Transcript of Part Four (by Andy Elliot, 2007)

Now that I believe more or less we have a basic ground from the previous lectures, in this lecture, in the present and the next one we will explore a few consequences of how the conditions of this indicated ground can affect things in general.

Today we're going to discuss territory, memory and subjectivity. Basically what happened is that this disappearance of Nature as the centre of the world for people with a realistic perspective and, consequently, the disappearance of the individual as the centre of the analysis for the people who were more subjective-orientated in their analysis, created a problem. They created a problem over the meaning of subjectivity: what is the meaning of subject, how do we construct a subject, either in the sense of the individual, or in the sense of philosophy. Because we have this simultaneous idea of time , we create a conflict with the idea of memory: what we need to remember, what we remember, do we remember, are we lost in memories, is memory important? All of these questions are raised in one way or another, starting with Bergson; for as we have seen Bergson was discussing the idea of memory involved in these problems, discussing memory of course in connection with this problem. The vision of our memory as a reservoir for our past, either in terms of family, country, culture, heritage: all of that has disappeared, or rather its legitimacy has disappeared. Because at the end of the day, memory is important because *we* believe it is important, because we *use* memory, it gives us some kind of identity. At the beginning of the 20th century and throughout this problem had a crisis. We are struggling to produce this connection between memory and identity, which is no longer automatic. It is not automatic that we have a past, a construction, memory which gives us some kind of identity. That model no longer works that easily. Thus the key issue becomes; What kind of memory we will have in the future? This is the key issue that people like

Virilio, and Deleuze are discussing.

It is connected also with the idea of territory, the idea which we are going to discuss in the second part of the module, which has to do with 'matter', with 'physical' reality. It deals with the idea that has been developed by cinema that what is real is not physical any more, which is a huge epistemic problem, and one which, in one way or another, according to Deleuze or other authors, can be approached from a cinematographical perspective. Why? Because cinema is grounded on this fact, that what we call reality nowadays is no longer physical. This assumption that reality means the 'physical world' is just not working in that way any more. That is why the idea of territory is important, and that is why I chose Space as a central concept. Because we have a problem here that I think can be approached only if we have a sort of perspective about space, *about how we construct this imaginary reality*. And this is why I have picked out from Borges, the Argentinian writer, this short piece, which has been translated into English, but I am using the Spanish one (see Borges, 'Del rigor en la ciencia'). However, this sarcastic idea coming through is that cartographers of an Empire in Asia were getting such a great sense of reality that a map had the same dimensions as the territory. So the funny thing about this approach from Borges is that a map is a sort of resume, a sort of representation of a particular physical dimension. They are not working any more when we start to have maps which have the same dimensions as the territory. Because then we have two worlds: the physical world and the other world with the same dimensions, the world of the maps. And this is a sarcastic account of what happens nowadays, when representation doesn't work any more, and what we have been assuming is a map, as a cartography of our space, is not necessarily working any more. I thought this was a nice metaphor to approach that.

Again, Gilles Deluze and Felix Guattari were two authors who approached this problem most extensively from a philosophical point of view; both authors focussing on how we deal with this disappearance of time and this problem of space. How we can re-chart the space in which we are living?; what tools, what new concepts we need to chart this new territory? I think that it is because of this questioning that they are using cinema, because cinema is one of those tools which should allow us to explore and understand this new territory.

Let me put it in another way. You can ask me why maps aren't working any more? What is behind this Borges account? Maps were a sort of representation of the physical world, (1) because we were thinking that representation is an accurate and true perspective and (2) that reality was grounded in the physical world. But if we realise that (1) the representation is not as accurate as we thought and it is therefore not true any more and (2) that the physical world does not necessarily match this idea of Reality with a capital, then the situation looks different. If we look from this perspective then maps really *aren't* working any more, and we need to start from scratch. We need to make the land in which we are living a new territory. So we need to reterritorialise things, and this is something that Deleuze has been working on especially, in particular in *Thousand Plateaux* (it has been translated into English).

