

Aegrum corpus quassari etiam lenibus solet offensis¹. Health literacy and illiteracy.

This paper examines biopolitics, a multilayered phenomenon that has many different senses and multiple definitions as well as a history of misuse. It may be associated with racism and eugenics but at the same time it may be perceived as a rational management of people and their living space. Some – as is noted by Thomas Lemke² – emphasise paradoxical nature of this concept, that seems to coin two contrary ideas in one, oxymoronic in its nature. In this approach politics is seen as something that opposes what is biological, sensual and carnal in its nature; concerned with control of a public space, social and separated from its biological and organical aspects. The treatment of the biopolitics weaver between a political one (that consider life processes as a subject of politics) and a naturalistic one (that treats life as a basis for politics). Naturalists place life above politics, as a kind of a blueprint, that organizes all of political actions while the others consider politics as something governing over life (understood as something more than just biological processes).

Apart from this radical opposition there is also a Michel Foucault's proposition, whose deliberations are focused on the biopolitics as a force that regulates life processes in a population. Alive beings are considered to be subjects to both law and biology. Foucault expanded on historical and relational understanding of the notion³, where the life itself moves beyond this binary limitation. It is neither a subject to politics nor its basis, but a border between them. Biological traits of an individual are projected on the population that in turn creates norms and standards of behaviour. Due to that, the governance is possible as a cooperation between expertise and subjects like statistic, demography, biology, epidemiology that manages individuals and collectivity by means of normalisation, discipline and exclusion. The nature itself depends on actions of the governors, is a part of them, a correlate. A control of people as a population in his understanding

¹ A sick body trembles even when lightly touched.

² Thomas Lemke: Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction (http://ieas.unideb.hu/admin/file_7425.pdf) (30.09.2016))

³ Ibid.

is a „game” played on what is natural for the population, and the population has a status of object that is played with. Its nature and independent inner dynamics allow for such manipulations through statistics, birth rate, mortality rate and morbidity rate⁴.

Many theoretist (such as Michael Hardt, Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Negri and Roberto Esposito) expand on or critique concepts proposed by Michel Foucault. The most interesting are propositions that indicate a transformation of modern biopolitics into postmodern biopolitics and analyse its connection with capitalism, problems of relations and borders between economy and politics or production and reproduction. Different approach is presented by the authors focused on a development of biotechnology and new forms of interventions in the body (they will change means and goals of biopolitics). As the main core of my work is focused on matters of a body, that is enmeshed in medical procedures and discourses, it seems reasonable to later on discuss concepts of biosociality by Paul Rabinew and etopolitics by Nikolas Rose as they are directly referring to the issues of contemporary medical practices and structures.

This wide array of propositions indicates that biopolitics is still functioning, important and prevailing notion that needs further redefining. Therefore I will describe the term - biopolitics as a one, that is still (always) in a process of defining. My perspective is strongly influenced by my reading of Michel Foucault's texts. His theory is rather philosophical than historical or sociological; he analyses whole complexes of contexts and discourses, that have influenced the development of the idea, he indicates transitions, passages, cuts and symptoms: “But what I am doing – I don't say what I am cut out to do, because I know nothing about that – is not history, sociology, or economics. However, in one way or another, and for simple factual reasons, what I am doing is something that concerns philosophy, that is to say, the politics of truth, for I do not see many other definitions of the word “philosophy” apart from this”⁵.

Foucault is a stirrer, who intrigues (both stylistically and conceptually), a journey through his texts feels like a fight against never-ending entanglement.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Michel Foucault: Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-78 (<http://www.azioni.nl/platform/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Foucault-Security-Territory-Population.pdf> p.17(30.09.2016))

Stirrer is a thinker who does not give a ready-made formulas, clear-cut answers for his questions. He throws a stone into water, ripping and rippling its clear and smooth surface with weaves that are spreading in all directions. It is not my intention to recount Foucault's thoughts but to enter into a dialogue with him or to immerse into divagations caused by an uncertainty evoked by the sheer amount of ideas tackled by the philosopher. However, in some parts of my paper, his influence will be more visible than in others. I will also cross-refer to theorist that address the issue of biopolitics either by taking a stance on Foucault's thoughts or by developing their own ideas – sometimes parallel to his, sometimes researching other directions. In view of discussed matter this approach has a practical aspect as well. It is the most prominent in the case of the main core of this text: that is a relation between structures of power-knowledge towards a body of an individual and towards a population (as connected and tangled construct) and designing by these structures the areas of competencies of those who want to aspire to a status of health/sickness as decided by a medical discourse. The concepts of the philosopher are especially interesting because he managed to propose/develop an analytical-interpretative apparatus without saturating it in scientific perspective. Foucault prepared a very flexible theoretic tool without sacrificing precision and details, thanks to which his ideas have both universal as well as detailed character.

