

TIOQQUN

Conscious Organ of the Imaginary Party

Exercises in Critical Metaphysics



To annihilate
the nothingness

Of course you know, this means war!

In everything one must begin with principles. The correct course of action follows.

When a civilization is ruined, its bankruptcy must be declared. There's no point cleaning house when the house is falling apart.

Goals aren't lacking; nihilism is nothing. It's not a question of means; powerlessness is no excuse. The value of the means has to do with the ends.

Everything that *is*, is good. The world of the Qlipoth, the Spectacle, is all entirely evil. Evil isn't a substance; if it were it would be good. The mystery of the effectiveness of evil comes down to the fact that evil doesn't exist; it's just an *active* nothingness.

What's evil is not distinguishing evil from good. Indistinction is its kingdom, indifference is its power. Men do not love evil, they love the good that's within it.

In *Tiqqun* being returns to being, nothingness to nothingness. The fulfillment of Justice is its abolition. History isn't over; it needs our consent first.

As long as there's one single free man, that's enough to prove that freedom isn't dead.

The question is never how to "live with one's times," but for or against them. *That's final.*

Whatever boasts of moving forward in time only shows that it isn't superior to time.

Newness is just an excuse for mediocrity. Up to now, progress has only meant a certain growing insignificance. The essential has remained in its infancy. Men had morals, but they still haven't thought them through. It's a neglect they don't have the means to correct anymore. History starts here.

The catastrophes of history prove nothing against the good. It's not revolutionary movements that have suspended the "normal course of things." Reverse that. That ordinary course of things is the suspension of the good. In their successive occurrence, revolutionary movements comprise the tradition of the good; up to now, that's been the tradition of the vanquished. It's ours too.

All past history comes down to this: a great city has been besieged by little kings. Indelibly, the rest remains.

Meaning comes absolutely before time.

There's a clock that never chimes. All true royalty is hers.

We must act as if we were no one's children. Men are not given to know their true filiation. It is the constellation of history that they manage to steel themselves with. It's good to have a pantheon. Not all pantheons are found at the end of Soufflot street¹.

Commonplaces are the most beautiful things in the world. You can say that again. Truth has always said the same thing in a thousand different ways. When the time comes, commonplaces have the power to rock worlds. The universe was born from a common place after all.

This world hasn't been adequately described because it hasn't been adequately contested, and vice-versa. We aren't seeking the knowledge that takes account of the state of the facts, but the knowledge

¹ Street of the French Pantheon – TRANS.

that creates them. Critique must fear neither the weight of foundations, nor the grace of consequences. Our era is furiously metaphysical, and it works incessantly to make that forgotten.

Some people think that truth doesn't exist. And truth punishes them for it. They don't unveil the truth, even as the truth unveils itself to them. They do not bury it, even as it buries them.

We don't have to wail and cry; we'll give to no one the charity of a tailor-made revolt. You'll have to start all over yourselves. This world needs truth, not consolation.

Domination has to be criticized because servitude dominates. The fact that there are "happy" slaves doesn't justify slavery.

They were born. They want to live. And they pursue their deathly destiny. They even want to rest, and they leave behind sons so that other dead men and other deathly destinies can be born.

This is the time of larvae; they even write little books that chronicle their breeding. As long as there have been men, and men have read Marx, we've known what the commodity is, but we've always ended up *practically* taking sides with it. Some people who once made it their profession to criticize it even say that it's a second nature, more beautiful and legitimate than the first, and that we ought to fold to its authority. It's metastasized to the far reaches of the world; it's useful to remember that it doesn't take long before a totally cancer-ridden organism collapses.

The old choices and disputes are bloodless. We're imposing new ones.

Reject both sides. Only love the remainder. Only the remainder will be saved.

Men are responsible for a world they didn't create. That's no mystical idea, it's a given. And the satisfied are shocked by it.

Hence the war.

The enemy lacks the intelligence of words; the enemy tramples upon them. And words yearn to be avenged.

Happiness has never been a synonym for peace. It is necessary to make happiness a plan of attack.

Sensibility has for only too long been a passive disposition towards suffering; it must itself become a means for doing battle. It's an art of turning suffering back into strength.

Freedom has no truck with patience; it is the practice of history in acts. Conversely, "liberations" are but the opium of bad slaves. Critique is born of freedom and gives birth to it.

Men are far more certain to get free by escaping than they are to attain happiness by having it handed to them.

Pursue freedom; the rest will come naturally. Whoever tries to stay safe will just come to ruin.

Just like anything else whose existence needs prior proof, according to our times, life has very little value.

An ancient order lives on here, in appearances. In reality it's only there anymore so all its perversions can be followed through on.

People say that there's no danger at all because there's no riot going on; people say that since there's no material disorder on society's surface that revolution is a far-off thing. The forces of annihilation are just traveling down a completely different road from the one that people expected them to.

Know well young imbeciles, little realist boors, there are many more things under the sun and in the heavens than your inconsequential little solipsism could imagine.

This society operates like a constant appeal to mental restriction. Its best elements are foreign to it. They rebel against it. This world revolves around its fringes; its decomposition infuriates it. Everything that is still alive lives against this society.

Abandon ship – not because it's sinking, but in order to sink it.

Those who today fail to understand already expended all their strength yesterday trying not to understand. In their inner conscience, man is aware of the state of the world.

Everything's getting radicalized – both stupidity and intelligence.

Tiqqun exposes the cracks in the world of homogeneity. The element of time is reabsorbed into the element of meaning. Forms come to life; figures become incarnate. The world is.

Each new mode of being ruins the mode of being preceding it and it's only then, on the ruins of the old, that the new can begin. And this coming time of great tumult is the "labor pains" of that birth. It appears that the old mode of being in the world will be destroyed; that will change various different things.

Once there was a society that tried by innumerable and endlessly repeated means to annihilate the most lively of its children. Those children survived. They want the death of this society. They are free of hatred.

This is an undeclared war. We aren't declaring war; we're just revealing it.

There are two camps; their conflict is over the nature of the war. The party of confusion says there's only one camp – it's waging a military peace. The Imaginary Party knows that conflict is the mother of all things. It lives scattered and exiled. Outside of the war it is nothing. Its war is an exodus, where forces constitute themselves and weapons are discovered.

Leave behind to this passing century its battles between ghosts. We're not fighting against ectoplasms here; we're pushing them away to make the target clear.

In a world of lies, the lie cannot be vanquished by its opposite, but only by a world of truth.

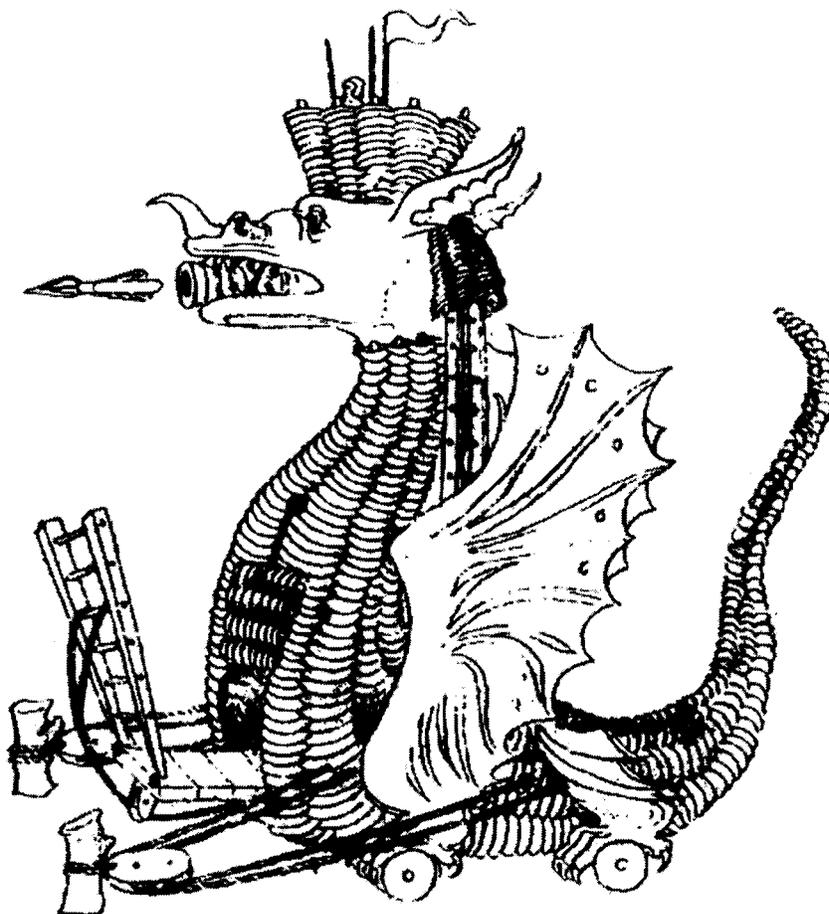
Complacence engenders hatred and resentment; truth gathers brothers together.

"We" means us and our brothers.

Intelligence must become a collective affair.

And the rest is silence.

Venice, January 15th 1999.



What is Critical Metaphysics?

There was no longer any reality, only its caricature.
GOTTFRIED BENN.

*We are the cause of the universe, its creation and
its future destruction.*
BAUDELAIRE

It does not escape us that “metaphysical” – exactly like ‘abstract’ and even ‘thinking’ – has become a word before which everyone more or less takes flight as before a plague victim.” (Hegel). And it is certainly with a shiver of wicked joy, and the worrying certitude that we’re going right to the wound, that we bring back into the center what the triumphant frivolity of our times believed it had forever repressed to the periphery. By this act, we also have the effrontery to claim that we’re not just giving in to some sophisticated caprice, but to an imperious necessity inscribed in history. Critical Metaphysics is not just one more piece of blather about the way the world is going; nor is it just the latest piece of heady speculation with some particular intelligence to it – it is the most *real* thing contained in our times. *Critical Metaphysics is in everyone’s guts.* Whatever we might protest about this, there is no doubt that *people* will try to say we were the inventors of Critical Metaphysics, so as to hide the fact that it existed *already* before finding its formulation, that it was already *everywhere*, in the state of emptiness behind suffering, in the denial behind entertainment, in the motives behind consumption, or, obviously, in anxiety. It’s clearly a part of all the sordid spinelessness, the incurable banality, and the repugnant insignificance of the times called “modern” that it’s made metaphysics the apparently innocent leisure activity of learned men in stiff suits, and that it’s reduced it to the sole exercise proper to insects like that: a kind of platonic mandibulation. Merely by virtue of the fact that it is not reducible to conceptual experience, Critical Metaphysics is *the experience* that fundamentally denies an inept “modernity,” and, with open eyes, celebrates more each day the excesses of the disaster.

ACT THE FIRST: *When the false becomes true, truth itself is but a mirage. When nothingness becomes reality, reality in turn falls into nothingness.*

(the inscriptions at either side of the entrance to the “Kingdom of Dreams and Immense Illusion” in the *Dream of the red chamber*).

Western civilization is living on credit. It thought it could last forever, and get off without paying the outstanding debt it owes for its lies. But now it’s suffocating under their crushing dead weight. Thus, before entering into more substantial considerations, we have to start by clearing the air, and unburdening this world of a few of its illusions. For example: the fact is that modernity has never existed. We’re not going to linger over indisputable facts. That the term “modernity” now just evokes a bored irony, no matter the progressivist senility accompanying it, and that it has finally appeared as what it always was – just a verbal fetish that the superstition of shithheads and simple spirits, ever since the supposed “Renaissance,” have decorated the progressive rise of commodity relations to a state of social hegemony with, in favor of interests we understand only all too well – hardly merits any critical explanation. This is just another vulgar brutish use of labels, whose elucidation we’ll leave to the priests of tomorrow’s historicism. We’ve got far more serious things to deal with. In fact, in the same way as commodity relations never really existed as such, i.e., as commodity relations, but only as relations between men mutilated into relations between things, everything that is said to be, believed to be, or held up as being “modern” has never really existed as *modern*. The essence of the economy,

that transparent pseudonym with which commodity modernity always tries to pass itself off as eternally obvious, has nothing economic about it; and in fact, its foundation, which is also its program, can be expressed in these rude terms: it is THE NEGATION OF METAPHYSICS – that is, the negation of that the transcendence of which is for humanity the *effective* cause of immanence; to put it in other words, it is the negation of that which makes sense of the world, of the imperceptible appearing within the perceptible. This fine project is wholly contained within the aberrant but *effective* illusion that a complete separation between the physical and the metaphysical is possible – a fallacy which most often takes form as the underlying reality behind the physical reality, setting itself up as the model for all objectivity, and logically commanding a myriad of local ruptures, between life and meaning, dreams and reason, individual and society, means and ends, artist and bourgeois, intellectual work and physical labor, bosses and workers, etc. – which are not, by and large, any less absurd – with all these concepts becoming abstract and losing all their content outside of their living interaction with their opposites. Now, since such a separation is really impossible, that is, *humanly* impossible, and since the liquidation of humanity has so far failed, nothing modern has ever existed as such. *What is modern is not real, what is real is not modern.* Thus there is indeed a *realization* of this program, but as it perfects itself at present we also see that it is just the opposite of what it thought it was, in a word: the complete de-realization of the world. And the whole extent of the visible now carries within it – with its vacillating character – the brutal proof that the realized negation of metaphysics is in the end but the realization of a metaphysics of negation. The functionalism and materialism inherent to commodity modernity have produced a void everywhere, but this void corresponds to the primordial metaphysical experience: where there is no longer any response that goes beyond mere being-there, which would permit a position within the latter to be taken, anxiety surges forth, and the metaphysical character of the world blossoms in plain sight for everyone. Never has the sentiment of foreignness been so pregnant as it is in the face of the abstract productions of a world that had intended to bury it under the immense, unquestionable opulence of its accumulated commodities. Places, clothes, words and architecture, faces, acts, gazes and loves are nothing anymore but the terrible masks invented by one and the same absence to put on in order to approach us. Nothingness has visibly taken up residence in the intimate depths of things and beings, and the smooth surface of spectacular appearances is cracking everywhere as a result of its growth. The *physical* sensation of its proximity is no longer the ultimate experience reserved for a few mystical circles. On the contrary it is the only sensation left to us by the capitalist world, the only sensation still intact, and indeed increased tenfold, as all the

others are slated to disappear. It also happens to have been precisely the one it had explicitly proposed to eliminate. All the products of this society – whether the hollow conceptuality of the YoungGirl, contemporary urbanism, or techno – are things that the spirit has gone out of, things that have outlived all their meaning and all their reason for being. These are all just interchangeable symbols that replace each other moving about on one plane; it's not that these symbols signify nothing, as the kindly morons of postmodernism like to think – indeed they signify *Nothingness* itself. All the things of this world live on in a perceptible state of exile. They are the victims of a faint and constant loss of being. Indeed, this modernity, which claims to be free of mystery and thought it had liquidated metaphysics, has instead realized it. It has produced a décor comprised purely of phenomena, of pure beings-there that are nothing beyond the simple fact that they are there, in their empty positivity, and which ceaselessly push humanity to feel “the marvel of marvels: that *being-there* is” (Heidegger, *What is metaphysics?*). In this ultramodern hall of ice, marble, and steel we've wandered into, a slight relaxation of our cerebral constriction suffices for us to be brutally confronted with seeing all that exists slip away and be inverted into a simultaneously oppressive and floating presence where nothing remains. Thus we get the experience of Total Otherness even in the most common of circumstances, even in newly renovated bakeries. Before us is spread a world that *can no longer hold our gaze*, a world that can no longer look us in the eye. Anxiety is on guard duty at every street corner. Now this disastrous experience, wherein we are violently expelled from all that exists, is the experience of transcendence and of the irremediable negativity *contained* in us. In that experience is the whole of the asphyxiating “reality” that all the great machinery of social deception works to make us take for granted, that suddenly and in so cowardly a way collapses, into the vast chasm of its nullity. This experience is the birth of metaphysics, where metaphysics appears precisely *as metaphysics*, where the world appears as the world. But the metaphysics that arises again there is not the same metaphysics that *people* had hunted down and banished, because it returns as the truth and negation of what had defeated the old metaphysics: as a *conquering force*, as *critical* Metaphysics. Because the project of capitalist modernity *is nothing*, its realization is but the spreading desertification of everything that exists. And we are here to ravage that desert.

Enthroned on its rickety stilts in the middle of the mounting catastrophes, commodity domination no longer feels at home in the singular state of things that it itself nonetheless produced, every detail of which contradicts it more. And by domination we mean specifically the symbolically mediated relation of complicity between the dominators and the dominated; so for us there is a little doubt that

“the torturer and the tortured are one, that the former is fooling himself believing he’s not himself tortured, and the latter believing he’s not participating in the crime”: go sit at the back of the class, Bourdieu! To convince ourselves of this, we can merely take a close look at the *steps taken* by our contemporaries, who are reminiscent of a band of deserters running after themselves, spurred on by their own metaphysical disquiet. It’s a full time job now for Blooms to get themselves out of the fundamental experience of nothingness, which destroys all simple faith in this world. The mockery of things threatens to overwhelm his consciousness at any given moment. To not know the forgetting of Being, the retreat of which closes in on us in every metropolitan slum, every vagina, and every gas station, now requires a daily ingestion of almost lethal doses of Prozac, news, and Viagra. But all these temporary fixes don’t suppress the anxiety, they just mask it, and banish it to an obscurity that only spurs on its silent growth. And in the end, in order to sell their lies and disease, women’s magazines all the same end up having to convince their readers that “the truth is good for your health,” cosmetics multinationals decide to put things like “metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology” on their packaging, TF1 sets up the “quest for meaning”, as a profitable principle for its upcoming programming, and Starck, that enlightened counterfeiter, gives *La Redoute* information about its competitors a few years in advance by putting together for it a “catalogue of non-products for use by non-consumers.” It’s hard to imagine how so totally at a loss domination must have been internally to get to such a state. In these conditions, critical thought must stop waiting for a mass revolutionary subject to constitute itself to show how imminent social upheaval is. It must rather learn to see this in the formidable explosion of the social demand for entertainment/distraction in recent times. That kind of a phenomenon is a sign that the pressure of essential questions which were for so long left unanswered, so profitably, has crossed the line into the intolerable. Because, if *people* distract themselves so furiously, it must be that they’re getting their minds off something, and this something must be becoming a very obsessing presence. “If man were happy, he would be all the happier the less distracted/entertained he was.” (Pascal)

Let’s suppose that the object that spreads such a significant terror everywhere, which *people* can deny the effective action of only so long as it is unnamed, is Critical Metaphysics – and this is a definition, perhaps the clearest and most comprehensible one we’ll give ourselves. The harmless sociologists are naturally not gifted with the proper endowments to comprehend what this is about, no more than is that handful of poor aesthetes, who in vain indignation denounce the misery of the times from the lofty heights of their profession as writers, and who see its mere

consumption as its consummation. We would never dream to protest against the extent of the disaster, but its meaning. The generalized fear of getting old, the charming anorexia of women, the official takeover of all life, the sexual apocalypse, the industrial management of entertainment, the triumph of the YoungGirl, the appearance of unprecedented and monstrous pathologies, the paranoid isolation of egos, the explosion of acts of gratuitous violence, the fanatical and universal affirmation of a supermarket hedonism, make an elegant litany for paroxysms of all kinds. The trained eye sees nothing in all this to lend credit to some eternal victory of the commodity and its empire of confusion; rather it sees the intensity of the generalized state of patient expectation, a messianic waiting for the catastrophe, for the *moment of truth* which will finally put an end to the unreality of a world of lies. On this point as on many others, it is not superfluous to be Sabbatean.

From the perspective we’ve taken, the resolute plunge of the masses into immanence, and their uninterrupted flight into insignificance – all things that could make us lose hope for the human race – cease to appear as positive phenomena containing their truth within themselves, and come to be seen as purely negative movements, accompanying our forced exile from the sphere of meaning, wholly colonized by the Spectacle, from all the figures and forms in which one is permitted to appear, and which expropriate



from us the meaning of our acts, and our acts themselves. But this escape is no longer enough, and it must sell off in individual packages the void left by Critical Metaphysics. The New Age, for example, corresponds to its infinitesimal dilution and the burlesque travesty by which commodity society attempts to immunize itself against it. The fact of generalized separation (between the perceptible and superperceptible as well as between humans), the project of restoring the unity of the world, the insistence on the category of totality, the primacy of the mind, and intimate knowledge of human pain combine themselves there, in a calculated fashion, as a new commodity, as new technologies. Buddhism also belongs to the mass of hygienic spiritualities that domination must put to work to save positivism and individualism in whatever form it can, so as to go on a little longer still in its nihilism. In any case *people* resort even to taking up the moth-eaten banner of religions, and *everyone* knows what a useful complement these can be to the reign of all miseries down here on earth – it goes without saying that when a weekly magazine of bigots in sneakers ingenuously worries in covering whether “Will the 21st century be religious?” one must read instead: “Will the 21st century manage to repress Critical Metaphysics?”; all the “new needs” that late capitalism flatters itself that it can satisfy, all the hysterical agitation of its employees, and even the expansion of consumer relations into the whole of human life, all that good news that it believes it can give itself so that its triumph will be a lasting one thus only shows the profundity of its failure, of suffering, and of anxiety. And it is this immense suffering that inhabits so many gazes and hardens so many things, that it must always race breathlessly to *put to work* by degrading into *needs* the fundamental tension of human beings towards the sovereign realization of their virtualities, a tension that grows in proportion to the distance of their separation from them. But their evasion gets exhausted and its underlying effectiveness quickly wanes. Consumerism can no longer manage to wipe away the excess of held-back tears. Thus it must put into place selection apparatuses that are ever more ruinous and drastic, so as to exclude from the gear-works of domination those who were unable to destroy any propensity towards humanity in themselves. No one who effectively participates in this society is supposed to fail to know just what it might cost for them to let their true pain be seen in public. But in spite of these machinations suffering nonetheless continues to grow in the forbidden night of intimacy, where it stubbornly gropes for a way to pour out. And since the Spectacle can’t prevent it from manifesting itself forever, it must ever more often give in and allow it to come out, but only while misrepresenting its expression, by assigning one of its empty objects to the world’s mourning, one of those royal mummies it alone holds the secret recipe for the preparation of. But suffering isn’t satisfied with such doppelgangers. And so it waits patiently, almost as if lying

in wait, for a brutal interruption in the regular course of the horror, where human beings would own up to themselves with an unlimited relief: “We miss everything unspeakably. We’re dying of nostalgia for Being.” (Bloy, *Gladiators and pig-keepers*).

It should now certainly be clear to the reader that we are not in any way the inventors of Critical Metaphysics: all we had to do was open our eyes a bit to see that it is plain on the very surface of our times, sketched out in the *hollow imprint* it’s left. Critical Metaphysics manifests itself to anyone who decides to live with their eyes open, which only requires a particular stubbornness that *people* usually just pass off as madness. Because Critical Metaphysics is *rage* to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes a *viewpoint*. But such a viewpoint, one that has recovered from all the beguilements of modernity, does not know the world as distinct from itself. It sees that in their typical forms materialism and idealism have had their day, that “the infinite is as indispensable to man as the planet he lives on” (Dostoevski), and that even where *people* seems to be flourishing in the most satisfied immanence, consciousness is still present, as an inaudible feeling of decay, as *bad conscience*. The Kojevian hypothesis of an “end of History” where man would remain “alive as an animal in accord with his given Nature and Being,” where “the post-historical animals of the species *Homo Sapiens* (who [would live] in abundance and total security) [would be] *content* in virtue of their artistic, playful, and erotic activity, since by definition they [would be content in it],” and where discursive knowledge of the world and the self would disappear, has proved to be the Spectacle’s utopia, but has revealed itself to be unrealizable as such. There is manifestly no access to the animal condition anywhere for human beings. Naked life is still a *form of life* for them. The unfortunate “modern man” – we’ll let the oxymoron slide – who had such a virulent need to liberate himself of the burden of freedom, is now starting to perceive that this is impossible, that he cannot renounce his humanity without renouncing *life itself*, that an animalized man is *still not* an animal. Everything, at the end of this era, leads one to believe that man can only survive in an environment that has meaning to it. Nothing shows the extent to which the possibilities that mankind contains themselves tend towards mankind’s realization as does the effort our contemporaries put into distracting themselves from them. Even people’s crimes are dictated by their desire to find an outlet for their capacities. Thus, thinking is not a duty of man, but his essential necessity, the non-fulfillment of which is suffering – that is, a contradiction between his possibilities and his existence. Human beings *physically* wilt when they negate their metaphysical dimension. At the same time, it appears clearly that alienation is not a state that mankind has definitively been plunged into, but the incessant *activity* that

people must engage in to remain alienated. The absence of consciousness is but the continual repression of consciousness. Insignificance *still* has meaning. The complete forgetting of the metaphysical character of all existence is certainly a catastrophe, but it is a metaphysical catastrophe. And the same affirmation, even though it's thirty years old, still reigns in the domain of thought. "Contemporary analytic philosophy is out to exorcize such 'myths' or metaphysical 'ghosts' as Mind, Consciousness, Will, Soul, Self, by dissolving the intent of these concepts into statements on particular identifiable operations, performances, powers, dispositions, propensities, skills, etc. The result shows, in a strange way, the impotence of the destruction – the ghost continues to haunt." (Marcuse, *One dimensional man*). Metaphysics is the specter that has haunted western man over the past five centuries, as he's been trying to drown himself in immanence and has failed to do so.

ACT THE SECOND: "*The Truth must be said and the world must be shattered by it.*" (Fichte)

Even so, the act of acknowledging the forgetting of Being, and thus escaping nihilism, can't be taken for granted and couldn't have a rational foundation; *it is a question of ethical decision*. And it's not abstractly, but *concretely* ethical: because in the world of the authoritarian commodity, where the renunciation of thought is the first condition for "fitting in socially," consciousness is immediately an *act*, and an act for which the typical punishment is that *people* will starve you out, whether directly or indirectly, by the gracious service of those you depend on. Now that all the repressive courtrooms where ethics were alienated into morality have fallen to pieces, it has finally become clear what 'ethics' means, in all its original radicalness, which designates it as *the unity of the morals of human beings and their consciousness of them*, and as such the absolute enemy of this world. This could be explained in more decisive terms as follows: you're either fighting for the Spectacle, or for the Imaginary Party; there's nothing in between. All those who could accommodate themselves to a society that accommodates itself so well to inhumanity, all those for whom it already sits well to give the alms of their indifference to their own suffering and that of their peers, all those who speak of disaster as if it were simply another new market with promising prospects – are not our brothers. Rather we would find their *deaths* highly desirable. And we'd certainly not blame them for not devoting themselves to Critical Metaphysics, which, as a mere discourse, could constitute a particular social object to decide to take up, but for *refusing* to see the truth in it, which, being everywhere, is beyond any particular decision. No alibi holds up in the face of such blindness; a metaphysical aptitude is the most common thing in the world: "you don't need to be a shoemaker to know whether a shoe is

going to fit you" (Hegel); in the present conditions, refusing to exercise this aptitude constitutes a permanent crime. And this crime, the denial of the metaphysical character of what exists, has enjoyed such a lasting and generalized complicity that it has become revolutionary merely to *formulate* the a priori principles on which all human experience is based. And here we must recount them; our times should be ashamed of the fact that we have to.

1. Like a disease is obviously not merely the sum of its symptoms, the world is manifestly not the sum of its objects, of "the case at hand," nor of its phenomena, but rather it is a characteristic of humanity itself. The world exists as a world only for mankind. Conversely, there is no *worldless humanity*; Bloom's situation is a transitional abstraction. Each person finds himself always already projected into a world which he experiences as a dynamic totality, and he necessarily goes out into it with a prior understanding of it, however rudimentary it may be. His mere preservation requires that.

2. *The world is a metaphysics*, that is: the way it presents itself first of all, its supposed objective neutrality, its simple material structure, are already part of a certain metaphysical interpretation that constitutes it. The world is always the product of a mode of disclosure that brings things out into presence. Things like the "perceptible" only exist for man relative to man's superperceptible interpretation of what exists. Obviously, this interpretation does not exist separately; it cannot be found outside of the world, since it



itself is what configures the world. Everything visible rests on the invisibility of this representation, which is at the root of that which lets itself be seen, which conceals even in its disclosure. The essence of the visible is thus not something visible. This mode of disclosure, imperceptible as it may be, is far more concrete than all the colorful abstractions that *people* would like to pass off as “reality.” The given is always the posed, its being comes from an original affirmation of the Mind: “the world is my representation.” At their bottom, that is to say in their emergence, humanity and the world coincide.

3. The perceptible and the superperceptible are fundamentally the same, but in a different way. Forgetting one of these two terms and hypostatizing the other renders both of them abstract: “to dispose of the superperceptible is also to suppress the purely sensible and thus the difference between the two.” (Heidegger)

4. Primitive human intuition is but the intuition for representation and imagination. What’s called perceptible immediacy comes only after that. “Men start by seeing things only such as they appear to them and not such as they are; by seeing not the things themselves but the idea they have of them.” (Feuerbach, *Philosophy of the future*). The ideology of the “concrete,” which in its different versions fetishizes the “real, the “authentic,” the “everyday,” the “little nothings,” the “natural” and other “slices of life,” is but the zero-point of metaphysics, the general theory of this world – its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point of pride, its moral sanction, its ceremonial complement, and its universal grounds for consolation and justification.

5. By all evidence, “man is a metaphysical animal” (Schopenhauer). By that it should not only be understood that he is the being for whom the world *makes sense* even in its insignificance, or whose disquiet does not let itself be appeased by anything finished, but quite eminently that all his experience is woven in a fabric *that does not exist*. That’s why materialist systems properly so-called, as well as absolute skepticism, have never been able *by themselves* to have a very deep or a very lasting influence. Certainly, man can for long periods of time refuse to consciously engage in metaphysics, and that’s most often how he deals with it, but he cannot completely do without it. “Nothing is so portable, if one wants, as metaphysics [...] And what would be difficult, and even totally impossible, would be to fail to have – would be to not have a metaphysics of one’s own, or at least some metaphysics... But it’s not just that not everyone has the same one, which is only too obvious, but not everyone even has the same kind of metaphysics, nor the same degree of metaphysics, nor a metaphysics of the same nature, nor of

the same quality.” (Peguy, *Situations*)

6. The metaphysical is not the simple negation of the physical; it is, symmetrically, also its foundation and its dialectical transcendence. The prefix meta-, which means both “with” and “beyond”, does not imply a disjunction, but an *Aufhebung* in the Hegelian sense. Hence metaphysics is in no way something abstract, because it is the basis for all concreteness; it’s what stands behind the physical and makes it possible. It “goes beyond nature to get at what is hidden in it or behind it, but it considers this hidden element only as something appearing in nature, not as something independent of all phenomena” (Schopenhauer). Metaphysics is thus the simple fact that the mode of disclosure and the object disclosed in a primordial sense remain “the same thing.” Thus all together it is *experience as experience*, and is only possible on the basis of a *phenomenology of everyday life*.

7. The successive defeats that mechanistic science has for a century ceaselessly mopped up and repressed, both on the battlefield of infinitely great matters and on the battlefield of infinitely small matters, have definitively condemned the project of establishing any physicality without metaphysics. And once again, after so many foreseeable disasters, we must acknowledge along with Schopenhauer that the physical explanation – which, as such, though it refuses to see it, “needs a *metaphysical* explanation to give it the key to all its presuppositions – [...] clashes everywhere with a metaphysical explanation that suppresses it; that is, one that takes away from it its explanatory character.” “The naturalists try hard to show that all phenomena, even spiritual phenomena, are physical, and in this, they are right; their error is that they don’t see that all physical things equally have a metaphysical side to them.” And we read the following lines as a bitter prophecy: “The greater is the progress made by *physics*, the greater it will make felt a need for a *metaphysics*. In effect, though on the one hand, a more exact, more widespread, and more profound knowledge of nature undermines and ends up overturning the metaphysical ideas ongoing up to then; on the other hand it will serve to give a clearer and more complete perspective on the issue of metaphysics itself, by removing it ever more severely away from its physical environment.”

8. Commodity metaphysics is not just one more metaphysics among others; it is *the* metaphysics, that denies all metaphysics and above all denies itself as metaphysics. It is also why it is, among all, *the most null* of metaphysics, the one that would sincerely like to pass itself as simple physicality. Contradiction, that is, falsehood, is its most durable and distinctive character, the one that affirms so categorically what is but pure negation. The historical period of this metaphysics’ *explanation*, and its nullity, is one of nihilism.

What is critical metaphysics?

But this explanation must itself be explained. Once and for all: there is no commodity world, there is only a commodity perspective on the world.

9. Language is not a system of symbols, but the promise of a reconciliation between words and things. "Its universals are the primary elements in experience; they are not so much philosophical concepts as they are real qualities of the world as we confront it every day. ...Each substantial universal tends to express qualities that surpass all particular experience, but which persist in the mind, not as fictions of the imagination or as logical possibilities, but as the substance, the 'matter' our world is made of." From this it follows that the operation by which a concept designates a reality is simultaneously the negation and the realization of that reality. "Thus the concept of beauty encompasses all the beauty not *yet* realized; the concept of freedom all the freedoms that not *yet* attained." (Marcuse, *One dimensional man*). Universals have a *normative* character, which is why nihilism has declared war on them. "The *ens perfectissimum* is at the same time the *ens realissimum*. The more a thing is perfected, the more it really is." (Lukacs, *Soul and form*). What is excellent is more *real*, more *general* than the mediocre, because it realizes its essence more fully: a specific concept does indeed *unify* a specific variety, but it unifies it by aristocratizing it. Critical thought is thought that brings about an exit from nihilism, starting from a profane transcendence of language and the world. What is transcendental to critical thought is that *the world exists*, and what is unspeakable is *that there is a language there*. There is an uncommon faculty of conflagration to a consciousness that spends its time on the edges of such nothingness, gazing into its abyss. Every time it finds that language to communicate itself, history will be marked by it. What's essential is to concentrate our efforts in that direction. Language is both what's at stake and the stage that the decisive part of this will be played out on. "It will always only be about knowing whether we can reconcile speech and life, and how." (Brice Parain, *On dialectics*).

10. The basis for the "categorical imperative to overturn all the conditions in which man is a humiliated, enslaved, abandoned, and contemptible being" (Marx) can only be a definition of man as a metaphysical being; that is, a being open to the *experience* of meaning. Not even Hans Jonas, that earthworm of intelligence, who will remain one as long as he exists, has failed to recognize this: "Philosophically, metaphysics has fallen into disgrace in our days, but we could not do without it – so we'll have to risk going into it anew. Because only metaphysics is capable of telling us *why* man must exist, and thus does not have the right to provoke his disappearance from the world or to permit it by simple negligence; and also *how* man must be so as to honor and not betray the reason by virtue of which he must exist...

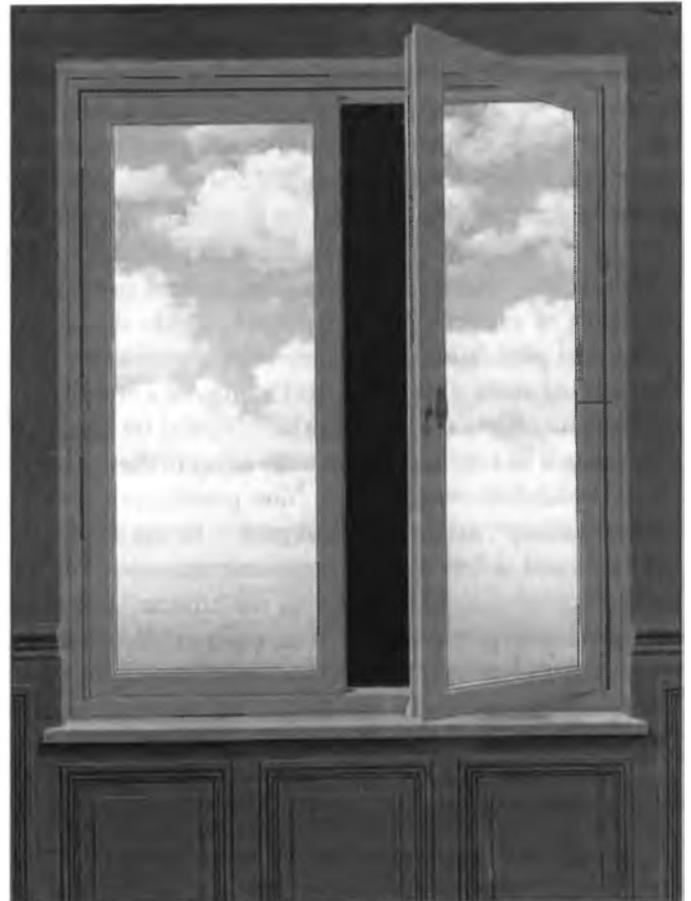
thus we have a renewed need for metaphysics, which must, with its vision, arm us against blindness" (*On the ontological foundations of a ethics of the future*).

11. We mention in passing that reality is the unity of meaning and life.

12. All that is separated remembers that it was once unified, but the object of this memory is in the future. "The mind is what finds itself, and thus what had gotten lost" (Hegel)

13. Human freedom has never consisted of being able to go, come, and pass the time as one pleases – this is more suitable for animals, which *people* thus say, very significantly, are "at liberty" – but in giving *oneself* form, in realizing the figure one contains, or *wants*. Being means keeping your word. All of human life is but a bet on transcendence.

People could, in the past, treat such pronouncements with the special and amused contempt that philistines have always reserved for considerations apparently deprived of any effectiveness. But meanwhile, the metamorphoses of domination have conferred upon them an unpleasantly quotidian concreteness. The definitive and historic collapse of really existing liberalism in 1914 cornered commodity society; revolutionary assaults were making manifest, in





all western countries, the incapacity of the economic perspective to fathom the *whole* of man, and finally to ensure the abstract reproduction of its relations. Thus in order to keep the *fiction* of that liberalism feeling obvious, it had to colonize all the spheres of meaning, the whole territory of appearances and finally, as well, the whole field of imaginary creation, at first in a state of emergency and then methodically. In a few words, it had to infest the whole of the continent of metaphysics in order to ensure its hegemony over all of the earth. Certainly, the simple fact that the very moment of its apogee, the 19th century, was dominated not by harmony, but by an absolute, and absolutely false, hostility between the figures of the Artist and the Bourgeois, was in itself sufficient proof of its impossibility, but it took the great disasters that washed over the first decades of this century to fill its absurdity with enough pain to actually make the whole edifice of civilization itself appear to shake. Commodity domination then learned from those who were against it that it couldn't content itself anymore with seeing man simply as a worker, an inert factor in production, but that to remain what it was, it was going to have to organize the whole of everything that stretched outside the sphere of material production as well. However repugnant it may have seemed at the time to it, it had to impose a brusque *accelerando* on society's socialization process, and lay hands on everything it had denied the existence of up to then, all that it had disdainfully written off as "non-productive activity", "private fantasy", art and "metaphysics." In the space of a few years, and at first without significant resistance, Publicity had entirely given itself over to the arbitrary power of the spectacular protectorate – it is a general fact that the undertaking of ancient offensives is rarely recognized when they make use of totally new means. Since the commodity interpretation of the world had been revealed in acts to be insane, *people* undertook to put it *into* the very heart of all acts. Once commodity mysticism, which *formally* and *externally* postulated the general equivalence of everything, and the universal interchangeability of all, proved itself to be

a pure negation, a morbid official takeover, *people* resolved to make all things *really* equivalent, and beings *inwardly* exchangeable. Since the systematic liquidation of all that contained a hidden transcendence in its immediacy (communities, ethos, values, language, history) put humanity in a place where it was dangerously likely to make demands for freedom, *people* decided to industrially produce cheap transcendences, and to hawk them priced like gold. We stand at the other extreme of this long night of aberration. Because even as it was its failure that in the past created the basis for the infinite extension of the world of the economy, the contemporary accomplishment of this universal extension carries the announcement of its upcoming collapse.

This critical *realization* process of the ever-impoorished commodity metaphysics has been referred to variously as "Total Mobilization" by Junger, as the "Great Transformation" by Polanyi, or the "Spectacle" by Debord. For the time being the lattermost concept remains indisputably one of the war machines it pleases us to use, as a *Figure* that transversely penetrates all the spheres of social activity – one where *the object revealed merges with its mode of disclosure*. Though the Figure can't be deduced simply from its manifestations, since it is at their very root, it could nonetheless be useful to take note at least of some of the most superficial of them. So in the 1920s, advertising took it upon itself to inculcate the Blooms with "a new philosophy of existence," in the terms of its first ideologues, Walter Pitkin and Edward Filene; to present to them the world of consumerism as "*the world of acts*" with the declared intention of thwarting the communist offensive. The adjusted production of cultural commodities and their massive circulation – the lightning deployment of the movie industry is a good example of this – was responsible for tightening up the control over joyous behavior, spreading lifestyles adapted to the new demands of capitalism, and above all spreading the illusion of their viability. Urbanism was responsible for building a physical environment commanded by the commodity *Weltanschauung*. The formidable development of the means of communication and transportation in these years began concretely abolishing space and time, which had put up such annoying resistance to the universal putting into equivalence of all things. The mass media then initiated the process by which little by little they concentrated together into an autonomous monopoly on the production of meaning. Then they had to extend over the whole realm of the visible a particular mode of disclosure, the essence of which is that it confers upon the ruling state of things an unshakeable objectivity, and thus models on the scale of the whole human race a relationship with the world based on a postulated approval of what exists. It should also be noted that it was at that time that the first literary mentions of the repressive function of the YoungGirl were made, by Proust, Kraus, or Gombrow-

icz. It was among their contemporaries, after all, that there began to appear in the productions of the mind the figure of Bloom, so recognizable in the work of Valery, Kafka, Musil, Michaux or Heidegger.

This terminal phase of commodity modernity appears in a necessarily contradictory light, because in its process *it denies itself while realizing itself*. On the one hand, at this stage each of its advances contributes a little more to the destruction of its own foundation – the negation of metaphysics, in other words the strict disconnect between the perceptible and the superperceptible. With the virtually infinite extension of the world of experience, “the speculations...tend to obtain an increasingly realistic content; on technological grounds, the metaphysical tends to become physical.” (Marcuse, *One dimensional man*). The separation of the perceptible and the superperceptible is ever further undermined by the new productions of industry. “The marvellous and the positive (contract) an astonishing alliance, the two old enemies swearing to engage us in a race of unlimited transformations and surprises... The real no longer has a clear end. Place, time, and matter permit unanticipated liberties. Precision breeds dreams. Dreams take body... The fabulous is today to be found in business. The manufacture of marvel-making provides the livelihood of the thousands,” remarked Valery in 1929, with all the disarming naivety of a time when the meaning of life had not yet become just another consumer product in the shopping cart, just the most hackneyed sales pitch. Even when the total realization of abstraction – in the mimetic behavior of hip youth, the televised image, or the new city – makes obvious to everyone the clearly physical character of metaphysics, Biopower, a differentiated moment of the Spectacle, shamefully admits the *political* character – and there is a “metaphysical nugget present in all politics” (Carl Schmitt, *Political theology*) – of the rawest physicality, of “bare life.” Underneath this relationship is a process of reunification between the perceptible and the superperceptible, meaning and life, the mode of disclosure and the object revealed; that implies commodity society’s complete disavowal of its very basis, but at the same time such reunification only operates *on the terrain of their separation itself*. It follows that this pseudo-reconciliation is not a passage of each of these terms through each other and onto a superior level, but

rather their suppression pure and simple, which brings them together not as united, but as separate. So much so, that on its flipside the Spectacle presents itself as the realization of commodity metaphysics, as the realization of nothingness. The commodity here effectively becomes the form in which all manifestations of life appear, the objective form itself both of object and subject – love, for example, appears from now on as a regulated exchange of orgasms, favors, sentiments, where each contracting party is ideally to benefit *equally*. The Spectacle is no longer content to externally tie together processes independent of it by monetary mediations. The commodity, that “*superperceptible yet perceptible* thing” (Marx), transforms into something perceptible yet superperceptible. It imposes itself in reality as the “universal category of total social being” (Lukacs, *History and class consciousness*). Little by little, its “ghostly objectivity” comes to drape itself over all that exists. At this point, the commodity interpretation of the world, the only content of which is the affirmation of the quantitative replaceability of all things, that is to say the negation of all qualitative differences and all real determinations, reveals itself to be *the negation of the world*. The principle according to which “everything has a price” was certainly always the morbid refrain of nihilism before it became the global hymn of the economy. Also, and this is an everyday experience that no one can escape, putting this interpretation of the world into acts would consist exclusively in taking away all the qualities of everything, purging every being of all particular meaning, and reducing everything to the non-differentiated identity of general equivalence – in a word, to nothing. There’s no more this or that; and singularity remains but an illusion. What appears now no longer arrogates to itself any higher organic nature, but gives itself over with infinite abandon to the simple fact of being, without being anything. Under the effect of this rising disaster, the world has ended up starting to look like just a chaos of empty forms. All the pronouncements made above, which *people* thought were safely cut off from having any possible effectiveness, take form in the ensembles of a tangible, oppressive, and, to put it plainly, diabolical reality. In the Spectacle, the metaphysical character of existence is taken as a obvious, central fact: the world has become *visibly* metaphysical. Even the narrowest of minds, whose custom it always was to hide in their comfortable sense of objectivity – whether it’s rainy weather or nice out – can’t even be spoken

“It would be ridiculous to reproach chewing gum for being an affront to metaphysics’ good taste, but one could probably show that Wrigley’s profits and their Chicago palace were due to its operation of a social function consisting in the reconciliation of men with their impoverished conditions of existence and dissuading them from criticizing them. **It’s a matter of explaining that chewing gum, far from being harmful to metaphysics, is itself metaphysical.**”

(Theodore W. Adorno, *Prisms*)

of without immediately evoking the decline of industrial society. There, the light has solidified, the incomprehensible mode of disclosure that *produces* all being-there has become *incarnate as such*, that is to say independent of all content, in a sprawling sector of social activity all its own. That which makes things visible itself becomes visible there. Phenomena, by autonomizing themselves from what they manifest, that is by manifesting no more than nothingness, immediately thus appear as *phenomena*. The surroundings man exists in, the metropolis, itself proves to be a mere “linguistic formation, a constituted framework comprised above all of objectivized discourses, pre-established codes, materialized grammars.” (Virno, *The labyrinths of language*) In the end, since “communicative action” is becoming the very material used in productive activity, the *reality* of language falls among the number of things that can be experienced in a merely leisurely way. In this sense, the Spectacle is the final figure of metaphysics, where it objectivizes itself *as such*, becomes visible and shows itself to man as material evidence for the fundamental alienation of the Common. In these conditions, *man’s metaphysical dimension escapes him, confronts him and oppresses him*. But just as well, before man becomes completely and totally alienated he cannot concretely comprehend it, or consequently hope to reappropriate it for himself. The darkest days give us the greatest hope, precisely because they will come on the eve of victories.

As soon as the economy becomes flesh, it must perish like all living things. It falls under the hard law of the mortal realm, and knows it. In the overthrow of all things, in the chasms that we see opening up everywhere, we can already see the hints of its impending shipwreck. Commodity domination has now embarked upon an endless, hopeless war to put up obstacles to the necessity of this process. It’s no longer a question of whether it will die, but of when it will die. Life within such an order, which has as its only ambition anymore just to last a little bit longer, is distinguished by the extreme sadness attached to all its manifestations. Here, the survival of commodity domination, which is but the prolongation of its death agony, is hanging from a thin thread: it must ensure that the visible not be seen, and thus must carry out an ever more brutal takeover of the totality. It can only exercise its sovereignty under the constant threat that *people* might make its metaphysical character explicit, and that it might be recognized for what it is: it is a tyranny, and the most mediocre tyranny that ever was – the tyranny of servitude. Everywhere, domination’s efforts to maintain a particular interpretation of the world that when realized finds that it is itself subject to interpretation end up more and more tending towards brute force. Certainly, the naturalization of the commodity mode of disclosure required a constant dose of violence towards humans and things in the past. It had to raze, intern, enslave, confine, brutalize or im-

prison in camps the whole mass of phenomena that contradicted commodity nihilism. For the others, suffering teaches everyone how to see them only from the point of view of reification, utility, and separation, and generalized equivalence, over the whole course of their lives, in an uninterrupted manner. But now a new configuration of hostilities is coming about. Commodity domination can no longer limit itself to merely keeping its contradictions in a frozen state, getting alienation, corruption and exile taken for granted by everyone, and repressing any aspirations Man might have to Being. It must make its progress a forced march, though every step it takes towards its perfection only brings it closer to the moment of its collapse. With Biopower, which, under the cover of ameliorating, simplifying, and extending “life,” “form,” or “health,” leads to the total social control of behavior, it has played its last card: by supporting its whole weight on the cardinal illusion of common sense, the immediacy of the body, it ended up destroying it. After that, everything is ambiguous now. Bloom’s own body appears like a foreign jurisdiction that he inhabits against his will. By buying its further survival at the price of putting the metaphysical *to work for it*, commodity domination has robbed this terrain of its neutrality, which alone guaranteed its victorious advancement: it made metaphysics into a *material force*. Every bit of progress it makes must henceforth be responded to by a substantial rebellion that will oppose its *faith* head on, and which will proclaim in one tone or another that humanity “can only be revived by a metaphysical act of reawakening the spiritual element that created or maintained it in its earlier or ideal existence” (Lukacs). And so the commodity order, which is taking on water everywhere, will have to *physically* eliminate, one by one, all extremism or sects, every independent metaphysical universe that may manifest itself, until the unification and victory of the Imaginary Party. All the individuals that refuse to wallow in its half-starved immanence, in the nothingness of entertainment, all those who are too slow to renounce their own most human attributes, and in particular to renounce any concerns beyond mere being-there, will be excluded, banished, and starved out. For the others, they must be maintained in an ever more vicious fear. More than ever, “the holders of power live haunted by the terrifying idea that not only some handful of loners, but entire masses might one day free themselves of their fear: this would be their certain downfall. It’s also the real reason for their rage in the face of any and all doctrines of transcendence. There’s a supreme danger hidden there: that man might lose his fear. There are places on the earth where the word ‘metaphysics’ itself is hunted down as a heresy.” (Junger, *Crossing the Line*) In this final metamorphosis of the social war, where it’s no longer mere classes, but “metaphysical castes” (Lukacs, *On the Poverty of Mind*) that enter into conflict with one another, it is inevitable that men – first a few at a time, and then in their vast numbers –

will gather together with an *explicit project*: to *POLITICIZE METAPHYSICS*. From now on, those that do so are signals of the coming insurrection of the Mind.

ACT THE THIRD: *"It is necessary to take a position where destruction is not seen as the end goal, but as the precursor."* (Junger, *The Worker*)

At the moment in the Spectacle when commodity domination reveals its metaphysics, and reveals itself *to be* metaphysical, its real past and present contestation comes back onto the stage and reveals itself as such. It is then that its relatedness to messianic movements, millenarianisms, mysticisms, the heresies of the past, or even with Christians before Christianity appears. All "modern" revolutionary thought settles before our very eyes into the encounter between German Idealism and the concept of *Tiqqun*, which in the Lurianic Kabbalah refers to a *process* – one of redemption, of the restoration of unity between meaning and life, the repair of all things *by the action of human beings*. As for its supposed "modernity," that in the end was but the repression of its fundamentally metaphysical character. Thence the ambiguity of the work of a Marx or a Lukacs, for example. As a rule, the Spectacle, where we saw the *conceptual* violence of idealism change into *real*, even *physical* violence, repudiates as "idealist" this very aspect of the thinking of those it didn't manage to suppress soon enough. That is a solid criteria to judge pseudo-contestation's consequent criticisms, which are always allied with this society in their relentless evacuation of all the Unspeakable out of the politically expressible.

