Pažnja! Pažnja! Šta je sa našom pažnjom?

Igor Simić

Pre nekoliko nedelja mi je profesor sa Prinstona dr Grejam Bernet zakazao intervju oko jedan po podne u svom stanu u Njujorku. Pisao sam mu bez uvoda ili preporuke, naprosto zato što sam bio upoznat sa njegovim tekstom u „Njujorkeru“*, Da li će humanističke nauke preživeti veštačku inteligenciju?* kao i intervjuom za „Njujork tajms“ podkast kod Ezre Klajna na temu pažnje. Takođe sam znao i za njegovu Stroter školu radikalne pažnje (Strother School of Radical Attention), koja organizuje događaje, seminare i umetničke radionice u duhu kolektivnog učenja koje nije samo „digitalni minimalizam“ kao stil života, već pokušaj političkog delovanja. Rezultat tog zajedničkog, aktivističkog i teorijskog rada je knjiga *Attensity! A Manifesto of the Attention Liberation Movement* (*Manifest Pokreta za oslobođenja pažnje*). Takođe, dopala mi se kovanica *human fracking*, kojom referiše na nasilnu i zagađujuću hidrauličnu tehniku frakturisanja uljanih škriljaca za izvlačenje nafte. Time Grejam sugeriše da velike kompanije kao što su Meta, Alfabeat, ByteDance itd. tretiraju nas kao resurs iz koga **isisavaju pažnju**. Vrlo srdačno mi je odgovorio na imejl, pokazao interesovanje za moj rad i uglavio me između dva putovanja, povratka iz Los Anđelesa i odlaska za Madrid, kako bismo se videli pre mog puta za Beograd.

Sastanak je bio zakazan za 9. jun. Dan ranije, Njujork Niksi su izgubili od San Antonija, ali su i dalje vodili 2:1 u finalu NBA. Uz letimično praćenje košarke, dve grupne izložbe koje sam tih dana imao, rada za moj gejming studio i snimanja prvog dugometražnog filma, pažnja mi je bukvalno rasturena.

Temom pažnje sam se pomalo bavio u svom kratkom animiranom filmu, koji

će imati premijeru u septembru u Švajcarskoj, a počinje citatom Simon Vejl: „Pažnja je najređi i najčistiji oblik darežljivosti." Intuitivno sam osećao da njen rečnik obuhvata nešto blisko našem izrazu **„pokloniti pažnju"**, što ukazuje na gest brižnosti. U tom smeru razmišlja i istoričarka umetnosti Kler Bišop: „Pažnja [*engl. attention*] potiče od latinskog *attendere*: kombinujući *at*(blizina) i *tendere* (usmeriti). Konotacija je manje shvatiti ili uhvatiti, a više *težiti ka* i *reciprocitet* – posvećivanje pažnje onome što zaokupira i druge."

Danas se najčešće o pažnji govori u kontekstu **upravljanja** pažnjom u **ekonomiji pažnje** *(attention economy*), usled gejmifikacije svakodnevice u zadacima na poslu, dostavi hrane, rekreativnog vežbanja i društvenih mreža. Dok jedni gledaju da zarade na tome, drugi se bore protiv, te je došlo do zabrane telefona u učionicama u Australiji, Francuskoj, Italiji. Tako je Hju Grant lice britanske kampanje *Zatvori ekrane, otvori umove* (*Close Screens Open Minds),* koja za cilj ima podizanje svesti o tome da digitalni alati kao učila (tzv. *edtech*) štete razvoju dece i njihovom kognitivnom sazrevanju.

S druge strane, moj otac, rođen na selu pre Drugog svetskog rata, bez električnog svetla u kući, a mene je dobio u vreme dajl-ap interneta, govorio je da mi zavidi na internetu i pristupu snimcima mislilaca koje je cenio i čije je govore voleo da sluša, poput pisca i aktiviste Džejmsa Boldvina. To je zanimljiv slučaj gde **distrakcija** kliktanja na Vikipedijine fusnote vodi širenju vidika. Veze koje čine odnose otac–sin, prijatelji, obrazovne institucije, politička interesovanja, televizija, internet itd. je nešto što Iv Siton zove **ekologija pažnje** u kojoj može da se razvija kolektivna **polifona pažnja**. Siton pominje i ideju koje sam se nesvesno dotakao u svom petominutnom crtanom filmu: **„Treba da biramo svoja otuđenja jer neka otuđenja nas obogaćuju."**

No, tema poslednjih godina postaje još kompleksnija ako uzmemo u obzir i mašine kao vrstu subjekta. Jedan od najznačajnijih inženjerskih radova u

oblasti veštačke inteligencije se zove ***Pažnja je sve što ti treba*** (*Attention is All You Need*), gde pažnja predstavlja tehnički termin za dodelu važnosti određenoj informaciji, slici, itd. u mašinskom učenju. Baš tih dana kada sam bio u kontaktu sa Grejamom, upoznao sam i umetnika Trevora Paglena. Sa njim ovog puta nije došlo do uklapanja rasporeda, pa ovde samo uključujem fotografiju posvete na prvoj strani njegove nove knjige *Kako videti kao mašina*. Trevor kaže da su se tokom njegovog života desile tri revolucije u našem odnosu sa slikama: prva je **nastanak digitalnih slika** (osnov .jpg slike je kod), druga je **sposobnost kompjutera da vidi** (mašine tumače slike, kao, recimo, *face recognition* tehnologija, komunikacija je često mašina–mašina bez čoveka) i treća je **generativna AI** (lakoća stvaranja vizuelnih materijala, pa samim tim i ukidanje autorstva).

Najtačniji siže Paglenovog celokupnog rada jeste njegov zaključak koji se čita gotovo kao epigram: „**Mi više ne gledamo slike – slike gledaju nas.“** Naprosto, svaka slika sada u sebi sadrži kod sa okidačima koji su povezani sa našim očekivanjima, pažnjom, emocionalnim stanjem i sl. Slika je operabilna, a ne pasivna. Možda ste ispratili kontroverznu teoriju da je bend *Geese* postao popularan usled neke vrste organizovanog ispiranja mozgova (*psyop*) putem interneta, kroz veštačke debate na društvenim mrežama, botove u komentarima, plaćenu simulaciju trendova na TikToku, i da je time definitivno proglašena smrt autentičnosti u muzici. Paglen na primeru CIA objašnjava kako ubacivanjem slika u medijsku cirkulaciju možete **potpuno promeniti nečiju percepciju realnosti.** Sve te zamršene ideje imao sam u glavi dok sam tog vedrog dana hodao do adrese koju mi je poslala asistentkinja dr Grejama Berneta.