In order to slightly limit that extraordinarily wide range of subject that can be interpreted from the perspective of (bio)ethics, sociology, history of politics, history of technology, history of law or medicine I will use a theoretical matrix (proposed by Foucault). It is a strategy of writing about realms that are found between discourses and their relations, ties, borders and limits. In this approach some issues that I present in this paper will interweave and reverberate with my practical work that is realised in another medium. A series of drawings and installations are a sketch (not to say – an illustration) of a perspective, very idiosyncratic, that is available only in media that I have used. It is important to realise that all empty and unfinished parts of my theoretical and practical work are connected. They are references to my other work where the answer may have been found. This paper should be treated as a hint, not a solution to the mystery,

a whisper behind a picture, gust of wind in the curtains, a gentle lullaby-that is heard through a fading consciousness when falling asleep...

The following remarks are an result of my attempts to understand the philosopher's reflection through the means of art. I tried to find a stance and common themes, perform a critique or, perhaps, just to understand, explain and translate some of this issues/problems not only by a mean of written language by also through visual interpretation.

One can pose a question – that only seems to be unrelated – what is happening to the evolutionary concepts now? They appear to have been moved to the field of bioinformatic. In this kind of nexus how does the issues of exclusion are supposed to be interpreted? How would they manifest? In this case it seems to be appropriate to consider looking though a prism of the semiotic ability. I am convinced that in this area the problem of a special structure (based on cuts and boundaries) also arises and that structure is not so far away from a mechanisms of racism in the field of biopower. Let us ask, how those that are supposed to receive help from a social health system, are functioning in this field?

The semiotic ability (assuming that this competency is developed through health literacy) is realised in the field of economical ability. The development of self control mechanisms is also a result of actions in the area of the biopolitics (after all it is based on natural life processes, that are stimulated by desires – and can be curbed by self-control). It is not demanded or forced but is encouraged by education in the matters of health and hygiene. Public health system is promoting a model of human that alone is a specialist in the matters concerning health. However, it does not diminish a function of a doctor as an authority. It has even stronger influence (like a sovereign in disciplinary systems) and becomes a revered caretaker and a supervisor. Health literacy is defined by WHO as follows: “cognitive and social skills which determine the motivation and ability of individuals to gain access to, understand and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health’ Health literacy implies the achievement of a level of knowledge, personal skills and confidence to take action to improve personal and community health by changing personal lifestyles and living conditions. Thus, health literacy means more than being able to read pamphlets

and make appointments”⁶.

That means that individuals have to be educated, drilled, prepared to control many diverse factors that must be regulated in order to attain a good health and longevity. These individuals are required to have a wide range of competences. The basic knowledge of where and whom to ask in a case of health problems is not enough, they also need a to know a way of managing their health (in some cases by preparing first diagnoses, deciding on treatment and adhere to self-imposed regulations). As we can notice, the definition that is supposed to define certain carnal competences of an individual (since literacy is a term originating in its antithesis – in the lack of competence – illiteracy is a lack of ability to read and write) is not connected with a body as much as with a language system and with understanding of words and things and an ability to recognize connections and similarities between them. That linguistic (semiotic) aspect is supposed to be a functional one, just like the accurate naming of occurrences and analysing them in the light of the underlying processes (as it happens with safety mechanisms and protocols) and that originates in the governing mechanisms. It is a pure biopolitical project.

