

Poiesis and Serendipity—attracting the accident in research in the arts

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“all things are full of gods”
(Tales de Mileto)

“(…) thought that the solution of a mystery was always
a good deal less interesting than the mystery itself”
(Borges, *El Aleph*, 1952)

I have insisted elsewhere on *poiesis* (ποίησις) value within research in the arts; this validation relates to the current tendency toward theoretical revalorization of the artist’s role in contemporary art.¹ Added to this, *poiesis*’ value dislocates the regard from the final work toward the making process, thus minoring the romantic vision of the artist as an individual genius, locked within him and his inspiration. Artistic *poiesis* implies a walking journey, one which is individual and resulting from several interactions:

“The idea of the artist as social recluse or a cultural lamplighter of genius is an inadequate representation in this day and age. (...) The image of the artist as creator, critic, theorist, teacher, activist, and archivist partly captures the range of art practice today. Many contemporary artists move easily over the terrain of other disciplines as they absorb, adapt, and co-opt a research language”².

1 “What is apparent is the reemergence of artist-theorists as important sources of vision and voice within the cultural politics of these tomes, and the approaches they use that require different ways of thinking about artistic inquiry”. Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research. Inquiry in the Visual Arts*, Thousands Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005, p.150.

2 *Ibidem*, p.151.

What I propose is poesis as the aggregating center that opens the discourse toward constructing an “artistic knowledge”. Poesis, I suggest, is the captivating place of those aggregating relations during the creative process itself. I understand this process through an investigatory dimension—that of poetic creation as stage for another research mode. Theorization surges from the interaction of poesis as practice, being a potential critical axis from the force of conceptual separation and allowing a distance that may animate the poetic process itself. From what they have of irreducible among them, as languages, I concur that “the coalition between the visual and the verbal is both critical and supportive”.³

Limit and transgression—*hubris* and *nomos*

“A thinker sees his own actions as experiments and questions—as attempts to find out something. Success and failure are for him answers above all”

(Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, section 41)

Jean-Claude Guillebaud considers that transgression is simultaneously a mark of modernity that redefines limits and is individualistic, according to the freedom of subjectivity,⁴ and defined in an interplay between the social and the individual: “*c’est la limite qui me fait homme mais c’est la transgression qui me fait individu*”.⁵ To Freud it is the prohibition to kill the father that makes civilization emerge,⁶ to Claude Lévi-Strauss it is taboo’s interdiction that permits the passage from Nature to Culture.⁷ Culture feeds itself from interdiction, from limitation, that defines its *moral*.

It is the *incorporation of limits* that makes social life possible, but it is also through transgression that the individual manifests himself and social play animates, in a negotiable synergy between rule and disobedience.⁸ Limit does not define what resides outside of its borders—things such as the *impossible*—but what *transgresses* it. Law does not impede what does not comply with it, it only defines failure to comply as transgression. As such, transgression brings out something that emerges in face of order, towards the stabilized and common (in the sense of something communal).

“C’est ordinairement par la transgression qu’un homme manifeste son autonomie, son énergie, sa créativité; c’est en assumant ce risque que l’individu se construit. En traversant la frontière, il quitte l’unanimité routinière de la communauté pour s’aventurer dans l’inconnu. Pour la plupart des mythologies, des plus anciennes aux plus actuelles, *le héros est celui qui désobéit*”.⁹

3 *Ibidem*, p.181.

4 «Or, dans le même temps, la culture dominante est celle de la *transgression*, au point que nous identifions cette dernière à la modernité elle-même. (...) Notre liberté individuelle est transgressive par définition, par essence et par choix ; du moins est-ce ainsi qu’elle se perçoit et s’affiche». Jean-Claude Guillebaud, *Le Goût de l’Avenir*, Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 2003, p.84..

5 *Ibidem*, p.88

6 Cf. Freud, Sigmund, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, London: Penguin, 2002.

7 Cf. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (revised edition), Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

8 Cf. Jean-Claude Guillebaud, *Le Goût de l’Avenir*, Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 2003, p.92..

9 *Ibidem*, p.91.

Transgression enters the dialectic process through measure and law. From here, it positions and defines itself. So, transgression is a motor of punctual or structural modifications, an agent of transitions and balanced mediations of different moments. Modernity, more than the unbalanced poles of this binomial relation—and because of a supposed valorisation of transgression—accelerates the dialectic process as a necessary agent of change. It equally constitutes a pluralisation of negotiating modes like transgression, culminating in the *self-mobilizing* or *self-kinetic* advance of modernity.¹⁰

Even the artistic avant-gardes needed traditions to make themselves dynamic. Even *anti-art* movements (such as Dada) needed the limits of art to affirm themselves—or their affirmation was possible because those *place(s)* or *art world(s)* existed. Those fundamental concepts (limit/transgression) equally unfolded as antonymic pairs including static/dynamic and symmetric/asymmetric. This is part of a game between *hubris* (that which surpasses limits or measure) and *nomos* (law, status and norms; a divinity with that name is son of Eusebia, goddess of piety, and Dice, goddess of justice and punisher of law infringements; usually opposed to *physis*, nature), in a necessary dialectic between both.

This game defines each antagonistic term's place in transformative moments. It equally manifests how they culturally manifest in a more diverse way throughout the history of culture: in Platonism, the becoming of the sensible world constitutes the corruption of eternal truth in the world of ideas that opposes to it; madness counterposes and subtracts reason; the situationist drift defies the order of controlling urbanism; the *principle of Eros* of *Id* suffers the counterpart of the principle of *reality* managed by the *ego*; in Nietzsche's aesthetics, the serene contemplative order of Apollo opposes (and articulates) Dionysian ecstasy; within art historiography, Heinrich Wölfflin's *Fundamental Concepts of Art History* argue the formal antinomy between *linear* and *pictorial* fed a series of dichotomies (multiplicity/unity; open form/closed form; unity/multiple; static/dynamic; symmetric/asymmetric; flat/recessional; absolute clarity/light-dark contrast), considered transversal to all great artistic movements. There is an uncountable number of hypothetic dialectic binomials in art history: renaissance and baroque; *poussinism* and *rubenism*; cubism and expressionism; geometric abstraction and expressionist abstraction, etc.

Especially with the advent of modernism and the avant-gardes, the art world was conferred a special place of transgression, associated to the *myth of originality*, grounded in the defense of subjectivity and individual liberty relating to the *myth of the author*, in a continuous safeguarding of the art world's limits.

