

Robert Pfaller: Theorist of public grace

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An aesthetics of delegated enjoyment? Sure. An escape from prevailing ideologies? Indeed. An exposure of capitalist commodified happiness? Check. A key to understanding the paradoxes of our cynical-hedonist era? Absolutely. Robert Pfaller's disquisition on interpassivity is all that its back flap promises, and more. But reading this new book, and rereading earlier publications, make me believe that there is something else brewing in Pfaller's heterodox writings – something that is perhaps less in line with the image we have of a cultural theorist taking his bearings from Althusser, Lacan, Spinoza, Mannoni and Žižek. Something more – forgive me philosophers – of a sociological nature. I believe we can also read Pfaller as a theorist of public space. Or, given his predilection for graceful acts of enjoyable togetherness, we can read him more specifically as a theorist of public *grace*.

To be sure, displays of public grace in the Pfallerian sense are not merely pleasurable and elegant sights and experiences—they are also acts of resistance, of refusal, of defiance even. This is in line with their origin in the versatile and prolific concept of interpassivity, which in its

own idiosyncratic way signals both resignation and opposition. Interpassivity, both as a phenomenon and as an object of study, was born in the mid-1990s, prodded to life as a reaction to “the overwhelming dominance at the time of the discourse of interactivity.”¹ The discourse of interactivity charges us with responsibilities not to be taken lightly: we are not just to consume – art, policy, or whatever – but also to become engaged and involved with, and accept co-responsibility for, the product we are consuming and the relation in which we find ourselves with it. These responsibilities are all the more difficult to evade, or refuse, or criticize, as they are the product of the 1990s confluence of two previously quite separate, or even hostile, political affinities. On the one hand, neoliberal ideology, which incites people to assume individual responsibility for their situation despite the overwhelming force of economic and social powers; on the other hand, leftist ideology stuck in the post-68 emancipatory discourse of participation and democratic co-creation.² Interpassivity is a move to counter, evade, or sabotage this nefarious new political and artistic consensus.

That sounds like a plan! Let us not be co-opted into this kind of “democracy and other neoliberal fantasies,” to speak with Jodi Dean.³ Pfaller’s remedy is as striking as is his diagnosis. His preferred counter-measures do not entail strikes, occupations, or political agitation – to the contrary, they have to do with our experience of enjoyment (*Lust*). Or more specifically, with how and why we may wish to *delegate* enjoyment, even surreptitiously enjoying such delegation of enjoyment. This strategy of course raises some questions (as well as eyebrows). Such as: how is one supposed to delegate enjoyment, especially while incurring enjoyment through such delegation? And moreover: how could enjoyment, of whatever kind, be an effective countermeasure against powerful political and social forces like neoliberalism and emancipation? Why would it have the capacity to make us act and behave in public without succumbing to these forces? What is graceful about it? And is it even a countermeasure – rather than one more ploy of dominant ideology?

I aim to approach these and related matters in the following way. The first step is to see that enjoyment has become an object of legitimate interest, for theorists like Pfaller, because there is something *problematic* about it. And perhaps more importantly: something has made it *become* problematic – a consideration which introduces an historical dimension into the discussion. This dimension seems indispensable to me to make interpassivity theory work in a more sociological and political sense, although I realize this brushes against the structuralist grain of interpassivity as conceived originally by Robert Pfaller, and Slavoj Žižek. Next, I connect the idea of a “disturbed relation to enjoyment” to two important historical developments in western culture in the last half century. In this way, we will indeed be able to acquire a key to “understanding the paradoxes of our cynical-hedonist era.” In the 1960s and 1970s, we witness the impact of emancipatory discourse and practice, connected to ideals of democratic involvement with collective decisionmaking, but importantly also to ideals of self-understanding and self-realisation. Through what we might call a narcissistic backlash, this has led to a structural change – a deterioration – of the public sphere. Enjoyment becomes connected to self-exposure in the public sphere. Here is where I see an important connection between Pfaller’s work and that of social theorist Richard Sennett and, although perhaps less crucially, Michel Foucault. The 1990s then provide a neoliberal turn, through which enjoyment explicitly becomes enlisted in the service of neoliberal ideology, as brought out in contemporary expressions like “flexible man” and “work hard, play hard.” To enjoy is to become a *Genußarbeiter*, as Svenja Flaßpöhler has aptly put it.⁴ This interactive commitment to maximize both emancipation and enjoyment, leads to interpassivity as a “refusal to refuse” – a way to avoid becoming caught in the trap of a “surplus of positivity,” to speak with Byung-Chul Han.⁵ Public interpassive ritual may be among the most important answers we presently have – and it is certainly the most graceful.

1.

What the heck is interpassivity? And in what possible ways could enjoyment count as a defence against the onslaughts of neoliberalism?

These are questions which readily present themselves to the minds of those newly introduced to Pfaller's work. And indeed they often pop up in the many interviews Pfaller has given to popular media which have worked up an interest in interpassivity as it appears to resonate with the causes of 'lifestyle' they champion.⁶ This in itself is a good point to start, as it is both surprising and heartening that through Pfaller's ministrations such an abstruse theory like that of interpassivity – the term itself is enough to scare off most of the potential broader public – has been able to appeal to such a broad interest. And this not in the guise of what university bureaucracy condescendingly calls "popularization," a kind of hawking of serious academic work to mass media "outlets," but as a happy example of philosophy not only studying popular culture, but actually managing to attract its interest and, literally and figuratively, speak to it.

Of course, much also goes wrong or gets lost at this interface of academic and popular culture! For instance, when our protagonist is vulgarly requested by his interviewers to disclose some of his own indiscretions, irrationalities, or stupidities – to which he rightly gives either a suitably banal answer, or a meta-reply like: "the most irrational act now would be to disclose my most irrational act."⁷ Of course, the banality is to be expected, and endured. More dangerous, and more pertinent to our topic, is the "human interest" purport in these lifestyle-related interview questions. These betray an ineradicable desire to discern a human being behind the "mask" of the academic philosopher. "Which are your personal pleasures, Herr Pfaller? Give us a peek – be candid now!" Here our protagonist is faced with what Richard Sennett called "the tyranny of intimacy," to be discussed further down in more detail, which equates the real-world value of academic thought with the degree to which it can be personalized.⁸ One of the virtues of Pfaller's writing is that his form of "popularization" of interpassivity has managed to avoid the pitfalls and temptations of intimacy and narcissism.

