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Identity, Possibility, Rigid Designators
On Formally Undecidable Propositions of Janež Janša and Concerning Systems



Janez Janša
latitude : 10.37762779989358
longitude : 82.61404965517542
Janez Janša
latitude : 10.37912750760024
longitude : 82.61423510520172
Janez Janša
latitude : 42.51266075471439
longitude : 13.37766901866853

Janez Janša, Janez Janša, Janez Janša
Signature Event Context,
Berlin, 2008
Performance
Courtesy: Aksioma

1. DEUS ABSCONDITUS

It might seem that the practices of conceptual art (a field so vast that it makes one think that it is synonymous with

contemporary art) induce us to abandon the prejudice, dating back to the romantic culture, that urged the viewer not to take the artist's projects and intentions into much consideration, since the work of art was the fruit of a tortuous and mysterious process – of a poorly-defined “inspiration” that largely eluded the conscience of the artist himself. However, this very inspiration – also for reasons hard to explain – led the artist to express (to a greater or lesser degree) the *Zeitgeist* that almost always eluded the conscious intention of the artist him/herself.

Today, on the other hand, the mediatic and conceptual character of contemporary art leads the public to take the artist's statements and intentions into much consideration, and they are often regarded as an integral part of the work of art (installation, video, performance). Since the meaning of the work of art itself¹ depends more on the project and the conceptual concatenations the visual

pure and simple realization of the work of art, it is clear that what the artist says about his work is of the utmost importance. The critic or the curator often does nothing else but explicate the artist's intentions, thus functioning in many cases as a true accomplice in his operations and providing theoretical and historical framework, reinforcement, support, and enrichment of the project – basically, intervening throughout the course of its realization (not just *a posteriori*) and offering a reading when the work has been completed.

Nevertheless, behind the idea that in conceptual art the artist's intentions are crucial for its comprehension, there hides a risk that is sometimes a proper trap: the illusion of transparency of the work of art, of its formal readability being determined once and forever, of an authentic “interpretation” intended to give it a “meaning” that is certain and no longer debatable. The apodicticity of the work of art – its definite and almost sacral character, in short its “aura” – which was repeatedly driven out the door throughout the 20th century, could thus come back comfortably through the window regardless of all the honours and almost providing relief to the public who've been daunted by the invitations to become co-authors of the work of art. This is perhaps the reason, that some artists include, within their works, robust countermeasures to avoid this risk. I have the impression that the extreme caution with which Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez Janša moved during the initial stages of their operation – between summer and autumn 2007 – was due to something more than simply the understandable desire to complete the legal and official change of their names as safely as possible (acting individually and without any statements whatsoever

¹ This refers more generally to the artistic and expressive process.

artist intends to dispose and expose, rather than on the

to avoid untimely publicity compromising the positive outcome of their application). Their reluctance – not quite refusal – to label the change of their nominal identity as an artistic operation was also evident on the occasion of their first joint public action (*Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav*, 6th August, 2007), which was carried out when

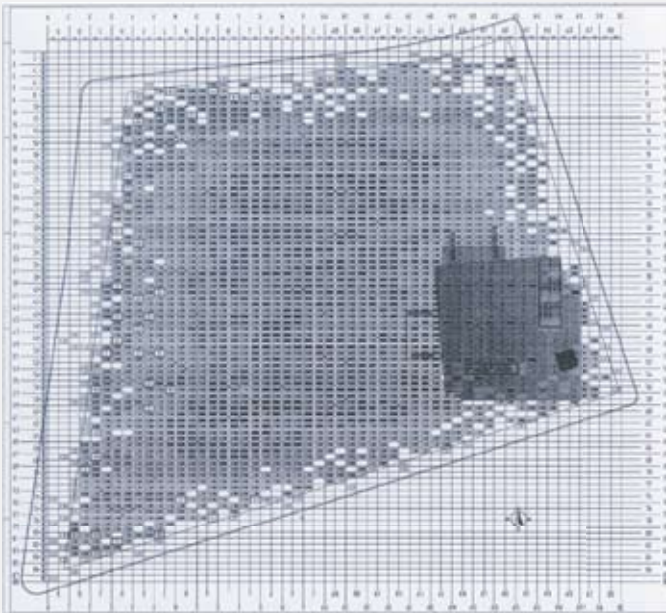
the three had not yet changed their names, and only later designated as a Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez Janša production. On the occasion of their first international exhibition/second joint appearance (*Signature Event Context*, Berlin, 28th January, 2008), the three Janez Janšas were again extremely careful not to put emphasis on