Such bastards can unfailingly be recognized by their rage to understanding nothing, see nothing, and understand nothing. As long as they live, anxiety, suffering, the experience of nothingness, the feeling of foreignness to everything – as well as the innumerable manifestations of human negativity – will be expelled from the gates of Publicity, either with a smile or with a team of riot police. As long as they live, *people* will consider them null and void. The historic window opening at present is the psychological moment that will bring to light the content of truth, that is, the power of devastation, in all past and present critique. Since commodity domination has come to fight openly on the metaphysical battlefield, its contestation will have to place itself on that battlefield as well. This is a necessity which has as little in common with the good will of militants as it does with the resolve of their cardboard theoreticians: it has to do with the fact that this society needs that conflict in order to have something to employ all its accumulated technological powers in. Once again we're in a high-speed chase where we can't just be content to apply critique, but must begin by creating it. It's about making criticism *possible*, and nothing else. Thus, Critical Metaphysics isn't just another object jumping up on the world stage in all its definitive splendor; it is what elaborates itself and will elaborate itself in the fight against the present order. *Critical Metaphysics is the determined negation of commodity domination.*

Whether this negation manifests itself without betraying itself or whether its forces will be hijacked once again to serve the calculated spread of disaster has nothing



Paris, Place de la Sorbonne, 15th of May, 1998. Politicizing Metaphysics



Arcachon, 11th of July, 1998. Generalizing disquiet.

to do with necessity; it depends on the melancholic decision made by a few free elements bound together by their determination to make a *practical* use of their consciousness, in other words, to sow in the world of the Spectacle a Terror that is the inverse of the terror that reigns at present. However, the simple fact that, faced with a reality that has taken such a perfectly systematic turn, it can no longer be contested in its details, leaves no room for ambiguity about the terrible radicalness of our era. Critique has no choice but to seize things by the roots; and the root of man is his metaphysical essence. So, when domination consists in *occupying* Publicity, building a world of facts piece by piece, a system of conventions and a mode of perception independent of any relations other than its own, its enemies recognize one another in their double ambition to destroy the aura of familiarity in what still passes for “reality” by revealing it to be a mere construct, and to set up symbolic spaces in the recesses of the present semiocratic tyranny, autonomous from the state of public explanation and foreign to it, but with as much a claim to universal validity as it has. *We* must everywhere contradict *People*. And that’s what we’re working on, according to our own penchants, when we reveal the YoungGirl as a *political* coercion apparatus, the economy as a ritual of black magic, Bloom as a criminal saintliness, the Imaginary Party as the bearer of a hostility as invisible as it is absolute, or the corner bakery as a supernatural apparition. It is above all about bringing out, in everything *people* say, in everything *people* do, and in everything *people* see, its natural unreality factor. This world will cease to be so monstrous when it ceases to be taken for granted. And so the whole of

our theory is written in everyday life, where it must obtain, still and forever, all the familiar things that it is our duty to render disturbing. Our maniacal interest for “miscellaneous events” could be related to this, because in them is the habitual itself uprooting itself from normal habit, the varnish on which thus suddenly fades away. The lucid and blind violence of a Kipland Kinkel or an Alain Oreiller is testimony to what happens when one takes a lethal dose of the *negative* truth of man, that a well-planned, everyday banality is invariably asphyxiating. Up to a certain point in this offensive, language comprises the field of battle; what we’re doing is burying *mines* all over it. This isn’t an arbitrary choice; it’s based on the observation that domination, which was *forced* to infest it, will never be at ease there. Though in certain aspects the economy’s present effectiveness and its apparent durability are based on a free manipulation of signs, and their operative reduction to signals, it is just as clear that the definitive success of this reduction will be its death. So that domination can still handle them as its vehicles, the signs must contain some meaning, that is to say a transcendence which in one way or another goes beyond the present state of things and the threat of nullity. And there is a contradiction there, an open wound, that if it were exploited malevolently enough could bring about the downfall of domination. We’ll provide for that.

Critical Metaphysics, in many aspects, pursues and completes the steady undermining successfully carried on by nihilism for five centuries. The consistency with which all simple faith in reality found itself, piece by piece, to be

first shaken, then damaged, and finally destroyed, is not unfamiliar to it; it feels no regrets about helping that process. Critical Metaphysics has no vocation for procuring a new and refined type of consolation for humanity. Rather, its watchword is: GENERALIZE DISQUIET. Critical Metaphysics itself is this disquiet, which can no longer be understood as a weakness, or as a vulnerability, but as the origin of *all strength*. It is not there to bring security to the weak in need of help, but to lead them into battle. It is like a weapon; whoever seizes it can decide who it's going to serve. In each life that remains in contact with Being there is a devastating power; and *people* have no idea just how intense that power can be. The struggle against the real, taken up before us by so many others, is getting close to being won, but by the enemy. That's why, on our wrong-headed path, we consider the preliminary to *everything* the pulverization of the last palpable structure for the apprehension of what exists: the quantitative abstract form of the commodity, which "for the reified" has become "the form in which its own authentic immediacy becomes manifest and – as reified consciousness – does not even attempt to transcend it. On the contrary, it is concerned to make it permanent by 'scientifically deepening' the laws at work". (Lukacs, *History and class consciousness*) Rendering the wisdom of the world insane is indisputably part of our program, but that's only the first step. Critical Metaphysics, rather, is "the spiritual movement that takes nihilism as its terrain and models itself on it, reflecting it into Being," (Junger, *Treatise of the rebel*), that necessary force that intends to reverse commodity hegemony by revealing it to be *metaphysical*. Only that act of reflecting reality and manifesting it as a mere interpretation, a construct, by merely showing that the essence of nihilism is not at all nihilist, already advances *beyond* nihilism. Everywhere it exposes its viewpoint, Critical Metaphysics marks being-there with signs contrary to the dominant convention. All reality which it is brought to bear upon brusquely changes its meaning, and its proportions are inverted: what had always appeared to be a few mere *remains* on the margins of the Spectacle proves to be the most real thing, what *people* had always thought of as the very world itself is rendered to its miniscule misery, that which appears firmly established begins to totter, what seemed to be of such airy consistency acquires a rock-hard presence. Thus Critical Metaphysics reveals the insignificance to which all being-there is reduced in the Spectacle, that false unity of meaning and life (false because it is abstract) – not as an insignificant fact, but as a *political* situation of servitude, a *concrete* form of social oppression. In so doing, it puts this

insignificance into possession of a multiplied reality that nothing in this world can lay claim to. But what it pushes into presence, and makes audible and thus real, is really all the non-identity that had been repressed to the feeble light of the infraspectacular world, everything that was neither expressible nor admissible in the dominant mode of disclosure. By starting from nothingness, Critical Metaphysics creates a truer, more compact, and looser fullness than the apparent fullness of the Spectacle: the fullness of dereliction, the absoluteness of disaster. In revealing to human suffering its political significance, it abolishes it as such and makes it the harbinger of a superior state. This goes equally well for anxiety, where what exists itself goes beyond what exists: once this experience is driven into the heart of Publicity, the finite as such falls apart and comes back together as a *sign* of the infinite. But the transfiguration that Critical Metaphysics is synonymous with operates first of all in man dispossessed of all that he'd believed was his own, in Bloom, who thus recognizes the nothingness left for him to share in as the only thing really of his own that he's ever had: his indestructible metaphysical faculty. The idea of the Imaginary Party, hence, gives form to that residue, to that *remainder*, to non-coincidence, to everything that falls outside of the universal plane of the economy, forced takeover, and Total Mobilization. Thus, Critical Metaphysics is the doctrine of transcendence which alone permits a liberation from and annihilation of this world, draws up the prologue for all future insurrections, and affirms itself as the *determined* negation of commodity domination, and simultaneously it *already* contains, in its present manifestations, the positive transcendence that goes beyond the zones of destruction. "Each man," it says, "exercises a certain intellectual activity, adopts a vision of the world, follows a conscious line of moral conduct, and thus contributes to the defense and victory of a certain vision of the world." (Gramsci, *Intellectuals and the organization of culture*) Consequently Critical Metaphysics will come to impose itself as an always more inflexible and virulent injunction to each Bloom to become conscious of the worldview underlying his lifestyle, then, either rejecting or appropriating it, to recognize his peers and adversaries, and thus, fundamentally, to awaken to the world. We won't grant anyone the leisure of failing to understand the importance of their existence. Everything is bound to everything else. We will make people lose even their taste for consumption. Critical Metaphysics is thus not content to consider everything from the point of view of *Tiqqun*, in other words of the unity of the world, the final realization of all things, the immanence of meaning in life; it produces

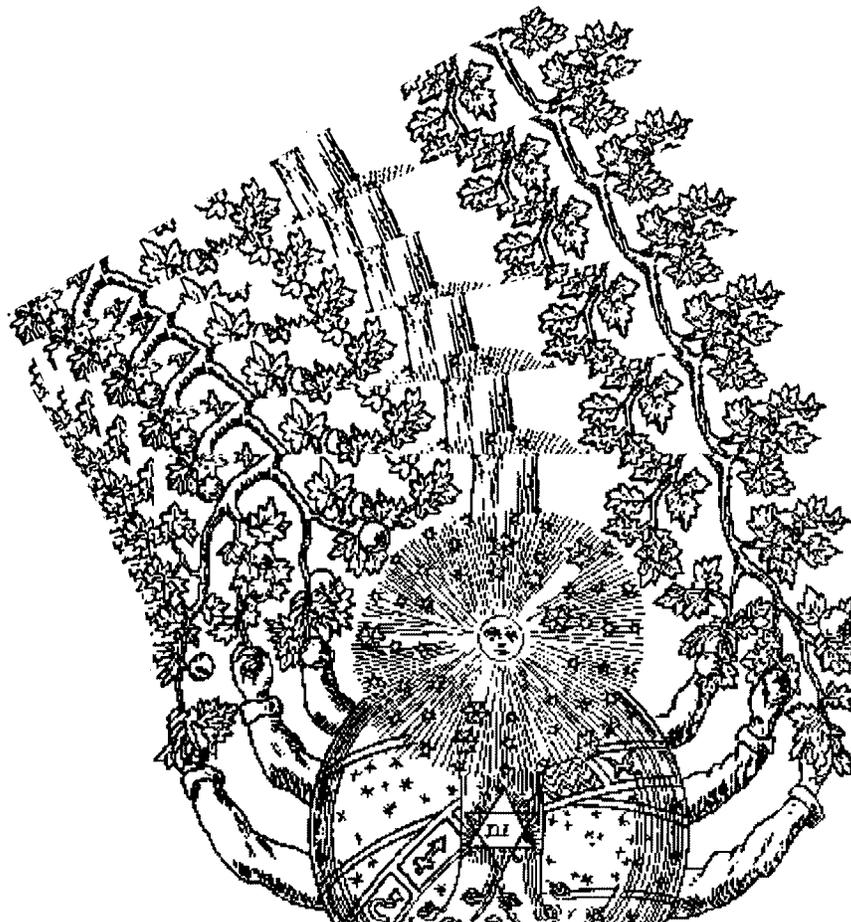
that unity, this realization, and this immanence in its practical and exemplary character. It is itself part of the world of *Tiqqun*. In its everyday existence, Critical Metaphysics is the perspective from which the Beautiful, the Good, and the True have already ceased to be contradictorily perceived. Because nihilism is the “provisional loss of the opening where a certain interpretation of being-there constitutes itself as interpretation” (Junger) and Critical Metaphysics presents itself as a general injunction to determine oneself *starting from* the metaphysical character of the world, it constitutes by its own trajectory the *fulfillment* and the *transcendence* of nihilism; that is, in the words of Heidegger – that old swine – “The Appropriation of metaphysics,” “The Appropriation of the forgetting of Being.” In the first place it’s about distancing yourself from the world as it is in representation; it “appears at first as a transcendence of metaphysics... But what happens in the appropriation of metaphysics, and there alone, is rather that the truth of metaphysics comes flooding back, the lasting truth of an apparently repudiated metaphysics, which is nothing else but its henceforth reappropriated *essence*: its *Dwelling*. What’s happening here is something different from a restoration of metaphysics.” (Heidegger, *Contribution to the question of being*)

For the community of critical metaphysicians, there is now nothing more *concrete* than this Appropriation and this Dwelling, even if they still provisionally present themselves in the form of problems to solve, rather than as immediately given solutions. To whatever extent they can within the constraints imposed on them by this society, they are doubtless now building, somewhere in the crevices of the metropolises, a really – that is, *collectively* – practiced *ethos* where “Metaphysics (is) part of the everyday practice of life” (Artaud). One would be wrong to see this as a comfortable alternative to taking up arms and going on the attack. Contrary to what certain hasty leftists would have us believe, in the current conditions, the immediate issue for revolutionary practice is not direct struggle against commodity domination, since that unavoidably crumbles away, “and what crumbles away may crumble away, but it cannot be destroyed.” (Kafka) Thus one must instead leave that old whore to decompose insipidly, and prepare for the moment to come to deliver a fatal blow it can’t recover from; this means uniting, by any means necessary, all the particular forces currently confronting commodity hegemony – in other words, *building the Imaginary Party*. Solely because of the fact that “in a world of lies, lies cannot be eliminated by their opposite, but only by a world of truth” (Kafka), those whose vocation is but to destroy have no choice but to work for the formation, in the infra-spectacular space, of such “worlds of truth” if nevertheless they intend to become something other than the sworn professionals of social contestation. Among the ruins, the positive elaboration of

forms of life, community, and affectivity independent and superior to the icy waters of spectacular morals is an act of sabotage where the power capable of defeating the *imperium* of abstraction acts without appearing. It thus comprises the *sine qua non* condition for all effective contestation, because unless they gather into mental families, those opposed to this society have zero chance of survival. Nevertheless, nothing will be able to prevent the critical metaphysicians from rallying to all agitation that explicitly attacks commodity domination, and fomenting some of their own too. We will never give up disrupting the dreary ceremony of the world. But such acts on our part will be falsely understood if without the understanding that they make sense only in the broader construction of a lifestyle that *war* has a place in. The peaceful coexistence of universal mutual ridicule, which makes our times such a strong emetic, is one of those things we intend to bring to a bloody end. It is intolerable that truth and falsehood go on living at peace with one another. The mutual compromise of so many viscerally irreconcilable metaphysics, in the baroque pay-toilet of the Spectacle, is one of the means at the enemy’s command for breaking down even the liveliest of minds. Human beings will have to agree to express their disagreements, trace out the clear borders between the different metaphysical homelands, and thus put an end to the world of confusion, where no one can recognize their brothers nor their enemies anymore. The interminable disputation of theologians comprises a model for social life. The utopia of Tlön does not displease us. We grant no laurels to the love of those who were never able to hate, nor to the peace of those who have never done battle. Therefore, in daring to act in such a way as to make “the utopian rejection of the conventional world objectivizes itself in a likewise existent reality, so that polemical refusal actually becomes the central form of the work” (Lukacs, *Theory of the Novel*), our search for chances to quarrel with those whose metaphysics are objectively adverse to ours is no less important than is our quest to find our brothers dispersed in Exile. The object of authentic community can only be the conscious construction of the Common itself, that is to say the creation of the world, or, to be more exact, the creation *of a* world. This is why critical metaphysicians are so particularly concerned with composing, *together*, the true alphabet whose application gives meaning to things, beings, and discourses; in other words with reconstituting a hidden order within reality, where what exists would cease to drown them and at last present itself in the familiar form of figures, rather than as faces, in Gombrowicz’ sense. It’s about elevating elective affinity up to the free construction of a common mode of reality-disclosure. We must make our individual perceptions and our moral sentiments a *collective creation*. Such is the task. But here we can already feel – along with an *objective* feeling of evil – an inexorable shiver of vice, like one gets when fucking a YoungGirl, or shopping in a su-

permarket. In each of our enemies, the postmodernist, the YoungGirl, the sociologist, the manager, the bureaucrat, the artist, or the intellectual, all defects that can easily all come together in just one scumbag, we see only their metaphysics. Our “power of voluntary hallucination” has gone beyond such a degree of coherence to where now everything speaks to us of what we are doing – and that’s just what our messianic era is all about: *the re-absorption of the element of time in the element of meaning*. Those who believe they can build a new world without building a new language are fooling themselves: the whole of this world is contained in its language. Ours does not hide its imperialist vocations any more than any other does: all poetry, all thought, all imagination that doesn’t manage to become effective, when that becomes *possible*, doesn’t even rise above the pathetic rank of cutesy crap. Roger Gilbert-Lecomte gives this observation an expression we find perfectly suitable: “the birth of concrete thought (experimental metaphysics), by drawing upon the vision in its artistic expression, will transform its knowledge into power.” He has also remarked that “the experimental metaphysician bets on his disequilibrium, which gives him various different perspectives on reality.” Quite true. A world made of ideas is also a world at the mercy of ideas, as long as they rule arbitrarily. The matter that absorbs us, in sum, is the realization of the *concrete* utopia of a world where each of the great metaphysics, each of the great “languages of creation”, among which there can be “no overtaking nor dou-

bling” (Peguy) can finally and in the full sense of the word *inhabit* the world, come into a kingdom of its own, and lose itself unrestrainedly in inexhaustible holy wars, schisms, sects and heresies, where the immanence of meaning in life will be rediscovered, where language will draw upon Being and Being language, where the metaphysical will no longer be a discourse, but the fecund tissue of existence, where each community will be another unique space within a reappropriated common, where man, giving up disguising his insoluble relationship with the world with the stupid and crude lie of private property, will truly open himself to the experience of anguish, ecstasy, and abandon. Life does not delight in our consciousness of it and its form is still experienced as suffering; this shows that we are living in times nearing their end. As for us, we announce a world where man will espouse his destiny as the tragic play of his freedom. There is no life more properly human than that. Doubtless the critical-metaphysicians carry in their unreason the outcome of the disaster. And even if we must succumb to the powers that this world will have unleashed against us, we will have at least presaged that happy time when there will be no more metaphysics, because all men will be metaphysicians, living bearers of the Absolute. Then we’ll understand that up to now *nothing’s happened*.





Theory of Bloom

Mr. Bloom watched curiously, kindly the lithe black form. Clean to see: the gloss of her sleek hide, the white button under the butt of her tail, the green flashing eyes. He bent down to her, his hands on his knees.

- Milk for the pussens."

- Mrkgnao!"

They call them stupid. They understand what we say better than we understand them.

JAMES JOYCE, *Ulysses*

At this hour of the night – The great watchmen are dead. Doubtless THEY killed them. The weak glow of their solitary stubbornness disturbed the party of sleep too much. That, at least, is what we think, we guess – we who've come so late – in light of the perplexity that their name still stirs up at certain times. Every living trace of what they did and were has been erased, it seems, by the maniacal obstinacy of resentment. In the end, all that's left of them for this world is a handful of dead images that it still haloes with the villainous satisfaction of having conquered those who were better than it is. So here we are, orphans of grandeur, marooned in a world of ice where no fires light the horizon. Our questions have to remain unanswered, the old ones assure us; then they say, all the same: "*there's never been a blacker night for intelligence.*"

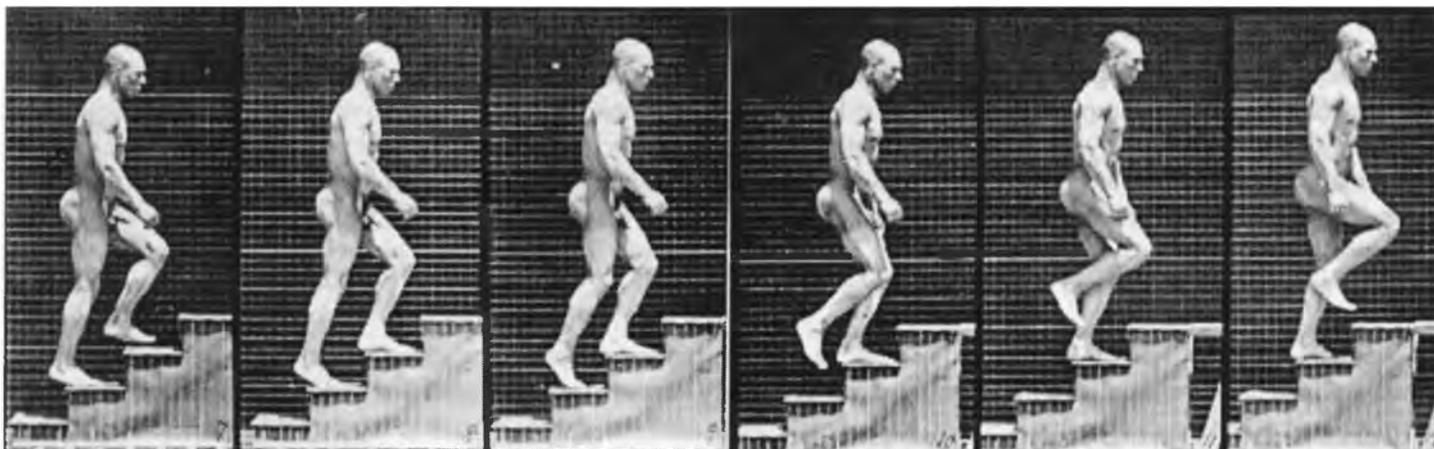
Hic et nunc – One day you pay more attention than usual to the collective silence on a metro line, and are overtaken by a deep shiver, a primal horror, coming out from behind the shared fakery of contemporary morals and suddenly plain for all to see. The last man, man of the street, man of the crowd, man of the masses, mass-man; that's how THEY represented Bloom to us at first: as the sad product of the time of the multitudes, as the catastrophic child of the industrial era and the end of all enchantments. But even there, no matter the name, there's still that shiver; THEY shiver before the *infinite mystery of ordinary man*. Each of us feels a pure force growing behind the theater of our qualities, hiding out there; *a pure force* that we're all *supposed* to ignore. What's left is the necessary anxiety we think we can appease by demanding of one another a rigorous absence from each other's selves, and an ignorance of a force which is *common*, but is now unqualifiable, because it is anonymous. And the name of that anonymity is Bloom.

Kairos – In spite of the extreme confusion that reigns on its surface, and perhaps precisely because of that, our era is by its nature *messianic*. What should be understood by this is that very old distinctions have now been effaced, and that many thousand-year-old divisions have now in turn been divided. Our era is reducing itself to one single, basic reality, and to *amusement* in that reality. More and more visibly, our contemporary non-societies – those imperative fictions – endlessly populate themselves with pariahs and parvenus. And the parvenus are themselves merely pariahs that have *betrayed* their condition and would like to make it forgotten by all means – but it *always* ends up biting them in the ass. One might also say, following another line of demarcation, that there's nothing left of these times but idlers and the disturbed, and that the disturbed are in the end no more than idlers trying to *cheat on* their own essential inaction. Will the pursuit of "deep feelings," of "intense life," which seems to be so many desperate people's last reason to live, ever really distract them fully from the fundamental emotional tone that inhabits them: boredom?

The reigning confusion is the result of the planetary deployment of all these *false paradoxes*, under which our central truth nevertheless is born. And this truth is that we are tenants of an existence which is a kind of exile, in a world which is a desert, that we've been *thrown out* into this world with no mission to accomplish, with no place assigned us, and no recognizable filiation

– abandoned. That we are at the same time *so little* and already *too much*. True politics, *ecstatic* politics, begins there. With a brutal and all-enveloping laugh. With a laugh that *undoes* the pathos oozing out of the so-called problems of “joblessness,” “immigration,” “precariousness,” and “marginalization.” There’s no *social problem* in unemployment, just the *metaphysical fact* of our own *idleness*. There’s no *social problem* in immigration, just the *metaphysical fact* of our own *foreignness*. There’s no *social problem* in precariousness or marginalization, just this inexorable existential reality that we’re all alone, *dying of it alone in the face of death*, that we are all, for all eternity, *finite beings*. You decide what’s serious about that and what’s just social entertainment. The era that opened in 1914, where the *illusion* of “modern times” completed its decomposition while simultaneously metaphysics completed its *self-realization*, saw the ontological burst out into history in its pure state and on all levels. Such tectonic upsurges of truth appear in those rare moments where the lie of civilizations starts to crumble. Our times are part of a curious constellation, which includes the decline of the middle ages and the first Gnostic centuries of our era. The same *Mood [Stimmung]* expresses itself everywhere, with the same radicalness: finiteness, perdition, separation. “Modern times” and the Christian west were born before that from such outbursts, *as a reaction*. This kinship keeps us from considering the emotional tone that dominated the twentieth century as simple “malaise in civilization.” And it’s not about subjective dispositions, nor some capricious propensity towards despair or disapproval: no, this tone is, on the contrary, the most *obvious* one of our era, one that THEY work ceaselessly to repress, at every stage in its advancement. It’s not that men have – negatively – “lost their bearings”; it’s rather that they have *positively become Blooms*. BLOOM IS THE FINAL UPSURGE OF THE NATIVE. From now on there’s nothing anywhere but Bloom and Bloom’s *escape*.

Up to now, too much has been written, and not enough thought about Bloom.



Approaching Bloom – Kafka’s *characters* are in a fundamental sense the same *thing* as Kafka’s *world*. Understanding the *figure* of Bloom doesn’t just require renouncing the classical idea of the subject, which is no big deal; it also requires abandoning the modern concept of objectivity. The term “Bloom” doesn’t in some exotic way fill the need for a word in the current lexicon to designate a new human type that has recently appeared on the surface of the planet that we should defend ourselves from. “Bloom,” rather, is the name of a certain *Stimmung*,¹ a fundamental tonality of being. This *Stimmung* doesn’t come from the subject, like a kind of fog clouding perception, or from the object, as a liquefied version of the Spirit of the World; rather it is the *basis upon which* the subject and the object, the self and the world, could exist as such in the classical age, i.e., as clearly distinct from one another. Because it’s “how” every being is the way he or she is, this tonality is not something unstable, fleeting, or simply subjective; rather it is precisely what gives *consistency* and *possibility* to each being. Bloom is the *Stimmung* in which and by which we understand each other at the present time, without which these words would be no more than a succession of meaningless phonemes. Historically, Bloom is the name for an uncommon *Stimmung*: one that corresponds to the moment the subject retreats from the world and the world from the subject, the moment when the self and the real are suddenly suspended, and just might have been abolished. For that reason Bloom is the general *stimmung* where *nothing but Stimmungen are apparent*, where the primacy of the *stimmung* over all other realities manifests itself as such. Since it always impregnates beforehand all the conceptual instruments by which PEOPLE might claim to understand it, the *Stimmung* cannot be understood, circumscribed, or analyzed “objectively,” no matter how much one might be able to feel it. The best we can draw out of it is the Figure that corresponds to it, in the sense where a Figure is a *human power to configure worlds*. What we’re aiming at with this “theory” is therefore indeed a

1 Mood – TRANS.

Stimmung, but we're doing so by seizing upon a Figure. Bloom also refers to the spectral, wandering, sovereignly vacant humanity that can no longer rise to any other content besides that of the *Stimmung* that it exists in, to that twilight being for which there is no more real, no more I, only *Stimmungs*.

The Most Disturbing Guest – Because he is the emptiness in all substantial determinations, Bloom is indeed the most disturbing guest within man, the one who goes from being a simple invitee to becoming the master of the house. Ever since he took up residence inside us, we've found ourselves saddled with a purely sartorial being. Whatever we undertake to try to buy back some substantiality, it ends up only ever being just something contingent and inessential relative to our selves. Bloom is thus the name of a new, ageless nudity, the properly human nudity that disappears under every attribute and nonetheless bears it, which precedes all form and renders it possible. *Bloom is masked Nothingness*. That's why it would be absurd to celebrate his appearance in history as the birth of a particular human type: that there are such men without qualities *is not* a certain quality of mankind; but on the contrary this is *mankind as such*, as *mankind*; the final realization of a generic human essence that is precisely a deprivation of essence, pure exposedness, pure availability: *larva*. The bourgeois republic can flatter itself that it was the first historical expression of any magnitude of this controlled ecstasy, and in the end the model for it. In it, in an unprecedented manner, the existence of man as a singular being finds itself *formally* separate from man's existence as a member of the community. Thus, in the bourgeois republic, where man is an acknowledged, veritable subject, he is abstracted from all qualities specific to him, and is a figure with no reality to it, a "citizen"; and where in his own eyes, as in the eyes of others, he passes for a real subject – in his everyday existence – he is a figure with no truth, an "individual." The classical era has in a way established the principles whose application has made man what we know him to be: the aggregation of a double nothingness: that of a "consumer," that *untouchable*, and that of a "citizen," that pathetic abstraction of impotence. But the more the Spectacle and Biopower perfect each other, the more autonomy is obtained by appearances and the basic conditions of our existence, the more their world detaches from men and becomes foreign to them; and the more Bloom draws back into himself, deepening and recognizing his interior sovereignty relative to objectivity. And as he detaches ever more painlessly from his social decisions and from his "identity," he gets stronger as a pure force of negation, beyond all effectiveness. The condition of *exile* in the unrepresentable that men and their common world are in coincides with the situation of *existential clandestinity* which befalls them in the Spectacle. That condition is a manifestation of the absolute singularity of each social atom as the absolutely anonymous, ordinary social atom, and its pure differentiation as pure nothingness. It is assuredly true that, as the Spectacle never tires of repeating, Bloom is *positively nothing*. But as to what this "nothing" means, interpretations vary.

Mundus est fabula – Because Bloom is he who can no longer separate himself from the immediate context containing him, his gaze is that of a man *that does not identify*. Everything blurs under the Bloom effect and is lost in the inconsequential wavering of objective relationships where life is felt negatively, in indifference, impersonality, and the lack of quality. Bloom lives inside of Bloom. Spread out all around us is a petrified world, a world of *things* where we ourselves, with our "I," our gestures, and even our feelings, figure in as things. Nothing can belong to us as truly our own in such a landscape of death. We are more and more like exiles, never sure of understanding what's happening all around. In spite of this gigantic relinquishment, in spite of the inexplicable suspended-animation that now strikes everything that exists, the overall mechanism continues to *function* like it was nothing, processing our isolation. In this perpetually renovated empire of ruins, there's nowhere for us to take refuge, and we don't even have the ability to desert it all by withdrawing into ourselves. We've been delivered up, without appeal, to a finiteness with no landmarks to orient us, totally exposed across the whole surface of our being. Bloom is thus that man whom nothing can save from the triviality of the world. A reasonable mind might conclude: "Well, then, in fact, Bloom is alienated man." But no, Bloom is man so completely mixed up with his own alienation that it would be absurd to try to separate him out from it. Empty angels, creatures without a creator, mediums without a message, we wander among the abysses. Our path, which could easily have come to an end yesterday or years back, has no reason and no necessity outside of that of its own contingency. It's a wandering path, one that carries us from the same to the same on the road of the Identical; and wherever we go we carry within ourselves the desert that we're the hermits in. And if some days we might swear that we are the "whole universe," like Agrippa de Nettesheim did, or more ingenuously that we are "all things, all men and all animals," like Cravan, it's just that all we see in everything is the Nothing which we ourselves so totally are. But that Nothingness is the absolutely real, in the light of which everything that exists becomes somehow ghostly.

Fragrance – Under commodity occupation the most *concrete truth* about everything is the truth of its infinite replaceability. All the situations that we find ourselves engaged in bear, in their equivalence to one another, the infinitely repeated stamp of an irrevocable "as if." We collaborate in the maintenance of a "society" *as if* we were not part of it; we conceive of the world *as if* we didn't ourselves occupy a specific situation within it; and we continue to grow old *as if* we had to always remain young. In a word:

we live *as if* we were already dead. And that's certainly the most painful paradox of Bloom's existence: he can no longer hear the voice of his living body, the speech of his physiology. And this at the very moment that PEOPLE want at every instant to make them mean something sexual. Whether Bloom's flesh is the body of a woman or of a man, or even a body with indiscernible form, it is always the prisoner of the non-sensual sexualization it's riddled with. But this sexualization, which is omnipresent and at the same time *never really lived*, is but the source of a deaf and persistent suffering, like amputees feeling their phantom limbs. From this comes the essentially spectral character, the sinister aura of contemporary mass pornography: it is never more than the presence of an absence. In Bloom's world – a world made fully semiotic – a phallus or a vagina are but symbols referring to something else, to a reference that can no longer be found in a reality that never stops fading away. Bloom's flesh is sad and has no mystery to it. It's not sex that has to be re-invented: we're already living among the ruins of sexuality, and our bodies themselves are but relics therein. Bloom cannot transform the gender roles that he has inherited *due to the shortcomings* of traditional societies, frozen as he is in an unstoppable pre-pubescent phase. Both male Blooms and female Blooms thus go through the same old tired dance, to the tune of the classic gender roles. But their gestures fall apart. Their dance is awkward. They stumble. And it's painful to watch. A thing among things, Bloom keeps himself outside of it all with an abandonment identical to that of his world. He's alone in every kind of company, and naked in all circumstances. That's where he rests, in extenuated self-ignorance, away from his desires and the world, where life rolls the rosary-beads of his absence day after day. All lived content is indifferently interchangeable for him, as he passes through it in a kind of existential tourism. We've unlearned joy like we've unlearned suffering; we've become emotional illiterates; we only perceive diffracted echoes of feelings. Everything's worn out, in our late-in-coming eyes; even unhappiness. And that, in sum, is perhaps the real disaster: that nowhere do we find support, doubt, or certainty. For a being who feels attached to life no more than by so tenuous a bond, freedom has such an incomplete and yet final meaning that it can no longer be taken away from him: the freedom to carry into his becoming a certain sense of the theatrical uselessness of everything, a terminal manner of spectatorship on the world, even of being a spectator of himself. In the eternal Sunday of his existence, Bloom's interests thus remain forever emptied of any object, and that's why Bloom is himself *the man without interest*. Here, *disinterestedness*, in the sense where we don't manage to have any importance in our own eyes, but also in the sense where the bourgeois category of interest can no longer strictly account for any of our acts, is no longer an expression of individual idealism, but a mass phenomenon.

Everyone is more foreign to himself than to anyone else – Bloom's fundamental experience is that of his own transcendence of himself, but this experience, in spite of how nice it sounds, is above all one of impotence, an experience of absolute suffering. Whatever high esteem we'd like to hold ourselves in, we are not subjects, finished products, autarchic and sovereign even in our allegiances. We evolve in a space that is entirely sectioned off and policed; a space *occupied*, on the one hand, by the Spectacle, and on the other, by Biopower. And what's terrible about this gridding, this occupation, is that the submission it demands of us is nothing that we could rebel against with some definitive break-away gesture, but something that we can only *deal with strategically*. The regime of power that we live under in no way resembles that which could have run its course under administrative monarchy, that expired concept which up until recently, that is, even within biopolitical democracies, remained the only enemy recognized by revolutionary movements: a simple restriction mechanism, a purely repressive mechanism of coercion. The contemporary form of domination, on the contrary, is essentially *productive*. On the one hand it rules all the *manifestations* of our existence – the Spectacle; on the other, it generates the *conditions* for it – Biopower. The Spectacle is the kind of Power that wants you to talk, that wants you to *be someone*. Biopower is benevolent power, full of a pastor's concern for his flock; the kind of Power that wants its subjects to be safe, that *wants you to live*. Caught in the vise of a kind of control that is simultaneously totalizing and individualizing, we are walled into a double constraint that annihilates us by the same stroke with which it makes us exist, the majority of us take up a kind of politics of disappearance: feigning an inner death and keeping our silence, like captives before the Grand Inquisitor. By subtracting all positivity and subtracting *themselves* from all positivity, these specters steal from a productive power the very thing it might have exerted itself upon. Their desire to not live is all that they have the strength to counterpose to a power that intends to *make them live*. In so doing, they remain in Bloom, and often end up buried there. So this is what Bloom means: that we don't belong to ourselves, that *this world isn't our world*. That it's not just that it confronts us in its totality, but that even in the most proximate details it is foreign to us. This foreignness would be quite enjoyable if it could imply an exteriority of principles between it and us. Far from it. Our foreignness to the world consists in the fact that the stranger, the

**TOO
LATE!**

“Distraction, in all its forms, will become absolutely vital to maintain social order”
(*Le Monde*, April 28th, 1998)

foreigner, is *in us*, in the fact that in the world of the authoritarian commodity, we regularly become strangers to ourselves. The circle of situations where we're forced to watch ourselves act, to contemplate the action of a "me" in which we don't recognize ourselves, now closes up on and besieges us, even in what bourgeois society still calls our "intimacy." The Other *possesses* us; it is this dissociated body, a simple peripheral artifact in the hands of Biopower; it is our raw desire to survive in the intolerable network of miniscule subjugations, granulated pressures that fetter us to the quick; it is the ensemble of self-interested contrivances, humiliations, pettiness; the ensemble of *tactics* that we *must* deploy. It is the whole objective machine that we sacrifice to inside ourselves. THE OTHER IS THE *ECONOMY* IN US. Bloom also means that each person knows for himself that he *is not* himself. Even if momentarily, faced with such and such a person – and most frequently in anonymous interactions – we might get an impression to the contrary, we still retain at bottom that feeling that this is an inauthentic existence, an artificial life. The internal presence of the Other takes shape on every level of our consciousness: it's a slight and constant loss of being, a progressive drying-out, a little death doled out continually. In spite of this, we persist in assuming the external hypothesis of our identity with ourselves; we *play* the subject. A certain shame accompanies this shredding process and evolves with it. So we try evasion; we project ourselves ever more violently to the outside, towards wherever is as far away as possible from this terrifying internal tension. We feel the need to let nothing about it appear, to glue ourselves to our social "identity," to remain foreign to our foreignness: TO KEEP AN AIR OF COMPOSURE before the field of ruins *This lie is in our every gesture*. That's the essential thing. It's no longer time to make literature out of the various combinations of disaster.

Ens Realissimum – What's certain is that we're nothing, nothing but the nothingness around which spins the movement of our ideas, our experiences, our miseries, and our feelings. What's certain is that we are the empty axis of this pit without walls, an axis that does not exist in and of itself, but only because every circle has its center. But this hopeless deficiency itself can be understood as an ultimate positivity, which is expressed as follows: I AM THE INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN WHAT I AM AND WHAT I AM NOT. Bloom is indeed such an intermediary, but he's a *passive* one; he's the *witness* to his own desubjectivation, to his endless becoming-otherwise. He conceals within him a primordial differentiation: knowing that we are not what we are, and that none of our particular attributes can really exhaust our potential. Incompleteness is the mode of being of everything that remains in contact with potential; the form of existence of everything devoted to *becoming*.

Uprooting – Every new stage in the development of commodity society requires the destruction of a certain form of immediacy, the lucrative separation of what had been one and united into a *relationship*. It is this split that the commodity then takes over, mediates, and extracts profit from, clarifying a little more each day the utopia of a world where every person will be, in all things, exposed on the one market. Marx admirably described the first phases of this process, though only from a labor bureaucrat's perspective, the perspective of Economy: "*The dissolution of all products and all activities into exchange value*," he wrote in *Grundrisse*, "*presupposes the decomposition of all frozen (historical) relationships of personal dependence within production, as well as the universal subjugation of producers to one another. . . . The universal dependence of individuals indifferent to each other constitutes their social bond. And this social bond is expressed in exchange value*." It would be perfectly absurd to consider the persistent devastation of all historical attachments and of all organic communities as a short-term defect in commodity society, one that it would only take the good will of men working for reform to deal with. The uprooting of all things, the separation into sterile fragments of each and every living totality and the autonomization of those fragments within the circuits of value are precisely the essence of the commodity, the alpha and omega of its movement. The highly contagious nature of this abstract logic takes on the form of a real "uprooting sickness" among men, which makes the uprooted ones throw themselves into an activity that always tends to uproot those who are still not uprooted or are so only partly, often by the most violent of methods; *whoever has been uprooted will uproot others*. Our era has the dubious prestige of having brought to its apex the proliferating and multitudinous feverishness of this "destructive character."

The Loss of Experience – As an observable *Stimmung*, as a specific affective tonality, Bloom is in touch with the extreme abstraction of the conditions of existence that the Spectacle fleshes out. The most demented, and at the same time the most characteristic concretion of the spectacular ethos remains – on a planetary scale – the metropolis. That Bloom is essentially the metropolitan man in no way implies that it might be possible by birth or by choice for him to remove himself from that condition, because there *is no outside* of the metropolis: the territories that its metastatic extension does not occupy are always polarized by it; that is, they are determined *in all their aspects* by its absence. The dominant trait of the spectacular-metropolitan *ethos* is the **loss of experience**, the most eloquent symptom of which is the formation in it of the very category of "experience" in the restricted sense where one *has* "experiences" (sexual, sporting, professional, artistic, sentimental, ludic, etc.). Everything about Bloom flows from this loss, or is synonymous with it. Within the Spectacle, as they are within the metropolis, men never have the concrete experience of events, but only of conventions, rules; a wholly symbolized, entirely constructed second nature. There, what reigns is the

radical split between the insignificance of everyday life – called “private” life – where nothing happens, and the transcendence of a frozen sphere called “public” that no one has access to. But all this is starting to look more and more like ancient history. The separation between the Spectacle’s lifeless forms and the “formless life” of Bloom, with its monochromatic boredom and silent thirst for nothingness, moves aside at numerous points to make way for indistinguishability. The loss of experience has finally attained such a degree of generality that it can in turn be interpreted as the primordial, original experience, as the *experience of experience as such*; as a clear disposition, that is, towards Critical Metaphysics.

The metropolises of separation – Metropolises are distinct from the other grand human formations first of all because the greatest proximity, and usually the greatest promiscuity, coincide in them with the greatest foreignness. Never have men been gathered together in such great number, and never have they been so totally separate from one another. In the metropolis, man experiences his own negative condition, purely. Finiteness, solitude, and exposedness, which are the three fundamental coordinates of this condition, weave the décor of each person’s existence in the big city. Not a fixed décor, but a moving décor; the amalgamated décors of the big city, due to which everyone has to endure the ice-cold stench of its non-places. The *hip, plugged-in* metropolis-dwellers here comprise a rather remarkable type of Bloom not only in terms of intensity but also in the numerical extent of their legions: Bloom’s imperialist fraction. The *hipster* is the Bloom that offers himself up to the world as a tenable form of life, and to do so constrains himself to a strict discipline of lies. The final consumer of existence, stricken by a definitive incredulosity concerning both people and language, the *hipster* lives on the horizon of an endless experimentation *on himself*. He has circumscribed the volume of his being and has decided to never get out of it, if not to ensure the self-promotion of his own sterility. Thus, he has replaced the emptiness of experience with the experience of emptiness, while waiting for the adventure he’s always ready for but never comes: he’s already written out all the possible scenarios. In a deceived ecstasy, the solitary crowd of *hipsters*, always-already disappeared, always-already *forgotten*, pursue their wandering path like a raft full of suicides, lost in a depressing ocean of images and abstractions. And that crowd has nothing to communicate, nothing but conventional formulas for absent enjoyment and a life with no object within a furnished nothingness. The metropolis appears, moreover, as the homeland of all freely selected mimetic rivalries, the sorry but continuous celebration of the “fetishism of little differences.” PEOPLE play out all year-round a tragicomedy of separation: the more people are isolated, the more they resemble one another; the more they resemble one another, the more they detest one another; and the more they detest one another the more they isolate themselves. And where men can no longer recognize each other as the participants in building a common world, everything only further catalyzes a chain reaction, a collective fission. The teachings of the metropolis show, from different angles, the extent to which the loss of experience and the loss of community are one and the same thing. It must however be taken into account, in spite of the nostalgia



The world of authoritarian merchandise

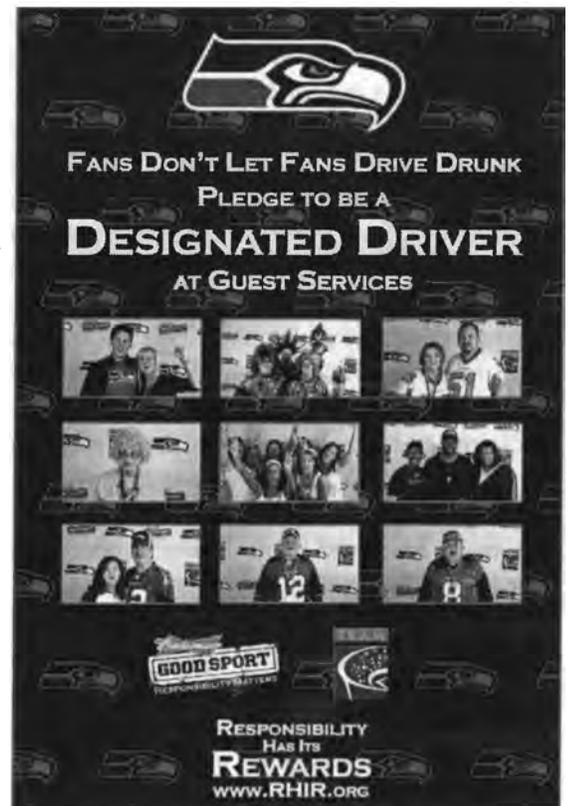
that a certain romanticism so enjoys cultivating even in its enemies, that before our era there was not, and had never been, any community. And these are not two contradictory affirmations. Before Bloom, before “separation perfected,” before the unreserved abandon that is ours – before, then, the perfect devastation of all substantial ethos, all “community” could be but a hummus of falsehoods – a false “belonging,” to a class, a nation, a milieu – and a source of limitation: and anyway, if it were otherwise *it would not have been annihilated*. Only a radical alienation from the Common was able to make the primordial Common burst forth in such a way that solitude, finiteness, and exposedness – that is, the only *true* bond between people – could also appear as the only *possible* bond between them. What PEOPLE call a “community” today, while gazing out upon the past, obviously shares in this primordial Common, but in a reversible way, because it’s just second-hand. And so it’s up to us to have for the first time an experience of real community, a community based *on the honest assumption of our separation, exposedness, and finiteness*. Following Bloom’s example, the metropolis simultaneously materializes the total loss of community and the infinite possibility of regaining it.

Bloom – The elucidation of the possibilities contained in our times depends exclusively on whether we consider the Bloom figure. Bloom’s eruption into history determines, for “our party,” the need to completely rebuild our foundations, both in theory and practice. All analysis and all action that does not absolutely take Bloom into account will damn itself to eternalizing the

present exile, because Bloom, since he's not an individuality, doesn't let himself be characterized by anything he says, does, or manifests. Each moment is for him a moment of decision. He has no stable attributes whatsoever. No habits, no matter how far he pursues his repetition of them, are susceptible to conferring any being upon him. Nothing adheres to him, and he doesn't adhere to anything that may seem to be his, not even "society," which would like to support itself upon him. To cast a light on these times, we must consider that there is on the one hand the mass of Blooms and on the other the mass of acts. All truth flows from this.

A genealogy of Bloom-consciousness – Bartleby is an office employee. The diffusion of mass intellectual labor within the Spectacle, in which conventional knowledge counts as exclusive competency, has an obvious relationship with the form of consciousness that is proper to Bloom. So much so that except in situations where abstract knowledge dominates over all vital milieus, outside of the organized sleep of a world produced entirely as a symbol, Bloom's experience never attains the form of a lived continuum which he might add onto himself; rather it just starts to look like a series of inassimilable *shocks*. Thus he has had to create an organ to protect him against the uprooting that the currents and discordances of his external milieu threaten him with: instead of reacting with his sensibilities to this uprooting, Bloom reacts essentially with his intellect, and the intensification of consciousness that the same cause produces ensures its psychic preponderance. Thus the reaction to these phenomena is buried in the least sensitive psychic organ, the one that is most distant from the depths of being. His pure consciousness is, then, the only thing that Bloom manages to recognize as his own, but it is a consciousness that has become autonomous from life, that no longer feeds it but merely observes it, and in its lapse, muzzles itself. Bloom cannot take part in the world in an inner way. He only ever goes into it in exception to himself. That's why he has such a singular disposition towards distraction, towards *deja-vus*, towards clichés, and above all why he has such an atrophy of memory that confines him in an eternal present; it's also why he's so exclusively sensitive to music, which alone can offer him *abstract sensations* – we should here mention speed and "sliding," which are also bloomesque enjoyments but this time only insofar as they are *abstraction itself arising as sensation*. Everything that Bloom lives, does, and feels remains something external to him. And when he dies, he dies like a baby, like someone who's never learned anything. With Bloom, the relations of consumption have extended themselves over the totality of existence, and over the totality of what exists. In Bloom's case, commodity propaganda has so radically triumphed that he effectively conceives of his world not as the fruit of a long history, but like a primitive man conceives of the forest: as his natural surroundings. A number of things become clear about Bloom when he's looked at from this angle. Because Bloom is indeed a primitive man, but he's an *abstract primitive*. It would be enough to summarize the provisional state of the question in a formula: *Bloom is the eternal adolescence of humanity*.

The world of the authoritarian commodity – For domination – and by this term we cannot properly understand anything other than the symbolically mediated relations of *complicity* between the dominators and the dominated – in proportion to the autonomy that the Blooms acquire relative to their assigned social positions, there is a strategic need to extract ever more appropriations, and to constantly carry out new *subjugations*. Maintaining the central mediation of everything by commodities thus demands that ever larger sections of humanity's being need to be brought under control. From this perspective, one cannot fail to note the extreme diligence with which the Spectacle has burdened Bloom with the heavy duty of Being, the prompt solicitude with which it has taken charge of his education, and of defining the complete panoply of conforming personalities – in sum, one cannot fail to notice how it's been able to extend its grip over the totality of what may be said and seen, and the codes according to which all relationships and identities are to be built. The development of Biopower since the 18th century, a development whose qualitative leap took place with the Total Mobilization of 1914, can only be understood strictly in light of this. The taking of control over men as living beings within biopolitical democracies, the application of the social forces of integration *even to bodies*, the ever tighter management of the *conditions* of our existence, comprise domination's response to the *disintegration of individuality*, to the erasure of the subject within Bloom. Its response, in sum, to the fact that it has *lost its grip*. The productive character of power as it circulates in the world of the authoritarian commodity can be illustrated, among other ways, by the manner in which the control of behaviors *operates* therein: most often it is enough



The world of authoritarian *merchandise*

simply to master the organization of public space, the arrangement of décor, the material organization of infrastructure so as to maintain order; and to maintain order by the simple power of coercion that the anonymous mass exerts *over each of its elements*, so as to make that mass respect the abstract norms in force. In a downtown street, a metro train aisle, or among a team of *collaborators*, the perfection of the apparatus of surveillance resides precisely in the *absence of any surveillance watchmen*. Panoptical control is only all the more operative when it's faceless. In the final analysis, it doesn't care at all whether its subjects reject it or accept it, as long as they submit to it *outwardly*.

Militarization of disaster, concentration of domination – Since 1914, commodity domination has only been able to respond to the enormity of its disaster with the use of Total Mobilizations. It intends, with the use of a state of exception – sometimes manifest, sometimes latent, but always *permanent* – to contain the overflowing flood of its inconsistencies. The first of these inconsistencies has to do with the fact that its development demands in the same movement both the production of ever more extensive possibilities and the general prohibition against making them real. Commodity domination must thus simultaneously produce both an overabundance of resources and the overabundance of terror necessary in order that no one make use of them. Bloom is the man of this terror, the one that spreads it and the one that suffers through it: he is the *collaborator*. The recent period, over the course of which brutal crises of control have claimed to put whole sectors of what exists into step with a categorical imperative of transparency and traceability, is marked by a rapid movement of the *concentration of domination*. Only a minority of conformed subjectivities, from whom PEOPLE require a new fusion between life and work, personality and function, are co-opted into the really vital positions, which meanwhile have become ever fewer. The formation of this Praetorian Guard of Capital, whose elements are not interchangeable (contrary to the situation of the large mass of wage workers), is part of this concentration of domination, which is inseparable from the militarization of disaster. As for the excess people, they essentially are set to work *keeping each other busy*, reciprocally dispossessing one another of their idleness, which indeed takes some real effort. At the moment of domination's general restructuring, Bloom finds himself hunted down everywhere and in everyone, since he is just as much the idle person as he is the foreigner or the pariah. That's why he has to camouflage himself under so much artificiality, because *Bloom is the civil figure at the heart of the universal militarization of disaster*.

Poor Substantiality – Bloom lives in a state of terror, above all in the terror of being recognized as Bloom. Everything happens as if the mimetic hell we suffocate in was unanimously judged preferable to our encountering ourselves. Biopower organizes itself ever more visibly as a directed economy of subjectivations and resubjectivations. There is, thus, a certain inevitability about the feverish enthusiasm for the industrial production of personality-kits, of disposable identities and other hysterical temperaments. Rather than really examining their central emptiness, the majority of people recoil before the vertigo of a total absence of *ownership*, of a radical disinclination, and thus, at root, they recoil before the yawning chasm of their freedom. They prefer to be engulfed ever more deeply in poor substantiality, towards which everything pushes them, after all. And so it must be expected that, hidden in some unequally latent depression they will discover some buried root or other, some spontaneous belonging, some incombustible quality. French, outcast, woman, artist, homosexual, Briton, citizen, fireman, Muslim, Buddhist, or unemployed person – anything's fine as long as it lets one moo out that miraculous "I AM..." in some tone or another, eyes glazed over and gazing off into the infinite distance. It doesn't matter what empty and consumable particularity gets taken on, or what social role is at hand, because it's only all about warding off your own nothingness. And since all organic life fails in light of these pre-chewed forms, they never take long to quietly reenter the general system of commodity exchange and commodity equivalence, which reflects and pilots them. Poor substantiality thus means that PEOPLE have put all their substance on record within the Spectacle and that the latter operates as the universal *ethos* of the celestial community of spectators. But a cruel ruse makes it so that in the end all this does is accelerate even more the process of the collapse of all substantial forms of existence. The man of poor substantiality's primary non-resolution inexorably spreads itself out underneath the waltz of dead identities, where he always successively leads the dance. What should mask a lack of individuality not only fails to do so, it also increases the mutability of what could have lived off it. Bloom triumphs above all in those who flee from him.

