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# Transmodality, or What it Means to Have Intelligence

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#### Abstract

Footprint 36 features eight contributions that each in their own way examines how the discipline of architecture may contribute to resisting stupidity and relearning how to think by moving beyond disaffected apocalyptic forms of reasoning, imagining and creating. In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Sixth Extinction, we propose to reframe the concept of stupidity as the inability to discern between the singular (remarkable) and the ordinary (trivial), and not to confuse it with a failure to offer the 'right' solution (optimisation). Following Henri Bergson's understanding of problematisation, the concept of stupidity that we collectively examine is thus understood as the incapacity to properly determine a problem. Its near synonym 'idiocy' by definition prevents us from seeing beyond our narrow interests and ready-made solutions, thereby blocking environmental awareness and the possibility of trans-individuation, that is, of living and transforming collectively.

#### Keywords

Intelligence, archiving, instituting, complexity, proletarianisation

#### Transmodality, or what it means to have intelligence

Halfway through his Difference and Repetition, Gilles Deleuze poses a startling question: how is stupidity possible?1 While stupidity notoriously eludes descriptive analysis, it has been a major concern for thinkers and philosophers for millennia. The Stoics formulated sapientia (intelligence) as an ongoing struggle against stultitia (stupidity). However, as Miguel de Beistegui recently underscored, stupidity is not the opposite of intelligence, and it is not reducible to ignorance.<sup>2</sup> According to Avital Ronnell, stupidity is neither a pathology nor an index of moral default, and yet it is linked to the most dangerous failures of human endeavour.3 It is both the reason for and the consequence of what Bernard Stiegler has diagnosed as today's universal condition of proletarianisation, defined as a generalised loss of knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Stupidity, therefore, is not to be confused with a cognitive or psychological shortcoming. It is systemic insofar as it has become a planetary condition that is as produced as it is maintained, sustained, and occasionally actively promoted.

Stupidity has arguably become ubiquitous despite, or perhaps because of, the dominance of terms that belong to what Orit Halpern and Robert Mitchell call the 'smartness mandate' (smartphones, smart cars, smart homes, smart cities, whereby 'smart' first and foremost means 'automatic' (automatised statistics)).5 While stupidity has traditionally been the object of criticism, the acute self-referentiality of the sciences, philosophy and the avant-gardes has effectively rendered them inadequate to this task. We are no longer in the realm of critique, as the critical moment itself seems to be occurring behind our backs, threatening to obliterate the vital possibility of thought

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itself. Terms such as 'uncertainty,' 'risk,' 'complexity,' and 'crisis' fail to convey the irreversibility of the end of an era that used to define itself through 'rational' processes.<sup>6</sup> The question of stupidity is thus not exhausted by the discovery of a negative limit to knowledge. If we agree that – apart from climate thermodynamics and the anthropogenic deterioration of habitat and welfare – there is also an informational loss of potential that leads to cultural destruction and behavioural standardisation, then stupidity as proletarianisation comes close to entropy or a gradual decline into homogeneity.

Footprint 36 features eight contributions that each in their own way examines how the discipline of architecture may contribute to resisting stupidity and relearning how to think by moving beyond disaffected apocalyptic forms of reasoning, imagining and creating. In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Sixth Extinction, we propose to reframe the concept of stupidity as the inability to discern between the singular (remarkable) and the ordinary (trivial), and not to confuse it with a failure to offer the 'right' solution (optimisation). Following Henri Bergson's understanding of problematisation, the concept of stupidity that we collectively examine is thus understood as the incapacity to properly determine a problem.<sup>7</sup> Its near synonym 'idiocy' by definition prevents us from seeing beyond our narrow interests and ready-made solutions, thereby blocking environmental awareness and the possibility of trans-individuation, that is, of living and transforming collectively. According to Stiegler, this is an issue of individuation and disindividuation:

If we are able to be stupid, it is because individuals individuate themselves only on the basis of preindividual funds (or grounds) from which they can never break free: from out of which, alone, they can individuate themselves, but within which they can also get stuck, bogged down, that is, disindividuate themselves.<sup>8</sup>