We now first need to address how enjoyment might constitute a defense against neoliberal powers. Is enjoyment not something rather implied and promoted by neoliberalism, and more generally by

capitalism, for instance through commercials? And has not Hollywood's *Kulturindustrie* already been denounced by Horkheimer and Adorno, in their *Dialektik der Aufklärung*? Pfaller however argues the opposite: capitalism and the *Kulturindustrie*, or its present-day equivalent, frustrate, constrain, and inhibit our enjoyment, rather than elicit it. This is basically because, for Pfaller, enjoyment stands for, or equals, "passivity." Although this notion caused some discussion in the community of interpassivity authors⁹ (is visiting a traditional museum, or reading a book, something passive?) we can understand it in the present context as: the condition or ability to not be pressured by the demand – the ideology – that we be active and self-determining, the expectation (of both ourselves and others) that we participate in both individual and collective self-realisation.

The paradox, or trap, here is that we are invited to engage in ever more strenuous and ambitious (inter)activity in order to be self-determining and achieve self-determination, while actually it is precisely the "passive" aspect that is most determinative and specific about us. This passive part is the part that we cannot control, discipline, or otherwise manipulate.¹⁰ As this is unwelcome news in our modern society, we try to minimize – or in interpassivity: outsource – this unmanageable part of ourselves by frantically engaging in active shaping of self and society. This is where neoliberal and leftist projects meet, according to Pfaller. In their confluence, they constitute an ideology of "boundless moderation," or in other words, of a "stunning ascetism".¹¹ This imposes a demand of maximum responsibility upon us, while denying us the enjoyment of passivity (or the passivity of enjoyment).

In this way, we can indeed see how one could claim that enjoyment may be conceived to counter neoliberal ideology (as well as the leftist cause of emancipation). The argument however raises at least as many questions as it answers, and most of what follows will be an attempt to deal with those questions. A first point to notice is that this argument implies that enjoyment is something *problematic*. All is not as it should be; something is precluding us from enjoying enjoyment, so to speak. The source of this problematic nature seems to be neoliberalism,

or more broadly capitalism. This would imply that removing capitalism would remove the hindrances to enjoying enjoyment. Which would be a relatively straightforward diagnosis, familiar from, say, Wilhelm Reich's *The sexual revolution*.

However, there is more at stake here. Pfaller takes on not only neoliberalism and capitalism, but also the whole Western or (North-west) European culture of Enlightenment and of protestantism. For the Enlightenment part, notice his indignation at Kant's dictum that oppression is due to man's own laziness, as he is too lazy to use his abilities to be his own master.¹² Indeed, Hegel rightly turned this insight upside down in his master-slave dialectics: it is the master who is too lazy to do his own work, and thus gets to depend on the slave who does it for him. And then famously Marx turned Hegel upside down by pointing out that the roles of master and slave were assigned through (capitalist) relations of production. The point is that it is not merely capitalism which is to blame here for Pfaller, but in fact the philosophical culture of (early) modern Europe.

Which, of course, importantly also includes protestantism. See here for instance Pfaller's complaint that "in the 1980s, Documenta looked like a catholic church; now, more like a protestant one: lots of text, few pleasurable objects."¹³ This is one reason why Slavoj Žižek, on the back flap, calls *Interpassivity* "a great founding text of social thought, on a par with works of classics like Max Weber." The point here is of course the protestant ethic. Already at its inception, capitalism was intimately tied up not only with the practice of bookkeeping, imported from Italy, but also with the "boundless moderation" and "stunning ascetism" of protestantism. If there is one mortal enemy of protestantism, it is certainly enjoyment. Equally obviously, this makes Pfaller's theory vulnerable to the charge of being partial to catholicism, a suspicion corroborated by the telling fact that he is a native of Vienna.

We may have legitimate issues with all three of these possible culprits – capitalism, Enlightenment, Protestantism – but for the diagnosis as well as for the possible therapy it is not indifferent which target we

choose. Suppose we succeed in abolishing capitalism, which for instance would certainly please Zizek (I am not really sure about Pfaller) – would we then also need to abolish, or somehow overcome, Enlightenment? And protestantism? And perhaps modernity in general? Again, legitimate issues, but one would like to know which enemies to fight, so as not to end up in disappointment, or confusion.

And there is one more problem here. Whether it is capitalism, Enlightenment or protestant culture we choose to blame for messing with our enjoyment, this kind of argument is at odds with the Lacanian strain in Pfaller's (and also Zizek's) interpassivity notion. According to the Lacanian view, enjoyment is never unproblematic and always and everywhere somehow screwed up. There is always something non-enjoyable about enjoyment, as there is no such thing as 'simple', 'mere', or 'pure' (unmediated) enjoyment, at least not in western societies. This is because our self-understanding is not only always routed through (the perception of) the other, which is standard Hegelian fare, but this rerouting for Lacan always inevitably introduces a distortion. As Zizek has put it, 'there is no freedom outside the traumatic encounter with the opacity of the Other's desire'.¹⁴ Both self-understanding and enjoyment are therefore always pathological. Maybe there is a special *kind* of pathology that is characteristic of capitalism, or protestantism (or of course catholicism). But the structural(ist) nature of the Lacanian insight into these matters does not sit well with any reference to historically specific developments, such as that of capitalism, or protestantism, in (early) modern European history. Like in my earlier critical assessments of Pfaller's and Zizek's work, I propose to de-emphasize the Lacanian dimension, in order to make a more historically and sociologically informed analysis possible.¹⁵ And in fact, *Interpassivity* contains just two passing references to Lacan – both concerning the interpassive function of the chorus in Greek tragedy – so hopefully I as well can be forgiven for failing to include Lacanian notions in my account of interpassivity.

2.

Deemphasizing a structuralist dimension and foregrounding a historical dimension implies claiming that interpassivity is a phenomenon produced and experienced under certain social, economic, and cultural conditions. It is a product of certain developments within western culture. More specifically, in my view, interpassivity is a condition born in the 1990s, in reaction to a number of historical constellations or forces which start with Enlightenment and culminate in the confluence of interactive government and neoliberal ideology.¹⁶ Hence it is not a coincidence that Robert Pfaller, together with Slavoj Žižek, “discovered” interpassivity around 1995; they encountered it around that time, and not in say 1971, 1908 or 1830, simply because it didn’t yet exist. What did exist earlier than the 1990s are three historical constellations or developments through which what we call interpassivity eventually took shape. These are: the rise of Enlightenment and modernity, the radical emancipatory dynamics of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the rise of the interactive paradigm in the 1980s and 1990s.

