The Body and the Micropolitics of Risk

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Once upon a time there was a man who tried to master his body in a rather peculiar way:

"Did I ever tell you about the man who taught his asshole to talk? His whole abdomen would move up and down you dig farting out the words. It was unlike anything I ever heard.

'This ass talk had a sort of gut frequency. It hit you right down there like you gotta go. You know when the old colon gives you the elbow and it feels sorta cold inside, and you know all you have to do is turn loose? Well this talking hit you right down there, a bubbly, thick stagnant sound, a sound you could smell.

'This man worked for a carnival you dig, and to start with it was like a novelty ventriloquist act. Real funny, too, at first. He had a number he called 'The Better'Ole' that was a scream, I tell you. I forget most of it but it was clever. Like, 'Oh I say, are you still down there, old thing?'

' Nah! I had to go relieve myself.'

'After a while the ass started talking on its own. He would go in without anything prepared and his ass would ad-lib and toss the gags back at him every time.

'Then it developed sort of teeth-like little raspy incurving hooks and started eating. He thought this was cute at first and bulit an act around it, but the asshole would eat its way through his pants and start talking on the street, shouting out it wanted equal rights. It would get drunk, too, and have crying jags nobody loved it and it wanted to be kissed same as any other mouth. Finally it talked all the time day and night, you could hear him for blocks screaming at it to shut up, and beating it with his fist, and sticking candles up it, but nothing did any good and the asshole said to him: 'It's you who will shut up in the end. Not me. Because we don't need you around here any more. I can talk and eat and shit.'

'After that he began waking up in the morning with a transparent jelly like a tadpole's tail all over his mouth. This jelly was what the scientists call un-D.T., Undifferentiated Tissue, which can grow into any kind of flesh on the human body. He would tear it off his mouth and the pieces would stick to his hands like burning gasoline jelly and grow there, grow anywhere on him a glob of it fell. So finally his mouth sealed over, and the whole head would have amputated spontaneous - (did you know there is a condition occurs in parts of Africa and only among Negroes where the little toe amputates spontaneously?) - except for the eyes you dig. That's one thing the asshole couldn't do was see. It needed the eyes. But nerve connections were blocked and infiltrated and atrophied so the brain couldn't give orders any more. It was trapped in the skull, sealed off. For a while you could see the silent, helpless suffering of the brain behind the eyes, then finally the brain must have died, because the eyes went out, and there was no more feeling in them than a crab's eye on the end of a stalk."
(Burroughs 1993: 110-1)

Well, things did not turn out exactly as this man wanted. His attempt to master his body ended in disaster. The body turned out to be a force he could not gain control over by use of mind and will alone. His body turned back against him, and it was instead he who ended up becoming a slave of his body. His will, his desires, were counteracted by other forces, which did not come from sources outside himself, but from his own body.

This man who teaches his asshole to talk develops exquisite skills to control his body. The body becomes something he can perform and demonstrate. He becomes an artist, a very special character. He succeeds in the game of representation. But then the body turns against him, and he loses control. The organs no longer obey him, but take over control. The asshole

becomes the master, and he becomes its slave.

What this man initially demonstrates is what seems to be the ideal subject-position sought after for many today - the subject with total mastership over his/her bodily performances and appearances.

But the story demonstrates that the body cannot be ruled by willpower alone. Although it may be possible to exercise the body to extremes, this does not necessarily say that one's mastership over the body increases. The quest for freedom and mastership, an autonomous body worthy of representation, can lead to a life under slave-like conditions, when the autonomy collapses and the subject is laid bare in it's dependency on factors beyond it's willpower to control and master.

The man's story also brings out the dark side of this ideal. It is an aspect of risk to be found in this story. What at first seems like a triumph of the will turns out to be a very risky position, one that this man fails to upheld. The position sought and acclaimed involves practices that put the subject at risk of losing control over his body and appearances. The story then turns to the misery experienced when this subject-position collapses, the subject laid bare in it's slavelike state, controlled by the forces beyond it's own willpower. The fight for power over one's body and an autonomous subject-position involves a risk of losing control and a dethronization of this subject-position. As long as the work of maintaining the image proceeds seamlessly, the selfhood is represented successfully and kept intact, but the risk of cracks appearing in the surface will (always) loom in the background.

Bodies are hard to master. To be a master of your body takes years of practice. Manners, hygiene, etc, are not tasks easily learned and maintained. These regimens to master one's body and appearances are not inborn but needs years of cultural practice. They have to be learned and mastered, and then again relearned as new fashions and trends develop. Continual work of supervising your own body is necessary to stay intact as a whole person. By losing control of the body, one loses control of the bodily appearances, and hereby the image. Without mastering your body, your whole status as an individual and a subject is at risk. This paper will deal with risk, culture and the human body. It will deal with risks that affect the human body, and with how these risks relate to culture. Risks to the human subject and the body reach from the everyday to the extreme, from personal worries such as being struck by illness or accidents to incidents more severe in a large-scale perspective.

Risk

Risk. What is risk? The threat of some danger appearing? The likelihood of something bad to happen? What or who makes our lives risky? Is it terrorists, street criminals, bacteria or viruses spreading diseases, smoking causing cancer, technology providing potential for disaster, factories polluting the environment, etc? These are all risks looming out there, threatening our conditions and ways of life.

Risk has risen to the centerpoint of interest of social scientists in the last few decades (Beck 1994, 1999; Douglas & Wildavsky 1983; Douglas 1992; Lupton 1999, etc). The literature portrays how risk affects and concerns human life. Maybe the best known writer on risk of today is Ulrich Beck. Beck (1994) proposed the concept of 'risk society' implying by this that the modern society as a whole is inflicted by risk - with a new awareness of dangers looming almost in all spheres of life. Beck's focus is mainly on macro-structures, such as

technology, economy and the environmental balance. This does not say that risk only operates on a macro-level. The effects of risk are perceived and experienced by people in their everyday lives. Risks are all-encompassing to a larger degree than ever before, we are all in danger of being struck by these disasters. These risks are a product of modernity, but still very real ontological entities. They are risks that people living in reflexive modernity have to relate themselves to, whether they like it or not.

The risks portrayed by Beck are negative and disastrous things that might occur. Risks are foreseeable, but not predictable. Risky areas and topics can be spotted and located, but when and where the exact incidents will take place is not possible to predict. This uncertain aspect of risk makes it impossible to escape. There is no safe harbor against such unpredictable dangers, there are only more or less risky zones.

These risks possess a threat to the body from outside. They have their origin outside of the body and threaten it by way of invasion. The person and the body can be protected from these risks to a greater or lesser degree, but the risks are something located outside of the body that individuals have to relate to, and eventually take precautions against. The body becomes a passive matter, to be inscribed by the forces of risk. These risks can take the form of disasters, violence, bankruptcies, poisons, viruses, bacteria, etc, all factors coming from the outside to threat the individual. This individual is reflexive, to the degree that it absorbs and reflects on these dangers threatening the body and the selfhood. This reflexive character shapes the perception of risks, and as such also the effects of risk. Though risks are given, their effects are not so. Risks are forces from the outside that have to be taken a stance against, but these can be done in many different ways.