Health literacy that is understood as a skill that is a part of a spectrum of semiotic ability is a set of a competences that belong to a person entangled in a health system (that in turn is also dependent on an economics and political systems). These competences are results of many factors (education, economic factors, place of residence, age, gender) and they make possible understanding of direct and indirect statements connected with the health of a said individual. They not only allow for an understanding of written information that are delivered in etiquettes, flayers, on the pharmacological products boxes, advertisements in radio and television or remarks made by a doctor – a type of written and audiovisual information, that is characterised by a very hermetic and nonintuitive vocabulary connected with medicine and pharmaceutics but also for fulfilling another important part of these competences – an ability to interact – to communicate one's needs, to take a part in a dialogue, to display a set of interpersonal skills as well as to take a critical stance towards obtained knowledge. Thus literacy consist of a set of social skills in the field of communication and

⁶ http://www.healthliteracypromotion.com/upload/hp_glossary_en.pdf p.20 (30.09.2016)

negotiations, that properly used will lead to decisions that are in favour of sustaining „health“. (The quotation marks are not accidental – a definition of health itself is not clear and during my reflections on the health literacy I will try to provide an updated, contemporary meaning. However, anticipating certain conclusions I would like to emphasise that the meaning of health is enmeshed in relativistic issues. The changeability of definition is dependent on culture and time-space continuum, as well as on the current knowledge and technology. In this paper I will focus on its ideological and theoretical aspect).

A paradox that is connected with this understanding of the health literacy originates in the fact that an individual already have to possess some basic skills – like an ability to read and write (in a language that is used in the health care system) thus it requires from them a literacy in its literal sense. The individual need to properly decode given communicates, thus – he need to be semiotically capable.

As a result a certain group of people will be unable to gain an access to a set of competences required to gain the knowledge about the health and in the effect a care for their health may be hindered. At this point I would like to stress out a very important matter. We are facing a tangled nexus of discourses and their “physical” equivalents. In a case of the health it is a human body and his psyche that is a subject to the discourse (without taking in an account all doubts concerning ethical matters). In this aspect of my research I am basing on thoughts of Michel Foucault for whom cognition, episteme is a language event that, while working in an epistemological field that is historically conditioned, yields various types of discourses. It is a critique of rationalism and empiricism as well as a scientific discourse that based its power on a repressive function of authority. His idea of the archaeology of knowledge is largely based on an analysis of social institutions and his critique is directed at discursiveness of knowledge and its relation with power. At this point I will recall terms: biopower and biopolitics that are a key to my artistic/theoretical project. They are resonating in both my artwork (drawings and installations) and in my paper that is devoted to the Foucault's ideas.

The less obvious examples of illiteracy (understood as a semiotic disability)

my arise from the lack of social skills, a high level of social withdrawal, introversion – personal traits of an individual. It seems logical to assume that the condition of understanding a given set of laws is to have a knowledge of how to decode this laws. Nutbeam proposed three-degreed division of illiteracy that is based on a hierarchical structure – the basic competences of an individual are a condition of acquiring next, more complicated levels of the knowledge (basic/functional literacy, communicative/interactive literacy, critical literacy). The ability to care for one's own health is conditioned mainly by such factors as an availability of knowledge and education. This factor seemed to me to be the most suspicious. I believe that a model of obtaining (institutionalized) knowledge, that is dividing it into nature science and humanities, while being questioned, still determines cultural tendencies and practices.

I think that a semiotic ability is a term that defines in a more precise way the set of cognitive competences that are required from individual than literacy (for the well-being of a population that is a main interest of biopolitics). Literacy is a part of it, a part that allows it to function and to produce results in performances (biological and economical).

I realise a slightly cynical impression that is evoked by the of use of this term, but it is a result of not only a reflection on a relation between power-knowledge and its discursiveness (that is widely commented by Foucault) but of my own artistic struggles as well. While preparing my artwork I used a method that was supposed to be ambiguous from the very beginning. I used a classical, originating from the positivism method of gathering data for this project. In this case it was a quantitative method: I did a statistical research based on results from questionnaires. Through analysis of the results I have encountered many paradoxes and misunderstandings, that I tried to show in preceding paragraphs. I was aware, that using a scientific method with an intention of representing the results in the form of an artwork is an impossible task, doomed from the very beginning. It is also impossible to establish a set of norms that would in a tolerant yet consistent, proper manner define what the health is. In a broader perspective I would like to present my theoretical/practical work (I need to emphasise once more that both aspects are complementary) as a metaphor of struggles and

failures that scientific discourse is subjected to in a public and individual life.