It is thus correct to say that certain aspects or dimensions of interpassivity can already be distinguished in, or “traced back to,” earlier events. Interpassivity did not appear out of the blue. Although it certainly has its own peculiar, not to say idiosyncratic characteristics, it is in a way an extension and a radicalization of certain earlier developments. The reason to reserve the term “interpassivity” for the specific cultural constellation appearing in the 1990s is, for me, that it refers to a state after or beyond interactivity; or at least, it is a condition that arose in reaction to the dominance of interactivity, in art, politics, and society more generally. Given the fact that not earlier in history has there been, or could there have been, any such paradigm of interactive relations, between citizens and institutions, it makes no sense to speak of interpassivity when referring to cultural constellations obtaining earlier than, say, thirty years ago. Therefore, I don’t think it makes much sense to say that Lacan’s remark on the function of the Greek tragic choir ‘passed unnoticed for a long time’ as an observation of (early) interpassivity.¹⁷ The choir mourned “on behalf of the spectators,” yes, but these early Greek

spectators did not enjoy an interactive relation with their institutions, so there is no ground to see this kind of “outsourcing” of passivity or enjoyment as a reaction against the demands made by interactivity.

In other words, a lot of things must have happened in the mean time in order for us to be able to start suffering from interpassivity. Most importantly, the ideal and practice of *emancipation* must have taken shape; emancipation, to put it in a Hegelian way, must have largely realized itself. But simultaneously, to continue in a Hegelian way, things must have gone awry somehow, in the mean time. Interpassivity is not the simple “realization” of some earlier idea, or the straightforward outcome of its development. It is rather the unforeseen and unintended outcome of an idea like emancipation. And this, as Pfaller rightly argues, is not a matter of a “thwarting” by empirical circumstances of some previously unpoluted ideal. Rather, the problem lies in the ideal itself; a kind of “dialectics of Enlightenment” is at work here. As Pfaller, following Zizek, puts it: “if an emancipatory theory turns, during its actualization, into a most repressive nightmare, then this is not to be understood as a simple abuse of the noble theory – ‘we should rather indicate how it lies dormant in it as a possibility’.”¹⁸

So there is already something in Enlightenment that will eventually enable the rise of interpassivity. Or more generally, something in the constellation of Enlightenment, modernity and protestantism. This something we may very generally indicate as *subjectivity*. Man realises his own ability to think for himself, and to take responsibility for how to give shape to the human world, to society. Modern man creates the world out of a particular kind of self-relation called subjectivity, as Hegel says; there is nothing but his own subjectivity to base this creation on.¹⁹ The principle of subjectivity is thus, if not the most important philosophical principle of modernity, then certainly the principle most characteristic of it. Every human relation or constellation has to somehow be understood and justified through subjective assessment and investigation; there is nothing we can put “outside” of us – “outsource” to some external, alien authority. We become *emancipated* when we

acquire the status and the capabilities to appeal to the principle of subjectivity in order to justify our actions and beliefs.

We see this principle reflected in many of the practices and institutions of modern life, such as democracy, rights, entitlements, and more generally the norms that – with our consent – regulate social and political life. Everyone is personally involved, at least in the sense that everyone has the right to see him – or herself as a person recognized and respected in both formal and informal arrangements. Not only does everyone have the capacity and the status to join in the debates and the decisions on how to arrange our collective lives; such capacities are also institutionally facilitated and supported, and this status is also legally protected. We would find it very hard, if not impossible, to live without these arrangements, capacities and statuses. In that sense it would be hard to imagine for us to forego the rights, privileges and statuses connected to subjectivity, and to being recognized as a person. This becomes sufficiently clear the moment such rights, privileges or statuses are being violated, denied, or taken away, by authoritarian government, or by intolerant society.

Yet there is also another side to this “taking personal” of modern life by modern individuals. We moderns might be said to “take things too personal.” We come to expect, and even demand, that all arrangements, institutions and practices of modern society take notice of us, that they perceive and acknowledge us in our personal convictions and our individual specificity. This might be said to instil in us a certain proclivity for *narcissism*, when we conceive of narcissism as the expectation that the external world literally and figuratively reflects us, allows us to project ourselves in its structures and institutions. In other words, when we expect society to reflect our subjectivity back to us so that we may admire ourselves in this image. Or perhaps more tellingly, that we can become indignant when we feel that our peculiar personal distinctiveness is insufficiently recognizable in this image.

Modern western society thus may be said to have always harboured a potential for narcissism – perhaps already visible in Jean-

Jacques Rousseau's view of world and self. The point here is that when people are burdened, or burden themselves, with the ability and the responsibility of creating and maintaining their selves and their world by their own efforts and their own designs, they will be likely to be in constant need of affirmation of their efforts, their designs, and maybe above all, of the fact or illusion that they are really distinctive individuals who should be appreciated, and confirmed, in the value of their unique subjective existence. And because that affirmation can no longer be received from traditional sources such as God or nature, or any other self-evident and undisputed source of authority, it can only be procured from man-made social arrangements and be based on assessments by other human beings. It is thus to be expected that individuals will demand such continuous re-affirmation from other individuals, or collectives.

This potential for narcissism was of course not immediately and fully released, or realised, with the advent of modernity. It took time for the philosophical principles of modernity to become realised in actual life, to become a regular part of both the institutional and the personal dimension of life in modern society. For those who would see a teleological style of argument shimmering through here: the time taken here is not like for some fruit to ripen, but the time needed to fight things out between the different sides in opposing social force-fields, as well as the time taken by technological developments. Emancipation, being the main individual and collective process at state here, is a process driven by the principles of modernity itself and realised by and through social struggles and technological innovations.

3.