Grejam je otvorio vrata svog stana na poslednjem spratu zgrade u Vašington hajtsu. Iako je u srednjim pedesetim, izgleda kao da je u ranim četrdesetim, kao da je spreman za hajk. Dok ulazim u svetlo, prostrano potkrovlje, Grejam me obaveštava da je pod malim pritiskom jer treba da se pakuje za put u

Španiju. Spremao je lagani ručak sa salatom, dimljenim lososom, maslinovim uljem, a pili smo vodu u koju je dodao kap belog vina. U toku ručka nam se pridružila i njegova ćerka Frančeska. Nakon što sam odgovorio na njegova pitanja o samom intervjuu, stišao je malo muziku, pa smo ceo razgovor od sat vremena obavili za ugaonim kuhinjskim pultom. Pitao sam ga kako se zainteresovao za istoriju nauke, oblast koju predaje na Prinstonu.

„Osnovna je činjenica, koje se Frančeska seća jer sam o tome govorio na naninoj sahrani“, pogledao je ka ćerki pored sebe, „da je moja majka bila rani, ženski istraživač u oblasti koja nije usko istorija nauke, već literatura i nauka. Bila je ekspert za francusku književnost 17. veka. Njen dug, neobjavljeni rad o kojem sam govorio na sahrani je knjiga o tome kako je naučno razumevanje svetla u 17. veku promenilo poetsku i liturgijsku upotrebu svetla. U vreme kada je fizičko obrazloženje svetla postalo dominantno, šta se dogodilo sa idejama kao što su svetlost blagodati, svetlo ljubavi ili svetlo uma? Imao sam dvanaest-trinaest godina kada je ona pohađala dodatne časove fizike na Univerzitetu u Pensilvaniji jer je želela da razume kako svetlost fizički funkcioniše“, govorio je Grejam nakon što smo se kucnuli čašama i počeli da jedemo.

„To je delimično razlog što sam se zainteresovao za istoriju nauke. Doduše, ja sam prevashodno bio na trasi da postanem student baš nauke, ali zbog roditelja koji su voleli i predavali literaturu otišao sam u ovom smeru. Moj otac je radio na istoriji arhitekture i literature u Francuskoj, kako je Hausmanizacija Pariza uticala na Bodlerovu poeziju. Dakle, bio sam u miljeu koji...“

„Ali oni zvuče kao srodne duše, tvoji roditelji“, upao sam žvaćući salatu jer sam već idealizovao njegove roditelje kao velike životne i stvaralačke ljubavi poput filmadžija Džona Kasavetesa i Džine Roulands. Naravno, to su bile samo moje projekcije.

Očevo zanimanje za uticaj arhitekte Barona Hausmana na nastanak pariskih bulevara, stambenih zgrada, kafea, šoping izloga u sebi sadrži pitanje: kako političko-tehnološki urbanizam oblikuje naš unutarnji život? Film nedavno preminulog Vlatka Gilića, *Kičma*, dramatizuje upravo tu tenziju kroz žanr psihološkog horora. Ne čudi zašto Grejama interesuje uticaj **nevidljive infrastrukture tehno-kapitalizma na naš doživljaj sveta**.

„Da, bili su i jesu posebni ljudi. I definitivno su podigli mene i sestru Mariju uz ohrabrenje da možemo da postignemo bilo šta. Uticali su na to da razvijemo ljubav prema tekstu i istraživanju. Otac me je vodio da vidim Rubensovo *Skidanje sa krsta* u Antverpenu kada sam imao trinaest godina. To je bio naš put, otac i sin. Istraživao je o francuskom pesniku Teofilu Gotjeu, koji je napisao pesmu o toj slici. Posle sam upao na Prinston, bavio sam se matematikom, trebalo je da postanem doktor, da budem mali naučnik. Ali završio sam na predmetu… pričao sam ovu priču pre…“ Grejam kao da se trudio da mi ispriča što više u što kraćem roku jer smo obojica znali da će za nekih četrdeset pet minuta on imati onlajn poziv, pa odlazak na aerodrom, a još nismo došli do glavne teme. Ali sam se poistovetio sa njegovim intelektualnim svaštarenjem, pa mi je bilo zanimljivo.

„Napravio sam pauzu između srednje i koledža. Otišao sam u Indiju i teško se razboleo. Dobio sam meningitis. Bio sam hospitalizovan, a kad je trebalo početi koledž i dalje sam bio suviše bolestan da bih ga pohađao na uobičajen način. Bio sam i dalje slab da bih sedeo uspravno, pa me je otac odveo na Prinston i **prijavio na predmete za koje je smatrao da će mi se svideti**. I jedan predmet je bio o naučnoj revoluciji. Taj profesor je postao moj mentor. Već pete nedelje fakulteta sam otišao u njegovu kancelariju i pitao ga kako mogu da dobijem njegov posao.“

Ukratko, Grejama je fascinirao odnos analitičkog razmišljanja u nauci u kojoj **nastaju „istine“** i šire kulture u kojoj nastaju **ideje o smislu**. Ime

profesora koji je uticao na Grejama je Majkl Mahoni i na neki način je Grejam zaista nasledio posao svog harizmatičnog mentora.

„Moja majka je bila pomalo mističarka – napuljska rimokatolikinja. Moj otac je neka vrsta sartrovskog ateiste. Dakle, od najranijih trenutaka u mom odrastanju postojala su dva načina da se posmatraju stvari"... Shvatio sam da je u interesovanjima njegove majke postojala fascinacija za tenziju koja kopka i njega: kako profanizacija sveta (materijalno, merljivo, ekonomsko) utiče na duhovno tumačenje sveta (smisao, vera, zajednica).

„Ista situacija kod mojih..."

„Zanimljivo, kakva je podela kod tebe?"

„Otac ateista, inženjer, mama je pravoslavna", rekao sam.

„Da, onda kapiraš kako to pravi izvesnu teksturu u odrastanju. Zapravo, moja sestra, koja je vrlo cenjen advokat za ljudska prava i kul osoba, udata je za Albanca i ne želi da krsti decu. Ja sam, zapravo, katolik. Slušao sam papinu encikliku o veštačkoj inteligenciji. Ne znam da li si je čuo."

„Jesam."

„Zasuzio sam slušajući je. Veoma je dirljivo kada neko pokušava da artikuliše zašto nam je stalo do ljudi i šta znači izgraditi **'imperiju ljubavi'**. Crkva je napravila velike greške kroz dve hiljade godina, ali je i dalje tu da kaže da ne možemo da prevaziđemo čoveka na mašinski način. Projekat čovekove transcedentnosti treba da ide kroz ljubav, a ne kroz pokušaj da pobegnemo od svojih granica jer su **naše granice mesto gde ljubav postaje moguća**. Tu počnem da se osećam pijano i postanem emotivan", već mu je glas malo zadrhtao.