Pierre Bordieu observes that social sciences lost a realistic relationship to their theoretical inheritance, resulting from the way the “valeurs d'originalité” of the literary artistic and philosophical fields continued to guide judgments, thus discrediting the inscription in tradition.¹¹ A crisis that would be pointed by post-modernity, the 1980s post-modernity opened space to the fatigue caused by theories of avant-gardes and their overcoming. They equally pointed out the uselessness of the claim for the “right to originality” by the modern artist, as proposed by Rosalind Krauss.¹² In fact, post-modernity has

10 «(...) dans la modernité les automouvements du monde naissent de nos automouvements qui s'additionnent progressivement jusqu'à entretenir le mouvement du monde». Peter Sloterdijk, *La mobilisation infinie. Vers une critique de la politique*, Paris : Christian Bourgois Éditeur, 2000, p.31.

11 Pierre Bordieu, *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Éditions du Seuil, 1998, p.296

12 Rosalind E. Krauss, *La originalidade de la Vanguardia y otros mitos modernos*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1996, pp.171, 174.

associated itself to the decline of the avant-gardes, diagnosed as several temporal effects: the overcoming of the historic sense of the avant-gardes (Octavio Paz);¹³ the unpredictability of modern art turned predictable (Suzi Gablik);¹⁴ its overcoming of the unnecessary (Luc Ferry);¹⁵ its entropy resulting from a culture ingrained in a daily expectation of the unpredictable (Matei Calinescu);¹⁶ the passage of an exclusive modern art to an “inclusive” post-modern art (Gilles Lipovetsky);¹⁷ the avant-garde offered as success to cultural tourism (Marie-Claire Uberquoi);¹⁸ an avant-garde that loses its exceptionalism and singularity, without “aesthetic exception or artistic privilege, not even in negative terms” (Jean Baudrillard).¹⁹ Professionalism, bureaucracy and market economy “have deprived the avant-garde of its rebellious capacity and paralysed its effects”.²⁰ Consequently, the only solution was “to mix once again what is known and reorganize once again”.²¹ The avant-garde became history and tradition, cited and even parodied.

Limit and transgression in method

“All truly great thoughts are conceived while walking”

(Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “Maxims and Arrows”, 34)

Before reflecting on the transgressive possibilities of the method, I want to precise some concepts. *Method* differs from *Analysis* (more common in natural sciences) for its greater openness. *Analysis* may be a phase or the exercise of a method, but its search is made retroactively—it encounters the principle of what it wants to demonstrate.²² There is a reference and direction target that must be met, annulling all obstacles or deviations from its route. *Method* should be a plurality of hypotheses.

Method, in the core of artistic poesis, is not reducible to an exclusive mode (like a style), nor it is applicable of to a universal mode. It is between its own route that possibilities open, allowing deviation points in their interior. It can be considered that *style*, with a strong tradition in the art world, by escaping the order given to concepts, resides outside of *method*. While it is a ‘strategy’, it is not *method*, because ‘style’ signifies “organizing and working all those ingredients that individually escape the net woven by those concepts and re-cutting generic facts according to a *method*.”²³ *Style* defines a unique mode, and justifies the sole being of a work of art. From here, we withdraw that research in the arts stops being its corollary: to me, investigation is art and is not reducible to a works’

13 Octavio Paz; *Los hijos del limo*, Barcelona, Editorial Seix Barral, 1974, p.138.

14 Suzi Gablik, *Le Modernisme et son ombre*, Paris: Thames & Hudson, 1997, p.11, 69.

15 Luc Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus. L'Invention du Goût à L'Âge Démocratique*, Paris: Grasset, 1990, sobretudo ultima parte: «Le déclin des avant-gardes: la postmodernité», pp.269-342.

16 Cf. Matei Calinescu, *Cinco caras de la modernidade. Modernismo, vanguardia, decadência, kitsch, posmodernismo*, Madrid: Editorial Tecnos, 1991, p.145.

17 Cf. Gilles Lipovetsky, *A Era do Vazio. Ensaio sobre o individualismo contemporâneo*, Lisboa: Relógio d'Água Editores, 1989, p.113..

18 Cf. Marie-Claire Uberquoi, *¿El Arte a la Deriva?*, Barcelona: Random House Mondadori, 2004.

19 Jean Baudrillard; *O Paroxista Indiferente*, Lisboa: Edições 70, 1998, p.126.

20 Suzi Gablik, *Op.cit.*, 1997, p.70. Posição semelhante é defendida por Luc Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus. L'Invention du Goût à L'Âge Démocratique*, Paris: Grasset, 1990, sobretudo ultima parte: «Le déclin des avant-gardes: la postmodernité», pp.269-342.

21 Wolf Lepenies, *Ascensão e Declínio dos Intelectuais na Europa*, Lisboa: Edições 70, 1995, p.101.

22 G.-G. Granger, «Método», in *Enciclopédia Einaudi. Volume 21: Método-Teoria/Modelo*, Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, Casa da Moeda, 1992, p.60.

23 *Ibidem*, p.69.

conception. Research in the arts surpasses not only the conception of the work, but it equally surpasses style as *individual poietic mode*. If in artistic poiesis method tends to become private, it does not take refuge to dissolve as research. Thus, research in the arts is where the walking mode (style) questions itself beyond the mere conception of the artwork, to gain conscience of (a) method and positions itself towards it. From here, more than applying methods—and even less applying models, because it tends to multiply and individualize them—, research in the arts enquires them. Diving in poiesis as process, research in the arts problematizes method, defining not a practice of theory but instead a theory of practice.

Thus, I consider that artistic production as process is at the core of a research on the arts (and not on the finalized work), as much as I consider that there is always a method imbedded in the artistic process (even if it has the tendency to be private, and in many cases, ignorant about itself). One may think that this is not a *methodology*, with methodical presumptions and an “overall” strategy, a “broader explanatory system of theory and practice” with certain methods, a method which is more a process, more specific and relative to the scientific process of individual techniques.²⁴ So, generally, while scientific research tends to make the methodological processes uniform, artistic research tends to become plural through specific methods. One needs its repetition to be rigorous (in face of the opposite, it can be proven wrong or false), thus legitimating its objectivity and efficacy; the other makes repetition a space for divergence and variation. From here, reflection on scientific methodology tends to be *meta-theorist*, alien to the dominance of its application, while in research in the arts reflection is *implied on method*; that is, it dives into the process of poietic production where, in its own understanding, a *meta-practice* will fatally and voluntarily coincide spontaneously with its metatheory. If research on arts is defended as obliging the conjugation of a conceptualization of acts and practices, it becomes a reflection about itself and simultaneously a *theory of its practice* as much as *its methods*.