The 1960s and 1970s constitute a major historical turning point for the principle of emancipation – and thus indirectly of subjectivity – to become broadly and extensively realised. There is no need to belabour the enormous impact of, most notably, the civil rights movement and of feminism on social and political relations in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Not to speak of sex, drugs, and rock&roll. The times they are a-

changin! Selma, Vietnam, Woodstock, Gloria Steinem, and reliable contraception indeed change the world. Previously excluded or marginalized groups and minorities speak up and demand to be heard and seen. Traditional institutions and ways of life find themselves under attack. Many institutions, such as in education and in health care, have to reinvent and reorganize themselves, in response to the demands by a newly empowered clientele aware of its often newly won rights and not afraid to assert itself in the face of previously impenetrable and impervious institutions and authorities. Personal relations change quite dramatically as well. The relations between the sexes become much more equal and many stigmata with regard to private life, especially sexuality, are being set aside. And finally, in close connection with these transformations, there is also a “culture war” being waged, in which new lifestyles and cultural life forms clash against established, traditional ones.

Generally, all traditional forms of authority are now considered suspect and obsolete. Politically, this translates into attacks on established political entities such as old-school parties, authoritarian government, and unresponsive institutions. There is a widespread and urgent call for democratization, at all levels and across all institutions. People demand to have a say in the way in which the institutions determining their lives are run. They are no longer going to put up with traditionalism. Instead of simply issuing rules and maintaining order through a mixture of repression and paternalism, authorities must now start to justify themselves – increasingly under pressure from the media, whose influence is rapidly increasing. But also more widely in people’s lives, there is a shift taking place from “command household” to “negotiation household,” as Dutch sociologist Abram de Swaan has aptly put it.²⁰ Authority is no longer associated with fixed hierarchical statuses; it now comes to depend on processes of negotiation and discussion, in which all parties involved have a say, and none can claim to speak for all.

Widespread, radical and irreversible as these changes may be, they are not universally perceived as liberating and emancipating. Conservatives criticize them as an all too rash upset of established social

and cultural patterns – the predictable counter-move to the well known 1968 exhortation “be reasonable, demand the impossible!”. But there are also other cultural critics who see something repressive and problematic in this ostensible gain in freedom and release of emancipatory powers. And, in line with the exposition on the Enlightenment above, something *narcissistic*. Emancipation tells people that they have the right to be noticed, to be *seen* by society – an aspect implicitly shared by most or even all concepts of emancipation, and explicitly brought out in Jacques Rancière’s notion of emancipation as a change in the “partage du sensible”.²¹ Emancipation is thus on the one hand something personal. The objective principle that everyone is important and everyone matters has the subjective implication that *you* matter and that *I* matter; we both, as individuals, regardless of our social or cultural status, or lack of it, have a claim to be noticed, acknowledged, and recognized. On the other hand, it is also something public. We have a right to be visible *to others* – to not lead a merely personal life, but to appear and be visible in the midst of those that constitute the social, cultural, and political society that I am part of.

As Richard Sennett has understood early on, such public visibility cannot be something naive, spontaneous, or natural – something Rousseauian. On the contrary, public visibility as a modern citizen is more like an art, requiring the development and mastery of a set of skills and a repertoire of actions, movements, and statements, to be deployed depending on the situation one finds oneself in.²² This is so because in the public sphere in modern society, we are in the company of strangers. We do not personally know those we interact with, and therefore we necessarily depend on a set of impersonal rules – norms and conventions – to regulate our interaction. We may become aware of them when we ask ourselves what it takes to successfully negotiate busy train stations, crowded streets, neighbourhood cafes, soccer matches, political demonstrations, and what not. While normally in the background, we especially become aware of such conventions when someone *breaks* them, by bumping into us, talking too loud, standing too close to us, or being too friendly. There is a fine line between being too rude and being too courteous, between being entertaining and being

annoying. Being in public space requires the ability and the awareness to discern these behavioural patterns and to accommodate to them. And, as emancipation also requires, to accept and recognize others, as those with an equal status to be publicly present.

The point here is that the public dimension of emancipation is something primarily *impersonal*. We have a title to be publicly seen, not for “what we are,” but for what we do, and for how we present ourselves (this is the Arendtian dimension in Sennett). As Sennett saw, this impersonal character of emancipation as a public practice runs counter to the personal aspect of emancipation understood as the ability and the right to self-realisation. And more particularly, to the experience of self-realisation in terms of personal identity and difference, which became increasingly popular in the late 1960s and early 1970. There was a strong feeling that traditional society had been repressive, and that the successful fight against such repression would mean that now there was space to develop a “real me,” a personal identity untainted by discrimination, segregation, and subordination. Accordingly, there was a rising expectation that the public sphere was the place where this unrepressed, personal identity could and should be recognized. The “mask” of public identity increasingly became experienced as something negative, something to be cast off in order to reveal some truer identity behind it.

Maybe Sennett pressed the formal dimension of interaction in public space too far. There will always be some aspect of teasing – some routine of seduction – around hiding and revealing, presenting and withdrawing, being open and reserved, when addressing others in public space. And since the cultural revolution of the 1960s, public life is bound to be more “playful,” more joyful, and more informal than before, without overly threatening the ability of us as modern individuals, in interaction with civil servants, to maintain a public sphere. However Sennett was right about the problematic aspects of the increasing desire to penetrate “behind the mask” in the public sphere, especially when this is done from the expectation that this will show up something that is real – real because intimate.

This desire is what Sennett called the tyranny of intimacy.²³ People increasingly find it imperative to present their personal, intimate affairs in public space. This is done by literally opening up to view what is intimate, but importantly also by discussing it – not only without shame or reticence, but even with a certain obsessiveness, incited in no small part by the idea that such discourse on the intimate contributes substantively to emancipation and self-realisation. This is the time when intimate matters start to be discussed on talk radio, and later on television. And also the time that interviewers start asking their subjects questions like: “How do you feel about what happened?”, and: “What went through you at that moment?”²⁴

In this way, we are admonished and encouraged not only to care about our self and its realisation, but also to expect the public sphere and the public institutions to be responsive to our self-realisation. This creates institutions responsive to emancipation on the one hand, but a tendency towards narcissism on the other. In fact, according to Christopher Lasch in his bestseller *The culture of narcissism* from 1979, the 1960s ideal of emancipation has been betrayed by its 1970s inward turn, transforming a noble idea of independence in the American tradition of sturdy self-reliance into its opposite: an insecure craving for continuous affirmation of one’s precious individual identity, supported by a newly established army of professional insecurity mongers called psychotherapists, who promise to make their clientele more free, but in fact only increase its dependency on institutional assistance. That is, the now ostensibly liberated and emancipated self-experience is accompanied by an obsessive need to self-reveal, in gesture and speech, and to have this recognized and supported by psychotherapeutic and other institutions.