Iako je u daljem toku razgovora fokus bio na istoriji pažnje i aktivizmu, ovaj

trenutak je obojio moje viđenje Grejama. Shvatio sam da iza termina kao što je „human fracking“ i teze da su velike kompanije orobile našu pažnju, leži uverenje da se radi o **odsudnoj borbi za opstanak čoveka**, ali ne čoveka kao životinje koju možemo trenirati kao Pavlovljevog psa, već odbrani metafizičkog u čoveku, gde se nalazi **poslednje uporište slobodne volje**.

Na početku enciklike o veštačkoj inteligenciji, *Magnifica Humanitas*, papa Leo XIV se poziva na papu Lea XIII (i njegov *Rerum Novarum*), koji je smatrao da je crkva dužna da se bavi društvenim realnostima svog vremena zarad očuvanja **„dostojanstva čoveka“**. U to vreme, 1891. je obeležila industrijalizacija koja je dovodila do eksploatacije radnika, čak i dece, te je papa podržao razvoj sindikata i **distributivizam** kao treći put između kapitalizma i socijalizma.

Crkva je pokušavala da prevaziđe **instrumentalizaciju čoveka**. Dostojanstvo takođe podrazumeva i nesavršenost ljudi: „Građenje zajedničkog dobra znači prihvatanje ograničenja i slabosti ljudskog roda bez smatranja da su greške koja treba ispraviti.“ Tako da se sadašnji papa dotakao i unapređenja post-čoveka, tehnološki i medicinski, što prema crkvenim učenjima vodi **dehumanizaciji**. Tu spadaju Maskov američki, neoliberalni Neuralink, ali i sovjetski projekat besmrtnog, Novog Čoveka. Treba imati u vidu da je pitanje dostojanstva čoveka na udaru još od Kopernika, tj. ideje da Zemlja nije u centru kosmosa, pa iz tog ugla deluje da je u 21. veku čovek pao na još niže grane.

Ceo tekst enciklike iz 2026. počinje kontrastom između arogantne izgradnje Vavilonske kule koju najbolje poznajemo sa Brojgelove slike i iz udruženog obnavljanja Jerusalima. Jedno predstavlja tehnokratsku vlast i profit, a drugo zajedničko pregnuće koje uključuje sve zarad „**zajedničkog dobra**“. Papa Leo XIV piše da rezultat izgradnje ambiciozne, monolitne, Vavilonske kule sa ciljem jednog jezika, jedne tehnologije zarad ovozemaljske

slave „nije bilo jedinstvo, već disperzija“. Ta disperzija podrazumeva **naoružavanje veštačke inteligencije** za potrebe rata u globalnoj trci, ali i veliko **raslojavanje**: „Kada je moć koncentrisana u nekolicini ruku, teži da postane skrivena i da izbegava javni nadzor, povećavajući rizik od iskrivljenih oblika razvoja koje stvaraju nove zavisnosti, isključenja, manipulacije i nejednakosti.“ Papa direktno kritikuje najmoćnije kompanije i investitore iz Silicijumske doline. Mada je sama Katolička crkva prilično netransparentna institucija, pa izjava ima dozu nenamerne ironije.

Ipak, zanimljivo je da je na događaju bio prisutan i Kristofer Olah, suosnivač kompanije Antropik. Antropik jeste implementirao izvesne sigurnosne mere zbog kojih je u sukobu sa Pentagonom, ali u praksi stalni je pritisak da se biznis isplati, što je sam Olah u kratkom govoru priznao. Američka vojska ipak koristi Claude, AI kompanije Antropik, za odabir vojnih ciljeva u Iranu, a direktor Dario Amodei i dalje ne zna da li je njihov AI korišćen kada je pogođena škola. Paralelno se sprema teren za izlazak kompanije na berzu, a tada propovedi o etičkim misijama postaju tercijarne u odnosu na interes akcionara. Moralisanje u postojećem „socijalizmu za velike kompanije“ nije moguće, a regulative se vide kao kočničar progresa. Prema tome, najznačajniji doprinos enciklike jeste da **se uopšte bavi pitanjem novih tehnologija** iz više uglova, pa i pitanjem **koncentracije** kod dece. Ali, za razliku od prethodne enciklike pape Lea XIII, ova nije ponudila konkretan predlog, već kritiku jer je problem daleko složeniji.

Sam papin govor odslikava Grejamovo zanimanje za to kako su dva načina razumevanja sveta bila suprotstavljena: kako je naučno istisnulo religijsko poimanje sveta.

Uprkos maloj nervozi jer nam je curelo vreme i dalje me je zanimao njegov put od istorije nauke do aktivizma, pa sam ga pitao o njegovim ranijim knjigama na temu kartografije i razvoja nauke kroz prizmu kolonijalizma. Te

teme su ga dovele do okeanografije i proučavanja kitova: uvideo je na primeru kitova da je došlo do radikalne promene u našem poimanju životinja od Linea do Darvina. Naime, preokret je bilo suđenje u Njujorku 19. veka, gde je porota morala da odluči da li je kit riba. Kit je zanimljiv slučaj jer ruši biblijsku podelu na bića koja lete, plivaju i idu po zemlji, dok su ljudi bipedalni, van sistema (opet, dostojanstvo čoveka). Kitovi i slepi miševi su u tom smislu različiti i ne uklapaju se u sistemi. To istraživanje odvelo ga je do naredne teme: kako su kitovi od 19. do 20. veka postali prijatelji čovečanstva i ekološki simboli, a ne puko industrijsko dobro (ulje kita, meso). U Grejamovom radu o kitovima važna osoba bio je Džon K. Lili, čijem radu je imao pristup u arhivima Stanforda. Lili je bio neurofiziolog, koji je radio za vojsku, te je proučavao delfine i time postao svetski prepoznatljiv, a vremenom je postao „kosmonaut svesti" i eksperimentisao je sa LSD-jem i ketaminom.

Naposletku, to nas dovodi to Grejamovog istraživanja pažnje od 1880. do 1980: gde je bilo puno naučnika poput Lilija koji su radili na **hladnoratovskom istraživanju svesti** i tzv. **ispiranju mozgova** (setite se filma *Mandžurski kandidat*), a onda su se krajem pedesetih godina 20. veka preobratili u zagovornike meditacije, terapije i postali aktivisti kontrakulture.

„Laboratorijska psihologija, istraživanje u komunikacijama i niz inženjerskih oblasti teoretisale su o ljudskoj pažnji. **Pažnja je bila merena, sečena, kvantifikovana, operacionalizovana** na načine koji su potpuno bili usmereni na mašinske interakcije." U pozadini, sa zvučnika je dopirao trubački solo koji je postajao sve glasniji, a Grejam je sve strastvenije menjao intonaciju i mahao šakama sa prstenjem.