This is the apparent paradox of the method: on the one hand, it limits and conditions its results, and on the other hand, it aims at being something new, creative and revealing (even for the most objective sciences which are historicized in these moments). Method, be it scientific or artistic, will be a game between what limits and what transgresses. What I propose now is serendipity as figure of pure emergence that escapes the dialectic between these two dimensions—the dimensions of the method.

Serendipity

“(…) par hasard, diriez-vous, mais souvenez-vous que, dans les sciences de l’observation, le hasard ne favorise que des *esprits préparés*” (Louis Pasteur)

““Halt, dwarf!” said I. “Either I—or thou! I, however, am the stronger of the two:—thou knowest not mine abysmal thought! IT—couldst thou not endure!”

²⁴ Cf. Morrow, *Critical theory and methodology*, Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994, apud Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research. Inquiry in the Visual Arts*, Thousands Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005, p.38

Then happened that which made me lighter: for the dwarf sprang from my shoulder, the prying sprite! And it squatted on a stone in front of me. There was however a gateway just where we halted.

“Look at this gateway! Dwarf!” I continued, “it hath two faces. Two roads come together here: these hath no one yet gone to the end of.

This long lane backwards: it continueth for an eternity. And that long lane forward—that is another eternity.

They are antithetical to one another, these roads; they directly abut on one another:—and it is here, at this gateway, that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: ‘This Moment.’”

(Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*—XLVI. The Vision and the Enigma)

“If we affirm one single moment, we thus affirm not only ourselves but all existence. For nothing is self-sufficient, neither in us ourselves nor in things; and if our soul has trembled with happiness and sounded like a harp string just once, all eternity was needed to produce this one event—and in this single moment of affirmation all eternity was called good, redeemed, justified, and affirmed”

(Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, II. Dionysus—1032)

The serendipitous “encounter”

The term serendipity has its origins in the Persian fairy tale, *The Three Princes of Serendip*. Yet, the tale refers more to the capacity to interpret indexes, corresponding to the notion of ‘index’ proposed by Charles S. Peirce.²⁵ In the narrative, the three brothers are accused of robbing a camel because they decoded the characteristics of an animal they had not seen. The tale would be recovered by Voltaire in *Zadig* or *La Destinée* (1747), and it kept the same logic and its indicative principle.

There are approximations to Giovanni Morelli’s method for art history (the “Morelli method”), that defended that authorship and artistic schools were traced in the tinniest and less significant details, in the “smallest and inadvertent gestures” represented, as well as in the drawing of a finger’s nail or an ear’s lobe. This “interpretation of indications” as assignment method to indicate a painting’s authorship has already been placed in analogy with the procedures undertaken by Arthur Conan Doyle’s famous Sherlock Holmes. The psychanalytic, or semiotic medic method of symptomatology allowed the “establishment of the diagnosis even when the disease is not capable of being directly observed through symptoms or superficial signs, almost always irrelevant to the eyes of the layman”.²⁶ The

25 “2.248. An Index is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object. It cannot, therefore, be a Qualisign, because qualities are whatever they are independently of anything else. In so far as the Index is affected by the Object, it necessarily has some Quality in common with the Object, and it is in respect to these that it refers to the Object. It does, therefore, involve a sort of Icon, although an Icon of a peculiar kind; and it is not the mere resemblance of its Object, even in these respects which makes it a sign, but it is the actual modification of it by the Object”. Cf. Charles Sanders Peirce, *Elements of Logic* [1903], in *Collected Papers*, Harvard University Press, 1960.

26 Cf. Carlo Gisnburg, *Morelli, Freud e Sherlock Holmes: Indicios e Método Científico*, Porto: Deriva Editores, 2016, p.25. Persian histry is referred in pages 27-28. This indicative method of interpretation that has in Sherlock Holmes its greatest ancestor, serves as the functional base to decipher various series of crimes that have recently dominated the televised world (*Criminal Minds*, *Castel*), some of which including strong articulations with legal medicine (*NCIS*, *Bones*, *Forever*).

fascination of the “cognitive model” of the “conjectural disciplines” resides in their capacity to infer from the effects, in that capacity of seeing from what is only as residue, remain or fragment.

In the mid-eighteenth century, Horace Walpole opened the first deviation of the concept of serendipity that I find important to distinguish. He considered the neologism “serendipity” to designate happy and unexpected discoveries, surged from *chance* and *sagacity*, as connotations that will signal methodological and scientific processes where the concept would find its own route. Umberto Eco became fascinated by the term as an expression of valuing discoveries amidst error, and how they revealed themselves as correct and true with fairness, and emerging so strongly as its interior credibility, or as “those mistakes have led to new discoveries means only that even errors can produce interesting side effects”:²⁷

“(…) I wanted to show how a number of ideas that today we consider false actually changed the world (sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse) and how, in the best instances, false beliefs and discoveries totally without credibility could then lead to the discovery of something true (or at least something we consider true today). In the field of the sciences, this mechanism is known as serendipity. An excellent example of it is given us by Columbus, who—believing he could reach the Indies by sailing westward—actually discovered America, which he had not intended to discover. But the concept of serendipity can be broadened. A mistaken project does not always lead to something correct: (…).”²⁸

Serendipity thus revealed an expressive heuristic *marc*, deriving from “I encounter or I find”, directed toward the etymological origins of the famous Archimedes expression: “Eureka!” (meaning: “I found it!”). It is in this sense that we understand the famous expression by Picasso; “I do not seek, I find!” We observe the heuristic sense in Picasso’s case as *encounter* with something that comes to the subject from his own *artistic poiesis*. Deciding what stays is more an encounter based on the acceptance of something not programmed coming from outside, than a choice based on the subject’s free will. If the programmed being makes me encounter what was previously intended, here something comes to our encounter which we recognize as adequate or correct. *Choice* is the illusory form of what functions more as *encounter* because, after all, it was not the subject that followed something nor his route has taken him there. By defying will, serendipity is manifest in an encounter that emerges from the *mismatch between what I want and what comes*. In this sense, what I want must be open beyond its own waiting: only this way unexpected will be captivated as encounter from outside its expectations and becomes *encounter*. This *encounter* implies that *sagacity* that was traceable in the tale of the princes of Serendip that Horace Walpole would also underline. But what I want to highlight is that *serendipity is not planned*.