On the other hand, there are risks that do not provide a threat by way of invasion, at least not ontologically so. Rather, these are risks that seem to appear from inside the body. They have no definite source or concrete appearance that can be located outside of the body. Such risks are portrayed in the introduction by William Burroughs' story of the man who taught his asshole to talk. These are risks that cannot be located in some external source. Rather this man's disaster is a result of the hard, if not impossible, task of keeping a position intact, a position that is constantly at risk of breaking apart – or that can develop into a maintenance regime that will make the subject a prisoner of this regime. Of course, this is a literary text, fiction, with no 'true' base, but the frustration portrayed is still all to familiar for many today, namely the despair over losing control over one's body and appearances.

The risks I will discuss in this paper are of another kind than the risks portrayed by Beck. Here I will focus on the micropolitics of risk. By this I mean the risks perceived and confronted by people in their everyday life, concerning their notions of self and the body. I will argue that though the risks Beck portrays can inflict peoples concerns and life-choices, there are other risks that inflict people's everyday practices, lifestyles and worries to an even larger degree. I think that what affects people most in their close surroundings, is not threats of some macro-scale disaster. To put it another way - what affects people's everyday life, is mostly what they themselves affect in their everyday practices. These are the risks that have the most direct effects on most people's life. To most people, personal issues are closer to their attention than the effects further away from them in time, place and scale. People do not always follow health warnings, they do buy goods that may not be healthy and good for themselves and the environment, they do continue to smoke and pollute, etc. But this does not say that they are not at all concerned with risk. There might be other kinds and perceptions of risk that can help explain the bits that do not fit into Beck's picture.

While Beck focuses on situations where the blame for social and structural (macro) problems are put onto the individual (micro), I will rather focus on situations where the individual is put to blame for his or her own problems that can not necessarily be traced back to some macrolevel source. This does not say that I agree with explanations that say that people are the source of their own problems - victim-blaming - but rather that I will try to distribute these problematics onto a broader sphere, into networks of relations without definite means and ends, causes and effects.

Risk as culture

Before proceeding to my own argument, I would like to introduce briefly another theorist who has put a stamp on risk-related discussions over the last few decades, the anthropologist Mary Douglas. Douglas is the main influence in what can be seen as the *culturalist* approach to risk. This perspective looks upon risk as culturally given. The structure of society corresponds to the structure of culture, and thereby to people's mindset, values and beliefs. The physical world is organized and made sense of through our cultural lenses. Culture is the middle area of shared beliefs and values, in between private, subjective perception and public, physical science (Douglas & Wildavsky 1983: 194). Societies are organized according to cultural notions of purity and danger (Douglas 1980). The selection of dangers and the choice of social organization run hand in hand, according to Douglas and Aron Wildavsky (1983: 186). These dangers are real, and they exist in the physical world. But not all dangers are perceived as risks. To become a risk, a danger must be culturally perceived and selected as such. Risk is what threatens the social organization of the group where a particular risk is perceived. Risks serve a function in social integration. Risks sustain the values and beliefs that they are regarded as threats against.

My perspectives on risk in this paper proceed from a cultural perspective, but they divert from Douglas on some vital premises. I will return to this discussion towards the end of the text.

In this paper I will look upon risk as possible threats that produce real effects among those who perceive these threats - no matter how likely it is that this threat will occur. That is - perceived threats that result in worry and that are taken precautions against to prevent them from happening. Whether these preventions are successful or not is not the case here. As you can see, this is a quite pragmatic stance on risk. Risk is what is *perceived* as risk, and that is treated as such - to the degree that it inflicts the concrete *practices* undertaken. Whether these risks represent real dangers or not is irrelevant here. What matters is that they produce effects. Risks make things happen, they force people to act, to take steps to avoid or prevent risks. While in Beck's perspective risk is what threatens the conditions of life, and in Douglas' perspective risk is what threatens social borders and integration, then in my perspective risk is what threatens personal borders and the coherence of selfhood. This does not imply that I consider risk as something that stems from the individual by him/herself alone. Risks are indeed a social product. But these risks that I will focus on here do not necessarily have to be a threat to the material conditions of life or to the integration of society. Risks need no solid basis to be real, neither do they have to be culturally agreed upon.

The risks I will discuss are risks from the *inside*. This does not say that these risks are purely individual. I will discuss risks that have no definite source. Rather these are risks that

are lived, felt and experienced by people in their daily life. These risks point to dangers such as depressions, self-hatred, eating disorders, self-mutilation, etc. Dangers such as these are frequent in today's society. I will argue that also threats like these can be looked upon as risks, or rather as effects of risk. They point to the position of having to *be* someone. This position is constantly at risk of failure. There are worries, sufferings and disorders relating to the troublesome task of being a human, and performing the standards that this implies. The task of having to represent yourself through your daily practices and appearances is a risky business.

This paper has two interrelated arguments. The first is to argue that bodily risks are not (necessarily) produced apart from the body, and do not (only) possess a threat to the body by way of invasion. Risks are not always possible to separate from the body, rather, risks can also be constituted *in* and *by* bodies and bodily practices. Rather than something external and separate from the body, risk can be something that is entangled with the body, and that works through the body's attachments and practices. This argument implies a break with perspectives that operate with a line of demarcation between microentities such as bodies and subjects on one side, and macroentities such as structure, history and/or culture on the other side.

The second argument is that bodies and subjects are not given, stable and solid entities, governed by given, stable minds. Rather, I will argue that bodies are not passive matter, and that it is only through abstraction that they can be looked upon as given and stable. The subjectivities are fluctuating multiplicities, constituted under a disguise of representable identities to be performed and lived out. Everything that break with this image of the subject as stable, and the body as something to be mastered, becomes a possible dethronization of the subject – it becomes a risk.

These two arguments above are closely entwined, as they both propose a rejection of given boundaries and categories. This in turn leads to my argument that risk can be something that possesses a threat to these boundaries and categories. Risk becomes something that may threaten the subject and the body as autonomous, stable and solid.

I proceed now to introduce some points that constitute the foundations of my arguments. Central here is what I call the logic of representation, and how this relates to (contemporary) notions of subjectivity and identity. This logic implies a subject-position that is at constant need of being kept together by any means necessary. This position can prove impossible to upheld, and is as such always at risk. Risk becomes a threat of departure from the representable self.

Representation of the self

Be true to yourself. This seems like a mantra of our culture. If everyone just dared to open up to their innermost feelings and explore the true character inside, one would really learn to appreciate her/himself, and receive the praise and acceptance s(he) truly deserve from others. The whole world would really be a much better place to live in for us all. What a wonderful world, right? Well, in many cases this can work out this wonderful, but in other cases it does not. What I will argue further is that this dictum also can put the subject and the body in a position of risk.