In postmodern times the juxtaposition between virtual and real is disappearing, turning them into an interwoven thread. It is also visible in approach to science, the differentiation between natural science and humanities, language and social space. A language of humanities and nature science is shuffled. A topos of separation between philosophy and science in mythos and logos is resonating like a distant echo. However, is it possible to talk about a return of the old union of knowledge and myth (because a myth is a type of knowledge as well)? I would advise against rushed diagnosis. Biopolitics merges this fields with utilitarian goals. Its aim is not to explain the world (as do knowledge and myths) but to control it, normalising and eventually using it.

The antipositivism breakthrough is the beginning of progressively more complicated nexus of uncertainties. A rupture of knowledge into humanities and nature science (started by Dilthey) and into nomothetic and idiographic method (by Wildenband) has cast a shadow of relativism on the methods of gaining knowledge and its cohesion. The rising critique of this model of scientific research (i.e. by Michel Foucault) is exposing not only its dysfunctionality but also dangers that accompany a radical rationalism and scientism (it is enough to remind effects of using this paradigm by totalitarian governments). Instead of drawing a clear line between humanities and nature science, a division into cultural practices and theories is suggested. Despite being rather vague terms they seem to accurately describe ways in which knowledge is gained and distributed. The language that used to be considered as stricte scientific, now derives from metaphors and concepts that used to be characteristic for the language of humanities and the other way round: metaphors and conceptual apparatus that used to be scientific are now used for disciplines that belong to humanities. One may say that on the linguistical level theses vocabularies are interwoven and complementary for each other. The cultural theory allows for many perspectives and is defined by interdisciplinarity rather than by searching for the objective truths. It champions a multidimensional, heterogenic, pluralistic interpretation of events, that may vary, according to a chosen method (deconstruction, feminism, postcolonialism). While researching cultural practices that are based on the knowledge and ways of

spreading it in that culture, it tries to avoid hierarchization and evaluating. A social consequence of this model of conveying the knowledge is already mentioned relativism and scepticism as well as acceptance of multitruthfulness. The key is an interpretation, that leads to one of the possible truths – in accordance with who and why performs the interpretation.

Considering the medical science, which guidelines should correspond to the health of a patient (by being measurable and verifiable as it is understood from the positivistic perspective) a so-called scientific truth may differ from the actual state of the patient. The prominent notion here is a term of a norm. The “Truth” of the medical discourse is always written/told/decided from the perspective of the institution that holds the power (on the basis of its authority) and that defines norms and pathologies. Non-normative phenomena that cannot be easily classified are ignored and they become a blind spot of the discourse.

The term rhizome, that was introduced by Deleuze and Guattari, is a convenient tool that describes a dynamics of gaining and distributing the knowledge. The model of rhizome is lacking all characteristics of a structure based on one, permanent core. It is the opposite of a tree, a plant that has a known, predictable structure. „A rhizome is a wilding, a complicated system of underground sprigs and overground roots, wreath, bulb, bulbel. A rhizome is a potato and a quack grass, a swarm of rats and animals' dens, ants and grass. Rhizomatic is a language and a memory, a glial tissue and marionette strings, unparallel evolution of a wasp and an orchid, a cat and a baboon, oriental gardening of 'clones' and American capitalism, underground and bitnics. (...) If we were to speak about some model of the world, we would speak with regards to a rhizome, because the reality is a rhizomorphic indeed – plants are creating a rhizome with wind, animals, people and „we form a rhizome with our viruses, or rather our viruses cause us to form a rhizome with other animals”. Rhizome is formed from a plateau and plateau is a „continuing region of intensity” which vibrations does not succumb to organizing orientation, it is multitude that can be connected with other, to create a rhizome that „has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo”⁷.

⁷ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari: Rhizome. Translation: Bogdan Banasik. „Colloquia Communia 1988, nr 1-3 w Bogdan Banasiak: Nomadologia Gillesa Deleuze'a. Cyt. za: M. Pisarski, <http://techsty.art.pl/hipertekst/teoria/postmodernizm/klacze.htm>, dostęp z 13.12.2015.

In the case of the nexus/rhizome discourses (considered from the perspective of the cultural theory/practices) are interfusing each other and their research fields are overlapping. Both sender and receiver of a communicate need to have a multidimensional competences. It seems to be a very “egalitarian” approach to the knowledge. Lack of a stable structure eliminates any form of hierarchy and exclusion but at the same time it may cause a chaos, confusion and dissonance in the recognition of the content that seems to lack an origin.