Draw Your Path and Walk it Out

at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin, Germany

"In this monument there is no goal, no end, no working one's way in or out. The duration of an individual's experience of it grants no further understanding, since understanding is impossible. The time of the monument, its duration from top surface to ground, is disjoined from the time of experience. In this context, there is no nostalgia, no memory of the past, only the living memory of the individual experience. Here, we can only know the past through its manifestation in the present."

Eisenman Architects, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin
Project text by Peter Eisenman



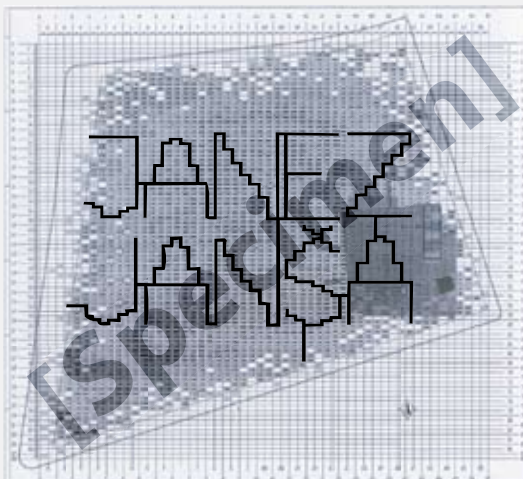
BASIC INSTRUCTIONS

- 1] Draw a path on this plan
- 2] Go to the Memorial
- 3] Spot your starting position
- 4] Walk following the path you have drawn

Janez Janša, Janez Janša,
Janez Janša
Signature Event Context
(*Specimen*, 1st page),
Berlin, 2008
Print on paper,
29,7 x 21 cm
Courtesy: Aksioma

the issue of the name and instead explained the expressive and theoretical reasons of the work, comprehensively expounded and solidly sustained with references to texts by Jacques Derrida, architect Peter Eisenman, and others. It seems to me that the same statement can be made about their first international exhibition.

It seems that it would be completely superfluous for the artists to have insisted too much on the element that otherwise strikes the eye in each of their actions: the name with which it is signed is one of the key elements (if not the most important one) for understanding the action. While this yet again seems a certainly correct and



“By definition, a written signature implies the actual or empirical nonpresence of the signer. But, it will be said, it also marks and retains his having-been present in a past now, which will remain a future now, and therefore in a now in general, in the transcendental form of nowness (maintenance). This general maintenance is somehow inscribed, stapled to present punctuality, always evident and always singular, in the form of the signature. This is the enigmatic originality of every paraph. For the attachment to the source to occur, the absolute singularity of an event of the signature and of a form of the signature must be retained: the pure reproducibility of a pure event.”

Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context” in *Margins of Philosophy*, tr. Alan Bass, pp. 307-330

This specimen derives from the project “Signature Event Context” by Janez Janša, Janez Janša and Janez Janša.

more: www.aksioma.org/sec

Janez Janša, Janez Janša,
Janez Janša
Signature Event Context
(*Specimen, 2nd page*),
Berlin, 2008
Print on paper,
29,7 x 21 cm
Courtesy: Aksioma

