similarities. So we have to go on discussing!!

After the session Tim Unwin came to ask if we wanted to submit our talks to his new journal Ethics, Place and Environment. I was very happy about his openness, although a bit worried how to turn my presentation into an article. This journal, on the other hand, was certainly the right place for discussing cartographical reason. Also because of Ethics: all three presentations, I feel, expressed much of what Wittgenstein said about ethics (I don't know if his conversations with M. Schlick in 1929 or his 1930 lecture on ethics have been translated): trying to

run against the limits of language is what ethics is, he said there. And that he takes it as important to end all idle talking about ethics; whether there is knowledge, whether there are values, whether what is good can be defined etc.. I think he meant ethics is something we cannot say anything about, but rather something which shows itself in our persistent attempts to say something about it. If someone would be able to write a book about ethics, one that really would be a book about ethics, I like this sentence of Wittgenstein!, this book would annihilate all other books in the world in a big bang.

But I wanted to tell you about my presentation: Here is what I did in Boston, at first, the part I had prepared. Dressed in black, as necessary for such circumstances, I read the following text:

Ladies and gentleman!

The passing away of Cartographical Reason, our beloved father, supporter and friend has brought us together here today; here in this special place, this institute dedicated to the highest contemporary achievements in merging the visible and invisible world. From now on, the form in which these worlds touch and transform each other, will never be two-sided again.

And so we have assembled here to say good bye to this form and accompany our old Cartographical Reason on its last journey. Let me therefore, also for a last time, map out the distinctive features of this founding father of our culture, so that we can, this last time, remember: remember the guiding lines through which he has been such a powerful ideal for us.

About his mother-country and birth, Cartographical Reason himself could never tell us anything. Herein - we can see it now - lay the roots of his tragic fate. For wherever he turned to as an origin, he was always already there, and all he could do to relieve his longing, was to go straight ahead into the future, turning its infinity to a circle and hoping, one day he would return home.

For us, however, being the illegitimate children we are, it is possible to at least have presumptions about the birth of Cartographical Reason. And so there are some, who say it was Odysseus, who was his father,

stumbling into the arms of an unknown woman while escaping from what he believed to be the Cyclops projectiles.

There are others, who say Cartographical Reason was born, when the ana-logical body of animistic culture could no longer incorporate the soul of human imagination, when spreading its members to take the position of its priest, this body liberated the name from the thing.

Both presumed explanations amount to the same: From his birth, distinction was the characteristic of Cartographical Reason. But contrary to other children, who use touch and taste, his, from the very beginning, was a distinction by sight. Let us be thankful for the clarity of this vision, which shaped the two-sided form of logic and thus gave rise to the distinct cutting lines we always have to remember!

Remember, ladies and gentleman, the instrument Cartographical Reason provided for us to remember: It is representation, the old allegorical representation as much as the later perspective. Now that he does not hold it up, that it is not given any longer, we all have to go on ourselves and keep constructing, constructing by trying to repeat, go on repeating never to find the same.

But allow me, just one more time, to present you some other characteristics of Cartographical Reason: To him, who was so willing to stay in the background, being human meant to be known by sight, to be a material individuality behaving as bound identity. And he lived it: Whenever you saw him, he appeared so consistent internally, so independent difficult to understand why there was this longing inside him.

As you know, Cartographical Reason was a thinker much more than a talker, but if he said something, he was very eloquent, so much in possession of his words, words which he saw as fixed marks in space! Like the scars on a woman's body they should enable communion, should be media of communication. Being no magic events, nor ungoing traces, you could rely on the words of this man as stable means for community-building.

Because community for Cartographical Reason was not something given by birth, but something you had to work for, be enlightened to. Enlightened to inhabit a framed horizon whose boundaries - the consistency of its internal ones as well as its external fence - were guarded by referees acting in his name.

I am sure, you now share my mourning, the sadness I feel when looking at the notion of knowledge, Cartographical Reason stood for: to him, it was not just the ability to make a next step towards a purpose resting in a shared world or a shared stepping in the movement of different worlds. No! To him, knowledge was literal knowledge, confirmed propositions of the form $A=B$. You know them. And you know that the community which had to be created, was a community created by shared propositions, settled by them.

If Cartographical Reason also had his enemies, if we - you as much as I - had to defend him sometimes, it was because of another aspect of his character: While providing us with distinctions, providing us with propositions, Cartographical Reason always stepped back from his facts, wanting to represent rather than be present. Few understood, that he had to do this, had to distance himself from the world if he wanted to provide us with orientation. And few understood what we know, how much discipline, how much loneliness, renouncing of the pleasure of true mutuality ... this entailed. They said it was to his own advantage, that he took that upon him: For the enormous power it gave him, the hold on time and the control over categories. But we, who have known him so intimately, know better: He was doing it with his best intentions! One day, in Sevilla, he said to a friend whom he had thrown in prison: See how simple, how dissolute they are, he said; how bitterly they need the wonder, the secret, authority. And yet what freedom you wanted to give them, a freedom, much greater than they can bear! I had to captivate you. So he intended to help us, help us in finding the way that is good for us, the way towards what we truly want. To do this - and Cartographical Reason was perfectly aware of it - he had to know better, had the enormous responsibility of knowing better. And you know how hard he worked for it.