Bloom is the positive reality pointed towards by the Empire of simulacra – It is vain to claim substantiality within the Spectacle. Nothing in the final analysis is less authentic or more suspect than "authenticity." Anything that claims to have a *name of its own* or claims to adhere to itself can only be usurpation or stupidity. By imposing upon each living singularity the need to consider itself as specific – that is, from a formal perspective, from a point of view outside of itself – the Spectacle tears it apart from inside, and introduces an inequality, a difference into it. It forces the I to consider itself as an object, to reify itself, to understand itself *as an Other*. Consciousness thus finds itself pulled into a flight without respite, into a perpetual split stimulated by the imperative – for anyone who refuses to let himself be won over by a lethal 'peace' – to detach itself from all substance. By applying to all the manifestations of life its tireless work of denomination, which is thus a work of anxious reflexivity, the Spectacle wrenches

the world out of its immediacy with continual blasting. In other words, it produces and reproduces Bloom: the *thug* that knows he's a *thug* is no longer a *thug*, he's a Bloom *playing* the *thug*. Many of the things that we call by names that are thousands of years old ceased to exist long ago. We don't need neologisms to replace the old words: we should just replace them all with "Bloom." For instance, there's no such thing anymore as that supposedly substantial reality that used to be called "the family." There aren't even any more fathers, mothers, sons or sisters; there's nothing but Blooms playing family, Blooms playing dad, mom, son or sister. And these days one finds so few philosophers, artists, or writers: there's hardly anything but Blooms anymore in these extras' roles, just Blooms producing cultural commodities and striking the standard poses becoming of their position. To top it off, even farmers themselves have ended up by deciding that they'll have to play "farmer." It just seems like that would be more profitable. It's forbidden to us under the present regime of *things* to durably identify ourselves with any specific content, only with the *movement of tearing ourselves away from it*.

Sua Cuique Persona – In the present reality, the question of who's masked and who isn't is moot. It's simply grotesque to claim to establish oneself outside of the Spectacle, outside of a mode of disclosure in which everything manifests itself in such a way that its appearance becomes autonomous, that is, as a *mask*. Its costume, *as a costume*, is the truth of Bloom; that is, *there's nothing behind it*, or rather – and this unveils much more casual horizons – behind it is *the great Nothing*, which is a potential power. That the mask comprises the general form of appearance within the universal comedy from which only hypocrites still think they



can escape doesn't mean that there's no more truth, just that truth has become something quite subtle and biting. The figure of Bloom finds its highest and most contemptible expression in the "language of flattery," and in this ambiguity there's no room for whimpering or rejoicing, just for fighting. The reign of travesty always just slightly precedes the final death of a given reign. We'd do wrong to take off domination's mask, since it's always known itself to be threatened by the element of night, savagery, and impersonality that are introduced when masks are worn. What is *evil* about the Spectacle is rather that faces *themselves* are petrified until they become like masks, and that a central authority sets itself up as the *master of metamorphoses*. The living are those who are able to fathom the words of the maniac tremblingly proclaiming: "*Happy is he who in his disgust for empty, satisfied faces decides to cover himself with a mask: he will be the first to rediscover the raging drunkenness of all that dances to its death over the waterfall of time.*"

"*Alienation also means being alienated from alienation.*" – Historically speaking, it's in the figure of Bloom that alienation from the Common attains its maximum degree of intensity. It's not so easy to imagine the extent to which the existence of man as a singular being and his existence as a social being have *in appearances* had to become foreign to one another in order that it become possible to speak of "social bonds," that is, to grasp man's being-in-common as something objective, as something exterior to him, and as something confronting him. The true front lines pass right through the fine milieu of Blooms, and determine their schizoid neutrality. The militarization of disaster spreads out like a final warning, given to him so that he will choose sides: he must

either endorse in an unconditional manner *whichever* social role, *whichever* servitude, or starve to death. We are dealing here with a kind of urgent measure taken quite ordinarily by regimes in desperate straits; one that simply allows Bloom to be hidden, but not suppressed. But, for the time being, that's good enough. The essential thing is that the eye that sees the world in a different way than the Spectacle does can be sure that PEOPLE have never seen any such thing this side of the Pyrenees – “what's that you say? A what? A Bloom???” – and that it's just a metaphysician's chimera; and thus will make its critiques on that basis. All that matters is that bad faith can become a clear conscience, and that it can counterpose to us its time-stamped improbabilities. For the rest, how could that which PEOPLE have essentially dispossessed of all appearance ever appear *as such* in the Spectacle? It is Bloom's fate to never be *visible* except to the extent that he participates in poor substantiality, that is, only to the extent that he disowns himself as Bloom. All the radicalness of the figure of Bloom is concentrated in the fact that the choice he finds himself permanently faced with has on the one side the best and on the other side the worst, with no transition zone between the two accessible to him. He is the neutral core that casts a light on the analogical relationship between the highest point and the lowest point. His lack of interest can comprise a great opening to *agapè*, or the desire to simply operate like a gear in a technocratic extermination enterprise, for instance. In the same way, an absence of personality can prefigure the transcendence of the classical petrified personality, as well as the terminal inconsistency of the metropolitan *hipster*. There is the “*me ne frego*”² of fascism, and there is the “*me ne frego*” of the insurgent. There is the banality of evil, and there is also the *banality of good*. But in circumstances of domination, Bloom's banality always manifests itself as the banality of evil. Thus, for the 20th century, Bloom would have been Eichmann much more than Elser; as for Eichmann, Hannah Arendt tells us, “it was obvious to everyone that he was not a ‘monster,’” and that “one couldn't help thinking that he was really a clown.” It should be mentioned in passing that there is *no* difference in their nature between Eichmann – who identified *purely and completely* with his criminal function, and the *hipster* who, unable to assume his fundamental non-belonging to the world, nor the consequences of an exile situation, devotes himself to the frenetic consumption of the *symbols* of belonging that this society sells so expensively. But in a more general sense, everywhere PEOPLE talk about “economy,” the banality of evil prospers. And it is there peeking out from under the allegiances of all kinds that men swear to “necessity,” “doin' alright,” to the “that's the way it is” by way of “all work is honorable.” And it is there that the extreme reaches of unhappiness begin, when all commitments are replaced by the commitment to surviving. And commitment/attachment is thus stripped naked. With no object but itself. Hell.

The Inner Man – The pure exteriority of the conditions of existence also form the illusion of pure interiority. Bloom is that being who has taken up into himself the emptiness that surrounds him. Hunted out of any place of his own, he himself has become a place. Banished from the world, he has become a world. It was not in vain that Paul, the Gnostics, and later on the Christian mystics drew a distinction between the inner man and outer man, because in Bloom this separation has taken place historically. The marginal condition of those who, like Ruysbroeck the Admirable's inner man, feel “more inwardly inclined than outwardly inclined,” who live “anywhere at all, and among anyone at all, in the depths of solitude... sheltered from multiplicity, sheltered from places, sheltered from men,” has since then become the common condition. However, it is a rare person who, having experienced it positively, has had the strength to want it. Pessoa: “To create myself, I destroyed myself; I exteriorized myself so totally within myself that inside myself I only exist outwardly. I am the living stage over which various actors pass, playing various theater pieces.” But for the time being if Bloom resembles this inner man it's most often only in a negative manner. The non-essential interior of his personality hardly contains more than the feeling that he's found himself to be pulled along on an endless fall towards an underlying dark and all-enveloping space, as if he were ceaselessly jumping off into himself while disintegrating. Drop by drop, in uniform beads, his very being oozes, rushes away, and bleeds out. His interiority is less and less a space or a substance, and more and more a threshold and its passage. And this is also what makes Bloom fundamentally a free spirit, because he is an empty spirit.

“*Whoever would thus leave himself behind shall truly be returned to himself*” – The ecstatic “essence” of Bloom is expressed as follows: IN EVERYTHING THAT HE IS, BLOOM IS OUTSIDE OF HIMSELF. In the empire of Biopower and autonomous publicity – the tyranny of the impersonal, of what PEOPLE say, do, or think – the ecstatic structure of human existence becomes manifest in the form of a generalized schizoid state. Each person now distinguishes between his “true self,” something pure, detached from all objectifiable manifestations, and the system of his “false self,” social, acted, constrained, inauthentic. In each of his determinations – in his body, in his “qualities,” in his gestures, in his language – Bloom clearly feels that he is leaving himself behind, that he has left himself behind. And he contemplates that egress. And he is that wandering among those attributes, in that contemplation. His becoming is a becoming-foreign. Léon Bloy, in his time, compared the capitalist to the mystic; his *The blood of the poor* dedicates a good number of pages to a rather free interpretation of the “fetishistic character” of the commodity: “This money, which is but the visible figure of the blood of Christ circulating through all his limbs,” “far from loving

2 “I don't give a damn” – TRANS.

it for its material enjoyment, which he deprives himself of, (the greedy man) adores it in spirit and in truth, like the Saints adore the God that gives them their duty of penitence and their martyrs' glory. He adores it for the sake of those who do not adore it; he suffers in the place of those who do not wish to suffer for money. The greedy are mystics! Everything they do is done in view of pleasing an invisible God whose visible and so laboriously sought-after simulacrum showers them in tortures and ignominy." If the capitalist is similar to the mystic in his activity, Bloom is similar to the mystic in his passivity. And in fact, nothing resembles Bloom's existential situation better than the detachment of the mystics. His reified consciousness effectuates upon it a definite propensity towards contemplation, whereas his indifference corresponds to that "honorable detachment (that is) none other than the fact that the mind remains immobile in the face of all the vicissitudes of love and suffering, honor, shame, and outrage." Until paralysis sets in. In the end, Bloom reminds one of Meister Eckhart's God, a God that is defined as "he who has no name, who is the negation of all names, and has never had a name," like the pure nothingness for whom all things are nothingness. Under its perfection, Bloom's alienation conceals a truly primordial alienation.

Let us share our poverty, not our misery! – For Meister Eckhart, the poor man is he who "wants nothing, knows nothing, and has nothing." Eventually dispossessed and deprived of everything, mutely foreign to his world, and as ignorant of himself as of what surrounds him, Bloom realizes, at the heart of the historical process and in all its fullness, the truly metaphysical magnitude of the concept of poverty. Indeed, they needed every bit of the dense tackiness of an era where economy has served as metaphysics in order to make an economic notion out of poverty (now that this era is coming to an end, it becomes obvious once again that the opposite of poverty is not wealth, but misery, and that of those three, only poverty has any perfection about it. Poverty means the state of he who can make use of anything, having nothing specifically his own, and misery means the state of he who cannot make use of anything, whether because he has too much, or because he doesn't have the time, or because he has no community). Thus, everything that the idea of wealth has been able to carry through history, all the bourgeois tranquility, all the domestic bliss, all the immanent familiarity with the readily perceived reality here below, is something that Bloom can appreciate, out of nostalgia or simulation, but that he cannot experience. For him, happiness has become a very old idea, and not only in Europe. Together with all interest, and all ethos, the very possibility of use value has been lost. Bloom only understands the supernatural language of exchange value. He gazes upon the world with eyes that see nothing; nothing but the nothingness of value. His desires themselves are only roused towards absences, abstractions, not the least of which is the YoungGirl's ass. Even when Bloom appears to want something, he never ceases to not-want, since he wants emptily, since he wants emptiness. That's why wealth, in the world of the authoritarian commodity, has become something grotesque and incomprehensible, merely a cluttered form of miserable poverty. Wealth is now merely something that possesses you; something PEOPLE restrain you with.

Agape – Bloom is the man in whom everything has been socialized, but socialized as private. Nothing is more exclusively common than what he calls his "individual happiness." Bloom is ordinary and characterless even in his desire to stand out as a singular individual. For Bloom, all substantial differences between him and other men has been effectively abolished. All that remains is a pure difference without content. And everything, in the world of the authoritarian commodity, aims to maintain this pure difference, which is pure separation. And so Bloom may still answer to a particular name, but that name no longer means anything. All the misunderstandings regarding Bloom have to do with the depth of the gazes that people allow themselves to stare at him with. In any case, the award for blindness has to go to the sociologists, who like Castoriadis talk about "a retreat into the private sphere" without clarifying that this sphere itself has been entirely socialized. At the other extreme we find those who have let themselves go so far as even to go into Bloom. And the stories they bring back all resemble in one way or another the experience that the narrator of Monsieur Teste had upon discovering what that character was like "at home": "I've never had a greater impression of the ordinary. It was an ordinary, characterless dwelling, similar at any given point to the theorems, and perhaps just as useful. My host's existence took place within the most general home, the most common of interiors." Bloom is, indeed, the man that exists in the "most common of interiors." It is only in those places and circumstances where the Spectacle's effect is temporarily suspended that the most intimate truth about Bloom comes out: that he is, at bottom, in agapê. Such a suspension arises in an exemplary manner in uprisings, but also at the moment when we talk to a stranger in the streets of the metropolis, and in the final analysis anywhere that people must recognize themselves, beyond all specifics, as simply people; as separate beings, finite and exposed. It is then not rare to see perfect strangers show us their common humanity, by protecting us from some danger, by offering us their whole pack of cigarettes instead of just the one cigarette we'd asked for, or by spending a quarter-hour helping us find the address we'd been looking for when otherwise they are usually so stingy with their time. Such phenomena are in no way explainable by an interpretation using the classical ethnological terms of gift and counter-gift like a certain kind of bar-room sociality, on the contrary, might indeed be. No hierarchical rank is in play here. There's no glory being sought after. The only thing that can explain it is the ethics of infinite gift, which, in the Christian tradition, and specifically the Franciscan, is known as agapê. Agapê is part of the existential situation of man that has informed commodity society in this, its

final age. And that's the state commodity society has left mankind in, by making it so foreign to itself and its desires. In spite of all indications to the contrary, and as disturbing as it may be, this society is coming down with a serious kindness infection.

"Be Different – Be Yourself!" (an underwear ad) – In many respects, commodity society can't do without Bloom. The return to effectiveness of spectacular representations, known as "consumption," is entirely conditioned by the mimetic competition that Bloom's inner nothingness impels him towards. The tyrannical judgments of the impersonal, of what "PEOPLE" will think, would remain just another item



"Because Bloom is something that must be transcended; a nothingness that must annihilate itself."

in a universal mockery if "being" did not, in the Spectacle, mean "being different," or at least making an effort to. So it's not so much, as good old Simmel put it, that "a person's personal, special importance comes about through their having a certain impersonal trait," but rather that the special importance of impersonality would be impossible without a certain labor on the part of individual persons. Naturally what is reinforced with the originality that PEOPLE give to Bloom is never his singularity, but the impersonal "PEOPLE"-ness itself, in other words, poor substantiality. All recognition within the Spectacle is but recognition of the Spectacle. Without Bloom, therefore, the commodity would be no more than a purely formal principle deprived of all contact with becoming.

I would prefer not to – At the same time, one thing's for sure – Bloom carries within himself the destruction of commodity society. In Bloom we find that same ambivalent character seen in all the realities in which the transcendence of commodity society on its own terrain manifest itself. In this dissolution, it is the foundations themselves, which have for a long time now been deserted, rather than the great edifices of the superstructure that are the first to be attacked. The invisible precedes the visible, and the basis of the world changes imperceptibly. Bloom bears the end of the world within himself, but does not declare its abolition; he just empties it of meaning and reduces it to the state of a left-over husk awaiting demolition. In this sense one might affirm that the metaphysical upheaval that Bloom is a synonym for what is already behind us, but that the bulk of its consequences is yet to come. With Bloom, for whom all the self-intimacy that gave rise to private property is lacking, the latter has lost all substance: what is really left that is truly proper to anyone, that is really anyone's own? What is left, *a fortiori*, that is private, in the proper sense? Private property now subsists merely in an empirical manner, as a dead abstraction gliding along above a reality that escapes it ever more visibly. Bloom doesn't contest the law, he lays it down. And how could the law not have been definitively outdated with the appearance of this being who is not a subject, whose acts bear relation to no particular personalty at all, and whose behaviors are no more dependent on the bourgeois categories of interest and motivation than they are on passion or responsibility? Faced with Bloom, thus, the law loses all its competence to deliver justice – what could justice mean to a totally indifferent being? – and it is only when PEOPLE leave it strictly to police terror that it can be applied at all. Because in the world of the always-similar, we stagnate just as much in jail as we do at Club Med: life is everywhere identically absent. That's why it's so important to domination for prisons to become places of prolonged torture, and for that to be well known by everyone. But it is the economy itself, and with it all notions of utility, credit, or instrumental rationality, that Bloom has above all made a thing of the past. That's the reason for the well planned and public constitution of a lumpen-proletariat in all the nations where late capitalism reigns: the lumpens are there to dissuade Bloom from abandoning his essential detachment by the abrupt but frightening threat of hunger. Because from the economic point of view, this "non-practical man" (Musil) is a disastrously clumsy producer, and a totally irresponsible consumer. Even his egoism itself is in decline: it is an egoism without ego. If Bloom hasn't failed to devastate classical politics in its very principles, it's in part only by default (there can be no more imaginable establishment of equivalence between everything within the universal than there can be senatorial elections among rats – each rat is an equal and inalienable representative of his species, *primus inter pares*³) but also in part by excess, because Bloom moves spontaneously within the un-representable, which is Bloomness itself. So; what can we think, then, of the troubles that this ungrateful son causes the Spectacle, from under which all characters and all roles slip out with a little murmur saying "I would prefer not to?"

Tiqqun – *Tiqqun* goes to the root of things. It is still only crossing through purgatory. It carries out its work methodically. *Tiqqun* is the only possible outlook for revolution. Not the revolution that must be waited for, much less the revolution that we

can prepare: but the revolution that is taking place according to its own invisible pulsations, in a temporality operating internally within history. Tiqqun is not a determinable point in the future, with a validity period more or less short, even if it is also that, but rather it is the “real movement that abolishes the existing state of things.” Tiqqun is always already there; that is, it is but the manifestation process of what exists, which also entails the annulment of that which does not exist. The fragile positivity of this world has to do precisely with the fact that it is nothing, nothing but the suspension of Tiqqun. This epochal suspension can now be felt everywhere. And there really isn’t anything else that can truly be felt at all anymore. Bloom is a part of Tiqqun. Precisely because he is the man of full-fledged nihilism, his fate is either to make his escape from nihilism or perish. The intuition of the proletariat, for Marx, aims at that, but its trajectory ends up warped before it reaches its target. So we read, in *The german ideology*: “The productive forces are confronted by the great mass of individuals, from whom these forces have been torn, and who, all the real substance of their lives having been frustrated, have become abstract beings, but precisely for that reason are able to establish relationships with one another as individuals.” But it is precisely to the extent that he is not an individual that Bloom establishes relations with his peers. The individual carries within his deceptive integrity, in an atavistic manner, the repression of communication, or the need for its artificiality. The ecstatic opening of mankind, and specifically of Bloom, that I that is a THEY, that THEY that is a I, is the very thing that the fiction of the individual was invented to counter. Bloom does not experience a particular finiteness or a specific separation; he experiences an ontological finiteness and separation common to all men. Furthermore, Bloom is only alone in appearances, because he is not alone in his being alone; all men have that solitude in common. He lives like a foreigner in his own country; non-existent and on the margins of everything – but all Blooms inhabit together their fatherland: Exile. All Blooms belong indistinguishably to one and the same world, which is the world of forgetting – forgetting the world. And so, the Common is alienated, but only in appearances, because it is even more alienated as the Common; the alienation of the Common only refers to the fact that what is common to them appears to men as something particular, something of their own, something private. And this Common, issued from the alienation of the Common and formed by it, is none other than the veritable and unique Common among mankind, its primordial alienation: finiteness, solitude, exposedness. Here the most intimate coincides with the most general, and the most “private” is the most shared.

Did you see yourself when you were drunk? – As PEOPLE can easily see, all this sketches out a catastrophic possibility for commodity domination, the realization of which it must ward off by all means: the possibility that Bloom might come to want what he is and reappropriate his inappropriateness. This “society,” that is, the set of situations that it authorizes, fears nothing more than Bloom, that “condemned man that has no business, no feelings, no attachments, no property, and not even a name of his own.” (Nechayev). It must be considered, even in the most miserable of its details, as a formidable apparatus set up with the exclusive purpose of eternalizing the Bloom Condition, which is a condition of suffering. In principle, entertainment is no more than the politics devoted to such ends; eternalizing Bloom’s condition starts by distracting him from it. Thence, as if in a cascade, come certain absolute necessities – the necessity of containing all manifestations of the general suffering, which presupposes an ever more absolute control over appearances, and the necessity of painting pretty makeup on the all-too-visible effects of that suffering, to which the totally disproportionate inflation of Biopower is the response. Because at the confused point things have gotten to now, the body represents, on a generic scale, the last performer of the irreducibility of human beings to total alienation. It’s through the body’s illnesses and dysfunction, and only through them, that the demand for self-knowledge remains an immediate reality for each person. This “society” would never have declared such an all-out war on Bloom’s suffering if it didn’t constitute in itself and in all its aspects an intolerable attack on the empire of positivity; if it didn’t go hand in hand with an immediate revocation of all the illusions of participation in its flowery immanence. Maintaining in everyday life the use of representations and categories that long ago became inoperative; periodically imposing the most ephemeral but renovated versions of the most gappy asses’ bridges of bourgeois morality; maintaining, beyond the intense obviousness of their falsehood and expiration, the sad illusions of “modernity”; such are just a few chapters in the heavy labor that the perpetuation of this total separation among people requires. The impersonal ‘THEY’ decides in advance on what is comprehensible, and what must be rejected for its incomprehensibility. Bloom and his ecstasy are incomprehensible; they must be rejected. His poverty is also reputed to be a pretty shady thing in alienated Publicity – it is quite true that capitalism has done all it can to make poverty identical to misery at its heart, the property of a given thing always being essentially the right to deprive others of its use. PEOPLE are even ready, in order to keep Bloom shameful of his poverty, to allow Bloom to subjectivize himself in this shame. The executive failure will thus, in the panoply of fashionable writers, find a lot to identify with and be reassured by: yes, “abject man” is indeed on its way towards becoming an honorable form of life. Otherwise, he may turn towards Buddhism, that nauseating, sordid, corny spirituality for oppressed wage workers, which sees as already quite the excessive ambition the idea that it might teach its fascinated and stupid faithful flock the art of wading in their own nullity. It is of absolutely primary importance from domination’s perspective that we never recognize ourselves as having all the traits of Bloom, that we appear to ourselves and each other as opaque, terrifying objects. At all costs Bloom must be given ideas, desires, and a subjectivity by the impersonal force of PEOPLE. THEY give him

everything he needs so that he can remain that mute man in whose mouth the Spectacle puts the words it wants to hear. THEY aren't even averse to wielding Bloom against Bloom, turning his own impersonality against him, precisely by personifying him, in "society," "the people," or even "the average joe." All this converges in a social sum that always puts an ever more exorbitant price on "being yourself," that is, it all converges in a strict assignment to a residence within one of the identities recognized by autonomized Publicity. Parallel to this, the processes of subjectivation and desubjectivation become more and more violent and their control more and more measured to the millimeter. And since this control can't operate other than in a strict economy of time, in a synchrony, Bloom is henceforth regularly exhorted to be "proud" of this or that, proud of being homo or techno, second-generation north African, black, or even a gang-member. No matter what, Bloom absolutely must be something, anything, rather than nothing.

Mene, Tekel, Peres – Adorno speculated, in his work *Prisms*, that "those men that no longer exist except through others, being the absolute zöon politicon, may certainly lose their identity, but they would at the same time escape their grip on self-preservation, which ensures the coherence of the 'best of worlds,' as well as that of the old world. Total interchangeability would destroy the substance of domination and show some promise for freedom." Meanwhile, the Spectacle has had all the time in the world to test out the truth of such conjectures, but has at the same time victoriously applied itself to wrecking the fulfillment of that incongruous promise of freedom. Naturally, that wouldn't work out too well without taking a tougher stance, and the commodity world thus had to become ever more implacable in the exercise of its dictatorship. From "crises" to "recoveries," from "recoveries" to depressions, life in the Spectacle has since 1914 never ceased to become ever more stifling. A look of terror hangs on all gazes, even in would-be popular celebrations. The planetary watchword of "transparency" explains the present context of permanent war against Bloom's opacity, as well as the deferred character of the existence that arises from it. As a first response to this situation we see appearing among Blooms not only a certain taste for anonymity, but at the same time a certain defiance towards visibility, a hatred for things. There's a metaphysical hostility coming back again, a hostility towards that which exists, and it threatens to burst at every moment and in every circumstance. At the origin of this instability is a disorder, a disorder that comes from unused strength, from a negativity that can't eternally remain unemployed, on pain of physically destroying those experiencing that negativity. Most often, that negativity remains silent, though as a result of its being so bottled up it constantly manifests itself in a hysterical formalization of all human relationships. But here already we are looking at the critical zone of totally disproportionate backlash against repression. An ever more compact mass of crimes, of strange acts comprising a "violence" and destruction "with no apparent motive," besieges the everyday life of biopolitical democracies – in general, the Spectacle calls "violence" everything that it intends to handle by force, everything that it would like to be able to wield all its arbitrary power against; and this category only has any validity within the commodity mode of disclosure, which itself has no validity, and which always hypostatizes the means relative to the ends, which here is all activity itself, even to the detriment of its immanent significance. Incapable of preventing them and even more incapable of understanding them, commodity domination claims to be committed to not allowing any such attacks on the social control of behavior. So it broadcasts its habitual saber-rattling about



poor substantiability

video-surveillance and “zero tolerance,” the repression of “uncivil behaviors” and of the “feeling of insecurity,” as if the surveillers themselves didn’t need to be surveilled, as if the “feeling of insecurity” had not been ontologically assigned to Bloom! A socialist cop, high up in the bureaucracy of some Japanese teachers’ union, expresses in the following passage his disturbance about the little Blooms under him: “The phenomenon is all the more concerning because the authors of these violent acts have often always been such ‘good kids.’ We used to get problem children; but today the kids don’t revolt, they just ditch out of school. And if we punish them, their reaction is totally disproportionate: they just explode.” (*Le Monde*, Friday April 16th, 1998) An infernal dialectic is at work here, one that will tend to make such “explosions” become ever more frequent, fortuitous, and ferocious as the massive and systematic character of the control necessary for their prevention is ever more emphasized. It is a rarely disputed fact: we know from experience that the violence of explosions grows in proportion to excessive confinement. In Bloom, domination, which thought it prudent to impose the economy as a morality so that commerce could make men soft, predictable, and inoffensive – we’ve seen a number of centuries’ worth of this now – sees its project flipping over into its opposite: to wit, it appears that “homo economicus,” in his perfection, is also what makes the economy outdated; and he makes it outdated as that which, having deprived him of all substance, has made him perfectly unpredictable.

The man without content, has, in the final analysis, the hardest time of anyone trying to contain himself.

The unavowable enemy: in which every Bloom, as a Bloom, is an agent of the Imaginary Party – Faced with this unknown enemy – in the sense that we can speak of an Unknown Soldier, that is, a soldier that everyone knows to be unknown, singularized as an “anybody,” who has no name, no face, no epic history of his own, who resembles nothing, but is present under his camouflage everywhere in the order of possibilities – domination’s disquiet becomes more and more clearly paranoid. The dedication it has now undertaken to carrying out its decimation, even in its own ranks and against all odds, appears to the detached viewer as rather a comedic spectacle. There’s something objectively terrifying about the sad forty-year-old who, up to the moment of the outbreak of total carnage, had been the most normal, the flattest, the most insignificant of average men. No one had ever heard him declare his hatred for the family, work, or his petty-bourgeois suburb, up until that fine morning when he wakes up, takes



a shower, and eats his breakfast, with his wife, daughter and son still sleeping, and then loads his hunting rifle and very discreetly blows all their brains out. Confronted by his judges, or even by torture, Bloom will remain silent about the motives of his crime. Partly because sovereignty doesn’t need to give reasons, but also because he senses that the worst atrocity he could subject this “society” to would be to leave his act unexplained. And thus has Bloom managed to insinuate into all minds the poisonous certainty that in each and every man there is a sleeping enemy of civilization. Quite apparently he has no other purpose than to devastate this world – indeed, it’s his destiny, even – but he’ll never say so. Because his strategy is to produce disaster, and around himself to produce silence.

“Because what crime and madness objectivize is the absence of a transcendental homeland.” – To the extent that the desolate forms we are intended to be contained within tighten their tyranny, some strikingly curious manifestations come about. Runners-amok, for instance, adapt to existing in the very heart of the most advanced societies, in unexpected forms, and take on new significance. In the territories administered by autonomous Publicity, such disintegration phenomena are rare

things that expose the true state of the world nakedly, the pure scandal of things. And at the same time as they reveal the lines of force within the reign of apathy, they show the dimensions of the possibilities we're living in. That's why – even in their very distance – they are so familiar to us. The traces of blood that they leave behind in their trail mark the last steps taken by a man who made the mistake of wanting to escape alone from the grey terror in which he had been detained at such high cost. Our tendency to conceive of that is a measure of what life is left in us.

The living are those who understand for themselves that at the moment when fear and submission attain, in Bloom, their ultimate figure as a fear and submission that is absolute because it has no object, the liberation from that fear and that submission means an equally absolute liberation from all fear and all submission. Once he who had indistinctly feared everything passes such a point, he can never fear anything again. There is, beyond the most far-flung wastelands of alienation, a zone of total clear and calm where man becomes incapable of feeling any interest in his own life, nor even the slightest hint of attachment to his place in the world. All freedom, present or future, which departs in some way or other from that detachment, from that serene calm/ataraxy, can hardly do any more than expound the principles of a more modern servitude.

AMOK AND AGAPE

“Alarming outbursts of ‘hatred’ amongst Japanese teen must be placed within a broader context, Masashi B says: *‘Parallel with this violence, we must offer the youth help voluntarily. Often, they are simply children suffering from exhaustion, but when offered comfort they will dash towards others.’*” (Le Monde, April 16th, 1998)

The possessed of nothingness – “I’m sorry. Like Shakespeare says, Good wombs hath born bad sons.” (Eric Harris, Littleton, Colorado, April 20th, 1999) There aren’t many ways out from under the universal crush. We extend our arms but they don’t find anything to touch. The world’s been distanced from our grasp; PEOPLE put it outside our range. Very few Blooms manage to resist the disproportionate enormity of that pressure. The omnipresence of the commodity’s occupation troops and the rigor of their ‘state of emergency’ condemn most projects of freedom to a short existence. And so, everywhere that order appears to have firmly set in, negativity prefers to turn against itself, as illness, suffering, or frenzied servitude. There are some invaluable cases, however, where isolated beings take the initiative, without hope or strategy, to open a breach in the well-regulated, smooth course of disaster. In them, Bloom violently liberates himself from the patience that PEOPLE would like to make him languish in forever. And since the only instinct that can tame such a howling presence of nothingness is that of destruction, the taste for the Totally Different takes on the appearance of crime and is experienced in a passionate indifference where its author manages to hold steady when confronted with it. This manifests itself in the most spectacular way in the growing number of Blooms, big and small, who, for lack of anything better, lust after the charm of the simplest surrealist act (recall that “the simplest surrealist act consists in going out into the street, revolvers in hand, and firing at random, as much as possible, into the crowd. Whoever has not at least once had the urge to finish off in this way the wretched little system of degradation and cretinization in force belongs in that crowd himself, with his gut at bullet height.” (Breton) Recall as well that this inclination, like many other things, remained among the surrealists a mere theory without practice, just like its contemporary practice is most often without theory). These individual eruptions, which are doomed to proliferate among those who have still not fallen into the deep sleep of cybernetics, are indeed desperate calls for desertion and fraternity. The freedom that they affirm is not that of a particular man assigning himself a particular end, but the freedom of each, the freedom of the human race itself: a single man is enough to declare that freedom has still not disappeared. The Spectacle cannot metabolize characteristics bearing so many poisons. It can report them, but it can never strip them entirely of the unexplainable, the inexpressible, and the terror at their core. These are the Noble and Generous Acts of our times, a world-weary form of propaganda by the deed, whose ideological mutism only increases its disturbing and somberly metaphysical character.

Paradoxes of sovereignty – In the Spectacle, power is everywhere; that is, all relations are in the final analysis relations of domination. And because of this no one is sovereign in the Spectacle. It is an objective world where everyone must first subjugate themselves in order to subjugate others in turn. To live in conformance with man’s fundamental aspiration to sovereignty is impossible in the Spectacle except in one single instant: the instant of the act. He who isn’t just playing around with life has a need for acts, for gestures, so that his life can become more real to him than a simple game which can be oriented in any given direction. In the world of the commodity, which is the world of generalized reversibility, where all things merge and transform into one another, where everything is merely ambiguous, transitional, ephemeral, and blended together, only acts cut through it all. In the splendor of their necessary brutality, they carve an unsolvable “after” into what had been “before,” which PEOPLE will regretfully have

to recognize as definitive. A gesture/an act is an event. It cuts open a wound in the chaos of the world, and installs at the bottom of that wound its shards of unambiguity/univocity. It is a matter of establishing so profoundly in their difference things that have been judged as different that what separated them out from each other can never have any possibility of being erased. If there's anything in Bloom that thwarts domination, it is the fact that even dispossessed of everything, even in all his nudity, man still has an uncontrollable metaphysical power of repudiation: the power to kill others and to kill himself. Death, every time it intervenes, rips a disgraceful hole in the biopolitical tissue. Total nihilism/nihilism fulfilled, which has really fulfilled nothing but the dissolution of all otherness in a limitless circulatory immanence, always meets its defeat right there: upon contact with death, life suddenly ceases to be taken for granted. The duty to make decisions which sanctions all properly human existence has always been in part tied to the approach to that abyss.

THE FALSE ANTINOMIES OF THE THOUGHT POLICE

Commissioner Lucienne Bui-Trong (intellectual party, Ecole Normale Supérieure de Fontenay section, General Intelligence sub-section, attached to "cities and banlieus") told *Le Monde* (Tuesday, 8 December 1998): "Several times recently, I have seen cases where people spread gasoline on your door and set it on fire. Can you imagine the impact this might have! Violence against individuals takes precedence over acts of violence against institutions." But the individual is more so a bourgeois institution, *which even includes them all*. Otherwise, who would have thought of the arson?

On the eve of the day in March 1998 when he massacred four Bloom-students and a Bloom-professor, little Mitchell Johnson declared to his incredulous schoolmates: "Tomorrow I will decide who will live and who will die." This is as far from the Erostratus-ism of Pierre Riviere as it is from fascist hysteria. Nothing is more striking in the reports on the carnage brought about by Kipland Kinkel or Alain Oreiller than their state of cold self-control and total vertical detachment relative to the world. "I'm no longer acting out of sentiment," said Alain Oreiller while executing his mother. There's something calmly suicidal in the affirmation of so omnilateral a non-participation, indifference, and refusal to suffer. Often the Spectacle uses this as a pretext to start talking about "gratuitous" acts – a generic qualifier with which it hides the purposes it doesn't want to understand, all the while making use of them as a fantastic opportunity to reinject some life into one or the other of bourgeois utilitarianism's favorite false paradoxes – as long as those acts aren't lacking in hatred or reason. To prove this all one needs to do is watch the five video tapes that the "monsters of Littleton" filmed in anticipation of their operation. Their program appears in them quite clearly: "We're going to set off a revolution, a revolution of the dispossessed." Here hatred itself is undifferentiated, free of all personality. Death enters into the universal in the same way as it emerges from the universal, and it has no anger about it. This isn't about giving some revolutionary significance to such acts, and it's hardly even about treating them as exemplary. It's about understanding what they express the doom of, and grasping onto them in order to plumb the depths of Bloom. And whoever follows this path to the end will see that Bloom is NOTHING, but that this NOTHING is a nothing that is sovereign, an emptiness with a pure potential. The contradiction between Bloom's isolation, apathy, powerlessness, and insensitivity on the one hand and on the other his dry and brutal need for sovereignty can only bring about more of these acts, absurd and murderous as they may be, yet still necessary and true. It's all about knowing how to deal with them in the right terms in the future: like [in Mallarmé's] *Igitur*, for instance: "One of the acts of the universe has been committed there. Nothing else but the breath remained, the end of speech and gesture united – blow out the candle of being, by which everything has existed. Proof."

The era of pure guilt – Men don't have the option of not fighting; the only choice they have is which side they're on. Neutrality has nothing neutral about it; it is indeed the bloodiest side there is to take. Bloom, both when he's the one that shoots the bullets and when he's one that succumbs to them, is certainly innocent. After all, isn't it true that Bloom is but dependence itself on the central farce? Did he choose to live in this world, whose perpetuation is the result of an autonomous social totality that appears ever more extraterrestrial to him every day? How could he do otherwise, stray Lilliputian confronting the Leviathan of the commodity? All he can do is speak the language of the spectacular occupier, eat from the hand of Biopower, and participate in his own way in the production and reproduction of its horrors. This is how Bloom would like to be able to be understood: as a foreigner, as something external to himself. But in this defense, he only tacitly admits that he himself is that fraction of himself that sees to it that the rest of his being will remain alienated. It matters little that Bloom can't be held responsible for any of his acts: he remains nonetheless responsible for his own irresponsibility, which he is at every instant given the opportunity to declare himself against. Since he has consented, negatively at least, to being no more than the predicate of his own existence, he is an objective part of domination, and his innocence is itself pure guilt. The man of total nihilism, the man of "what's the point?" who cries on the shoulder of the man of "what can I do about it?" is indeed quite mistaken to believe himself free of fault just because he hasn't done anything and because so many others are in the same situation he's in. The Spectacle, in so regularly

admitting that the murderer was “an ordinary man,” a “student like any other,” is suggesting that the men of our times all participate equally in the unappealable crime that our times really are. But it refuses to recognize this as a metaphysical fact: as the case of the gas-chamber operators in Auschwitz shows, the fear of responsibility is not only stronger than conscience, it is in certain circumstances even stronger than the fear of death. In a world of slaves without masters, in a world of collaborators, in a world dominated by a veritable tyranny of servitude, the simplest surrealist act is governed by none other than the ancient duty of tyrannicide.

Homo sacer – The possessed of nothingness begin by drawing the consequences from their Bloom condition. And thus they expose the dizzying vertigo of it: Bloom is sacer, in the sense of the word used by Giorgio Agamben; that is, a creature that has no rights, who cannot be judged or condemned by men, but who anyone may kill without being considered to have committed a crime. Bloom is sacer to the exact extent that he knows himself to be possessed by bare life, to the extent that, like a Muselmann in the concentration camps, he is the simple witness to his own becoming-inhuman. Insignificance and anonymity, separation and foreignness – these are not the poetic circumstances that the melancholic penchant of certain subjectivities may tend to exaggerate them as: the scope of the existential situation they characterize – Bloom – is total, and it is exceedingly political. Anyone who has no community is sacer. Being nothing, remaining outside all recognition, or presenting oneself as a pure, non-political individuality, is enough to make any man at all a being whose disappearance is unscrutable. However inexhaustible the obituary eulogies may be – eternal regrets, etc. – such a death is trivial, indifferent, and only concerns he who disappears; meaning, that is – in keeping with good logic – nobody. Analogous to his entirely private life, Bloom’s death is such a non-event that anybody can eliminate him. That’s why the expostulations of those who, sobs in their voices, lament the fact that Kip Kinkel’s victims “didn’t deserve to die” are inadmissible, because they didn’t deserve to live, either; they were outside the sphere of deservingness. To the extent that they found themselves in the hands of Biopower, they were already the living dead, at the mercy of any sovereign decision-making, whether that of the State or of a murderer. Hannah Arendt: “*Being reduced to nothing anymore but a simple specimen of an animal species called Mankind; this is what happens to those who’ve lost all distinct political qualities, and who have become human beings and that alone... The loss of the Rights of Man takes place at the moment when a person becomes just a human being in general – without profession, citizenship, opinion, or any acts by which he identifies himself and specifies himself – and appears as differentiated only in a general way, representing no more than his own and absolutely unique individuality, which, in the absence of a common world where it might express itself and upon which it might act, loses all meaning.*” (*Imperialism*) Bloom’s exile has a metaphysical status to it; that is, it is effective in all domains. And that metaphysical status expresses his real situation, in light of which his legal situation has no truth to it. The fact that he can be shot down like a dog by a stranger without the slightest justification, or – parallel to that and conversely – that he is capable of murdering “innocents” without the slightest remorse, is a reality that no jurisdiction whatsoever is capable of dealing with. Only weak and superstitious minds could give themselves up to believing that a verdict of life in prison or some orderly trial could suffice to sweep those facts into the limbo of null and void-ness.



The weariness of speech

What's the way out of Bloom?

The Assumption of Bloom,
for instance.

– You can only really liberate yourself from anything
by reappropriating the thing you're liberating yourself
from. –

What does the assumption of Bloom mean?

Making use of the metaphysical situation defined by
Bloom, the exercise of the self as a *prankster*.

Not fighting against the dominant schizoid state,
against our schizoid state,
but *starting from there*, and making use of it as a pure
power of subjectivation and desubjectivation, as an ap-
titude for experimentation.

Breaking with the old anxiety of “who am I really?” to
the benefit of a real understanding of my situation and
the use of it that I could possibly make.

Not just surviving in the constant imminence of a mi-
raculous *departure*,
not forcing ourselves to believe in the jobs we do, the
lies we tell,
but *starting from there*, to enter into contact with other
agents of the Invisible Committee – through *Tiqqun*
for example – and silently coordinate a truly elegant act
of sabotage.

To detach from our detachment through a conscious,
strategic practice of self-splitting.

BREAKING WITH THE WORLD,
FIRST OF ALL INWARDLY.

The Invisible Committee:

an *openly* secret society,

a public conspiracy,

an instance of anonymous subjectivation,

whose name is everywhere and headquarters nowhere,

the experimental-revolutionary polarity of the Imagi-
nary Party.

The Invisible Committee: not a revolutionary *organiza-
tion*, but a higher level of reality,

a metaphysical territory of secession with all the magni-
tude of a whole world of its own,

the playing area where positive creation alone can ac-
complish the great emigration of the economy from the
world.

Tiqqun

IT'S A FICTION THAT'S MADE
ITS REALITY REAL

All the elsewheres that we could have fled to have been liquidated;
we can only desert the situation inwardly,
by reclaiming our fundamental non-belonging to the biopolitical fabric with a participation
on a more intimate,
and thus unattributable level,
in the strategic community of the Invisible Committee, where an infiltration of society on all levels is being plotted.

This desertion is

a *metamorphosis*.

The Invisible Committee – the *concrete* space where our attacks, our writings, our acts, our words, our gatherings, our events circulate:

our desertion –
transfigures the totality of what we'd accepted as a trade-off,
of what we'd endured as our "alienations,"
into a *infiltration strategy*.

The Other ceases to possess us:

and indeed,
possession itself is reversed

and becomes gentle.

We will conceal our act
within a relationship
that our powers have not yet attained to.

A TONGUE-IN-CHEEK ACCESS
TO EXPERIENCE

Experimentation:
the practice of freedom,
the practice of idleness,
opposing the design of
a process of emancipation separate
from the existence of men,
and sending back to their desks all the learned plans and
projects of liberation.

**A kind of Contestation
whose authority
and methods are not
in any way distinct
from experience.**

Taking the possibilities that my situation contains all the way.

Revolutionary experimentation,
collective-revolutionary experimentation,
revolutionary-experimental collectivity carrying out the
assumption of finiteness, separation and exposedness as
the ecstatic coordinates of existence.

The life of he who
knows that his appearance and his essence are identical
to one another, but not identical to him,
cannot be in the world without remembering that he is
not of this world,
cannot accommodate himself to a community which
would be a simple amusement of his solitude in the face
of death,
– dancing, in total precision, to the death
 with time, which kills you –
THAT'S EXPERIMENTATION.

Language,
words and gestures:
that's the common home
 of the placeless.

The bond between those that cannot be reduced to
the lie of belonging, to a certain plot of land, a certain
birthplace.
A journey into dispersion and exile,
communication
 that *acts* upon
 our essential separation.

“Once we've spoken, to remain as close as possible in
line with what we'd said, so that everything won't be
effectively up in the air, with our words on the one side
and ourselves on the other, and with the remorse of
separations.”

This text is a pact.
The protocol for an experimentation now open
 among deserters.

Without anyone noticing,
 Break ranks.

Phenomenology of everyday life

1) from the bottom of shipwreck

'tis but a wisp of fog, my son
GOETHE, *Erlkonig*

There are fragile moments when the bleating unreality of our world, which generally masks the sediments of habit under a compact layer of apparent concreteness, suddenly gushes forth, like a ghost flying out from some crumbling tomb: Absence.

I will here mingle a little more with this metaphysical experience (because it is one; too bad if that startles the cheerful ones and dogs), which appears, it's true, to be the cousin of Nausea as Sartre described it – although it is there that the non-existence, rather than some quivering existence that reality has now been stricken by, unveils itself.

I found myself in a slightly curved street, in the city outskirts where I live. And something was there, strangely, instead of something else that wouldn't have caught my memories – this thing that shouldn't have been there. There was a large window above an immaculately shined, far-too-new placard, affixed to the wall; on that placard, in rigid letters, the word “BAKERY” was written. Through the window you could see a few display shelves that appeared in a way – and even with quite the frank similarity – to resemble those that are often used to display pastries or some sickening cake or another, display shelves doubtless placed there to perfect its confusion with familiar places; but I wasn't duped. I was all the less fooled since their enthusiasm had gone way beyond the believable. So, there, planted behind those phantom display shelves, perfectly immobile, standing in an expectant position, was the baker! The baker... and her white apron. And the whole assemblage, so firm yet scattered, was more evanescent than that

false manor
suddenly evaporating
into mist

that Mallarmé spoke of, more shifting and impalpable than all the ethers; behind or in it – I don't know, since it was as if the cloudy screen had with so much finesse been muddled up with what it already no longer covered up, as if it were woven of its own tears – terrible, was Nothingness.

Destabilized by so much foreignness, I decided to go inside anyway – I marched into the emptiness. I already felt how you feel, or how you think you feel upon waking up, in some very hazy dream where you haven't quite forgotten the feeling that's passed through you. From that cloud, which was also the cloud of nothingness, my head and my whole body were like sealed off, and thought itself, which sometimes can slide so well like a brazen blade, with a clear but serious whistle, and my thinking itself was that cloud, that gas that spread out as if it were following the physical laws governing the noble gases. All matter had melted or was perhaps sublimated; in any case it was dead at that moment, disappeared. I finally managed, waveringly, to approach the calm baker, who pushed her impossible role all the way to the point of asking me, terrible music with a diabolic candor – since the devil excels in putting on candid airs – what I wanted. Her question made me flinch. I couldn't look around myself; all the nothingness blinded me more than I could bear. I understood quickly that the only presence that could absorb my gaze, hold it a bit, instead of imperviously repelling it, that the only island of existence that could save me from all this drowning, rather, this drowning of everything, was this woman, disguised as a baker, her face and her arms, emerging alone from the fallacious costume. I suddenly found a kind of Spanish charm in her that troubled me a bit, but oh so much less did than all the nothingness that I had to drown in! Anyway, an existing being, in form and substance too... a being that did not immediately fade away elsewhere. I thought: there's no way that this woman, standing there facing me, in the middle of all this Nothing, all this abyss quickly dressed up as a simulacrum of a bakery, really believes all this pasteboard decor, this shameful pantomime – this whole scene; are we really required to act it out!? No... I had to tell her... tell her that it needed to stop... “Miss, we know full well, don't we, that all this is nothing but an absurd practical joke, and you're not really a baker, that this isn't a bakery, and how absurd it would be for me to play the customer. The age of playing commodity has passed; let's speak frankly and forget all this frightful decor, which fools no one... I don't know how you found yourself in this strange situation – so tell me, what's all this about?” The reply, the only reasonable one, which then filled my mind like a clear truth rescuing me, I couldn't say; my whole being, still cloudy, was still incapable of responding practically to such an injunction from Reason, when a man appeared behind her, grotesquely disguised as a baker, and made me fear that this bad theater piece was going to turn into some kind of vaudeville, a final bouquet on an insolence that had already lasted too long. So I muttered – absurdity! – an unmotivated order for a perfectly random number of loaves of bread, putting off clearing up this affair until later. Still dubious, and now almost getting into the game, by some vice I didn't know I had, I laid down a few coins – to see if this pataphysical scene really was determined to run its course. It was, and I regretted my lie a bit, since after all, I wanted the truth, not bread. So I left, dizzied and dreaming after the whole event. People around me remarked that the number of baguettes I'd bought (I didn't even imagine that what had happened at that moment even had a name) was singularly disproportionate. And so I told the tale of my adventure, and then, since I couldn't make myself understood, I thought about it alone.

What I'd felt there was true, no doubt about that. The experience had revealed to me, in a brutal way, the unreality of this world, the realized abstraction which is the Spectacle. The whole metaphysical – and thus total and filled out all the way to the existential sphere – dimension of this concept had appeared clearly to me in this private mode of disclosure, and could appear as it really is, as something really strange, posing a problem the essence of which is absolute foreignness, only insofar as it is lived as an experience, as a phenomenon. Habit makes phenomena be forgotten as phenomena, that is, the supra-sensible – must I add that Hegel's famous affirmation too took on a kind of dazzling concreteness, the power of a revelation? And yet, habit is precisely the characteristic means of commodity metaphysics, its manifestation, which never manifests anything but the forgetting of its character as

a manifestation... That's how the bulging intuition of Absence also reveals that it's already transcended as such, since it presents itself as a manifestation of the forgetting of the manifestation as such, meaning as the revealing of the commodity mode of disclosure, as the revealing of the Spectacle. When it shows itself thus, Absence is already but a hollow space, a pure absence. It is a positive affirmation of the World about itself. It is precisely the return of all reality and already the possibility of reappropriating it. This whirlwind of paradoxes showed how much my experience had been critical-metaphysical. I also thought back about similar sensations, and tried to make an almost zoological classification of the various textures that the phenomenon can manifest, from the half-vapor, half-liquid melancholy to that other state, where everything is, on the contrary, quite marked with all the hallmarks of a concreteness so massive that it shocks you (and reality is then palpably too concrete to not reveal itself still as being, in fact, abstract to the point of delirium). All these magico-circumstantial experiences are obviously inaccessible to Blooms who know nothing of solitude, which is often their case. Our contemporaries, for the most part, habitually obviate such unappealed perceptions of the Nothingness, which is also their nothingness, our Bloom nothingness, which terrify them, by massing them against one another in sordid accumulations that they sometimes dare to call friendship, that great powerful word that the worst cockroaches are no longer afraid to grind under their filthy feet when they say no less crudely that they hang out together. There are also a few tools that such a service of forgetting offers, in an equivalent manner to this fallacious proximity: television, walkman, boom box or lighted radio "to give a musical backdrop," etc. And finally when it appears anyway, that Demon which is critical metaphysics, in spite of all Bloom's precautions, the latter can still try to put one last falsification past, with the reassuring use of a word without any meaning, invented or recuperated for such cases: stress, fatigue: in the cases when the Demon comes in through the window itself, depression, or lastly, if the Bloom in question proclaims New-Age-isms or some other young-cool-isms, he can exteriorize the phenomenon, rather than directly denying the phenomenon's being a phenomenon, and put it on a level of general equivalence, out on the psychedelics market, as a purely subjective experience¹, that is, transform it into poor substantiality, by just calling it a trip. It goes without saying that this short list of amusements is by and large non-exhaustive.

All these attitudes sketch out negatively a particular terrain, which had to be clarified before positively, which would be that of a critical-metaphysical attitude. Taking a closer look, this appeared as a kind of unity between, on the one hand, the practice of a conceptually powerful dialectic, and on the other, a certain existentialist attention, and a certain *laisser-être* ('let it be'), too. These two approaches, far from being irreconcilable, are incarnate in anyone who knows how to conceive of and feel becoming, who knows thought as a science in the sense Hegel understood it, who knows the purpose of the Figure used, while at the same time being attentive enough to be able to stop at certain moments, before they are suppressed, and squeeze out their content, becoming totally immersed in them (the surrealists had already felt this, but had explained it differently – compare with the summary of the surrealist attitude given by Breton in *Mad love*). It's a question of considering the Gaze as experience, and thus as a certain tension between two successive moments: the first moment is the sensation of the phenomenon, the second its revealing as a phenomenon. When the critical-metaphysician is shown the moon, he first looks at the moon and then at the finger pointing at it. The phenomenon takes place first off in itself, then, for itself, and from the basis of being for itself emerges being in itself. The Paraclete never comes right away and is always already there. This critical-metaphysical attitude, fixed-exploding, this chang-

1. As for us, far from considering such an experience as simply subjective, we affirm, on the contrary, its objective and eminently political character.

ing of the gaze, which is not blind, can only really be attained and know itself as such by sharing all these sensations and analyzing them, whether or not these experiences themselves are or must be lived in a solitary manner. Thus we'll be including this section, phenomenology of everyday life, until further notice.