The notion of health is, as in many other cultural phenomena, defined by its opposition. That binary, black and white approach allow for a classification of things. Since the idea of structure is pertaining to the definition of literacy developed by WHO I would like to propose a definition of health illiteracy not as an anachronistic structure but as something that is growing out of a rhizome/nexus construction. This model is more adequate to describing a contemporary shape of medical knowledge and terms of access to this knowledge. The health illiteracy is an impossibility of caring for health in contemporary “prohealth” politics.

Now I would like to present a function of objects, that were constructed, invented and designed by me (including drawings, that are almost cartographical guidelines for possible perspectives of interpreting my works). “A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb “to be” but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, “and... and... and...” This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb “to be.”⁸. The last chapter I closed (or did I opened a new one?) by writing about nexus. I also quoted a Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's work. The last quotation is also from Deleuze, because he (almost poetically) tackles a problem of thought-structures, defining them on a basis of terms originating in chemistry, physics and mathematics in a way that allows me to find a connection between this, Michel Foucault's philosophy and mine artworks.

I have also found a question – can art, as a mean of a recognition, naming and describing of the reality be, on a certain level, a concrete that was reduced to

⁸ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari: Rhizome
<https://www.ntnu.no/wiki/download/attachments/21463142/deleuzeguattarirhizome.pdf> p.23 (30.09.2016)

abstracts, that in some semi-real, semi-intuitional realm can be expressed? The problem is oscillating around an uncertain status of a matter in confrontation with what (only, just, almost) was thought; extrasensory – yet possible only due to the physical experience (this is the main paradox).

The nexus structure can help to bracket this paradox in a frame of visuality. Deleuze writes about a quack grass, a bulb, a growing rhizome that would be posed against tree: with a straight core-trunk and (predictably) growing branches. The nexus as rhizome shows the (apparent) chaos. This arbitrary mess of relations and joints is not without an architecture. On the contrary – it is a structure that defeats paradoxes, annihilate oppositions – the nexus as something ephemeral, strong, matter woven from delicate, thin, almost immaterial, almost two-dimensional elements is (still) a building – something that is susceptible to changes, but also lasting due to sheer amount of connections and inner diversity. Nexus is consisting not only from material elements but also from gaps and spaces between joints, that are a visual and conceptual reverse of the threads that they complete. Nexus is also a model of thoughts, acts, relations and relation itself – this is immateriality woven from materiality and materiality woven from immateriality. It is the essence of the concrete and essence of the abstract at the same time. It is a pattern and a realization of this pattern. It is neverending tension between virtual and chaotic, where the chaos is not guilt of a disorder, but is a condition and a possibility of genesis, the condition of emerging of organisation. What is semiotic, linguistic always function in a register between an expansiveness of virtual and a deadlock of real. In the language a nexus, a rhizome can show itself in its complete form – concrete and abstract, virtual, potential and para/psuedomaterial. Following this trail, where all significant and signifier make One, that is a multiplication of threads and ties; I ask a question: in what language a body, the body-organism speaks? (It is not a coincidence that an organon in Greek means an instrument, a tool, an organ, and in a historical perspective – the history of philosophy – the history of thought (as a mean of conceptualization of the world): it means a logical text by Aristotle). Organon-logic is a tool of a cognition. Thus chaos is: superficial if thought about in a common way or extraordinarily precise preform if thought about in the spirit of Deleuze's

philosophy. As a preform of (organ)isation it is a seedbed, a beginning, a germ. It is a chaos-logic, pre and para form. So body-organism, an order that arose from a chaos speaks to us in many languages. This language of organon-body is schizophrenic, divided into many modus (it is enough to mention a language of sickness symptoms). However, this language is unseemly logical, precise and despite its polisemiotics very evident, speaking plainly because it reveals itself through its structure, syntax. It is naked, open, non-misified. The form is not a container, it is evident, almost honest and truthful. “A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive”⁹.