But, ladies and gentleman, who have come here today to mourn with me, I now have to tell you that in these last years, Cartographical Reason also was aware, that in knowing better, knowing people's ways for them, he actually annihilated them as human beings. Cartographical Reason knew that. He was able to see it clearly and distinctively and he faced it. - You might think that it is this, what in the beginning I have called his tragic fate, but it was not. Now that it is possible to look over his complete life, what I see as tragic is that he knew exactly about the bad outcomes of his good intentions, while at the same time he knew exactly that he had to go on with them. He had to go on, because - just like a prisoner who is cut off from the world cannot stop longing to get out - he

could not stop longing for the origin, the place from which he had cut himself off.

This, ladies and gentleman, is what I believe has made him grow old so quickly in the last years, and what eventually killed him. Maybe, when we arrived here today, Cartographical Reason had not completely passed away from our minds, maybe he was still a bit alive in our eyes and we still did not trust our other sense for building community, the feeling for atmosphere. But now this speech has executed his end and in our coming together in shared feelings, something new can begin.

May Cartographical Reason rest in peace!

At this point of my presentation- we talked about it - the question was, how to continue. I had about 15 minutes left. So, how to give a lecture at the end of cartographical reason? Because for sure, even if it might not have been completely dead when I began, the first half of my presentation must have killed it. Showing cartographical reason so clearly in the way I spoke, I had killed cartographical reason by applying cartographical reason to it, by allowing myself to map its life-path, to fix and define the meaning of its single stations. And - in case that was not enough for Cartographical Reason himself, for convincing Cartographical Reason - in doing so I had also killed him with a paradox, with cartographical reason's map of itself dead.

But how to go on after? How to open up the territory of cartographical reason for another reason, for a distinction which does not distinguish itself from itself, from being a situated human activity? How to open up its territory for a reason of several reasoning sites, several situated distinctions, of multiple lines laying on top of each other to cover One and the Other in several terms? It seemed most appropriate to me, to dissolve the boundary of cartographical reason's territory, dissolve its distinction from itself, by eating: I had to eat the deceased, eat cartographical reason's map of cartographical reason, that is, eat my written text.

Eating is usually quite a good means for dissolving distinction. At a time before the time of cartographical reason, eating some distinct unity, some dead part of the world, was considered a way to unite with the world, a way to know it. (You remember what Franco said about the Lotus eaters in the

Odyssey.) Now, this was no longer possible, for what I had to eat was not a distinct unity, but a distinction distinguished from itself, was not dead world, but dead knowledge. Still, I thought that eating this knowledge might be a way to dissolve its distinction from embodied human existence and bring knowledge back to life.

There is a second association in eating: at a time before the time of cartographical reason, the shared eating of a sacrificed organism was considered as a way of uniting human beings, a way to dissolve the chaotic distinctions of collective violence and re-create community, in this case a community-organism. In my case, creating community as an organism was no longer possible, because what I ate was not an organism, not anything that could be split into parts standing for the whole. Supported by matter, it was still not sufficiently interwoven with it for any part to suffice. So I had to eat the whole dead knowledge myself. No sharing possible! And the organism which was thus re-created from a distinction distinguished from itself, was just mine. But in losing the distinction within myself, I found a way to allow distinction between thinking subjects. There is a way to respect their specificity and still connect them in one unity, a community of a different kind, one created by specific individuals that do not have to reduce and reify each other.

So, in my presentation,

I made a long break,

*and I ate cartographical reason's map of its self dead.
And then I made a further break.*

Because I did not know how to go on. - Well, not quite, but you will see... I really had tried to keep what I had talked about with you and also with Jette: that I should not allow myself to plan

anything, or think in advance about the second half of my presentation, but just get to this point and then feel the atmosphere and do what happened to be appropriate.

It did not work. It did not work, even if I still believe, it could have worked (just take improvising musicians!). One reason was, that I was not physically present enough and, without such acute presence, not sensitive enough actually to feel how I feel myself and the atmosphere in the room (which was not easy to feel, because the few people sat quite apart from each other). I need more practice at that!

The other reason why going with the moment did not work, was that some ideas got in my way. Even without planning what would happen after cartographical reason, I had some ideas about what had to happen. And they got in my way. So I did not not know how to go on enough.

What I thought had to happen after the end of cartographical reason, idea one, was that thinking would turn from remembering to repeating. This is an idea from Kierkegaard, who said in the first pages of *Die Wiederholung* that just as the Greeks have taught that all knowing is remembering, the newer philosophy will teach that all life is repetition. I understand him as saying, that in our longing to use some situation, some chance, better than we have used it, we try to repeat what gave us this chance. But in life, contrary to thought (or thought about science), it is not possible to repeat. There is always some deviation and it is these deviations that give us a chance. Not the old chance again, but a chance for something for which before, we did not know how to ask. So, my idea was that reason, after cartographical reason would be a kind of lived, or living reason.

