

MULTITASKING ACTUALISATION IN MULTIMEDIA ART

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SUMMARY

Multitasking in multimedia and multimedia art, especially in the form of integrative activities or performances, presents an artistic actualisation via simultaneous processing by intensifying the experience as a process of affective individualization. As opposed to computer multitasking where a larger number of activities weaken concentration, i.e. attention is dispersed and memory is weakened, the orchestrated affective experience in multimedia is anchored in an existential support by artistic attention which results in an organic memory and authenticity. With this thesis we hope to disallow the findings of other scholars (such as Christine Rosen, Ph.D., in her work „The Myth of Multitasking“, Sead Alić, Ph.D., in ‘McLuhan, Announcement of Media Philosophy’ and others) who claim multitasking results in the loss of wisdom.

Key words: multitasking, multimedia art, performance, emotion, individuation, intuition, authenticity, existentialism

INTRODUCTION

Multitasking is a notion taken from the computer technology area and refers to simultaneous execution of multiple tasks or processes, so we can differentiate between computer and human multitasking. Although in computer multitasking tasks are being executed one by one, its complex arrangement helps build the world of illusionary parallelism known as symmetric multiprocessing.¹

Human multitasking has been frequently criticized as a simultaneous execution of several commonplace activities such as making phone calls and driving a car, which most frequently

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multitasking>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiprocessing> Accessed: October, 2011

leads to distraction and damage to short-term memory.² However, this problem can be solved by repetition and practice, especially if the tasks are interesting and amusing. Scientists believe that such continuous attention is only partial and specific to multitasking and that such cognition is not deep enough.³ An example of the most popular and most commercial multitasking is media multitasking – simultaneous usage of the Internet and web, e-mail or electronic mail, television, telephone, radio, video games, CD player etc. Research has shown that not only younger generations are especially skilful at these activities, but older generations as well. Still, it has to be emphasized that distraction and the need to be informed have prevailed over the importance of studying.⁴

However, this paper aims to introduce the notion of ‘multimedia art’ into the sphere of multitasking and to prove that multimedia art is a fertile ground for its application due to its *exceptional capacity of orchestrated affective experience of artistic action*, and that it is also very convenient for rooting the basic energy of existential support in authenticity and organic memory.

ARCHETYPIZATION OF MULTIMEDIA ART IMAGES

Some very impressive examples of anthropological artistic multimedia came in the form of archetyped performances given by the *Kugla glumište* theatre from Zagreb in the 1970s and 1980s. This theatre was composed of a group of university students, mostly from the Faculty of Philosophy, who were moving along the streets making strange gestures and mimes, accompanied by unusual sounds of musical instruments and silent, expressive performers who would, let us use anthropological terms, become the creators of archetypal images via their auras of 'doubles'. The audience would also follow them silently, almost hypnotized, not disturbing them in any way, but becoming with them an anthropological mediation of artistic

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_multitasking Accessed: October, 2011

³ „Continuous partial attention is multitasking where things do not get studied in depth.“ Accessed: October, 2011 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_multitasking)

⁴ The researchers conclude that the experiments “suggest that heavy media multitaskers are distracted by the multiple streams of media they are consuming, or, alternatively, that those who infrequently multitask are more effective at volitionally allocating their attention in the face of distractions.“ Accessed: October, 2011 <http://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/media-society/cognitive-control-in-media-multitaskers>

action of raising consciousness in/about surroundings. In this state of *theta consciousness*, the state of intense awakesness in extremely deep sleep, cognition through experience is immediately and completely guided by intuition.

Although we agree with the idea that archetypization of art hides certain dangers, which some multitasking scientists recognize by “bottleneck”⁵ body state in a “grey chaotic zone“, it still, contrary to doubts expressed by Sead Alić, Ph.D., in his inspired work *The Announcement of Philosophy of Media* hasn't substituted a man with a shadow through the fragmentation of myth, images “in lust for life” and “naturally emanated” and a needed stimulus. Therefore, archetypization of art is neither inferior nor opposed to the sound and original speech.⁶ In the same way, critical reducing of popular opinion of multimedia, according to Alić and his source McLughan, to the fact that “to think today means to consume kilometres of video material, audio records, libraries of texts, myriads of quotations, and in this treasure to extract / underline what is indicative, crucial, basic, pervasive“, we hope is not self-referential, but is a general critique of large masses. However, as we expected, Alić's observation does not contain an expression of deeper perception of visual art, which again incorporates deep emotions through which an image as „an archive of the world image“ offers authentic individual capacity via its humming.