valid explanation, in my view it is insufficient to explain the reserve of Janez Janšas about what remains one of their main trumps. It is as if, by putting a mute on this element and emphasizing other projects' attitudes and intentions, Janez Janšas wanted to challenge the public to discover and interpret a more covert and secret meaning, a less obvious and banal reason for the strange signature that he attaches to his works. In short, Janez Janšas, if we are allowed this irreverent comparison, presents himself as *Deus absconditus* of Isaiah and Luther: but unlike the latter, who invites the believer to distrust any rational approach and lean exclusively on his own faith, the Janez Janšas expect their public to use every possible instrument – rational as well as intuitive – to answer questions like: “Why is Janez Janša called Janez Janša?” “Why do the persons called Janez Janša do what they do?”. While one of the most evident (and sometimes unbearable) characteristics of contemporary art is the incorporation of the communication strategy into the work of art, thereby making it an intrinsic element of the work in this project, that characteristic is reversed: the communication strategy certainly has a prominent place in the Janez Janšas' actions, but it reveals and really explains nothing. At most, it signals a void or a white space, a space filled by a name that, paradoxically, for the very reason that it is well-known – the name of a public figure, loved and deprecated in Slovenia, obviously – seems to mean nothing or, on the contrary, to mean too much. In short, the embarrassing actions of Janez Janša refer to a just as embarrassing problem of logic and philosophy of language regarding (what a coincidence!) proper names.

2. MINIMUM EXTENSION, MAXIMUM INTENSION

In the 20th century logic and philosophy of language, the proper name occupies a central position and has a strategic role in the attempts to give clarity and stability to language. What is the logical and linguistic status of words designating individuals or singular objects (persons and things)? What is the relation between proper and common names? Which of the two logical-linguistic categories has a priority? What is the difference between describing an individual and determining a concept? We can better approach this problem if we consider that the fundamental inspiration of formal or mathematical logic, since it was founded by Gottlob Frege, subordinates the *intension* of concepts, or predicates, to their *extension* (i.e. the definition of a concept, the properties defining a predicate, are dependent on the whole of the individuals to which these predicates refer): the reason is, to put it simply, that dealing with predicates through the set of individuals to which the predicates refer is supposed more useful for clarifying the definition itself.

This is, therefore, as pointed out by Virno, a *denotative* conception not only of logic, but also of language in general.²

At first sight, it seems that this is not how things are. Frege actually started from a critique of what could be called “referential conception” of the proper name. Such a conception – defended by the likes of John Stuart Mill – asserts that the only “meaning”

of the proper name is the object, or the individual, to which that name refers. The only possible meaning of

² Within the terminology prevailing in logic after the *System of Logic* by John Stuart Mill (1843), we say that a predicate denotes its extension while it connotes its intension. Cf. Kneale and Kneale 1962.

“Aristotle”, for example, is the individual that bore that name, the individual to whom that name refers. Let us see Frege’s critique of this formulation:

$a = a$ and $a = b$ are obviously statements of differing cognitive value; $a = a$ holds *a priori* and, according to Kant, is to be labeled analytic, while statements of the form $a = b$ often contain very valuable extensions of our knowledge and cannot always be established *a priori*. (...) Now if we were to regard equality as a relation between that which the names ‘*a*’ and ‘*b*’ designate, it would seem that $a = b$ could not differ from $a = a$ (i.e. provided $a = b$ is true). [But if equality referred to the relation between signs and not between objects], the relation of equality would by its nature result in something arbitrary. Nobody can be forbidden to use any arbitrarily producible event or object as a sign for something. (Frege)

So, according to Frege, equality cannot exist as a pure relation between names nor as a pure relation between objects. The solution he suggests is to distinguish between the *intension* and the *extension* of a sign, according to the above: it is for this reason that Frege introduces the distinction between *Sinn* (sense) and *Bedeutung* (reference). Sometimes, more simply, meaning):

It is natural, now, to conclude that, thinking of a sign (name, combination of words, letter), we have to connect it with two different things: not only the object to which the sign refers, which may be called the ‘reference [*Bedeutung*] of the sign,’ but also the ‘sense [*Sinn*] of the sign,’ which denotes the way in which that object is given. (...) It is clear from the context that by ‘sign’ and ‘name’ I have here understood any designation representing a proper name, which thus has as its

reference a definite object (this word taken in the widest range). The designation of a single object can also consist of several words or other signs. For brevity, let every such designation be called a ‘proper name’. (Ibid.)