Theses on the Imaginary Party

The political and moral significance of thinking only appears in those rare moments in history when "things fall apart; the center cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world," when "the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity." At these moments thinking ceases to be a marginal affair in political matters. When everyone is swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in, those who think are drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join is conspicuous and thereby becomes a kind of action.

HANNAH ARENDT, *Thinking and moral considerations*

I

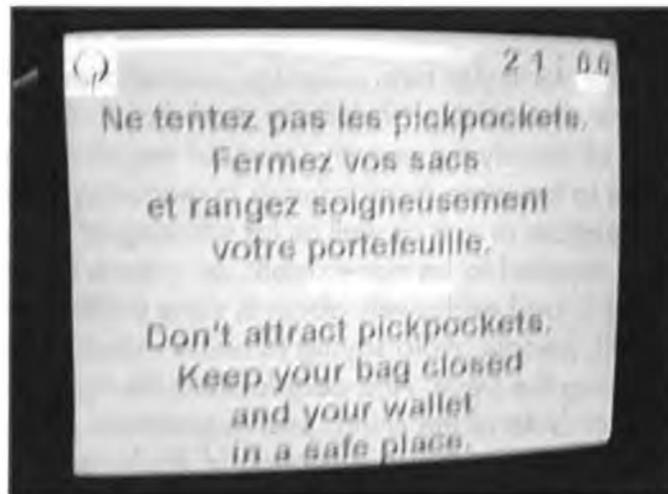
The Imaginary Party is the particular form taken by Contradiction in the historical period when domination imposes itself as the dictatorship *of* visibility, and dictatorship *in* visibility; in a word, as *Spectacle*. Because it is above all merely the *negative* party of *negativity*, and because the sorcery of the *Spectacle* (since it is unable to liquidate them) consists in rendering *invisible* all the expressions of negation – and that goes for freedom *in acts* as well as for suffering or pollution – its most remarkable character is precisely that it is reputed to be non-existent, or – more exactly – to be imaginary. But *people* speak incessantly about it, and exclusively about it, since a little more every day it disrupts the proper operation of society. Still, *people* avoid saying its name – could it be said anyway? – with the same fear as if they were invoking the Devil. And *people* are quite right to do so: in a world that has so conspicuously become an attribute of the Mind, pronouncements have the unfortunate tendency to become performative. Inversely, the nominal evocation of the Imaginary Party, even right here in these pages, may serve as its act of constitution. Up to now, that is, up to its naming, it could be no more than what the classical proletariat was before coming to know itself as the proletariat: a class of civil society that is not a class of civil society, but rather its very dissolution. And, in effect, today it comprises but the negative multitudes of those who *have no class*, and don't want to have any; the solitary crowd of those who have reappropriated their fundamental non-belonging to commodity society in the form of their voluntary non-participation in it. At first, the Imaginary Party presents itself simply as the community of defection, the party of exodus, the fleeting and paradoxical reality of a *subjectless subversion*. But this is no more the essence of the Imaginary Party than the dawn is the essence of the day. It still remains to be seen how it will come fully into its own, and that can only appear in its living relationship with what produced it and now denies it. "Only he who has the dedication and will to make the future come into being can see the concrete truth of the present." (Lukàcs, *History and class consciousness*).

II

The Imaginary Party is the party that tends to become *real*, incessantly. The Spectacle has no other ministry aside from endlessly obviating its manifestation as such, that is, obviating its own becoming-conscious, its becoming-real, since were it not to do so it would have to admit the existence of the negativity of which (since the Spectacle is the *positive* party of *positivity*) it is the perpetual denial. It is thus part of the essence of the Spectacle that it acts like its opposition is just a negligible residue, makes it a total non-value, and declares it criminal and inhuman as a whole, which comes down to the same thing; otherwise of course it would have to recognize that it itself is the criminal monster. That's why there are really only two parties in this society: the party of those who claim that there is only one party, and the party of those who know that there are really two. That's all we need to know to see who's with us.

III

It is incorrect that people reduce war to the raw event of confrontation, but they do so for reasons that can easily be explained. It would certainly be quite harmful to public order if it were to be seen for what it really is: the supreme possibility, the preparation and adjournment of which are at work within all human groupings in a continual movement of which peace is really but a moment. The same goes for the social war, whose battles can be perfectly silent and, in a manner of speaking, clean. They can hardly even be discerned in the sudden resurgence of the dominant aberration. In light of the facts, it must be acknowledged that the confrontations are exaggeratedly rare compared to the losses.



IV

It is by applying to these kinds of cases its fundamental axiom, according to which whatever is not seen does not exist (*esse est percipi*), that the Spectacle can maintain the exorbitant, world-wide illusion of a fragile civil peace, which to be perfected would require that the Spectacle be allowed to extend its gigantic society-pacification and contradiction-neutralization campaign to all domains. But its predictable failure is only logical, since its pacification campaign *is also a war* – and certainly the most frightful and destructive war that has ever been, since it is waged in the name of peace. After all, it's one of the Spectacle's most consistent traits that it only speaks of war in a language where the word "war" doesn't even appear anymore, and where it's simply a matter of "humanitarian operations," "international sanctions," the "maintenance of order," "protecting human rights," the fight

against "terrorism," "sects," "extremism," or "pedophilia," and above all, of "the peace process." The enemy is no longer called the *enemy*, it is called *outside the law and outside of humanity* because of its having broken and disturbed the peace; and each war waged in order to preserve or extend positions of economic or strategic strength will have to make use of propaganda mechanisms that will transform it into a crusade or into humanity's last great war. The lie that the Spectacle hinges upon requires that it be so. Furthermore, this non-meaning reveals a surprising systematic coherence and internal logic, but even this system, which in appearances is supposedly apolitical – antipolitical, even – serves the existing configurations of hostility, and provokes new regroupings of friends as enemies and vice-versa, since not even it can escape the logic of politics. Those who do not understand war do not understand their times.

V

Since its birth, commodity society has never given up its absolute hatred of politics, and that's what bothers it the most: the fact that even the project of eradicating it is itself *still* political. It is certainly willing to talk about law, economy, culture, philosophy, environment, even about political policy – but never about the *political itself*, that realm of violence and existential antagonisms. In the end, commodity society is but the *political* organization of a raging negation of politics. This negation invariably takes the form of a naturalization, the impossibility of which is betrayed in just as invariable a manner by periodic crises. The classical economy, and the century of liberalism that corresponds to it (1815-1914), was the first attempt – and the first failure – to bring about such a naturalization. The doctrine of utility, the system of needs, the myth of the "natural" self-regulation of markets, the ideology of human rights, parliamentary democracy – all these were means brought to bear over time in order to serve that purpose. But it was unquestionably in the historical period that began in 1914 that the naturalization of commodity domination came to take on its most radical form: Biopower. In Biopower, the social totality, which little by little becomes autonomous, begins to take over *life itself*. On the one hand, we're seeing a politicization of the biological realm: society has over the years more and more taken administrative responsibility for the health, beauty, sexuality, and mobilizable energy of each individual. On the other, we're seeing a biologicalization of the political: ecology, economy, the general distribution of "well-being" and "care," the growth, longevity, and aging of the populace – all these emerge as the principal subjects for measuring the exercise of power. And indeed, this is only the appearance of the process, not the process itself. In reality it's about falsely setting up as obvious and as based on the body and biological life a movement towards total behavior control, control over representations and relations among people – forcing assent to the Spectacle by each individual, by making it out to be part of their instincts of self-preservation. Because it bases its absolute sovereignty on the zoological unity of the human race and on the immanent *continuum* of the production and reproduction of "life," Biopower is that essentially homicidal tyranny that is exercised over each person in the name of all, and in the name of "nature." All hostility to this society, whether that of the criminal, the deviant, or the political enemy, must be liquidated because it goes against the best interests of the human species, and more specifically the human species as it exists in the very person of the criminal, the deviant, and the political enemy. And so it is that each new diktat, restricting a little further our already pathetic freedoms,

OBVIOUSLY! ←

“Delinquency is becoming the primary force of socialization, in lieu of institutions.” (*Le Monde*, June 9th, 1998)

claims to protect each of us from ourselves by opposing to the extravagance of its sovereignty the *ultima ratio* of bare life. "Forgive them, they know not what they do," says Biopower, and readies the syringe. Certainly, bare life has always been the point of view from which commodity society considered mankind, a point of view where human life is no longer distinct from animal life. But now it is all manifestations of transcendence (which politics is just a loud expression of), all remnants of freedom, all expressions of the metaphysical essence and negativity of mankind that is treated like a sickness, which for the sake of general happiness must be suppressed. The revolutionary penchant – that endemic pathology which a permanent vaccination campaign has still not managed to deal with – is explained away as an unfortunate convergence of a risky heredity, excessive hormones, and a "chemical imbalance" among certain neuro-mediators. There can't be any politics *within* Biopower, just *against* Biopower. Because Biopower is the negation of politics fulfilled, real politics has to start by liberating itself from Biopower; that is, by revealing it as such.

VI

In Biopower, man's physical dimension escapes him, stands against him and oppresses him; and it is in that sense that Biopower is but a moment of the Spectacle, like physics is a moment of metaphysics. Iron necessity, felt even in what in appearance is the simplest, most immediate, most material detail – the body –condemns the present movement of contestation to having to either take a position on the metaphysical level or be nothing. And so it cannot be understood nor perceived from inside the Spectacle or Biopower, any more than can anything to do with the Imaginary Party. For now its primary attribute is its *de facto* invisibility within the commodity mode of disclosure, which is most definitely metaphysical, but has that most singular of metaphysics which itself is the denial of metaphysics, and above all it denies that it itself is metaphysical. But the Spectacle fears the empty void, and so it can't restrict itself to just denying the massive evidence of these new kinds of hostilities agitating the social body ever more violently; it must go further and mask them. And so it falls within the proper role of the many-varied forces of mystification and concealment to invent ever more empty pseudo-conflicts, conflicts that themselves are ever more fabricated, and still ever more violent, however anti-political they may be. And upon this deaf equilibrium of Terror rests the apparent calm of all late capitalist societies.

VII

In this sense, the Imaginary Party is *the* political party, or more precisely the party of the *political*, since it is the only part of society that perceives the metaphysical workings of *absolute hostility* at the source of this society; that is, that sees the serious schism at its very heart. And so it too takes up the road of *absolute politics*. The Imaginary Party is the form taken by politics in the time of the collapse of Nation-States – we now know that they are quite mortal. It dramatically reminds every State that it is not demented enough or vigorous enough to successfully pass itself off as *total*, that the political space is in reality no different from physical, social, cultural space, etc.; that, in other words – and according to an old formula – *everything* is political, or at least it is potentially. At this point, politics appears rather like the Whole of those spaces that liberalism believed that it could fragment, premise by premise. The era of Biopower is when, domination having applied itself to the very body, even individual physiology takes on a political character, in spite of the laughable alibi of biological naturalness. Politics is thus more than ever the total, existential, metaphysical realm where the movement of human freedom takes place.

In these darkling days we are watching the final phase of the decomposition of commodity society, which, we admit, has lasted only too long. On the planetary level, we are seeing the divergence, of ever growing proportions, between the map of the commodity and the territories of Man. The Spectacle stages a global chaos, but this "chaos" only manifests the now admitted inability of the economic vision of the world to understand anything about human reality. It has become obvious that "value" no longer measures anything: its accountants are spinning their wheels. The only point of work now is to satisfy the universal need for servitude. Even money has ended up letting itself be won over by the emptiness it propagated. At the same time, the totality of the old bourgeois institutions, which rested on the abstract principles of equivalence and representation, have fallen into a crisis, and they look too fatigued to recover: Justice no longer manages to judge, Teaching no longer manages to teach, Medicine can't cure, the Parliament can't legislate, the Police can't get the law to be respected, and Families can't even raise their children. Certainly, the outer shell of the old edifice remains, but all the life has definitely gone out of it. It floats in a timelessness that is ever more absurd and ever more perceptible. To stave off the mounting disaster they still from time to time put their symbols on parade, but no one understands them anymore. The only ones their magic fascinates now are its magicians. And so the National Assembly building became a historical monument, which is only exciting to the stupid curiosity of tourists. The Old World spreads out before our eyes a desolate landscape of new ruins and dead carcasses, all just waiting for a demolition that never comes, and they might wait for it forever if no one gets the idea to undertake it. People never planned so many parties, and their enthusiasm about them never looked so false, so feigned, so forced. Even the greatest celebrations these days have a certain air of sadness to them that they can't shake off. In spite of all appearances, the death of the whole takes place not so much in the way it decomposes and becomes corrupted organ by organ, nor in any other positively observable phenomenon for that matter; rather it is in the general indifference that this decomposition and corruption unleashes, an indifference that brings about the plain feeling that no one thinks it concerns them and no one resolves to remedy the problem. And since "faced with the feeling that everything is falling apart, to do no more than to wait patiently and blindly for the collapse of the old, cracking edifice, eaten away at its very roots, and to let oneself be crushed in the falling pile, is as contrary to wisdom as it is to dignity," (Hegel) we foresee the preparation of an inevitable Exodus out of that "old cracking edifice," from certain signs that the spectacular mode of disclosure makes impossible to decipher. Already, masses of *silent* and *solitary* people have begun to appear, who have chosen to live in the interstices of the commodity world and *refuse to participate* in anything to do with it. It's not just that the charms of the commodity leave them doggedly cold, it's that they have an inexplicable suspicion about everything that ties them to the world it has built, which is now collapsing. At the same time, the ever more obvious malfunctions of the capitalist State, which has become incapable of any kind of integration with the society upon which it stands, guarantee that at its very heart there will subsist necessarily temporary spaces of indetermination, ever vaster, ever more numerous autonomous zones. In many ways this resembles a mass experience of illegality and clandestinity. There are moments where people already *live* as if this world no longer existed. During this time, like a confirmation of this bad omen, we see everywhere the hopeless tensing and tightening of an order that feels itself dying. *People* still talk about reforming the Republic, when the time of republics is over. *People* still talk about the colors on flags, when the time of flags itself is past. Such is the grandiose and mortal spectacle that unveils itself to whoever dares to consider our times from the point of view of their negation; that is, from the perspective of the Imaginary Party.

IX

The historical period we are entering must be one of extreme violence and great disorder. A permanent and generalized state of exception is the only way commodity society can maintain itself when it has completely undermined its own conditions of possibility so as to set itself firmly in its nihilism. Certainly, domination still has force – physical and symbolic force – but it has no more than that. This society has lost its grip on the discourse of its *critique* at the same time as the discourse of its *justification*. It finds itself faced with an abyss, which it discovers is actually located at its very heart. And it is this truth which can be felt everywhere that it distorts endlessly, by embracing at every opportunity the “language of flattery” where the “content of the discourse that the mind has with itself and about itself is the perversion of all concepts and all realities; it is the universal trickery of the self and the other, and the impudent expression of that trickery is thus the highest truth,” and where “the simple consciousness of the true and good... can tell the mind nothing that it doesn’t itself already know and say.” In these conditions, “if simple consciousness finally demands the dissolution of this whole world of perversion, it can nevertheless still not require *the individual* to remove himself from this world, because even Diogenes himself in his barrel is conditioned by it; furthermore this requirement posed to the singular individual is precisely what passes for evil, since *evil* consists in being concerned only for *oneself* as a *singular* being... the requirement for this dissolution can only be addressed to the very spirit of culture.” Here we see the true description of the language that domination now speaks in its most advanced forms, when it has incorporated into its discourse the critique of the consumer society and the spectacle, and of their misery. The “Canal+ culture” and the “Inrockuptibles spirit” are fleeting but significant examples of this. It is more generally the scintillating and sophisticated language of the modern cynic, who has definitively identified all uses of freedom with the abstract freedom to accept everything, but in his own way. In his blathering solitude, his acute consciousness of his world prides itself on its perfect powerlessness to change it. And that consciousness ends up maniacally mobilized against self-consciousness and all quests for substantiality. Such a world, which “knows everything as having become foreign to itself, knows being-for-itself as separate from being-in-itself, or the focus and the goal as separate from the truth,” (Hegel) a world



Umberto Boccioni, *Stati d'animo I: Quelli che restano* (1911)

which, in other words, while effectively dominating, has attached itself to the luxury of openly acknowledging its domination as vain, absurd, and illegitimate, only calls up against itself – as the only response to what it expresses – the violence of those who, deprived by it of all rights, draw their rights from hostility. *People* can no longer rule innocently.

X

At this stage, domination, which feels the life trickling out of it inexorably, has gone insane, and claims a tyranny that it no longer has the means to maintain. Biopower and the Spectacle are the complementary moments corresponding to this final radicalization of the commodity aberration, which appears to be its triumph and is but a prelude to its defeat. In both cases, it's a matter of eradicating from reality everything within it that exceeds representation. At the end, an unchained arbitrariness is attached to this ruined edifice that intends to regulate everything and annihilate as soon as possible anything that would dare to give itself an existence independent of it. We are giving ourselves one. The society of the Spectacle has become inflexible on this point: everyone *must* participate in the collective crime of its existence; *nothing* must be able to claim to remain outside of it. It can no longer tolerate the existence of that colossal abstaining segment which is the Imaginary Party. Everyone must "work," that is, put themselves at its disposition at all times and be *mobilizable*. In order to achieve its ends, it makes equal use of the most brute means, such as the threat of starvation, and the most underhanded of means, such as the YoungGirl. The dusty old tune of "citizenship," which is sung everywhere on any and every subject, expresses the dictatorship of this abstract duty of participating in a social totality which has nevertheless become autonomized. And it is thus, from the very fact of this dictatorship, that the negative party of negativity little by little becomes unified and acquires positive content. The elements of the multitude of indifferent beings, not knowing one another at all and thinking that they are part of no party, all find themselves facing a unique and central dictatorship, the dictatorship of the Spectacle – and the wage system, the commodity, nihilism, or the imperative of visibility are but partial aspects of that. It is thus domination itself that forces those who would be content with a floating existence to recognize themselves for what they are: rebels, *Waldgänger*. "The contemporary enemy ceaselessly imitates Pharaoh's army: it hunts down the fugitives, the deserters, but it never manages to get before them or confront them." (Paolo Virno: *Miracle, virtuosity, and déjà vu*). In the course of this exodus, unprecedented solidarities form, friends and brothers gather at new front lines that sketch themselves out, and the formal opposition between the Spectacle and the Imaginary Party becomes concrete. Thus a powerful sense of *belonging to non-belonging* develops among those who realize their essential marginality, a sort of community of Exile. The simple feeling of being foreign to this world becomes, as circumstances change, an *intimacy* with that foreignness. Running away, which was simply an action, becomes a strategy. Now, "escape,

**THE
NECESSARY
FAILURE
OF TOTAL
MOBILIZATION**

"What would be the dangers of a total depersonalization of space? It would accentuate what has already begun, that is, the feeling of having a very fragile place in the business. It would reinforce the idea that we are pawns, that we are interchangeable. We would have to live as if in a state of pure transition with contractual and ephemeral relationships. Perhaps that would help people to lose their illusions, those who thought that with a CDI [indefinite-duration employment contract] in a big structure they'd be safe? But this change could deteriorate the social climate, the coherence of the business. Relationships of loyalty and belonging to the business would be very attenuated." (Liberation, Monday October 5, 1998)

called the thirty-sixth strategem, is the supreme politics." But the Imaginary Party is already no longer just imaginary; it has begun to recognize itself as such and to slowly progress towards its realization, which will be its disappearance. Metaphysical hostility to this society has now ceased being lived in a purely negative mode, as a smooth indifference to anything that might come about, as a refusal to *play along*, as a defeat of domination via a rejection of denomination. It has taken on a positive character, and one that is quite disturbing; thus power is not wrong, in its paranoia, to see terrorists everywhere. It is a cold, clean hatred, like a kind of angina; a hatred which for the time being does not openly, theoretically express itself, but rather shows itself as a practical paralysis of the whole social apparatus, a mute and obstinate malice, the sabotage of all innovation, all movement, and all intelligence. There is no "crisis" anywhere; there is only the omnipresence of the Imaginary Party, whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere, since it operates *on the same territory as the Spectacle*.

XI

Each of this society's failures must be understood positively, as should the work of the Imaginary Party and the work of negativity, that is, of what is human. In a war like this, everything that denies one of the parties, even if only subjectively, *objectively* backs the other one. The radicalness of our times imposes its conditions. Regardless of the Spectacle, it is the notion of the Imaginary Party that renders visible the new configuration of hostilities. The Imaginary Party encompasses everything that conspires to destroy the present order in thought, word, or deed. The disaster is its doing.

XII

Up to a certain point, the Imaginary Party is the specter, the invisible presence, the fantasized return of the Other to a society where all otherness is *suppressed*, where the reduction of everything separate to equivalence is generalized. But this bad dream, this suicidal ideation running through the Spectacle's mind, in light of the present character of social production – itself imaginary – must soon engender its reality as consciousness becoming practical, as *immediately* practical consciousness. The Imaginary Party is the other name for the shameful sickness of power when it has been weakened: paranoia, which Canetti only too vaguely defined as an "illness of power." The desperate and planet-wide deployment of ever more massive and sophisticated apparatuses for the control of public space materializes in a piquant way the asylum-grade madness of domination when it's been wounded; it still pursues the old dream of the Titans, the dream of a universal State, when it is just another midget like the rest of them; and that makes it sick. In this terminal phase, all it talks about anymore is the fight against terrorism, delinquency, extremism and criminality, since it is constitutionally forbidden to explicitly mention the existence of the Imaginary Party. This, moreover, is certainly a combat handicap for it, since it can't name "the real enemy, inspired by infinite courage" (Kafka) so as to direct the hatred of its fanatics against it.

XIII

It must however be acknowledged that this paranoia has some reason to it, in light of the direction taken by historical development. It is a *fact* that at the point we have arrived to in the process of the *socialization of society*, each individual act of destruction constitutes an act of *terrorism*; that

Those who are the symbols of some thing that they do *not* in fact bear within them [S] “Adolescents, more and more numerous and ever younger, appear to be creating a parallel system of their own, rejecting all consensual rules, and affirming themselves only on the basis of the economy of predation and the codes of violence. ‘The night belongs to them,’ say the police, exasperated to find themselves alone on the front lines.” (*Le Monde*, December 15, 1998)

is, it *objectively* attacks the whole of society. And so, to the extreme, suicide – which in a single gesture intermingles freedom and death – manifests a limitation, a suspension, and an annulment of the sovereignty of Biopower, and acquires the sense of a direct attack on domination, which thus finds itself deprived of a fine source for the consumption, production, and reproduction of its world. In the same way, when the law rests on nothing but its pronouncement – that is, on force and arbitrariness – when it enters into a phase of autonomous proliferation, and above all, when no *ethos* gives it substance anymore, then all crime is seen as a *total* contestation of a solidly ruined social order. All murder then, is no longer the murder of a particular person – if anything like a “particular person” is still possible – but *pure murder*, with no object or subject, no guilty party nor victim. It is *immediately* an attack on the law, which does not exist but wants to reign everywhere. The most minor of infractions have taken on a different meaning now. All crimes have become *political crimes*, and that’s precisely what domination must hide at all costs so as to conceal from everyone the fact that an era has come to an end, that political violence, once buried alive, now demands that accounts be settled, in new forms that *people* didn’t know it could occur in. And so the Imaginary Party manifests itself with a certain character of blind terrorism, which the Spectacle intuitively grasps. It might be interpreted as the moment when all developed commodity societies internalize the negation they had kept locked away in the illusory but cathartic exteriority of “truly existing socialism,” but that is just its most superficial aspect. It would also be permissible for anyone to diminish its unusual character by affirming that as a general rule “a political unit can only exist in the form of a *res publica*, of *publicity*, and it is attacked every time a space of *non-publicity*, which would be an effective disavowal of that publicity, is created within it.” It is certainly not a rare thing to see some people take the position of “disappearing into the shadows, but transforming the shadows into a strategic space from which emerge attacks that will destroy the place where the *imperium* has manifested itself up to now, which will dismantle the vast stage of official public life, which technocratic intelligence could not manage to organize.” (Carl Schmitt, *Theory of the partisan*). It is a constant temptation in effect to conceive of the positive existence of the Imaginary Party simply as guerrilla war, as civil war, as partisan war; as a conflict without precisely established front lines nor declarations of hostilities, without armistices or peace accords. And in many ways what we are dealing with here is a war that is indeed nothing but its acts, its violence, and its crimes, which appear at this point to have no other program but to become conscious violence, that is, a violence conscious of its metaphysical and political character.

XIV

Because the Spectacle, in virtue of the congenital aberration in its vision of the world no less than in light of strategic considerations, *cannot* say, see, or understand a single thing about the Imaginary Party, whose substance is purely metaphysical, the particular form in which the latter erupts into visibility is the *catastrophe-form*. The catastrophe is what discloses but cannot be disclosed. Thus it must be understood that catastrophe only exists *for the Spectacle*; it ruins, in a single, irreversible blow, all the Spectacle’s patient labor to pass off as The World that which is merely its *Weltanschauung* – and this shows that, like everything finite, it is incapable of conceiving of its own annihilation. In each “catastrophe” it is the commodity mode of disclosure itself being disclosed/revealed and suspended. Its character as something obvious and taken for granted thus shatters.

The totality of the categories it imposes for use in the apprehension of reality is destroyed. Interest, equivalence, calculation, utility, labor, value – all are derailed by the unattributability of negation. And so the Imaginary Party, within the Spectacle, is understood as the party of chaos, crisis, and disaster.

XV

It is to the exact extent that the catastrophe is a brilliant, searing truth that the men of the Imaginary Party work to bring it about by all means. The axes of communication are special targets for them. They know how infrastructure “worth millions” can be annihilated in a single audacious blow. They know the tactical weaknesses, the points of least resistance, and the moments when the enemy organization is vulnerable. They are thus able to choose more freely than it is what their theater of operations will be, and act on the point where the tiniest pressures can cause the greatest damages. The most troubling thing, when *people* ask them about it, is certainly that they know all about that without knowing that they know it. And so an anonymous worker in a bottling plant “just like that” dumps some cyanide into a handful of cans; a young man kills a tourist in the name of “the purity of the mountains,” and signs to his crime the name “THE MESSIAH”; another blows out his petty-bourgeois father’s brains on his birthday “without any apparent reason”; yet another suddenly opens fire on the peaceful flock of his schoolmates; and another “gratuitously” throws cinderblocks down onto passing cars on the freeway below from an overpass, when he’s not setting them on fire in their parking lots. In the Spectacle, the Imaginary Party does not appear to be comprised of men, but of *strange acts*, in the sense understood by the Sabbatean tradition. These acts themselves are however not connected to one another, but are systematically locked away as exceptional enigmas; *people* would never think of seeing in them the manifestations of one and the same human negativity, because *people* don’t know what negativity really is – besides, *people* don’t even know what humanity is, or even if such a thing exists. All this comes off as somewhat absurd, and indeed there isn’t much that doesn’t at this point. Above all, *people* don’t want to see that these are actually all attacks directed against them and their ignominy. And so, from the spectacular point of view, from the point of view of a certain alienation of the state of public explanation, the Imaginary Party is a mere confused ensemble of gratuitous, isolated criminal acts, the meaning of which their authors don’t grasp; just the periodic eruption into visibility of ever more mysterious forms of terrorism, all things that end up producing the displeasing impression that in the long run *people* aren’t safe from anything at all in the Spectacle, that an obscure threat is weighing down on the empty task-sequencing of commodity society. Doubtless what we’re dealing with is a generalized state of exception. In either camp, no one can really claim security or safety anymore. That’s fine. We now know that the denouement is close at hand. “Lucid holiness recognizes in itself the need to destroy, the necessity of a tragic outcome.” (Bataille, *Guilty*)

XVI

The effective configuration of hostilities that the notion of the Imaginary Party makes legible is essentially marked by *asymmetry*. We are not dealing here with the struggle between two camps at rivalry over the conquest of one and the same trophy, where eventually they will shake hands over it all and one will concede defeat. Here the protagonists move on two levels so perfectly foreign to one another that they only meet at very rare points of intersection, and, to say the least, sort of randomly. But this foreignness is itself asymmetrical. Because although for the Imaginary Party the Spectacle

has no mystery to it, the Imaginary Party must remain forever arcane to the Spectacle. What ensues from this is a strategic consequence of the greatest grandeur: whereas we can easily identify our enemy, which is after all the identifiable *par excellence*, our enemy cannot identify us. There is no uniform for the Imaginary Party, since uniformity is the central attribute of the Spectacle. And so all uniformity must now feel itself threatened, along with everything that uniformity acts as the currency for. In other words, the Imaginary Party *only* recognizes its enemies, not its members; its enemies are precisely *all those that people recognize*. The men of the Imaginary Party, by reappropriating their Bloom-being, reappropriate the anonymity that they have been forced into. In so doing they turn against the Spectacle the very situation that it put them in, and use it to make themselves invincible. In a certain way, they make this society pay for the *imprescriptible crime* of having deprived them of their name – that is, the recognition of their sovereign singularity and thus of all properly human life – for having excluded them from all visibility, all community, all participation; for having thrown them out into the indistinct mass of the crowd, into the nothingness of ordinary life, into the suspended animation of the mass of *homo sacer*; for having walled off their existence from any access to *meaning*. This condition, which *people* would like to keep them in, is where they *start from, by leaving it*. It is perfectly insufficient, however indicative of a certain intellectual impotence, to remark that in this terrorism, innocent people receive the chastisement “that they are nothing, that they have no destiny, that they are dispossessed of their name by a system that is itself anonymous, consigned to an anonymity that they then become the purest incarnation of. (Because) they are the finished products of the social, of an abstract sociality which has now become globalized.” (Baudrillard) Each of these murders, without any identifiable motive or particular victim, each of these anonymous acts of sabotage, constitutes an act of *Tiqqun*; it executes the sentence that this world *has already* proffered against itself. It reduces to nothingness that which the Spirit has abandoned; it kills what was not living, but merely surviving itself; it reduces to ruins what for so long was merely remnants. And though it must be accepted that these acts be called “gratuitous,” it is only because they only aim to manifest that which is *already* true, but is still hidden; to realize what is *already* real, but not recognized as such. They add nothing to the course of the disaster; they merely *acknowledge it* and *put it into acts*.



(Police attempt to locate agents of the Imaginary Party in the crowd.)

The fact that its enemy has no face, no name, and nothing identifiable about it, that it still presents itself – in spite of all colossal plans – in the guise of a perfectly normal Bloom: that’s what sets off Power’s paranoia most. Johann Georg Elser, whose bomb attack in Munich on November 8th 1939 would have killed Hitler were it not for a narrow, lucky escape, provides the model which in the years to come will plunge commodity domination into an ever more perceptible panic. Elser was a model Bloom, however unacceptably contradictory it may be to say that. Everything about him evokes neutrality and nothingness. His absence from the world was complete, his solitude absolute. His very banality was banal. Poverty of spirit, a lack of personality, and insignificance were his only attributes, but they could never really make him stand out as singular. When telling the story of his totally ordinary life as a carpenter, it all comes off as endlessly impersonal. Nothing appears to have stirred any passion in him. He was equally indifferent to politics and ideology. He didn’t know what Communism meant or what National Socialism meant, even though he was a worker in Germany in the 1930s. And when the “judges” interrogated him about the motives for his act, which took him a year to prepare for with the most meticulous care, all he could manage to mention was the increased deductions being taken out of the workers’ wages. He even declared that he had no intention of eliminating Nazism, but just of getting rid of a few men he thought were bad people. And this was the kind of being that nearly saved the world from the unparalleled suffering of a global war. His plans were based only on a solitary resolve to destroy what denied his existence; what was unspeakably his enemy; what represented the hegemony of Evil. He drew his right to do so from himself; that is, from the explosive force of his own decision. The “party of order” will have to face – and is already facing – the proliferation of such elementary acts of terrorism that it cannot understand nor predict, since they are authorized by nothing more than an inexhaustible metaphysical sovereignty, the insane possibility of disaster that each human existence contains within it, in however infinitesimal a dose. Nothing can protect anyone from these eruptions, which attack society itself in response to the terrorism of *social issues*, not even fame and glory. Their target is as vast as the world itself. And so everything that attempts to remain within the Spectacle must now live in the terror of a threat of annihilation – and no one knows where it’s coming from or what its about, and all anyone can tell is that it’s intended to serve as an *example*. The lack of any decipherable goal in such *scandalous actions* as these is necessarily part of the goal itself, since that’s how they show their exteriority, their foreignness, their irreducibility to the commodity mode of disclosure – and that is how they corrode that mode of disclosure. It’s a matter of spreading the *disquiet* that makes men into metaphysicians, spreading the doubt that breaks down level by level the dominant interpretation of the world. It is thus in vain that *people* would attribute to us any immediate goal, if not perhaps the hope of provoking a more or less lasting *breakdown* in the machine as a whole. Nothing is more capable of abolishing the totality of the world of administered alienation than one of these miraculous interruptions, which suddenly bring flooding back all the humanity that the Spectacle so constantly obscures, where the empire of separation is defeated, where mouths rediscover the speech they owe it to themselves to voice, where men are reborn to their peers and to their inextinguishable need for them. Domination sometimes needs decades to completely recover from a single one of these moments of intense truth. But it would be a serious misunderstanding of the Imaginary Party’s strategy to reduce it to the pursuit of *the catastrophe*. It would be just as much a misunderstanding to think that we would have the childish desire to pulverize in a single blow some military headquarters or other where power is concentrated. One does not take a mode of disclosure by assault as if it were a fortress, even if the one could usefully lead to the other. The Imaginary Party does not aim at general insurrection against the Spectacle, nor even its direct and instantaneous destruction. Rather it assembles the proper set of conditions to make domination succumb as quickly and broadly as possible to the progressive

paralysis to which its paranoia condemns it. Though at no time does it give up the intent to finish it off, the Imaginary Party's tactic is not frontal attack; rather it is the very act of evasion, guiding, and hastening the emergence of its illness. "That is what makes it feared by the holders of a power that does not acknowledge it: never letting itself be grasped, and simultaneously being the dissolution of the Social Fact, and the unruly stubbornness to reinvent the latter as a sovereignty that the law cannot circumscribe." (Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*). Powerless in the face of the omnipresence of this danger, domination, which feels itself to be more and more alone, betrayed, and fragile, has no other choice than to extend control and suspicion over the totality of a territory that free circulation nevertheless remains the vital principle of. It can surround its "gated communities" with all the security guards it wants; the ground will nevertheless continue to slip out from under its feet. It is part of the essence of the Imaginary Party that everywhere it eats away at the very foundation of commodity society: *credit/credibility*. And there is no limit to this dissolving activity other than the collapse of that which it undermines.

XVIII

It's not so much the content of the Imaginary Party's crimes that tends to ruin the *imperium* of blood-thirsty "peace" as it is their *form*. Because their form is that of a hostility with no precise object, a fundamental hatred that erupts from the most unfathomable interiority with no regard for any obstacle, from the uncorrupted depths where man remains in true contact with himself. That's why a force emanates from them that all the Spectacle's blather cannot dam up. Japanese children, who one might fairly consider a kind of frantic, violent avant-garde of the Imaginary Party, have created verbal locutions to name these heights of absolute rage, where something carries them away which is them but not them, which is indeed much bigger than they are. The most widespread of them is *mukatsuku* – at root it means "to be *nauseous*," i.e., to be overtaken by the most physical of meta-physical sensations. In this special kind of rage, there is something somehow *sacred*.

XIX

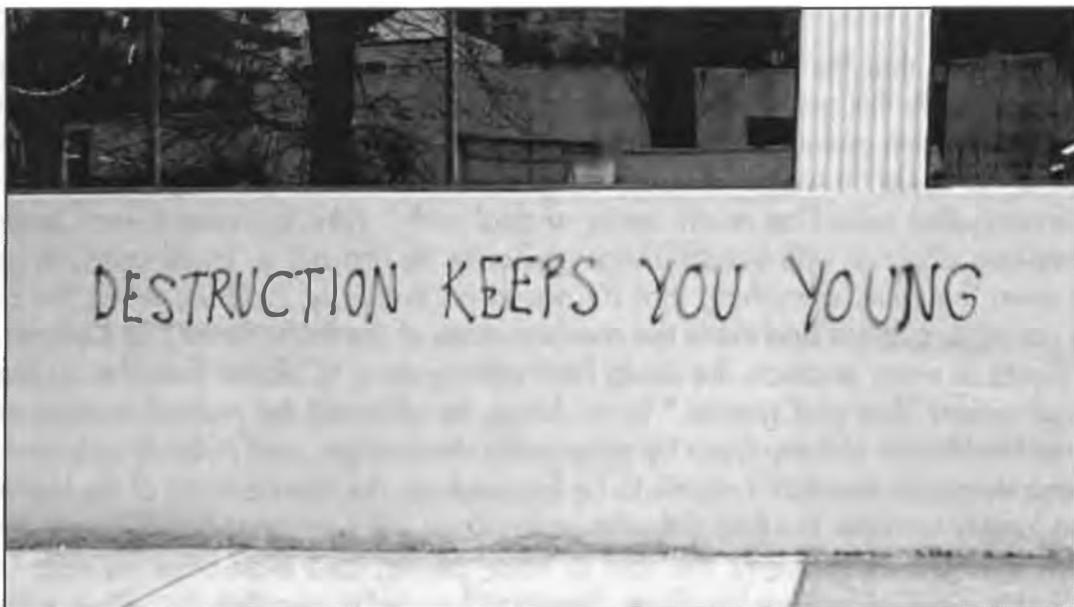
It is however obvious that the Spectacle – faced with these massacres, crimes, and catastrophes besieging it, faced with this growing weight of the unexplainable – can no longer be content to affirm that there is a chasm opening in its vision of the world. And it expresses this, moreover, without beating around the bush: "it would certainly be preferable if this violence were the fruit of misery, of terrible poverty; that would be much easier to deal with." (*The Thursday Event*, September 10, 1998). As we can observe with breathtaking regularity, its first act is, at all costs, to put forth an explanation even if it ruins everything that it's based on in theory. And so, when the pathetic Bill Clinton was called to explain and draw the consequences of the Beau Geste* of Kipland Kinkel, an exemplary Bloom in many respects, he could find nothing more to blame than the "influence of the new culture of violent films and games." In so doing, he affirmed the radical transparency, insubstantiality, and liquidation of the subject by commodity domination, and publicly acknowledged that the tragic desert-island-fiction that it claims to be founded on, the irreducibility of the individual legal person, is no longer tenable. He thus artlessly undermined the very principle of commodity society, without which law, private property, the sale of labor power, and even what he calls "culture" is, at the most, just a piece of fantasy literature. *People* still prefer to sacrifice the whole edifice of their pseudo-justification rather than trying to understand the enemy's reasoning and nature. Because

* A gesture noble in form but meaningless in substance.

were they to do so, they would have to agree with Marx that “the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary praxis*.” And though *people* try so hard to hide it, *they* will eventually fall back and confess it at the painful moment when *they* at last have exhausted themselves with ridiculous blather about the non-existent psychology of the Blooms who’ve finally taken action. In spite of these endless considerations, one cannot prevent oneself from feeling that indeed it is *people* themselves being judged, and society being accused. It is only too obvious that the origin of these Blooms’ gestures has nothing subjective about it; in its sacredness it quite simply opposes the objectivity of domination. At this point *people* will reluctantly admit that, yes, this is a social war *they* are dealing with here, without however precisely indicating *what* social war it is; that is, *who* the protagonists are: “the authors of these attacks of madness, these new barbarians, are not all nutcases. They are most often actually very ordinary people.” (*The Thursday Event*, September 10, 1998). And it’s this kind of rhetoric, a rhetoric of absolute hostility, which has begun to emerge universally: the enemy, that *people* refrain from naming, is declared barbarous and excluded from humanity. The proof is that now we can hear some dictator of public transit or other, right smack in the middle of a period of supposed social peace, proclaiming “we shall re-conquer the territory.” And in fact, we see spreading everywhere the certitude that there exists an unnamable internal enemy, most often in camouflaged form, which is carrying out a continuous activity of sabotage: but this time, unfortunately, there won’t be any more “kulaks” to “eliminate as a class.” So it would be quite wrong to not subscribe to the paranoid perspective that thinks that behind the inarticulate multiplicity of the manifestations of the world there is a unique will, armed with dark intentions: because in a world of paranoids, the paranoids are right.

XX

The fact that the Spectacle fears that it harbors an imaginary party in its very heart, even if in fact it is the opposite – in effect it is really the Imaginary Party that harbors the Spectacle in its aura – clearly betrays its suspicion that by qualifying these acts of destruction as “gratuitous” it has not really said all there is to say about them. It is flagrantly conspicuous that the whole ensemble of the misdeeds that



An illiterate will struggle to erase the inscription “DESTRUCTION KEEPS YOU YOUNG.”
“...because the sorcery of the Spectacle, since it is unable to liquidate them, consists in rendering invisible all the expressions of negation...”

people attribute to these "madmen," these "barbarians," these "irresponsible individuals," merge adjacently into a unique, non-formulated project: the liquidation of commodity domination. In the final analysis, it is always *objectively* a matter of making life impossible for it, of propagating *disquiet*, doubt, and distrust, of doing whatever damage is possible, to whatever modest extent each person's means permit. Nothing can explain the systematic absence of any remorse among these criminals but the mute sentiment that they are participating in a grandiose oeuvre of devastation. In all obviousness, these men, themselves insignificant, are the agents of a severe, historical, and transcendent reasoning that demands the annihilation of this world, that is, *the fulfillment of its nothingness*. The only thing that distinguishes them from the conscious fractions of the Imaginary Party is the fact that *they are not working for the end of the world, but for the end of a world*. And this difference may at a given moment give sufficient room for a most reasoned hatred. But that is inconsequential for the Imaginary Party itself, which must remain *the next figure of the Mind*.

XXI

The men of the Imaginary Party carry on an irregular warfare. They are engaged in a kind of Spanish War where the spectacular occupier bankrupts itself stationing troops and munitions, and a paroxysmal dialectic holds sway within the terms of which "the strength and significance of the irregulars are determined by the strength and significance of the regular organization they attack." (Carl Schmitt) and vice-versa. The Imaginary Party can count on the fact that a handful of partisans is enough to immobilize the whole "party of order." In the war being waged at present, there is no *jus belli* left. The hostilities are absolute. Even the "party of order" itself sometimes doesn't shy away from acknowledging it: *one must operate as a partisan everywhere there are partisans* – it's enough to know how prisons have changed over the last decade, and look at the habits that the various kinds of police have gotten into when it comes to the way they deal with "the fringe elements" to understand what that watchword can mean in terms of bloodthirsty arbitrariness. And so, as long as commodity domination continues to exist, the men of the Imaginary Party will have to expect to be treated like criminals, or be hunted like game, depending. The disproportionate magnitude of the weapons and punishments that people now wield against it has nothing to do with any particular juncture in the politics of repression; it is consubstantial with what they are, and what their enemy is. What is expressed in this is the simple fact that the Imaginary Party contains in its very principle the negation of everything that commodity domination is based on, a negation that will be manifested in acts before it is manifested in discourse. The coming rebellion will be different from the revolutions

FEAR...

"When it comes to subjectivity,' explains Christophe Dejours, [...] 'we are entering into a realm that is not included in the visible. Suffering and pain can be felt, but not seen. What is visible are the defensive strategies and decompensations.'"

"Beyond the 'classic' strain pathologies – among which we have the Japanese 'karoushi' (death by overwork), and the Anglo-Saxon 'burnout,' Mr. Dejours sees 'a recent and massive eruption of fear.'" (Le Monde, April 9th, 1998).

AND TREMBLING

"Thus we've been seeing more and more of these 'executive shakeups' (by the shoulders), which Christophe Dejours affirms 'generate fear not only in the shaken-up executive but also among his colleagues.'" (ibid.)

of the past in that it won't call upon any of the age-old transcendences, rendered detestable by being worn down to a thread so continually by so many oppressive regimes thirsty for justification. At no moment will it claim to draw its legitimacy from the People, from Public Opinion, the Church, the Nation, or from the Working Class, even in an attenuated manner. It will base its cause on nothing, but that nothing is Nothingness itself, which as we know is identical to Being. That its crimes demonstrate such a miraculous sovereignty comes from the fact that they are not rooted in any of these particular transcendences, which after all are totally defunct, but rather take root in *transcendence as such*, with no mediation. Thus it represents the most formidable peril to the Commodity State that has ever been mounted against it. What's before it now is not to contest this or that aspect of the legal system, or this or that law; rather it is to attack that which comes *before all law*, the obligation of obedience itself. Even further, the partisans of the Imaginary Party grow and develop in the most complete violation of all the existing rules, without ever having the feeling that they're breaking them, since they act *in total contempt* for them all. These partisans do not oppose the legal order, they *depose* it. They claim a higher justification beyond all written and unwritten laws: the lawless text that they themselves *are*. They thus unearth and renew the absolute scandal of Sabbatean doctrine, which affirmed that the "fulfillment of the Law is its transgression," and leave it behind. They themselves constitute a fragment of *Tiqqun*, inasmuch as they are the living abolition of the old law, which split, divided, and separated. They respond to the state of exception with a state of exception, and thus throw the sad unreality of the whole legal edifice back in its face. In sum, if they represent no one and nothing, that's not by default but on the contrary by excess, in their refusal of the very principle of representation. Starting from the fundamental irreducibility of all human existence, they proclaim themselves unsusceptible to representation; they are the *unrepresentable* itself, but also the *unrepresentative*. Analogous in this sense to the totality of language, or of the world, they defy all concrete reduction to equivalency. Such an Imaginary Party, which renders the whole monument of legality to its infamous origins as a Romanesque fiction, brings the Commodity State down to the level of a criminal association merely more consequential, better organized, and more powerful than the others. This in no way presumes any kind of social disorganization. Chicago was administered in quite the exemplary fashion in the 1920s, after all. As you can see, the Imaginary Party is just as fundamentally anti-state as it is anti-popular. Nothing is more odious to it than the idea of a political unity, except perhaps the idea of obedience. In the present conditions, it can be none other than the non-party of the multitudes, since as that piece of shit Hobbes so forcefully put it, "when the citizens rebel against the State, it is the Multitudes against the People."

XXII

If the notion of an Imaginary Party above all names the *suspended* negativity of our times, while at the same time designating its invisibility, it must inseparably be conceived of as the idea on the basis of which one can understand the *positive* content of all these practices, which the Spectacle only grasps the negative aspect of; that is, the basis for an understanding of that which they are not. The Spectacle calls the mass defection from the appalling institutional political sphere a "crisis of politics," calls the obstinate indifference that welcomes the overwhelming flood of trash produced year after year by contemporary art a "crisis of culture," calls the growing refusal of imprisonment in schools a "failure of education," calls the mute resistance to capitalist modernization and the ever more widespread refusal to work an "economic crisis," calls the resolute destruction of the unhealthy nuclear family a "crisis of family," and calls what is no more than the transparent rejection of alienated social relations and spectacular morality a "crisis of the social pact"; thus it remains blind to this "silent revolution... which is not visible to all eyes, that contemporary minds are the least capable

of observing, and which is as difficult to put into words as it is to conceive of." It fails to realize that "the forming mind ripens slowly and silently into its new figure, disintegrating fragment by fragment the edifice of its prior world; and the collapse of this world is only indicated by the sporadic symptoms thereof. Frivolousness and boredom invade whatever is still left, the vague foreboding of the unknown – these are the signs announcing that something different is happening. And then this continual crumbling – which causes no change whatsoever in the physiognomy – is suddenly interrupted by the sunrise, which, in a lightning flash, sketches out all at once the form of the new world." (Hegel) After all it is true that while serpents are shedding their skin they are blind.

XXIII

All the positivity of the Imaginary Party is located in the gigantic blind spot of the *unrepresentable*, which the Spectacle is atavistically incapable even of merely perceiving. The Imaginary Party is, in all aspects, merely the political consequence of this positivity, the concept of which is Critical Metaphysics, and the figure of which is Bloom. When Bloom, that creature justiciable by no social determination other than the negative, whose primary characteristics, as attributed to him by Hannah Arendt – who identified him perhaps a bit prematurely with the mass-man – are "isolation and the lack of normal social relations," becomes the dominant human type in more than just one world, commodity society discovers that it no longer has any grip on these subjectivities which were nevertheless *entirely* formed by it, and that thus, simply by following its own natural course, it has engendered its own negation. Domination's defeat by its own products appears in a privileged fashion in the sphere of sociology: *Bloom is everywhere, but sociology cannot see him anywhere*. In the same way, it would be vain to expect that the latter would ever be able to give any indication whatsoever of the effective existence of the Imaginary Party, the essence of which is extraterrestrial to it. And this, be it said in passing, is but one of the aspects of *the death of sociology*, which has definitively spoilt the socialization of society, and thus also sweeps away the socialization of sociology. In this process it disappears upon becoming realized, and is made ridiculous as a separate science by its very lack-eyes, who in the meantime were forced to become themselves their own sociologists. And so, as soon as a central, unique, undifferentiated instance of authority – the Spectacle – takes over the continual secretion of all social codes, the social sciences have their share reduced to the mere weight of their lies, from Weber to Bordieu. With the death of sociology, a whole sector of classical social criticism based *on* sociology and *as* sociology shows its double-dealing, servile essence by collapsing. That kind of criticism is no longer able to keep up with the times; it is no longer apt to describe them or to contest them. This task now falls to *Critical Metaphysics*.

XXIV

Up to now the front lines along which the friends and enemies of the dominant order are arranged have been very poorly sketched out as continual and linear. This representation must now be replaced by an image of innumerable, circular front lines, each of which has its space-time located within communities of human beings, practices, and languages that are in a state of absolute rebel-



"The professor spoke, then wrote on the chalkboard, and she waited for us to write, to write, to write – to write everything she said. And all of a sudden I looked and saw what a beautiful day it was outside. I don't have to bother anyone else if I don't agree with what is being proposed to me. So I left."
(*Le Monde*, July 7, 1998)

lion against commodity domination, and which the latter besieges ceaselessly, in keeping with its immanent logic. Everything that contributes to the maintenance of the old representation belongs in the enemy camp. The first consequence of this new geometry of struggle has to do with the form subversion spreads in. Faced with the world of the authoritarian commodity, we are no longer dealing with the advance of a battlefront company after company – that of the poor, the workers, or the wretched of the Earth – but with a contagion, similar to the succession of concentric waves on the surface of a pool of mercury when a drop falls into it. Here the herd instincts of the past are also attacked, by *the intensity of what is lived* at the drop zone. It follows that the elementary revolutionary subject is no longer the class, or the individual, but the metaphysical community, whatever its degree of exile may be – this is what testifies to the fundamentally insignificant and inconsequential default character of all personal adventures and all private histories in the Spectacle. A good geometrician does not consider it exaggerated to reduce the world as a whole to these miniscule, dispersed focuses, since everything that is not them, everything that does not give life to a particular and shared existential content, is dead, beyond the boring waltz of appearances. Each of these metaphysical communities arises from an extreme world, where men can no longer find one another except on the basis of essentials, and constitutes an exclusive pole of substantiality in the middle of the desert. All recognition that does not have its own laws and all simple superficiality are excluded from within it. There the conditions are created in which the Absolute can recover its temporal pretensions, and possibilities open up that had been lost since the millenarian uprisings and the Jewish messianic movements of the 17th century. Whatever people may say about it, the acute demand for a new strength and a new language which is felt there shines a light clarifying things far beyond the misery of our times. And that is precisely what the forces of decomposition fear, forces which promise such excessive favor to those who consent to renouncing themselves in order to be loved by them. The Imaginary Party, above all, refers only to the positive fact of this multitude of autonomous zones, free from commodity domination, which are experiencing *here and now* – beyond the reach of the deterioration of the alienated Common and the last death throes of a perishing social organism – their own forms of Publicity. Up to now, there has been no federation to it except *by intellection*. And that which bonds them is in effect at first merely a passive character: these are communities in which the meaning and form of life is more important than life itself, where the duty of *being* has been elevated up to the point of incandescence. They thus share the same metaphysical substance, although they still don't know it. It is only under the black auspices of their common persecution by the global hegemony of the commodity that they must come to recognize themselves for what they are: fractions of the Imaginary Party. There is something ineluctable about this process; the resistance that these communities put up to the generalized reduction to equivalency expressly sets them out before the roller-compactors of the reigning abstraction. But in the end the only identifiable effect of this oppression is that these independent universes see themselves forced by their enemy to leave the immediacy of their own particularity one by one; and to receive their universal character from their enemy in the course of their struggle against it. And it is to the precise extent that this enemy is none other than a permanent effort for the negation of metaphysics that they attain to the consciousness of what unites them: not the affirmation of any one metaphysics in particular, but of metaphysics itself as such. This bond, which is certainly not immediate, is in no way formal, and not at all a construct; rather it is something that precedes all freedom, and gives it its very foundation: an existential, absolute, concrete hostility to commodity nihilism. It follows from this that, contrary to everything that has been called a "party" in the past, the Imaginary Party does not need to converge on a general united intent or will, because it already shares the Common, here identified with a language, Mentality, metaphysics, or even a politics of finiteness – and in these circumstances all these terms become pseudonyms for one and the same Unspeakable thing. To say that the coherence of the Imaginary Party is of a metaphysical nature is thus in no way intended to evoke anything other than the everyday war that each of us is

already engaged in, which opposes that coherence against the ruminant negation of all forms-of-life. At this point, the need for its unification imposes itself on all its elements, as identical to its becoming conscious: "the battle is between the modern world, on the one hand, and all the other possible worlds on the other." (Péguy, *Sequential notes*). All those who, in love with truth, though certainly not the *same* truth, come together to wreck the pathetic commodity metaphysics, are rallying round the Imaginary Party. But the movement that produces this unity is also the movement where differences are set out and freeze in place. Each particular community, in its struggle against the empty universality of the commodity, recognizes its particular nature little by little, and elevates itself to a consciousness of that particularity; that is, it apprehends its reflection and mediates itself through the universal. It inscribes itself in the concrete generality of the Mind, whose progress through figures is a banquet celebration where all irreducibilities rejoice in drunken revelry. Fragment after fragment, the reappropriation of the Common continues. And so it is that over the course of the battle the nomadic ballet of communities takes on the complex, architectural structure of a metaphysical caste system whose principle can only be *play*, that is, a sovereign consciousness of Nothingness. Each metaphysical reign slowly learns the frontiers of its territory on the continent of the Infinite. At the same time a general common is constructed which contains within it all the differentiated totalities



"In these darkling days we are watching the final phase of the decomposition of commodity society, which, we admit, has lasted only too long. On the planetary level, we are seeing the divergence, of ever growing proportions, between the map of the commodity and the territories of Man."

of the regional commons; that is, it is the layout of their *Limes*.* It is to be expected that as victory approaches the men of the Imaginary Party will no longer so much have to wage battle to defeat what is, after all, a very weakened enemy, as they will have to fight to finally give free rein to their metaphysical conflicts, which they intend to exhaust, *physically* and in *play*. And in such matters they are fierce partisans of *violence*, but of a highly ritualized, agonistic violence, rich in meaning. As one can plainly see – and it would be quite wrong to be disappointed about it – the triumph of the Imaginary Party will also be its defeat, and its disintegration.