INTELLECTUAL INTUITION

In the end of *The Announcement of Philosophy of Media* Alić is on the verge of 'structural intuition'⁷ and 'integral consciousness'⁸ in the artist, a freedom practitioner,⁹ who will put the end to media enslavement. Media manipulations are by all means dangerous, but in the sense in which a medium tends to become a message content¹⁰ the integration of multimedia

⁵ William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890.), according to Christine Rosen in *The Myth of Multitasking*, A Journal of Technology and Society, 2008. Accessed: October, 2011
http://www.thenewatlantis.com/docLib/20080605_TNA20Rosen.pdf

⁶ “Climbing Nietzsche's hill, we find ourselves in the attic /subconscious of the world which emits itself as naturally as an image. In order to feel alive, the body needs a stimulus, and the image is more powerful than words. It is a mine of energies which helps the critique of the fallen linguistic paradigm, but it is a mine of unstable cave corridors in which a man often substitutes himself with his own shadow. Sead Alić, *The Announcement of Philosophy of Media*, Center for Philosophy of Media and Media Research, Zagreb, 2010, p. 169.

⁷ Ibid. 396

⁸ Ibid. 344

⁹ Ibid. 346

¹⁰ Ibid. 394

authenticity into multimedia art also lies hidden. Therefore, coincidental synchronicity initiates multimedia art multitasking. In this process, in the case of the *Kugla glumište*, even ordinary 'background noise' is perceived and included. So, when discussing multitasking we can speak about intellectual intuition¹¹ which perceives through the unconscious and empathy and which combines empirical data and intensified observations, penetrating through the surface of the reality itself. Simultaneously, through this intuitive perception one can achieve a state of contemplation in which he feels completely free to choose the impulses of what he wants. Transcending the bare level of ordinary, everyday perception, a multimedia artist uses multitasking to avoid conceptualization of knowledge and enters a sphere of existence perception, sensitizing all his senses, questioning the boundaries, coincidences and phenomena.

EMERGENCE OF EXISTENCE THROUGH MULTIMEDIA ART MULTITASKING

In an attempt to explain the phenomenon of multitasking in multimedia art on how consciousness 'emerges into a being'¹² and how to build an immediate and non-cognitive relationship of oneself to oneself¹³, we will make wide use of achievements of a French philosopher, but also an existential artist, Jean-Paul Sartre. Bearing in mind an immediate character of existence cognition, it is evident that Sartre finds revealing intuition in consciousness.¹⁴ Regarding discussion on technology, it is necessary to point out that Sartre does not try to diminish human identity of man if he uses technology, denying or annihilating himself, because in the end, he is the one to assimilate it, just as we believe that by making technology anthropological, man has intensified his consciousness and has not become cybernated in the process. He has not exploited the idea of humanity with "Stay human!" nor become Transhuman.¹⁵

A sensibly, emotionally or intuitively mediated unity of glocal surroundings in cacophony and harmony of spheres is phenomenologically and existentially shown in coincidence and then

¹¹ <http://melschwartz.com/IntellectualIntuition.html>

¹² Žan-Pol Sartr: „Biće i ništavilo“, Nolit, Beograd, 1983, p. 16

¹³ Ibid. p. 14

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 22

¹⁵ „Kultura“, magazine, Cicero print, Beograd, 2011, dr. Divna Vuksanović, „Filozofija medija vs. misliti medije“, p. 22

assimilated through a multimedia artistic procedure, and later, in fact, it becomes humanized as anthropologically humanized technology.

Special significance of multitasking in both technological and artistic multimedia lies in the process of coinciding of the Artist with the Other. Appreciating his spirit and body, the artist will not forget either dimension, as Sartre lucidly objected to Hegel's consciousness ('But if Hegel forgets himself, we cannot forget Hegel').¹⁶ Rather, we meet the other either as 'existing-in-pair-with-the-other' or we, by coincidence, oust our own existence and reach for our being through the other. This 'absolute event' was maybe exaggeratedly perceived by Sartre as a distance, discomfort, shame and fear and called the process of 'temporalizing'.¹⁷ We think that in order to avoid reacting with shame while permeating the other with our objectivity, becoming self-aware through the other should be taken as responsibility, and one's self should be taken as a free project of returned love, beauty and admiration because we become engaged while simply 'bearing witness' by taking roots.¹⁸ Simultaneous quality of this type of multitasking in multimedia art cognition provides us with an opportunity to reveal the secrets of our own being through the Other, who is also engaged.¹⁹

In certain sense simultaneity at several levels of cognition or multitasking of multimedia art cognition makes '*...the total of means the exact correlation of my abilities*',²⁰ so we can say that it is a *performance of what we are*. Sartre claims that if the performance becomes too profane, its course is an inner world bleeding.²¹ When we undergo the process of self-awareness in our multi-dimensional multitasking performance, the other becomes what we do not want to become; an intuitive 'event that belongs to the coincidence of being'.²² If we refer back to the performance by the *Kugla glumište*, it obviously presented, as Sartre claims on this kind of fundamental project and coincidence process, '*(...) flickering of a being of a broken totality (...), and yet still specific in being through the explosion of this totality, and this is what the being of others and myself as the other would be.*'²³

