

The body is our general medium for having a world.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

All I have to do is to work on transition and technique.

Usain Bolt

TRANSITION MATERIAL

by Gisela Schmalz

PHENOMENON

The body is not a prison. It is not a constraint. It is a springboard to anywhere. Starting from a substance in time and space you can get to wherever you want to. You might reach out far – to other matter or beyond the material to the immaterial. Out of reach. Experience begins with the body. To get any idea of the world you need the body. You need your body to carry you and some other body to stimulate you. To live means to relate to stimuli. Life starts with the senses, with sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. Be aware of your body in relation to other bodies.

Curtis Anderson's "The Hot Seat - A Tête-à-Tête" offers its body to your body. Behold "The Hot Seat's" Gestalt. See its \$-shaped body, its size, its colors green and gold, the reflections of light. Capture the sound waves floating around this body through the air. Lick the green-tinted leather and the stainless steel. Enjoy the taste (or not). Smell the leather. Touch the S-curves of the body. Touch the steel-bar and feel how cold "hot" can be. Hidden from immediate perception, the steel-bar contains 3³ kilos of gold. 27 gold bars have been shoved into "The Hot Seat's" bar, while a notary was witnessing. This seat is full of gold, a transition metal, that the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) defines as a chemical element "whose atom has a partially filled d sub-shell, or which can give rise to cations with an incomplete d sub-shell". "The Hot Seat's" 3³ inner gold bars underline the fact that this body is valuable. Depending on the gold price per kilogram its interior only is

roughly worth \$ 1.15 million. Its inner transition metal also alludes to the “The Hot Seat´s” surplus value – its promise to trigger transitions.

This body loaded with transition metal leads you from A to B, from one pole to another, from the tangible to the intangible, from this place in time and space to wherever. Thanks to its multiple bipolar nature “The Hot Seat” enables a plethora of transitions, including the following three.

TRANSITION I: Real Currency to Virtual Currency.

“The Hot Seat´s” interior is filled with gold. Its outer shape is that of the American dollar sign. This bipolarity drags you right into the history of money. It invites you to contemplate on the currency transition from the dollar pegged to the gold standard to a free floating dollar. The United States dollar used to be linked to the value of gold until August 15, 1971, when President Richard Nixon declared the end of the international convertibility of the dollar to gold. In addressing this one transition from the gold standard to its abandonment “The Hot Seat” alludes to the whole chronicle of currency changes. It tells the story of the shift from real money (legal tender) to virtual money. The short version of the story goes like this: People initially exchanged goods and services directly. This process called bartering required no money. To ease and to expand commerce people started using objects like whale teeth, feathers, shells or barley to pay for goods. They started minting coins made of valuable metal such as silver or gold to use it as money until a substance much lighter to carry around in a purse was being introduced, sheets of paper with their value printed on it. In the beginning the value of these bills was linked to the value of a fixed quantity of gold. After the “Nixon Shock” in 1971 and after the last traces of the gold standard had disappeared in 1973, the paper money´s value consisted in nothing but trust. Markets could be flooded with bills to boost commerce. When credit cards and electronic banking technology substituted paper money, commerce was stirred even more, particularly global trade. Digital technologies gave way to new payment methods such as paying via mobile phone. Digital machinery also enabled new currency to be created. Cryptocurrencies such as Ethereum, Ripple or Bitcoin no longer operate with coins. Those currencies are connected to a whole new payment system. Those peer-to-peer-networks based on code allow users to interact directly without any intermediary or trusted third party such as a government or a bank involved. The asset cryptocurrency works via cryptography, a combination of digital

techniques that allows controlling the creation of supplementary units, to secure transactions and to verify the asset transfer. The new money operates entirely virtual.

The "The Hot Seat" might provoke thoughts the disembodiment of money. It might set the brain in motion to consider the intrinsic value and the missing value of money as well as the value of tangible and intangible stuff, compared to its price. Currencies smooth the transitions of goods and services. So currency changes might also change exchange processes. Any exchange is a twofold transition. One market player hands something to another, who hands something back in return. How will deals be fixed in the years to come? Will hands really be involved in future commercial transactions? If yes, how? What are these body parts supposed to do, when most business partners might never see and not know each other personally? Sellers and buyers might never shake hands. Their hands just serve to type or dictate numerical sequences to conclude transactions. How smooth will goods and money flow in a global market fueled by virtual money? Who will benefit? Who will lose? Exchange will not stop, nor will currency changes. This process is open-ended. "The Hot Seat" can give you an idea of the transition of money.

TRANSITION II: Body to Soul.

