

Transcript of Part Nine (by Andy Elliot, 2007)

Before I start the lecture I would like to briefly say something in connection with the second part of the module; as you noticed, probably, my references to the idea of space in the first part of the course were more frequent than they are now, but I am trying to go a little more deeply, more specifically. So as for references to space I assume that you have in mind what we discussed in the first part, and you can work out this connection with space. However, I will say that because, as I mentioned, the model of concepts and meanings nowadays are placed in an invisible domain, the idea of time, or the concept of time, is not as useful as it used to be, and a more relevant idea of space came up. To deal with this invisible area, time is not really a useful concept. And briefly that is why we are more or less forced to use the concept of space. I just wanted to briefly address this situation.

Following that, I would like to discuss today this idea of love, or if you like, of feelings, which is not the same, but we are going to see that later. Normally the idea of love was connected with a romantic perception. What I understand by romantic is that love was an area, a domain, of the invisible, so everything which was not real, not physical, everything which was important (identity, relation to others, etc.) but not visible in our ordinary life; that was love. So that was the idea of love normally associated with the romantic period. Of course, because it was the area of the invisible, it wasn't a very attractive area, it wasn't an area in which people were trying to explain things that normally they couldn't do, in Reality, or Nature. Briefly, and in a very simplistic way, that was the idea of romantic love. But what is paradoxical is that now the problem we are facing, what I call the *Lost Dimension*, is that what is important is that reality is invisible. So this monopoly that love was enjoying as a concept which dealt with all of the invisible parts of human being, this monopoly

disappeared because all of the relevant concepts in our life are invisible, and something we cannot see. This posed a problem for all, because love had been so effective and so important owing to this monopoly. So the idea that now reality itself is invisible makes love something very real, and that is something that cannot be accepted, and cannot work if we want to keep love in the old way. So we need now, as Niklas Luhmann, the author I have indicated in your suggested reading, says, we are now in need of a new code of intimacy. Because the monopoly of love regarding the invisible was important because it was a sort of codification of intimacy, and in a monopoly it was important because intimacy was something which was placed normally within individuals in a very special part which does not need to be confused with other areas. Considering that the monopoly of the invisible has been lost, love now needs to go somewhere else to recover this separate, special status. So what we need now is a new code of intimacy as Luhmann suggested.

Another aspect that I would like to discuss quickly is that this change can be seen from a sort of social point of view. In the past we have been in a society grounded in institutions, so every time we want to understand society we would go to the institution, we study them and we have a picture of society; stratification was the key to understand the place of individual within the society. Now we move to another environment in which society is grounded in symbolic values, as we discussed in the recommended reading of Bourdieu, who was discussing the idea that we have a culture now which has symbolic values. So if our idea of group or community is grounded on these symbolic values, that means that communication is crucial. So what was the role in the past of stratification in social terms to understand the place of an individual within a group now has been taken up by communication. If we want to understand something, we need to understand the communicative situation of a particular person. And that is when the idea of love is important. Because if we conceive that love is the domain, or the privileged place of communication, because when we are in love we communicate within a density, in semantic terms, which we normally don't do. If that is true then the idea of love is crucial to our understanding of society. And when I say Love, I refer as Luhmann did to this symbolic code. So if we are living in a society, to recap, which is grounded in symbolic values, communication is crucial because this exchange of symbolic values is grounded in communication. And remember this communication includes images, as we discussed

in the first part. So within that context, if we are looking for a new code of intimacy, love is important and relevant, because normally intimacy is the deeper area.

Another aspect which I would like to discuss is that if we have this problem of invisibility, this question in which reality is no longer physical, we face another problem; that is a problem of the body. In a world in which what we understand as the main concept of reality, or reality itself is not associated with the physical world any more, then the question is what is the role of the physical body, because at the end of the day the body remains a physical thing. So, that is why the body as such became a subject and there has been a lot of discussion in cinema, and semiotics and philosophy about the body, because the traditional idea of the body presents problems, was causing a crisis, and we need to reconfigure what we understand as the body. I mention this because that poses a problem with the idea of love. If what we are looking for is a new code of intimacy and we call that love, and at the same time we are looking for a new perspective about the body, then the two become connected. Not necessarily because, as we traditionally conceive, we express our conception of love using our body, but also because a more important concept appears which is this non-compatibility between perception and knowledge, which has been transferred to several levels in society. One level is our body, in the sense that this assumption that what our body does is connected deeply and necessarily with love is not working any more; it is wrong. And the typical example is the film in which you come across to the character who says (to another) that they are having sex for example, but they are not in love. You are using your body as a tool, for example, but that has nothing to do with love. This separation of love on one part and the body on the other is a consequence of the switch, of this change, that we have been discussing today and in previous lectures as well. As you can see, this is a very tricky area, if you want to call it that way. There are still a lot of discussions on this subject. What I think is important for you is to have two or three points regarding this, and see how you can use them watching a film. How you can use this description when you watch a film. I don't think you necessarily need to have a clear picture of this because there are several aspects of this idea of love and feelings, which are unclear. And this is why I recommend Luhmann, because of all the authors who are discussing this he is the more economical, synthetic and clear in this analysis.

For the suggested reading, again, I indicated more reading from Luhmann, which I think could be very instructive for you; from Deleuze and Guattari *What is Philosophy?* chapter Seven; a very interesting author, Richard Sennett, I have picked up Chapter Four and the Conclusion from *The Fall of Public Man*; and *The Corrosion of Character*, which is a very nice book, I have chosen chapter one; About Deleuze, John Rajchman, Chapter Six; Calvino has an interesting Chapter Four regarding feelings - I think it is translated as *American Lesson* - then a book I recommended before, Kevin Robbins, Chapter One, and again Martin Jay, Chapter one again. So I think if you go through the recommended reading and just pick up one or two and that should be enough to have an alternative perspective to the one I have just given to you. And that should be enough, if you decided to analyse a film from this perspective, it should be enough to make the first step. Anyway, you can discuss with me as usual.

Recommend Reading

Niklas Luhmann, 'Love as a Generalized Symbolic Medium of Communication' in N. Luhmann, *Love as passion. The Codification of Intimacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 18-33.

Suggested Reading

Niklas Luhmann, *Love as passion. The Codification of Intimacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 'Preface to English Edition', 'Introduction', Chapters 12 and 15.

Gilles Deleuze/Felix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie?* (Paris: Minuit, 1991), Chapter 7.

Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), Part Four and Conclusion.

Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character. The personal consequences of work in*

the new capitalism (New York: Norton, 1998), Chapter 1.

John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), Chapter 6.

Italo Calvino, *Lezioni Americane* (Milano: Mondadori, 1993), Chapter 4.

Kevin Robbins, *Into the Image. Culture and Politics in the Field of Vision* (London: Routledge, 1996), Chapter 1.

Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes. The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1994), Chapter One.