²⁷ Umberto Eco, *Serendipities. Language & Lunacy*, Columbia University Press New York, 1998, p.52.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp.VII-VIII.

Nevertheless, despite accepting that it is not possible to plan serendipity, we may also consider that it is not revealed without any planning. Serendipity is not planned, but this does not imply that a plan, an expectation is non-existing, that it surprises with the strangeness in which it sustains its apparition or emergence:

“En pratique une vraie découverte, invention, création est toujours la combinaison d'un élément étonnant et d'une vérification pertinente. Nous pensons que la recherche systématique et la sérendipité ne s'excluent pas, au contraire elles se complètent et même se renforcent. En science et en général dans l'action, il faut planifier, mais un plan n'est jamais sacré: des milliers d'événements inattendus ou d'effets non anticipés interviennent dans le cours d'une expérience ou d'un projet dont *un bon chercheur doit savoir se servir*. Il en est de même pour tout type de création”²⁹.

Popper refused the idea of a neutral observer of nature; there are always expectations and anticipations.³⁰ Gadamer also insisted in this possibility, and valued notions such as tradition and preconception (or *pre-conception*), crucial to the production of sense and interpretation. Refusing the ingenuity of historical objectivism, of being able of doing without “itself”, Gadamer valued pre-conception, that is not something strange or external, but what links us to things. Their anticipatory power sustains the subject of understanding as emerging novelty—that is, there is no novelty without a vast source of tradition from which emerges desire and the direction of comprehension. *Pre-conception*, as *pre-comprehension*, is as much *limit* as *possibility* of any understanding, and situates the subject in history as agent of understanding. As structure of anticipation of understanding, it provides to the hermeneutical problem its true direction. *Pre-conception* is not so much that which is *preconceived*, but rather it becomes necessary to the true possibility of *conceiving*. What is underlined in these ideas is that there is no possibility of a totally neutral subject. But in its turn, serendipity does not act in this neutrality: the mark of its action is to constitute a surprised subject.

I propose that serendipitous effect does not exist without the historical place of the subject that verifies it—and claims “Eureka!”. But, if we regard Gadamer's theses, we do so to verify how serendipity is one of the most impressive cases of feint to *pre-conception*, in an *encounter* less done through a *fusion of horizons*³¹ that finds itself in a short and punctual time, of sudden and unexpected emergence—a punctual time that surprises the subject in the moment that intersects its horizon of expectations, one which could not surge without the *subject that encountered what simultaneously surprises him while he verifies it as discovery*. Serendipity is the sudden encounter with that which was, immediately before, totally alien.

29 Pek van Anel, Danièle Bourcier, “Pourquoi un colloque sur la sérendipité? Histoire d'une notion” (résumés), *La sérendipité dans les sciences, les arts et la décision - Colloque de Cerisy- Actes*, 2009. p.8, pdf in : http://www.cersa.cnrs.fr/IMG/pdf/Actes_Colloque_Serendipite.pdf

30 Karl Popper, *The Rationality of Scientific Revolutions*, 1975, apud M. Piattelli Palmarini, “Antecipação”, in *Enciclopédia Einaudi. Volume 21: Método-Teoria/Modelo*, Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, Casa da Moeda, 1992, p.15

31 *Preconception, tradition and fusion of horizons* are essential notions to the thinking and hermeneutic method of Gadamer. Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Vérité et méthode. Les grandes lignes d'une herméneutique philosophique*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1996.

The punctual time of serendipity

After these considerations, I find necessary to reflect on the temporal dimension of serendipity's functioning. In the case of the princes of Serendip, their interpretation, despite working on the present, resulted from their capacity of reading signs from a past. But the question emerged before, toward the drama of the subject that had lost a camel. The princes only surprise others because of their sagacity, knowing through those *indirect* signs, through those *traces* or *indexes*, that the camel is white and blind in one eye. Serendipity I sustain (deriving from Walpole) emerges without questioning, or outside the query—no-body asks for a lost camel. The sign is apparition without question. From here derives the need for *encounter* I referred to earlier.

In the horizontality of our methodological walk, serendipity constitutes a vertical, opposite, sudden intersection, which illuminates like a lightning to surprise our walking. That light emerges and disappears of it is not signalled (that is, if we do not say "Eureka!"). We might consider that lightning as "vertical time" (approximate to Bachelard's "temps de la poésie" that merge the ambivalent antinomy between reason and passion³²) that intersects method's "horizontal time" as a solitary and immobile instant waiting to be *encountered* in its unused reason. It is not so much a matter of reencountering that *time-fragment* through the direct brutalization of horizontal time as Bachelard found in Mallarmé's poetry,³³ but more a question of escaping the successive time, to the becoming in which it is inscribed, as if it was elevated and suspended on it, stopping the fragment concentrated of time. The question here is its *detention*, a solitary moment of the affirmation of its *recognition* or *finding*.

In Bachelard's perspective, I may affirm that I am closer to Roupnel's philosophy of the instant which values *acte*, than Bergson's *durée*, which values *action*. *Durée* is a continuation of *action*, a living entity between decision and its effect, already the sequence or following from the *action*, a living entity between a decision and its effect, following from the sequence or *follow-up* from *acte*, thus negating the instant. *Acte* is instant discontinuity from the actual and active decision that originated the doctrine of the "*l'accident comme principe*".³⁴ To Bergson, *action* is indivisible because it is an intensive synthesis, while what is divisible because quantifiable is the extensive representation of the spatial and temporal dimension where the *action* happens.³⁵ The *durée* surpasses each moment, it is irreducible or divisible to simultaneity, because it is more the synthesis of the mobile continuum of an interval (even a short one), and in it there is more duration than time and more movement than dislocation. If *action* is always an interval and *durée*, then *acte* is a concentrated point, a dimension of the instant that condenses in it the *durée* as *noyaux d'action*.³⁶ It is in this "absolute of the instant" that surges as attack or accidental blow, freed from the intentions of duration, without communication with the past or with the future, that discon-

32 Gaston Bachelard, *L'Intuition de l'instant*, Paris: Éditions Stock, 1992, p.104.

33 *Ibidem*, p.106.

34 Cf. *Ibidem*, pp.15-27.

35 Henri Bergson, *Ensaio sobre os dados immediatos da Consciência*, Lisboa: Edições 70, 1988, pp.79-82. In these pages, the author develops a critic to science, especially to mathematics and physics, because they deal with an abstract and quantitative dimension of time.