Behold "The Hot Seat". See the \$-shaped body, its size, its colors green and gold, the reflections of light. Capture the sound waves floating around this body through the air. Lick the green-tinted leather and the stainless steel. Enjoy the taste (or not). Smell the leather. Touch the S-curves of the body. Touch the steel-bar and feel how cold "hot" can be. Be fully aware of your perception and oblivious of being aware at the same time. Trust Maurice Merleau-Ponty: "As soon as there is consciousness, and in order that there may be consciousness, there must be something to be conscious of, an intentional object, and consciousness can move towards this object only to the extent that it 'derealizes' itself and throws itself into it." Notice that this \$-shaped something is a seat. Relate. Move. Throw yourself into "The Hot Seat". Put your body on this body. Sit down. Be conscious of the steel-bar's coldness under your thighs, feel the leather-clad inner part of the \$ in your back and indulge in the transition.

The body is the seat of the soul. This seat carries its soul within and without showing it. Anyway it allows you to sit on it – on its soul and it permits you to reflect about its soul, your

soul, souls in general and all its relations. "The Hot Seat" might prompt some soul searching. It invites you to travel from its exposed exterior to its concealed interior – a most valuable transition metal. According to Martin Heidegger the exterior and the interior are twinned. The obvious, unconcealment (aletheia), and the covered, concealment (lethe), are inseparably amalgamated. The hidden is embedded in the exposed. Heidegger identifies the hidden as its heart, not as its soul: "Self-concealing, concealment, lethe belongs to aletheia, not just as an addition, not just as a shadow to light, but rather as the heart of aletheia." "The Hot Seat" inspires you to interact with its lethe and to transcend it in getting deeper to find aletheia. Whatever you might detect buried within the seat's belly, gold, a transition metal, value, soul, mind, spirit or heart; enjoy not only the found, but also the process of finding – the transition from your body to a soul. Martin Heidegger misses the process. In stating that lethe and aletheia are two sides of the same coin, he is unable to notice any transition. Don't make the same mistake. Undergo the transition.

TRANSITION III: Body/Mind to Body/Mind

"The Hot Seat - A Tête-à-Tête" is shaped like an \$ and not as a ¢. Other than a ¢ a \$ has two booths to sit in and two backs to lean on. This two-seater incites a tête-à-tête. So you might invite somebody to sit with you. Hello. Sense the difference between sitting alone and sitting à deux. Feel the coldness of the steel-bar under your thighs and the softness of the leather-clad wood in your back. Does your co-sitter feel something similar? Relate. Let a "Tête-à-Tête" happen. Feel the dynamics between the two of you. Talk about it. Start a conversation, a dialogue, a debate, a dispute, even an argument - exchange. Communicating is transitioning. Sense the transition to the other. Sense the other's transition to you. Receive and convey. The body is language, therefore capable of communicating. Two corporal poles are able to mutually transcend their corporeality. Maurice Merleau-Ponty sees no difference between the human body, its movements, gestures and speech. According to him the two poles, the sensual and the meaningful, are in conjunction: "It has always been observed that speech or gesture transfigure the body, but no more was said on the subject than that they develop or disclose another power, that of thought or soul. The fact was overlooked that, in order to express it, the body must in the last analysis become the thought or intention that it signifies for us." Let your body speak. Let your body be the spirit you want to deliver. Become the meaning of your words. Dare to communicate. Pick up the

signals of the other. In perceiving the other's expressions, you might perceive your own and vice versa. Look into the eyes of your co-sitter and see its colors green or golden. Capture the sound of her/his voice. Embrace your co-sitter, kiss him or her. Lick the other's lips and enjoy the taste (or not). Smell the lips, the tongue. Touch the skin, the curves of the other's body. Feel how hot "hot" can be. Perceive the flow between two bodies and two minds. Body to body, body to mind, mind to mind. Indulge in the "Tête-à-Tête" as if you underwent the ultimate transition. Feel the value of your physical currency. Feel the other body's value. Explore the sensual gliding into the consensual. Be in transition. Be transition. Slide into a finer transition. Try love, a transition process that never ends.

POSSIBILITIES

The internal horizon of Curtis Anderson's "The Hot Seat - A Tête-à-Tête" is wide. It allows you not only to perceive its manifold bipolarity. It also encourages you to travel from pole to pole, to undergo a transition from its materiality to the immaterial. Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty ignore that there might be a development from one entity to the other. Heidegger denies the difference between the revealed and the concealed. Merleau-Ponty states that in order to express an idea the body has to become this very idea. They assume an identity in difference: The hidden is (in) the open and the thought is inseparable from bodily gestures and speech. Analytically both philosophers depict the dissimilarities, but they dismiss the Hegelian idea of process. Curtis Anderson embraces exactly that idea. He doesn't have to go back to Descartes' mind-body distinction to defend the idea of two poles and of transition. He places "The Hot Seat" in the here and now. He doesn't need to send it into space, not even to cyberspace, to illuminate the process between two ends of perception. The "The Hot Seat's" materiality unleashes its full transition potential within this world. Before experiencing the final transition from life to death, the perceiver is invited to seize some valuable transition opportunities.

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