While Sennett analysed this process in terms of the decline of the public sphere and the rising tyranny of intimacy, Michel Foucault around the same time did something comparable in terms of a history of sexuality and the “will to knowledge.” Foucault argued that the openness and frequency by which sexuality was publicly discussed did not so much emancipate, as install a new regime of discipline and self-control.²⁵

While previously the enjoyment of sex was supposedly being repressed, it was delusional to think that incessantly questioning oneself and others about sexual identity and experience would create emancipated beings, able to more or less unproblematically enjoy sex. Instead, we were now even more constrained than before, this time not by external restriction and enjoinders, but by our own self-imposed duty to discursively discover within ourselves, and then publicly disclose, the truth about our sexuality.²⁶ In more Pfallerian terms, we merely exchanged one disturbed relation to enjoyment for another.

Thinking about Pfaller, there are two more possible points of convergence to consider here. First, we may note here the concurrence of a movement of protest with a more or less implicit conformity with a new regime of power or control, or as Foucault called it by then, a *dispositif*.²⁷ The emancipatory movements of the 1960s and 1970s were of course often protest movements, in which people actively revolted against established forms of power. But simultaneously, and paradoxically, this active assertion of a newly acquired status or capability implies the insertion into a new kind of regime, which turns this activity into a kind of new complicity, or responsibility. When as emancipated beings we become independent and able to take matters into our own hands, we directly also become responsible for actually doing so, and for “monitoring” whether we make sufficient progress. We thus inadvertently deliver ourselves into the hands of a new kind of power, which makes us both more free and, in a different way, more unfree.

Second, the protest we are speaking about is at least partly directed against the culture of capitalism. The (post-)1968 proponents of counterculture may not all have been embittered enemies of capitalism, but for many of them, including famously Deleuze and Guattari, the problem of capitalism was precisely that it disturbed their experience of enjoyment. In conjunction with traditional psychoanalysis, capitalism organizes and controls how we can experience desire. In this era of “flower power” and emancipation, the problem is still that of the opposition of enjoyment and stratifying systems like capitalism. In the

1990s, to which we will turn in a moment, the problem has become more the opposite: enjoyment has now all too successfully become aligned with the demands of capitalism, and more generally with the way we are governed.

4.

With the 1990s, we reach the era of interpassivity proper. And of neoliberalism proper. The dominance of capitalist ideology has perhaps never been stronger. With neoliberalism, government has been explicitly enlisted in the services of capitalist economy. Where in the 1970s government was supposed to provide the conditions for the free self-realisation of individuals, now it is charged with the task of guaranteeing the self-realisation of the free market. We are now ruled by reference to GDP, or the Dow Jones index. Credit rating agencies up- or downgrade not only banks and businesses, but even whole countries. Banks can gamble all they want, when considered “too big to fail.” Public administration reorganizes itself on the model of business management theory, most notably represented by Osborne and Gaebler’s *Reinventing government* from 1992. Privatization is rampant, following the new creed that almost everything government can do, the market can do better.

And more importantly, this ideology of market-driven operations has similarly penetrated the perception of private life. Also, in this sense, “privatization” has become rampant. People actually start to describe themselves as “flexible” and as being “open to new challenges,” translating corporate strategies into private virtues, neoliberal style.²⁸ We must not only work at work, we must also work at our selves. Self-realisation here is taking a new turn: we can only accomplish it by ceaseless work in both these dimensions. Actually, both tend to flow together, as consumption, or enjoyment, tends to become a form of labour, and in turn, labour tends to become a form of enjoyment. We have indeed become *Genussarbeiter*; even wellness is a kind of “working on your body.” As the phrase “work hard, play hard” indicates, we *must* enjoy ourselves, to the limit; similarly, we tend to look for self-realisation in work, for instance by “flexibly” bringing it home, and working nights

and weekends. All this to maximize our efforts, and results, at work and self: "alles nur optimiert, bitte!"

Understandably, this *dispositif* puts a lot of stress on people; or worse, under such a regime, they put a lot of stress on themselves. They are expected, both by society and by themselves, to "get the most out of themselves," literally as if they were a factor of production. Moreover, when they feel they have fallen short of this terribly ambitious goal, they typically blame themselves, rather than the conditions under which they labour and live. This results in considerable increases in burn-out and depression. Nowadays, it is not uncommon to become exhausted and depressed by the exertion necessary to become the best version of oneself.²⁹ In Germany for instance, we see a considerable increase in cases of mental illness since 1994: the number of cases of incapacity for work due to mental illness has doubled over 1994-2010.³⁰

Under such conditions, enjoyment becomes more problematic than ever before. There is little time left for enjoyment, and what time there is, falls victim to the ruling neoliberal ideology of optimisation and a seamless alignment of enjoyment and work. Neoliberalism, to put it in a Marxist way, robs people of their means of enjoyment. They are being replaced, in the mid-1990s, by an ascetic regime of self-realisation, in which enjoyable activities like drinking alcohol, smoking, and eating red meat are suddenly perceived as offensive, dangerous, and politically incorrect.³¹ For Pfaller, this implies a new kind of narcissism, in which people prefer being good over being happy, being healthy over being sociable, and being self-optimised over being cheerful. And it also implies a threat to public space, because this environment requires one to be "a bit more elegant, a bit more sensitive, and a bit more cheerful."³² This capacity for a certain aesthetic "presentation of the self in public life" is threatened by neoliberal puritanism.

And worse, as already briefly mentioned, we now find neoliberal puritanism in a coalition with leftists stuck in their post-68 emancipation discourse. Both feel that someone is free when not determined by others, in this case for instance by not being bothered by someone else's

cigarette smoke. Pfaller feels that in the 1970s and 1980s, people were prepared to deal with such issues themselves, and even better, they were prepared to do so in an elegant way. For instance by graciously addressing the smoking other along the lines of: “well, I don’t smoke myself, but please go ahead, the smell is so enjoyable.” Now, however, laws are drawn up and enforced against smoking in public places, which by the left is even perceived as *progress*.

On this issue, I have to say that I place less trust than Pfaller in the self-regulating abilities of the public sphere, especially when it comes to smoking—a practice difficult to disentangle not only from serious health issues and problems of addiction, but also from an industry with very deep pockets and very large interests at stake. Some thirty years ago in the Netherlands, when plans were drawn up to legally restrict public smoking, the slogan “Smoking? We can work it out together” seemed to be everywhere and shared by everyone, circulating widely on television and in other media. An elegant message, one might say. The source of the message was left opaque, however much later it turned out to have been stealthily produced and plugged entirely by the tobacco industry.