36 Gaston Bachelard, *L'Intuition de l'instant*, Paris: Éditions Stock, 1992, p.27.

tinuity and vertical blow of punctuality in the horizontal becoming of temporality—as if Cronos was detained—that Bachelard calls “instant creator”.³⁷ But I prefer to call it “instant of encounter or discovery” because I consider that it operates serendipity as pure event.

Regarding punctual time, that is suspended and wants to deter Cronos, I find analogies with some images of time in Walter Benjamin's (1892-1940) famous *Thesis of the Philosophy of History*. On thesis XV surges the singular revolutionary image of “having fired against mural watches” to refund the history's movement:

“The consciousness of exploding the continuum of history is peculiar to the revolutionary classes in the moment of their action. The Great Revolution introduced a new calendar. The day on which the calendar started functioned as a historical time-lapse camera”³⁸.

This suspension point serves here to deter and acquires its own thickness. It provides to the moment a funding dimension. Besides the hermeneutical void facing the prior circumstances, of the transient absence of significations, the analogy with serendipity is part of the watches' paralysis. Nevertheless, Walter Benjamin criticized rational and instrumental time of modernity—that unstoppable and homogenous void of time, always in flux and with no return.

Progress, criticized in thesis IX through the allegorical figure of the “angel of history” consists in a *time of production* that rests in a homogenous and void time, whose success resides outside the works and the happenings, thus *devaluing punctual time in favor of linear time*—the *emergence of the happening* (and its revolutionary force) seen as exclusive. To Benjamin, it becomes necessary “to make the content of history jump” and “to explode historical continuity” through a present that stops being passage and transition to become “immobile”.³⁹ That moment appears as “messianic now”, condensing the summary of history to a redemption promise—an intense present where is inscribed a suspended time, that contains a time that sustains *cronos*; a moment of redemption, revolutionary and messianic.

This is a time of “detention” and “unique experience”. Affirming itself as a *non-transient-time-of-now*, such *present moment* shows itself as “punctual time”—as “detention” and “foundation”. Therefore, the same “originary” time (as in origin) and “revolution” (as in rupture). Only this *punctual time*, that is *labyrinth* as much as it is *fissure*, enables the realization of the past as “redemption”. Thus, no time is locked and lost in its own time—moments of suspension are of a density that opens timeless dialogues and correct history. In Walter Benjamin there is a dialectic between punctual and detention times, a mutual appeal of an historical responsibility, that obliges to a compromise between distinct times.

In Walter Benjamin, the revolution is messianic because it was expected, as an intimate desire, filled with hopes that link distinct deferred punctual times. I consider that serendipity is a moment of cleave devoid of that dialectical game. More than detaining the linear time, serendipity's punctual time inscribes in it a time coordinated with its own apparition. There is no clear expectation, as much as there is no place for Walter Benja-

37 *Ibidem*, p.18.

38 Walter Benjamin, “Teses sobre a Filosofia da História” (tese XV), in *Sobre Arte, Técnica, Linguagem e Política*, Lisboa: Relógio d'Água, 1992, p.167.

39 *Ibidem* (teses XV-XVI), p.167-168.

min's intimate and profound hopes. The waiting that welcomes it does not come from the past; rather it coincides with the moment of encounter and is inculcated of surprise in the middle of its own affirmation that recognizes the signs of serendipity.

Serendipity's synchronicity is not that of *kairós* (καιρός), the time of opportunity or the propitious time—*Kairós* or *Caerus* is the Greek god of opportunity and luck or the genius of favourable moments—although it is often associated to him. *Kairós* is a unique time on the occasion, also punctual, in a way that *only in the interior of cronos can kairós exist, but for kairós to happen a bit of kronos must exist.*⁴⁰ But *kairós* is like time concentrated in a ricochet, that the subject simultaneously welcomes and decides to alter the course of things through a unique circumstance and which is not lost in that reception. In *kairós*, Greek subjective time (*aiôn*)⁴¹ relates outsider of itself, to a course external of *cronos*. The subject is in the right moment to make destiny follow its own route, as if it was in a temporal bifurcation to lean destiny in an option. It glues to the favourable moment (*momentum*) that *must not be lost*.

Serendipity has that movement *coming from the outside*, of a non-controlled time, even when happening inside a controlled effort. It is in the difference with that effort of control that serendipity has its biggest manifestation and corresponds to the subject that does not let it escape from it to suspend it. Like *kairós*, serendipity is a short time—but closed within—while *kairós* is implied in its effects. The encounter is exclamatory and affirmative, a unique time in which the subject recognizes *something* that surprises him coming *from the outside*. This is not recognition of an opportunity, with which one must act in the *momentum*, but the *recognition that becomes suspended in it, a revelatory encounter*. The punctual dimension of serendipity's time is as in a brut state and beyond *momentum*. What may be done after with what was encountered is another plane, another story that no longer becomes to it.

If *Kairós* promotes "unique, extraordinary moments, and authentic singularities" he does not leave time to chance, that if not used when the event happens is immediately lost, acting as an "opportunistic moment, ready to chance the course of events."⁴² But this time has something of providential, and does not depend solely on men. He (man) is solely attentive to it, predicting and welcoming the event. *Kairós* is not the relation of the dominance of subjective time (*aiôn*) on the exterior, in the line of time in the production of modernity that allows constructions of times of human decisions, such as Benjamin's dialectic and messianic redemption or the times of "revolt" and revolution as myths of the new beginning of history.⁴³ But it is equally not reducible to the exclusivity of serendipity's punctual time. *Kairós* promotes the human decision in face of external contingencies. There is a dimension of living opportunity to the subject that legitimises it, soliciting the subject to face a point, that is more a crossroads than unique opportunity—a moment of opportunity of liaison of subjective time (*aiôn*) with *cronos* time.

40 Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *Le temps qui reste. Un commentaire de l'Épître aux Romains*, Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 2004, p.121.

41 Cf. Julián Serna Arango, *Somos tiempo. Crítica a la simplificación del tiempo en Occidente*, Barcelona: Anthtopos editorial, 2009, parte 3: "Aiôn y Kairós en Grecia", pp.39-54

42 *Ibidem*, pp.42-43.