And of course, the expectation of being guided by the atmosphere, the feeling I had of myself and of the people in the room, contained another presupposition, an idea two, which probably also stood in my way. This is the idea that community, after the end of cartographical reason, is no more created by disciplining people into one fixpoint, fettering their neck and tights to make them stay in one position and look the same way, look forward, to see the map (or propositions) everyone has to believe. At the end of cartographical reason, there is still reason,

but it is too situated and the distinction between thinking subjects is too big. Never would they sit in the same position, never stand in one agora, never come together in a lecture hall to be enlightened from authority's cathedra. Without a meta-position for drawing a map to mediate different claims, any hope that pure, rational argumentation would lead to agreements for living together without oppression is empty. All we can hope for is some understanding (by putting oneself in another(s) position). Not any more can community be built on a shared consciousness (or shared propositions), and - what had worked in earlier cultures: - it can also not be built on the picture of a shared body any more (even if today the latter is sometimes tried as a rescue in the face of the former).

My idea is, that after the death of cartographical reason community is based on a kind of atmosphere - I still don't have a better name for it. What I mean is something in the space between people, an atmosphere that is created by their physically, intellectually and emotionally animated bodies and also perceived by them - a kind of climate in which people react to each other, a resonance that unites without reducing individual difference, or in Benjamin's word, a constellation uniting particular, moving stars. This, I feel, is how community is created. Because one common order does not imply that there has to be just one origin of order.

We are often not consciously aware of this atmosphere and may, in some situations, have lost the sensitivity for it, but I am sure you have, at times, felt it. It is something embarrassingly simple, hence extremely complex, and I believe, it becomes stronger the less people are fettered to conform to a given position and the more they are animated in their own, particular one. Maybe what we do in thinking, in our situated acts of distinction in which we draw and redraw our particular, personal maps, is just trying to reshape ourselves to become more adaptable and versatile for this resonance, to intensify (our impact on and our sensitivity for) this atmosphere and make it more gentle. I don't know, Ole Michael, how to explain this well, how to describe what is just a feeling, an idea I have - an idea about community after the end of cartographical reason, which in Boston, in any case, probably stood in my way.

So in my presentation in Boston,

after the second break, I began by repeating, repeating the words of the Obituary out of my mind. Ladies and gentleman! , I said, waiting for the deviations to happen, We have come together here today because of the passing away of Cartographical Reason, our beloved father, supporter and friend. Here in this special institution which is dedicated to contemporary achievements in merging the visible and invisible world, because from now on, the form in which these worlds will meet and transform each other will never be the same again, will never be two-sided again.

And so we have assembled here ... I think I spoke on a little bit further, but I was so bored with it and I did not feel anything from the audience either, that I just said well, I could go on like that. and stopped. I laugh when I think about it, because it seems that I was so good in remembering, so good in intending what I must not intend, that with cartographical reason I also eliminated myself. It's really funny, even if it is sad!

Well, Ole Michael, that's the story. I am still trying to understand what I was doing. What does the end of my Boston presentation point to? One dead or two; two dead or none? Is it true, what Gunnar and Franco take it to show, that we will never be able to kill cartographical reason, we will never get out of the prison house of distinction and the most we can reach, is bringing the paradox to the extreme? Or is this only true for the cartographical reason *they* mean, for distinction *per se*? (For which I would just use the word reason). Would it be true for the cartographical reason I mean, that is, for a distinction as solid reference for community building, a distinction therefore distinguished from itself?

And taking their prison house of distinction, of reason: it is not that I am looking for an easy way *out* (and I appreciate the honesty of our friends, who don't give in to their longing for freedom, but sustain it, and don't promise the possibility of an escape through steps they pretend to know). I am not looking for an easy way out, but I am really wondering if we are *in*. If we are inside, be it a prison, a cave, a cartesian meditation room or a fly bottle. (Somehow I feel that it would be too presumptuous to

believe and would, in the end, be longing for something we already are.) I don't look for an easy way out, but I think, they take distinction to be a prison house, because they take what I call cartographical reason to be reason. They take reason or distinction to be a prison house because they take distinction distinguished from itself to be the only distinction possible.

Well, this is something we have to discuss. But what I am certain of, is that for what I learn from Franco and Gunnar, the atmosphere they are able to create, animated by reasoning is what, to me, is most important. Being so different, it is not any map that connects us, but an intense atmosphere which arises between us, all of whom are so concerned with our own mapping. In such an atmosphere of community, what we think and who we are is given impetus to to change.

So, Ole Michael, I do not only not know what I was doing in my Boston presentation, but I also do not know what I was doing in this letter. Is, what shows itself in what I say, my cartographical reason risen from death (if ever dead at all), or is it another kind of reason, one that is alive to fill the space between us, one that requires that I write this letter.

Please write back to me, if you have time, write to me about what you are thinking. And please greet your family, tell them I felt very well staying with them and thank them for their hospitality! As I thank you.

Herzliche Grüße!

Dagmar

P.S.: Here are the references I wanted to give you (some of them, of course, will be familiar to you):

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