¹⁶ Žan-Pol Sartr: „Biće i ništavilo“, Nolit, Beograd, 1983, p. 256

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 291

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 300

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 299

²⁰ Ibid. p. 300

²¹ Ibid. p. 301

²² Ibid. p. 305

²³ Ibid. p. 307-8

In these artistic circumstances we try to maintain our multimedia *objectivity in the sense of certain sensation cohesion which, with consistency and regularity, better corresponds with our performances*.²⁴ In the process of this multitasking of multimedia moment performance we are not a body, we completely *emotionally 'exist' the body*²⁵ and it is a pure *'texture of consciousness'*²⁶ or, as Sartre calls it, *coenesthésia*, meaning the unity of sensations or the sixth sense. Sartre believes we can resist the unutterable nausea which we then feel as a body-in-situation while we observe 'looking at looks' by being *proactive*, as an organic unity which acts and freely *chooses itself*.²⁷

Sartre mentions an interesting fact about a subversive loss of identity, which we can apply to actualisation moment in multimedia art action: "There is an *intention* to lose consciousness in order to annihilate the intimidating world in which the consciousness is engaged and which comes into being through it."²⁸ We try to win our own being back again because we are the freedom which aesthetically and ethically reveals itself by a 'mere fact that being-in-itself exists, as we have seen, and the value emerges to oust its being-for-itself.'²⁹

Existential performance of multimedia artistic action is multitasking actualisation and can be seen as a movement towards the emergence of a new foundation. Vanja Sutlić, in his afterword to Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism* disagrees with the existential philosopher in his own text *Metaphysics of Powerless Freedom*, on the radical new development. He thinks that Sartre, in his "exaggerated 'actuality' forgets the mission of philosophy to refer to what is important in history."³⁰ We are surprised that Sutlić, although having recognized "thoughtful power and greatness of his moral attitude"³¹ overlooked the fact that the entire Sartre's body of work is about the most important facts in human history and philosophy: existence through courage, spirit, body, being, and that he had thoroughly analysed these facts in historical context, because Sartre's existential philosophy is also a critique of civil philosophy and a revolutionary turning point towards new history, as Sutlić partially admits himself.³²

²⁴ Ibid. p. 321

²⁵ Ibid. p. 335

²⁶ Ibid. p. 336

²⁷ Ibid. p. 439

²⁸ Ibid. p. 443

²⁹ Ibid. p. 611

³⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, „Egzistencijalizam je humanizam“, Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1964, p. 96

³¹ Ibid. p. 96

³² Ibid. p. 96

Therefore, it is not surprising that new papers written by some American multitasking researchers have not gone into sufficient depths of possibilities of computer or human multitasking in man's existence. In *The Myth of Multitasking* published in *Journal of Technology & Society*,³³ Christine Rosen, Ph.D., analyses routine actions (already mentioned phone calls made while driving or typing on a computer) in multitasking and considers them harmful to short-term memory and work productivity, since they are distractors and a source of 'infomania'. Although she presents sufficient scientific evidence for this state of broken attention which psychologists call ADT (Attention Deficit Trait) and places gadgets research into the business world, only briefly mentioning the optimistic attitude of David Meyer, a psychologist, and the process of 'adaptive executive control',³⁴ it is still evident that the possibilities of multitasking in the creative world of art have not been sufficiently examined and should not be reduced to the same level of analysis.

CONCLUSION

In the long run, multitasking can, when used superficially, cause damage to memory and studying, and can even lead to weakened wisdom.³⁵ The aim of this paper was to show all ways in which we can deepen our experience and find existential foothold in multitasking multimedia art, both technological and human. The key process in artistic multitasking is, as Sartre explained, a proactive existence of the body, and we add: by intensified experience through emotional cognition, disciplined calming of the mind and intensified attention.³⁶ Although most researchers mention great stress and adrenaline release in intense situations of multitasking operations, we think the opposite: in multimedia artistic performances multitasking helps achieve a state of deep contemplation through which perceived existence can be adapted and recreated.

³³ http://www.thenewatlantis.com/docLib/20080605_TNA20Rosen.pdf, a Journal of Technology & Society, 2008. Accessed: October, 2011

³⁴ Ibid. p. 3

³⁵ Ibid. p. 6

³⁶ In his anthropological research Carlos Castaneda mentions 'assemblage point' or assembly point and its movement as a pre-condition for perception and movement through various realities of levels of the conscious and subconscious. („The Art of Dreaming“, HarperPerennial, New York, 1994)