The growing importance of the individual's responsibility over his/her own body have

been repeatedly stated by several authors (Beck 1994; Beck-Gernsheim 1996; Giddens 1991; Lupton 1999). Life is increasingly being portrayed as a project, for each individual to fulfill on its own behalf. This is looked upon as a consequence of modernity, where the individual is increasingly set free from binding social forms such as gender, class and family (Beck 1994: 87-90). This opens up the possibility for the individual to create its own biography, according to his or her own wishes and desires. This development also has its downside, where the individual to an increasing degree is put to blame for his or her own failures. Social problems are perceived as psychological problems (Beck 1994: 100). This can in its turn increase the individual's sense of guilt and shame over his/her own situation. Individuals are supposed to fulfill subject-positions where independence, autonomy and control over one's appearance and life-conditions are vital expectations forming the foundations. Underlying this perspective is the view that power equals independence and self-mastership. The powerful individual is the one who easily fits into the available subject-positions and confirms to the ideals of autonomy. Individuality equals conformity to the established subject-positions. When this position breaks, the subject is exposed as weak and unable to fulfill his or her obligations and tasks in the project of becoming a whole and independent individual. What is exposed is a subject no longer worthy of representation.

The stance that the individual is personally responsible for her or his (mis)fortunes is closely entwined with what I will call the logic of representation. This implies that what is exposed is the true self, who you really are. A person's practices and appearances is as such a result of the person's true character. This character, this personality, is what one is supposed to be true to, and to act in accordance with. The opposite of this is the false person, the person who betrays it's true self.

What this implies is that the subject-positions available should serve as a confirmation of the persons character. This logic implies that the roles and positions may be general, but the personalities are unique. This uniqueness is then to be represented through the person's practices and appearances.

So, the logic of representation is the logic that implies that what a person does or looks like is a result of that person's selfhood. The meaning is not intrinsic in one's practices, but it lies in the self underneath that the practices are supposed to represent. This logic is portrayed as the natural order of things. To be a person is to be someone and to act like that someone.

This dictum states that it is possible to be true to who you are, that there is a single truth to stick to. To be true to something means to revere it, and stay faithful to it, under any circumstances. The truth is whole, it is single, and it is nothing but the truth. Divergences from the truth are some sign of fallacy or dishonesty. The one who is not truthful is a liar, a false person, or a ruthless and superficial player and performer.

Further this dictum states that there is a self one can be true towards. Each of us has a self, an inner core that says who you really are. This self is to be represented through the subject's appearances and practices. Represented both towards oneself and towards others. Through appearances and practices the person should act out who he or she is. Or to put it another way - through your appearances and practices you represent who you are.

I will here focus on two closely connected aspects of this individual subject-position to be represented, namely the aspect of autonomy on one hand, and the aspect of power and mastership on the other hand. The first aspect states that the individual is free from binding attachments and bonds, the other aspect states that the individual is his/herself in command over its practices and appearances. Further both of these aspects are highly normative in that

they portray the autonomous, self-contained and self-governed subject as the ideal, and any indicator of departure from this is portrayed as some sort of weakness, as something less worthy of representation.

Risks of representation

As brought out in the works of Erving Goffman (1971; 1972; 1990, etc) and Harold Garfinkel (1999), human daily behavior needs a lot of maintenance work to keep up the appearances. Normal behavior is not easily accomplished, but needs to be carefully worked over, again and again. When slips occur they have to be immediately corrected or explained away, to prove for oneself and others that this was just a slip, not a part of one's self or identity (see Goffman 1961: 103-5).

How one represents oneself is constitutive in how one feels. It is not just others perception of oneself that is constituted through the representation, but also one's self-perception. The question here is not to discuss how and why some people become dissatisfied with what they perceive as their selfhood, but rather to state that this idea of representation is not self-evident. Though it can seem as such in many cases, the work of representation does not always function easily. There are risks of failure in the process of representation, and the feeling of having something there, worthy of representation, is not always present.

Risk becomes something that threatens the self-image - what makes you not you. Daily life is a zone contaminated by potential risks to one's image. There are risks such as becoming fat, ugly, lonely, isolated, wrinkled, boring, etc. These are all risks that point back to the person receiving these potential maladies. You are what you happen to tell yourself and others that you are. If you are wrinkled, you are old and past your best days. If you are ugly, you are unattractive as a partner. The same applies when you are fat, with the extra burden of sloppiness and lack of willpower. If you are boring you are unattractive on the social scene, something loneliness and isolation can become a confirmation of. This is a scene laden with self-fulfilling prophecies. A failure of representation hits back on the self to be represented. Through the success or failure of the representations, the self itself is constituted as a success or a failure.

I will here dwell on one example of a topic and a 'disorder' that implies a break from these ideas of representation - that portrays the impossible in a situation where the subject is totally autonomous and in command - namely food and eating disorders.

An everyday event such as a common meal can be heavily loaded with potential risks. What you eat, who you eat with, the context of the meal - these all do possess possible threats to your image. These possible threats can then easily overshadow other interests such as the nourishment content of the foods, and the properly amounts of vital ingredients necessary to keep oneself fit. The food itself possesses possible risks. It can be fattening, give pimples, flashes, produce burps or farts, etc. The food's communicative value is also important. By purchasing and consuming goods, such as food, one is communicating an image. Some foodstuffs can give prestige, others can provide shame - the purchase and consumption of which is something to be hidden away. The bulimic's food practices can often provide striking examples of this: the purchase of food is most often done alone, to be consumed then as fast as possible, also alone, hidden away from the eyes of others. The binge and purification that can follow is also hidden from others, as this is even more a shameful practice. These

practices speak of a self that needs to be hidden - that is not worthy of representation.

During the course of a meal, such as a lunch with colleagues at work or school, several threats and risks can occur. One can order/buy/eat the wrong kinds of food, too small/large a portion, eat too fast/slow, display bad habits/manners, failing to keep up with the conversations around the table, talk too much/little, eat significantly more/less/faster/slower/different than the others, failing to control one's bodily functions/sounds/odors, etc. These are all possible traps - risks to one's image. Falling or stepping into one of these traps can have huge and painful consequences. The failures communicate back to the self to be represented. A broken image leads to a broken notion of selfhood.

Eating disorders

Eating disorders can stand as a striking example of the problematics of representation. In this field these logics are at work and produce effects. Rather than as a break with common ideals and subject-positions, the logics here at work can be seen as variants of these, taken to the extreme. These subjects are super-normal, rather than abnormal.

I will try to read positions of subjectivity constituted and performed in and through texts and stories regarding eating disorders. In these subject-positions there are located possibilities and restrictions that lay foundations for further practices.

Here I will use some quotes and examples from Marya Hornbacher's auto-biography *Wasted* (1999), and from the pro-eating-disordered subculture on the internet - a community on the net, put up by young girls and women, who constitute their own culture, where eating disorders are promoted as a legitimate way of life. These sites cannot be said to give a general presentation of the attitudes and practices of people diagnosed as eating disordered. But I will claim that they can give a view into a logic at work, though taken to its extreme limit, that can be found widespread among people recognized as eating disordered.

The logic of representation states that there is a self underneath. This self has to be performed and represented. This is not like a performance on a scene, where an act is carried out in front of an audience. Rather this is a logic that seeks to convince oneself and others that there is a self, a me, underneath, and that this self is worthy of exposure. Practices are subordinated to this logic, and subjects are subordinated - and subordinate themselves - to these practices. The practice becomes a confirmation of will-power.