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We can therefore see from this how this conception of the proper name – which could be called “descriptive” – does not really succeed in finding a way out of the difficulties of the referential conception. Frege himself admits this in the succeeding paragraph:

The sense of a proper name is grasped by everybody who is sufficiently familiar with the language to which it belongs; but this serves to illuminate only a single aspect of the reference, supposing it to have one. Comprehensive knowledge of the reference would require us to say immediately whether any given sense belongs to it. To such knowledge we never attain. (Ibid.)

Frege’s programme emerges very clear here and elsewhere, and it is also obvious why the “proper name” had such a strategic position within his thought. In his quest for clarification and maximum transparency of the language that would make it suitable to be formalized (or quantified or algorithmed), the German logician is led to assume as a paradigm of “signs” that function well those which have minimum *extension* (i.e. refer to one single object) and a maximum *intension* (the richness of properties, qualities, specifications that define univocally that single object): a well delimited and specified *Bedeutung* and a vast and rich *Sinn*. However, he knows full well that in the natural language this situation is almost never attained; the division of tasks between signs referring to individuals and signs referring to concepts is always unstable and the referential conception of the individual

sign leads to a dangerous circularity, because on one hand the possibility of appreciating the nuances of the “sense” of a given sign depends on the certainty of the reference (the “meaning”) to which the sign refers, on the other hand, the latter (i.e. the meaning) should be determined by the description, that is by the sense. This is the case in the example quoted by Frege in a note regarding two possible senses of the name “Aristotle”: “the pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great” and “the teacher of Alexander the Great who was born in Stagira”.

Bertrand Russell, who substantially shared Frege’s goals, was well aware of this difficulty, so well aware that, in certain cases, he drastically restricted the category of proper names. The “Theory of Descriptions” expounded in Russell (Russell, 1905) essentially aimed at safeguarding the possibility to use singular terms in every case, even when they do not apparently have any referent. For example, every assertion containing the phrase “the present King of France” would be obviously false (“the present King of France is bald”), but its negation would be false as well (“the present King of France is not bald”): since there is no king of France at present we are driven to regard such assertions as being devoid of sense. Russell considered this situation risky and therefore tried in every way to build a theory of proper names that would allow us to regard the two propositions from the previous example as false and not as nonsense. What he calls “definite description” does not have any “meaning” for him and can always be split into an “assertion of existence” and an “assertion of uniqueness”, and if at least one of these assertions does not have verification in the state of things (e.g. if there is no “present King of France”) the

complete assertion can be regarded as false. However, such strong restrictions on the logical form of these descriptions led him, some years later, to paradoxically assert that “there are only two words which are strictly proper names of particulars, namely, ‘I’ and ‘this’” (Russell 1918). The first person singular personal pronoun and the demonstrative pronoun would thus be the only two verbal signs whose referent is certain and devoid of ambiguity.

Such a privileged position of the proper name in the theories of Frege and Russell points to the evident aspiration to make stable the relation between language and reality, identifying its transcendent rootedness. This is what the Italian philosopher of language Paolo Virno says about the subject:

Each time we discuss a failed reference, but also a successful one, we suppose that to the grammatical subject there always appertains a referential function or intentionality. Irrespective of the fact whether there is or not an actual denotation, what appears ensured in advance is, so to speak, the denotativity of the singular term, i.e. its aptitude to stand-for-something. Now, it is due to this implicit assumption that the noun is given a privileged position. And on its presupposed intentionality depend both the possibility of judging an assertion true-or-false (if denotativity is manifested positively as denotation) and the ruling that it is nonsense (if denotativity remains unrealised). Because it allows or precludes its validity, the noun is never subjected to truth-values. As the holder of the referential function, the noun is the transcendent foundation of the sentence it is also part of. (Virno, pp. 31-32)

The theory of descriptions is subject to much criticism, and the most widespread one concerns the difficulties that arise when, in an assertion containing a proper name, we want to replace the name with a description³.