The objects that I have created, have developed from almost dramatic encounter with a materiality. They are almost stuck in it but at the same time in a certain way through certain fixation they started to show something more – or maybe nothing more, maybe they have just given a permission to see and think about them as they are: a matter, a part of nature, a part of the world apart from which (apart from its physical, chemical, biological, semiotic, logical, genetic, intellectual aspect) there is nothing. Where is metaphysic then? Metaphysic (from Greek *metà tà physiká*) (once more, a reference to the history of philosophy) is a collection of texts that are after physis. In the most plainspoken sense – they were to be found after texts about science (in the meaning of space, laying underneath them). The name was coined by a first editor of Aristotle's writings, philosopher originating from the peripatetic school, Andronicus of Rhodes. Thus, in a very ironic way that (probably) anecdote is showing, that an origin of metaphysics was very physical indeed. I do not want to negate terms originating from a tradition of philosophical thought, it is too much for this paper. I would prefer to show it.

And I do so, by creating a series of artworks:

Quassar IV, VI) that through its materiality “emits” surplus, an ephemeral entity, an erratic afterimage: a shadow; what is a main star of this spectacle? It is

⁹ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari: Rhizome
<https://www.ntnu.no/wiki/download/attachments/21463142/deleuzeguattarirhizome.pdf> p.5 (30.09.2016)

impossible to assess. Two competing modus: the tangible, material one, a piece of matter forced into a space that is a reason of phantom; or on the contrary – may a phantom be a reason for this matter?

Quassar IX, XI) tangled branches – a structure of a net, a game of gaps, blanks, loops and empty spaces. Deleuze often juxtaposed a rhizome, a bulb with the structure of a tree. To begin a dialogue with him I weave from a tree-branches a model of that unsubdued impetuosity, the dynamics that is innate to botanical growth. I am facing a structure that is susceptible to changes, it is I that decide its shape. Technology of that transition is so prosaic, I already have a readymade recipe. Weaving, caneing, spinning. A wicker basket – net, weaving a yarn thread – web. We can settle on that, we can spin on. A context that anchors this associations: a handicraft but also an isolation – a structure, that stopped halfway.

Device impractical I) a glasses – an optical device, a kind of prosthesis; by being they evoke (not)presence of their owner; the meanings surfacing here are a play on a culture: third eye of some near-sighted deity or perhaps an effect of some horrifying mutation? Not(presence) of owner is in a some way painful: I think that an impression made by this object is similar to phantom pains. Paradoxical, traumatic feeling of a limb that is no more there. How can something that does not exist hurt so much? Perhaps the third eye also never existed, it was just a paranoia of a madman who believed in its existence. Schizophrenia that brings about and produces phantoms. A question – what is more “real”, what has a greater importance in a case of a mental sickness: a phantom, paranoia or a matter, facts? These aspects are competing without a chance for a resolution. There is also another story of this object, very personal, as probable and improbable as are other stories that we can spin around this object. There is a sickness, there is lack of sickness. And that is a meaning and a reason of that opening of the matter – to archeologise, to think about genesis, to search for whatever is in an essence of that matter-meaning and yet is separated as a history, associations, aspects and modus.

Device impractical II) a stopper – a device used to measure a short lengths of time (a kind of a prosthesis as well – that helps to realise a flow of time); what does it measure and on what kind of scale, where is an end to this measuring,

what does the measuring? It all remains unclear. Once again we see an apparition, due to a mal/dysfunction of measuring device we can realise arbitrariness of all arrangements (in this case – the units of time), that do not possess material attributes and are totally abstract and yet they determine our actions, thoughts and our being itself. We are witnesses of a count down to the eternity.

Quassar I, II, III, V, VII, VIII, X) a series of drawings that are a tissue from which other art process grew, resulting in aforementioned objects. There is no body sick or healthy, there is a modality of prevailing states of being, from the perspective that analyses a cartography of the body: disform emerges from form (my drawings are very concrete and material), nexus – is a surplus, a shadow, a phantom. The gap, that emerges between the visible (visual, a trace of graphite on a paper) and its meaning conveyed (by the hand, sight, thought, intuition, gesture of my own body that became a seismograph that “measure” the other body), resonates, synthesized semiotically, reveals further identities. These are crucial eyes of the nexus, its most lasting material. From this perspective, I – the seismograph, the organ, the organon-tool – can realise a certain truth about the things that are most carnal and real. It is not something that can be divided in a binary opposition of health and sickness, it is emotionless, calculated cartography, a record, that due to its multilayered nature grows like a tissue, cancerous surplus or developing embryo. “(...) everything begins in the moment, when abstract lines and drawn, with proper segments, cuts, crack, breaks. If somebody wants to play piano, or begins either to love an animal or to hate it, both our loves and hates must be distributed along lines – but not figurative lines. Organism or organisation of a body is a molar organisation and it is obvious that it is not about saying: screw your organism and you will be happy (...) our theme of cohesion plain, composition plain is connected with death. You will die and that's all. It is a problem of overdosing”¹⁰.