The self gets to be represented through a performance of a subject-position. Autonomy is a vital part of this subject-position. Autonomy implies freedom from restrictions and attachments. Control over one's desires. This is all well and fine as long as there is something to represent, and the practice of representation works fine. This is the case with the well-functioning subject-positions, where the subject succeeds in representing the self underneath. The autonomous position is kept intact, and the self comes out in the representation. In such a situation the mediating materials and attachments do not show. They are overshadowed by the performance of autonomy. The represented image corresponds with the subject's self-image. The seemingly natural and self-evident position is kept intact. The subject is represented as singular. When this works easily the subject-position is not at risk. But when cracks appear, and the work of representation does not proceed so smoothly, the position becomes at risk, and precautions need to be taken.

Marya Hornbacher here describes what can be regarded as a fight for an autonomous subject-position through an eating disorder:

"Too often the shrinks assume an eating disorder is a way of avoiding womanhood, sexuality, responsibility, by arresting your physical growth at a prepubescent state. But more recently, some insightful people have noticed that some of us may be after something quite different, like breathing room, or, crazy as it sounds, less attention, or a different kind of attention. Something like power. An eating disorder appears to be a perfect response to a lack of autonomy. (...) Your intention was to become superhuman, skin thick as steel, unflinching in the face of adversity, out of the grasping reach of others." (Hornbacher 1999: 68)

The targets Hornbacher describes are difficult to achieve. She seeks total autonomy, free from other people, free from the need for food and other material objects. These others become a threat to her subject-position. They endanger her living space, her control over her own life. But it proves impossible to do without these others. The quest to free oneself from them ends in slavery. The subject is truly dependant on other social and material factors.

Food as an attachment

Food is a material factor that it is hard to do without. The body needs food to survive as a biological organism. Hunger cannot be controlled by willpower alone. That makes food hard to master. The food acts back. It produces effects. By getting in contact with food the subjects become at risk of loosing control, over its attachments, over its practices, and over its appearances. The subject's status as an autonomous and solid entity is challenged.

The French sociologist Bruno Latour argues that humans do not exist as separate entities, but that they are constituted through sets of attachments (Latour 1999). The single individual is always made up as a network of other social and material factors, and is produced as an effect of these. Through abstractions these network can be reduced to single entities, but when complications occur, the dependency on the network of attachments is exposed. As when the anorectic's denial of food becomes a exposure of how dependant (s)he is of the food. Food is impossible to do without, and the attachment between body and food cannot be mastered by the body alone. The food acts back and proves it's power - and the subject's state of dependency is exposed, something which is not a state worthy of representation. The subject cannot succeed in being the sole master over her/his attachments. To succeed the supporting attachments and mediators must not show. The image of the subject as the independent master of her/his appearances and practices must be kept intact. The risk to be avoided is the risk of being exposed as lacking autonomy, of being a slave of ones attachments. Eating disorders imply practices that do away with the attachments, which make them imperceptible. These practices serve to hide the attachments, and to purify the representations. The aim is to be truly representable, and at the same time completely autonomous and singular. This is the desired position, as can be located in the following quote from one of the pro-anorectic sites:

"Is THAT what they are so afraid of? Is THAT why they strive so eagerly to silence our voices? Could it really be all about power, and the way our lifestyle exposes where it

corrupts? Could it simply be that those who wield their pathetic little naked-emperor reign so irresponsibly and selfishly do NOT want word getting out to "the masses" of how simple a matter it is to throw off their chains and exist self-directed?" (Anorexic Nation, 22.03.02)

This statement marks a position of superiority. A success in complete self-control and liberation. The eating disordered position marks a triumph of the will. The life of others is a life in slavery. They lack the superior management of their own lives. They lack the will-power to realize the ideals of autonomy. The subject in this statement on the other hand confirms its autonomous position, and its underlying self, through detachments and control of desires. The practices this subject subordinates herself to confirms her own subject-position. It is a confirmation of being, where the experience of hunger marks a control of appetite and a negation of the attachment to food. *I hunger therefore I am.*

But what happens when the practice of representation fails? When the self to be represented does not come out in the representation?

The logic of representation, and the networks and machinery supporting it, succeed in upholding some subject-positions, but fails tragically when it comes to others. One of the obstacles that can make the representation fail is materiality. An example of this is food. Food is a material mediator that the body needs to get attached to – to survive as an biological organism. This attachment can work smoothly, but not always so. Some times the subject can fail to control its relation to food. Food can become a material factor the subject cannot master. There are of course other material factors as well that acts back on the body: clothes, furniture, infrastructure, etc.

The material attachments do not always work smoothly to the subject's advantage. A successful representation depends on these material mediators working in accordance with the subject and the subject's status as an autonomous actor. When this happens, the subject is represented as free and independent, in control of it's body and appearances, and of the attachments the subject is constituted through.

This position is constantly at risk. Autonomy is a status that has to be achieved, and that does not come easy. It is a hard task to be a conqueror of one's environment, body and desires. The attachments have to fit, which they do not always do. Things that do not fit can often be simply just too easy to spot out. What breaks is not just a superficial appearance, but the self-image - who you are:

"A lot of people said that I didn't have enough self-esteem and I, being a very suggestible person, went along with it. But as I got a mind of my own I realized that I did have plenty of self-esteem, too much even. I did put myself down a lot but I deserved much worse." (The Anorexic Mind, 28.06.01)

Here the self is no longer worthy of representation. The subject no longer has anything to represent. The social scene loses it's value. Isolation and detachment become the solution - with self-erasal as a possible outcome:

"I didn't want it to be me underneath. I wanted to kill the me underneath. That fact haunted my days and nights. When you realize you hate yourself so much, when you realize you cannot stand who you are, and this deep spite has been your motivation behind your behavior for many years, your brain can't quite deal with it. (...) This is a wish to murder

yourself; the connotation to kill is to mild. This is a belief that you deserve slow torture, violent death. Without being entirely aware of it, I had settled on starvation as my torture of choice. When people think about killing themselves, they usually think about killing themselves with the least amount of pain, the briefest period of suffering. This is different." (Hornbacher 1999: 205, emphasis in original)

Hornbacher describes a self not worthy of anything but hatred. This is the dark side of the ideal, autonomous subject-position; the risk of fatal failure. This position is not easily upheld, and blame for failures are put on the subject itself - resulting in feelings of shame and self-hatred.

The constituted subject is constantly at risk of tripping over and exposing its dependency on other social or material factors that it is attached to. The representative subject is as such built on unstable foundations.

This does not say that representative, autonomous subject-positions are an illusion, a social construct with no real foundation. They are constructed, yes, but they are still very much real. They are products who in their turn are producing effects. Constructed notions of humanity can be real without then necessarily having an essential foundation.

Risks are real - and they are constructions. They are constructions, but not purely social ones. The social world does not exist independently of the material world(s). Rather the material and the social submerge to produce reality, over and over again, so that a multiplicity of realities is constantly under making. Or to put it in the words of Deleuze & Guattari: *"The real is not impossible; on the contrary, within the real everything is possible, everything becomes possible." (Deleuze & Guattari: 1998a: 27)* The real is constantly under production. What is real is what is possible. Reality is not given, but an outcome of an ongoing process.