But it is certainly true that the late 1980s, early 1990s evinced a widespread, emancipatory enthusiasm for interactive decision-making which took hold across institutions, especially those of government. We can see this as the institutionalized legacy of the emancipatory movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which not only propagated individual emancipation, but also saw this as going together with the capacity and commitment to engage in collective deliberation over the shared goals and interests of society. Which, of course, is different from “working things out” privately, or through the market. Increasingly, decisions by institutions--and especially governmental ones--are seen as legitimate and acceptable only when everyone possibly affected by them has had the opportunity to engage in the process of deliberation and decisionmaking.³³ Here we see the confluence of democratization and self-realization: being included in the democratic process is not only a confirmation of political equality, but also something to be valued in terms of self-realization. In other words, being excluded from the

democratic process is increasingly being seen as harmful not only to the political community, but also as harmful to the self, and the self-realization, of those excluded.

This is the junction where Pfaller, in concert with Žižek, introduced the notion of interpassivity. They diagnosed it as a reaction to the dominance of interactivity in the scene of art, which required active participation by the visitor if the work of art was to realise itself. Interpassivity indicates a refusal of this invitation to be involved—or perhaps better: a pass—in the sense that interpassive works of art are no longer in need of the visitor's contribution, or strictly speaking, of the visitor at all. An interpassive work of art can take care of its own reception. Pfaller says that we as visitors here “outsource” our enjoyment of it to the artwork itself. Perhaps it is equally adequate to say that the artwork “insources” this enjoyment by us, as frankly we remain unaware which of the parties initiates the shift.

Despite my unmitigated enthusiasm for the concept of interpassivity, this is the place where I should register one more small dissent concerning the best way to diagnose it. I believe it is more adequate to say that what we outsource to the work of art is not our passivity or enjoyment, but our interactive involvement. Interpassivity is, after all, a reaction to (the dominance of) interactivity. The artwork thus indeed takes care of our involvement, but not merely of the passive side of it—the “enjoyment”—but of the interactive dimension it has now acquired as well. This is also because I believe that the interactive relation to works of art, but more generally to institutions, has become too important to us to simply dissolve or disappear. It still exists, and is even in full swing, but now in the form of virtual representation, as we might say: it is taken care of for us, on our behalf. In the case of artworks, this happens for instance through curators, catalogues, and reviewers, whose interactive involvement in a way pre-empts any interactive contribution by us regular visitors.

In any case, we see Pfaller rightly pointing towards *Dienstleistungskunst* as the prime example of interpassive art.³⁴ The

enjoyment of art--as I would say, including its interactive dimension--is now offered as a *service*, by the artist, or the artwork. And indeed, this is what we see happening nowadays on quite a large scale. Increasingly, institutions can do without our participation, because they are now able to pre-empt whatever it is we could plausibly contribute. They can proactively take care of my contribution--sometimes even better than I myself would be. Think of Amazon that, given its algorithmically powered analysis of my earlier searching and buying behaviour, already knows which book I am about to order—and even already may have sent it my way! Or think of Cambridge Analytics, the company which compiled relevant profiles of *all* American voters already *before* the 2016 presidential elections took place, mostly using the vast database of Facebook *likes* as source material, so that voters could be—selectively—“encouraged” to go vote.³⁵ Or think of the many online vote-o-matics, which similarly compile your political profile for you, only now with your permission.

So, we let the artwork deliver, or take care of, the contribution we would normally make. This avoidance of contributing, or participating, has a double, and even paradoxical meaning. On the one hand, we are abstaining from the (interactive) procedure that is going on, letting the artwork take care of it, on our behalf. The artwork virtually represents us. On the other hand, our interpassive stance also implies a refusal to engage with the interactive system. But importantly, it is not a straightforward protest against participation—that would again be one more move in the ‘game’ of interactivity! And therefore not fundamentally change that game. The interpassive stance, however, is therefore best characterized as a “refusal to refuse”—something like Melville’s *Bartleby*, who did not protest any assignment or request to act, but merely replied: “I would prefer not to.” Without giving reasons, for that would bring him back into the game of interactive responsibility.

Bartleby is perhaps not the best example, because it concerns just one individual, who moreover is no part of an interactively functioning institution. José Saramago’s *Seeing* is a more fitting literary example.³⁶ Here, the residents of the capital of an unnamed country suddenly, and

in overwhelming majority, return blank votes: they come to the polls, hand in their voting cards, but without any of the boxes checked. They do not refuse to participate in the elections, but they rather refuse to refuse. The furious reaction of the (democratic) authorities in the story is in a way understandable, and even correct: modern individuals can legitimately be expected to behave as responsible citizens, actively supporting the system by being interactively engaged. But rather than properly protesting, the citizens more surreptitiously evade having to give their blessing to what the existing system presents them for interactive validation.

5.

I agree with Pfaller that the system functions so as to responsabilize us, and that interpassivity constitutes both a going along with it, and a surreptitious kind of protest against it. I also agree that such responsabilization is a design imposed by neoliberalism. But I also believe that it is a design implicit in the process of emancipation, and more importantly, that in many respects emancipation runs counter to neoliberalism. We are overburdened by both, but the cure cannot consist of merely doing away with neoliberalism. As long as we have the desire to shape our own lives, and collectively decide on the shape of collective life, we will be faced with this problem of overburdening, and with the ensuing interpassivity.