XXV

The form of Publicity prefigured by and prevailing in the Imaginary Party has nothing to do with anything that could have been elaborated in classical political philosophy. If we really had to attribute some ancestry to it, we would have to hearken back to what was fugitively sketched out in those rare and precious moments of insurrection that arose in the Soviets, the Communes, the Aragonese collectives of

* i.e. the *limes romanus*. The *limes* (pl. *limites*) was the Ancient Roman border delimiting/defense system, marking the boundaries of the Empire.

1936-1937, or in the secret schools of the Kabbalah, the Safed school for instance. Every time that the latter managed to carve out a way onto the unwelcoming stage of History, the consequences knew no limits. Few among those who lived through those instants where History emerged, shattering whole slabs of the amputated and limited forms of Publicity, and made itself plainly perceptible, were then able to endure seeing the world as it is remaining as it is, once their eyes had glimpsed the unparalleled dawn of the *restitutio in integrum* – of *Tiqqun*. But it is now a necessary consequence of evolution as it has taken place in all developed commodity societies that this thing, which we have only seen violently breaking and entering, has now taken up residence in silence and calm for the long haul, unperceived, with its advancement apparently taken for granted. A strange spectacle indeed, this world where the dominant forms of existence are known conceptually to have been transcended,

but persist within being, as if it were nothing, while, beyond the extreme alienation of Publicity imposed by the Spectacle, and as a counterweight thereunto, we see the dawning – though still mingled together with the contrary principle – of a humanity which feeds exclusively on meaning, adulterated though it may be. Liberated from the need to produce, freed from the chains that bound them to working landed estates, fragile worlds take shape in which elective affinity is everything and servitude nothing. The ruins of the metropolises already have nothing living within them besides these fluid human aggregates of individuals who, finding no more real reason for their alienation, scurry around in it in all directions. The slavery of the men of the Spectacle appears just as extravagant to them as their freedom appears incomprehensible to the former. In the suspended animation of their existence, the problematic nature of the world has ceased to be problematic; it has become the very material of the life they live. Language no longer appears to them as a laborious exteriority that must first be recovered in the self and then applied to the world; it has become the immediate substance of the latter. At no moment does their action come off as separate from their speech. And so then we can understand that the Spectacle, where politics and economics remain abstractions separate from metaphysics, represents for them a bygone figure of Publicity. But it is in fact all the old petrified dualisms that have been abolished in the substantial continuity of meaning. In these totalities, rich in mean-



“The fact that things ‘continue as they are’ is itself the catastrophe. It is not something that might hit us at any moment; it’s happening right now.” (Walter Benjamin)

ing, full, and open, eternity takes up residence within each instant, and the whole universe in each of its details. Their world, the city, shelters them as an interiority, while their interiority takes on the dimensions of a whole world. In a partial, and unfortunately reversible and provisional manner, they are already within the "restoration of the broken unity of the real and the transcendent." (Lukàcs). Were it not for the caprices of domination, their lives would by themselves tend towards the realization of all the human potentialities that they contain. This coming figure of Publicity corresponds to the maximum deployment of that realization; that is, it espouses language without the slightest reserve: indeed, it *is* language, as it *knows* silence. There, the essence is no longer separate from the appearance, but man has ceased to confuse them with himself. There, the Mind has its Residence, and it peacefully watches its own metamorphoses. Language is the unique, new, and eternal Law, which goes beyond all the past laws which it was, after all, but the material for, though in a frozen state. If the old forms of Publicity arose with a more or less balanced, more or less harmonious construction, it, on the contrary, is horizontal, labyrinthine, topological. No representation can extend to cover it at any point. All its space demands to be traversed. As for the operational structure of the Imaginary Party – as for the innervation of this world – it is not comprised of any kind of a vertical delegation system at all, but of a mode of transmission which itself is part of the limitless horizontality of language: the Example. The flat geography of the world of *Tiqqun* in no way signifies the abolition of values and the end of the very human pursuit of recognition. It's simply that instead it is by "the authority of the *prototype* and not the normativity of order" (Virno, *Miracle, Virtuosity, and Déjà-vu*) that it is there permissible to men, as it is now to the fractions of the Imaginary Party, to impose their excellence. The map of the world we are sketching out is none other than *the map of the Mind*. It is at present this Publicity of the Mind that is everywhere overflowing with the party of nothingness, whose idiocy and tactlessness become more ferocious and more intolerable every day. And we will inevitably put an end to it.

XXVI

The all-out war waged by the Spectacle against the Imaginary Party and on freedom has doubtless already devastated whole regions of the social space. People have decreed that protective measures be implemented in that space, measures that the world had been accustomed to only in global conflicts: curfews, military escorts, the methodical collection of personal information for databases, arms and communications control, the takeover of whole sectors of the economy, etc. The men of these times are marching straight into a world of maniacal fear. Their nightmares are populated by tortures that are already no longer just the stuff of dreams. Once again one hears people speak of pirates, monsters, and giants. Tied to the progress of a universal sentiment of insecurity, everyday facial expressions show the demonstration of a fatal and continual accumulation of petty nervous exhaustions. And since each era dreams of the era to come, little big shots proliferate, who fight for control over public space, which has already been reduced to the mere space of circulation. The weakest minds give in easily to insane rumors that no one can confirm or deny. An infinite darkness fills the distance men leave between each other. Every day, in spite of that growing darkness, the gloomy outlines of the civil war are clarified a little more, a civil war where no one knows who's fighting and who isn't; where the only limit to the confusion is death; where in the final analysis the only thing that is certain is that the worst is yet to come. And so we remain, before the coming birth, within the obvious disaster; but nothing keeps our gaze from going beyond it. It appears, then, that these are the "birth pangs," that no new era has the right to be exempt from. He who squints to see in the night the coming clash of the Titans will discover that all this desolation, all these deaf echoes of cannon blasts, all these faceless cries are but the doing of the *lone*, hideous Titan of Commodity Domination, which, in its bloodthirsty delirium, is struggling, howling, firing at will, stomping its

feet, convinced that someone's after him, barking insane orders, rolling around on the ground, and ending up slamming his whole weight against the walls of his living room. From the depths of his madness, he swears that the Imaginary Party is the darkness surrounding him, and that it must be abolished. He appears to really have a problem with this nefarious territory, which insists on never agreeing with his maps, and already he threatens it all with the worst reprisals. But as his day wears on, no one's listening anymore; even his closest subjects lend no more than a distracted ear to the demented old fool as he huffs and puffs... They just pretend to listen, then wink a knowing eye.

XXVII

The Imaginary Party expects nothing from the present society and its evolution, because *practically* – that is, in its real acts – it is already its very dissolution and that which lies beyond it. Consequently, it cannot be a matter of taking power, but only defeating domination everywhere, by making it durably impossible for its apparatus to go on functioning – the *temporary*, and in places even the *fugitive* character of the contestation at work under the banner of the Imaginary Party can be explained by this: it guarantees that it itself will never become a Power. That's why the violence it takes recourse to is of a totally different nature than the Spectacle's violence. And that's also why the latter is in fact just struggling alone in the darkness. Even when commodity domination unleashes its "freedom of the void," its "negative will that only feels its existence when it's being destroyed" (Hegel), whereas its violence without content only aspires to the infinite extension of nothingness, the exercise of violence by the Imaginary Party, unlimited as it may be, is only attached to the preservation of forms-of-life that centers of power are preparing to alter, or already threaten. That is where its incomparable force and aura comes from. That is also where its fullness and absolute legitimacy originate. Even when it is totally on the offensive, it is a *preserving* violence. We thus reenounter the dissymmetry that we spoke of before. The Imaginary Party does not have the same goals as domination does, and if they are concurrent, it's only because each of them wants to destroy that which the other pursues the realization of; the difference is that the Spectacle wants no more *than that*. Whether the Imaginary Party will defeat commodity society and make that victory irreversible or not will depend on its ability to give intensity, grandeur and substance to a life freed from all domination, no less than on the aptitude of its conscious fractions to *explain* it in their practice as much as in their theory. It is to be feared that domination will find a generalized suicide, where it will at least be guaranteed to take its adversary down with it, preferable to its defeat. But from start to finish, that's the bet we're making. It's going to be up to history and its frozen operation to judge whether what we're undertaking is merely a beginning or already an end. The Absolute is in history.



Silence and beyond

A man who wants to take a fortress by assault can't do it merely with words, but must dedicate all his forces to the task. Thus must we accomplish our task of silence.

Jakob Frank, *Words of the Lord*

PEOPLE write a lot about these times, and PEOPLE talk even more. And it seems that the more PEOPLE write and talk the less they want to be understood. Their reasons for that are pretty sparse, yet there certainly are reasons. There have to be. What's clear is that the majority of them are hardly avowable. As for those that are, in the end they always give in to the need to make themselves heard, and then are met with laughter. The only exception to this rule is Critical Metaphysics in the broad sense, in the sense that we, like so many others, *submit* to it; in the one sense that is appropriate, in sum, to the enormity of its object. It even mixes the fiercest severity in with its demand to be heard; you have to use a kind of imperious tone when you're dealing with overthrowing an order that's based on and perpetuates the suffering of human beings. It is strictly to the extent that they contribute to defining an *effective* practical critique for the new conditions, modalities, and possibilities at hand that the conscious fractions of the Imaginary Party can exercise their most insolent right to humanity's attention. Capitalism produces the *conditions* for its transcendence, not that transcendence itself. The latter depends, rather, on the activity of a few people who, having adjusted their eyes to discerning the true geography of the times beyond domination's glaring illusions, concentrate their forces at the right moment on the most vulnerable point in the whole. Among those we encounter, we appreciate nothing more than such cold resolution to ruining this world.

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Put the surrounding cretinism to the test with a bit of dialectics; you'll most likely hear some insolent praise for the incredible plasticity of capitalism, which was able to use the defeat of contestation itself as the basis for its latest modernization. When their approach to the subject immediately shows a kind of reconciliatory fury, a fury of

“Logical ruses,” you can clearly see what the real object of people's fascination is. Even contestation proves daily how incapable it has been of supporting itself on that modernization's uninterrupted avalanche of defeats. Over the course of the last twenty years, the mechanical renewal of inoperative methods and poorly clarified aims in successive social agitation campaigns has everywhere won out over “critical-practical activity.” It has in many cases even ended up able to make a simple avant-avant-garde variant of social work out of it. PEOPLE have even condescended to grant a name of its own to this special sector of general production, whose participants are so scantily remunerated: the “new social movements.” But this expression is more than just a reference to the spongy Monsieur Touraine; there's actually a particularly cruel irony in it, since it designates something so totally old, and the qualifier “movement” in the phrase is applied to a kind of agitation that has no real meaning or direction. It wasn't humanly possible to see the degree to which the monstrous effect of commodity subsumption has extinguished all the negativity in social critique until Toni Negri, with an enthusiasm that wasn't even fake, described the militant of the future as an “inflationist biopolitical entrepreneur.” Nowhere among domination's enemies has any evaluation been made of the reforms it has put in motion with its vast range of metamorphoses. The fact that our tyrannical enemy no longer draws its power from its ability to shut people up, but from its aptitude to make them talk – i.e., from the fact that it has moved its center of gravity from its mastery of the world itself to its seizure of the world's mode of disclosure – requires that a few tactical adjustments be made. Because, indeed, that's precisely how, little by little, it has deprived the opposition forces of their sense of direction. Let all those who thought they could change the world without even going so far as to interpret it – all those who have refused to see that they are operating in radically new conditions – deign to see things for a moment

from our perspective: they'll realize that in the final analysis they are merely serving what they think they're challenging. Look at the few hysterical groupuscles working to maintain the low-intensity social guerrilla war that buzzes stubbornly around the various issues, like the "illegal immigration" issue or the "anti-National Front" struggle. That shows well enough how the negation of the Spectacle, inverted into the spectacle of negation, can act as the basis for a collective *catharsis* procedure without which the present state of things could not survive itself. By triggering *within* and *against* itself its Scourge of denomination, domination has made even its pseudo-contestation into the spearhead of its *ideal* self-improvement. To such an extent that there's no real difference any more between these two camps that, at bottom, want the same world; it's just that one of them has the means to make it and the other just dreams of doing so. There's no place for moralizing in this matter, just lessons to be drawn, the first of which is perhaps that the Spectacle only recognizes as a truly existent opposition the opposition that *is willing to speak*; that is, to speak *its language*, and hence to subscribe to the alienation of the Common. In all discussions, the *listener* imposes the terms, not the talker. Thus the real hostility, the metaphysical hostility, which allows neither the language nor the moment it will express itself to be controlled, and which moreover prefers silence to any speech, has been pushed back into the shadows of what does not appear and hence does not exist. By means of this offensive in the form of a retreat, organized capitalism has derailed all the forces of effective critique, drowning it out in its resounding chatter and adapting to it with the language of flattery, not without first having deprived it of any real point at which it could apply itself. Everything that prolonged the classical workers' movement within it had to succumb to these new conditions, where now the true is no longer limited by the false, but rather by the insignificant. Quite quickly, it ceased to exist in fact as practical contestation beyond an unanimous parrotlike repetition on the one hand ("let's all chant together now!") and the mute autism

of direct action cut off from all substantial life on the other. Once the latter part had been liquidated – perhaps the past tense verb "exterminated" would be more appropriate in certain cases, like Italy for example, where the savagery of the repression had something really exemplary about it – the former abandoned itself to its natural inclination: repetition to mask its aphasia and aphasia to mask its repetition. By deteriorating into a pitiful practicalism of resentment, practice has just as consciously discredited itself as theory has by taking refuge in theoreticism and literature. After that nothing remained to oppose the restoration process that since the 70s has swept away everything that was consciously

hostile to commodity society. With time, the Spectacle has managed to circumscribe the possible by what is permitted to be said, keeping it in terms that it alone now has the authority to define. In spite of a formidable primitive accumulation of frustration, suffering, and anxiety among the population, over the course of all this time critique *has never really manifested itself*. It has remained *voiceless* in the face of the advancing disaster. It has even had to allow the enemy to impudently play on its own failures. This was how the Spectacle was able to turn the progressive

**MAMMALS SUPERSEDED
DINOSAURS
BECAUSE THEY WERE
FASTER, SMALLER,
AND MORE AGGRESSIVE.**

(Charles Darwin)



crumbling of Nation-States and the universal discredit of systems of political representation into the farce we see today, which every day adds a new episode to its endless infamy. It has gotten *everyone* to permit it to exercise its symbolic violence, and it has gotten *each person* to submit to enduring it as something simultaneously natural and chimerical. Sure, there are a few local eruptions from time to time that disturb this tired mimodrama, but domination is so sure of itself in its course that it can even allow itself to look with scorn at those tactless few who, by forcing it to repress them too visibly, require it to echo what everyone already knows: that the rule of law rests on a permanent state of exception, and that at present it rests on that alone. In this context of mute social war, where, like "in any transitional period, the riff-raff found in all societies rises to the surface, not only having no aims but without even the slightest

ideas, expressing only its disquiet and its impatience” (Dostoievski, *The possessed*), all “social struggles” are ridiculous.

From the chaos of 1986 to the “unemployed workers’ movement,” for those that experienced them from within, not a single one of them wasn’t emptied of all substance and removed from all contact with reality by a sub-police-like para-trotskyist activism that repeatedly “let itself be carried away by the trend it intended or pretended to oppose: bourgeois instrumentalism, which fetishizes means because its own form of practice cannot tolerate any reflection upon its ends.” (Adorno, *Critical models*). *And yet*, somewhere within the total wreck and ruin of institutions and their contestation, there is still something powerful, new, and intact: an *existential* hostility to domination.

Beyond the carnage, suicides, and miscellaneous irregularities, beyond all these *strange gestures* that provide us with so much encouraging news of commodity civilization’s decomposition, and consequently of the deaf advancement of the Imaginary Party, we place a high importance on the form of the manifestations of negativity that invent a new *active grammar* of contestation. Among those manifestations, there was in recent months one that was particularly *touching* for us: the “Turin Antagonists.” The events we’re referring to here lasted a whole week, in which Turin was plunged into a terror of a nature totally different from that of the planned, profitable, gray Terror typically running rife through the metropolises of separation.

It all started Friday March 27th, 1998, the day after the evening when Edoardo Massari, a 34 year old anarchist, hanged himself in his cell in Turin prison, where he had been duly incarcerated on the 5th of March along with his fiancée and another comrade. They were presumed to have been guilty – which after all is irrelevant, when you’re dealing with anarchists – of a number of attacks on the construction sites of the Italian TGV (high speed train), all acts of eco-terrorism which made the mistake of seriously irritating a certain number of business and mafia lobbies whose interests were deeply tied in with this grandiose project, a project which, as everyone so obviously knows, is of the utmost necessity. This “suicide” should have quietly gone to take its place in the long list of State murders; PEOPLE would prefer to leave the establishment of such a list to the scrupulous care of next century’s historians, but we already know that Italy will be able to proudly claim an honorable number of outstanding contributions to it. Unfortunately, said Massari belonged to the little community of Turin social centers, and their reaction wasn’t exactly as expected in domination’s simulation models. Thus, the next day, the citizen-consumers were presented with quite the motive for complaint: a *silent and hostile* procession of many hundreds

of anarchists-with-knives-clenched-in-their-teeth and other autonomists-with-iron-rods, who showed up to upset the colorful frolicking of a laughter-filled Saturday afternoon festival of consumerism, insisting all too seriously on striding through the downtown area carrying a banner saying “murderers,” and getting up on the roofs of some public buses to read out a communiqué seeming to insinuate that every Bloom within earshot was an accomplice to that murder, and even promising that “within one hour (from then), life in this city of death isn’t going to be the same anymore, and it’s their fault.” Besides the animosity-filled invective they addressed to the innocent, terrorized passers-by, they even gave a hiding to a cameraman from Rai TV, and to a photographer and columnist from *Repubblica* newspaper, taking even the *instruments of their labor* from them, which they methodically reduced to their primitive state of scattered electronic components. Not content with having thus reminded a finally pacified Italy of the darkest hours of its years of lead and urban guerrilla warfare, which everyone was doing their best to forget, in Brossio on Thursday April 2nd they *lynched* the journalist who had ratted Massari out, grabbing him while he was on his way to go listen to what was to be a heavily biased sermon by the bishop of Ivrea comparing Massari to the Penitent Thief from the gospel of Luke. On that day they really did go beyond the limits of the reasonable, *indifferently* attacking both right wing and extreme left journalists, and all the representatives of the media without distinction as to party, even taking to pieces one of their cars. But the high point was really the April 4 manifestation where seven thousand of these “antagonists,” without scruples and out of nowhere, went for another march. With the same, evil silence about them as at first, but now with an extreme tension, they went calmly and wordlessly smashing windows, cars, and cameras, smudging up the walls with inane stuff like “We’re gonna burn you, McDonald’s,” attacking the Palace of Justice with paving stones and spreading fear among the honest citizens. The sociologist Marco Revelli can claim all he wants that “the city should *communicate* with them, consider them as a *resource* and not as enemies” (*La Repubblica*, 30 March), but how can you talk to people who don’t say a word, and take recourse to violence and terrorism? People who as minister Piero Fassino commented quite justly, “detest this society but don’t even propose to change it”? The majority of the media and the Blooms basically reacted to these new manifestations of “disorderly youth” like this. Deputy Furio Colombo faithfully summarizes the atrocious amazement the good people fell into: “It’s my city, and I saw what happened here, and I just can’t explain it. There was this procession of strangers, young people we’d never seen before and no one had ever talked to, going around the city streets, and it was plain that they were dangerous... The march was totally silent, but it had these unexplainably threatening physical

signs about it;... words that passers by didn't always understand the meaning of, but it felt hostile. Anyone who saw them up close would have said they were 'young people,' but they certainly weren't 'our' youths. They came down here but they weren't from here. It felt like they'd come from far away. How far? You can't measure that kind of distance in kilometers. It was like an inner distance, something that you can only feel... My own city; it was impeccably clean, freshly painted, and then it was terrorized, with this march by these unknown invaders..."(*Repubblica*, April 2nd).

Men's moral values can doubtless be seen in the way they react to news about acts like this. Exploding with their slave's resentment, they certainly won't be able to make even an imperceptibly small sign of intelligence. For our part, this was one of those joys that come up from such a depth that you don't just hear it, you understand it from *within you*, as if it were something that had happened in your body. We, the others, the critical metaphysicians, intend to found on the basis of that psychopathology a method of analysis that, while radicalizing the meaning of certain manifestations and *by removing them from their temporal element*, strips nude the truth of our times. It is only insofar as they too undergo such a broadening of vision that people will be able to recognize that with what happened that week, a Veil of Maya was pierced in the world of the Spectacle, or

that with "antagonists" like this we are entering the time of *wordless revolts*, the time of illogical revolts, which must in turn be massacred. The enemy has let himself be *seen*, he has shown himself and has been recognized as such. Now this society *knows* that it is flanked by men who, although they are certainly doing *something*, are doing nothing to participate in it, and who, rather, are *collectively* questioning its right to exist. The Spectacle, at that moment, was brutally forced to face up to the defeat of its pacification campaign. It was torn from its façade of neutrality by the very people that it thought it had definitively entombed in its profusion of conditioning, and for whom it had even prepared a whole prison so full of privileges that people even dream of being confined in it forever: "youth." And it discovered, on its familiar map of cities arranged according to its plans where it had even been able to accommodate "self-managed social centers" and other "liberated zones" for "rebellious individualities," an interdependent chaos of ruins, spread over with innumerable enclaves where people aren't just content to live with it, but also *conspire* against it. It had thought that it would be enough to hide negativity in order to suffocate it, but all that did was free it from mimetic behavior control and make it take to the shadows where free forms of existence can blossom. But the most disturbing aspect of these new people of the abyss – since that's how they were depicted – was that the critique they were carrying out

was above all the *affirmation* of an *ethos* that is foreign to the Spectacle, that is, a heretical relationship to lived experience. It appeared that in this section of territory it thought it had gotten squared away, there were recesses where relations were not mediated by it; that in other words its monopoly on the production of meaning was not just being contested but had even been *locally and temporarily* removed. And it's clear that those who – and this is a rare event in these "autonomous zones" – succeed in *tying together* a critique of commodity society and an effective experimentation with free sociality are an immeasurable danger for the Spectacle, because they are the partial realization *here and now* of a *concrete and offensive utopia*. When a few individuals remove themselves from the corset of codes and reified behaviors prescribed by the tyranny of servitude, domination starts to talk of genius, madness, or criminal deviance, which all boil down to the same thing. But let that kind of phenomenon present itself in the form of a whole community, and domination is brutally without recourse and has to fight the battle according to the non-rules of absolute hostility, where the enemy is always non-human. And this procedure will in this case be more painful than otherwise, because it's their own children they'll have to exclude from human-



A barricade in Berlin during the January Revolt of 1919

"The soviet is *the place of silence*." (Brice Parain)

ity – because they wouldn't let themselves be *sold* on the market. And so, in Italy, where the conditions for it are the least propitious of anywhere, the Imaginary Party *manifested itself* as such. It was an event not without import, because in light of it, all the traditional forms of contestation appear somehow provincial and polite.

Those who are simply happy because such a state of war gives them faith once more in the possibility of new epic sagas of struggle are not going beyond a superficial comprehension of what happened there. Because these Turin “antagonists” gave rise to much more than damages, lynchings, and frightened people: they laid open the way for *crossing the line*, the way towards the exit from nihilism.

At the same time, they also forged the weapons that lead beyond it. We recognize the passage over the line in the fact that a protest like all the rest, like PEOPLE are so used to seeing, was suddenly changed by the introduction of new factors. And so the silence of the antagonists was no longer the traditional aphasia of the leftist protestors, nor that of Bloom, but something qualitatively new. The remarkable and mute tension that they gave rise to throughout the course of their marches must be essentially understood as the confrontation between two types of silence that are radically different from one another. On the one hand, there is the natural, negative, and to put it plainly, animal silence of the solitary crowd of Blooms who never really express anything of their own at all, anything that the Spectacle has not already said; the silence of the inorganic mass of consumers on their knees, who are not supposed to speak, but just respond when they're *spoken to*; the silence of the bleating flock of those who think they can peacefully go back to being simply the representatives of the most intelligent of animal species since there are no real *human beings* to denounce their degeneration. And on the other, there is strategic silence, the full, positive silence of the “antagonists,” deployed as a tactical device so as to manifest the existence of negativity, so they could erupt into visibility without allowing themselves to be frozen into any petrifying spectacular positivity. (Perhaps we should clarify here that for them there was a *vital need* to appear out in the open: the need to break the encirclement that domination had subjected them to, which was threatening them with

the same fate that Massari had, the same fate suffered by those who Nanni Balestrini calls *the invisibles*: the discreet physical elimination, in unanimous indifference, of those whose existence Publicity never recognized.) Perhaps we sound like we're saying that the “antagonists,” after some mature deliberation by an omniscient general staff, *chose* that silence. But nothing could be more false: they were cornered into it by the objective modalities of domination. And it is precisely because these modalities have generalized themselves throughout the whole of all industrialized societies that the way silence took on a new character in their hands and became an offensive tool/weapon deserves our attention. All reality's mode of disclosure and Publicity, all mankind's linguistic essence, have been radically alienated

into an autonomous sphere which holds a monopoly on the production of meaning, i.e., the Spectacle. And in such conditions, when anything is explained or shown it is by that simple fact immediately exposed to being metabolized by said Spectacle, as long as that serves its ends. The “antagonists” are the first – and it hardly matters whether they're consciously aware of this or not – to draw the *practical* consequences from this situation. By refusing to take any recourse to any of the codes, to any of the accepted signifiers or meanings, which are all managed and controlled by the occupier, and by *manifesting that refusal*, they established *in acts* that wherever the Spectacle reigns, silence is the *necessary* form in which true contestation – the Imaginary Party – must appear. They brought into existence what lucid minds, like Jünger in his *Crossing the line*,



had already observed: “the tyrants of today,” he wrote, “no longer fear speechifiers. Maybe they used to in the good old days of the absolutist State. Silence is much more terrible – the silence of millions of men, and also the silence of the dead, which the drums cannot drown out and which gets deeper every day until it sparks off the Judgment. As nihilism becomes more and more the norm, the symbols of emptiness spread much more terror than those of power do.” Silence on its own, however, can only become a war-machine by becoming *conscious* silence. All its effectiveness is suspended until it recognizes itself as a *critical-metaphysical sabotage device* directed against the triumph of positivity and the defeat of Being by its forgetting. “In order to be able to be quieted, Dasein (being-there) must have something to

say; it must have a veritable and rich openness to itself. Then the silence it had kept bursts out, and quiets the impersonal voice of the ‘people say,’” said the old swine (Heidegger) in his jargon.

The silence of infinite rage has a frightful power that has still not even begun to appear, and in the coming years we would be foolish not to hope to give a few good examples. For the case at hand, this power so shocked the Spectacle that it made that philosopher-for-YoungGirls, Umberto Galimberti, immediately begin to blather on about “this squatters’ silence,” and greatly bemoan the “collapse of communication” – as if communication had ever really existed in the framework of the modern world; and as if such silence was not disturbing to it precisely and only because it acknowledges the former’s nothingness – and to pompously predict the poverty of the era and the indigence of “politics” – as if politics, as a separate moment, had ever been anything but another kind of poverty. Sociologists and elected officials also came out to call, suicidally, for “dialogue” with these “new barbarians.” What these rotting corpses had gotten an inkling of, with the keen instinct of someone who knows he’d have everything to lose were alienation to come to an end, was that in their very silence, these “antagonists” hit upon something that in the right hands would be able to blow the whole worm-eaten social organization to bits: the unspeakable. Because by *manifesting their silence*, they brought out into Publicity not just some thing or other, but a pure potential speech, a statement liberated from the said, and more original than it is, i.e., the unspeakable itself: the fact that language is. By making the nothingness heard and seen, they managed to *render visibility to visibility as visibility*, or, in Heidegger’s terms, to “render speech to speech as speech.” They forced the dictatorship of presence, which claims: “that which is, you are not,” to admit that *that’s reality itself* as it is really lived. Thus they forced visibility to *come out at its very limits*; they ruined its illusion of neutrality. The Spectacle was forced to recognize an exteriority, even a kind of transcendence, perhaps; PEOPLE overheard it make the fatal confession, “the inexpressible certainly exists. It *shows* itself.” (Wittgenstein). It simultaneously became *visibly* what it was essentially: a *party* to the unfolding of the social war. By imposing silence upon it, by shutting up its inexhaustible babbling with their fists, the “antagonists” rendered it

questionable, and *that’s its downfall*. From the moment the alienation of the Common is projected as such into the very heart of the Common itself, its days are numbered. – The press can squawk and complain that a few of its henchmen got beat up and cry foul about freedom of expression being sacrosanct all it likes, but no one’s listening, since there’s no doubt in anyone’s mind anymore that that freedom long ago became merely the tyrant’s freedom, and that expression merely that of its baseness. –

But the parable of Turin also contains other good news, like the defeat of domination right where it had concentrated all its forces: in keeping *all* the important issues in suspended animation. And of course it has to have had a confused intuition about this possibility; otherwise it would not have donned the ingenuous and diabolical trappings of an ever more frenetic proliferation of cultural commodities and distractions it has over the last decades. In fact, it appears that the neutralization of social contradictions has no other effect but to push them little by little onto a higher plane where they become radicalized into metaphysical frenzies. But then there are no more important issues left: those who have found the answer to the question of life recognize themselves in this, since for them the question has disappeared. These “antagonists” are just the tip of the iceberg of immeasurable violence; to them belongs the terrible glory of having brought the unspeakable to the very heart of politics. Between the two parties that they provoked the immediate crystallization of *by their simple presence*, between the Imaginary Party and the Spectacle, *nothing* can be resolved with words, *nothing* can comprise a subject for any kind of discussion, and there is only a *total, existential hostility*. In every sense, the existence of the one is the absolute negation of the existence of the other. These are two camps between which there is not so much a difference of opinion as a difference of *substance*; what happened in Turin made that obvious fact *perceptible*. The one is the anomic heap of monads that “have no windows through which anything at all can enter or exit” (Leibniz); the nothingness accumulated of humanity, meaning, and metaphysics; the desert of nihilism and pure indifference where “the idea of death has lost all presence and all plastic force” (Benjamin, *The Narrator*). The other is the *community* in mourning, the community of mourning, for which the act of dying is “the most public

THE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION OF MAKING YOU TALK

“Perhaps mobile phones allow the rediscovery of speech, which had been lost in a more and more dehumanized society. [...] Free speech everywhere and at all times has become possible thanks to this technology which has become available precisely at the moment when society feels most acutely the need for expression that such technology can satisfy.” (Le Monde, 25th-26th, October 1998)

act of individual life, and a highly exemplary one” – only animals fail to accompany their own in death – which experiences the loss of one of its constituents as the loss of a *whole world* and where each takes “the death of others upon himself as the only death that concerns (him)... that puts (him) outside of himself and is the only separation that can open him up, in all his impossibility, to the Openness of a community” (Blanchot, *The unavowable community*). The one falls short of nihilism, and the other already stands beyond it. Between the two there is *the line*. And that line is the unspeakable, which imposes silence. *The greatest possible demands don't allow themselves to be formulated.*

The years pass, and we see the Spectacle burden itself with a growing quantity of strange and brutal displays whose meanings it proves incapable of aligning, and for which it cannot find a name suitable to satisfy its spirit of classification. This is a sure sign that this world is little by little in the process of crossing the line.

And it's not the only sign, either. Hence, the latest bewitchments of the commodity fail more and more to maintain themselves for more than a few weeks, and new ones constantly need to be found which are already surrounded by skepticism at their birth. No one can believe their own or anyone else's lies anymore, even if that is the best kept and at the same time the most shared secret of all. Ageless enjoyments shed their millenarian attraction, and what not long ago was the object of universal longing now inspires no more than weary scorn. To recover a speck of the dust of past pleasures, forces and effects must now be unleashed that no one had ever thought to devote to such mediocre ends before. Consumption's own inevitability pushes it to ever more extreme forms, in no way distinct from crime anymore besides in the name PEOPLE give it. And at the same time, a landscape of catastrophes is unrelentingly forming in which even participating at all in the final metamorphoses of nihilism has ended up losing its charm. The old feeling of security is crumbling everywhere. Blooms live in a state of terror that nothing can match, except perhaps the monstrous hodgepodge of metropolises where asphyxiation, pollution, and embittered promiscuity seem to be the only things that give them any feeling of safety. When we look at them separately, we see that Bloom's trembling has attained to such heights that it has put him in a general state of paralysis and incredulity that forever excludes him from any *contact* with the world. Even when there is nothing anymore in the zones still held in the grip of the empire of nihilism that is not driven by a secret desire for self-destruction, we see the army of those that have crossed the line and are applying nihilism to nihilism itself appear here and there, detachment after detachment. They still retain, from their prior state, the feeling that they are living as if they were already dead; but from this state of indifference concerning the raw fact

of being alive, they draw the formula for the greatest possible sovereignty, a freedom which is incapable of trembling in the face of *anything* anymore, because they know that their lives are no more than the meaning they *collectively* give to them. Domination fears nothing more than these purely metaphysical creatures, these maquis of the Imaginary Party: “today, as ever, those that do not fear death are infinitely superior to the greatest of temporal powers. Hence they must ceaselessly spread fear.” (Jünger, *Crossing the line*). In the glassy eyes of the Spectacle, this renaissance, this new influx of Being presents itself as a fall back into barbarism, and it is true that we are indeed dealing with a return of the elementary forces. It is also true that all this is operating in the context of a universal cybernetic alienation, the mode of expression proper to such a context is the most unintelligible brutality. But this violence is distinct from all other criminal manifestations, because it is in its essence a *moral violence*. And it is precisely to the extent that it is moral that it is also *mute and calm*. “Truth and justice demand calm, but only the violent attain them.” (Bataille, *Literature and evil*) – there was no shortage of old roadies of abjection surprised about how even a guy that was witness to all the political violence 1970s and worked for the good cause, for *Manifesto* newspaper, even, got beat up by the “antagonists”; and concluding from that in one sitting that it was just some banal “apolitical violence.” Clearly certain lives would be hardly predisposed towards getting an understanding of what a *hyperpolitical violence* might mean. That once again it is possible to designate with certainty who the real *scum* and their accomplices are shows clearly enough just how far beyond nihilism we have come. When Lynch law reappears among men who will not deign to listen to anyone but the bishop of Ivrea, then we know that the *gravity of history* is making its bloody return. The time is gone when a Sorel could observe that “the old ferocity has been replaced by trickery,” even if there are still “plenty of sociologists around who think serious progress (was) being made.” That remark was in regards to the deformation that the very concept of “violence” has undergone over the last decades, which presently designates in a generic manner anything that pulls Bloom out of his passivity, starting with history itself. As a general thesis, insofar as the arbitrariness of domination is more and more threatened by the arbitrariness of freedom, it will have to label as “violence” everything that opposes it in practice which it is preparing to crush, all the while proclaiming itself to be open to “dialogue” between three carloads' worth of riot cops. And it is precisely because there is no dialogue except among equals that the *complete* liquidation of the world of closed discourse, the spectacular infrastructure, and all the relays of alienated Publicity is the necessary prerequisite for even the possibility of true discussion being reestablished. Before that happens it's all just empty chatter. Also, contrary to what a certain Jacques Luzi

wrote in issue 11 of the magazine *Agone*, it's only when mankind will be free from the grip of things that they will really be able to communicate, and not just by "communicating" their intent to free themselves from that grip.

Here, though only partially, we have hit upon an enormous truth which we doubt will be recognized as reasonable before it becomes brutally real: *we cannot transcend nihilism without realizing it, nor realize it without transcending it*. Crossing the line means *the general destruction of things as such*, or in other words the annihilation of nothingness. In effect, at the moment when society's socialization attains completion, each existing being fades away into what he *represents* in the totality that he can then come to occupy a place in materially, with his whole being absorbed by what he's participating in. Hence there is nothing that must not be destroyed, no one that can be guaranteed pardon, inasmuch as they are part of a real order, a Common, that was designed only to separate us. In the Sabbatean tradition, the moment of the general destruction of *things* was given the name *Tiqqun*. In that instant, each thing is repaired and removed from the long chain of suffering it underwent in this world. "All the subsistence existence and toil that permitted me to get there were suddenly destroyed, they emptied out infinitely like a river into the ocean of that one infinitesimal moment." (Bataille, *Theory of religion*) But the "perfect silent ones" that carry universal ruin within them also know the paths that lead beyond it. Jakob Frank, the absolute heretic, handled this truth in his usual abrupt style: "Everywhere Adam went, a city was built; but everywhere I have set foot *everything* will be destroyed. I came to this world only to destroy and annihilate, but what I will build will last eternally." Another heretic said likewise, a century later: "no matter what you want to undertake, you have to begin by destroying everything." Whether *Tiqqun* will bring life or death depends for each person on how much of his illusions he has been able to lose: "it is to the extent that clear consciousness wins out that the objects effectively destroyed will not destroy mankind itself." (Bataille). It is certain that those who have not been able to throw off their reifications,

those who persist in putting their whole being into things, are doomed to the same annihilation they are. Whoever has never experienced one of those hours of joyous or melancholic negativity cannot tell how close to destruction the infinite is. What we're saying here is in no way reverie; events such as these can be found scattered throughout history, but since the world was still not unified in a substantial totality, they remained mere *local curiosities*. The laughable Ortega y Gasset tells, in his *The revolt of the masses*, how such a *catastrophe* came about in Tijar, a village near Almeria, when Charles III was crowned the king, on September 13th, 1759, as follows: "The proclamation was made at the town's Central Square. Soon afterwards, drink was ordered for the whole enormous crowd, which consumed 250 gallons of wine and 13 gallons of brandy, and the pernicious vapors warmed their spirits in so fine a manner that the crowd spilled over towards the Town Granary all yelling 'viva' repeatedly, went inside, and threw all the wheat that was in there and all the Treasury's 900 silver coins out the windows. Then they proceeded over to the City Hall, and made them throw all the tobacco and money out of the doors of the Tax Collector's office. They did the same in the shops, to spice up the festivities, scattering all the edible and liquid goods that were inside. The ecclesiastical State contributed in a lively manner as well; then, with great cries, the women were called upon to throw out everything they had in their houses, which they did with the most total selflessness because there was nothing left: bread, wheat, flour, barley, plates, kettles, mortars and chairs. These rejoicings went on until the village was completely destroyed." The imbecile then concludes – oh bitter irony – "Admirable Tijar, the future belongs to you!"

We must work to make *that* future come about, and aim for a *world-wide realization of Tijar*. We would be quite upset if one of these universal High Mass events that the Spectacle is so fond of, like the year 2000 for instance, did not one day turn disastrous. So many people gathered in the streets can only herald the storming of new Bastilles. Not a stone upon a stone must be left of this enemy world.



On the economy considered as black magic

a metaphysical critique

– Hornsocket! We will not have demolished it all completely until we've destroyed even the ruins! And I see no other way of doing it besides balancing it out with beautiful, well-ordered buildings.

ALFRED JARRY

I – The Commodity and Equivalence

1

The commodity is, *essentially*, the *absolutely equivalent* thing. This can be seen whenever two commodities (one of which is often money) are exchanged for one other. Marx denounced this equivalence as an abstraction, for good reason: it is an abstraction that has become *real*.

2

Quite naturally, Marx sought the concrete foundations of that abstraction. He thought he'd found such a foundation in *use value*, in value as utility. For Marx, use value has no mystery about it; it is the bare state of the thing, its very body – its physical reality. Moreover, and consequently, use value is not at all implied in the logic proper to exchange value, which is a logic of total equivalence: “as use values, commodities have – above all – different qualities.” Marx remarks, furthermore, that use value is not something specific to commodities (for instance, the air we breathe is *still* not for sale), and he implies, as if it were an obvious fact, that it does not even presuppose the commodity world.

But we will see not only that use value, which appears at first glance to be something trivial and self-sufficient, is in fact something quite problematic and full of metaphysical subtleties, but also that it itself is the foundation of an abstract logic of equivalence, inseparable from the logic of exchange value that Marx criticized.

3.

The perspective of the metaphysics of the *useful* was summarized as follows by Hegel: “since everything is useful to man, man himself is useful to man as well, and his fate is, equally, to make himself a member of the flock useful to the community and universally of service. Just as much as he attends to himself, he must lavish just as much of himself on others, and just as much as he lavishes himself upon others, he must attend to himself; one hand washes the other. Everywhere he finds himself, he is there on purpose; he uses others and he himself is used.

“One thing is useful to another, in another way; but all things have this reciprocity of utility in their very essence; indeed, they have doubly to do with the absolute: one is positive, where things exist *in themselves and for themselves*, and the other negative, where things are for others. The *relationship* with the absolute essence or religion is thus the supreme utility among all utilities, because it is the purely useful itself; it is this subsistence of all things, or their *being-in-themselves and for themselves*, and the fall of all things or their *being for another thing*.” (*Phenomenology of spirit*)

Remarks: 1) *The “discourse” of the Negriist cretins is reduced to this tawdriness. These people, more than a century after Marx’s*

very regrettable chapter in Grundrisse “Immaterial Production,” still thoroughly enjoy that late-in-coming Mandevillian excrement, to the point where they’re still spreading it all over the place with their dirty paintbrushes. There they are, these gourmets of muck, licking their lips and assholes in a peaceful enumeration of all the Xs and Ys that could have been “put to work,” from the soul to the emotions by way of the revolving door-becoming of their immaterial vinaigrette. Rather than figuring out that work has finally showed itself to be something inessential, something that in itself is without foundation, these stinky imbeciles sing the ambiguous glory of the supposed magnitude of the useful, while in fact, as it is conceived by utilitarianism (that is, as a relationship capable of configuring a world), the useful is nowhere to be found! And this supposed magnitude, anyway, should be ample proof of that. From one day to the next, the concept of usefulness more and more designates everything and anything, and that shows that in fact it designates nothing. The petty, cunning utilitarians invoke the usefulness of the useless but do not see the uselessness of the useful. What is everywhere – blueballs! – isn’t usefulness, but utilitarianism.



2) The absolute essence, seen through the opera-glasses of supreme usefulness, can then either (still) be called God (like it was for Voltaire for instance), or, among those for whom God has explicitly become a useless hypothesis, it can be “society,” where the supreme usefulness then gets called by more specific names, like: The Greatest Happiness for the Greatest Number of People (Bentham found this puke when reading Beccaria – “massima felicità divisa nel maggior numero” – and gargled it), The Wealth Of Nations, economic growth, etc., or more flatly need, as an abstraction. In any case, it always ends up subsuming within it the relationship of things to themselves and to each other, and comprises a pedestal of general equivalence, equivalence as the foundation upon which all that can come out between things is a negative relationship, a negative relationship which itself is subsumed into absolute essence as the supreme usefulness (the so-called wealth of refined needs, that branch office of supreme usefulness). Exit the negative! To the delight of all the world’s grocers, this charming concept – and all its avatars, from the early naïve theories of the social contract to the modern ones, including that of flat, militant, pro-communication democratism – by smothering the flames (even the hottest!) that burn under the frozen marsh of ignoble social positivity. But, much to the displeasure of these good sirs, those dead waters are haunted, by what ghouls we shall now see.

4

Use value is to need what Marx considers that exchange value is to labor: use value is the abstract need crystallized in a particular thing, which appears as a purely specific quality of that thing, because need is presented as something general, abstract. “The *intention* according to which all things are, in their immediate being, either as they are ‘per se’ or something good” is in so many words returned to the thing, and comprises the metaphysical foundation of exchange value and commodity abstraction.

Remarks: 1) This is how we’ll be making our critiques – over the length of this article, and more generally, over the length of these Exercises in Critical Metaphysics – of the double-edged sword of utilitarianism that we’ve passed from mouth to mouth for far too long, formed from all the mucus of commerce and mixed with economist bile cooked up on the driftwood of a certain Marxism that has by now quite visibly become counter-revolutionary; this infinite certainty of having exhausted our Being and Mind thanks to magical concepts of usefulness, need, and interest. – This mortuary scholasticism, still paying for its millions of Pierre Bourdieus, which is quite simply the flattest discourse that the commodity can sustain about itself, is contradicted each day by the simple existence of the commodity itself.

2) This is what a certain Jean Baudrillard almost understood, in his call to make a criticism of the political economy of signs, not without a certain tension of mind unusual for this good fellow, it’s true. But he foolishly believed that a simple reference to some Absolute would be enough to invalidate utilitarianism... Whereas, indeed, what makes the metaphysics of the useful despicable – because it is, effectively, a particular metaphysics – is not that it has a relation to the Absolute, but rather the modality of this relation, the fact that this relation is conceived of as the supreme usefulness, the fact, in sum, that this metaphysics is false. And mister Baudrillard assimilates it to Christianity, and deplores that still no one has buried this filthy transcendence along with all the old-fashioned metaphysics. This is what takes off Baudrillard’s mask and shows him to be a super-utilitarian, when he affirms an identity between Christianity and use value – without even the slightest laugh – merely because of the fact that both of them participate in some kind of transcendence – a transcendence that our gentle post-modernist schoolboy can obviously only think

of abstractly as some kind of transcendence or other, and in the modality of the supreme “useful.” And so, not only does this pig establish a general equivalence between all the moments of metaphysics, he even falls under the beguiling illusion of the utilitarians, who believed their thinking to be “guaranteed without any metaphysics.” Imbecile, if you’d read Péguy (Situations), you’d know just how portable metaphysics is! What world do you think you’re fidgeting in? Does all the telos inscribed in the heart of things disgust you so? Apparently everything that’s effectively inscribed in it presents the risk that it might just sweep you aside... And so, you and all the other post-modernist dogs howl yourselves to death screaming that all that is but illusion, that nothing exists; that you don’t give a fuck, and anyway that you’re getting your income from the University and the cruel politeness of your doglike colleagues – utile e onore, perhaps.

3) It’s this metaphysics of the useful that lays the foundation of utilitarianism in its two moments, the one of which is called theoretical, the other normative (Cf., notably, A. Caillé’s Critique of utilitarian reason). The former, which claims to explain all the acts of men, considered as isolable individuals because of the utility that anybody can find in any one of them separately, is obviously the only anthropological representation that could possibly grow from such a poor metaphysical hummus, wherein all relations are conceived of as relations of utility. Normative utilitarianism, which, supposing the other to be true, considers that all that is quite fine, and adds that the supreme utility is the supreme Good; which is nothing more than the morality, supposedly immanent, that is consecutive to said metaphysics. You can’t seriously attack utilitarianism if you don’t attack its foundation, the metaphysics of utility.

II – Exchange in General

5

The majority of false ideas about the ancient/old world are based on the eternalization of commodity categories, and belief in their naturalness. What modern man *believes* himself to be, he also believes all the men of the past to have been as well, with the slight difference that he thinks they were less perfectly so. The thread of our demonstration will take us on a tour through the field of ruins covering this fine evolutionist tranquility.

a) Gift

6

Primitive society still appears to certain people as being the society of *pure neediness*. But need is not the primary fact of humanity: it is not the condition of all human life, nor is it that which was present at the beginning of human history. *Far from being primitive, need is rather a product specific to modernity.*



Remark: Utilitarianism would like to grant that needs are historical, that needs change with social organization, etc. However, even the supreme utility is relative to a particular era, since the society it involves the reproduction of is not always the same. Functionalism is an elastic kind of utilitarianism – but this elastic snaps under the tension of history. What is historical is not only the mode of being of needs, nor even merely their essence: the simple existence of needs as needs is not an anthropological invariable, but an historical creation whose global spread is relatively recent, as is that particular mode of life which is called survival. We also know that it is precisely the appearance of the modern market that created scarcity, that “presupposition” of the so-called economy.

7

Primitive exchange takes on the form of gift.

Adam Smith’s *homo economicus* in its natural environment, engaged in financial speculation from the depths of the cave.

Remark: *There is nothing more false than the notion of barter. All Adam Smith's speculation start from Cook's error regarding the Polynesians, who climbed on board his ship and proposed to the Europeans an exchange, not of objects, but of gifts. The notion of barter – which is supposedly a utilitarian exchange of goods considered as equivalent and in which all would be lacking for it to become commodity exchange would be currency... – was born in the 18th and 19th centuries, from utilitarianism as we know it. Marcel Mauss gathered together a considerable number of facts dealing with various primitive societies under the head of the concept of the "gift" (cf. His essay, The gift), and expressed a few of its universal traits. It now seems that we would hardly be overstepping ourselves to generalize his discovery to all primitive societies. In passing it should be mentioned that all the modern robinsonades start from the same idiotic postulate: to wit, that something called homo economicus lived in caves and on islands – a farce all the more amusing considering that no such species has ever existed, even in the London-style "City," where nonetheless certain cave-dwelling sorcerers called "stock traders" abound.*

8
In the way it is represented to us, gift-giving appears above all as an isolated act, where one person gives up a good to another. But isolating an act from the totality of social life like that seems, rather, to be mere abstraction.

9
Gift, as the simple act of giving, immediately poses beside it two other acts, two other moments: *receiving* it and *returning* it.

10
But, in fact, of the three former moments, *giving*, *receiving*, and *returning* the gift, only the lattermost appears to be the one that makes it into a cycle, because the gift given in return will itself be received and returned. In the primitive world, *debt* is permanent. This cyclical aspect of gift reveals it to be the unity of these three moments.

Remark: *It was in this that Levi-Strauss objected to Mauss, in his preface to the anthology Sociology and anthropology; to wit, that "it is exchange which constitutes the primitive phenomenon, and not the distinct operations that social life is broken down into," or, as Mauss himself had already put it in his Essay on magic, "The unity of the whole is even more real than each of its parts."*

11
But what is exchanged are not goods, words, polite remarks, services, etc. What is exchanged in the primitive world is the *gift* itself. That is, exchange is the exchange of exchange. And so, the gift, as the unity of these three moments, is reflected back into the moments that make it up and into its simple means of reproduction. Primitive man gives so that Gift can be, and because Gift is. The thing itself that circulates is but the symbolic reflection of Gift itself, as the *figure* of *Publicity* (Publicity in the sense of a *mode of public expression*), the being-for-itself of the World – this is what Mauss calls a *total social fact*.