43 Cf. Hans Robert Jauss, "Los mitos del comienzo: una oculta nostalgia de la Ilustración", in *Las transformaciones de lo moderno. Estudios sobre las etapas de la modernidad estética*, Madrid: Visor, 1995, pp.25-61.

Serendipity is thus, another encounter. It does not make the subject responsible for absence. There is no guilt in loss nor lost opportunities, but only the affirmative fascination of the encounter without each serendipity does not take place. The subject may be there, but without imposing the will of its own subjective time, but only witnessing the signal. From here, it is regarded as a happy surprise. Nothing is lost when it does not happen, because only a positive encounter defines and justifies it, and not the opposite. In that sense, without antonymic negation (thus escaping the dialectic), we can trace in serendipity a punctual time close to the difficult characterization of a *pure originating and founding time*. Serendipity establishes the founding time, without melancholy or guilt, because it emerges unexpectedly freed from any debts toward any other punctual time that is not its own. Being able to project new historical processes through its apparition, its mark is alien to any project and historical consciousness.

It is important to define precisely another dimension associated to serendipity—*chance*. Chance is characterized by contradicting the logic of causality: “chance is an event that we cannot predict, not because it is undetermined, but because we have insufficient information of its determining causes.”⁴⁴ Chance is affirmed as the expression of a certain lack of predictability. It surges through *causes* we do not understand or do not dominate. I have mentioned that serendipity is defined in an encounter point; it obliges an affirmative reconnaissance of the subject. To impute it the alienation of causes (chance) is to refer something as *result* (even if an uncontrolled result), and this viewpoint contaminates the *effect of pure serendipity*. Thus, I suggest that *chance* is as external to serendipity as *cause*. If taking the case of dice rolling into account, what one observes is that the result escapes a given expectation. Serendipity remains outside any program: sagacity finds the result even though dice were not rolled. So, there is no result or outcome to expect. It is in this sense that I convey that *chance* may remove density from the moment of encounter that defines it as *causality*. In the punctual intersection between *cronos* and *aiôn*, serendipity has no dice rolled waiting for an outcome, nor anything is lost to find (like the Princes of Serendips’ camel). More than *discovery by chance*, I prefer the *accidental encounter*. Serendipity happens when the *evential* (from *event*) crosses its path with the accidental, and from here an *encounter* is liberated as pure happening, without cause or effect. If that short time did not emerge, it would not exist. Thus, the short time is not postponed or expected, it is not recoverable or possible to project. Serendipity is freed from *memory* as much as it is freed from the *oracle*.

So, serendipity generates around a certain unpredictability; it is not a point of rupture, nor it is dialectic, but a pure and genuine emergence, a new signal that has no reading along situational paradigms. As it emerges, it sets these paradigms into question. Thus, I consider that serendipity is a phenomenon beyond transgression, and beyond *hubris* and *nomos*. To create an analogy with the processes of the artistic avant-gardes, I suggest that it does not confront with tradition (like Futurism) nor it surpasses the transgression of limits (like in Dada).

To conclude, and returning to the research topic: serendipity is a creative emergence amid a process (method). It is not a transgression of limits, but rather something that irrupts in its interior without framing itself into it. Serendipity produces a corruption of

44 Stefan Amsterdamski, “Acaso”, in *Enciclopédia Einaudi. Volume 33: Explicação*, Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, Casa da Moeda, 1996, p.87.

the strategies of anticipation because it is external to it, even if it is received by a subjective look—there is no serendipity without subject, thus my reference to *aiôn*—, open and available beyond expectations and amid the strangeness and awe of its sudden apparition. What matters to me is that serendipity emerges outside any method to be welcomed in it as pure surprise. The failure (and danger) of a controlling and closed method is, at the centre of its own transparent and positive affirmation, that of becoming *blind to the ray of light of serendipity's encounter*.

Serendipity and Method within Research in the arts

The interest in the phenomenon of serendipity for artistic research links to its *poietic* process, and resides exactly within the dimension of encounter that I have underlined. It encompasses the surprise of contestation. It helps us see the possibility and trace the knot between the author who follows his own *parcours of poietic practice*, of horizontal dimension, as a private method, and the vertical intersection of the unexpected encounter with something that emerges inside its practice. This encounter is of interest because it allows me to consider it as potential to a conceptual extraction to work upon.

Deleuze offers some instruments to talk about what I am uncovering. Without privileging a certain discipline, Deleuze only differentiates *philosophy's* value as foundation of principles, of *science*, as the processor of functions, and the *arts*, as the organizer of sensations. He considers all the creative actions of thought as linked through connections and integrations of the subjects' brain functions.⁴⁵ The work of art "is a being of sensation, and nothing else" that "exists in itself".⁴⁶ The brain functions retrieves plans from chaos: they constitute a *chaosmos* (a term that Deleuze borrows from Joyce). If science updates chaos' virtuality in a reference plan, philosophy affronts a chaotic plan through the virtuality that is extracted from a virtual reality. That is why philosophy *detritorializes*, and elevates the actual to the condition of virtual. Therefore, the artist rips out variations of affects and precepts, that do not simply reproduce the sensible, but that offer a *being of the sensible or the sensation*.⁴⁷

What I propose is that serendipity is particular and pure emergence of concept that encounters the deleuzian notion as something pertaining to the singular (not individual) that is linked to the happening to a particular application. To Deleuze, philosophy makes concepts emerge, and offers its consistency without losing the infinite or without losing the opening of the horizon of a *plan of immanence*. If, by inverting the paradigms, we defend that *irony*⁴⁸ and *absurd*⁴⁹ through their hollowness are operative dimensions

45 "Le véritable objet de la science, c'est de créer des fonctions, le véritable objet de l'art, c'est de créer des agrégats sensibles et l'objet de la philosophie, créer des concepts" Gilles Deleuze, *Pouparlers*, Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1990, p.168. To better frame this question, I value the synthesis of Sousa Dias, *Lógica do Acontecimento. Deleuze e a Filosofia*, Porto: Edições Afrontamento, pp.43-47.

46 Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1991/2005, pp.154-155.

47 "Distinct du plan de référence, qui caractérise la science, [lequel] est formé d'actuels et renonce à l'infini, et du plan de consistance, qui caractérise l'art, [lequel] est formé d'affects et de percepts, et [qui] crée du fini qui redonne l'infini, le plan d'immanence caractérise la philosophie, est formé de concepts et sauve l'infini". Maurice Elie et Arnaud Villani, "Plan d'immanence", in *Le vocabulaire de Gilles Deleuze* (sous la dir. Robert Sasso et Arnaud Villani), in *Les Cahiers de Noesis* n° 3, Printemps 2003, p.272.