#### N-1, the formula of immanence

It is indeed ironic that, in an era dominated by artificial intelligence and so-called smart solutions, stupidity has become ubiquitous. One could argue that stupidity is, in fact, our most urgent problem. Cognitively and behaviourally, it manifests as scepticism (denialism, conspiracy theories, cynicism), while at systemic and institutional levels, it gives rise to authoritarianism, war, resource depletion, and mass extinction. Alongside the thermodynamic entropy driving climate change, we witness habitat destruction, welfare degradation, and the informational loss of potential that leads to cultural destruction and behavioural standardisation.<sup>9</sup> Under these conditions, we might ask: What does it mean to resist stupidity and relearn how to think? We might seek guidance from the seventeenth-century philosopher Benedict Spinoza, who posed a similar question: Why do men fight *for* their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?<sup>10</sup> The paradox of desiring one's own oppression constitutes a fundamental ethico-political problem that not only persists but has intensified in both scope and complexity.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, this problem will continue to perplex us as long as we remain unwilling to challenge certain orthodoxies concerning the nature of free will. According to Spinoza, 'men believe that they are free, precisely because they are conscious of their volitions and desires; yet concerning the causes that have determined them to desire and will they do not think, not even dream about, because they are ignorant of them.'12 It is precisely these incorporeal yet real (quasi) causes, as effects of spatiotemporal dynamisms, that we must turn our attention to in order to map the continuously changing virtualities. The incommensurability between the virtual and the actual offers a way out of the structuralist, totalising fallacy in which the whole is merely the sum of its parts. Mereology, or part-to-whole relation, gives way to mereotopology, which aligns with Bergson's formula of the virtual - a non-totalising whole that exists (or better, subsists) alongside the actual parts.13 This implies that there is no simple one-to-one correlation between the action received and the action executed. Put succinctly: no mereology - no mechanicism with predetermined outcomes or solutions that extrapolate the future from the past.

Mereotopology, or a theory of parts and boundaries, becomes indispensable for distinguishing between the significant and the trivial. However, this distinction should not be confused with the eternal opposition between necessity and contingency. Instead, it demands a speculative pragmatist disposition based on a kind of tinkering, best described as a shift from the mechanism of 'if-then' to the machinism of 'what-if'.<sup>14</sup> What there is (ontology) and what we are to do (ethics) become mutually determining, reciprocally defined, and radically open. In other words, one does not step back or ascend to a higher level (N+1) to gain a synoptic perspective; rather, one intervenes directly in the causal fabric of reality to draw out salient points.<sup>15</sup>

To do this, one must be 'flush' with the world (N-1).<sup>16</sup> If N+1 represents the formula for transcendence, N-1 could be understood as the formula for immanence, which reverses the subordination of time to movement.<sup>17</sup> Time is not merely a measurement of movement; when unhinged, it frees us from our 'destiny'. The defatalising mereotopology does not reduce all contingent things to a necessary concept, but instead relates each singular concept to the variables that drive its mutation.<sup>18</sup> This process grants us access not to the future, but to futurity as a perpetually transforming relationship between past and present: implication, complication and explication. In the words of Manuel DeLanda:

If, like mathematicians, we use the variable "N" to indicate the number of dimensions, we can say that intensive thresholds always have N-1 dimensions: points in a line, lines in a surface, surfaces in a volume. The reason why this is significant is that in a materialist metaphysics the structure of possibility spaces must always be immanent not transcendent, and as Deleuze argues, transcendent forms of determination always exist on a higher dimension than the space in which a material process unfolds. That is, transcendent determination is always N+1. Aristotelian essences, for example, exist on a higher ontological plane than that of the individual entities they formally determine, the level of species or genus, endowing these individuals with homogeneity and unity from above. The immanent structure of possibility spaces, on the other hand, "however many dimensions it may have, ... never has a supplementary dimension to that which transpires upon it. This alone makes it natural and immanent".19

Once again, the most general definition of stupidity is the inability to discern between the singular and the trivial. It is not a failure to offer the right solution but rather a disorientation of the problem itself – either through overly myopic considerations or ready-made solutions. Arguably, all poorly posed problems are technologically and technocratically produced. Consequently, what is needed is a broad understanding of technology, which we propose to substitute with the more inclusive term 'technicity' – the entanglement of humans, the environment, and technology.<sup>20</sup> Our approach, which connects architecture, intelligence and transdisciplinarity, focuses on the technicities of archiving and instituting as a viable antidote to stupidity.

#### Modes of possession

When one refers to immanence, then one falls in line with a very peculiar philosophical trajectory. It is a trajectory that, from the Stoics to Bruno and from Spinoza to Nietzsche, wishes to prioritise the event in favour of the 'being' that undergoes the event. Quite the opposite, the subject is no longer undergoing anything since it does not exist in advance. The subject is produced by the event, so much so that for these thinkers, it would be better named a superject. In the same spirit, the object is also produced eventfully and does not pre-exist; in following a transformative curvature, a line of individuation, the object becomes an objectile. The couple superject-objectile, birthed in and through events, is now set to replace the fixed subject-object binary and we owe its coupling to a very unorthodox reading of admittedly one of the most intelligent and productive philosophers of all time: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Deleuze's engagement with his work. Now, both

Leibniz's grandeur and Deleuze's radical take on him are well beyond the scope of this introduction. Nonetheless, there is a crucial point (pun intended, as will soon be clear) that manages to introduce an equally radical (and admittedly much needed) perspective on how we can understand (architectural) intelligence.