Remarks: 1) *The gift as a unity of the three moments is but Gift revealing itself as a figure.*

2) *Then we see that gift is not motivated by need, but by Gift. This explains the fact perfectly that "useless" objects, with no "use value," are primarily what get exchanged, to the great surprise of the utilitarian observer. One might cite the case of the *vaygu'a* of the Trobriand Islands, described by Malinowski (in The argonauts of the western pacific), two particular types of which, the *soulava* and the *mwali*, establish in their exchange what is called *Kula*, and in sum the whole social organization of a very extensive district. But a *soulava* can only be exchanged for a *mwali*, and vice-versa. These *vaygu'a*, which are respectively large necklaces and armbands, are often unusable as finery because of their dimensions or because of their heavy symbolic content. In the same way it thus becomes clear that – contrary to an idea widespread in the West and defended by Aristotle and Marx – costumes are exchanged for costumes. In sum, once one has grasped the total aspect of Gift there's nothing mysterious anymore about the fact that labor itself is subordinate to Gift; not only does the producer give the whole material product of his labor to someone else (for instance to his step-parents, whereas he himself will receive everything his sons-in-law produce) – but, more symbolically, that labor itself is the object of great pride on the part of the producer and above all a significant *Publicity* (we cite, for instance, the aesthetic concern – and the resulting efforts – a Trobriand gardener has for his garden, and the ritual he carries out, which consists in piling up the yams he's grown in conical piles, and keeping anyone from seeing them). And indeed one might say that work is a form of exchange, that is a manifestation of Gift. And Gift, as a figure of *Publicity*, also appears as a unit of labor and exchange. Add to that the fact that material scarcity is generally absent from primitive life, and the commonplace idea that says that man has*

always worked for his subsistence and that he did so more in the primitive world than in any other, because of some hypothetical insufficiency that the “means of production” supposedly had to meet a set of “needs” that is just as hypothetical, is knocked flat. In fact, the primitive world aspired to little more than to Publicity, and it had quite ample means to attain it. It only lacked the public consciousness of Publicity as Publicity: the Publicity of Publicity.

3) A remark in passing on Voyer, the buffoon-dialectician. We’ve taken his concept of Publicity; he didn’t deserve to keep it, since he wasn’t able to do anything else with it after his Introduction to the science of publicity, which was nevertheless a pretty good book. But one could already see his intolerable defect even there: Voyer has an instinctive hatred for SILENCE. And so he wanted to believe that Publicity was definitively and absolutely based on itself which is obviously false (in the same way, the concepts individual and human race have an inexcusable defect: they hide, under a self-satisfied immanence, the incompleteness of man; there is still a remainder, and that remainder is Bloom). We can then see that this concept, which is supposed to float somewhere up among the high summits of the Spirit, was able to give birth to that anorexic and positive little mouse, “communication,” or to a utopia as cretinous and repulsive as gab and gossip. All the contortions and grimaces Voyer can make won’t hide the fact that he too “forgot” to consider the negative as it lays in the place where PEOPLE buried it... How could such a pseudo-trobriander of contestation ever comprehend that the conflict between Publicity and Spectacle has been transcended, and in the final analysis is actively mediated by Silence (certainly the Spectacle is an alienated Publicity, and thus is Publicity denying itself, but Silence – that is, the Invisible – is the negation of that negation); that the negation of the Spectacle is not only the negation of dictatorship in visibility, but also the negation of the dictatorship of visibility; that the silent destroyers of Turin have espoused the formidable weapon form of that negation, and that it is precisely because of that that they are destroyers! And so, out of his passion for visibility, Voyer, that rusty weathercock, has made contestation invisible; and he can go ahead and spin around, leap about, and howl for us to watch him carry on with his deplorable clowning – epistolary or otherwise – all he wants, but we’ll just leave him there, in indifference, and to the scorpions.

b) The inversion of generic relations

12

Posed as separate, the individual and the race¹ remain abstract. It is only in their *relationship* – insofar as the race takes form in individuals, and the individual can only define him or herself as an individual, that is, as a social being, within relationships, which draw their substance from the race – in their being for one another, that they attain concreteness. The unity in which these moments, the race and the individual, are as inseparable, is at the same time different from them; it is thus a third term alongside them, which is found precisely to be none other than Publicity itself, that which forms the absolute basis for *relations* or exchange as pure exchange.

13

The *Generic relationship* is the same thing as Publicity, but in the generic relationship the two terms going from the one to the other are better represented as the one resting outside of the other, and the generic relationship as taking place between them. Wherever the individual and the race are present, this third term must also be present; because they cannot subsist independently – contrary to what is abstractly posited by economism and its “methodological individualism” – but only exist in Publicity, that third term. It is in the unity of Publicity that the generic relationship can become something concrete.

Remark: *At the same time it is quite clear that the generic relationship takes place via relations, or exchange.*

14

Thus Gift, as the figure of Publicity, is a specific figure of the unity of the human race and the individual – and corresponds to a specific modality of the generic relationship.

15

In this modality, individuals are, as *personages*, absolutely differentiated from one another *a priori*, and realize their difference through exchange, which is gift. And this gift itself is singular, as an act that takes place between specific personages. So much so that the object given, as a symbol of Gift, appears immediately to the primitive consciousness as the singular symbol for all the singular gifts that he has participated in and will participate in giving. Furthermore, things, in

1 Meaning “human race” – TRANS.

the primitive world, are themselves reputed to be absolutely unique, differentiated, singular, and personal (that is, *endowed with personalities of their own*).

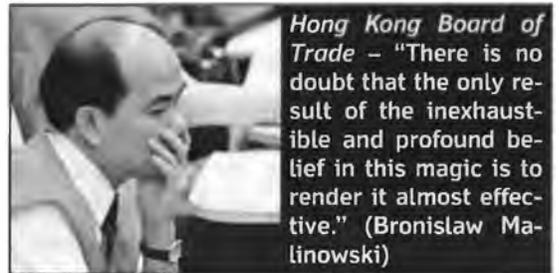
Remark: Thus Malinowski remarked, in *The argonauts of the western pacific*, that “each quality Kula object has its own name, and in the form of a story or legend it has its place in the indigenous peoples’ traditions.” And Mauss says, concerning certain Amerindian objects: “each of these precious things, each of these signs for all this wealth, has – like it does among the Trobrianders – its own individuality, its own name, qualities, and power. The big abalone shells, the shields they cover in them, the belts and blankets adorned with them, the decorated blankets themselves, covered with faces, eyes, animal and human figures, woven into and embroidered upon them. The houses, their girders, the walls themselves are beings. Everything speaks; the roof, the fire, the sculptures, the paintings – because the magical house is built not only by the chief or his people, and by the people from the brother tribe across the way, but by the gods and the ancestors; the house itself receives and vomits out the spirits and the initiated youths.

“Each of these precious things furthermore has a productive virtue to it. It is not just a sign and a pledge, it is also a sign and a pledge of wealth, a magical and religious principle of rank and abundance.” (Essay on the gift) We may furthermore remark that things themselves are the performers of the gift, or rather of Gift. They themselves are also personages, and participate in and with the race as its Community. Nonetheless, though two things, like two human beings, are incomparable in the primitive world, a thing and a human being, as we will see now, can be united by a bond of identity.

16

The immediate symbolic unity of a primitive object and the personage that is *temporarily* the performer of this thing as a relation, as a gift, is *possession*.

Remark: In the primitive world, it happens that the thing itself is identified with its possessor, to the point where it has the same name and the acts of the one can be considered as emanating from the other. We see then how absurd it is to still believe in any primitive communism. Furthermore it must be noted that possession does not designate a bond with the thing as utility. I can give you my *vaygu’a* if you desire it, but it will remain mine and if you exhibit it in the village, it will be exhibited as mine and will participate in and with my glory. Furthermore, we’ve already seen that the things in question could have no other use besides as something to be given. Hegel already said it in *Principles of the philosophy of right*: “the will of the property owner that a thing be his own is the primary substantial basis, the ulterior development of which – use – is but its phenomenon, its specific modality, and must come only after the establishment of that universal foundation.” And this ulterior development, in the primitive world, quite quickly takes on an aspect of contingency.



17

In the gift cycle, the human personages involved affirm their common humanity, their common belonging to the human race. The personage-things exchanged themselves also affirm their belonging to a common race, their being of a kind. At the same time, the cosmic unity that brings together all the personages, things, and men, is reproduced; the living reproduce the living.

Remark: We can here cite the example of a Kula incantation, cited by both Mauss and Malinowski, which expresses this common belonging to a race / being of a kind, affirmed on the basis of an irreducible a priori singularity of the partners. The incantation says, notably:

Everything diminishes, everything stops!
Your rage diminishes, it dies out, oh man of Dobu!
Your war paint is fading, it’s going away, oh man of Dobu!

Then:

Your rage, oh man of Dobu, shall subside like the rage of a dog when he has just caught the scent of a newcomer.

Or:

Your rage is going out like the tide; the dog is at play,
Your anger is going out like the tide, the dog is playing around, etc.

Aside from the obvious – that this means appeasement and communion surging forth, whereas supposedly rage, radical singularity in fact, reigns a priori, there is a second explanation given for this evocation of the dog, an explanation of indigenous origin: “Dogs play nose to nose. When you speak that word, dog, as has been forbidden for a long time, the precious things come out too (to play). We gave bracelets; necklaces will come. The ones and the others will find each other (like dogs that come around sniffing).” Mauss comments on this as follows: “The expression, the parable here is beautiful. The whole plexus of collective feelings comes out at once: the possible hatred of associates, the aloneness of the vaygu’a coming to an end through enchantment; precious men and things gathering like dogs playing and rushing up at the sound of voice.

Another symbolic expression is that of the marriage of the mwali, the bracelets, the feminine symbols, and the soulava, the necklaces, the masculine symbols, which tend towards one another like the male to the female.

These various metaphors signify exactly the same thing as the mythical jurisprudence of the Maori expresses in different terms. Sociologically speaking, it is once again the blend of things, values, contracts, and men that is being expressed.”(ibid.)

18

All the partnered personages, people and things, emerge from the gift cycle with their singularity confirmed, shimmering with having bathed in the fountains of the substantial: in being-of-a-kind.

Remark: Here, primitive possession is contrary to modern private property in that it is no case so alienable as to be “reformattable.” Things retain the memory of all the gifts that they had ever participated in. Thus, a primitive man will be able to recount the historical or mythical exchanges that a given thing has participated in. This is the basis for the renown of the thing, and its value. In the same way, the renown of men is built, perpetuates itself, and is ceaselessly put back into play in Gift. This is the primitive manna. Its law is that of agon, the conflict of peers as social bond.

Moreover, Gift organizes singular and permanent bonds as well. For example, Kula is practiced between permanent partners, and there is a privileged bond among them.

19

But in the primitive world, each community, as an Interiority, affirms itself as the whole race itself. And for us, and for universalist consciousness in general – what we’re dealing with here is more like a fragmentation of the race as a human totality. This fragmentation of the human race into *species* is the condition for the subsistence not only of each fragment as a fragment, but also and above all of Gift, which as a figure of Publicity also reveals itself to be the greater unity of the fragments.

Remarks: 1) In order to obviate any messily biologizing interpretations of this thesis, we clarify that we’re only using the term species here for lack of any other, to convey the idea of a fragmentation of the human race into subunits, irreducible Interiorities, even though they are rooted in their unity within the race as a whole. Thus the above theses should be re-read in light of the idea that where the generic relationship comes into it, this generic fragmentation of the human race steps in as well.

2) In the primitive world, relations are primarily face-to-face, and cannot remain as such over too great a distance. Also, each primitive society establishes what is inside and what is outside of itself, and only those that are inside can be recognized as participants in the human community, in the human race. Gift has to do with the inside, and only the inside (an interiority that can, moreover, bring in a rather large number of tribes). Exchange with the outside, with the foreign, when it takes place, occurs according to what Marshall Sahlins calls negative reciprocity – a form similar to commerce, or to pillage. Gift defines the internal, by positing limits that enclose the race and the personages. At the same time, the Gift also defines each community or society as internal, and also defines the fragmentation of the race as a whole, as much as it does the affirmation of each fragment as being the race.

We can thus understand the power of destruction that the great universalist religions were able to wield over primitive communities (even though, regardless, primitive societies had a certain capacity to incorporate into their mythical unities beliefs that came from outside, as the instructive example of the Cargo cults in Melanesia shows).

20

In Gift, the generic relationship presents itself above all as the process of realization of the individual personage by means of the race, and its fragmentation into species. The race appears in the species, as if it were appearing on its own final, absolute frontier, and thus realizes itself in the personage himself, and becomes the united community of singular personages. The personage, like the community, has a concrete existence, and Publicity is *effectively* present and unitary inside each community (but then Publicity breaks down into different interiorities, and the appearance of one interiority for another

is that of an exteriority, although that other is also an interiority), although it is still not understood as Publicity.

21

The modern world presents, quite visibly in the era of the *Spectacle*, a generic relationship that is a *reversal* of the Gift relationship.

22

Bloom, that being without particularities, is equivalent *a priori* to any other Bloom or rather to the Blooms as a *mass*, and thus, as a Bloom, is *absolutely* equivalent. All the particularities that he frenetically exhibits are in fact for him something outside himself, and their banality reveals itself in the end as a *ruse of equivalence*.

Remark: *To the insolent question, "Who hides behind an Audemars Piguet watch?" that was recently spit out of the Advertisers' bag of shit-streaked tricks, the answer is obviously: nobody.*

23

Bloom's permanent agitation, his desperate effort to build an *appearance* of personality, a *personality as appearance*, reveals the appearance as an act both *of* Publicity and *for* Publicity. And in fact, Bloom evokes these small primitive tribes whose lives revolve around affirmations of prestige. It calls to mind the pride that a Trobriander takes in his piles of yams. Nothing resembles a Trobriander's display more than a storefront window or a *cool kid's* clothes.

24

However, it cannot be said that primitive man is *superficial*. His truth – and this proves Hegel right – is *immediacy*, or rather the unity of the totality and the appearance of the totality, that is, *Publicity*; but then only as an immediate unity. It's Publicity that still doesn't know itself to be what it is, which has not attained to the Publicity of Publicity, Publicity purely *in and of itself*, which is still not *for itself*.

25

Inversely, Bloom's world is the world where Publicity at last appears. And the primitive world is the beginning that this world deserves. Our era is the era when Publicity has finally appeared, as the truth of the primitive world. Advanced capitalist society is thus *the first primitive society*.



26

But if Publicity is visible today, it is visible only in its absence. Because Publicity appears at the hands of each Bloom. But no Bloom experiences the unity of the world and its appearance; that is, Publicity. On the contrary; confronted with his own misery, he sees in the apparent happiness of the Other only a contradiction, something terrifying, which impels him to build an appearance for himself: *The Other has stolen his life from him*; he's never lived anything, and this dispossession appears to Bloom as a horrifying *curse* that he must at all costs hide since he can't completely forget it. But the Other, the impersonal "they," is also he himself. The world we "live" in is thus the world where the appearance of Publicity comes up against Publicity; but this division is itself *split*. Publicity's exteriority to its own appearance is also Publicity's exteriority to itself, a split in the heart of Publicity, insofar as the latter is precisely the unity of *what is* and *what appears*. This split in Publicity, which then only unites its two moments as separate, is, precisely, the *Spectacle*.

Goya, *The sleep of reason produces monsters.*

"The spirit of nature is a hidden one, it does not manifest itself in the form of a spirit: it is only a spirit for minds that know it, and it is spirit in itself, but not for itself."

Remark: *Alienation creates the conditions for its own transcendence. It is precisely because Publicity is absent that it can finally appear, by appearing as something necessary. And it is, in the end, the alienation of Publicity into Spectacle that shows us Publicity as Publicity.*

27

To this split in Publicity which is the Spectacle there also corresponds a becoming-abstract of the individual and the human race. In this movement, the individual becomes Bloom, the individual without individuality, the abstract individual who seems to be no more than an accident of the human race or rather a means for or it to remain purely of a kind; that is, as the human race abstractly, as masses. Simultaneously, the race itself, as the pure, abstract, mass human race, appears to lose all its organic nature and become a simple ensemble of atom-individuals.

Remark: *Bloom often attempts, with the use of apparently particular commodities, and with roles (in the sense of the term used by the Situationists) – roles that not only generally organize themselves around commodities, but are themselves commodities ontologically speaking, as the following section of this article makes clear – to capture a simulacrum of individuality. He sometimes attempts to take on a reassuring pseudo-belonging to some puppetlike community or other, one of those that manage a poor substantiality (we note that this pseudo-belonging has for Bloom the advantage – which becomes even a necessity – of reducing the tyrannical power of the Other, that thief of life, that demiurge, by taking it down to proximity; thus it can be tamed, gotten used to... – and this spiteful relationship between enemies, between strangers, is in general the basis for that abject state still called “friendship”). This is what the disgusting ad-men of the commodity and certain of their sociologist colleagues dare to call a “tribe.” But if this abstract form of a species is a tribe, it is clearly but the tribe of roles and of the commodities that organize it, rather than that of the Blooms themselves, who are merely the mediators of the all-important communication that things engage in so as to ever further appropriate the Common, and ever further alienate Publicity.*

28

In the Spectacle, that figure of Publicity, equivalence triumphs. One atom is equivalent to another atom; atoms are *absolutely* equivalent, and the human race is revealed as simply the universal and absolute reign of equivalence, as the absolutism of equivalence.

Remarks: 1) *On the other hand, the absolute equivalence of Bloom as equivalence to Bloom's abstract Self is also for him the illusion of his identity with himself, of pure subjectivity. That's what makes Bloom tend to become so massively relativist.*

2) *This atomism and generalized split in Publicity might be considered a kind of closing down, a shrinking of interiorities as discussed in theses 19 and 20, a closure around the lone individual, who consequently cannot exist any longer as an individual, as an atom. Note that this signifies a radical foreignness among all men, and the extension of this foreignness; that is, the alienation of Publicity. Because the foreigner, as simply a stranger, is only negatively characterized relative to interiorities; for each given interiority, each “inside,” everything that is foreign to it is handled as equivalent. Here we find Bloom's absolute equivalence once more. And then we see how the practice of commerce has from the beginning gone hand in hand with the alienation of Publicity.*

29

The whole aim of *relations* is thus to make singularity appear, to create singularity as appearance. But this appearance of the totality as a fabric of singularities is in external opposition to the totality, which in reality is alienated into an absolute equivalence.

30

The generic relationship is thus the movement from which the *a priori* absolute equivalence emerges from the relationship as confirmed, ever more powerful, and ever more tyrannical, as an appearance of singularity, or rather of simple particularity. In this sense an *inversion of the generic relationship* takes place. Nothing is more antinomic to a Trobriander *display* than a storefront window or a *cool kid's* clothes.

III – Critical Metaphysics

**And the social puzzle
Has revealed its final combination**

André Breton

31

Two commodities are *a priori* and veritably equivalent. It is only superficially and secondly that they present themselves as *singular*. A commodity must always present itself as singular; that's what gives it all its *manna*. It is only thus that it is desired, that is, that the idea of exchange as equivalence, which is contained within it, becomes public, and can then participate in the magical act of consumption. And this is an act that confirms its absolute equivalence in exchange, before the absolute equivalence of use affirms itself tyrannically as a speedy impoverishment among all the Blooms that have bought it. And the singularity that had appeared also shows itself as a mere commodity singularity; that is, as perfectly undifferentiated. The *manna* has gone out from it.

32

This singularity is first of all undifferentiated because each species of commodity is produced and consumed on a mass scale, and because that mass is comprised of identical objects. It is then also undifferentiated because the pseudo-singularities themselves, which appear to differentiate the various species, reveal themselves to be merely abstract. What was really desired – and was lost at the very moment it was believed to have been obtained – is commodity *manna*, canned substance for individuals without substance, *pure* singularity, general singularity, something totally abstract.

33

But this substance is more like a kind of *active nothingness*, so much so that the commodity is in fact like pure form, an empty shell, simply a dead fragment of a broken and emptied vase. And this *formal substance* is *essentially* defined by its manner of appearing as a pure, immediate presence, and it is only to realize its essence as a pure, immediate, and abstract presence that it must be made to look like a singularity. Its apparent singularity is what allows the commodity to realize its concept, by appearing as something immediate and free of any mystery, whereas in reality it is profoundly magical. The fact that the commodity must be magical in order to *effectively* exist as a commodity, while for the very same reason hiding its magical nature – because it must also be pure immediacy and pure evidence – is what characterizes it as the union of the profane and the sacred, not as transcended but as separate. The commodity is not the transcendence of the profane and the sacred, something borne of them. It is, rather, the simple *sodomite* union of these two moments, which does not transcend them but merely *muddles* them together, as is customary in the world of *Qlippoth*.

34

The reason that the commodity's form and substance are presented, not as inseparable moments transcended in a higher unity, but simply as subsumed into abstraction by a hypostasis of their form, is that the commodity is in fact *objectivized being-for-itself* presented as something external to man.

Remark: *And so, value is not "crystallized labor," as Marx believed; rather it is crystallized being-for-itself.*

35

But at the same time as this external being-for-itself, this objectivized Publicity, is what is most desirable in the era of the Spectacle, where the split in Publicity also means the absence of being-for-itself – the absence of Publicity – at the same time, this *being-for-itself* wrapped in cellophane, this *manna*, is what is most evanescent.

36

Because this *being-for-itself*, in consumption, remains external to the consumer. And this exteriority denies him as *being-for-himself*, as reflexivity. And that's why the *manna* escapes, and why the consumer is insatiable.

37

But then, the commodity, rather than as a simple externally objectivized *being-for-itself*, reveals itself to be the

object principle of the *absolutely-exterior-being* of this *being-for-itself*, and thus also of the exteriority to itself of the being-for-itself, and appears as precisely the very mediation that separates Bloom from being-for-himself, and separates the totality from its appearance – and the movement of the commodity is the movement of the splitting of Publicity.

Remark: *In other words, the commodity is the active mediation of being-for-oneself-as-much-as-for-any-other (in the sense that in the Spectacle the Other is always the impersonal PEOPLE); that is, poor substantiality. But this poor substantiality is always “internalized” as being-for-oneself-as-another, or: it is the mediation of reification.*



38

The Spectacle is the commodity that shows itself in the end to be a *figure of Publicity*.

39

The inversion of the generic relationship of human beings is also the diffusion of generic relationship of the commodity.

40

This generic relationship is an essential property of the commodity as a *pure phenomenon*. In effect, 1) it is the process of its appearance; 2) insofar as it is inverted, it presupposes by its absolute *a priori* equivalence, the total *platitude* of commodities, their blueprint-being, their declared absence from Interiority. Now, this pure phenomenality affirmed by the commodity, insofar as it is itself a phenomenon, is immediately supersumed. And this pure phenomenality also reveals itself as a *mode of disclosure*.

Remarks: 1) By “supersume” we mean, by a classic translation, the *hegelian aufheben* (which simultaneously means to suppress, preserve, and transcend).

2) The commodity presents itself as *platitude*, and the confession of that *platitude*, as the declaration of the non-existence of any mystery. But this manner of appearing is itself mysterious. That was already explained in thesis 33.

41

As such, and as the form of pure commodity phenomenality, the inverse generic relationship is a *metaphysical* property of the commodity: what is super-perceptible is the *phenomenon as phenomenon*.

Remarks: 1) *in effect, classically, the super-perceptible is something beyond the perceptible, as an Interiority inaccessible to comprehension. In such an exasperating situation, where the Interiority is like something empty (because the result is assuredly the same*

as one would get upon putting a blind man among the treasures of the super-perceptible world – though it has treasure in it, it hardly matters whether that treasure is the content proper to this world, or whether consciousness itself comprises that content – or as we would get by putting a man with good eyesight into the most total darkness, or, if we wish, into pure light, if that's what the super-perceptible world is; he who has no eyes cannot see either in pure light or pure darkness, like the blind man would see none of the treasures spread out before him), there is nothing left to consciousness but to cling to the phenomenon – that is, to consider true what it knows to be false – or to fill this emptiness with chimeras, which are always at least better than nothing...

But the Interiority, or the super-perceptible beyond, has been born; it arises from the phenomenon, and the phenomenon is its mediation. Better yet, the phenomenon is its essence, and in fact is its filling-out. The super-perceptible is the perceptible and the perceived presented as they are in reality; but the reality of the perceptible and the perceived is that they are phenomena. That's why the super-perceptible is the phenomenon as a phenomenon. If one were to understand by this that the super-perceptible is consequently the perceptible world, or the world as it is for immediate perceptual certitude and for perception, one would understand it upside-down; because the phenomenon is not the world of perceptible knowledge and perception as being-there, but rather it is the perceptible knowledge and perception presented as transcended and presented in their truth as interiorities. One might have thought that the super-perceptible was not the phenomenon, but that's just because when using the word phenomenon what was understood was not really the phenomenon itself, but rather the perceptible world itself, as real effective reality (which, it should be mentioned in passing, does not exist in-and-for-itself, nor absolutely, and is thus not a truly existing thing.)

The commodity, contrary to the most ancient metaphysics, positively affirms the vacuity of the Interiority, and even its own non-existence. It decrees that everything stops at the phenomenon; such an absolutism of pure phenomena also denies the phenomenality of the phenomenon. But as soon as this negation of the phenomenality of the phenomenon reveals itself to be a phenomenon, the phenomenon rediscovers itself as a phenomenon once more – which denounces this negation as a lie – and this phenomenality, as a phenomenon, is already supersumed into the super-perceptible, and this lying negation appears also as the metaphysical property of the commodity. In sum, insofar as the commodity presents itself as a pure phenomenon, its Interiority, its super-perceptible reality, becomes like something external to it. And this separation of the sacred and the profane, though muddled together – this split in the middle of the unity of the World as a totality, as Metaphysical – is itself still metaphysical, is itself a figure of metaphysics – in the same way as the split in Publicity was a figure of Publicity.

2) Those who have been able to read this far will here see an explanation of the third remark on thesis 11. Science is not the always-smooth unraveling of a white thread, or otherwise of an Ariadne's thread, full of knots. On the contrary, Science revisits itself and backtracks and crosses over its own path ceaselessly in the labyrinth of figures where meaning is in its element. And so, unswervingly, the blank returns, very soon gratuitously, to conclude, certain now, that nothing is beyond it, and authenticate the silence –

The phenomenon as phenomenon is the super-perceptible; the fact of its appearing itself does not appear. Critical Metaphysics can reveal that appearing is, and that that constitutes a mystery. It can also show how this mystery manifests itself, in the era of the Spectacle: It manifests itself as something not manifesting itself as a mystery. But Critical Metaphysics cannot, and does not wish to destroy this mystery. We will leave that Sisyphean dedication to such absurd tasks to the Spectacle.

3) More specifically: the existence of this mystery can be rendered public, contrary to the mystery itself, which is common but could obviously not itself be public. Here the difference between Publicity and the Common intervenes (a difference which Voyer lewdly confuses, for the sake of Publicis and Euro-RSCG).

The Common is that which is given to us in sharing, and Publicity is the conscious practice of that sharing, which knows what it owes to the Common: that it is its necessary alienation. Thus it also consciously shares in the radical impossibility of sharing. The Common is that which makes the public expression that comprises Publicity possible, but this possibility itself does not let itself be expressed. The Common peeks out from the surface even of Publicity, but by unveiling itself it veils itself, and veils its unveiling. What is the most consubstantial with us and the closest to us, is also the furthest away from us, what we have the least a grasp of. And that is the absolute paradox. We have in common to be in the world, to speak, to be mortal, but



“The Common can however erupt into Publicity, in the form of individual or collective experiences, which are always experiences of the inexpressible. The presence of the Common is none other than the presence of the transcendent.”

we cannot say what being-in-the-world, language, or death really are at bottom. The Common can however erupt into Publicity, in the form of individual or collective experiences, which are always experiences of the inexpressible. The presence of the Common is none other than the presence of the transcendent.

42

But this mode of disclosure which discloses itself as a *figure* also reveals the Spectacle as a *figure of Being*, or as a figure of metaphysics, or, rather, as the *commodity revealing itself to be a figure of Being and a figure of metaphysics*.

Remarks: 1) *It is the ultimately metaphysical and ontological nature of the concept of the Spectacle that impelled Debord to give so many different definitions for what the Spectacle is, without which it would have been hard to see how they can all agree and unite into an organic whole. Debord, like the majority of revolutionary theoreticians up to now, did not want or was unable to acknowledge that he was operating on metaphysical terrain so as to critique commodity metaphysics. And nevertheless it is precisely this fact and its necessity that Critical Metaphysics reveals.*

2) *The metaphysical character of the Spectacle concept also appears in what unites the object revealed and the mode of its disclosure. Any anti-metaphysical interpretations of that concept, by separating out these two moments, condemn themselves to impoverishing the critique of the Spectacle by reducing it to merely a critique of the media. In effect, such interpretations, by considering the mode of disclosure in an isolated manner, are quite naturally led to seek it out in an isolable social object, and thus to hypostatize it, most generally in a particular sector of production. Moreover, this – in general vulgarly materialist – perspective, is quite content that the media can then be reduced to a simple material structure; but in so doing it also contradicts all modes of disclosure: according to said perspective there are nothing but things, some of which are rather good (good uncapitalized wine, immaculate artisanal works, and good friends), and others rather bad (television, computers, and Coca-Cola). Once it has circumscribed the Spectacle as some big external object, it can play the “well, that’s shit but I have an authentic life” card and go back to sleepy-headed comfort, as if having flashed some certificate of anti-spectacular purity. Such an attitude naturally leads one to fetishize the true “concrete little things,” the “real people,” that concretely wear them out, and the oh-so-very authentic concrete little plots of soil they ever so truly cultivate – the summit of the Spectacle’s insolence, eternally trying to sell us what it’s already destroyed! O, but where’ve PEOPLE put the snows of yester-year?*

By insisting on leaving out the effectiveness of the mode of disclosure, this pseudo-critique of the Spectacle only speaks the language of the Spectacle – even in spite of itself

The critique of the Spectacle is either metaphysical or not a critique at all. And it must be explicitly metaphysical, or else it will turn against itself and reinforce the Spectacle.

43

“The spirit of nature is a hidden one; it does not manifest itself in the form of a spirit: it is only a spirit for minds that know it, and it is spirit in itself, but not for itself.” (Hegel). The commodity is the spirit that alienates itself in an oppressive nature, the dead spirit victorious. Critical Metaphysics is the mind that knows the spirit of this shoddy nature, the *being-for-itself* of that spirit. Critical Metaphysics is the *manifestation of commodity metaphysics as metaphysics*, the *neglegentiae mihi videtur si non studemos quod credimus intelligere* – “it would be in my eyes negligent of us not to study thoroughly the things we think we understand” – inscribed in the pure commodity presence itself. Up to the present time, the world has done our thinking for us.

Remarks: 1) *And so, contrary to popular opinion, we affirm that humanity has historically gone from social alienation to natural alienation, and not the other way around. And in spite of what certain economists may believe, the naturalness of the commodity is in no way a justification for its existence, and even less, indeed, a proof of its “eternal” nature. Humanity that alienates itself in nature does not correspond to its concept, and reality as nature is a reality that’s been fooled. Critical Metaphysics reveals this error of reality as the reality of error.*

2) *It is because nature is still a spirit that one can say, as we have (see our remark on thesis 27), that things communicate. Let us make ourselves clear: indeed, this spirit is still the spirit of men, but when mankind fails to grasp and know itself when spirit is not for-itself, its being-for-itself separates from its being-in-itself, and that is also the autonomization of spirit; this is the effective power of things.*

44

Critical Metaphysics applies even to being-there: every one of the fragments of this world is a confession of its falsehood.

45

The historical development of the commodity mode of disclosure has brought mankind to such degree of bloomitude that we know it and *are it*. But only a man can make a Bloom. Alienation is always alienation from something. And so, the Bloom that discovers himself to be a Bloom, who is conscious of his Bloom state, has already qualitatively become something other than a simple Bloom. Because what peeks out from under the surface then and reveals itself is once again the layer of being which comprises the experience of the commodity being, and consequently the foundation and its transcendence of the layer found underneath that of absolute equivalence. The Bloom who has the intelligence of his Bloom-being is thus a critical metaphysician.

Remarks: 1) *It was indeed our intent to write “the Bloom who has the intelligence of his Bloom-being.” He who only has a simple consciousness or comprehension of it is not yet a critical metaphysician; he can become one, that is unless he prefers to sell himself out as a professional in the language of flattery...*

2) *Who hides behind the Bloom that hides behind whatever watch? The act of hiding himself as Bloom, and thus the potential consciousness of it, inscribes in the very heart of his being, in the very heart of his bloomitude, a critical metaphysician who doesn't know he is one (or does). **Critical Metaphysics is in everyone's guts.***

46

But also, insofar as Critical Metaphysics is the manifestation of commodity metaphysics as metaphysics, its very movement itself pushes it towards its own abolition, towards its transcendence. The primary aim of Critical Metaphysics is to suppress itself. It's merely a question of giving it the means to do so.

Remark: *In effect, because the movement of Critical Metaphysics is precisely the movement of expression, and thus also the movement of the negation of commodity metaphysics, the fact of its attaining to effectiveness is its means of destroying commodity metaphysics, and thus of its own suppression, its own transcendence.*

47

Science is now the movement of Critical Metaphysics' disclosure. On its path towards self-suppression, Critical Metaphysics *is science*.

Remark: *What we mean by “science” here is certainly not what the so-called scientists – whether they're on the payroll of the CNRS² or of the laboratories of Biopower and Co. – and other positivists imagine science to be, but, obviously, the practical movement of the self-expression of the Spirit.*

(to be continued)

The Frankfurt Stock Exchange



Down with black magic!

Preliminary Materials for a *Theory of the Young Girl*

– *I did love you once.*
Hamlet



A

Under the hypnotic grimaces of official pacification, a war is being waged. A war that can no longer be called simply economic, social, or humanitarian, because it is *total*. And though each of us senses that our existence has become a battlefield where neuroses, phobias, somatizations, depression, and anguish are but a kind of defeated retreat, no one can grasp the trajectory of the battle or understand what's at stake in it. Paradoxically, it's because of the total character of this war – total in its means no less than in its ends – that it could be invisible in the first place.

To open force the empire prefers underhanded methods, chronic prevention, and the spread of molecules of constraint through everyday life. Its internal (endo) cop-ization clearly relays the general cop-ization, as individual self-control does social control. The new police are imperceptible because they're omnipresent.

Z

What's at stake in the ongoing war are "forms of life," which, for the Empire, means the selection, management, and attenuation of those forms of life. The spectacle's grip on the state of the public expression of desires, the bio-political monopoly on all medical knowledge-power, the containment of all deviance by an ever more psychiatrist-laden army, "coaches," and other "facilitators" and counselors, the aesthetic-policelike *filing away* of everyone's biological data, the ever more imperative and closer surveillance of behavior, the plebiscites' proscriptions against "violence": it's all part of the Empire's anthropological, or rather, anthropotechnical project. *It's about profiling the citizens.*

Obviously, a pure politics of repression can't do away with people's expression of their "forms of life" (lifestyles) – not in the sense of a form of life as something molding a certain material, from the outside, without which it would be formless "bare life," but on the contrary, a form of life in the sense of what gives rise to a particular penchant, an intimate movement in a given body in a given situation. There's a whole imperial project to divert, fog, and polarize bodies with absences and impossibilities. Its reach is not so immediate, but it's durable. With time and by so many combined effects, the desired disarmament of bodies is obtained, in particular in terms of their *immunities*.

Citizens are less the vanquished in this war than are those who, denying its reality, give up in it right off the bat; what is left to them in the guise of an "existence" is no longer anything but a *life long* effort to make oneself compatible with the Empire. But for *the others*, for us, each gesture, each desire, each affect eventually boils down to the need to annihilate the Empire and its citizens. It's a matter of breathing, of the amplitude of passions. We have time to go down this criminal road; nothing's rushing us to seek out direct confrontations. Rushing would even be a proof of our weakness. Assaults will

be launched, however, and that will be less important than the *position* they're launched from, since our assaults undermine the Empire's forces while our position undermines its strategy. So, the more it appears to be accumulating victories, the more deeply it will sink into defeat, and the more its defeat will become irreparable. The imperial strategy first of all consists in organizing blindness to forms of life; illiteracy to ethical differences; making the battlefield unrecognizable, if not invisible; in the most critical cases, disguising the *real war* with all kinds of false conflicts.

The retaking of the offensive from our side, then, requires us to make the battlefield clear again. The figure of the Young-Girl is a *gazing machine*, designed for that purpose. Certain people will use it to affirm the solidity of the hostile forces occupying our existences; others, more vigorous, will use it to decide on the speed and direction of their progress. Everyone will make of it what they deserve.

O

Let's be clear: the concept of the YoungGirl is obviously not a gendered concept. The nightclub-going jock conforms to it just as much as the second-generation north african girl painted up to look pornstar old. The spirited telecom retiree that splits his leisure time between the Cote d'Azur and the Parisian offices where he's kept a foot in the door, and the metropolitan single too caught up in her career in consulting to realize that she's already lost fifteen years of her life to it – both obey the concept. After all, how would it be so easy to see the secret connection linking the plugged-in, puffed-up, civil-unioned humanity from the hip neighborhood and the petty-bourgeois americanized girl in the suburbs with her plastic family, if it were a gendered concept?

In reality, the YoungGirl is only the *model citizen* such as commodity society has defined it since world war one, as an *explicit* response to revolutionary threats against it. As such, she is a *polar figure*, guiding becoming more than predominating in it. At the beginning of the 20s, in effect, capitalism noticed that it couldn't maintain itself as the exploitation of human labor without also colonizing everything found beyond strictly the sphere of production. Faced with the socialists' challenge to its dominance, it too needed to socialize itself. It thus had to create its own culture, leisure, medicine, urbanism, sentimental education, and morals, and also create a disposition towards their perpetual renewal. This would become the fordist compromise, the welfare state, family planning: social-democracy capitalism. And now, submission by work, limited because the worker is still separate from his or her work, has been replaced by integration through subjective and existential conformity, meaning, at root, by consumption.

From being merely formal, Capital's domination has become little by little *real*. The commodity society now seeks to find its best supports in the marginalized elements of traditional society themselves – women and youths first, then homosexuals and immigrants.

Commodity society can now give an air of emancipation to those who in the past it treated as minorities, who were the most foreign and most spontaneously *hostile* to commodity society, not having been folded into its dominant norms of integration. "The youth and their mothers," acknowledges Stuart Ewen, "will supply the social principles of consumer ethics to the lifestyles offered by advertising." The youth, because adolescence is "a period of life defined by a relationship of pure consumption with civil society." (Stuart Ewen, *Captains of consciousness*) And women, because at the time it was the sphere of *reproduction*, over which women still held sway, that they needed to colonize. Youth and Femininity, hypostatized, abstract, and recoded into *youthitude and feminitude*, are then elevated to the rank of ideal regulators of empire-citizen integration. And the figure of the YoungGirl thus realizes an immediate, spontaneous, and perfectly desirable unity between those two variables.

The tomboy is indispensable as a kind of modernity, much more thrilling than all the stars and starlets so quickly invading the globalized imagination. Albertine, found on the wall around a seaside resort, exhausts the whole collapsing world of [Proust's] *In search of lost time* with her relaxed, pansexual vitality. The high school girl makes her will the law in *Ferdydurke*. And a new authority figure is born, one *that out-classes them all*.

Th

Now, humanity, reformatted in the Spectacle and biopolitically neutralized, thinks it's defying someone by proclaiming itself to be made up of "citizens." The women's magazines correct a nearly hundred-year-old mistake by finally making equivalent magazines available to men. All the past patriarchal authority figures, from politicians to the boss by way of the cop, are YoungGirlized, even the last of them, the pope.

There are many signs that the new physiognomy of Capital, merely sketched out in the interbellum period, has now been perfected. “The ‘anthropomorphosis’ of Capital is complete when its fictitious character is generalized. Then the mysterious spell is cast thanks to which generalized credit, ruling all exchange (from the bank check to the bill, from the work or marriage contract to ‘human’ and family relationships, the schooling, diplomas, and careers following the promises of all ideologies: all exchanges are now mere exchanges of dilatory appearances), hammers out, in the image of its own uniform emptiness, the ‘heart of darkness’ of all ‘personalities’ and all ‘characters.’ that’s how Capital’s people grow up, with all ancestral distinctions, all class and ethnic specificity seemingly gone. That fact endlessly fascinates many naive people who still ‘think’ with their eyes lost in the past.” (Giorgio Cesarano, *Chronicle of a masked ball*). The YoungGirl emerges as the culmination point of this *anthropomorphosis of Capital*. The valuation process, in the imperial phase, is no longer just capitalist: IT COINCIDES WITH THE SOCIAL. The integration of that process, which is no longer distinct from integration into imperial “society,” and which no longer rests on any “objective” basis, demands of each person that she *self-valorize endlessly*.

The final moment of society’s socialization, Empire, is thus also the moment when each person is called upon to relate to herself *as a value*, that is, by following the central mediation of a series of controlled abstractions. The YoungGirl, thus, would be that being that has no more intimacy with itself *except as a value*, and all of whose activity, in all of its details, will finally come down to self-valuation. At each instant, she affirms herself as the *sovereign subject* of her reification. All the unquestionable character of her power, all the crushing self-confidence of this blueprint-person, comprised exclusively of the conventions, codes, and representations fleetingly in force, all the authority that the least of her gestures contains – all that is immediately cross-indexed to her *absolute transparency* to “society.”

And precisely because of her nothingness, each of her judgements has the imperative weight of the whole organization of society – *and she knows it*.

It’s not by chance that the theory of the YoungGirl has come into being at the moment when the genesis of the imperial order is being completed, and when it has begun to be understood as such. All things come to their end. And the party of the YoungGirls will have to split up as well, in turn.

To the extent that YoungGirlist formatting becomes generalized, competition will get tougher and the satisfaction tied to conformity will decrease. Got to take some qualitative leap; got to take on new and unexpected attributes; got to get away to some still-virgin space. A Hollywood despair, a TV journal political consciousness, a vague spirituality of a neo-Buddhist character, an engagement in whatever collective conscience cleaning enterprise gets the job done. And so, feature by feature, the eco-YoungGirl is hatched. The YoungGirls’ struggle to survive is then connected to the need to transcend the industrial YoungGirl, and the need to pass over to the eco YoungGirl. Contrary to its ancestor, the eco YoungGirl no longer displays a surge of some emancipation or other, but a *security-crazed obsession with conservation*. The Empire’s been fundamentally undermined and it’s got to defend itself from entropy. Having arrived at full hegemony, it can’t do anything any more but crumble. The eco-YoungGirl will therefore be responsible, “in solidarity,” ecological, maternal, reasonable, “natural,” respectful, more self-controlled than falsely liberated, in brief: biopolitical as hell. She’ll no longer be miming excess, but, on the contrary, moderation, in everything.

At the moment when the evidence for the YoungGirl is so obvious it becomes a cliché, the YoungGirl is already transcended, at least in its primitive, crudely sophisticated mass production aspect. It is this critical transitional situation we are going to leverage ourselves on.

Except incorrectly speaking – which may be our intention – the jumble of fragments that follows in no way comprises a theory. These are materials accumulated randomly in encounters with, visits with, and observation of YoungGirls; pearls extracted from their newspapers and magazines; expressions gleaned in sometimes dubious circumstances, arranged into no particular order. They are gathered here under approximate headings, as they were published in *Tiqqun*; a bit of order had to be given them. The decision to put them out like this, in all their incompleteness, their contingent origins, with all the ordinary excess of elements that would have comprised a nicely presentable theory if they were polished, cleaned out, and whittled down, means choosing *trash theory* for once. The cardinal ruse of theoreticians in general is that they present the result of their elaborations in such a way as to make the *elaboration process itself no longer appear in them*. In our estimation, this ruse doesn’t work any more in the face of today’s Bloom-esque attention span fragmentation. We’ve chosen a different one. Minds looking for moral comfort or for vice to condemn will find in these scattered pages but roads that will lead

them nowhere. In fact we're not so much trying to convert YoungGirls as we are trying to trace out all the corners of a fractalized battlefield of YoungGirization. And to supply the weapons for a hand to hand, blow by blow fight, wherever you may find yourself.

I. The YoungGirl as phenomenon

The YoungGirl is old already insofar as she knows herself to be young. So for her it's just a question of making the most of that suspended sentence, that is, committing the few reasonable excesses and living the few "adventures" expected of her age, all in view of a moment when she'll have to quiet down into the final nothingness of adulthood. Thus, the social law contains in itself both the rotted time of youth and its violation, which are nothing after all but exceptions to it.

The YoungGirl is crazy about the authentic *because it's a lie*.

What's paradoxical about the masculine YoungGirl is that he's the product of a kind of "alienation by contagion." Though the feminine YoungGirl appears as the incarnation of a certain alienated masculine imagination, the alienation of this incarnation has nothing imaginary about it. She's concretely escaped those whose fantasies she populated in order to stand up against and dominate them. To the extent that the YoungGirl is emancipated, blossoms, and proliferates, she's a dream that turns into a most invasive nightmare. It's the freed slave returning as such to tyrannize the former master. In the end we're watching an ironic epilogue where the "masculine sex" is the victim and object of its own alienated desires.

**"I want people
to be beautiful."**

The YoungGirl is the spitting image of the total and sovereign consumer; and that's how she behaves in all realms of existence.

**The YoungGirl knows *the value of things*
ever so well.**

Often, before decomposing too visibly, the YoungGirl gets married.

The YoungGirl is good for nothing but consuming; leisure or work, it makes no difference. Because of its having been put on a level of equivalence with all intimacy in general, the YoungGirl's intimacy has become something anonymous, exterior, and objectlike.

The YoungGirl never creates anything; she re-creates herself.

By investing youth and women with an absurd symbolic surplus value, by making them the exclusive bearers of the new esoteric knowledge proper to the new social organization – that of consumption and seduction – the Spectacle has thus freed the slaves of the past, but has freed them *as slaves*.

The most extreme banality of the YoungGirl is still to have herself taken as something "original." The scrawny character of the YoungGirl's language, though it implies an incontestable retraction of the field of experience, does not in any way constitute a practical handicap, since it's not made for talking but for pleasing and repeating.

Blather, curiosity, ambiguity, hearsay; the YoungGirl incarnates the fullness of a misfit existence, which Heidegger pointed out the categories of.

The YoungGirl is a lie, the apogee of which is her face. When the Spectacle trumpets that woman is the future of man, it's naturally talking about the YoungGirl, and the future it's anticipating is merely the worst cybernetic slavery.

"FOR SURE!"

For her whole philosophy, the YoungGirl manages to live with a dozen inarticulate concepts that immediately

become moral categories, that is, the whole extent of her vocabulary is definitively reduced to the couplet Good/Bad. It goes without saying that, to put the world before her for her to understand it, it has to be rather simplified, and to let her have a happy life, a lot of martyrs have to be made, and a martyr has to be made of her, first of all.

“Very visible physical imperfections, even if they do not in any way effect the aptitude for work, socially weaken people, transforming them into labor’s involuntary cripples.”

(Dr. Julius Moses, *Afa-bundeszeitung*, February 1929).

For the YoungGirl, the easiest things are the most painful, the most “natural” are the most feigned, and the most “human” is the most mechanical.

Adolescence is a category that was created only recently to meet the demands of mass consumption.

The YoungGirl invariably calls everything that she is chained up with “happiness.”

The YoungGirl is never simply unhappy, she’s also unhappy about being unhappy.

In the final analysis, the YoungGirl’s ideal is *domestic*.

Bloom is the crisis of classical gender roles. And the YoungGirl is the offensive that commodity domination responds to that crisis with.

There’s no chastity about the YoungGirl, and there’s no debauchery either. The YoungGirl simply lives as a stranger to her own desires, which the commodity Super-Ego regulates the coherence of. The boredom of abstraction flows freely in this fucked up situation.

There’s nothing the YoungGirl can’t bring into the closed horizon of her trivial everydayness; poetry as ethnology, marxism as metaphysics.

“Albertine is from nowhere and that’s rather modern: she flutters about, comes and goes, and draws from her lack of attachments a certain instability and unpredictable character that gives to her her power of freedom.”

(Jacques Dubois, *For albertine; Proust and the meaning of the social*).

When it is speaking distinctly to the YoungGirl, the Spectacle isn’t averse to a bit of *bathmology*. So all the meaning there is to the *boy-bands* and *girl-bands* is the fact that they put on a show of the fact that they’re putting on a show. The glaring irony of this lie is that they’re presenting as a lie what is on the contrary *the truth of the YoungGirl*.

The YoungGirl suddenly feels dizzy when the world stops revolving around her.

The YoungGirl understands herself as the holder of a *sacred* power: the power of the commodity.

“I love babies, they’re so beautiful,
so honest; they feel good.”

The mother and the whore, in Weininger’s sense, are both equally present in the YoungGirl. But the one hardly makes her any more praiseworthy than the other makes her blameworthy. Over time, a curious reversibility between the two can even be observed.

The YoungGirl is fascinating in the same way as everything that expresses its being closed in upon itself, a mechanical self-sufficiency or an indifference to the observer; like an insect, an infant, a robot, or Foucault’s pendulum.

Why must the YoungGirl always feign some activity or other?

In order to remain **impregnable** in her passivity.

The YoungGirl’s “freedom” rarely goes beyond the showy worship of the Spectacle’s most trivial productions; it consists essentially in a rulebook slowdown strike against the necessities of alienation.

The Young Girls’ Future: the name of a group of young “communist” girls in 1936 organized for the purposes of “amusement, education, and the defense of their interests.”

The YoungGirl wants to be either desired lovelessly or loved desirelessly. In either case, her unhappiness is safe.

The YoungGirl has love stories.

It's enough just to remember what she defines as an "adventure" as to get a pretty clear idea of how much fear the YoungGirl has of the possibilities.

When the YoungGirl gets old she's no more hideous than she is in her youth. From one end to the other, her life is merely a progressive shipwreck in formlessness and never the eruption of becoming. The YoungGirl stagnates in the limbo of time.

In terms of the figure of the YoungGirl, age and gender differences are insignificant. There's no age limit for being stricken by youthitude, and no gender is unable to take on a dash of feminitude.

Just like the magazines that are slapped together for her and that she devours so painfully, the YoungGirl's life is divided up and arranged to fall under a certain number of headings between which the greatest possible separation reigns.

The YoungGirl is she who, being no more than that after all, scrupulously obeys the authoritarian distribution of roles.

**The YoungGirl's love
is merely a kind of autism for two.**

What is still called virility is nothing but the childishness of men, and femininity that of women. Otherwise, one should perhaps speak of virilism and "feminism" when it's a question of acquiring an identity or free will.

The same cynical obstinacy that characterized the traditional woman, under house arrest in the duty of ensuring survival, now blossoms in the YoungGirl, but this time it's emancipated from the domestic sphere, and from all gender monopoly. It's now expressed everywhere: in her irreproachable emotional impermeability to work, in the extreme rationalization she imposes on her "sentimental life," in her gait – so spontaneously militaristic – in the way she fucks, holds herself, or taps away on the computer. It's also how she washes her car.

"A piece of information I gathered at a large well-known Berlin department store is particularly instructive: 'when we recruit sales and administrative personnel,' said an important personage from the personnel service, 'we put a high importance on a pleasing appearance.' From a distance he resembled the actor Reinhold Schunzel in his old movies. I asked him what he meant by that, whether it was a question of being sexy or just cute. 'Not exactly cute,' he said, 'it's about having a morally healthy glow about oneself.'

"I understand, actually. A morally healthy glow – that assemblage of concepts clarifies at once an everyday fact about decorated shopwindows, wage workers, and illustrated magazines. Their morality should be kind of rosy-cheeked, their rosy cheeks stamped with morality. That's what those who are in charge of selection are looking for; they want to extend into real life a veneer that hides a reality that's anything but rosy. And it's bad news for you, if your morality disappears under your skin and the rosiness isn't moral enough to prevent the eruption of your desires. The dark depths of natural morality would be just as threatening to the established order as a rose blazing in full flower without any morality at all. They're associated with each other so strictly that they neutralize one another. The system that imposes the selection tests also engenders this likable and genteel medley, and the more that rationalization progresses, the more the rose-moral colored makeup gains ground. We'd hardly be exaggerating to say that there's a kind of employee being made in Berlin that's uniform and tends towards the desired coloring. Language, clothes, manners, and countenances edge towards uniformity and the result is that pleasing appearance reproduced in photographs. A selection that is completed under the pressure of social relations, and one that the economy reinforces by stimulating the corresponding needs among consumers.