This does not imply any idealist relativism, where each reality is as valid as the next. The realities are real in a material sense, not simply as idealistic concepts. But they are still constructed - and changeable. They can be made, remade, and unmade. What exists is not the only possible reality. With new realities, you also get new possibilities. But, the existing realities set limits to the existing possibilities. The possibility of new realities does not imply that any reality is possible. Materiality is not without limits. And material transformations take time. Reality exists, as do nature, modern society and its subjects, but not as singular and solid objects. They are products, which need a lot of maintenance work to be kept intact.

It is along similar traits Michel Foucault (1979) claims the reality of the human soul. Foucault states that the soul is not an illusion, but has a real existence, about, outside and inside the body. This soul is a historical reality, not as a given substance, but as an effect. This effect will again act back on the body, and inhibit this.

The same applies to the modern subject, and the positions it entails. These subject-positions are constituted as something that needs to be kept intact. The body becomes a singular and independent entity, governed by the subject's free will. The body's appearances and practices are thereby perceived as entirely human. They are a representation of the individual subject. The appearances and practices are not given an intrinsic value, rather they are communicative. They represent, and create an image of the self underneath the surface. The individual is poised to fill representative subject-positions.

Michel Foucault argues that this conception of man and the subject is not something natural, but a historical construct. This does not say that Foucault wants to do away with the human as such. His aim is rather to break down this concept of individuality that we today

seem to take for granted, so that we then can create alternatives to this. Or as Foucault himself stated in one of his later texts: *"We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for centuries" (Foucault 2002: 336).* Foucault does not deny that the dominating forms of subjectivity constitute a reality. Rather, he acknowledges their existence, but points out that their constructed character also makes it possible to undo them. Alternatives can be made.

Another, and similar alternative to these ideas of subjectivity as something solid and stable is offered by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. In their book *Anti-Oedipus* (1998a) Deleuze & Guattari firmly reject the idea of a stable subject, the one in charge of action and production. Rather, they argue that:

"This subject itself is not at the center, which is occupied by the machine, but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentered, defined by the states through which it passes" (Deleuze & Guattari 1998a: 20).

Deleuze & Guattari replace the subject with desire as the center of production. Desire has no given location, but is constantly produced and producing. Desire flows and marks traces, it constitutes machinery for further desire-production. We recognize here Foucault's notion of subjectivity, as something real, but as a product that can also be unmade or replaced.

Deleuze & Guattari's stance is materialist, and in no way idealist or meta-physical. Desire is real, and it produces reality. Desire is social, but not belonging to a particular subject. Desire is perceived as such due to its repression, and the subordination of desire to pre-established structures. The subject is produced as an effect of desire's working in the social, where subjects are constituted as separate entities, prescribed to a singular identity.

Instead of given stable and solid subjects, Deleuze & Guattari speak of territories. These territories are not stable, but fluctuating fields. Here forces are to be found that bind together and stabilize - reterritorialize - the territory. But also forces that direct flows away from - deterritorialize - the territory.

This also implies that the subject is not given, but something that has to be constantly maintained and upheld. Constant reterritorializations are necessary to keep the subject intact. This is something that takes a lot of maintenance work. A stable and coherent body is not a given, natural territory. Reterritorializations such as practices of hygiene, manners, clothing, etc, help keep the body and the subject intact. Without these practices the body will quite simply not stay as it is. Washing, cutting hair and nails, getting dressed, behaving in a cultivated way, these are all practices of maintaining a person - making him/her recognizable. These are not practices that come by themselves, they have to be learned, mastered and maintained. Without such work the process of representation would not be possible. There would be no coherent substance of self left to represent. These practices are necessary to maintain and upheld the subject-positions individuals are supposed to fulfill.

A representative body is constantly at risk of failure. Pressing deterritorializations such as those arising from hunger, sexual desires, moods, bodily pressures, digestive systems, acne, fat, etc, cannot be avoided. The body and subject are under lot of influence and pressure that can expand, develop, change, and even tear the body and subject apart. The work of representation can break down. Traits that do not fit into the desired image can appear. And such traits and cracks do appear, over and over again. The question arises of how to deal with these cracks. They can be ignored, corrected, or they can grow and gain impact. Regimes of

control or regulation can then be put to use, to fight back the unwanted appearances and bring the image back in shape so that the representations work successfully. The responsibility for the work of representation is put on the individual. Each has the responsibility for the success or failure of his or her bodily appearances. Even more so as the norm of individual responsibility is becoming more widespread.

Lack of solidity and steadiness are then perceived as a weakness - as lack of power. The powerful subject is the autonomous, self-contained individual, the one who fits into the legitimate subject-positions. This individual defies contradictions and behaves according to the self-image he or she is supposed to represent.

Image

The image needs to be performed. It is relational, but is still supposed to represent something beneath the surface, an identity, a character. This means that the surface, the image, needs to be stabilized, to be kept intact. The body, and its appearances and practices, need to confirm the image to be represented. To manage the task of representation desire needs to be locked into rigid patterns to confirm the already established structures and conceptions.

"The whole of desiring-production is crushed, subjected to the requirements of representation, and to the dreary games of what is representative and represented in representation. And there is the essential thing: the reproduction of desire gives way to a simple representation, in the process as well as theory of the cure. The productive unconscious makes way for an unconscious that knows only how to express itself - express itself in myth, in tragedy, in dream." (Deleuze & Guattari 1998a: 54)

This implies that representation is stabilizing, a reterritorialization that refer back to the pre-established subject. Representations keep the already dominant subject-positions intact, and reproduce these. It confirms what is already known, what already exists. New productive potentials are cut off. Deterritorializations are warded off, in favor of a strict reterritorializating regime. The territoriality of the subject is kept intact and in control. As such it manages to serve its representing functions as well as possible.

In the texts on eating disorders presented earlier the logic of representation is at work, and producing its effects. These stories of eating disorders most often, if not always, seem to involve notions of low self-esteem. They speak of dissatisfaction with the self to represent, and the frustration when the representations do not work out as desired.

The practices described as eating disordered are as such not a line of flight from the territories of subjectivity and normality, but rather a paranoid reaction to ward off the threatening flows, attachments and desires. The practices become a reterritorialization to keep the subject-position intact. A fight against the risks of not being perceived as the subject one desires to represent. The risks of failure, or of not finding something worthwhile to represent, is ever looming, and need to be fought of or prevented.

So rather than a practice involving risks in itself, eating disorders can be looked upon as a way of dealing with risk. Risks are not sought, but avoided. But - that involves putting oneself at other forms of risk. The entity to be protected is the self - inside and underneath the

body. The body can be seen as a threat to this self, and as something that one can do away with. To protect the self, one may end up putting the body at risk. The bodily risks as such are not a desired outcome, but a side-effect to prevent an even bigger disaster. Everything that threatens the established patters of the self become a risk - it carries along potentialities for suffering and pain.