With Leibniz, the rational morphs into the relational, regaining its original meaning (from the Latin ratio); his famous variety of 'reasons' - ratio essendi, ratio existendi, ratio cognoscendi, ratio fiendi - are not principles but cries for a thinking that operates relationally: the logic of relations of identity, relations of existence, relations of knowing and eventually relations of continuity.21 As such, the core concern of metaphysics shifts: questions of being are no longer the most pressing, but rather, questions of having.22 In line with a thinking that prioritises the relational event, one no longer asks what it is to be intelligent but what it means to have intelligence, to involve and be involved in relations that can amplify or diminish your acquired (and, therefore, always contingent) intelligence. Such are the Leibnizian predicates, not nouns-statements-objects regarding a subject but verbs-possessions-objectiles that form a superject. Therefore, Deleuze will add that when the object becomes an objectile then it encounters a group in transformation and when the subject becomes a superject then it becomes a point of view.23 The shortest definition of a point of view, according to Deleuze, is that it subsumes a series of transformations through which the objectile passes.<sup>24</sup> At this point monadism could be said to encounter nomadism. The nomadic subject 'consumes and consummates each of the states through which it passes, and is born of each of them anew'.25 If this feeling is mine (possession), then there must also be a 'me' (conjunctive synthesis).

Following his radical reading of Leibniz, as well as the conceptual injections that come directly from other philosophers (let's not forget that the superject is a term we owe to Alfred North Whitehead, almost two centuries after Leibniz's death), Deleuze claims that a superject is that which envelops, implicates, complicates and explicates, or, even better, folds objectiles: in short, a superject folds variable curvatures.<sup>26</sup> According to Deleuze, Leibniz is intentionally confusing us here. Yes, the superject and the point of view are simultaneously one and the same thing, yet he is guick to add that the point of view is the modality of the subject: the point of view is its inseparable mode, but it is not the point of view that defines the subject.27 In agreement with a metaphysics that moves from being to having, the subject is not the point of the view; the subject has a point of view.<sup>28</sup> It has points of view (and can have others) precisely by being able to occupy and envelop variable curvatures; the superject, therefore, is the affective folding

of points of view and those points of view are the modes that determine it by dint of the folding act. From modes of existence, we move to modes of possession.

Why is it, however, that points of view become so important in our approach towards intelligence? As outlined before, our most general definition of intelligence is the capacity to properly determine a problem. We are, nonetheless, aware that there is a term in the above definition that needs clarifying, if we are to avoid any N+1 hegemonical a priori. Therefore, the 'properly' in determining a problem itself needs to be determined. That is precisely our goal for the remainder of this introduction. To achieve that, let's complement our previous definition of the point of view: it is no longer merely the point from which a metamorphosis of the object (the objectile) is revealed, but, crucially, the point from which one becomes able to arrange cases. As Deleuze claims, 'that is fundamentally the point of view: arranging contraries, arranging inverses, arranging opposites'.<sup>29</sup> Deleuze further claims that one can only pose a problem if one is able to occupy a point a view according to which cases might be arranged corresponding to that problem.<sup>30</sup> He goes on to provide an example by referring to astronomy:

If you take the planets, you will note an insane rotation. The rotation of the planets is such an irregular curve that one must give up on everything, except if you find the point of view. The point of view is the sun. That works for the planets and for different planetary movements. But if it works for the planetary system, that doesn't work for the star system. One has to find another point of view.<sup>31</sup>

Such is the power of the point of view: it immediately asks for a de-universalisation of perspectives since what works for posing one problem, can very well be catastrophic for another. The point of view is the N-1 operator, immanence in action. It unleashes the creative potential of a radical perspectivism that should not be confused for an 'everything goes, and each can have their opinion'. It's not 'to each their point of view' but, quite radically, that 'truth refers to a point of view'.<sup>32</sup> In a problematic objectile, the intelligent point view is the one that can not only subsume its series of transformations but also permit the arrangement of cases that allow the problem to be examined precisely in its continuous variations.<sup>33</sup> Now the reason for our previous insistence on the singular and the trivial (the ordinary) becomes apparent.