„Proučavanja ljudske pažnje su bila prevashodno kibernetička. Cilj je bio da **ljudi kao tačke u mreži postanu maksimalno pouzdani, tj. statistički predvidivi.** Cilj su predvidive forme senzornih i kognitivnih budnosti zato što je **kontrolna soba** postala novi epicentar moći u industrijskom i vojnom

posleratnom ekosistemu“, vreme je isticalo, imamo još petnaestak minuta uvrh glave.

„Za nas je ovo važno zato što naša pažnja sada živi u čudnoj monokulturi. Slično onome što se dogodilo preriji koja je nekad imala sto šezdeset vrsta trava i biljaka, a sada je samo soja. Ljudski kapacitet za pažnju je u osnovi neverovatno raznovrstan, ali smo sve više postavljeni u neki ekvivalent agrobiznis monokulture, gde uglavnom brinemo o mašineriji za praćenje i stimulaciju **operativne budnosti** koja se može kvantifikovati. Čak i kad smo zabrinuti za našu pažnju, koristimo jezik koji je već predefinisan. Na primer, kada uključimo limit za **vreme pred ekranom**. I tu dolazi naš aktivistički rad: čekaj, gde si uopšte dobio ideju za **raspon pažnje**? Taj termin je vrlo uska tehno-naučna formula. Ta uska vrsta pažnje jeste stvarna, nije samo ideološka ili kulturna, daje rezultate, proverljiva je, ali je ona tako osiromašen **delić celokupne pažnje** koja je gotovo podudarna, u nekom krajnjem smislu, našoj svesti.“

„Da li kažeš da je prosečna osoba… to nije najbolja metrika, ali zarad pitanja… da je prosečna osoba pre dvesta godina imala bogatiju, kompleksniju pažnju?“

„Ne želim da budem davež, ali bih rekao da su takva pitanja uvek predodređena za neku vrstu opovrgavanja, stvorena zarad svađe. Komplikovano je. Naravno, ako si bio rob 1620, neću da tvrdim da si u boljoj poziciji kada je reč o pažnji“, Grejam je odložio sudove.

Razumeo sam. Zapravo, pitanje sam postavio bez namere da ga potkačim. Još 2014. sam napravio kratki film *Cost-Benefit-Love*, u kojem se odvija dugi poljubac muškarca i žene u pozi Rodenove istoimene skulpture. Dok posmatramo tela koja deluju kao jedno, čujemo njihov tok misli, a oni pojedinačno rade ekonomsku, *cost-benefit* analizu da li im je u interesu da

budu sa drugom osobom. Moja ideja je bila da je kapitalizam „pounutrašnjen" do najintimnijeg. U to i dalje verujem, ali nikad nisam umeo jasno da odgovorim na pitanje: pa dobro, ali zar tako nije uvek bilo? Miraz, kuća iz koje neko dolazi, istorija bolesti – zar to nije čista računica? Nedavno sam saznao za „istoriju čula" i ideju da je, recimo, iskustvo bola različito za pojedinca u srednjem veku od savremenog čoveka, čak i ako je fizička povreda identična jer su senzibiliteti različiti. Drugim rečima, ne možemo u potpunosti da se stavimo u poziciju ljudi od pre sto godina.

Grejam je nastavio: „Ali iz mog iskustva svi intuitivno reaguju na to: da li je sposobnost da usmeriš produktivnost ka svom uređaju za određeni vremenski period zaista **pravi način** da govorimo o sveukupnosti pažnje?"

Konačno smo stigli do glavne teme – **aktivizam u domenu pažnje**. Stare prakse se možda mogu primeniti na nove izazove, ali ne na način na koji se joga i meditacija koriste u kapitalizmu za povećanje produktivnost. Za razliku od meditacije i *mindfulness* vežbi, gde je fokus na pojedincu, Grejamov aktivizam vidi pažnju kao nešto stvaralačko i zajedničko.

„Prijateljstvo mi deluje kao veliki deo vašeg programa...", prokomentarisao sam jer mi se činilo da je dobar deo rešenja koji njegova organizacija *Prijatelji pažnje* nudi na tragu ideja o drugarstvu, obrazovanju, licejima i gimnazijama iz vremena Epikura, Pitagore, Platona i Aristotela.

„Tako je, **ne treba ti monitoring za ekran, već ti treba prijatelj**. I to je veliki zaključak na kraju knjige *Attensity!* – da je pažnja zapravo političko pitanje našeg trenutka. Gi Debor je to razumeo na jedan način, a Gebels na drugi." Debor je skovao kritički termin „društvo spektakla", a Gebels je upregao radio i filmsku mašineriju za širenje nacističke propagande.

„Ne želim da sugerišem da smo mi izmislili ideju da pažnja populacije ima politički značaj, nipošto. Možeš da ispričaš celu istoriju 20. veka samo baveći

se tom tezom. Ipak, to je najambicioznija i najspekulativnija tvrdnja knjige, naježim se kad to kažem…", pogledao je u svoju ruku. „Nalazimo se u klasičnom dijalektičkom trenutku u čistom marksističkom smislu – **novi oblik tehnologije se pojavio i omogućio je novi vid eksploatacije.** Nehajni, pohlepni, racionalni maksimizatori su uposlili tu tehnologiju na civilizacijskom nivou kroz *biohack* i očigledno **aktivno štete** pojedincima i zajednici. Menjaju nas baš kao što je razvoj mlinova poremetio ekonomije i sveo **ljudski rad** samo na **radnu snagu**. Ali time je pretvorio rad u političku formaciju nove vrste. Uspon radničke politike krajem 19. veka je manifestacija toga da pre fabrike i parne mašine nije bilo moguće koristiti ljudski rad **na velikoj skali**", govorio je tečno, neprekinuto, u celim pasusima.

„To se sada dešava, samo za ono što Mauricio Lacarato zove **nematerijalni rad**. Pretvoreni smo u ***homo attentus***. Ekonomija radi na pažnju. Politika radi na pažnju. Naši životi su sve više problemi alokacije i optimizacije pažnje. Farmako-industrija se sve više bavi asistiranjem našem menadžmentu pažnje (ADHD). To je loše na sličan način na koji je život ljudi sveden na *homo economicusa* u slučaju radničke klase 17. i 18. veka. Ali istovremeno postavlja uslove za novu politiku, gde mi postajemo solidarni u insistiranju da je **naše iskustvo življenja**, osobenosti, međuljudskih odnosa zapravo pitanje pažnje. Nama deluje da je potencijal toga u politici ogroman. E sad, mi u knjizi nemamo predviđanja. Radimo to poput ekoloških aktivista koji su uzeli stručan termin *ekologija* i rekli taj termin je zastava pod kojom mi marširamo za novi odnos prema životnoj sredini kao zajedničkom dobru. Tako mi koristimo *attensity*." Sve ovo se nadovezuje na ideje s početka teksta: pažnja kao vid brige.