In "Nova Express" William Burroughs states: *"What is pain - Obviously damage to the image" (Burroughs 1978: 47).* This does not imply that pain is something superficial, an illusion produced by the mind alone. Rather this implies that pain is what results when the image cracks, when one no longer is what one perceives oneself to be. Reality is shattered, and one is no longer the same. Pain is the experience one perceives when the self breaks apart.

Deleuze & Guattari operate along similar traits when they claim that torture implies to lose face: *"The one who is tortured is fundamentally one who loses his or her face, entering into a becoming-animal, a becoming-molecular the ashes of which are thrown into the wind" (Deleuze & Guattari 1998b: 116).* By face Deleuze & Guattari do not refer to a given entity, but a mask - a mask that does not hide the face, but a mask that is the face (Deleuze & Guattari 1998b: 115). There is nothing behind this face, this mask. The face is a reterritorialization. It binds together who you are, and keeps the subject intact. It does not in itself represent anything. But it can be given a representative value. The face can be a representation of what is perceived as the real self, as who you are. When the face breaks, it is not only the surface that breaks, but also the self. Without a presentable face, you have nothing to represent. Without a face you are nobody. This means that the face - the image - is of vital importance. To lose one's face is not just a minor social blunder but a drastic loss of control over one's selfhood and self-mastership. The self cracks apart, and one enters a state of becoming that can be experienced as unbearable. Pain is as such the experience of not being someone, to not have an image to represent. Within the logic of representation this is not a sustainable position. One cannot stay imageless without being excluded. The subject therefore struggles to keep its body, its identity, its image, intact.

This task provides hard work. The subject must gain control over the body, and must control the attachments the body and the practices are constituted through. Often this can seem like an easy task, and in many cases it actually functions quite well. Many feel comfortable with themselves and their bodies and succeed in their representations. The social scene seems to be full of individuals happy with themselves and their representation-work. But - this is not always the case. Many of today's problems and diseases center around bodily and representative practices: eating disorders, social anxieties, depressions, feelings of shame over one's appearances etc. These are problematics relating to concern over one's self and appearances.

The logics of representation say that there is something underneath, this something is the real thing, and this is what should be looked for. The intrinsic value of a practice or an image is subordinated to its representative value.

My argument here is that risk is constantly produced in the work to uphold the representative subject-positions, in the work to keep up the image. Risk is constitutive in the logic of representation. Risk implies the constant prevalence of possible lacks. Lacks to be fought and prevented, so that they do not become too preeminent and then distort, or make impossible, the work of representation.

Risk revisited

Standards of risk are not given, but are to be fought over and over again. An example of how a territory of risk is challenged and remade, is the use of the Body Mass Index (BMI) as a indicator for assessing weight. The BMI is worked out as a neutral tool to signal if a person's weight is above or below the advisable medical standards. In the pro-anorectic subculture on the other hand, the BMI becomes a tool to measure one's success as an anorectic. On the internet you can find a lot of lists ranking the BMI-scores of movie stars, pop singers and supermodels. Several of these score below 17,5 which is the medical criteria for anorexia. On these web pages the readers can compare their own BMI-score with those of the idols, and as such get a judgment on their own body. That the intent of listing these scores is to provide a basis for comparison is often stated explicitly: *"I thought I'd compile a list of some actresses and models' weights and Body Mass Indexes to help you accurately compare yourself to them";[1] "it's much more fun to compare with celebs than numbers!!"[2]* The BMI becomes a competitive tool. No matter how thin you are there always seems to be a successful beauty with an even lower BMI-score. There is always someone to compare with. When you have beaten Julia Roberts, you can still go ahead for Jennifer Aniston. The BMI-scale such give the anorectics arguments to defend themselves with against any claims that they have gone too far. If one's own BMI is 16,5 that is still nothing compared to Gwyneth Paltrow who has a BMI of 16,0.

The products and tools of science and technology are not easily governed and controlled. The BMI-scores are territorialised into a new context, and then become a measurement of success, instead of risk. The scientific productions and means are deterritorialised and given new potentialities. As this happens the concrete measurable results no longer have singular meanings. A multidimensional space of readings and understandings is constituted. A BMI-score that for a medical doctor is a sign of risk, can for the patient be a sign of a development in the right direction. The meaning of numbers is not given, but has to be constantly remade due to the territory it is operating within. When the understandings of the doctor and the patient are diverting, this create difficulties, mainly so for the doctor. The patient is fully aware of the doctor's understanding of the score. She knows that the doctor will read a low BMI-score as a risk, but that will not make her accept the content of the doctor's judgment, even though she agrees in the doctors 'objective' findings. The doctor and the patient can agree completely on that the patient has a BMI-score of 17, but they can still understand this completely different. The score *is* something different for the doctor and for the patient. If the doctor is then not aware of what this BMI-score is for the patient, a problem of communication arises. Different logics will be at work. The doctor's warnings become a triumph in the ears of the patient. The scientific models do not determine the 'patients', but expand their fields of possibilities.

Medical criteria, concepts and diagnoses do not constitute given territories. As shown with the BMI, there is no one that possesses a monopoly of readings on how to use this. The scores are decoded from its previous context, and recoded into a new context. This does not necessarily say that the same phenomena are objects of different understandings in different contexts, but that the BMI is constituted as something different in the medical and the pro-

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1   Angelfire – Size! 28.06.01.

2   I Dream of Ana, 28.06.01.

anorectic field. The BMI is a multiplicity. It can operate as an indicator of risk in one context, as a sign of success in another. These values are local and highly contested. When fat becomes a risk of losing self-control, a destruction of the image, then reducing one's BMI-score becomes an escape from the position of risk, not a step towards this position. To avoid putting one's subject-position at risk, the body's 'healthy' status is put at risk.

The risks discussed above differ from the risks presented by Douglas. These risks are not agreed upon, and do not necessarily correspond to ontologically given dangers.

Mary Douglas' approach underlines how risks are selected and brought forth through cultural lenses. Different cultures perceive different risks. This does not imply a relativist standpoint. Douglas strongly underlines that the dangers are all too real (Douglas & Wildavsky 1983: 7).

One could say that Douglas looks upon dangers as ontologically given, but risks as epistemologically constituted through culture. This perspective operates with two levels that are kept apart. On one level is the real and material world with its real dangers. One the other level is the cultural world where the real world is structured and made sense of. The cultural world provides explanations and contexts for the events in the material world.

This does not imply that the cultural sphere is a world of illusions - an unreal world. Culture is also a reality, as the material world is. But, as already mentioned, where materiality is located ontologically, culture is located epistemologically. Risks are constituted epistemologically by through culture giving meaning and priority to ontologically given dangers.

Risk in Douglas' sense becomes a sort of social glue, that keeps a group together. By controlling risk, a social group controls what threatens their organization. Risk serves a function in the social organization. Risks mark borders and determine purities and dangers. This make risks collective perceptions, constituted hand in hand with the social organization.

Though risks are ontologically real, they also provide a threat to the culture they are constituted through. Risks mark borders not to be trespassed. Trespassing provides a threat to the culture and the social order.

Douglas' conception of risk is consensus-oriented. The perception and selection of risk are something shared by the members of a community, and this shared perception and selection serves a function in maintaining a group structure. Culture serves to unify and homogenize the group members, and ward them off from the surrounding cultures and communities.