Actually, Pfaller agrees on this point, although we differ on the normative consequences. I believe the project of emancipation has produced interactive institutions and self-understandings that we cannot do away with without giving up our status as adult, responsible citizens who share responsibility for the way our shared world is shaped and controlled. Pfaller however considers this sticking to philosophical idealism instead of committing to (aesthetic) materialism. And as remaining stuck in narcissism, which entails seeing ourselves as active shapers of the world; we are narcissists as long as we believe that we spectators can turn into we producers.³⁷

This concurs with what Richard Sennett proposed in *The fall of public man*: narcissism starts with the entrance of modernity and its project to continuously shape and change world and self. The conventional forms of civic interaction, or what Sennett calls “civility”—the bonds that are forged on the premise of a certain social distance from others—lose their meaning.³⁸ We have come to expect that the public world extends us warmth, trust, and open expression of feeling. And it will inevitably disappoint us by failing to do so, making us withdraw into ourselves and become silent “spectators” of a now barren public scene. The downfall of civility is accompanied by the rise of narcissism, characterized by Sennett as “the protestant ethic of modern times.”³⁹

As mentioned, Pfaller’s critique of narcissism also aligns with what Sennett in the late 1990s argued in *The corrosion of character*: we even desperately desire to shape and reshape ourselves, so as to be more ready to meet the demands of neoliberalism. And the analogy can even be extended to Sennett’s late work, in which he turns to craftsmanship and to cooperation as forms through which we might endure the pressures of modern life. This fits well with Pfaller’s view that narcissists detest ‘everything solid, work product-oriented, immutable’.⁴⁰ And finally, both also feel that such resistance means engaging in ritualistic practices performed in the public sphere. For Sennett this is mostly related to issues of craftsmanship and cooperation, while Pfaller of course is more interested in the dimension of enjoyment; however, the convergence on how to resist colonization of the public sphere by narcissistic individuals and neoliberal policies is unmistakable.⁴¹

The expression ‘aesthetics of delegated enjoyment’ refers mostly to public practices that somehow manage to evade, or even slightly sabotage, the project of responsabilization, and that are similarly immune to the lure of narcissism. This is partly due to their ritualistic dimension, as rituals lack the pretence, or illusion, that anything will change as a consequence of performing the ritual. Ritual is part and parcel of what Pfaller calls a “culture of *Augenschein*”:⁴² acting as if we are fooling some naive third party who looks on and who would take all our courtesies and gallantries “at face value.” This naive observer saves us from having to

internalize the illusions we live by and having to claim responsibility for them. And through this imagined naive third party, we of course hold ourselves in check; we manage to maintain civil relations in an anonymous public space for which no clear and settled rules can exist anymore.

Public life is thus for Pfaller a form of magic: a public fulfils the role of naive third party that believes in the reality of the performance that we put up. In other words, in “primitive societies” it is not so much the “medicine man” who performs the magic, but the tribe members that look on. In modern society, however, it is not so easy to create the conditions needed to conjure up magic; or in other words, to constitute publics who are willing and able to perform as naive third parties. First, we don’t believe we perform magic; we relegate this to cultures that we call “primitive.” For Pfaller however, we moderns are in this regard more primitive than the primitives because we are less aware than they are about the magic that we are both performing.⁴³ Second, because Foucaultian disciplining has worked—or as I would prefer to formulate it, because the project of emancipation has been successful. What used to be experienced as courteous and charming intercourse, is now rejected, because we find such social and cultural imperatives “normative.” In other words, we are disinclined to accept them at face value, hence we live in a “culture of complaint” rather than one of Augenschein. And thirdly, neoliberalism encroaches upon public space, privatizing space and financializing things that used to be public.⁴⁴

As Pfaller has indeed himself proposed, interpassivity is thus always also a theory of public space.⁴⁵ The forms that characterize interpassive behaviour are necessarily performed in public, and more importantly, they resist what Habermas would call the colonization of public space by responsabilization, validation, and financialization. Although of course Pfaller believes that the Habermasian recipe of deliberation on and validation of social norms has not supported, but rather help undermine public space. A public can only arise if and when form is produced but not interiorized – or responsabilized, or validated, or financialized. Public is thus not constituted through speech, and

intersubjectivity, as Habermas would have it. It is also not something Arendtian, in the sense that it is not about something new that could be produced in and by coming together. It is more something Sennettian: visual, bodily, non-verbal as well as verbal, and above all theatrical.⁴⁶ To this short list, we can add Judith Butler, who in her recent work *Notes towards a performative theory of assembly* presents the freedom and ability to “assemble” in public space, to manifest oneself bodily in public space amidst others and thus “occupy space,” as even more important than the “freedom of speech” so crucial to liberal political theory.⁴⁷

Among Richard Sennett's favourite examples of behaviour that constitutes and supports public space are walking through the city and conversing with whatever people you meet in a bar. Both are very everyday, uncomplicated practices, which express an ability to be with and to feel at home among strangers, precisely by *not* becoming acquainted with them, by not asking ‘what goes through them’, by not trying to pry behind the mask, by not attempting to achieve some consensus, and by not aiming to become intimate. In other words, by letting the magic of publicness, *Öffentlichkeit*, arise not through any special effort to do so, but by socially remaining on the surface, not destroying the fragile structure of publicness by interiorizing, validating, or responsabilizing it.

This is also why publicness-constituting behaviour for Pfaller always has something irresponsible—something non-biopolitical, we would say in a Foucaultian context. His favourite example is of course smoking. Tobacco culture is not something innocent. As Pfaller reminds us, it was an important part of European *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit* which was bitterly and bloodily fought for in 1848: smoking tobacco and exchanging thoughts in coffee houses.⁴⁸ Prohibiting public smoking for reasons of public health—biopolitics—is thus for Pfaller equivalent to a neoliberal attack on public culture, under the guise of protecting the weak. And perhaps even more importantly, it curtails or undermines the ability to elegantly and gracefully perform public ritual essential to cultivate public space.

There is a lot one could say about this provocative notion that smoking may be bad for private health, but—partly for that reason—good for the health of *Öffentlichkeit*. For instance, that blowing smoke in someone else's face is the opposite of elegant, as some of Pfaller's interviewers not unreasonably object. We may also doubt whether antibiopolitical acts like smoking might somehow seriously wrong-foot neoliberalism and its intrusion on public space and create something like a "positive *Öffentlichkeit*."⁴⁹ And we even might not fully share Pfaller's conception of elegance, as I noticed that he also declares it applicable to, of all things, Louis Althusser's writings.⁵⁰

For these and other reasons, I think it would be best, as mentioned, to consider Robert Pfaller's imaginative and stimulating writings less as a full-blown theory of public space—although interpassivity is a notion that could and should enrich any such fuller theory of public space—and more as a perfectly relevant theory of public *grace*. From this perspective, I propose we see Pfaller's prime example of smoking as justly evoking the fragile, ephemeral and indeed aesthetic character of what we perform when we constitute public space. Yes, it is also a subtle protest against neoliberal biopolitics. But it is primarily the performance of a ritual that is both sociable and aesthetic, whose most important fragile aesthetics literally arises as a side effect or 'afterthought': the smoke that drifts through space 'passively' after each of the smoker's puffs, the thin swirls of smoke curling up elegantly to the ceiling, before dissolving into space, to make room for new creations that 'occupy space', for one more evanescent moment. Elegant, captivating, and so very very Viennese.