Then the construction of space and the physical environment: well, again, what is a sort of conclusion here is that we don't have our surrounding as something given. Of course you can say that the physical world is there, and it is true. But it is not something organised in the way of the 19th century which is there with its logic and we need to understand that. No, we have a physical world, but what we do with it is something different; what we understand from it is completely different. What I am saying is that our sense of reality is a construction. It is not something which is outside us, it is a construction that we made. And this is exactly like in cinema. In cinema the sense of reality is a construction, which is precisely what Deleuze was proposing. We have a physical environment - we are living in a physical environment - but the meaning of that, the nuance of that is a construction. We need to construct it, because without this construction we cannot understand anything and we cannot protect ourselves: this is what Deleuze was discussing and this is what was very interesting. Now, if you like, there is another author working in an area similar to Virilio, picking up some points from Deleuze but developing them a bit more, this is an author called Marc Augé who discussed a sort of theory that can basically be explained like this: in our present, we are surrounded by places which are 'no-places'. What you might call 'no-places' are places which do not have a proper name, places where we are in transit; for example an airport. An airport is a no-place because we have no sense of being part of it. We go there, we stay there temporarily and we move on, constantly. What Augé is saying is that we are creating more and more of these places in our society, places in which we are no longer even living any more.

Sometimes even places like our homes are becoming transitional places. When we don't have this sense of roots, of ground, in a particular place, that is when we start to talk about these no-places. There is his book in the bibliography (I believe that it has been translated), it is not very complicated, and it's very short. I think that even for your general information outside of this course, it would be very interesting to have a look anyway.

So for the recommended readings I suggest Borges because his extract is very short, very funny, and very interesting; there are several different versions, I have indicated one edition but you can pick up whichever you wish. Of course, I have indicated chapters from Gilles Deluze and Felix Guattari, which are very representative of what we have been talking about. There is one article from *La cinéma selon Deleuze;* I have selected one article in particular which is very interesting. From Paul Virilio's *La machine de vision*, which I think has been translated into English, I have included Chapter One which I think has been translated from the French. Also from Virilio *Esthétique de la disparition*, which has been translated, and is interesting - it is a very short book, which is why I have not marked a chapter, as you could do it in one afternoon - he is an author who tried to analyse this idea of the invisible, which we will talk about in a little bit more depth in the second part of the course. Also, it was one of Virilio's first works. Then Marc Augé, *Non-Lieux*, which I have mentioned; I have indicated Chapter Three which I think is the more instructive one. Then from Pearson, *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual*, which makes a combination of all these issues from the perspective of media and cinema. The three chapters which I have selected form, I think, a sort of anthology.

Again, as with every week, these are just a few of the possibilities of interpretation and analysis; the bibliography about this subject is huge, as you can imagine. I am just looking at the ones who I believe connect more directly with this notion of space and the idea of European cinema, but if you have any trouble we can discuss it.

Recommended Reading

Jorge Luis Borges, ' On Rigor in Science ', in J. L. Borges, *Collected Fictions*

(London: Penguin, 1999; transl. Andrew Hurley).

Suggested Reading

Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers* (Paris: Minuit, 1990), Part II.

Gilles Deleuze/Felix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie?* (Paris: Minuit, 1991), Chapter 4.

Raymond Bellour, 'Penser, raconter. Le cinéma de Gilles Deleuze' in O. Fahle and L. Engell (eds.), *Le cinéma selon Deleuze* (Weimar: Universität Weimar/Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997), pp. 22-61.

Gilles Deleuze/Felix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), Chapter 12.

Paul Virilio, *La machine de vision* (Paris: Galilée, 1988), Chapter 1.

Paul Virilio, *Esthétique de la disparition* (Paris: Galilée, 1989).

Marc Augé, Non-*Lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), Chapter 3.

Keith Ansell Pearson, *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual* (London: Routledge, 2001), Chapters 1, 2 and 6.