A theme lacking in Douglas' writings is power. The members of a community seem to simply accept and adopt the given and shared beliefs and values that constitute their culture. People's mindset and practices are directed by this culture within the limits and possibilities it includes. These all-encompassing structures decide which practices and thoughts are possible, and which risks are selected and taken precautions against - to the benefit of the community at large. What Douglas opens up for to a lesser degree is the existence of several different perceptions of risk at work at the same time, in the same field, and even in the same subjects.

One of the things I have attempted to show with the example of eating disorders is that a multitude of different risk selections and perceptions can be at work within the same culture and the same social group, without these different perceptions joining together in a coherent, harmonic whole. Some of these aspects may strengthen the group structure, others may weaken it, and some may strengthen some ties, but at the same time weaken others.

Ideals and norms that serve to unify people can also cause great problems to these

same people. Culture may split up as well as bring together. Culture has no intrinsic value in its own, as an independent factor. Culture is an effect, not a cause, at least not so in the first instance. Culture reproduces and provides effects and functions, due to the pathways it forms and follows, not due to some sort of inherent functionalism. Cultures are produced, not decided and shared upon. As such culture is providing foundations for further discoursive productions. Culture is a multidiscoursive field, where different perceptions and understandings of risk are at work and produce effects.

Culture exists in the practices it is constituted by, not separately from these. Culture is patterns or pathways of practices. Through the practices that constitute culture, manifestations are produced that serve to reproduce this culture. Though not as the same culture, but as a reproduction that may seem identical to the previous cultural state. Culture is reproduced through mechanisms that lead future practices into the same pathways as the previous ones. As such culture can also change and take new directions. From one cultural standard deterritorializations can occur, and new attachments is possible. The territory is ever changing, though one state is always to a large degree determined by the previous one. Values, beliefs and practices are produced and reproduced constantly, either by following given tracks, or by taking different directions.

Risks are through culture not only shared, but also constantly made and remade through cultural practices. These practices are not stable and following strict patterns, but rather reinvented over and over again. New practices, and with them also new risks, are expanding and transforming the cultural pathways. Culture moves and expands through this multitude of micro-connections and -productions, not through huge and manifest large-scale structures.

Not only personal interaction, but also (mass-)mediated practices are spheres of cultural impact. The mass-media consists of tracks made through language and (audio)visual representations. Once established, media helps constitute the further developments of culture, and the potential practices of the future. Media carries along potentials for both re- and deterritorializations. It can operate along the existing and dominating logics, but can also challenge these - or it can take the logics to even further extremes. Commercial media feeds on keeping the territories intact, and on expanding them. Audiences and markets must be reached, kept together and expanded. Expansion provides deterritorializations, not free-floating but under restrictions, to keep the territories under control. Under a commercial market-regime deterritorializations should only be relative to a given field, never absolute, to keep an audience intact.[3] Media keep the territory developing, but should not tear it apart or develop it in totally new and different directions. It should be inventive, seductive, but not subverting - that would turn audiences away. This implies that the commercial media plays along with the existing logics, and introduces them to new uses, but without questioning their validity. What can be seen as the culturally challenging aspects of commercial mass-media are these existing and dominating logics taken to further extremes - rather than alternatives or confrontations with these.

Games of representation seem to be the hot subject of the commercial media of today.

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3 Deleuze & Guattari (1998b: 508-510) distinguish between relative and absolute deterritorializations. Where relative deterritorializations operate within the limits of an existing territory, absolute deterritorializations expand these and create new territories.

Reality tv, shows and competitions where 'ordinary' people can take part. *Big Brother, The Bachelor, Popstars*, etc, all focus on the same; who is the most exiting character, who has the most fabulous personality, who is the most popular. These are not presented as games of role-play, but as games of being. The competitors are told just to be them selves, to show who they really are. The more charismatic they are the better. *Star-quality* is what the producers are looking for.

The risk of participating in these shows is that you can easily end up making a fool of yourself. The participants can commit some big social blunder, perform badly or simply turn out to be unpopular or boring - in the eyes of the viewers and/or the other participants or, in some cases, an *expert* jury.[4] Anyhow, the destiny is the same, it is a game of the survival of the fittest. In the world of representations the unfit is the ones who fail in their representation-work. Only the popular survive. The biggest risk is to fail in the game of representation - to be voted out of existence in the media.

Everyday life may seem to be a more gentle scene than these games of representation, but the risks of failing is also here ever present, even more so for some than for others. Cultural ideals, norms and standards are portrayed as given, natural and uniform. But - this ideal representation is necessarily based on the repression of what does not fit into this image. Or to put it in the words of Elizabeth Grosz:

"(...) the ways in which a corporal 'universal' has in fact functioned as a veiled representation and projection of a masculine which takes itself as the unquestioned norm, the ideal representative without any idea of the violence that this representational positioning does to its others-women, the 'disabled', cultural and racial minorities, different classes, homosexuals-who are reduced to the role of modifications or variations of the (implicitly white, male, youthful, heterosexual, middle-class) human body." (Grosz 1994: 188)

This is the dark side of cultural standards. And - they point to the consequence of upholding these standards. There will always be people and practices that do not fit in - that are suppressed by the norms. And who are constantly at risk of failure - or rather we are all at risk of not living up to this standard. Ingunn Moser has put it like this in her work on disabled people, and the standards they are supposed to live up to:

"This construction - the norm - is almost identical to what we have learned to call the 'modern, liberal subject': the independent, autonomous, centered, singular, verbal and therefore competent subject. But this idea has already been deconstructed and revealed for what it really is: people are not the master in their own houses (or even in their own bodies) in this way. They do not have the power to create either themselves or history. There is probably no single person who can live up to the norm against which disabled people are generally measured." (Moser 2000: 9)

Standards do not only provide guiding lines, they also demand a lot of those who are supposed to live by them. To put people up against this standard is to put them at risk of failure in the task of representing an image as an autonomous, self-contained subject with control over practices and appearances. The capabilities of people to live up to these

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4   The logics of representation of course also imply experts of representation - the true masters of judging character.

standards, and to succeed in the game of representation, are not evenly distributed. Some positions are constituted as more at risk than others in failing in the game of representation. For example are the standards of bodily appearances and practices heavily gendered, as can be seen in the overrepresentation of women in the field of eating disorders.

Grosz underlines the impossibility of a model of the human that do not pay attention to the differences and specificities among bodies and subjectivities. She argues for:

"a framework which acknowledges both the physical or interior dimensions of subjectivity and the surface corporeal exposures of the subject to social inscription and training; a model which resists, as much as possible, both dualism and monism; a model which insists on (at least) two surfaces which cannot be collapsed into one and which do not always harmoniously blend with and support each other; a model where the join, the interaction of the two surfaces, is always a question of power; a model that may be represented by the geometrical form of the Möbius strip's two-dimensional torsion in three-dimensional space (...)" (Grosz 1994: 188-189, emphasis in original)

This is an attempt to grasp the complexities and multiplisities of bodies and subjectivities. Grosz is drawing on Deleuze, feminism and psychoanalysis. She refuses both social and biological determinism. Humans are neither just social inscriptions nor simply genetic material. Rather, they are both social and biological. We are all socially inscribed, but we also carry with us biological differences. But these biological differences carry no intrinsic meaning. And - biology does not provide a given foundation for the social to give cultural shape. Rather, the social and the biological are always working together. We are both materiality and culture.