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- ¹ Robert Pfaller, *Interactivity. The aesthetics of delegated enjoyment*. Edinburgh university press 2017, 2.
- ² Pfaller, *Kurze Sätze über gutes Leben*. S.Fischer, 2015, 13.
- ³ Jodi Dean, *Democracy and other neoliberal fantasies*. Duke university press, 2009.
- ⁴ Svenja Flaßpöhler, *Wir Genussarbeiter: Über Freiheit und Zwang in der Leistungsgesellschaft*. DVA verlag 2011.
- ⁵ Byung-Chul Han, *Müdigkeitsgesellschaft*. Matthes & Seitz, 2010.
- ⁶ An interesting collection of these interviews is found in *Kurze Sätze*.
- ⁷ Jens Bergmann, 'Jetzt benimm dich nicht wie ein Kind und bestell dir ja kein Mineralwasser!', Interview in *Brand eins*, 12/2014, 100.
- ⁸ Richard Sennett, *The fall of public man*. Faber & Faber, 1977.
- ⁹ See for instance Robert Feustel, Nico Koppe, Hagen Schözel (eds.), *Wir sind nie aktiv gewesen. Interpassivität zwischen Kunst- und Gesellschaftskritik*. Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2011.
- ¹⁰ Zizek speaks of "the inert passivity which contains the density of my substantial being". Slavoj Zizek, *The plague of fantasies*. Verso, 1997, 116.
- ¹¹ Pfaller, "Althusser's best tricks," *Culture & Critique* 2/2, 2015, 29.
- ¹² Pfaller, *Interpassivity*, 97-98.
- ¹³ Pfaller, *Kurze Sätze*, 18. Cf id., "The Althusserian battlegrounds", in *Slavoj Zizek and dialectical materialism*, edited by Agon Hamza and Frank Ruda. Palgrave MacMillan 2016, 33.
- ¹⁴ Zizek, *The puppet and the dwarf. The perverse core of christianity*. MIT press 2003, 129.
- ¹⁵ See Gijs van Oenen, "Interpassivity revisited: a critical and historical reappraisal of interpassive phenomena", *International journal of Zizek studies*, 2/2, 2008.
- ¹⁶ I first made this case in "A machine that would go of itself. Interpassivity and its impact on political life", *Theory & Event*, 9/2, 2006.
- ¹⁷ Pfaller, *Interpassivity*, 71.
- ¹⁸ Pfaller, "Althusserian battlegrounds," 23, quoting Zizek.
- ¹⁹ Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, Suhrkamp 1986, 16.
- ²⁰ Abram de Swaan, *The management of normality*. Routledge 1990.
- ²¹ Jacques Rancière, *Le partage du sensible. Esthétique et politique*. La Fabrique, 2000.
- ²² Sennett, *The fall of public man*. Cf id., *The uses of disorder*. Knopf 1970
- ²³ Cf Pfaller, *Interpassivity*, 135.
- ²⁴ Cf Jan de Vos, *Psychologization and the subject of late modernity*. Palgrave MacMillan 2013.
- ²⁵ Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité 1: La volonté de savoir*. Gallimard 1976.
- ²⁶ Cf Pfaller, *Interpassivity*, 96.
- ²⁷ Foucault, *Dits et écrits II*. Gallimard 1994, 298ff. Cf Stuart Elden, *Foucault: the birth of power*. Polity, 2017, 113.
- ²⁸ See Richard Sennett, *The corrosion of character*. W.W. Norton 1998.
- ²⁹ Cf Alain Ehrenberg, *La fatigue d'être soi—dépression et société*. Odile Jacob 1998.

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- ³⁰ Haiko Prengel, "Wir müssen mit Genuss arbeiten." Interview with Svenja Flaßpöhler, *Die Zeit*, 16 february 2012.
- ³¹ Pfaller, *Wofür es sich zu leben lohnt*. S.Fischer 2011, 15.
- ³² Jens Bergmann, "Jetzt benimm dich nicht wie ein Kind."
- ³³ See Habermas' classic formulation in his *Faktizität und Geltung*. Suhrkamp 1992, 107.
- ³⁴ Cf Pfaller, *Ästhetik der Interpassivität*. Philo fine arts, 2008, 41ff. Also id., *Die Illusionen der anderen*. Suhrkamp 2002, 30.
- ³⁵ Carole Cadwalladr, "The great British Brexit robbery: how our democracy was hijacked", *The Guardian*, 7 may 2017. G. Tett, "Donald Trump's campaign shifted odds by making big data personal", *Financial Times*, 26 January 2017.
- ³⁶ José Saramago, *Ensaio sobre a Lucidez*. Caminho 2004. English translation: *Seeing*. Harvill Secker 2006.
- ³⁷ Pfaller, *Wofür es sich zu leben lohnt*, 84.
- ³⁸ Sennett, *Fall of public man*, 264.
- ³⁹ Id., 333-334.
- ⁴⁰ Pfaller, *Wofür es sich zu leben lohnt*, 84.
- ⁴¹ There is also an unmistakable increase in references to Sennett in Pfaller's work, over the last ten years or so.
- ⁴² Pfaller, "Figuren der Erleichterung. Interpassivität heute", in: *Wir sind nie aktiv gewesen*, 22. Cf. Id., *Erwachsenensprache*. S.Fischer 2017, chapter 1.
- ⁴³ Pfaller, *Interpassivity*, 57-58.
- ⁴⁴ Pfaller, *Kurze Sätze*, 99;. Cf Bonnie Honig, *Public things. Democracy in disrepair*. Fordham university press 2017.
- ⁴⁵ Pfaller, "Figuren der Erleichterung", 21.
- ⁴⁶ Tim Black, "The intimate lives of others. Richard Sennett talks about narcissism, identity nad the unbearable lightness of selfhood", *Spiked online*, January 2016.
- ⁴⁷ Judith Butler, *Notes towards a performative theory of assembly*. Harvard university press 2015.
- ⁴⁸ Pfaller, *Kurze Sätze*, 99.
- ⁴⁹ Id., 9.
- ⁵⁰ Pfaller, "Althusser's best tricks," 25.