Najavio je da mora da ide. Čisteći za sobom, dodao je: „Moram da kažem da verujem u ovo. Mislim da je ispravno." Tu je napravio jednu zanimljivu digresiju o piscu i umetničkom kritičaru Džonatanu Kreriju, koji je imao tezu da je Dekartova ideja čoveka kao klasičnog subjekta, koji je kao oko kamere

sa fiksiranom perspektivom, na udaru novih ideja iz fiziologije, da nas čula varaju (24 sličice filma su dobar primer), iz psihologije o nesvesnom, itd. Prema Kreriju, **sam termin *pažnja* je pokušaj da se stabilizuje stara ideja ljudskog subjekta kao koherentnog agenta.** Grejam se načelno slaže sa ovim sižeom i ne misli da je pažnja jedini način da se bije ta bitka, ali je moćan i važan.

„Poslednja stvar koju ću reći jeste – ako ti je stalo do ideje ljudske slobode, moraš biti aktivista pažnje. Kako na nivou pojedinačnog ponašanja jer AI algoritmi ne **žele da mi želimo ono što želimo da želimo**. Tako da nisi slobodan **da želiš ono što želiš da želiš**. Uprošćava nas“, ovo pitanje želje je po mom mišljenju jedno od ključnih današnjice i zahteva zaseban intervju. Grejam se malo unervozio jer je moje vreme već iscurelo, ali sam uskočio sa poslednjim pitanjem:

„Za kraj: šta je tvoj savet?“

„Imamo tri stuba aktivizma pažnje: **prvi** je da je svaka vrsta učenja bitna kao formativna stvar u životu i način da se pažnja posmatra ozbiljno. **Druga** je organizovanje, tj. građenje koalicija. To može da bude muzička sekcija, roditelji koji vode decu na sport. Kada razmisliš šta si radio sat-dva, a da te činilo srećnim i bližim sebi, ljudima, svetu, e to što si radio, nastavi i štiti ga. Jer će internet doći i po to. **Svako mesto gde se ljudi okupljaju i osećaju dobro, biznisi dođu po to.** Fejsbuk je tako nastao. Pinterest. Napraviće platformu za to. **Treći** stub aktivizma mi zovemo **utočište**. Pod tim ne mislimo da treba da odeš u pećinu. Već se okupi sa svojom ekipom i odredi proaktivna, društvena pravila za prostor i vreme koje nije pod uticajem kompanija. Nije skrivanje, već čuvanje portala gde zajedno možemo da putujemo u svet misli, iskustva, imaginacije.“

Ugasio sam snimanje. Žurio je. Već je kasnio na poziv. Potom let za

Španiju. Poklonio mi je knjižicu *12 teza o pažnji* i suptilno me, uz izvinjavanje, isterao iz stana. To je ukratko Grejamova odbrana čoveka kao bića koje ima slobodnu volju. Ironija ja da smo u žurbi pričali o pažnji, pa mi je ipak poklonio pažnju, pomislio sam hodajući kroz Harlem.

Četiri dana kasnije izašao sam u žamor proslave, u masu plavo-narandžastih dresova jer su Njujork Niksi osvojili titulu NBA prvaka. Pešačio sam od Četrdesete ulice, preko gužve na Herald skveru, gde su ljudi opkolili autobus i popeli se na krov, preko Junion skvera, gde je devojka podigla šampionsku majicu da pokaže grudi, pa do Vašington skver parka, koji je bio pun omladine koja je skandirala. Pobede su donele osećaj zajedništva u gradu od osam miliona ljudi, inspirisanih timskim duhom i titulom osvojenom nakon pedeset tri godine. Iznad gomile kao antene su sijali telefoni u znojavim dlanovima. Prožimale su se teme o kojima smo razgovarali: tela koja poklanjaju pažnju sportu, privlače pažnju skandiranjem i dele pažnju na mrežama. Pa opet, u tom tiskanju mladih tela, u aspiracijama svih tih ljudi, malim gestovima pažnje da se ne stane na nečije stopalo, a da se opet deli euforija, makar nesvesno, kanališe se želja za pripadnošću nečem zajedničkom, radosnom i većem od naših pojedinačnih života.

Automated, uncorrected translation made using DeepL Translate

Attention! Attention! What's with our attention?

Igor Simić

A few weeks ago, a Princeton professor, Dr. Graham Burnett, scheduled an interview with me for around one in the afternoon at his apartment in New York. I wrote to him without an introduction or a recommendation, simply because I was familiar with his piece in The New Yorker*, "Will the Humanities Survive Artificial Intelligence?*", as well as an interview for the New York Times podcast with Ezra Klein on the topic of attention. I was also aware of his Strother School of Radical Attention, which organizes events, seminars, and art workshops in the spirit of a collective learning that is not just "digital minimalism" as a lifestyle, but an attempt at political action. The result of this collective, activist, and theoretical work is the book *Attensity! A Manifesto of the Attention Liberation Movement*. I also liked the coinage *"human fracking*," which refers to the violent and polluting hydraulic fracturing technique used to extract oil from shale. In doing so, Graham suggests that large companies like Meta, Alphabet, ByteDance, etc. treat us as a resource from which they suck out our attention. He replied to my email very cordially, showed interest in my work, and squeezed me in between two trips, a return from Los Angeles and a departure for Madrid, so we could meet before my trip to Belgrade.

The meeting was scheduled for June 1st. The day before, the New York Knicks had lost to San Antonio, but they were still leading 2-1 in the NBA Finals. Between casually following basketball, two group exhibitions I had at the time, working for my gaming studio, and shooting my first feature film, my attention was literally split.

It deals with the theme of attention, which I also touched on in my short animated film, which

will premiere in September in Switzerland, and begins with a quote from Simone Weil:
"Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity." Intuitively, I felt that her lexicon encompassed something akin to our expression "to pay attention," which implies an act of care. Art historian Claire Bishop also thinks in this direction: "Attention [from *the English word*] comes from the Latin **attendere**: a combination of **at** (near) and **tendere** (to stretch). The connotation is less about understanding or grasping, and more *about striving toward* and *reciprocity*—paying attention to that which also occupies others."