³ The canonical example is the description of Otto von Bismarck as “the first Chancellor of the German Empire” discussed in (Russell 1918).

This possibility of substitution was obviously essential, in Russell’s theory, to be able to determine the meaning to be

attributed to an assertion containing a proper name. But let us suppose, to refer to the example quoted in the note, that Bismarck died as a child. In that case the assertion “Otto von Bismarck was the first Chancellor of the German Empire” would be false, and the description “the first Chancellor of the German Empire” could not be used any longer to designate Bismarck. In other words, descriptions can change referents (or, which has the same consequences, referentiality is not ensured any longer) when we shift from a modality of the “actual” or of the “necessary” to a modality of the “possible”. One solution would be to link the referentiality of the name to possibility, to a single possible world in which a given assertion is uttered, but that would have the unpleasant consequence of no longer being able to give the name the role of the “transcendent foundation of the sentence” that Virno talks about.

In the 1960s, this was one of the reasons that led the American philosopher Saul Kripke to formulate his conception of “rigid designators”. This conception stems from Kripke’s dissatisfaction with any descriptive theory. According to him, the demand to pick out the referent of a proper name through a “definite description” (Russell) or an “agglomerate of descriptions” (Strawson) leads into an unbearable circularity (when we

presuppose the existence and the knowledge of that certain individual in order to be able to attribute to him the properties defining him), or into the impossibility of determining the individual if there is a change in our knowledge of the properties used in the individual’s description. 141

If we say Einstein was the man who discovered the theory of relativity, that certainly picks out someone uniquely. One can be sure, as I said, that everyone *here* [Kripke refers to the participants of the conference at which he speaks] can make a compact and independent statement of this theory and so pick out Einstein uniquely; but many people actually don’t know enough about this stuff, so when asked what the theory of relativity is, they will say: ‘Einstein’s theory’, and thus be led into the most straightforward sort of vicious circle. (Kripke)

On the other hand, when we define Einstein as “the man who discovered the relativity theory”, or Nixon as “the President of the United States that resigned in 1974 to avoid impeachment”, we run the risk of indicating some other person, in a case where things went differently: for example, if Einstein had not become a scientist or if Nixon had not been elected President of the United States. That is in contrast, according to Kripke, with the fact that we would continue to think that those two persons would “be” Einstein and Nixon, even if they had not done what they have done. So, there is no other way, in his opinion, but to free the proper name of any attempt to determine it through a description, and instead to classify it as a “*rigid designator*”, or a sign that designates the same object in every possible world it exists in; if that is not the case, the

designator is “unrigid” or “accidental”.

Kripke also outlines a model of the process through which we create proper names, or rigid designators, and then communicate and diffuse them:

An initial ‘baptism’ takes place. Here the object may be named by ostension, or the reference of the name may be fixed by a description. When the name is ‘passed from link to link’ [of a chain of speakers], the receiver of the name must, I think, intend when he learns it to use it with the same reference as the man from whom he heard it. (...) Notice that the preceding outline hardly *eliminates* the notion of reference; on the contrary, it takes the notion of intending to use the same reference as a given. (Kripke)

What does a theory on proper names like Kripke’s involve? In spite of the preoccupations of concreteness with which it presents itself (“but what is true is that it’s in virtue of our connection with other speakers in the community, going back to the referent himself, that we refer to a certain man”, Kripke, the conception of the rigid designator emphasizes the metaphysical character of the language–reality relation. The same author quotes, with favour, the saying of Bishop Butler: “Everything is what it is and not another thing.” If “everything is what it is”, language has no other task but to reflect the things “as they are”, and “possible worlds” are nothing but self-consistent universes, separated from each other and rigorously alternative. The possible does not mix with the real. The existence of “invariant” objects with regard to possible worlds reassures us of the stability of the world. The “rigidity” of Kripke’s conception extends, through designators, to all of reality, but, on the contrary, it is reality itself that sometimes

reminds us how unstable it is and what role possibility plays within and around it.