Grosz argues biology is:

"an open materiality, a set of (possibly infinite) tendencies and potentialities which may be developed, yet whose development will necessarily hinder or induce other developments and other trajectories. These are not individually or consciously chosen, nor are they amenable to will or intentionality: they are more like bodily styles, habits, practices, whose logic entails that one preference, one modality excludes or makes difficult other possibilities." (Grosz 1994: 191)

There is no state of nature, but rather a constant reconstitution of biological matter. The materiality is real and solid - but not given. Nature is made, though not due to a free will, without limits or restraints. Biology sets limits, but is not totally deterministic. What is made can be remade, or unmade. Possibilities are not distributed evenly, but one order is not more natural than another.

Grosz states that Mary Douglas founds her thinking in analogies. Purity and danger is based on standards perceived as natural, as given. The male body is the standard that the female deviates from. The solidity of the male body is contrasted with the fluid and leeking female body, which is conceived as impure, and therefore a source of danger. Douglas sees this as an analogy with a cultural system where the pure and solid must not be contaminated by the impure fluids. Female bodies are less stable and controllable, and then to a larger degree possess a threat to the social organization. Douglas is here accused by Grosz of *"rationalizing the models she finds useful in terms of some kind of natural resemblance"*

(Grosz 1994: 196).

Grosz strongly denies the perception of the male body as some sort of standard that the female deviates from. No body is given as solid, is her claim. Rather they are made solid. But the fluidity of the male body is explained away from the body, rather than seen as a part of it. She claims that semen is to a less degree than menstrual blood, seen as polluting, though there are no biological basis for this claim. Rather the male fluids are seen as separate from the body, a distinct entity. As such the male body is kept as a whole, not stained by the fluids it spills. Male waste is either separated from their bodies, or seen as a mark of appropriation, as the production of a solid (Grosz 1994: 201). She sees this as a foundation for male superiority in western culture. Male bodies are expanding and solidifying, where female bodies are leeking and disintegrating. Grosz hypothesis is that:

"women's corporeality is inscribed as a mode of seepage. My claim is not that women have been somehow desolidified but the more limited one which sees that women, insofar as they are human, have the same degree of solidity, occupy the same genus, as men, yet insofar as they are women, they are represented and live themselves as seepage, liquidity" (Grosz 1994: 203).

Grosz' perspectives can provide an explanation to why bodily representations can seem like a more risky practice for women than men. Women cannot to the same degree pull on discoursive resources to separate what does not fit into the image - a power it can seem like men to a larger degree possesses. This is not founded in natural differences alone, but in how biological differences are socially constituted and put into practice. Risk as such seems to be more preeminent in women's everyday life than for most men.

But - this is of course not the only form of categorization and segregation here at play. The discoursive workings also put other categories at risk: the disabled, the non-white, the non-heterosexual, etc. Such labels also help constitute people at risk of representing a less wholesome self. This does not say that the white, heterosexual, healthy male is in a position free of risk. Rather this position has a greater ability to draw on resources that can protect and provide explanations for any lack of autonomy and solidity.

As Grosz points out is stability not given. It needs constant maintenance work to stay the same person, with the same image. Continuous reterritorializations are necessary to keep the territory intact. That some positions some more exposed than others are not necessarily biologically given. Rather these are cultural, discoursive constructs. Male bodies are fluid and leeking, as female bodies - but are still perceived as the given solid standards that the seeping bodies are seen as a deviation from. As such is also the male maintenance work to a larger degree naturalized than the female, and the work of representation easier to sustain.

Ways to go

Under the logic of representation the body is always at risk - though some bodies more than others. The task of maintaining and presenting the image in a way that corresponds to the notion of a self underneath, is hard, complicated and time-consuming. Bodies are not solid and stable, and not always in a state that make them suitable for representation in correspondence with the desired notion of selfhood. Bodies are not totally manageable, and as

such they are always at risk.

Risks regarding the image and the subject can be fought in several ways. The most common, and seemingly easiest is to strengthen the image, to make the subject more solid. In Deleuze & Guattari's terms - a reterritorialization. This implies to keep the system of categories and ideals intact. The healthy subject governs the body autonomously and according to his or her own willpower. Threats to this position must be fought or warded off. When this position collapses or is threatened, remedies and treatments aim to restore and strengthen the subject position. Tools, medication, technology, exercise, diet, etc, all help to found of strengthen attachments that make the subject able to represent itself as an autonomous entity. Risks are fought by building a protective network, by and through the attachments that make up a representable subject. In a successful representation these attachments are made invisible and the subject is perceived as completely autonomous and independent. A successful reterritorialization of the subject makes the supporting attachments imperceptible. The powerful subject is hence the solid and autonomous subject, in command of itself.

An alternative stance can be found through a different notion of power. In his reading of Nietzsche, Gilles Deleuze (2002) argues that the will to power implies a will to be affected - not to withstand affections, but to give in to them. Not to lose all sense of coherency, but to leave the idea that there is a given notion of subjectivity to represent. This is later developed in Deleuze & Guattari's notion of *becoming* - where the representable subject is replaced by a fluctuating, flowing life-force without a fixed set of character traits (Deleuze & Guattari 1998b). This is a notion of the subject as something that opens up for deterritorializations. This implies to let go of the logic of representation. The practices have to speak for themselves, the attached character of bodies needs to be accepted and the social scene must be opened up for less solid and autonomous appearances. This does not indicate hedonism or a totally free-floating subject, rather a subject that is not given, but still with a notion of coherency. It is recognizable from day to day, but does not have to correspond to any fixed selfhood beneath the practices and appearances.

This position can be quite demanding. And it is also not without risks. One can go too far, and lose all sense of coherency - enter a schizophrenic state. But still - some positions would clearly benefit from the solid, autonomous notion of the subject being questioned. In particular this applies to those who are defined away from the given standards - the insufficient, leaking, dependent bodies. Those could be given discursive resources to strengthen their positions. This is the way the logic of representation can be fought - not by giving in to superficiality or the glorification of addictions - but through acceptance of the attached and fluid state of all bodies. To live is to put yourself at risk. But although risks may not be done away with they can be questioned, and alternative paths made possible. Images cannot be done away with, but their representative character can be questioned. Then the work of representation will be exposed as what it is - a work that depends on numerous social and material attachments to create an image that alludes to be a reflection of a true self.

It seems unlikely that risks can be avoided completely. My task here is rather to challenge these logics I think today put people at risk and provide them with a less satisfactory life-situation. To follow the logic of representation implies to put oneself at risk of failure. Such failures can in many instances not be avoided, the positions can prove impossible to keep intact. The problem is that this is then seen as failure of being. What is at risk is not just your welfare at a given moment, but your whole status as a human being. The

result may be that there is nothing left to represent.

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