48 Cf. Fernando Rosa Dias, "Tempos da Investigação em Arte—caminhar no método entre a dúvida, a crítica e a ironia", in *Investigação em Artes—Ironia, Crítica e Assimilação dos Métodos* (coordenação de Fernando Rosa Dias, José Quaresma, Alys Longley), Lisboa: Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema; The University of Auckland: Creative Arts and Industries Dance Studies, 2015, pp.44-58.

49 Cf. Fernando Rosa Dias, "Roteiros de uma caminhar no opaco", in *Investigação em Artes e Absurdo—Métodos Informais e Institucionalização do Conflito* (coordenação de José Quaresma; co-coordenação de Alys Longley, Fernando Rosa Dias, João Maria Mendes), Lisboa: Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema; The University of Auckland: Creative Arts and Industries Dance Studies, 2016, pp.127-140.

that facilitate the installation of a separation plan between the subject and his creative production, serendipity becomes the locale of *encounter* in which conceptual forces of production are verified. This could help understand Deleuze's fascination with aesthetics as encounter or "zones of distinction" between the plane of sensations and that of concepts, in which modern art demonstrates to philosophy modes of escaping theory and dogmatic thinking,⁵⁰ in the precise moment concepts emerge in a brut state. Countermanding Deleuze's plane of immanence, the "internal condition to create concepts",⁵¹ and that of the philosopher, I propose a *poietic plan* in research in the arts. This is a way to place *poiesis* as the hummus of (rhyzomatic) fertilization of concepts that are specific to its mode of apparition. The encounter, as an effect of serendipity, is an extraction of the concept amid its *poiesis*. This extraction that I defend in research in the arts consist in extracting (creating) from the *poietic* process a concept (thought), without losing the open plan of its horizon (unthought-of), in that moment in which the concept emerges without belonging to theory. Grasping this conceptual apparition, making an encounter of it, understanding that mode of apparition and its interactions while emergence of *poiesis* are immediate specificities of research in the arts.

From here, I defend that research on the arts does *not launch or project* categories about the work of art (how the researcher or the philosopher of aesthetics does when it tries to become approximate to the work of art); instead, it *extracts* a concept from the conception process (extraction that is separation), removes it from the *poietic* eventuality in which it resides. In that sense, and still in the way of Deleuze, the moment of extraction of the concept is that in which an alterity is founded that I consider as double-faced: on the one hand, the concept emerges as strangeness (like Deleuze) that does not belong to it and, on the other hand it distances the work in production from it because concept is also "auto-poietic"⁵² and it overflows things and the lived reality. This is not a discourse of categorization or proposition about the process or the artwork, but one of simultaneous extraction and separation of the *poietic* process. It deprives itself of that process of *artistic poiesis* (that this way becomes virtualized) but in function of a concept but in function of a concept that derives solely from it and has its roots in its *poietic plan*.

It is this tension that I want to demonstrate in serendipity as *encounter*, as the moment in which the concept unleashes between a *poietic plan* (specific from artistic production) and philosophy's *plan of immanence*. It emerges still in the brut state, in a pre-sense or in a sense that will still reveal itself, without media nor mediation, without significance nor referential proposition, but opened in the double virtuality of the horizons of those plans there intersected—this is the punctual moment of the bent and their liaison. This extraction amid *poiesis* can only be made by that whom practices it (who we traditionally call *artist*) and recognizes the effort of that encounter and the extraction of the concept, the potency of research in the arts. This in turn confides itself by providing the emergenc of pure concept, before the artwork (*ergon*) and before the plan of reflection (*thèrein*) that animates research.

50 Cf. John Rajchman, *As Ligações de Deleuze*, Lisboa: Temas e Debates, 2002, pp.122-124.

51 Sousa Dias, *Lógica do Acontecimento. Deleuze e a Filosofia*, Porto: Edições Afrontamento, p.48.

52 Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?*, Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1991/2005, p.16. Cf. Sousa Dias, *Lógica do Acontecimento. Deleuze e a Filosofia*, Porto: Edições Afrontamento, p.71.

“Dégager toujours un événement des choses et des êtres, c’est la tâche de la philosophie quand elle crée des concepts, des entités. Dresser le nouvel événement des choses et des êtres, leur donner toujours un nouvel événement : (...)”

(Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie ?*, p.36)

Serendipity, method and sustainability: in mode of final considerations

Serendipity is used as historical instrument of the history of knowledge, from science to art. In its plurality, it finds various examples in these disciplines, thus we may recognize in it a valuable cultural element. With this premise, I defend not only its need but also its importance in three plans of sustainability that I consider involved and that frame my reflections.

1. Serendipity of the research method.

As I have demonstrated, serendipity is a mode of apparition (and enlightenment) external to method that may emerge in its realm. When we witness a domain of methodological structuring which is becoming gradually more uniform – (be it within scientific norms, the structuring of methods, including in languages because of English dominance), be it in faculties, institutes, public or private structures that support research – I observe a danger the instrumentalisation that may reduce the necessary openness and the horizons that I find artistic and scientific research should be attentive to. For instance, the intransigent definition of previously delineated targets and objectives, be it grounded in the search of technological and economic efficacy (the profit) that place all research moments to the service of that specific goal. The uniformity of recent and global history in all universities has inverted the tradition in the arts and humanities, and has dislocated it from the natural modes of their functioning and from a real construction of its qualities as *sciences*.

Serendipity (like irony or absurdity, but revealed in other ways) is thus a punctual time of liberating method of causes and previous effects, as much as of teleological objectives, which allows that method does not become hostage of efficacy nor profit, while providing an open, critical spirit with distancing mechanisms that conduct its method. It constitutes not solely a research obsessed in achieving results, but also one which is attentive to the formulation of new questions and problematizing. It is about making the research a method sustainable in its own openness, available to the serendipitous surprise that because of its own mode of emergence, intersects it in a blind point of its orientations.