3. EVERY CONTEXT IS OPAQUE, NOT EVEN GOD CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT

We have seen how the aporias, in which the earlier examined theories on proper names flounder, are to be associated with a denotative conception of language that – as metaphysically as the idealistic philosophies it tends to surpass – has pretence to construct a transparent, regular, fluid, and almost mechanized relation between language and reality. The difficulties in stabilizing a certain and determined relation between linguistic signs and their real referents – difficulties that evidently indicate the existence of limits in language (as in any representative dimension) – are never connected to biological, perceptive, operative, and effectual origins of language itself: they are exorcised and fought because they are considered a “deviation” of the use with respect to a logical underlying structure in which those difficulties would magically disappear. The dream, which is typically human, of a transparent and omnipotent language able to express reality in an orderly, complete, and exhaustive manner – a symbolic structure able, at the same time, to preserve the richness of sensory experience and to correct the disorder by organising it impeccably – is transformed into a scientific programme that postulates the existence of such a structure. If natural language expresses imprecision, ambiguity, shadows, contradictions, it is because concrete use degrades, or weakens, a structure that would otherwise have in itself all the instruments to realise the perfect bi-univocal correspondence between linguistic expression and actual facts. The

Saussurian distinction between *langue* and *parole* is totally unbalanced here, and *langue* becomes an ideal and omnipotent expressive instrument that *parole* is not able to fully utilise. But art (or more modestly the innovative, curious and experimental use of languages and representations) is there also to criticise the delusion of omnipotence of philosophies, as well as the high-handedness of politics and the pretences of economies to guide every other sector of human experience.

The starting point of the Janez Janša project was very simple: three persons thoughtfully and determinedly played a game that has always destabilized the correspondence between individuals and the linguistic labels that designate them, namely, the game of *homonymy*. Homonymy is a linguistic and social condition common in every language and in every culture and has never created more than a few limited administrative problems in the most complex societies, neither has it ever prevented the persons “affected” by it from preserving the sense of their individual identity. In traditional cultures, there was the custom (quite widespread still today) of naming first-borns after their grandparents. In many languages, the combination of a very common first name and a very common surname can even be used to indicate “anyone”, the “average man” (“John Smith” or “Mario Rossi”). Nevertheless, cases of homonymy force individuals and communities into a series of particular measures (official and everyday) intended to preserve the different identities of homonyms recognizable and distinct. The sense (at least) of surprise that overcomes us when we run into a person that has our same name shows that we are facing something that we

all perceive as something bizarre – if not as an irregularity, we cannot resist at least a moment’s questioning of how we might distinguish ourselves from the other. In short, homonymy represents a potential menace for the individual identity of persons. 143

In August 2007 when three Slovenian artists decided to change their names and assume a common one, they naturally had to choose one that was already known, and they chose it in relation to a series of intentions of social and political criticism that were already characteristic of their work. The decision was: Janez Janša. The choice of the name is certainly not indifferent; I do not ignore this dimension and I do not want to negate it at all, but others have dealt with this aspect and will do so in the future. As for me, I have decided, within the limits of this intervention, to take interest in the purely linguistic aspect of their operation, which in my opinion exists and is particularly relevant. So, my considerations, if they have any value, are in relation to the choice of changing the name as such and not to the particular name that was chosen for this operation. That, I think, is also confirmed by the organizational and communicational characteristics of the operation that are mentioned also in the first part of this essay. It is obvious that when three artists decide to assume the same name it may recall other operations of “collective names” assumed by groups of artists or writers during the 1900’s (the most recent being that of Luther Blissett – now Wu Ming – in the 1990’s in Italy). Nevertheless, Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez Janša did not operate in this way; they did not assume a collective name and use it to sign their joint works and actions while keeping secret their real names that remained legally unchanged. They changed their names legally, following

all the procedures allowed and prescribed by the laws of their country, and they did it individually and without any statement that would link this event to a joint artistic action.