"Employees take part in this, for better or worse. The rush to the innumerable beauty schools also corresponds to existential worries; the use of beauty products is not always just for luxury. In fear of being seen as expired [products], men and women dye their hair, and forty year olds play sports to keep their tone. 'How does one become more beautiful?' is the title of a magazine that came out onto the market recently; it claims in its ads that it shows how to 'appear young and beautiful now and in the future.' Fashion and economy, working hand in hand. Certainly, those who can take recourse to aesthetic surgery are few. The majority fall in with the scribbles

of charlatans and have to be content with preparations as ineffective as they are cheap. And in their interest, Dr. Moses, the above-mentioned deputy, has for some time now been fighting in Parliament to integrate the healthcare required for physical defects into public health insurance. The recently established ‘German medical aestheticians’ association’ has signed on with this very legitimate proposition.”

(Siegfried Kracauer, *The employees*, 1930)

In the YoungGirl, the loss of metaphysical sense (meaning) is no different from the “loss of the sensible,” (Gehlen), where the extreme *modernity* of her alienation can be seen.

The YoungGirl moves within the forgetting of Being, no less than in the forgetting of events.

All the irrepressible agitation of the YoungGirl, in the spitting image of this society at each of its points, is governed by the hidden challenge of making a false and trivial metaphysics – the most immediate substance of which is the negation of the passage of time, and the obscuring of human finiteness – into something effective.

☛ THE YOUNG GIRL RESEMBLES HER PHOTO.

Considering that her appearance entirely exhausts her essence and her representation exhausts her reality, the YoungGirl is that which is entirely expressible, and also that which is perfectly predictable and absolutely neutralized.

The YoungGirl only exists in proportion to the desire that “people” have for her, and is only known by what they say about her. The YoungGirl appears as the product and the primary outlet of the formidable surplus-crisis of capitalist modernity. She is the proof and prop of the unlimited pursuit of the valuation process when the accumulation process itself is found wanting (due to the insufficiency of the planet, ecological catastrophe, or social implosion).

The YoungGirl enjoys covering up, with a falsely provocative secondary plane, the primary, *economic* plane of her motivations.

All the YoungGirl’s freedom of movement does not prevent her from being a prisoner, and manifesting in all circumstances a captive’s automatism.

The YoungGirl’s way of being is to be *nothing*.

Certain YoungGirls see “success in emotional and professional life” as an ambition worthy of respect.

The YoungGirl’s “love” is but a word in the dictionary.

The YoungGirl doesn’t just demand that you protect her, she wants to be able to educate you too.

The eternal return of the same fashions shows clearly enough that the YoungGirl doesn’t put on appearances, but rather that appearances put her on.

Even more than the female YoungGirl, the male YoungGirl shows with his imitation musculature all the character of absurdity, that is, of *suffering*, of what Foucault called “the discipline of the body”: “discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and decreases those same forces (in political terms of obedience).

In a word: it dissociates the power of the body; on the one hand it makes it into an ‘aptitude’ and a ‘capacity,’ which it seeks to increase; and on the other hand it inverts the energy, the power that could result from it and makes a strict relationship of subjection out of it. (Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish*)

“Oh, the young girl, that receptacle of shameful secrets, sealed in her own beauty!” (Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, 1937)

There must be nowhere that a person feels so painfully alone as in the arms of a YoungGirl.

When the YoungGirl abandons herself to her insignificance, she draws even more glory from that; she has “fun.”

“And that’s just what seduces me about her, that maturity and sovereignty of youth, that fully self-assured style, while we down below, in school, had ideals and acne all over the place, gauche and awkward in our gestures every step of the way, her exterior was perfect. Youth for her was not a transitional period; for a modern girl, youth was the only real time of human existence ... her youth didn’t need ideals, because she herself was an ideal.” (Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*)



The YoungGirl never learns anything. That's not what she's there for.

The YoungGirl knows all too well what she wants *in detail* to want anything at all in general.

“DON'T TOUCH MY BAG!”

The YoungGirl's triumph originates in the failure of feminism.

The YoungGirl doesn't speak; on the contrary: she is *spoken* – by the Spectacle.

The YoungGirl carries the mask of her face.

The YoungGirl brings all greatness down to the level of her ass.

The YoungGirl is a purifier of negativity, an industrial profiler of unilaterality. She separates out the negative from the positive in everything, and in general only keeps one of them. Thus she doesn't believe in words, which in effect have no meaning coming from her mouth. That's easy to see by looking at what she understands by the word “romantic,” and how little it has to do, in the end, with Holderlin.

So, it's useful, then, to conceive of the birth of the 'young girl' as the construction of an object that different disciplines converge to build (from medicine to psychology from physical education to moral education, from physiology to hygiene). (Jean-Claude Caron, Young girls' bodies)

The YoungGirl would like very much if the simple word “love” didn't imply the project of destroying this “society.”

OH, MY HEART!

“Don't confuse your job and your sentiments!”

In the YoungGirl's life, deactivated and reduced-to-nothing opposites complete each other, but don't contradict each other at all.

The YoungGirl's sentimentalism and materialism are but two complementary aspects of her central nothingness, no matter how opposite they may be in appearance.

The YoungGirl enjoys speaking of her childhood with great emotion, to suggest that she hasn't got beyond it, and that fundamentally she's remained naive. Like all whores, she dreams of innocence. But, distinct from them, she demands to be believed, and believed sincerely. Her childishness, which is, in the end, but a *fundamentalism of infancy*, makes her the most cunning vector of the general infantilization.

For the YoungGirl, even the meanest sentiments still have the prestige of their sincerity.

The YoungGirl loves her illusions in the same way as she loves her reification: by proclaiming them.

The YoungGirl sees everything as free of consequences, even her suffering.

Everything's funny, nothing's a big deal. Everything's *cool*, nothing's serious.

The YoungGirl wants to be recognized not for what she may be but for the simple fact of her being. She wants to be recognized *unconditionally*.

The YoungGirl is not there to be criticized.

When the YoungGirl has come to the end of the age of childishness, where it becomes impossible to not ask herself about ends without suddenly finding herself short of means (which can happen pretty late in this society), she reproduces. Paternity and maternity comprise just another way among others, and no less free of substance, to remain UNDER THE EMPIRE OF NEED.

The YoungGirl takes on above all the perspective of psychology, regarding herself as much as regarding the ways of the world. Thus she can present a certain consciousness of her own reification, a consciousness that itself is reified, because it is cut off from all acts.

The YoungGirl knows the standard perversions all too well.

TOO SWEET!

The YoungGirl needs a kind of *balance* that is less like that of a dancer than it is like that of the accounting expert.

Smiles have never been any good as arguments. There is also such a thing as the smile of skeletons.

The YoungGirl's feelings are made up of signs, and sometimes just of simple *signals*.

Everywhere that the *ethos* is failed or decomposing, the YoungGirl appears as the carrier of the fleeting, colorless morals of the Spectacle.

The YoungGirl's not supposed to understand you.

The YoungGirl's predilection for actors and actresses is explained by the elementary laws of magnetism: whereas they represent the *positive* absence of all quality, nothingness taking on all forms, *she* is but the *negative* absence of quality. Thus, the actor is the same as the YoungGirl; both her reflection and her negation.

The YoungGirl conceives of love as being a *private* activity.

The YoungGirl carries in her laughter all the desolation of late-night bars.

The YoungGirl is the only **insect** that consents to *the entomology of women's magazines*.

Identical to unhappiness in that sense, the YoungGirl is never alone.

Everywhere that the YoungGirls dominate, their tastes must also dominate; that determines the tastes of our era.



The YoungGirl is the purest form of reified relationships; she is the truth behind them. The YoungGirl is the anthropological condensation of reification.

The Spectacle remunerates the YoungGirl's conformity amply, though it does so indirectly.

In love more than anywhere else, the YoungGirl behaves like an accountant, always assuming that she loves more than she is loved, and that she gives more than she receives.

Among YoungGirls there is an uninspiring community of gestures and expressions.

The YoungGirl is ontologically a virgin, untouched by any experience.

The YoungGirl may prove solicitous if you're really, really unhappy; that's an aspect of her resentment.

The YoungGirl doesn't know anything about the flow of time, at most she gets emotional about its "consequences." Otherwise how could she talk about getting old with such indignation, as if it were some kind of crime committed against her?

Even when she's not trying to seduce anyone, the YoungGirl acts seductive.

There's something *professional* about everything the YoungGirl does.

The YoungGirl still flatters herself that she's got "Practical Sense."

In the YoungGirl, even the flattest moralism puts on a whorish air.

The YoungGirl has all the strictness of economy about her.

And yet she knows less of abandon than of anything.

The YoungGirl is all the reality of the Spectacle's abstract codes.

The YoungGirl occupies the central kernel of the present system of desires.

Every experience the YoungGirl has incessantly withdraws back into the prior representation she had made of it. The whole outpouring of concreteness, the whole of the living part of the passage of time and things are known to her only as imperfections, modifications of an abstract model.

The YoungGirl is resentment *that smiles.*

There are certain beings that just make you want to die before their very eyes, but the YoungGirl only excites a

desire to conquer and get off on her.

When the YoungGirl mates, it isn't a movement towards the other, but a movement of escape from her untenable nothingness.

The supposed liberation of women has not consisted in their emancipation from the domestic sphere, but rather in the extension of that sphere over the whole of society.

Faced with anyone who tries to make her think, it will never be long before the YoungGirl starts claiming how realistic she's being.

To the extent that what she's really hiding isn't her secrets, but her *shame*, the YoungGirl detests the unexpected, above all when it isn't pre-programmed.

“Being in love: a stress-relieving drug.”

The YoungGirl never stops repeating it: she wants to be loved *for who she is* – meaning she wants to be loved for the non-being that she is.

The YoungGirl is the living and continuous introjection of all repressions.

The YoungGirl's “I” is as thick as a magazine.

Nothing in the YoungGirl's conduct is wrong in itself; everything is properly ordered within the dominant definition of happiness. The YoungGirl's foreignness to herself borders on mythomania.

As a last resort, the YoungGirl fetishizes “love” so as to not have to face up to the fact of the integrally conditioned nature of her desires.

*“I don't give a shit about being free,
as long as I'm happy!”*

“THE CHEMISTRY OF PASSION: Today everything's explainable, even falling in love! Goodbye romanticism; this whole phenomenon is apparently just a series of chemical reactions.”

Divorced from one another, the YoungGirl's love and ass became just two empty abstractions.

“The example of the movie hero interposes itself like a ghost when adolescents embrace or when adults commit adultery.”
(Horkheimer/Adorno, *The dialectic of reason*)

The YoungGirl swims in *deja-vus*. For her, the first time something is lived is always [at least] the second time it has been represented.

Naturally, there's been no “sexual liberation” – that oxymoron! – anywhere, just the pulverization of everything that's been an obstacle to the total mobilization of desire in view of commodity *production*. To decry a “tyranny of pleasure” isn't an indictment of pleasure, but of tyranny.

The YoungGirl knows how to play the part of sentimentalism.

In the YoungGirls' world, coitus appears to be the logical penalty for all experience.

The YoungGirl is “happy to be alive,” so she says at least.

The YoungGirl establishes relationships only on the basis of the strictest reification and poor substantial content, so it is certain that what unites people only separates them.

The YoungGirl is optimistic, delighted, positive, content, enthusiastic, happy; in other words, *she's suffering.*

The YoungGirl is produced wherever nihilism starts talking about happiness.

There's nothing special about the YoungGirl; that's what her “beauty” consists in.

The YoungGirl is an optical illusion. From far off she's an angel, and from up close she's a devil.

THE YOUNG GIRL DOESN'T GET OLD; SHE DECOMPOSES.



Everyone knows in general what the YoungGirl thinks about *worrying about stuff*.

The YoungGirl's education follows an inverse trajectory compared to all other kinds of education: immediate perfection, inborn into youth first of all, and then efforts to keep herself on the level of that primary nullity, and at the end failure, faced with the impossibility of going back in time.

Seen from afar, the YoungGirl's nothingness appears relatively inhabitable, and even comfortable at times.

“Love, Work, Health”

The YoungGirl's beauty is never a private beauty, or a particular beauty of her own. It is on the contrary a beauty with no content, an absolute beauty, free of all personality. The YoungGirl's "beauty" is but the form of nothingness, the form of appearance attached to her. And that's why she can talk without choking about "beauty," since hers is never the expression of any substantial singularity, but a pure and phantasmic objectivity.

"The fundamental ideological confusion between women and sexuality ... only today has achieved its fullest amplitude, because women, who once were subjugated as a gender, are today 'LIBERATED' as a gender ... Women, youths, bodies, the emergence of which after thousands of years of servitude and forgetting in effect constitute the most revolutionary potentiality there is, and thus the most fundamental risk there is to any established order – are today integrated and recuperated as an 'emancipation myth.' 'Woman' is given to women to consume; Youth is given to youths to consume, and in this formal, narcissistic emancipation, their real liberation can be successfully prevented." (Jean-Trissotin Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*.)

The YoungGirl offers an unequivocal model of the metropolitan ethos: a refrigerated consciousness living in exile in a plasticized body.

“TOO COOL!!!” Instead of saying “VERY,” the YoungGirl says “TOO”; but, in fact, she’s all too insufficient.

II. The YoungGirl as technique of self

“What's
'pleasure'?”

Nothing in the YoungGirl's life, even in the remotest parts of her private life, escapes alienated reflexivity, codification, and the gaze of the Spectacle. This private life, littered with commodities, is completely given up to advertising, and completely socialized, but socialized *as a private life*, meaning that it is bit by bit subjected to an artificial ordinariness which doesn't allow its expression. *For the YoungGirl, the most secret is also the most public. The YoungGirl's body encumbers her; it is her world and it is her prison.*

The YoungGirl's physiology is the offensive glaxis of her poor substantiality.

The YoungGirl desires the YoungGirl. The YoungGirl is the YoungGirl's ideal.

"TIRED OF MACHO-MEN? WHY NOT GIVE A MAN-OBJECT A TRY?"

The rhetoric of the war of the sexes, and thus – for now – the rhetoric of the revenge of women, operates like the final ruse by which masculine logic conquers women without them noticing: by shutting them in, with a simple reversal of roles, to alternating between submission/domination, with the exclusion of everything else.

“What does the mortification of the body require? That we harbor a holy and implacable hatred towards our bodies.” (Spiritual instructions for the sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul, 1884)

The YoungGirl tries to express her self-referential closure in upon herself and her systematic ignorance of her unfulfillment. That's why she's faultless, and in the same way why she lacks any perfection.

In the relatively recent prehistory when women's magazines were made only for women, a rumor went around for a while that they had a depressive effect on their readers. It was said here and there – and it was the least of the malicious gossip of that time – that there had been an “American scientific study” done that said that after a woman put down one of those magazines she was noticeably sadder than she had been upon opening it – at least she certainly produced less serotonin. And it's true; if you've ever seen a young girl engaged in such exercise, you'll have noticed that she's got a kind of concerned air about her, an anguished seriousness, and a kind of haste to turn the pages, as if she were rolling the rosary beads of some sinister religion or another. It appears that in the Empire's biopolitical religion, the act of contrition has survived just fine, and has only become more immanent now.

“It's my hair and I can do what I want with it!”

The YoungGirl methodically reinvests everything she's been freed from into pure servitude (ask yourself, for example, what the *modern woman* which is a rather terrible kind of YoungGirl, has done with the “freedom” that feminism's struggles have won for her.)

The YoungGirl is merely an attribute of her own programming, where everything must organize itself.

“When I was twelve years old I decided to be beautiful.”

The tautological nature of the YoungGirl's beauty requires that no otherness concern her, only its ideal representation. Thus to a terrible extent she rejects her allegedly intended recipients, no matter how free they are to stupidly believe that she's addressing herself to them. The YoungGirl thus sets up such a space of her *power* that in the end there's no way of approaching her.

The YoungGirl has a sexuality at all to the exact extent that she is foreign to all sensuality.

“Consequently, the biologization of the genitals in particular and of the body in general sets the body of the young girl up as an ideal laboratory for the medical gaze.”
(Jean-Claude Caron, *Young girls' bodies*)

The YoungGirl's “youth” and “femininity,” her youthitude and feminitude in fact, are how appearance control deepens into body discipline.

The YoungGirl's ass is enough to give her a basis to feel an incommunicable singularity.

The YoungGirl is such a psychologist... She's managed to make herself just as *flat* as the object of psychology.

The YoungGirl is she whose very being depends on the metaphysical fact of finiteness being reduced to a simple *technical* question: what's the most effective anti-wrinkle cream? The most touching characteristic of the YoungGirl is doubtless this maniacal effort to attain, in appearance, that definitive impermeability to time and space, to her surroundings and history, her effort to be *impeccable* everywhere and at all times.

The protestant ethic, which has fallen as the general principle behind the operation of society and as a behavioral norm upon the end of “the morality of labor,” has at the same time been worked back in entirely on an individual level; this has taken place in an accelerated manner since the end of the second world war. Now it governs on a mass scale over the relationships that people have with their bodies, their passions, their lives – they economize on them.

Certainly, because eroticism presents itself to the YoungGirl with all the unquestionable positivity inevitably attaching itself to sexuality, and because transgression itself has become a calm, isolatable, and quantified norm, coitus is not one of those things that allows any advancement outside of a certain exteriority in the relationships one has with the YoungGirl, but on the contrary it is one of those things that solidify you within that exteriority.

"I'm getting new boobs
for my 18th birthday."

The Spectacle's "youth," with which it has gratified the Young-Girl, is a very bitter present, since that "youth" is something that is incessantly *being lost*.

What's alive doesn't need to ever-increasingly declare itself.

What's dying shows on its surface that it's coming to an end. And the YoungGirl's all-out gender affirmation is a clear demonstration of the fact that the classical gender roles are dying, meaning that their *material basis* is dying. The specter of Man and Woman haunts the metropolis' streets. Their muscles come from the Workout Club and their breasts are silicone.

☞ **There's a *window* between the YoungGirl and the world. Nothing touches the YoungGirl, and the YoungGirl touches nothing.**

Nothing about the YoungGirl's identity belongs to her in particular, her "youth" even less than her "femininity." it's not her that has attributes, but attributes that have her, and that are so generously lent to her.

The YoungGirl chases health as if it were a question of safety.

The feeling of the self as MEAT, as a bunch of organs variously decked with ovaries or flanked by nuts, is the basis from which begins the aspiration, then the failure, of the YoungGirl to give herself a form, or at least to simulate having one. This feeling is not only a lived consequence of the aberrations of occidental metaphysics – which would like the formless to precede form, brought to it *from outside* – it is also what commodity domination must perpetuate at all costs; and which it produces constantly with the putting of all bodies into equivalence, by the denial of forms of life, by the continual exercise of an undifferentiating interference. The loss of contact with the self, the crushing of all intimacy with the self that gives rise to the feeling of yourself as MEAT, gives rise to the *sine qua non* condition for the renewed adoption of the techniques of the self that the Empire offers you for consumption. *The penetration index of all of the cheap commodity crap out there can be read in how intensely you feel yourself to be MEAT.*

THE EXHAUSTING PROPRIETY OF BODIES

Blooms' feeling of contradiction between their existence as social beings and their existence as singular beings, which tears them apart, does not touch the YoungGirl, who has no more singular existence than she does any feelings in general.

"Me and my breasts, my belly-button, my butt, my legs: THE MAGAZINE OF MY BODY"

The YoungGirl is her own jailer, the prisoner of a body that has become a sign in a language made of bodies.

"Oh the cult, the obedience, the servitude of the young girl before the image of the school girl and the image of the modern girl! [...] Oh the slavery to style pushed all the way to self-destruction, oh the docility of the young girl!" (Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*)

"The deeply rooted instinct among women that urges them to use perfumes is the manifestation of a biological law. *The primary duty of a woman is to be attractive...* It hardly matters how intelligent or independent you are; if you can't influence the men that you meet, consciously or not, you won't meet your fundamental obligation as a woman..." (1920s perfume ad from the US)

**The YoungGirl conceives of her own existence as a
management problem she needs to resolve.**

More than it designates a relationship with others, a social relationship, or a form of symbolic integration, the YoungGirl designates a relationship with the self, that is, *to time*.

Contrary to appearances, the YoungGirl doesn't care about herself. She's not an egoist, properly speaking, nor egocentric, and that's primarily because her "I" is actually someone else. What she devotes all her care to, with stubborn piety, is in fact a reality that is external to her: her "body."

The application of the capital-form to everything – capital health, capital sun, capital sympathy, etc. – and in a more singular manner to the body, means that mediation by the alienated social totality has entered into relationships previously ruled by immediacy.

In the YoungGirl, the tension between convention and nature is apparently absorbed by the annihilation of the meaning of those terms, to such an extent that the one never appears to do any violence to the other.

The YoungGirl is like capitalism, servants, and protozoans: she knows how to adapt, and furthermore, she's proud of it.

Contrary to what happened in traditional societies, which recognized the existence of worthless things and exposed them *as such*, the YoungGirl denies their existence, and hides them.

The YoungGirl's appearance is the YoungGirl herself; there's nothing in between.

Like all slaves, the YoungGirl thinks herself to be much more watched than she really is.

The YoungGirl's absence from herself is not contradicted by any of the "care" she appears to give to herself.

THE YOUNGGIRL IS NEVER AS PLASTIC AS SHE'D LIKE TO BE.

The YoungGirl doesn't like wrinkles, wrinkles don't conform, wrinkles are the mark of having lived, life doesn't conform. The YoungGirl fears wrinkles as much as she does all true expression.

As a self-consciousness, the YoungGirl has but a vague feeling of life.

FOR THE YOUNGGIRL, BARE LIFE IS STILL A FUNCTION OF HABIT.

The YoungGirl lives sequestered in her own "beauty."

The YoungGirl doesn't love, she loves herself loving.

"Zen, speed, organic: 3 lifestyle systems."

The YoungGirl doesn't go so far as to demand that the fleeting conventions that she subjects herself to have any *meaning* to them.

The YoungGirl understands all relationships on the basis of *contracts*, and more precisely on the basis of *revocable* contracts that can be taken back at any time depending on the interests of the contractees. Bargaining on the differential value of each on the seduction market where someone's got to reap the dividends in the end.

"ARE YOU OK WITH YOUR BODY? Are you keeping up your young form, with its graceful curves? Is the carpentry solid? The clothes silky? Are you doing alright?"

The YoungGirl *daily* produces herself as such, by her maniacal reproduction of the dominant *ethos*.

"How to gain ten years with a good lifestyle."

A cosmetics multinational recently lauched an ad-heavy campaign for an anti-wrinkle cream called *Ethique*. What that meant at the same time is that there's nothing so *ethical* as painting shit all over yourself when you wake up in order to get in conformity with the categorical imperative of youthiness, and that there could be no *ethos* other than that of the YoungGirl.

“Beauty” is the mode of disclosure proper to the YoungGirl within the Spectacle. That’s why she’s also a *generic product* that carries within itself all the abstractions of what is found in the obligation to address oneself to a certain segment of the sexual market in which *everything resembles everything else*.

Capitalism has truly created wealth, because it has found wealth where it could not be seen. Thus it has for example created beauty, health or youth *as riches*, that is, as qualities that possess you.

The YoungGirl is never satisfied with her submission to commodity metaphysics, with the docility of her whole being, and visibly of her whole body, under the Spectacle’s norms. That’s why she feels the need to show it off.

“They’ve wounded me in what is most dear to me: my image.” (Silvio Berlusconi)

The YoungGirl always lives in a couple relationship: with her image.

The YoungGirl confirms the physiological reach of commodity semiocracy.

“How beautiful are you? No, beauty isn’t a subjective measure. As opposed to charm, a rather vague notion, beauty is calculated in centimeters, divided into fractions, weighed, examined under the magnifying glass, evaluated in a thousand hidden details. So stop hiding away behind hippy-cool principles like “inner beauty, that’s what counts,” “I’ve got my own style,” and dare to measure yourself with the greats!”

The YoungGirl’s beauty is *produced*. She herself isn’t afraid to say: “beauty doesn’t fall from the sky,” that is, it’s the fruit of labor.

The YoungGirl’s self-control and self-constraint are obtained by the introjection of two unquestionable “necessities,” that of *reputation* and that of *health*.

“Today, to not suffer isn’t a luxury anymore, it’s a right.”

Officially, the YoungGirl would have preferred to become some thing that feels rather than some Bloom that suffers.

The YoungGirl pursues plastic perfection in all its forms, notably her own.

From body building to anti wrinkle creams by way of liposuction, the YoungGirl always has the same dedication to making an abstraction of her body, and making her body an abstraction.

“All that can be done to reconcile yourself with your image.”

Whatever extent her narcissism reaches to, the YoungGirl doesn’t love herself, what she loves is ‘her’ *image*, that is, something that’s not just foreign and external, but which, in the full sense of the term, *possesses* her. And the YoungGirl lives beneath the tyranny of this ungrateful master.

The YoungGirl is above all a perspective on the passing of time, but a perspective incarnate.



III. The YoungGirl as social relationship

The YoungGirl is the elementary social relationship, the central form of the desire of desire, within the Spectacle. **AND MEANWHILE, LOVE HAS FALLEN AWAY INTO THE FOULEST OF SPECTACULAR ROLE PLAYING GAMES.**

The YoungGirl never gives herself, she only gives *what she has*, that is, the ensemble of qualities that are given to her. That's also why it's not possible to love the YoungGirl, but only to consume her.

“I don't wanna get attached,
you know?”

Seduction is an aspect of social labor, that of the YoungGirl.

The powerlessness or frigidity of the YoungGirl concretely manifests that her own erotic power has separated from her and become autonomous, to the point where it dominates her.

WHEN THE YOUNGGIRL GIGGLES, SHE'S STILL AT WORK.

The YoungGirl's reification fits so perfectly with the world of the authoritarian commodity that it should be considered her fundamental professional skill.

Sexuality is as just as central for the YoungGirl as any one of her sex acts is insignificant.

~~And they are realists
even in matters of love.~~

The YoungGirl isn't content with believing that sexuality exists, she swears she's found it. New gods, new superstitions.

“What's a good fuck?”

Never forget that the YoungGirl
that loves you also chose you.

“Oh, the sorrows of love; you could lose three
pounds from that.”

*For the YoungGirl, seduction never comes to an end,
that is, the YoungGirl comes to an end with seduction.*

All relationships with the YoungGirl consist in being chosen again at each instant. Here and at work, it's the same contractual precariousness.

The YoungGirl loves no one, that is, she loves the impersonality of what “PEOPLE” say/do/etc. She reveals the Spectacle wherever it is, and wherever she finds it, she adores it.

Because in the Spectacle, separation can be opportunely accumulated even in the “carnal union.”

“BELIEVE IN BEAUTY”

The “dictatorship of beauty” is also the dictatorship of ugliness. It doesn't mean the violent hegemony of a certain paradigm of beauty, but in a much more radical way, the hegemony of the *physical simulacrum* as a form of the objectivity of beings. Understood as such, it is clear that nothing prevents such a dictatorship from extending to all people, whether beautiful, ugly, or indifferent.

The YoungGirl has no problem with pretending to be in submission, *because she knows that she dominates*. Something in that brings her close to the masochism that has long been taught to women, and that made them give to men the *signs* of power so as to recover inside of themselves the certainty that they've kept it in *reality*.

Sexuality does not exist.

It is an abstraction, a separate moment, hypostasised and become the ghostly specter dominating relationships between people.

The YoungGirl is only ever really at home in relationships of pure exteriority.

The YoungGirl is production and a factor in production; That is, she is the consumer, the producer, the consumer of producers and the producer of consumers.

The YoungGirl's "femininity" only designates the fact that the Spectacle has put the legendary intimacy of "Woman" with nature back into a state of absolute intimacy with the spectacular "second nature."

"CUSTOMIZE YOUR COUPLE!"

THE COUPLE: PETRIFYING ALL THE UNCONTROLLABLE FLUIDITY OF DISTANCE BETWEEN BODIES BY CARVING AN APPROPRIABLE TERRITORY OF INTIMACY INTO IT.

The YoungGirl lends a very singular meaning to the word "desire." Don't be fooled: in her mouth, it does not designate the inclination a mortal being may feel for another mortal being or for any thing at all, but only – on the impersonal level of values – *a difference in potential*. It's not the tension one being feels towards its object, but a tension in the flatly *electrical* sense, a motor inequality.

|| Seduction is originally not the spontaneous relationship between men and women, but the dominant relationship of men *among themselves*. Seduction thus always had "sexuality" as its empty center, but the latter was repulsive as long as its effect was still not inverted. Shame and exhibitionism are the two opposite poles of one and the same fiction.

What's watching you in the YoungGirl's eyes is the Spectacle.

The YoungGirl's existential posturing didn't take long to radiate throughout all fields of human activity. In architecture, for example, this is called *façadism*.

The YoungGirl's reality is outside of herself, in the Spectacle, in all the adulterated representations of the ideals it traffics in, in all the fleeting conventions it decrees, in the morals that it commands us to mimic. It is but the insubstantial concretion of all these abstractions that go before and after her. In other words, she's a purely ideological creature.

The controlled intellectual, the cold and passionate, the toning competitor, the unstable creative, the toning and controlled, the sociable and emotional, the sensitive and inhibited, the emotional volunteer ... WHO ARE YOU REALLY?

The YoungGirl's essence is taxonomic.

Among monads, seduction is the relationship that most conforms to their essence. The completeness and impermeability of the two parts is the fundamental hypothesis. This impermeability to what she embraces, however, the YoungGirl calls "respect."

Macking is the most obvious domain for the *mechanical* operation of commodity relationships.

"Fashion is the playing area for individuals who lack interior autonomy and need support points, but who nonetheless feel the need to stand out, to be paid attention to and to be considered apart from the rest... Fashion elevates the insignificant by making it into the representative of a totality, the particular incarnation of a common spirit. Its function is to make possible a kind of social obedience which is at the same time individual differentiation... It is the mixing of submission and the feeling of domination that is in action here."

(Georg Simmel, *Philosophy of modernity*)

The couple is subjected to a kind of blackmail that shows itself more and more to be a blackmail of sexuality. But this subjugation is twofold: the YoungGirl only lets herself really be approached by her "best friends" in relationships where all sexual latency has been extinguished beforehand; and she keeps no-one at more of a distance than those who have slept with her. It's the experience of this distance that replaces the lover with the partner.

All the YoungGirls behavior betrays her *obsession with calculation*.

"If she were mine, she would never be just mine, nor should she be. Beauty is there for everyone's enjoyment; it's a public institution." (Carlo Dossi, *Loves*, 1887)

In her way, the YoungGirl's goal is "zero errors." And so she extends into herself above all the regime ruling the production of things. Her imperialism is no stranger to the intention of serving as an example for all other Blooms.

All the activity that the YoungGirl carries out, for the sake of which she abdicates all freedom and in which she never ceases to be lost, is of a cosmetic nature. And in that sense she resembles the whole of this society, which takes so much care to keep its façade clean.

The YoungGirl is in the habit of calling the reified whole of her limits her "personality." She can thus validate her right to nullity, as a right to "be herself," that is, to only be that: a right that is conquered and defended.

So that sexuality could spread through all spheres of human existence, it first had to be dissociated in spirit as a moment separate from the rest of life.

The YoungGirl's body is but a concession that is given her more or less lastingly, which clears up the reasons why she hates it so much. It's just a rented residence, something that she doesn't really possess or usufruct, that she is only free to *use*, and furthermore, because the walls, her corporeality projected as capital, a factor in production and consumption, are possessed by the autonomized social totality.

"Hey, who does that guy think he is?"

The YoungGirl is a form of "social bond" in the primary sense of what *ties* you to this society.

"The perfect sexual relationship isn't improvised, it's decided on, organized, planned!"

The YoungGirl's loves are a kind of *work*, and like all labor, they have become *precarious*.

As insubstantial identities, "manliness" and "femininity" are no more than convenient tools in the spectacular management of social relations. They are the fetishes necessary for the circulation and consumption of other fetishes.

The Spectacle loves itself, gazes upon itself, and admires itself in the YoungGirl, of which it is the Pygmalion.

Considered in herself, the YoungGirl expresses nothing; she's a symbol the meaning of which is elsewhere.

The YoungGirl is an engine for reducing everything that comes in contact with her to a YoungGirl.

"Live together and everyone for themselves!"

The YoungGirl is the highest point of alienated socialization, where the most socialized is also the most social.

In sexuality and money the relationship becomes separate from what it brings into relation.

It is precisely by conferring upon her body – but more generally upon her whole being – the character of *capital*, that the YoungGirl is dispossessed.

Sexuality is a separation device. In it, the fiction of a sphere of truth, within all relationships and in all beings, where the distance from self to self and from self to other – wherein pure coincidence was reconstituted – would be finally abolished, has been socially introduced. The fiction of sexuality sets up the choice truth/appearances, sincerity/lies, in such a way that everything that is not it, is cast as lies. It thus preventively undermines all possibility of *elaborating* relationships between bodies. The art of distances in which the exit of separation is experienced is set up as the device "sexuality" and its binary, blackmail.

The YoungGirl is also an element of the decor, a masturbating Pan of the "modern" conditions of existence.

Even in love, the YoungGirl speaks the language of political economy and of management.

The whole world of the Spectacle is a mirror that reflects to the YoungGirl the assimilable image of its ideal.

In the heart of the YoungGirl's world, the demand for freedom disguises the form of the demand for seduction.

***The YoungGirl is the anecdote for the world,
and what dominates the world of the anecdote.***

“**Job:** You’re going into a big construction period which will push you towards the future energetically. You’ll run into it all: luck, creativity, popularity.

“**Love:** Your seduction will bring you lots of positive feed-back.”

For the YoungGirl the language of horoscopes is also the “language of real life.”

The YoungGirl has quite the magical ability to convert the most heterogeneous “qualities” (fortune, beauty, intelligence, generosity, humor, social origin, ethnicity, etc.) into a single “social value” that controls her relationship choices.

The Spectacle intends to be able to awaken in everybody the YoungGirl sleeping inside them. It chases after the ghost of that uniformity.

The lie of porno is that it claims to represent the obscene, and shows the vanishing point of all representation. In reality, any family dinner, any managers’ meeting, is more obscene than a facial cumshot.

There isn’t room for two in the YoungGirl’s body.

The YoungGirl’s aspiration to become a symbol only expresses her desire to *belong* to the society of non-belonging, at any cost. It signifies a *constant* effort to remain adequate to her visible being. That wager explains the fanaticism.

Love is impossible in the modern conditions of production. Within the commodity mode of disclosure, a gift appears either as an absurd display of weakness, or as something taking place within the flow of other exchanges, and thus governed by a “calculated air of disinterestedness.” Since Man is supposed to be intimate with nothing but his own interests, to the extent that they do not appear to him nakedly only lies and simulations are plausible. Thus paranoid suspicion reigns regarding the other’s real intentions and motivations; gifts are so suspect that one must now *pay to give*. The YoungGirl knows about that better than anyone.

the dirty game of seduction

When private property has been emptied of all metaphysical substance of its own, it does not die immediately. It survives, but its content is only negative anymore; the right to deprive others of the use of our goods. When sex acts are freed of all immanent meaning, they proliferate. But in the end, it’s no longer anything but a fleeting monopoly on the other’s genital organs.

For the YoungGirl, the superficiality of all relationships is the cause of the superficiality of being.

IV. The YoungGirl as commodity

The YoungGirl is not worried so much about possessing the equivalent of what she’s worth on the desire market as she is about ensuring herself of her *value*, which she wants to know with certainty and precision, by means of those thousand symbols that are left to her to convert into what she would call her “seduction potential,” read: her *manna*.

“Those who cannot give of themselves sell themselves.” (Stendhal)

“How to be flirty without looking like a bitch”

The YoungGirl’s value does not rest on any interior or even intrinsic grounds; her foundation resides uniquely in her exchangeability. The YoungGirl’s value only appears in her relationship with another YoungGirl. That’s why she’s never alone. By making the other YoungGirl her equal as a value, she puts herself into a relationship with herself as a value. By putting herself into a relationship with herself as a value, she at the same time differentiates herself from herself as a singular being. “Thus representing itself as something differentiated in itself, it begins to show itself as what it really is, a commodity.” (Marx)

The YoungGirl is the commodity that at every moment demands to be consumed because with each passing moment she is getting closer to her expiration date.

The YoungGirl does not contain within herself the thing for which she is desired: her Advertising.

The YoungGirl is an absolute: she is purchased because she has value, she has value because she is purchased. Commodity tautology.

The YoungGirl is anyone who prefers to become a commodity him or herself, rather than simply suffering under tyranny.

In love, like in the rest of this “society,” *no one is allowed to not know their own value anymore.*

The YoungGirl is the place where the commodity and the human coexist in an *apparently* non-contradictory manner.

The world of the YoungGirl shows a singular sophistication, since her reification has progressed to an exceeding degree: *in her human relationships mask commodity relationships that mask human relationships.*

“You deserve better than that guy/that chick.”

In the Spectacle, the YoungGirl is, like woman was in the primitive world, an *object* of Advertising. But the YoungGirl is, furthermore, a *subject* of Advertising, who buys and sells herself. This division within the YoungGirl is her fundamental alienation. Added to that is this drama: while exogamy effectively maintained permanent relationships among tribes, the YoungGirl’s *manna* spills away between her fingers, her Advertising fails, and it’s *she herself* who suffers the consequences.

The YoungGirl is absorbed by price. She’s nothing but that, *and it makes her sick to her stomach.*

Shame for the YoungGirl consists not in the fact of being bought, but on the contrary of *not being bought.* She doesn’t get glory just out of her value, she gets glory out of having a price put on her too.

Nothing’s less personal to the YoungGirl than her “value as a person.”

It’s not rare to see, by an abuse of language that slowly becomes an abuse of reality, the owners of a unique or expensive object first get a hankering after something, and then finally they claim to “like” it, and then they even “really love” it after a while. Some may claim in the same way that they “love” a given YoungGirl. But if that were really the case they’d end up dying of unhappiness.

The YoungGirl puts to work the self-commodification of non-commodities, the self-estimation of the inestimable.

“Oh... no, not on the first night.” – The YoungGirl’s “value as a person” is but the “price” for which she is willing to be exchanged, and it is the reason she lets herself be bought and sold, in the end – to increase her value.

The YoungGirl sells her existence like it was a personal loan.

Whatever the YoungGirl gives that is incalculable, she counts anyway.

In the exchange set up by the YoungGirl, personnel are traded off against personnel on the terrain of commodity impersonality.

The YoungGirl, who is disturbed by love, only lets herself be approached conditionally, either at the close of, or according to the prospects of, a market. Even when she appears to abandon herself completely, she only in fact abandons the part of herself that is under contract, preserving or reserving the freedom that she does not alienate/sell. Since the contract can never bind the *whole* person being sold, part of the person still must remain outside the contract, so as to remain contractable. There’s no clearer or truer way to express the abject character of the present version of “love.” “From this one may conclude that from the beginning the absolute behind relationships was perverted, and that in a commodity society, there is a certain commerce between beings but never a real ‘community,’ never a meeting that was more than just the ‘right’ procedures, however extreme they may have been. Force relationships where the payer or the keeper is dominated, frustrated by their own power, which only measures their own powerlessness.” (Blanchot, *The shameful community*)

“Call on the other line!”

The YoungGirl at all times remains ferociously the *owner* of her body.

WAITRESS, MODEL, ADVERTISER, EXECUTIVE, COORDINATING AGENT. THE YOUNG GIRL TODAY SELLS HER “SEDUCTION POWER” LIKE PEOPLE USED TO SELL THEIR “LABOR FORCE.”

All success in matters of seduction is essentially a failure, since in the same way as you're not buying a commodity, but a commodity is *wanting* to be bought, it's not that we're seducing YoungGirls, but rather, that YoungGirls *want* to be seduced.

The broker of a somewhat singular transaction currency, the YoungGirl directs all her efforts towards *performing a good fuck*.

The diversity of social, geographical, or morphological constraints weighing upon the parcels of human organs that the YoungGirl encounters is not enough to explain her differential positioning among the competing products. Their exchange value cannot be based on any singular expression or any substantial determination that it would be impossible to consider as equivalent to every other, even in spite of the Spectacle's powerful mediation. This value is thus not determined by any chimerical natural factors, but on the contrary by the sum of the labor supplied by each to make themselves recognized in the glassy eyes of the Spectacle, that is, to produce themselves as a symbol of those qualities recognized by alienated Publicity, which in the end are never anything but synonyms for submission.

The first skill the YoungGirl learns: to organize her own rarity.

Rest, for the YoungGirl, means knowing *exactly* what she's *worth*.

“Oh my god I can't believe that old man rejected me!”

The YoungGirl is never worried about herself, just about her *value*. Thus, when she encounters hatred, she is seized by doubt: has her popularity rating/stock quotation gone down?

If YoungGirls had any interest in speaking, they'd say, “our use value can certainly interest men; as for us, as objects, we don't really give a damn. What concerns us is our value. Our relationship between ourselves as objects to be bought and sold proves it. We just see each other as exchange values.” (Marx, *Das kapital*)

“Seduce right. Don't get tired of turning stuff on!”

The YoungGirl relates to herself like she does to all the commodities she surrounds herself with.

“You shouldn't devalue yourself like that!”

The YoungGirl is – above all – all about making herself *valued*.

In the same way as an object that has been acquired for a certain sum of money is trivial compared to the infinite virtual possibilities that that sum contains, in the same way, the sex object effectively possessed by a YoungGirl is no more than a disappointing crystallization of her “seduction potential” and a given sex act at hand is but a poor objectification of all the possible sex acts that she *might just as well* have had. This scorning for everything by the YoungGirl results from the religious intuition against the “infinite evil.”

The YoungGirl is the most authoritarian commodity in the whole world of authoritarian commodities, the one that can never be possessed, but instead polices you and can at any time be taken away from you.

The YoungGirl is the commodity that claims to sovereignly desire her acquirer.

The YoungGirl feels as if she were with family when she's among commodities, all of which are her sisters.

The absolute triumph of the YoungGirl reveals that sociality is now the most precious and prized of commodities.

What characterizes the imperial era, the era of the Spectacle and Biopower, is the fact that the YoungGirl's very body takes on the form of a commodity belonging to her. “On the other side of it, it is at this very moment that the commodity form of human beings is generalized.” (Marx)

The varnished aspect of the YoungGirl's physiognomy must be explained by the fact that as a commodity she is the *crystallization* of a certain amount of *labor* expended in order to make her meet the standards for a certain type of exchange. And the form in which the YoungGirl appears, which is also the commodity form, is characterized by the concealment, or at least the voluntary forgetting, of this concrete labor. In the YoungGirl's "loves," a relationship between things phantasmagorically takes on the form of a relationship between single individuals. WITH THE YOUNG GIRL, IT'S NOT JUST THAT THE COMMODITY IS TAKING OVER HUMAN SUBJECTIVITY, BUT ABOVE ALL HUMAN SUBJECTIVITY THAT'S REVEALING ITSELF AS THE INTERNALIZATION OF THE COMMODITY. Marx must not have been thinking of the YoungGirl when he wrote that "commodities cannot take themselves to the market or exchange themselves among each other."

"My boyfriend's a poet."

"Originality" is part of the YoungGirl's banality system. It's a concept that lets her put all singularities into equivalence, as empty singularities. In her eyes, all non-conformities take their place within a kind of conformism of non-conformity.

It's always surprising to see how Ricardo's theory of competitive advantages is verified more fully in the commerce of YoungGirls than in that of inert goods.

IT'S ONLY IN EXCHANGE THAT THE YOUNG GIRL REALIZES HER VALUE.

Whether from the countryside, the ghetto, or the expensive neighborhoods, all YoungGirls are equivalent as YoungGirls.

The commodity is the materialization of a relationship, and the YoungGirl is its *incarnation*.

The YoungGirl is today the commodity the most in demand: the *human* commodity.

Within the commodity mode of disclosure, where "beauty" reveals nothing that is truly of its own about itself, appearance being autonomized from all essence, the YoungGirl cannot whatever she does, give herself to *just anyone*.

Bah, either her or some other chick...

The "laws of the market" are *individualized* in the YoungGirl.

What is still called "love" is just the fetishism attached to a particular commodity: the human commodity.

The YoungGirl's eye carries within it the placing into effective equivalence of all places, all things, and all beings. That's how the YoungGirl can conscientiously connect everything that enters her field of vision to something she's already known from alienated Publicity. That's what her language expresses, overflowing as it is with little words like "like," "-ish," and "sorta."

The YoungGirl is a central aspect of what Negriists call "putting desire and feeling to work," eternally dazzled as they are by this world of the commodity, which they never find anything reproachable about.

"Seduction: learn amorous marketing! You dream about him, he ignores you. Hook up with him by using the laws of marketing! No man can resist a well-designed campaign plan. Above all if the product is you!"

Wherever the Spectacle reigns, the YoungGirl's value is immediately effective; her beauty itself is an *executive power*.

The YoungGirl, to preserve her "rarity value," must sell herself at full price, meaning that she most often must refuse to sell herself. Also, as she is seen, the YoungGirl is opportunist even in matters of abstinence.

"Because I'm worth it!"

In terms of classical economics, the YoungGirl must be considered a "Giffen good," or a giffenian good, that is, an object that, contrary to what "ordinarily" happens, is more in demand the more expensive it gets. Luxury commodities fall into this category, and the YoungGirl is certainly the most common of them.

The YoungGirl never allows herself to be possessed as a YoungGirl in the same way as the commodity never lets itself be possessed as a commodity, but only as a *thing*.

“You can be pretty, popular, hassled by indecent propositions, and INWARDLY ALONE.”

The YoungGirl only exists as a YoungGirl within the general equivalence system and its gigantic circulatory movement. She’s never possessed for the same reason she’s desired. At the same time as one becomes her acquirer, she is withdrawn from circulation, a mirage blurs away, the magic aura is stripped, the transcendence that enshrouded her is gone. She’s an idiot and she stinks.

“The modern world isn’t universally whoring out of lust. It would be incapable. It’s universally whoring because it’s universally interchangeable.” (Peguy, *Note Conjointe*)

The YoungGirl is the universal inheritor of the whole of this world’s pseudo-concreteness, and above all of the pseudo-objectivity of the sex act.

The YoungGirl would like to be a thing, but not be treated like a thing. All her distress comes from the fact that she’s not just treated like a thing, but moreover she can’t even manage to really be a thing.

“No, my body isn’t a commodity, it’s a work tool.”

The revolting thing isn’t that the YoungGirl is fundamentally a whore, but that she refuses to see herself as one.

Since the whore, not being just purchased, but also *selling herself*,
is a maximalist figure of autonomy on the commodity terrain.

**The YoungGirl is a thing to the exact extent that she takes herself for a human being;
she is a human being to the exact extent that she takes herself for a thing.**

The whore is the highest holiness conceivable by the commodity world.

“Be yourself! (It pays)”

By a trick of commodity reason, what determines the YoungGirl’s value is supposed to be precisely what is non-commodity, “authentic,” and “good” about her.

The YoungGirl is a crisis of coherence knotting up the intestines of commodity society in the last quarter of its era. She is the response to the imperative of the total commodification of existence in all its aspects, to the need to ensure that nothing remains anymore outside of the commodity-form in what is still, in an euphemistic way, called “human relationships.”

The mission the YoungGirl has received is to re-enchant the bleak world of the commodity and to delay the disaster with joy and carefreeness. In her a second degree form of consumption is primed: the consumption of consumers. So far as one could tell from looking only at appearances, which in a number of cases has become legitimate, one might say that the commodity has, with the YoungGirl, achieved total annexation of the non-commodity.

The YoungGirl’s ass represents the last bastion of the illusion of use value, which has so manifestly disappeared from the surface of all that exists. The irony, of course, is that this value itself is still *an exchange*.

In the Spectacle, one might say about the YoungGirl what Marx said about money: that it is “a special commodity that is set aside by the common action of all other commodities and serves to expose their reciprocal value.”

V. The YoungGirl as living currency

The YoungGirl is demonetized as soon as she leaves circulation. And when she loses the possibility of putting herself back on the market, she starts to rot.

The YoungGirl is the commodity specially appointed for the circulation of standard emotions.

Value has never measured anything, but what it already didn’t measure, it measures ever more poorly.

Living currency is commodity society’s ultimate response to money’s powerlessness to be equivalent to, and thus to buy, the highest human productions, which are at the same time *the most precious and the most common*. Because to the extent that the empire of money has spread out to the ends of the world and to the expression of all human life, it has lost all value of its own, and has become as impersonal as its concept, and consequently so pathetic that to take on equivalence to anything really personal has become highly problematic for it. It’s this ab-



solite inequality between it and human life which one could always see in how impossible it is to pay prostitutes properly. With living currency, commodity domination has annulled these two weaknesses – the one regarding the purchasing of human life as such, that is, as *strength*, the other, regarding the purchasing of its highest productions, by multiplying them amongst themselves. Living currency achieves the equivalence of the incommensurable in people’s personal productions – which meanwhile has become preponderant – and the incommensurable in human life. NOW THE SPECTACLE ESTIMATES THE INESTIMABLE BY USING THE INESTIMABLE IN “OBJECTIVE” VALUES.

“Living currency,’ the industrial slave is simultaneously value both as a symbol worth riches, and as those riches themselves. As a symbol he or she can be exchanged against all kinds of

material wealth, and as wealth he or she nevertheless excludes any other demands, if it is not the demand that they represent the satisfaction of. But satisfaction itself, properly speaking, is also excluded by its very quality as a symbol.” (Klossowski, *Living currency*)

Attached to the YoungGirl as commodity is a character of exclusion linked to the fact that she is also, irreducibly, a human being, that is, something that is, like gold, an end in itself. And it is as a result of this situation of exception that she is returned to the role of a general equivalent.

Living currency, and specifically the YoungGirl, comprises a likely solution to the crisis of value, having become capable of measuring and remunerating the most characteristic productions of this society, those which are tied to the *general intellect*.

The preservation of minimal social conventions is conditioned by the fact that a surplus of living currency would devalorize it, and make it incapable of comprising a serious counterpart to the inestimable that she is intended for the purchase of. At the same time, by rendering the inestimable estimable, she undermines her own foundation. The specter of inflation haunts the YoungGirls’ world.

The YoungGirl is the *final cause* of spectacular economy, its primary motor, immobile. The YoungGirl’s ass carries no new value, only a new devalorization of all the ones that have gone before it. The devastating power of the YoungGirl is thus the fact that she liquidates all productions that cannot be converted into living currency. In total nihilism, all notions of greatness or prestige have long disappeared if they are not immediately convertible into YoungGirls.

The YoungGirl never misses a chance to display the victory of living currency over raw, vile money; thus she demands an infinite counter-gift in exchange for herself.

Money is no longer the ultimate term of the economy. Its triumph has depreciated it. A naked king that has abandoned all metaphysical content, it has also lost all value. Nothing shows it respect anymore, in the biopolitical flock. Living currency has taken the place of money as a general equivalent; that which *relative to which* it is worth anything. It is its value and its concretion. The purchasing power of living currency, and *a fortiori* of the YoungGirl, has no limit; it extends over the whole of everything that exists, because in her, wealth enjoys itself doubly: as symbol and as fact. The high level of individuation in people and their productions, which had made money incapable of serving as a mediator in purely personal relationships comes into play on condition that living currency is being distributed.

It appears that all that is concrete about this world has disappeared into the YoungGirl’s *ass*.

In the same way as the organization of social misery has been made necessary after 68 to return to the commodity its lost honor, sexual misery is necessary for the maintenance of the tyranny of the YoungGirl – of living currency. But there’s nothing economic or short-term about that misery; on the contrary, in the end, it is just the essential misery of “sexuality” itself.

“When it comes to personal property, possession amounts to title.”

Money in no way contradicts living currency; it preserves a transcended moment of it, along with all its accounting which no longer measures anything at all.

Since the translation of highly-differentiated human life into money had become impossible, the YoungGirl was invented to restore value to devalORIZED money. But in one fell swoop the YoungGirl not only out-classed money, making it a secondary consideration, she regenerated it, and returned substance to it. And money now continues to survive due to this ruse.

The YoungGirl’s impersonality has the same ideal, impeccable, purifying substance as money. The YoungGirl herself is *odorless*.

Just like a “use value” has no relationship with its exchange value, the emotion that living currency stirs is not susceptible to accounting; it is not commensurable with any *thing*. But in the same way as use value hardly exists free of exchange value, the emotion that living currency stirs hardly exists outside of the system it is exchanged within. Neither the YoungGirl or gold are really enjoyed; one enjoys only their uselessness and rarity.

When Marx said that an object’s exchange value crystallizes the labor time necessary for the production of that object, he was only saying that in the last analysis value is comprised merely of the life annulled in a thing – that is, that living currency is first of all the numeraire.