2. (Humanistic) sustainability in the history of culture and knowledge

Returning to aspects advanced before, this is a form of salvaging traditional functioning of humanistic forms in the construction of human knowledge and culture, and in consequence, their sustainability. The critic to dominant methodologies within universities in the last decades—as it has been confined within the *global university*—goes in the direction of what I want to present. This question encounters the great discoveries born out of *error*, that Umberto Eco recognized as one of serendipity’s forces within historical perspectives. I would say that knowledge cannot close itself in efficacy, or in the accumulation and quantification of data, that makes it blind and discards *error*. There is a qualita-

tive dimension that *should* be present and approximate. Byung-Chul Han points that the matrix of quantification—in the nakedness of the number, in the transparency of information and data accumulation—escapes the narrative. Without scene or transcendence, transparency on its own constructs a cold and objective culture, and subtracts discussion and problematization though the control of its efficacy and operability.⁵³ The danger of such cultural unbalance is the acritical dimension of its own positivity; that is, the absence of a balance with a necessary negativity and opacity. In face of everything that surges as truth and definite there must be a space for doubt, and its obverse (in the plural line of authors of the critical thinking such as Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Adorno, Foucault, Alan Badiou, among others).

Arts and humanities privilege the place of the subject, the subjective time of *aîôn*. Traditionally, the philosopher is a loner, a hermit that closes himself in a strange place. Sloterdijk asks where is Socrates when he “is lost in thoughts?”, because neither physics nor geography position the real thinking being, since he does not define the place of the thinking act with topological data. This *non-place* between *somewhere* (*Anderswo*) and *elsewhere* cannot be annihilated by efficacy and profit.⁵⁴

3. Toward a (meta)sustainability of the planet.

More renowned for its globalism and for the activist character that characterizes it, the dimension of sustainability has a strong tradition (and bibliography) in the areas of design but a more seldom presence in the, despite some decades of what has been named as *eco art*.⁵⁵ It consists of a more radical and decisive balance, that puts to question the survival of the planet. Here I expose some of its entropic centres, that announce the end of the *global village* balance:

- a. **the crisis of energy**, mitigated by the production of fossil fuels (it is speculated that the pick of its production has been achieved and that the decline is taking place until it the exhaustion of oil and uranium, both in decline, takes place). This aspect affects many other industries, such as transportation—in the sea, land and air—civil and military industries, and it propagates in a domino effect.
- b. **the environment crisis**, which relates to the prior one, tied to hyper-consumption and meta-waste. The pillage of the planet transform it into rubbish. It derives from the entropy of energy reserves and centres itself in climate change. After several environmental (natural) disasters (polluted rivers; desertification), the global disaster has started taking place.⁵⁶

53 Byung-Chul Han, *A Sociedade da Transparência*, Lisboa: Relógio d'água, 2014, pp.57-62.

54 Peter Sloterdijk, *Morte Aparente no Pensamento. Da filosofia e da ciência como prática*, Lisboa: Relógio d'Água, 2014, pp.44-46.

55 Cf. Linda Weintraub, *To Life! Eco Art in pursuit of a Sustainable Planet*, London: University of California Press, 2012.

56 Paul Virilio refers to the passage from a local and historical incidente to that of a global and instantaneous one. Cf. Carlos de Oliveira, “Global Algorithm 1.7: The Silence of the Lambs: Paul Virilio in Conversation”, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, September 2, 1995, translated in http://ctheory.net/ctheory_wp/global-algorithm-1-7-the-silence-of-the-lambs-paul-virilio-in-conversation/

- c. **economic crisis**, which results from the constant difficulty of continuous constant growth, that animates the dynamics of production/consumption and profit. Some authors defend that an *economic decrease* could be used as a mode of regulation.

After all, the apocalypse does not result from divine transcendence, nor does it derive from external diversified phenomena (such as the theory of the meteor that extinguished the era of the dinosaurs), but it is born from within *humanity* – in what humanity owns and simultaneously diverges from nature's dominance:

“The patterns of our existence (the unsustainable ones) are embedded in the world we have created. The physical contribution to those patterns are obvious; the allocation of resources, materials, energy, water, and so on, is structured into the fabric of the artificial environment. Much of our daily life is dependent on structures and products over which we have only limited choice or control”.⁵⁷ It is as if the *Big Bang* was reversed; this is the threat of a secular and immanent apocalypse.

Sustainability surges as mode of deferring or controlling the *hubris* (excess) blind from progress (a more radical route, that of sustainability, is only a deferral that perpetuates the structures of global capitalism). This is a way to impose limits to progress and to late-capitalism's *self-kinetic* sustainability that is used to constant growth, affirming its model through the need to slow down and question its own limitations. But, going back to aspects of sustainability that I have referred to as humanistic, a culture that is too reliant on the efficacy of positivity and the transparency of data, is also a culture that ditches itself from a critical voice that criticizes its image of *transparent positivity*. The alien and critical voice, being an active one (for example, the movements belonging to the green revolution), equally easily transforms itself in a Cassandra's complex, in which the functional residues of the arts and humanities follow on. The question becomes political: “‘Culture’ was represented by escalation of the industrial sector, resulting in the rapid expansion of affluence,” and “‘Counterculture’ was unified by its opposition to the stultifying conformity and spiritual vacuity of mainstream culture”.⁵⁸ But the problem is, at its core, a cultural one: “The real challenge lies in altering people's behavior patterns” that need a “sustainability [of] communication”.⁵⁹

Serendipity escapes theories of suspicion, not because of its inherent freedom in face of genealogies and designs—as much as it falls in that paradigm or it appears to own the same critical thinking. It is even less regulated by the different mechanisms of control and instrumentalization. Serendipity, in its decisive irruption, does not reify itself. It puts itself outside of any predictable place of the quotidian. If serendipity can be profitable, it is because it resides outside the expectations of the different levels that we have mentioned, and its censors. If sustainability and its opponents are legitimized by the apprehension of causes and effects, where they are inscribed in a dystopian or utopian way, then serendipity surges as the alien element outside of its own game—or the dice rolled. If we consider that the discourse of sustainability itself is partly considered as belonging in

57 Chris Ryan, “Towards a new manifesto for sustainable design”, in *Imaging Sustainability* (Edited by Helen Lewis and Chris Ryan), Melbourne: RMIT University Press, 2006, pp.15-16.

58 Cf. Linda Weintraub, *To Life! Eco Art in pursuit of a Sustainable Planet*, London: University of California Press, 2012, p.3

59 Stephan Bohle, in “The Eighth Wonder of the World”, in *Cause and Effect—Visualizing Sustainability*, Berlin: Gestalten, 2012, pp.2-3.

the same thinking system—a way to defer and adjust while maintaining the capitalistic system alive—maybe we can better comprehend the need for that punctual force coming from the external realm.