#### I see you

For a point of view to be able to perceive the transformations of a problem it needs to be able to perceive the events that transform it, the inflections in the curvature of

its individuating line. That is what the singular stands for: points of inflection, events of transformation, moments of envelopment. It is opposed to the trivial and the ordinary because they simply indicate a (spatial and temporal, ergo experiential) continuity of inertia. The singular is the remarkable gasp of transformation, the sigh (for better or worse) for that from which there is no return. To operate on a problem implies precisely this, and that is what a Leibnizian analysis is: to occupy a point of view that can allow you to perceive what is singular and what is ordinary in a problem ('your' problem) that makes life both worth living and unbearable simultaneously. As Deleuze wonderfully puts it:

Take your life, and do your own surgery, your logical surgery. This will be in your life as you see it, extracting singularities, that is, all the moments that constitute events. That happens a lot depending on the scale: a birds' eye view, a close-up view; there are lots, but it matters little. That is, in the end, at a spot where it seemed ordinary, you will perhaps see that everything was already singularities. There are perpetually singularities going into singularities, but you also find the opposite, that where you thought something was singular, it was ordinary ... The coincidence of two ordinaries is required for there to be a singularity.

Everything becomes an issue of (schizo)analysis, both of what has occurred and of what is yet to happen. Therefore, the capacity of a point of view to arrange cases in order to properly determine a problem, affects both archiving and instituting. If to occupy a point of view is to express clearly the small part of the world that is linked directly with your body, then what about those events that you did not perceive directly in the past (archiving) or the ones that are yet to come (instituting)? The response is that clarity itself needs to be understood in gradients. What I experience is clear to me but, thankfully, I can occupy points of view of what others have experienced in the form of a knowledge that is now exteriorised (ex-organised and exosomatised); Leibniz would call it 'blind knowledge'.<sup>35</sup> That is why, Leibniz would add in an almost Spinozian fashion, the best soul is the one that will be capable of enlarging its region of clear expression.<sup>36</sup> The degree of someone's intelligence (the degree of perfection or wisdom in Leibnizian terms) is directly connected with their field of vision and with the increased multiplicity of points of view they can occupy.37 What stops us then? Why do we act stupidly?

The same way one has intelligence, a superject has stupidity. The stupid, for Leibniz, is the damned: it continues to express the whole world, but its subdivision is reduced to zero, its points of view are diminished, reduced to only one, interested only in the things that are of immediate relation to it.<sup>38</sup> The stupid therefore is the one who claims to posses a universal point of view; stupidity, or, better said, idiocy, is the direct effect of the N+1, where all cases are literally arranged according to what suits 'you', and therefore that 'you' becomes a universal 'you'. Leibniz is at his best when he claims that the 'damned person is not eternally damned but is forever damnable and damns itself at every moment.'39 To be an idiot is a choice and admittedly a soothing one, since it literally entails doing what seems to be best for you, what is in your interest. Moreover, to be stupid is energetically mindful, since you do not need to spend any effort in occupying another point of view besides of the one immediately attached to your body. Stupidity is systemic precisely because it is so easy to be stupid and escaping its (monetised, profitable and overwhelming) allure is, paradoxically, a question of self-enjoyment that is achieved only by going beyond oneself. As Deleuze claims:

Whatever the abomination of the world might be, there is something that cannot be taken from you and through which you are invincible. This is not your egotism ... It's certainly not your egotism; it's not your tiny pleasure about being "me." It's something much more grandiose that Whitehead called precisely *self-enjoyment*, that is, this kind of vital heart in which you contract your elements, whether these are elements of a music, elements of a chemistry, vibratory waves, etc. ... and become yourself by contracting these elements and by turning yourself back towards these elements.<sup>40</sup>

The issue therefore is how can we escape our damnation, our collective idiotic fate, by figuring out ways in which we can enjoy ourselves through going beyond ourselves, syncing with both the objectiles and points of view that make us, as well as with the objectiles and points of view that we ourselves are and can be for others. How can we, in other words, sense one another in a manner that expresses both the fact that we are bound (one) and yet differ (many). In such an understanding of self-enjoyment, what becomes critical is the amplitude of points of view we can both occupy and allow ourselves to become for others; as such, architecture becomes literally vital, since it has the capacity to both construct and remove points of view, to archive expressions of experiential regions (the manner, for example, that light enters through the well-established figure of a window) as well as institute regions we are yet to experience (the complete opening of the facade that now itself becomes a window, therefore altering the notion of light itself). In both cases, intelligence is no longer confused with attaining universal ideas. Intelligence, its architectural variations included, becomes the self-enjoying art of going beyond the given through technicities that, like a pharmakon, cut both ways.