In the beginning I used archival, medical photographs. One can say that my first contact with a body was mediated, that it was not the body itself, but its meaning, already described with emotionlessness of medicine. However, while the

¹⁰ Lecture by Gilles'a Deleuze'a 15.02. 1977, Translation: Jakub Dadlez <http://machinamysli.org/wyklady-gillesa-deleuzea-15-02-1977/> available: 14.08.2016

medium could be “indifferent”, the semiotics were not. Bodies were sick, marked, estranged in a given narration. Hence my gesture, of giving them back some truth (and an attempt to understand if it is really there, available to a disclosure [like setting aside a dusted drape in an act of classical hermeneutics] or whether it would be my construct (in a gesture of deconstructionists). A drawing – what is visible – this seemingly abstractive record – is a mimesis, an emulation of growing tissues, dynamics of shaping things and an attempt to reach a reality (is it not an ancient topos, a primeval goal, a longlasting wish of science, art, philosophy and other cognitive systems?). Finally I have reached beyond the frames of the photos – the experiment of searching for the reality without a mediation, not marked by meaning that puts it in a binary modus. What kind of truth did I find by researching tensions, following and analysing, mimicking, replaying, recording and collecting what I have seen?

I have found structures. Nexus structures: neurons, fractals, joints, threads, knots, passages, trails, architecture that is so dynamic that it always reshapes itself. It is forming in parallels, sprawling in all directions, expansive. I have found a raw matter and its limits. I have found that what is immaterial, semiotic, signifying, ephemeral is generated by recordings in and on the matter. Limits and expansions of growth decide how the nexus develops, what are relations, connections, it is available for a partial description, always contaminated by a noise, never fully described due to always being on the move. The truth, that I have found, is that the nexus is the everchanging reality/present/now.

All my artworks, that I am showing, have that common trait, that is to be found in the structure of the nexus. They are apparently out-of-matter; they bring associationists with something, that is not; they are symptoms of a certain being, being that is alien, unsettling, that is not a:

- shadow: changeability;
- entanglement: emptiness;
- potential (previous) user: phantom pains;
- indescribable measurement: infinity.

Despite being rooted in a materiality, growing out of it (once more Deleuze's botanical metaphor) they are entangled in nonexistence, in potential, gaps, blanks

and intervals.

As a final remark I want to address two perspectives, that despite being overly optimistic and utopian, can make a statement on current changes in the field of biomedicine and an attempt to propose a vision that is competing with a ongoing commercialisation of life-signs.

Etopolitics by Nikolas Rose¹¹ and biosociality by Paul Rabinow¹² with their vision of relation between individuals and health care systems (or: a biomedical discourse and a health care system that works within its boundaries) could be an answer, a reaction against some oppressive, excluding forms of power. They are especially interesting due to addressing Foucault's concept of biopolitics. They are an alternative, other approach that Foucault did not choose. I think that in Rose's works there is an echo of Foucault's project of "Technologies of the Self", but his works are more concerned with science-technology innovations, that are responsible for changes in the biopolitical mechanism. In "Technologies of the Self" that are originating from an ancient Greece and Rome, Foucault considers a problem of a ties between subject and power, it is "(...) searching for the "art of living", that may sometimes attain a status of the "aesthetic of being" (...) ¹³. The techniques of self-care and self-determination are emerging from the history of ideas and their continuous, philosophical reworking.