Today, attention is most often discussed in the context of attention management in *the attention economy*, due to the gamification of everyday life in tasks at work, food delivery, recreational exercise, and social media. While some seek to profit from it, others fight against it, leading to a ban on phones in classrooms in Australia, France, and Italy. Thus, Hugh Grant is the face of the British campaign *Close Screens Open Minds,* which aims to raise awareness that digital tools as learning aids (so-called *edtech*) harm children's development and cognitive maturation.

On the other hand, my father, who was born in a village before World War II, without electricity in the house, and who had me during the dial-up internet era, used to say he was jealous of my internet and access to recordings of thinkers he admired and loved to listen to, like the writer and activist James Baldwin. It's an interesting case where the distraction of clicking on Wikipedia footnotes leads to an expansion of horizons. The connections that make up the father-son relationship, friends, educational institutions, political interests, television, the internet, etc., are what Eve Siton calls an ecology of attention, in which a collective polyphonic attention can develop.
Siton also mentions an idea I unconsciously touched on in my five-minute animated film: "We should choose our alienations because some alienations enrich us."

However, the topic has become even more complex in recent years if we also consider machines as a type of subject. One of the most significant engineering papers in

the field of artificial intelligence is called "*Attention is All You Need*," where "attention" is a technical term for assigning importance to certain information, an image, etc., in machine learning. Around the same time I was in contact with Graham, I also met the artist Trevor Paglen. The schedules didn't work out for us to meet this time, so I'm just including a photo of the dedication on the first page of his new book, *How to See Like a Machine*. Trevor says that three revolutions have occurred in our relationship with images during his lifetime: the first is the advent of digital images (the .jpg image is code), the second is the ability of computers to see (machines interpret images, as with, for example, *face recognition* technology, communication is often machine-to-machine without a human), and the third is generative AI (the ease of creating visual material, and thus the elimination of authorship).

The most accurate summary of Paglen's entire body of work is his conclusion, which reads almost like an epigram: "We no longer look at images—images look at us." Simply put, every image now contains a code with triggers that are linked to our expectations, attention, emotional state, etc. The image is operable, not passive. You may have come across the controversial theory that the band *Geese* became popular due to some kind of organized brainwashing (*psyop*) on the internet, through artificial debates on social media, comment bots, paid TikTok trends, and that this has definitively declared the death of authenticity in music. Paglen, using the CIA as an example, explains how by injecting images into the media circulation you can completely change someone's perception of reality. All these intricate ideas were running through my head as I walked to the address Dr. Graham Barnett's assistant had sent me on that clear day.

Graham opened the door to his apartment on the top floor of a building in Washington Heights. Although he's in his mid-fifties, he looks like he's in his early forties, as if he's ready for a hike. As I enter the bright, spacious loft, Graham informs me that he's under a bit of pressure because he has to pack for a trip to

Spain. He was preparing a light lunch of salad, smoked salmon, and olive oil, and we drank water with a splash of white wine. During lunch, his daughter Francesca joined us. After I answered his questions about the interview itself, he turned the music down a bit, and we had our entire hour-long conversation at a corner kitchen counter. I asked him how he became interested in the history of science, the field he teaches at Princeton.

"The basic fact, which Francesca remembers because I spoke about it at Nana's funeral," he looked at his daughter beside him, "is that my mother was an early, female researcher in a field that isn't strictly the history of science, but literature and science. She was an expert in 17th-century French literature. Her long, unpublished work that I spoke about at the funeral is a book about how the scientific understanding of light in the 17th century changed the poetic and liturgical use of light. At the time when the physical explanation of light became dominant, what happened to ideas such as the light of grace, the light of love, or the light of the mind? I was twelve or thirteen when she was taking extra physics classes at the University of Pennsylvania because she wanted to understand how light works physically," Graham said after we clinked our glasses and began to eat.

"That's partly why I became interested in the history of science. Admittedly, I was primarily on track to become a student of science, but because of my parents, who loved and taught literature, I went in this direction.
My father worked on the history of architecture and literature in France, on how the Hausmannization of Paris influenced Baudelaire's poetry. So, I was in an environment that…"

"But they sound like kindred spirits, your parents," I interrupted, chewing my salad, because I had already idealized his parents as great loves in life and art, like the filmmaking couple John Cassavetes and Gena Rowlands. Of course, that was just my projection.

His father's interest in the influence of architect Baron Haussmann on the creation of Parisian boulevards, apartment buildings, cafes, and shop windows inherently contains the question: how does politico-technological urbanism shape our inner life? The film by the late Vlatko Gilić, **Kičma** (Spine), dramatizes this very tension through the genre of psychological horror. It's no wonder why Graham is interested in the impact of the invisible infrastructure of techno-capitalism on our experience of the world.

"Yes, they were and are special people. And they definitely raised my sister Maria and me with the encouragement that we could achieve anything. They influenced us to develop a love for text and research. My father took me to see Rubens's *'The Descent from the Cross'* in Antwerp when I was thirteen.
That was our journey, father and son. He was researching the French poet Théophile Gautier, who wrote a poem about the painting. After that, I got into Princeton, I did math, I was supposed to become a doctor, to be a little scientist. But I ended up in literature… I've told this story before…" Graham seemed to be trying to tell me as much as he could in the shortest amount of time because we both knew that in about forty-five minutes he would have an online call, then a trip to the airport, and we hadn't even gotten to the main topic yet. But I identified with his intellectual hodgepodge, so I found it interesting.

"I took a break between high school and college. I went to India and got very sick. I got meningitis. I was hospitalized, and when college was supposed to start, I was still too sick to attend in the usual way. I was still too weak to sit up straight, so my father took me to Princeton and enrolled me in classes he thought I would like. And one of the courses was on the scientific revolution. That professor became my mentor. By the fifth week of college, I had gone to his office and asked him how I could get his job."

In short, Graham was fascinated by the relationship between analytical thinking in science, where 'truths' are created, and the broader culture, where ideas about meaning are created. The name

the professor who influenced Graham was Michael Mahoney, and in a way, Graham did indeed inherit his charismatic mentor's job.

"My mother was a bit of a mystic—a Neapolitan Roman Catholic. My father is a kind of Sartrean atheist. So, from the earliest moments of my upbringing, there were two ways of looking at things…" I realized that in his mother's interests there was a fascination with a tension that also gnaws at him: how the profaning of the world (the material, the measurable, the economic) affects the spiritual interpretation of the world (meaning, faith, community).

"Same situation with mine…"

"Interesting, what's the split like for you?"

"Father's an atheist, an engineer, my mom is Orthodox," I said.

"Yeah, then you get how that creates a certain texture to growing up. Actually, my sister, who's a very respected human rights lawyer and a cool person, is married to an Albanian and doesn't want to baptize the kids. I'm actually a Catholic. I listened to the Pope's encyclical on artificial intelligence. I don't know if you've heard it."