### The sense of the possible

Such pharmacological technicities are responsible both for sedimenting poorly posed problems (as 'poison') and for contributing to the regeneration of critical thinking (as 'remedy').41 Crucially, any research on technicities demands a novel form of transdisciplinarity that is daring enough to follow a problem wherever it leads, which inevitably calls for the transgression of disciplinary boundaries. The N-1 category of the 'interesting' or 'significant' displaces the N+1 category of 'truth' or 'essence', and only transdisciplinarity can save us from the stupidity inherent in the platitudinal circuits of knowing and experiencing. Intelligence, therefore, becomes the sense of the possible. It is found in what is simultaneously personal and universal: in the self-restraint of the physicist searching for hypothetical particles; in the unease of the heterodox economist confronting 'market-based' solutions; in the architectural designs that foster different modes of life: and in the artistic endeavour to express what cannot be expressed otherwise. Such examples suggest that intelligence is inseparable from a certain 'awareness' and 'care', and, second, always engaged in a struggle against the tendency toward closure inherent in its conditions of existence. What binds these two together is the initiation of a process whereby one falls out of phase with oneself by shedding givens and preconceptions (formerly known as ideology).

If the institution is the expression of archiving processes that externalise (ex-organise) and store its living memory, and if the archive is the foundation of instituting processes that solidify a collective, then the very act of instituting which sustains collective intelligence - becomes inconceivable without novel forms of archiving.42 Rather than merely storing and indexing past solutions, the archive acts as a 'memory of the future', indicating what kinds of actions correspond to given conditions. By concentrating on the technicities that institute by archiving, and that archive by instituting, one counters forms of stupidity that exploit the archive to suppress the formation of a collective sense and sensibility. In sensing together a (pure) past so that a future can be articulated, both the past and the future are unhinged and thus pluralised, avoiding the hegemony of a controlling subject while simultaneously decolonising the very processes of archiving.

By acknowledging the heterogeneity of archiving and instituting – across time, space, and diverse histories and geographies – we propose to reconceptualise transdisciplinarity as transmodality.<sup>43</sup> The imperative is to engage with different modes of possession on their own terms, without imposing an external taxonomy or the principle of general equivalence from a dominant N+1 perspective. For instance, the enduring dominance of the Cartesian cogito – 'I think, therefore I am' – continues to overshadow

other modes of possession, ones that do not align with the self-assured light of reason. The sceptic stands as the enemy of the otherwise. We must challenge traditional Western representational forms of archiving in favour of processes that register minor modes of possession (or possible worlds) that make themselves felt without ever being fully present.

The N-1 approach is attuned to recognising differences that matter - a Batesonian difference that makes a difference. It promotes an archival and instituting technodiversity that corresponds to various forms of intelligence - forms that are both produced by and sustain different points of view and their modes of existence. Heterogeneous approaches to archiving and instituting open the potential for adopting diverse modes of sensing transmodally: from bio-diversity to techno-diversity to noo-diversity.44 These approaches do not only challenge traditional binaries, such as those between the objective and the subjective, or between the known to be archived and the knower who 4. examines it, but also reshape the very question of what can be archived. If we accept that what we archive determines who we are, then N-1 introduces a critical third term: how do different points of view archive differently?<sup>45</sup> The goal of N-1 is both to re-evaluate transdisciplinary reason now understood through its transmodality – and to archive alternative modes of knowledge production that are often overlooked or entirely unacknowledged.46

The quasi-stable regularities we encounter in actuality do not have a specific cause that can be demarcated and isolated but may only be understood as a heteropathic cascade producing an eventual 'because'.47 As Gregory Bateson insisted, if effects were reducible to their causes, novelty would be utterly impossible: 'we used to ask: Can a 7. computer simulate all the processes of logic? The answer was yes, but the question was surely wrong. We should have asked: Can logic simulate all sequences of cause and effect? The answer would have been no.'48 Footprint 36 aims to fulfil the encyclopaedic ambition of creating a 8. tentative archive for intelligence. If a transmodal archive serves as a monument to possibility - less a tomb and more a laboratory - it establishes a circuit that escapes the false immediacy of the present rendered as a pastfuture by creating a communication of potentials between different points of view. As Raymond Ruyer has it, 'memory is not the property of bodies. Bodies, or what appear as "bodies," are the property of memory.'49 By understanding intelligence as the enactment of archiving and instituting processes that enable transmodal passages, we hope to present compelling examples of intelligence, its threats, the ways it can be archived, and the collectives instituted through this process – a people to come.<sup>50</sup>

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- 47. 'Unlike homopathic laws that have an additive character producing highly predictable patterns of causal interactions
  heteropathic laws are somewhat idiosyncratic linking quite

different classes of homopathic properties across levels.' Terrence W. Deacon, *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 155.

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