Joint actions obviously came – before and after the change of name – but the change of name was the individual, legitimate, and official (from the administrative point of view) premise of these actions. So, it seems clear to me that their action contained an explicitly linguistic intent that is absent in the case of Luther Blisset and similar operations. By deliberately choosing to create a triple case of homonymy, Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez Janša therefore reminded us that even the zero grade of language, the most elementary denotative operation, the nomination, that should, according to Russell, refer to the act of ostension – which connects language with sensible knowledge, the *knowledge by description*, if we use his own concepts, with the *knowledge by acquaintance* – that even this operation is not only arbitrary, but it preserves its arbitrariness also after the “initial baptism” (according to Kripke’s terminology) and continues to depend on the context, like the entire language. This condition is very clearly recalled also by Derrida in his essay that also gives the title to the action of Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez Janša at the Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas in Berlin in January 2008, *Signature Event Context*. Here Derrida particularly refers to writing, but his considerations can be extended, with due precautions, to any linguistic act:

It seems to go without saying that the field of equivocality covered by the word *communication* permits itself to be reduced massively by the limits of what is called a context (...) Is there a rigorous and scientific concept of the *context*?

Does not the notion of context harbor, behind a certain confusion, very determined philosophical presuppositions? To state it now in the most summary fashion, I would like to demonstrate why a context is never absolutely determinable, or rather in what way its determination is never certain or saturated. This structural nonsaturation would have as its double effect:

1. a marking of the theoretical insufficiency of the *usual concept of* (the linguistic or nonlinguistic) *context* such as it is accepted in numerous fields of investigation, along with all the other concepts with which it is systematically associated;
2. a rendering necessary of a certain generalization and a certain displacement of the concept of writing. The latter could no longer, henceforth, be included in the category of communication, at least if communication is understood in the restricted sense of the transmission of meaning. Conversely, it is within the general field of writing thus defined that the effects of semantic communication will be able to be determined as particular, secondary; inscribed, supplementary effects.

The “nonsaturation” of context, to continue to use Derrida’s terminology, means that the relation between language and the world is inevitably opaque; language remains an attempt – generous but destined to fail – to master the surplus of matter and sensible intuition with regard to the concept, or the symbolic dimension. As pointed out by Virno in his discussion of a famous passage from Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*, it is “the gap dividing intellect and sensibility” that destines to failure any attempt to absorb the reality of things into language and therefore

makes the possible, rather than the necessary, the founding dimension of language itself. And there are no denotations, definite descriptions or rigid designators that can save us from our fate of “animals of possibility”. But if there are still any doubts, it will be enough to remember the form of the *Signature Event Context* performance that was mentioned before. Certainly, the object that it evoked – the outcome, the result of the performance – was a totally abstract and virtual signature, visible only to a potentially remote spectator who connected to the website in question. In fact, the different routes of the three Janez Janšas drew their name on the image of Denkmal in Google Maps.

This was a matter of virtual writing, then, “the pure reproducibility of a pure event”, a presence that has already been “in the transcendental form of nowness”, as Derrida asserts. However, the walk of the performers was not silent: the three took the word, repeating at every step the inevitably rhythmic mantra “*Jaz sem Janez Janša, Jaz sem Janez Janša, Jaz sem Janez Janša... (I am Janez Janša, I am Janez Janša, I am Janez Janša...)*”. “I am Janez Janša” is the most elementary of statements, the only one, according to Russell, that is fully denotative and as-such not subjected to analysis in terms of truth-values. It only indicates who it is that is speaking and is consequently neither true nor false, because it does not predicate anything about any subject, it just connects language in its more potential form (“I am speaking”) – not in the abstract or metalinguistic one – with the sensible evidence of the existence of a speaking subject. If memory serves us right, this is also the way in which God presents himself to Moses, only that he has no name to exhibit, no linguistic sign with which to

designate himself, and so he limits himself to using the most intimate and most powerful of tautologies: “I am that I am.” So, *Deus absconditus* eventually reveals himself to be obviously, an earthly and material god and only the planner and executor of a performance. He has a name – or better still, to be economical, only one name for three – and he repeats that name to us quietly and a little anxiously, reminding us that, against the paradoxes of language, even gods fight in vain.

Translated by Denis Debevec

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