"I have."

"I teared up listening to it. It's very moving when someone tries to articulate why we care about people and what it means to build an 'empire of love.' The Church has made big mistakes over two thousand years, but it's still there to say that we can't transcend humanity in a mechanical way. The project of human transcendence has to go through love, and not through trying to escape our limits, because our limits are the place where love becomes possible. That's when I start to feel drunk and get emotional," his voice had already begun to tremble slightly.

Although the focus of the conversation shifted to the history of attention and activism, this

that moment colored my view of Graham. I realized that behind terms like "human fracking" and the thesis that big companies have robbed us of our attention, lies the conviction that this is a decisive battle for the survival of humanity, but not of man as an animal we can train like a Pavlovian dog, but in defense of the metaphysical in man, where the last bastion of free will is found.

At the beginning of the encyclical on artificial intelligence, **Magnifica Humanitas**, Pope Leo XIV refers to Pope Leo XIII (and his **Rerum Novarum**), who believed that the Church has a duty to address the social realities of its time in order to preserve the "dignity of man." At that time, the 18U1 was marked by industrialization that led to the exploitation of workers, even children, and the pope supported the development of trade unions and distributism as a third way between capitalism and socialism.

The Church has tried to overcome the instrumentalization of man. Dignity also implies the imperfection of people: "Building the common good means accepting the limitations and weaknesses of the human race without considering them as mistakes to be corrected." Thus, the current Pope also touched on the enhancement of the post-human, technologically and medically, which, according to Church teachings, leads to dehumanization. This includes Musk's American, neoliberal Neuralink, but also the Soviet project of the immortal, New Man.
It should be noted that the question of human dignity has been under attack since Copernicus, i.e., the idea that the Earth is not the center of the universe, so from that perspective, it seems that in the 21st century, man has fallen to an even lower branch.

The entire text of the 202S encyclical begins with a contrast between the arrogant construction of the Tower of Babel, best known from Bruegel's painting, and the joint reconstruction of Jerusalem. One represents technocratic power and profit, while the other is a common endeavor that includes everyone for the sake of the "common good." Pope Leo XIV writes that the result of building an ambitious, monolithic, Babylonian Tower with the goal of one language, one technology for the sake of an earthly

glory "was not unity, but dispersion." This dispersion entails arming artificial intelligence for the purposes of war in a global race, but also great stratification: "When power is concentrated in the hands of a few, it tends to become hidden and to avoid public oversight, increasing the risk of distorted forms of development that create new dependencies, exclusions, manipulations, and inequalities." The Pope directly criticizes the most powerful companies and investors from Silicon Valley. Although the Catholic Church itself is a rather opaque institution, the statement has a touch of unintentional irony.

However, it is interesting that Christopher Olah, co-founder of Anthropic, was also present at the event. Anthropic has implemented certain safety measures that have put it at odds with the Pentagon, but in practice, there is constant pressure to make the business profitable, which Olah himself acknowledged in a short speech. The U.S. military, however, uses Claude, Anthropic's AI, to select military targets in Iran, and CEO Dario Amodei still doesn't know if their AI was used when the school was hit. At the same time, the groundwork is being laid for the company's IPO, and that's when sermons about ethical missions become secondary to shareholder interests. Morality is impossible in the existing "socialism for big corporations," and regulations are seen as a brake on progress. Therefore, the encyclical's most significant contribution is that it addresses the issue of new technologies from multiple angles, including the problem of children's concentration. However, unlike the previous encyclical by Pope Leo XIII, this one did not offer a concrete proposal, but rather a critique, because the problem is far more complex.

The Pope's own speech reflects Graham's interest in how two ways of understanding the world were pitted against each other: how science displaced the religious worldview.

Despite my slight nervousness about running out of time, I was still interested in his journey from the history of science to activism, so I asked him about his earlier books on cartography and the development of science through the lens of colonialism. Those

These topics led him to oceanography and the study of whales: he realized from the example of whales that a radical change had occurred in our understanding of animals from Linnaeus to Darwin. Namely, the turning point was a trial in New York in the 19th century, where a jury had to decide whether a whale was a fish. The whale is an interesting case because it disrupts the biblical division into creatures that fly, swim, and walk on the earth, while humans are bipedal, outside the system (again, human dignity). Whales and bats are different in that sense and do not fit into the system. This research led him to the next topic: how whales, from the 19th to the 20th century, became friends of humanity and environmental symbols, and not just an industrial commodity (whale oil, meat). In Graham's work on whales, an important figure was John C. Lilly, whose work he had access to in the Stanford archives. Lilly was a neurophysiologist who worked for the military, and he studied dolphins, becoming world-renowned for it, and over time he became a "cosmonaut of consciousness" and experimented with LSD and ketamine.

Ultimately, this brings us to Graham's research on attention from 1880. to the 1980s: where there were many scientists like Lilly who worked on Cold War consciousness research and so-called brainwashing (remember the film *The Manchurian Candidate*), and then in the late 1950s converted into advocates of meditation, therapy, and became counterculture activists.

"Laboratory psychology, communications research, and a host of engineering fields theorized about human attention. Attention was measured, sliced, quantified, and operationalized in ways that were entirely geared toward machine interactions." In the background, a trumpet solo blared from the speakers, growing louder, and Graham's intonation grew more passionate as he waved his ringed hands.

"Studies of human attention were predominantly cybernetic. The goal was to make humans as nodes in a network as reliable as possible, i.e., statistically predictable. The goal was predictable forms of sensory and cognitive alertness because the control room had become the new epicenter of power in industrial and military

post-war ecosystem," time was running out, we have about fifteen minutes to spare.

> "For us, this is important because our attention now lives in a strange monoculture.

Similar to what happened to the prairie, which once had one hundred and sixty species of grasses and plants, and now it's just soybeans. The human capacity for attention is fundamentally incredibly diverse, but we are increasingly being placed in some equivalent of an agribusiness monoculture, where we mostly care about the machinery for tracking and stimulating quantifiable operational alertness. Even when we're concerned about our attention, we use language that's already predefined. For example, when we set a time limit for screen time. And that's where our activist work comes in: wait, where did you even get the idea of an attention span? That term is a very narrow techno-scientific formula. That narrow kind of attention is real, it's not just ideological or cultural, it yields results, it's verifiable, but it's such a impoverished fraction of the whole of attention that it is almost identical, in some ultimate sense, to our consciousness."

"Are you saying that the average person… that's not the best metric, but for the sake of the question… that the average person two hundred years ago had a richer, more complex attention?"