Paul Rabinow argues, that currently, in an epoche of genetical manipulations and prospects of incursion in a body on a molecular level, social connections are being reconfigured in biological categories. Thus he creates a category of biosocialisation, that is opposed to the earlier approaches (not longer applicable) of the idea of biologisation of what is social and transferring social relations to biological terms (ie. Sociobiological models or social Darwinism). „In the future this new genetics will cease to be a metaphor for modern society and will become instead a circulation network of identity terms and restriction loci around which and through which a truly new type of autoproduction will emerge, which I call "bio-sociality." If sociobiology is culture constructed on the basis of

¹¹ Thomas Lemke: Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction (http://ieas.unideb.hu/admin/file_7425.pdf) (30.09.2016)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Michel Foucault: The History of Sexuality, Wyd. I: Warszawa 1995, translator: Bogdan Banasiak, Tadeusz Komendant, i Krzysztof Matuszewski. Introduction: Tadeusz Komendant Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza „Czytelnik” p. 9.

a metaphor of nature, then in biosociality, nature will be modeled on culture understood as practice”¹⁴.

In the light of this concepts, the effects on approaches to identity are very interesting. According to Rabinow new collective and individual identities are being created, that describe self and other by a level of knowledge about sicknesses. It will happen with a help of bioscience and genetic terms and a vocabulary from biomedicine will also gain popularity and will become more and more common. Those suggested changes are already happening on a mass scale. Availability of medical portals in the Internet, the self-organisation on the internet forums of groups of people that are looking for a support and information concerning their sickness (it is not surprising to find a doctor as a member of such community) results in popularisation of a knowledge that used to be available only to specialists. From such understanding of biosociality emerges a possibility of acting against commercialisation of the life-processes. It is an optimistic and utopian vision, where self-help groups and organisations gathering patients are gaining an autonomy. They are no longer a passive subjects of the medical institutions. An experience of sickness is an impulse to a political activity. It should effect (according to Rabinow) in demands for patients' rights and a fight against financial barriers in the availability of medical technologies and bioscientific knowledge.

The etopolitics (by British sociologist Nikolas Rose) is concerned with a category of enhancing, bettering self and in some aspects takes place of health categories. According to Rose, a lack of differentiation between nature-culture leads to a new paradigm of conditioning. Lack of clear watershed between a culture/society and a nature/biology is an effect of a development of biotechnological possibilities and growing knowledge of matters that concern molecular biology and genetics. There is no nature without politics, biology is synthesised with a political order and a result of that transition is new form of politics – etopolitics.

Etopolitics is understood as „ways in which the ethos of human existence – the sentiments, moral nature or guiding beliefs of persons, groups, or institutions – have come to provide the “medium” within which the self-government of the

¹⁴ Thomas Lemke: Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction (http://ieas.unideb.hu/admin/file_7425.pdf (30.09.2016) p.112

autonomous individual can be connected up with the imperatives of good government (. . .) If discipline individualizes and normalizes, and biopower collectivizes and socializes, ethopolitics concerns itself with the self-techniques by which human beings should judge themselves and act upon themselves to make themselves better than they are¹⁵.

It is a constructivist vision, in which (thanks to the development of technology) are realised new possibilities in a matter of an individual life by opening a diversity and multiplicity of norms of health. However, Rose himself noticed that this approach has also a dark side. It is unequivocal. There is a risk of deepening social inequalities and conducting research that are motivated by a financial gain. Moreover, new forms of social compulsion and institutional authority, that value life according to its (usually economical) needs. “Physicians, bioethicists, genetic counselors, scientists, and representatives of pharmaceutical enterprises and biotech companies popularize scientific knowledge, disseminate value judgments, and guide moral reflection (ibid., 40, 73–76). Personal striving for health and wellness is in this way closely allied with political, scientific, medical, and economic interests“¹⁶.

In the lecture given on 14th of March, 1979, Michel Foucault argues: Now obviously we do not have to pay to have the body we have, or we do not have to pay for our genetic make-up. It costs nothing Yes, it costs nothing-and yet, we need to see ..., and we can easily imagine something like this occurring (I am just engaging in a bit of science fiction here)¹⁷.

Is it really such a farfetched and fantastic vision?

Agnieszka Piotrowska

¹⁵ Thomas Lemke: Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction (http://ieas.unideb.hu/admin/file_7425.pdf (30.09.2016) p.117

¹⁶ Thomas Lemke: Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction (http://ieas.unideb.hu/admin/file_7425.pdf (30.09.2016) p.118

¹⁷ Michel Foucault: The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979 https://1000littlehammers.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/birth_of_biopolitics.pdf (30.09.2016) p.122