"I don't want to be a jerk, but I would say that questions like that are always predisposed to some kind of refutation, created for the sake of an argument.
It's complicated. Of course, if you were a slave in the 1820s, I'm not going to claim you're in a better position when it comes to attention," Graham put down the dishes.

I understand. Actually, I didn't ask the question to be a smart-ass. Back in 2014, I made a short film called *Cost-Benefit-Love*, which features a long kiss between a man and a woman in the pose of Rodin's eponymous sculpture. As we watch the bodies acting as one, we hear their train of thought, and they are individually doing an economic, *cost-benefit* analysis of whether it is in their interest to be with the other person.

be with another person. My idea was that capitalism has been "internalized" to the most intimate level. I still believe that, but I could never clearly answer the question: well, okay, but hasn't it always been this way? A dowry, the family someone comes from, medical history—isn't that pure calculation? I recently learned about the "history of the senses" and the idea that, for example, the experience of pain is different for a medieval individual than for a modern person, even if the physical injury is identical, because the sensibilities are different. In other words, we can't fully put ourselves in the position of people from a hundred years ago.

Graham continued: "But in my experience, everyone reacts to this intuitively: is the ability to direct productivity toward your device for a certain period of time really the right way to talk about the totality of attention?"

We had finally reached the main topic—activism in the domain of attention. Old practices might be applicable to new challenges, but not in the way yoga and meditation are used in capitalism to increase productivity. Unlike meditation and *mindfulness* exercises, which focus on the individual, Graham's activism sees attention as something creative and communal.

"Friendship seems to be a big part of your program..." I commented, as it seemed to me that a good part of the solution his organization, *Friends of Attentiveness,* offers was in line with the ideas of friendship, education, and the lyceums and gymnasiums from the time of Epicurus, Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle.

"That's right, you don't need a screen monitor, you need a friend. And that's the big conclusion at the end of the book *Attentiveness!* – that attention is actually the political question of our moment. Debord understood this in one way, and Goebbels in another." Debord coined the critical term "society of the spectacle," and Goebbels harnessed the radio and film machinery to spread Nazi propaganda.

"I don't want to suggest that we invented the idea that the population's attention has political significance, not at all. You can tell the whole history of the 20th century just by dealing with the

on that thesis. Still, it's the book's most ambitious and speculative claim, I shudder to say it…," he looked at his hand. "We are in a classic dialectical moment in a pure Marxist sense—a new form of technology has emerged and enabled a new form of exploitation. The careless, greedy, rational maximizers have employed this technology on a civilizational level through *biohack* and are obviously actively harming individuals and the community. They are changing us just as the development of mills disrupted economies and reduced human labor to mere labor power. But in doing so, it has transformed labor into a new kind of political formation. "The rise of labor politics in the late 19th century is a manifestation of the fact that before factories and steam engines, it wasn't possible to use human labor on a large scale," he said fluently, without interruption, in full paragraphs.

"This is now happening, only for what Maurizio Lazzarato calls immaterial labor. We have been turned into *homo attentus*. The economy runs on attention. Politics runs on attention. Our lives are increasingly problems of the allocation and optimization of attention. The pharma-industry is increasingly about assisting our management of attention (ADHD). This is bad in a similar way that the reduction of people's lives to *homo economicus* in the case of the 17th and 18th-century working class was. But at the same time, it sets the conditions for a new politics, where we become solidaric in insisting that our lived experience, our subjectivities, our interpersonal relationships are actually a question of attention. It seems to us that the potential for this in politics is enormous. Now, we don't make predictions in the book. We do it like environmental activists who took the expert term *'ecology'* and said, 'that term is the banner under which we march for a new relationship with the environment as a common good.'
That's how we use *attensity*." All of this builds on the ideas from the beginning of the text: attention as a form of care.

He announced that he had to go. Cleaning up after himself, he added: "I have to say that I believe in this. I think it's right." He made an interesting digression here about the writer and art critic Jonathan Crary, who had a thesis that Descartes' idea of man as the classic subject, who is like the eye of a camera

with a fixed perspective, was under attack from new ideas in physiology, that our senses deceive us (24 frames of film is a good example), from psychology about the unconscious, etc.
According to Crary, the very term *'attention'* is an attempt to stabilize the old idea of the human subject as a coherent agent. Graham agrees with this summary in principle and does not think that attention is the only way to fight that battle, but it is a powerful and important one.

"The last thing I'll say is—if you care about the idea of human freedom, you have to be an attention activist. How on the level of individual behavior because AI algorithms don't want us to want what we want to want. So you're not free to want what you want to want. It simplifies us," this question of desire is, in my opinion, one of the key issues of our time and requires a separate interview.
Graham got a little nervous because my time had already run out, but I jumped in with a final question:

"To conclude: what is your advice?"

"We have three pillars of the activism of attention: the first is that every kind of learning is important as a formative thing in life and a way to take attention seriously. The second is organizing, i.e., building coalitions. That can be a music section, parents taking their kids to sports. When you think about what you did for an hour or two that made you happy and closer to yourself, to people, to the world—that thing you were doing, keep doing it and protect it. Because the internet will come for it, too. Any place where people gather and feel good, businesses come for it. That's how Facebook got started. Pinterest. They'll create a platform for it. We call the third pillar of activism a sanctuary. By that, we don't mean you should go live in a cave. Rather, get together with your crew and establish proactive, social rules for a space and time that isn't influenced by corporations. It's not about hiding, but about guarding a portal where we can collectively journey into a world of thought, experience, and imagination."

I turned off the recording. He was in a hurry. He was already late for his call. Then

a flight to

Spain. He gave me a booklet *of 12 Theses on Attention* and subtly, with an apology, ushered me out of the apartment. In short, this is Graham's defense of man as a being with free will. The irony is that we were talking about attention in a hurry, and yet he gave me his attention, I thought as I walked through Harlem.

Four days later, I stepped out into the roar of the celebration, into a sea of blue and orange jerseys because the New York Knicks had won the NBA championship. I walked from Forty-Second Street, through the crowds at Herald Square, where people surrounded a bus and climbed onto its roof, through Union Square, where a girl held up a championship T-shirt to show her breasts, all the way to Washington Square Park, which was full of chanting youth. The victory brought a sense of unity to a city of eight million people, inspired by the team spirit and a title won after fifty-three years. Above the crowd, like antennas, phones shone in sweaty palms. Themes we had discussed ran through it all: bodies paying attention to the sport, drawing attention by chanting, and sharing attention on social media. And yet, in that pressing of young bodies, in the aspirations of all those people, in the small, considerate gestures of not stepping on someone's foot, while sharing in the euphoria, even if unconsciously, a desire is channeled for belonging to something communal, joyful, and greater than our individual lives.