“As soon as the bodily presence of the industrial slave is figured absolutely into the equation for the assessable yield of what he can produce – his physiognomy considered as inseparable from his labor – only a specious distinction can be made between the person and his activity. His physical bodily presence is already a commodity, independent of and *beyond* the commodity that such presence contributes to the production of. And now the industrial slave either establishes a strict relationship between his bodily presence and the money that it brings in, or that bodily presence replaces the money function, it itself being money: at the same time the equivalent of wealth and wealth itself.” (Klossowski, *Living currency*)

In French, the verb “foutre”¹ is used generally to depreciatively refer to all activity. “What the fuck are you doing?”² And it’s true that in all societies where people cannot engage in free activity, *fuck* is the general abstract equivalent, the degree zero of all activity.

Until the appearance of the YoungGirl on the scene, it was impossible to concretely understand what “*baiser*”³ was all about, that is, to fuck someone without really fucking any one *singular person*. Because to “fuck” with a being that’s so completely abstract, so effectively interchangeable, is to fuck with the absolute.⁴

If money is the king of commodities, the YoungGirl is the queen.

The preferred kind of porn star is silent, keeps to herself, discourse-less; not because what they’d have to say would be so intolerable, or so excessively indecent, but on the contrary because when they talk, what they say about themselves is precisely the truth of *all YoungGirls*. “I take vitamins so I’ll have pretty hair; physical care is something you have to work on every day. It’s normal, you have to work on your appearance, the image people have of you,” one of them confesses.

In the final phase of the Spectacle, everything is sexually mediated, that is, the sex act has replaced the utility of specific things as their ultimate finality. The existence of the world of the commodity now tends exclusively towards it.

“As long as free love is not generalized, a certain number of young girls will always be needed to fill the function of today’s whores.” (Georg Simmel, *Philosophy of love*)

Ah, the YoungGirls of the tertiary sector; marketing; shops; social services. In the near, foreseeable future, the whole of the capitalist regime’s surplus value will be produced by YoungGirls.

What’s exchanged in the sex act is self-esteem. Each YoungGirl presents herself as an automatic and standard converter of existence into commodity value.

The YoungGirl is in fact neither the subject or object of emotion, but merely a *pretext for it*. One does not get

1 to fuck – TRANS.

2 “qu’est-ce que tu fous” (literally, “what are you fucking”) – TRANS.

3 to physically fuck – TRANS.

4 to delve into the absolute – TRANS.

off on a YoungGirl, or on her getting off; one gets off on getting off on her. A kind of gamble has to be made. Like money, the YoungGirl is equivalent to herself, and only bears a relation to herself.

The YoungGirl is the true gold, the absolute numeraire.

It's a unilateral-fetishist perspective to affirm that "the living object that is the source of emotion from an exchange perspective is worth its maintenance costs." (Klossowski, *Living currency*)

The time freed up by the perfection and growing efficiency of the instruments of production is not balanced out by any decrease in "labor" time, but by the extension of the sphere of "work" over the whole of life, and above all by the constitution and maintenance of a sufficiently large mass of living currency, of *available* Blooms and YoungGirls, available to give birth to a parallel and already regulated sexual market.

The ghostly nature of the YoungGirl reproduces the ghostly nature of participation in this society, for which the YoungGirl is also the remuneration.

Living currency, in sum, reveals the truth of commodity exchange, that is, it reveals its lie: the impossibility of putting the incommensurable aspects of human life (classically coagulated into "labor time") into equivalence with inert or other *things*, or with money, in whatever quantity. Because the lie of commodity society in the end is that it puts life through a regulated exchange, which always involves a SACRIFICE, and thereby claims to settle an INFINITE DEBT.

VI. The YoungGirl as compact political devise

More distinctly than any other commodity, but not any more fundamentally so, the YoungGirl constitutes an *offensive neutralization device*.

How could capitalism have managed to mobilize affects, to spread its power in molecules everywhere to where it colonizes our very sentiments and emotions, if the YoungGirl weren't working as a *relay*?

Just like the economy itself, the YoungGirl thinks she's got us by the infrastructure.

"Look at the bright side of life;" ...because history advances in its dark side.

Biopower is also available in a cream, pill, and spray form.

Seduction is the new opium of the masses. It is the freedom of a world with no freedom, the joy of a world with no joy.

The terrible example set in the past by a few liberated women was enough to convince domination that it would do well to ward off all feminine freedom.

By her sentiments, physiology, family, "sincerity," "health," desire, and obedience to all social determinisms, by all means, **the YoungGirl defends herself against freedom.**

Taking on the appearance of a ready-to-burst neutrality, the YoungGirl is the most fearful of all visible political oppression devices.

"Are you sexually normal?"

The YoungGirl advances like a living engine, directed by and directing itself towards the Spectacle's direction.

Domination has discovered a means vastly more powerful than the simple power of constraint: *directed attraction*.

The YoungGirl is the elementary unit of biopolitical individuality.

Historically, the YoungGirl appears in her extreme affinity with Biopower as the spontaneous addressee of all biopolitics, to which PEOPLE address themselves.

"Eating poorly is a luxury, a sign of idleness. Scorn for the body is a perfectly self-satisfied relationship to oneself. The working woman gets into maintaining her bodily capital (gym, pool), whereas for the student what's most important is aesthetics (dance) or the exhausting physical expenditure par excellence: the nightclub."

The function of the YoungGirl is to transform the promise of freedom contained in the end of western civilization into a surplus of alienation, into the deepening of the commodity order, into new servitudes, into a *political* status quo.

The YoungGirl lives on the same plane as Technology; that of the formal spiritualization of the world.

Within commodity domination, seduction straightaway shows itself as the exercise of *power*.

The YoungGirl has no opinion or position of her own; she takes shelter as quickly as possible in the shadow of whoever wins.

The “modern” type of labor, where it’s no longer a certain quantity of labor power that is made profitable, but rather the docile exercise of certain “human qualities,” admirably suits the YoungGirl’s skills of imitation.

The YoungGirl is the cornerstone of the commodity order’s maintenance system; she puts herself in the service of all its restorations. Since *the YoungGirl just wants some fucking peace, w the YoungGirl is the ideal collaborator*.

The YoungGirl understands freedom as the possibility of choosing from among a thousand insignificances.

The YoungGirl doesn’t want any history.

The YoungGirl aims at the regulation of all the senses.

In the world of the authoritarian commodity, all the naive praise given to desire is immediately praise given to servitude.

No slave of semiocracy doesn’t get a certain power out of it, a power of judgement; blame; opinion.

The YoungGirl is the materialization of the way capitalism has recreated all the needs that it had freed mankind from by tirelessly reworking the human world to meet the abstract norms of the Spectacle, and by raising the bar of those norms ever higher. Both YoungGirl and Spectacle share the morbid obsession with remaining identical to themselves, no matter the frenzied activity needed to do so.

The strict control and excessive solicitude that this society shows towards women only expresses its need to reproduce itself identically and to MASTER its perpetuation.

“The American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, in a publication dealing with the role of women in modern America (1929), concluded that mass consumerism has made the “modern housewife... much less a specialized worker than an entrepreneur of lifestyles.” (Stuart Ewen, *Captains of consciousness*)

Biopower’s program comes above all in the form of a process of the subjugation of men to and by their own bodies.

The Spectacle wards off the body in excessively evoking it, like religion evoked it by excessively warding it off.

The YoungGirl esteems “sincerity,” a “good heart,” “kindness,” “simplicity,” “frankness,” “modesty,” and in general all the virtues that considered one-sidedly are really just synonyms of servitude.

The YoungGirl lives in the illusion that freedom is found at the end of a total submission to commodity “Publicity.” But at the end of that servitude there is nothing but old age and death.

“Freedom doesn’t exist” says the YoungGirl, and then walks off into the pharmacy.

The YoungGirl wants to be “independent,” that is, in her mind, dependent only on PEOPLE.

Everything great that is not at the same time a sign of subjugation to the world of the authoritarian commodity is because of that devoted to a total detestation of the YoungGirl, who still dares talk about “arrogance,” “sufficiency,” and even “scorn.”

The YoungGirl is the central article of permissive consumption and commodity leisure.

Access to freedom in the Spectacle is merely access to marginal consumption on the desire market, which is its symbolic heart.

The preponderance of the amusement and desire markets is but a moment in the vast enterprise of social pacification, in which it has taken on the function of temporarily covering up the living contradictions that riddle the tissue of imperial biopolitics at all points.

The symbolic privileges that the Spectacle grants to the YoungGirl come back to it as the counterparts of the absorption and diffusion of the ephemeral codes, renovated usages, and general semiology that had to be there in order to politically neutralize the free time released by the “progress” made by the social organization of labor. The YoungGirl as the central linchpin of “permissive training.”

The YoungGirl as environment and coordination in the dictatorial management of leisure activity.

The YoungGirl, deep down inside, is like a rubber stamp: she bears all the proper indifference, all the necessary coldness that the conditions of metropolitan life demand.

It doesn’t matter much to the Spectacle if seduction is hated everywhere, as long as people don’t manage to get

any idea of the abundance that could *transcend it*.

When the Spectacle makes attempts to “praise womanhood” or more flatly acknowledges the “feminization of the world,” all you’ll ever really be getting will be an underhanded promotion of all the servitudes and of the constellation of “values” that slaves always pretend to have.

“Oh my God, you are SO gross!”

The YoungGirl is already the best-performing behavior control agent out there. With the YoungGirl, domination is introduced into even the profoundest extremities of each person’s life.

The violence with which feminitude is administered in the world of the authoritarian commodity recalls the way domination felt free to abuse its slaves even when, after all, it needed them to ensure its reproduction.

The YoungGirl is that power against which it is barbaric, indecent, and even plain totalitarian to rebel.

In the world of the authoritarian commodity, the living can see in their own alienated desires a demonstration of the power that the enemy has drawn from them.

VII. The YoungGirl as war machine

The YoungGirl spontaneously assents to anything that might mean subjugation to any kind of necessity – “life,” “society,” “work,” the education of children, another YoungGirl. But this assent is itself determined in an exclusively negative manner; it’s only given to such things as long as they bar all singular expressions.

The glassy smile of the YoungGirl always has a penal colony hidden behind it.

The YoungGirl has no other legitimacy besides that of the Spectacle. As docile as the YoungGirl is before the arbitrariness of what PEOPLE say, she’s just as tyrannical when it comes to living beings. Her submission to the impersonality of the Spectacle gives her the right to subjugate others to it, whoever they may be.

In fucking and in all the other sectors of her existence, the YoungGirl acts as a formidable mechanism for the annulment of negativity.

Because the YoungGirl is the living presence of everything that wishes us a humane death, she’s not just the purest product of the Spectacle, but the plastic proof of the love that we give it. She’s the path down which we follow our own loss of self.

Everything she has managed to neutralize finds its place in the YoungGirl’s world as an ACCESSORY.

Seduction as war. PEOPLE use the word “canon”⁵ as a metaphor, which appears to be taking on less and less of an aesthetic tone and more and more a ballistic one.

YoungGirls comprise the infantry of visibility’s occupation troops, the rank and file of the present dictatorship of appearances.

The YoungGirl finds herself to be in a relationship of immediacy and affinity with everything competing to re-format humanity.

Each YoungGirl comprises, in her own way, an advanced outpost of the imperialism of insignificance.

Viewed from a whole-territory perspective, the YoungGirl appears as the most powerful vector of the tyranny of servitude. Any manifestation of non-submissiveness makes her furious. And in that sense a kind of totalitarian social-democracy suits her marvelously.

The YoungGirl’s violence is proportional to her fragile vacuity.

Capitalism has made particular use of the YoungGirl in order to extend its hegemony over the totality of social life.

She is commodity domination’s toughest pawn, in a war whose stakes are still the total control over everyday life and “production” time.

It is precisely because she sketches out a total acculturation of the self, because she defines herself in terms set by outside judgement, that the YoungGirl is the most advanced bearer of the spectacular *ethos*, and its abstract behavioral norms.

“A huge educational project would have to be set up (maybe on the Chinese or Khmer

5 Literally: “gun”; Figuratively: “pimpin” – TRANS.

Rouge model), in the form of work camps where boys would learn, under the guidance of competent ladies, the duties and secrets of housewifery.”

The YoungGirl's insignificance shows her oppressed minority situation, and at the same time her imperialist and triumphal character. It's just that the YoungGirl is fighting for the Empire, **her master**.

Contrary to the young girls of Babylon, who, according to Strabon, turned over to the temple the income they obtained through their prostitution, the YoungGirl's prostitution profits the Spectacle, and she doesn't even know it.

“Furthermore, and this is where the schoolgirl's true pandemonium began, there was a whole pile of confidential letters sent by judges, lawyers, and prosecutors, pharmacists, businessmen, city or rural notables, doctors, etc., letters sent by all these remarkable and brilliant people who'd always inspired so much respect in me! I couldn't shake off my surprise ... So they too, in spite of appearances, were having relations with the schoolgirl? ‘Incredible,’ I repeated to myself; ‘it's incredible.’ So this Maturity weighed upon them so heavily that they wrote long letters to a modern 1st year schoolgirl, hiding it all from their wives and children? ... These letters made me fully realize all the enormous power of the modern schoolgirl. Where, indeed, did she NOT dominate? (Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*)

The YoungGirl is a metaphysical kidnapping procedure; that is, one is never her prisoner, but rather one is always a prisoner *in her*.

The YoungGirl is a warning to each and every one to make sure they keep on measuring up to the Spectacle's images.

The YoungGirl is an instrument in the service of a general policy to exterminate beings capable of love.

Identical in this sense to the alienated social totality, the YoungGirl detests unhappiness, since unhappiness indicts her *like it indicts this society*.

The YoungGirl works to propagate a kind of terror of fun.

– How many squads of riot cops does the YoungGirl need before she truly smiles like a child?

– More, more, MORE...

The vocabulary proper to the YoungGirl is also that of Total Mobilization.

“Fidelity – it earns interest.”

The YoungGirl is a member of the new morals police making sure that everyone carries out their *function* and sticks to it exclusively. The YoungGirl thus *never* really interacts with singular beings, but with groups of qualities objectivized into a role, a character or a social situation which one is supposed to conform to in all circumstances. And so anyone that she shares her little alienated everyday life with will always definitively remain “that guy” or “this chick.”

The YoungGirl watches over the commodity with an envious eye, because she sees her model in it, that is, she sees something that is the same as her, but more perfect. What humanity she has left isn't just what's keeping her from attaining commodity perfection; it's also the cause of all her suffering. And so she has to eradicate that too.

The YoungGirl reproaches reality, with a non-feigned bitterness, for not measuring up to the Spectacle.

The ignorance in which the YoungGirl sticks to her role as a cornerstone of the present system of domination *is also part of that role*.

The YoungGirl is a pawn in an all-out war that domination has undertaken in order to try and eradicate all otherness. The YoungGirl does not mince words when she says it: she's “horrified of the negative.” And when she says that she is, like Spinoza's stone, persuaded that it's her that's talking.

The YoungGirl wears a mask, and when she admits it, it's always only to suggest that she also has a “true face” that she wouldn't or couldn't show. But that “true face” is also a mask, and a frightful one: it is the true face of domination. And in fact, when the YoungGirl “takes off her mask,” the Empire is speaking *directly to you*.

“...what if all the guys on the planet were eliminated? Why try to make something new out of the old things? I'm sick of guys, they can all fuck off, just ...go away! Anyway, it's no use getting upset; historically and genetically speaking, man has had

his time. He's doing away with himself on his own."

Every YoungGirl is a modest filtration enterprise in and of herself.

Considered as a whole, YoungGirls comprise the most frightful paramilitary force that has been wielded by PEOPLE against all heterogeneity, against all vague desire for desertion. Parallel to this they also map out at each moment the most advanced outposts of Biopower, its revolting solicitude and the cybernetic pacification of everything.

Beneath the culinary gaze of the YoungGirl, all things and all beings, whether organic or inorganic, appear as if they could be possessed, or at least consumed. Everything she sees, she transforms into a commodity just by looking at it. In that sense also she comprises an advanced outpost in the Spectacle's endless offensive.

The YoungGirl is the nothingness that PEOPLE wield to hold down the pregnancy of Nothingness.

The YoungGirl doesn't like war, she wages it.

The YoungGirl is the final slavery, by which the *silence* of the slaves has been achieved.

It's not enough to affirm that the YoungGirl speaks the Spectacle's language; it must also be remarked that that's the only language she can understand, and that she thus forces everyone who doesn't loathe her to speak it.

The semicratic authorities, who ever more forcefully demand an *aesthetic* assent to their world, flatter themselves that they can now pass what they want off as what is "beautiful." But this "beautiful" is only the socially controlled desirable.

"SICK OF GUYS? GET A DOG! You're what, 18, 20 years old? You're starting school and it looks like it's going to be long and hard? Do you really think this is the time to slow down that fine takeoff of yours by desperately seeking affection from some boy who in the end has nothing to offer you? Or worse, to saddle yourself with a companion who himself isn't perfect, not really very nice, and not always so clean..."

The YoungGirl promotes conformity between all the fleeting norms of the Spectacle, and conveys an *example* of such a conformity.

Like everything that has achieved symbolic hegemony, the YoungGirl condemns as *barbaric* all physical violence directed against her ambition for the total pacification of society. Her and domination share the same obsession with security.

The very character of the war machine that can be seen so strikingly in every YoungGirl insists that she live her life no differently than she wages her war. But on the other hand, her inflatable emptiness already prefigures her coming militarization. She no longer just defends her private monopoly on desire, but in general the alienated state of the public expression of desires.

Men are not prisoners of their "instinctive impulses" in the Spectacle; they are prisoners of the laws of the desirable that have been written into them, even into their very flesh.

The YoungGirl has declared war on microbes.

The YoungGirl has declared war on chance.

The YoungGirl has declared war on the passions.

The YoungGirl has declared war on time.

The YoungGirl has declared war on fat.

The YoungGirl has declared war on darkness.

The YoungGirl has declared war on worry.

The YoungGirl has declared war on silence.

The YoungGirl has declared war on the political.

And finally, the YoungGirl has declared war on war.

VIII. The YoungGirl against communism

The YoungGirl privatizes everything she perceives. Thus, for her, a philosopher is not a philosopher, but an extravagant erotic object; in the same way, for her, a revolutionary is not a revolutionary, but a piece of jewelry. The YoungGirl is a consumer article, a device for the maintenance of order, a producer of sophisticated commodities, a new propagator of spectacular codes, an avant-garde of alienation, and she is also an amusement.

When the YoungGirl says “Yes” to life, she’s only expressing her deaf hatred for what is superior to time.

When the YoungGirl talks about community, she’s always thinking about the community of the species, about the living as a whole. She’s never thinking about a specific community, since she’d necessarily be excluded from it. Even when she thinks she’s engaging her “whole self” in a relationship, the YoungGirl is mistaken, because she fails to engage her Nothingness in it too. And that’s where she gets her dissatisfaction and where she gets her “friends.”

Because she discovers the world through the eyes of the commodity, when the YoungGirl looks at someone she only sees what he or she is “like,” what resembles that person. Inversely, she considers the thing that in her is the most generic as the most personal: the sex act.

The YoungGirl wants to be loved “for herself,” that is, for what isolates her. That’s why she always keeps an *appraiser’s distance*, even at bottom from her own ass.

The YoungGirl summarizes in herself alone all the nothingness, paradox, and tragedy of visibility.

The YoungGirl is the privileged vehicle of commodity social darwinism.

The continual pursuit of sex is a manifestation of a poor substantiality. The truth behind it is not to be found in “pleasure,” “hedonism,” the “sexual instinct,” or any of the existential content that Bloom has so completely emptied of its meaning, but rather in the frenzied quest for any kind of a *bond* to the social totality, which has become inaccessible. This is about giving oneself a feeling of *participation*, through the exercise of the most generic activity there is, the one linked most closely to the reproduction of the species. That’s why the YoungGirl is both the most common and the most sought-after object there is, because she is the *incarnation of the Spectacle*, or at least she aspires to such title.

In the YoungGirl’s understanding, the question of an *ultimate purpose* is a superfluous one.

In general, all poor substantialities spontaneously win the YoungGirl’s favor. However there are certain ones that get preference. So it is for any pseudo-identity capable of claiming superiority in terms of “biological” content (age, sex, size, race, measurements, health, etc.).

The YoungGirl postulates an irrevocable intimacy with everything that shares her physiology. Her function is thus to tend the fading fires of all the illusions of immediacy on which Biopower can then hold itself aloft.

The YoungGirl is the termite in the “material,” the marathon runner of the “everyday.” Domination has made her into the privileged bearer of the ideology of the “concrete.” The YoungGirl isn’t satisfied just to be all crazy about what’s “low maintenance,” “simple,” and “lived”; she furthermore considers that the “abstract,” the “complex” are evils that it would be wise to eradicate. But what she calls the “concrete” is itself, in its ferocious one-sidedness, the most abstract of things. It is the shield of wilted flowers behind which advances the thing she was designed to carry out: The violent negation of metaphysics. The YoungGirl doesn’t just have a chip on her shoulder against whatever transcends her; she’s got a whole forest against it, a whole pound of barking dogs. Her hatred for everything great, everything that is outside the reach of consumerism, is immeasurable.

The YoungGirl has enough “concrete” about her to not succumb to the metaphysical feeling of her own nothingness.

“Evil is whatever distracts.” (Kafka)

The “Love of life” that the YoungGirl glorifies so much is in reality nothing but her hatred of danger. Thus, she only professes her determination to keep a relationship of pure immediacy with what she calls “life,” and which, obviously, only refers to “life within the Spectacle.”

Of all the aporias the pretentious mass of which comprises western metaphysics, the most durable appears to be

that of the constitution, by the repudiation thereof, of a sphere of “bare life.” Underlying qualified, political, presentable human existence, there is supposedly, a whole despicable, indistinct, unspeakable sphere of “bare life”; reproduction, home economics, the upkeep of the vital faculties, heterosexual *coupling* or even diet, all those things that PEOPLE have as much as possible associated with the “feminine identity” supposedly have their confluence in that swamp. The YoungGirls have merely inverted the symbols of an operation that they’ve left unchanged. And thus they have made themselves a very curious kind of commonality that PEOPLE might call living-for-living’s-sake if THEY knew that the commonality of western metaphysics has lately been identified with “living-for-dying’s-sake.” As much and so totally that the YoungGirls have convinced themselves to unite on the deepest level of their being regarding physiology, everydayness, psychology, malicious corner gossip, and what PEOPLE think. The repeated failure of their loves and of their friendships does not appear to be of a nature sufficient to open their eyes or make them see that it is precisely that which separates them.



The YoungGirl opposes her swarm of organs against finiteness. Against solitude, the continuity of the living. And against the tragedy of disclosure, the idea that it’s good to be noticed.

In the same way as are the beings that are the limits of it, the relationships that are formed within the Spectacle are deprived of content and meaning – if still the lack of meaning so obvious in the whole extent of the YoungGirl’s life drove her nuts – but no; it only leaves her in her normal state of definitive absurdity. Their establishment isn’t dictated by any kind of real usage (YoungGirls properly speaking don’t really have anything to *do* together) or by a certain taste, one-sided as it may be, that the one may have for the other (even their tastes aren’t their own), but merely by symbolic usefulness, which makes each partner into a *symbol* of the other’s *happiness*, the paradisiacal completeness that the Spectacle’s mission is to constantly redefine.

Seduction, by becoming an argument for Total Mobilization, has naturally taken on the form of a job interview and “love” a sort of mutual and private employment, with an indeterminate duration for the lucky ones.

“Don’t get all worked up!”

No betrayal is punished more severely by the YoungGirl than that of the YoungGirl that deserts the YoungGirls’ Army, or claims to liberate herself from it.

The essential activity of the YoungGirl does not consist solely in separating the “professional” from the “personal,” the “social” from the “private,” the “emotional” from the “utilitarian,” the “reasonable” from “madness,” the “everyday” from the “exceptional,” etc., but above all in incarnating that separation in her very “life.”

The YoungGirl can certainly talk about death, but invariably she’ll conclude that after all “that’s life.”

The YoungGirl “loves life,” which must be understood as implying that she hates all “*forms of life*.”

The YoungGirl is like everything else that talks of “love” in a society that does everything it can to make it definitively impossible: she lies in the service of domination.

The YoungGirl’s “youth” only refers to a certain stubborn denial of finiteness.

The YoungGirl's ass is a global village.

When she talks of "peace" and "happiness," the face the YoungGirl makes is that of death. Her negativity is not of the mind; it is the negativity of the inert.

The YoungGirl has a singular connection to bare life, in all its *forms*.

The YoungGirl has entirely rewritten the names of the seven deadly sins. On the first line, she has cutely calligraphed the word: "solitude."

The YoungGirl swims underwater in immanence.

IX. The YoungGirl against herself: the YoungGirl as impossibility

It's only on the surface that the Spectacle has finally made real the absurd metaphysical concept according to which everything arises from its Idea and not the other way around. In the YoungGirl we see clearly how PEOPLE get a reality that appears to be but the materialization of a concept of reality: THEY cut it off from everything that makes it singular, to where it's similar *in indigence* to a mere idea.

It is the *human* foreignness to the world of the commodity that pursues the YoungGirl endlessly and comprises the supreme threat to her, a "threat which, factively, is not at all incompatible with total security and the total absence of need in terms of everyday worry." (Heidegger) This anguish which is the the fundamental mode of existence for those who can no longer really *inhabit* their world, is the central universal *hidden* truth of the era of the YoungGirl, and of the YoungGirl herself; hidden because it is most often shut away at home, far from all gazing eyes, that she does her endless sobbing. As she chews away at her nothingness, this anguish is just another word for the solitude, silence, and dissimulation which comprise the YoungGirl's metaphysical condition, which she has such a hard time coming to grips with.

The raging hunger for amusement that the YoungGirl and all other Blooms have is rooted in *anguish*.

One second the YoungGirl is naked/bare life, and the next she's dressed-up death. In fact, the YoungGirl is what holds them both together *constantly*.

The YoungGirl is closed in on herself; at first this is fascinating, and then it starts to rot.

Anorexia is interpreted as a fanaticism of detachment which, faced with the impossibility of all metaphysical participation in the world of the commodity, seeks to *physically* participate in it, and which of course fails to.

"SPIRITUALITY: OUR NEW NEED?"

Is there an unknown mystique to every one of us?"

Interest is only the apparent motive for the YoungGirl's behavior. When the YoungGirl sells herself she's trying to be rid of herself, or at least to feel she's been squared away. But that never happens.

Anorexia among women expresses the same aporia that men show in their pursuit of power: the will to mastery. But because of a patriarchal cultural codification that is more severely applied to women, the anorexic applies to her own body the will to mastery that she cannot apply to the world. A pandemic similar to the one we are seeing today among YoungGirls happened in the heart of the Middle Ages, among the female saints. To the world which would like to reduce her to her body, the anorexic YoungGirl opposes her sovereign power over the latter; for the female saint, to the patriarchal mediation of the clergy was opposed her own direct communication with God, and to the dependence that PEOPLE wanted to keep her in, her radical independence relative to the world. In saintly anorexia, "the elimination of physical demands and vital sensations – fatigue, sexual impulses, hunger, pain – allow the body to perform heroic deeds, and the soul to communicate with God." (Rudolph Bell, *Saintly Anorexia*). Today, when the medical establishment has replaced the clergy both in the patriarchal order and at the anorexic YoungGirl's bedside, the recovery rates for what PEOPLE quickly call "mental anorexia" are still exceptionally low, in spite of quite significant therapeutic efforts here and elsewhere; and the mortality rate has fallen to under 15% only in very few countries. The death of an anorexic whether saintly or "mental," only sanctions the final victory of the anorexic over her body, over the world. As if in the drunkenness of a hunger strike that's gone



as far as possible, the YoungGirl finds in death the ultimate affirmation of her detachment and purity. “Anorexics fight against the fact of their having been reduced to slavery, exploited, and not being able to lead their lives as they choose. They prefer to deprive themselves of food rather than go on in a compromised life. In this blind search for identity and a feeling of self, they will accept nothing that their parents or the people around them can offer them.... [in] authentic or typical mental anorexia, what sufferers want above all is to struggle to acquire mastery of themselves, their identity, and to become competent and efficient.” (Bruch, *The eyes and the stomach*) “In Fact,” concludes the afterword to *Saintly anorexia*, “the anorexic could sketch a tragic caricature of woman; liberated, autonomous, yet incapable of intimacy, driven by ideas of power and domination.”

There is indeed a certain objectivity to the YoungGirl, but it is a fictitious one. The YoungGirl is just a contradiction frozen in tomb-like immobility.

Whatever she may say, the YoungGirl’s not being denied the right to happiness, but the right to unhappiness.

However happy the YoungGirl may be in each of the various separate aspects of her existence (work, love, sex, leisure, health, etc.), she must remain essentially unhappy *precisely because those aspects are separate*. Unhappiness is the fundamental tonality of the YoungGirl’s existence. That’s OK. Unhappiness makes good consumers.

The suffering and unhappiness that are an intrinsic part of the YoungGirl show the impossibility of some “end of History” where men could be content to be the most intelligent of animal species, and renounce all discursive consciousness, all desire for recognition, and all the exercise of their negativity; the impossibility, in a word, of the *American Way of Life*.

When she hears talk of negativity, the YoungGirl calls up her psychologist. One way or another she has all kinds of words she can use to not talk metaphysics when it has the bad taste to make itself heard too clearly: “psychosomatic” is one of them.

Like the model that she has necessarily dreamt of being at one time or another, the YoungGirl aims at total inexpressiveness, an ecstatic absence; but the image gets all dirtied by becoming incarnate, and the YoungGirl only manages to express nothingness, living, teeming, sweating nothingness, humid nothingness – until she vomits.

The cyborg as the supreme, IMMUNODEFICIENT stage of the YoungGirl.

The YoungGirl’s depressing because she’d like to be a thing *among things*, that is, she’d like to be like everyone else – *as they are seen from the outside* – and she can’t; because she’d like to be a symbol, and circulate smoothly within the gigantic semiocratic metabolism.

The whole of the YoungGirl’s life coincides with what she’d like to forget.

The apparent sovereignty of the YoungGirl is also the absolute vulnerability of the separated individual, the weakness and isolation that can nowhere find the quarter, security, or protection that they appear to be seeking everywhere. That’s because the YoungGirl lives ceaselessly “in pursuit of herself,” that is, in *fear*.

The YoungGirl tenders us the authentic *enigma of happy servitude*, which we can’t bring ourselves to believe. The mystery of the slave glowing with joy.

The pursuit of happiness summarizes, as its effect as well as its cause, the YoungGirl’s unhappiness. The YoungGirl’s appearance-frenzy shows her thirst for substance which finds nowhere to quench itself.

All the YoungGirl’s elegance can’t hide her undethronable tackiness.

“EVERYONE BEAUTIFUL, EVERYONE ORGANIC!”

The YoungGirl wants *the best of all worlds*; unfortunately the “best of worlds” *isn’t possible*.

The YoungGirl dreams of a body purely transparent in the lights of the Spectacle. She’d like to be in all things no

more than the idea that PEOPLE have of her.

Frigidity is the truth behind nymphomania, impotence is the truth behind don-juanism, and anorexia is the truth behind bulimia.

Because in the Spectacle, where the appearance of happiness also works as the *sine qua non* condition for happiness, the duty to simulate happiness is the formula for all suffering.

The translucent non-existence of the YoungGirl shows the false transcendence that she incarnates.

What the YoungGirl proves is that there's no pretty surface without a terrible depth behind it.

The YoungGirl is the emblem of existential anguish expressing itself in a unreasoned feeling of permanent insecurity.

The Spectacle consents to talking about sexual misery so as to stigmatize people's inability to be exchanged with one another like perfect commodities. The stubborn imperfection of the seduction market would be worrisome otherwise.

The anorexic detests the things of this world only so as to render herself more detestable than they are.

Like so many other of our unhappy contemporaries, the YoungGirl has taken western metaphysics at its word, irresolvable contradictions and all. And she will seek in vain to give *form* to it in naked life.

The extreme spread of male impotence, female frigidity, or even vaginal dryness, can be immediately understood as contradictions of capitalism.

Anorexia expresses, on the same terrain as the commodity, the most incontinent disgust for it, and the tackiness of all wealth. In all her bodily manifestations, the YoungGirl signifies the impatient rage to abolish matter and time. She is a soulless body that dreams it is a bodiless soul.

"The anorexia of Catherine de Sienne was a consequence of her will to master the exigencies of her body, which she saw as an evil obstacle to her holiness/saintliness." (Rudolph Bell, *Saintly anorexia*)

Anorexia must be seen as more than a fashionable pathology: the desire to liberate oneself from a body entirely colonized by commodity symbology, to reduce to dust a physical objectivity of which the YoungGirl has been wholly dispossessed. But she just ends up making a new body out of the negation of the body.

Both in the anorexic YoungGirl and in the ascetic ideal, there's the same hatred of the flesh and the fantasy resolution tending towards the physical in its pure state: the skeleton.

The YoungGirl is afflicted with what might be called an "angel complex": she aims for a perfection that would consist in being *disembodied*. On her bathroom scale she can easily read the one-sidedness of commodity metaphysics.

The anorexic seeks the absolute in her own way; that is, she seeks the worst of absolutes in the worst of ways.

Bloom's desire, and thus the YoungGirl's desire, has nothing to do with bodies; it has to do with essences.

The absolute vulnerability of the YoungGirl is that of the merchant, whose merchandise can be stolen away by any uncontrolled force.

The YoungGirl is a "metaphysical" creature in the adulterated, modern sense of the term. She wouldn't put her body through the kinds of tests and cruel penitences that she does if she weren't fighting with it as though she were fighting a demon of some kind, and didn't want to subjugate it entirely to *form*, to the ideal, to the dead perfection of abstraction. This metaphysics is in the end only the hatred of the physical, understood as simply that which comes before metaphysics, in the proper sense.

"How do you dress 'bio'?"⁶

The YoungGirl is the commodity's final attempt to transcend itself, which fails miserably.

6 Also: "How do you dress yourself up as organic?" – TRANS.

X. To finish the YoungGirl

The YoungGirl is a reality as massive and brittle as the Spectacle.

Like all transitional forms, the YoungGirl is an oxymoron. She is also the first case of an asceticism without an ideal, of materialist penitence.

Cowardly devoted to the caprices of the YoungGirl, we've learned to detest her while obeying her.

The present sexual misery in no way resembles that of the past, because these are now bodies without desire, burning up inside because they can't satisfy these desires they don't have.

Over the course of its metastatic development, seduction has lost intensity while increasing its extension. Amorous discourse has never been so poor as it is now when everyone feels the duty to sing its praises and comment on it.

The YoungGirl doesn't look like a dead body, as one might presume from reading women's magazines; she looks like death itself.

Everyone looks to sell themselves and no one can manage to do it convincingly.

Contrary to how it might seem at first glance, the rapist isn't grappling with a man or a woman as a person, but with *sexuality itself* as the control apparatus that he reappropriates.

When it erupts, the naked body of the YoungGirl used to be able to produce a feeling of truth. Now that power is sought, in vain, among ever *younger* bodies.

Just how little charm we find in the YoungGirl anymore shows how much we've managed to destroy her already. It's not a question of emancipating the YoungGirl, but of emancipation *relative to* the YoungGirl.

In certain extreme cases, we'll see the YoungGirl turn the nothingness inhabiting her against the world that has produced her that way. The pure emptiness of her form, her profound hostility to everything that exists will be condensed into explosive blocs of negativity. And she'll have to destroy everything around her. The desertlike expanse inside her will get a burning urge to reduce every point in the Empire to an equal desolation. *Give me a bomb, I must die*, exultantly gasped a Russian nihilist of the last century, begging to be assigned the suicide attack on Grand-Duke Serge.

For the YoungGirl as for the man of power, who after all correspond in every trait where they don't totally coincide, de-subjectification cannot afford to have any collapse, a collapse *in itself*. And the distance of the fall will only measure the abyss between the amplitude of social being and the extreme stuntedness of singular being; that is, the poverty of our relationship to ourselves. But, in the poverty of the one, there is also all the *power* lacking for the completion of the other.

"But I had to pull aside the nimbus with which man sought to crown this other feminine figure which is the young girl, apparently immaterial and stripped of all sensuality, by showing that she is precisely the



mother type, and that virginity is by definition as foreign to her as it is to the whore. And analysis also shows that maternal love itself has no moral merit attached to it." (Otto Weininger, *Sex and character*)

Rarely was an era so violently agitated with desires, but rarely was desire so *empty*. The YoungGirl reminds one of the monumentality of platonic architecture that time has covered over, and which only give the viewer a passing idea of eternity, since they're already breaking down. It also sometimes makes one think of something different, but then it's always a slum.

"I could destroy the schoolgirl's modernism by introducing foreign, heterogeneous elements to her; indeed by mixing her with anything at all." (Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*)

Under the apparent disorder of desires of Barracks-Babylon sovereignly reigns *the order of interest*. But the order of interest itself is but a secondary reality

without any reason in itself but in the desire for desire that is found at the bottom of all *missing* life.

The mutations within the figure of the YoungGirl follow symmetrically the evolutions of the capitalist mode of production. So, over the past thirty years we've little by little moved from a Fordist type seduction, with its designated places and moments, its static and proto-bourgeois couple-form, to a post-fordist type seduction, diffuse, flexible, precarious and de-ritualized, which has extended the couples-factory over the whole of the body and all social space-time. At this particularly advanced stage of Total Mobilization, everyone is called upon to keep up their "seduction power," which has replaced their "labor power," so that they can at any instant be fired and set out again on the sexual market.

The YoungGirl mortifies the flesh to take revenge for Biopower and the symbolic violence that the Spectacle subjects her to.

Looking at her past unshakeable positivity, the difficulties that she now presents ever more massively show sexual enjoyment to be the most metaphysical of physical enjoyments.

"Some make sophisticated, plugged in, 'fad' magazines. We have made a clean, fresh, airy magazine, with blue skies and organic fields, a magazine that's more real than nature."

The YoungGirl is entirely constructed; that's why she can also be entirely destroyed.

It is only in her suffering that the YoungGirl is lovable. There is obviously a subversive power to trauma.

The success of the mimetic logic that has carried the YoungGirl to her present triumph also entails the need for her extinction. And finally, it is YoungGirl inflation that will be most certain to undermine the efficiency of each and every one of them.

The theory of the YoungGirl is part of the training for a way of seeing that is able to hate the Spectacle wherever it hides itself; that is, wherever it exposes itself.

Who, besides the few remaining suckers, is still seriously touched by the "ruses and tricks with which seduction knows how to insinuate itself into the heart of the YoungGirl, the influence it can hold over her, in brief, seduction's fascinating, calculated and methodical character" (Kierkegaard)?

Everywhere that the commodity is unloved, the YoungGirl is unloved as well.

The diffusion of seduction relations through the whole of social activity also signifies the death of everything that once was alive about it. The generalization of simulation too makes it more and more manifestly impossible. It is thus at the moment of the greatest unhappiness when the streets fill with enjoyers without hearts, seducers mourning all seduction, the corpses of desires that no one knows what to do with.

It would be a physical phenomenon, like losing an aura. Like the electrification of bodies caused by an intense separation beginning to express itself until it disappears. A new closeness would come out of it, and new distances.

A total exhaustion of desire would mean the end of commodity society, and of all *society*.

The landscape of a devastated eros.

"As a general thesis, social progress and changes of era take place accordingly as women progress towards freedom." (Fourier)

When the YoungGirl has exhausted all artifices, there is still one last one left, that of renouncing artifices. And that one is *truly* the last.

By making itself the Trojan Horse of planetary domination, desire has stripped itself of everything that flanked it that was domestic, secluded, private. The prerequisite for the totalitarian redefinition of the desirable was in effect its becoming autonomous from all real objects, from all particular content. By learning how to apply itself to essences, it has unwittingly become an absolute desire, a desire for the absolute, which nothing earthly can satisfy anymore. This dissatisfaction is the central lever of consumption as well as of its subversion.

A communization of bodies is to be expected.

**Does the everyday occurrence of the YoungGirl
still go without saying?**



The YoungGirl is presently the most luxurious of the goods circulating on the perishable goods market, the flagship-commodity of the fifth industrial revolution, which serves to sell all the others, from life insurance to nuclear power plants;



the monstrous and very real dream of the most intrepid and fanciful of tradesmen: the autonomous merchant that walks, talks, and commands attention, *the thing that's finally living*, which no longer understands life but instead just digests it.



Three thousand years of the ceaseless labor of millions of fat shopkeepers' existences, generation after generation, have now found their



brilliant crowning achievement in the YoungGirl, since she is *the commodity that it is forbidden to burn*, stock that stocks itself, inalienable and untransferable property which must nonetheless be paid for, property/virtue that endlessly converts



to cash; she is the hooker that *demand*s respect, the dead body moving by itself – she is the law and the police all in one... Who has not caught a flashing glimpse, in her definitive and dismal beauty, of *the sex-appeal of the inorganic*?

Theology in 1999

IRONING BY HAND

"You've just got to know how to be impeccable in all circumstances."

CHRISTOPHE MALAVOY, ACTOR

5aSec

ALWAYS THERE FOR ME

"IMPECCABLE" adj. - mid 16th century, from eccles. lat. impeccabilis, radical: peccare - to sin • Not subject to sin. (The Dictionary)

Machine-Men, User's Guide

1. *Disease is a language.*
2. *The body is a representation.*
3. *Medicine is a political practice.*

Bryan S. Turner,
The body and society

From subjects to patients

Under the rubble of the gamy, rotting democracies of the 20th century, we now see the upsurge of a new form of domination, a new and perverse relationship of collusion between the dominators and the dominated: biopower. This power effects us in the part of ourselves that is simultaneously the most exposed and the most hidden – bare life. And that has produced a social formation where anything that lies outside the abstract domain of “economy” gets *nothing*. Bloom is the name of this defenseless, valueless, formless life, which to put it plainly lies outside of and even below the human. What is at play here is not undeserving of our attention: the Western subject has been so totally devastated that politics itself has been rendered radically impossible in its classical form. The vacuum of the subject, which once resided in philosophy, the sciences, and politics, has left a gaping hole that *is* Bloom. With Bloom, what we are dealing with is a human life that is reduced to total weakness, a creature that is incapable of desire, will or autonomy. Politics can but be tragically denied to such a creature, whose fate is one of constant *waiting and expectation* with no ends or object. In sum this society resembles a kind of hospital where each patient is possessed by an urgent desire only to change beds.

Domination hardly asks for anything from us except that we be *patient*, in the double sense of the term: we must put up with and passively undergo its disaster without ever demanding any reparations from it, and at the same time tolerate being dependent on it, not like one might depend on a father or on an employer – relationships that

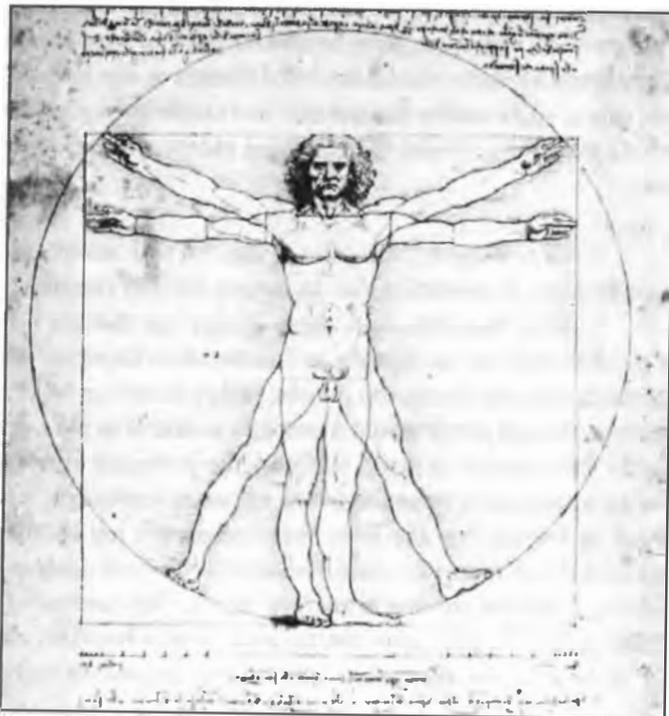
always leave some room for a possible emancipation – but like a patient depends on his doctor, that is, in a relationship any interruption to which would cause the death of the patient himself. *Patior* in Latin generally means *to suffer*, but it is from the same root that we have the word *passion* as well. Now, passion, insofar as it implies an *active* relationship with life, is the opposite of patience. It is precisely this active relation that domination has little by little brought about the disappearance of, for the “good” of the subjects; or in other words so that they make *good subjects*, dependent on it for their survival with a kind of artificial life-support on a global scale. And while human bodies continue to overrun the planet in an unprecedented proliferation guaranteed by “progress” in medicine, these bodies stripped of passion are abandoned by their minds, rendered foreign to the self and the other, while reality flattens out in a contingent plotline where everything speaks of everything except of us and our fate.

Why Viagra? What more can be said about this new frontier of aberration that humanity has just crossed?

What has been said about Viagra has thrown but a prudish light on its history and sometimes, between the statistics and one-liners, the present reality shows up on the surface, though *people* would never dare to take it to the next level. No attempt is made to reveal the profound reasons for its appearance: regarding what advanced capitalism has done to human life, the form that human life has to take on in order to maintain itself, the *omertà* has been quite effective. That the coming humanity, or our contemporaries, those people we pass by in the stairway or supermarket, are to be afflicted by impotence – or believe themselves to be

so, which comes down to the same thing – is not the real issue here. It's no longer incumbent upon us to ask ourselves whether the impotence striking the male populations of the industrialized nations corresponds to some schopenhauerian ruse on the part of the species itself to provoke the extinction of that part of itself that is most deeply sunken in abjection and unhappiness. The important thing is not so much the anthropological mutation that Viagra carries out; it's the terrain that its appearance was predicated upon, which for so long has been colonized by the most insidious forms of oppression.

Viagra is not the result of scientific research pressed forth by public demonstrations in favor of sex-finally-accessible-to-everyone, and it would be wrong to analyze its history from "the bottom up" perspective, from the perspective of its users. In effect the consumers of Viagra are not true consumers, or are such only to the extent that they purchase merely the effect, the consequence of the commodity, and not the commodity itself. For the first time, rather, such effect is neither a private sensation to be consumed more or less collectively, nor the preliminary condition for new relationships (a fine new car, a nice vacation, or the encounter of possible sex partners, etc.). The dematerialization of pornography and prostitution, their becoming-metaphysical, has already brought them into our telephones through erotic call-lines, but it's still not managed to slip them in between our sheets with us. With Viagra, men are buying the *modality* of their relations and the *conditions for their realization*; the sole domain where they have a choice – the partner, the other – automatically falls back into the shadows, because they have purchased, truth be told, none other than *potential human interchangeability*.



Viagra, biopolitics and the pleasure of knowing

Biopolitics, as defined by Foucault, is "the power to make live and let die," and it applies not just to each person in particular but also to the multiple and polycephalous body of the population as a whole, installing "security mechanisms around the random element inherent in each population of living beings," in order to "optimize a state of life," to "bring life under orderly management." (M. Foucault, *Society must be defended*)

Our sexuality, before it began to appear insufficient or pathological to us, had already been medicalized, not just in its deviant aspects but *as such*, "as if it were a particular zone of pathological fragility in human existence" (Foucault). It is we ourselves who adopt the pharmaceutical style, we ourselves who introject the medical norm and apply it to everything human.

We are permanently mobilized, like "assets"; above all in our playful and erotic activities, where otherwise we'd risk encountering that discolored image of ourselves and our freedom, which has been lost *since* always. And it is precisely there that domination installs its circus mirrors. And everything that truly speaks of us, our flesh and our feelings, our desires and our pains, everything in us that is passion and not passivity, is as foreign to us as a job that we didn't choose: "If power takes hold of bodies, it's not that it has at first to be interiorized into people's consciousness; there is a network of bio-power, of somato-power, which is itself the network from which sexuality itself is born as a historical and cultural phenomenon in which we simultaneously recognize ourselves and lose ourselves." (M. Foucault, *Power relations within bodies*)

"A good erection starts with a release of the erectile muscle that comprises the shaft of the penis. This release facilitates the dilation of the arteries and thus of the blood flow to the cavernous body, which permits the member to harden. This is what Viagra acts on." (*Cosmopolitan*, July 1995)

Though we can't recall ever having seen such extreme crudeness, even in our high school natural sciences books, we shouldn't really be surprised to find it in the dailies and weeklies, with all their disturbing, *unheimlich*' aspect of being simultaneously foreign and familiar. In our times, the *ars erotica* has become a *scientia sexualis*, which in order to understand things needs to classify them: an erection can *in itself* be "good" or "not so good," and what measures its value is the "quantity of orgasm/pleasure" that one can derive from it.

Centuries of alienation separate us from the simple wisdom of Rufus of Ephesus, who noted in his treatise on

* Uncanny – TRANS.

medicine: “the best thing for man is to devote his time to sexual relations when he is tormented simultaneously by the desires of the soul and the demands of the body.”

Now we have entered the time of “cosmetic pharmacology” (*Le Monde*, September 4th, 1998), where drugs firm up tissue, stop balding, make you slender, erase the stigmata of time. “Certainly,” affirms Richard Friedman, director of the psychopharmacology clinic in New York Hospital, “the limits are not obvious: if you’re impotent or bald and that becomes an obsession for you, what’s just a simple symptom can become a serious disease.” And Marian Dunn, director of the center for studies in human sexuality at the State University of New York, adds: “impotence quickly becomes a vicious circle. It’s a factor in depression that can have serious consequences on behavior and work.” (*Le Monde*, October 14th, 1998) The human beings to come are to be *functional* and to function in all their aspects, even if at times they put up resistance to the massive penetration of control into private life, as in the case of those Wall Street financiers who were so hesitant to take flyers that the marketers hired sandwich board wearers to carry panels reading “are you a candidate for Viagra?” followed by a phone number; this immediately brought in hundreds of orders per month. (*ibid*)

Second in sales after Prozac, Viagra, the name of which has given rise to various legends (it may have resulted from the coupling of “virile” and “Niagara” or perhaps from the Spanish *Vieja Agradecida*, “Grateful Old Lady”), was baptized with that name for its “vigorous and catch-all” connotation, the “neither masculine nor feminine, international, and not exclusively medical” ring to it (*ibid*). With Viagra alone, a whole new and appalling chapter has opened in the history of sexuality in Western civilization, where forty five million couples bewail the “impossibility of a normal sex life.”

To retake Michel Foucault’s expression, it is our insatiable “will to know” that opens up to us the doors of these pitiful bedrooms and indeed of all the other little rooms, where “normality” reigns – and how! – in the numbers: the 2 acts of sexual intercourse per week, which “fortunately” 41% of couples manage to consume.

These numbers, in reality, don’t just serve to satisfy the morbid curiosity of magazine readers or work as an indicator of the generalized social control of morals; they are also at the service of *a new inquisition into human misery*.

The American medical insurance companies¹ which contribute to reimbursing patients for the medications covered by their policies, have readily taken the side of the Church, and collaborate with the urologists and generalist doctors in interrogating those who declare themselves to be impotent. Ever eager to dictate meticulous checks and verifications, demanding to know when and how many times the difficulty has arisen, whether it appeared before or af-

ter the drug’s appearance on the market, they then finally – based on an *average* norm estimated at eight times per month – allow the unhappy patient to be granted his dose of artificial, rationed out “pleasure in a pill.” But in spite of their interrogations, the doctors still can’t manage to figure out with any degree of certainty who’s lying and who’s telling the truth; to such an extent that “for Pfizer the requirements are contradictory: it is in the laboratory’s interest simultaneously to go beyond – for commercial reasons – having as a clientele merely the really ‘seriously’ afflicted individuals, and to officially maintain a strictly medical line to convince the various health insurance companies to go ahead and reimburse it.” (*Le Monde*, October 14th 1998) One way or another, the rich are certainly willing to pay for the diseases suffered by the poor, but certainly not for their pleasure; the social structure is still not ready to redistribute the new costs for the management of both pain and leisure, as domination in fact now requires. And so, certain private health insurance companies refuse to pay for the drug, and the powerful American retirees’ association AARP has even complained about the Federal Government asking the States to cover Viagra reimbursements for the poorest patients through the public health insurance system.

And nevertheless, the American State, “in this new system where the private and public spheres are meshing and where sexual matters have become State matters,” (*ibid*) must make new investments for its patients, above all for those who have been the most subject to its discipline, and whose bodies have been rendered as effectively docile and ready for obedience as possible. Thus, fifty million dollars were released to re-eroticize the flock of US American bodies, and those of retired soldiers, with Viagra.

Strange things, these interviews that we read in the newspapers, where we’re given to know the age, the profession, the civil status and the number of children fathered by simple fellows with names like Marius or Patrick, and then are suddenly and clandestinely introduced to their most intimate miseries. We don’t know what houses they live in, nor the color of their eyes, or what their wives’ faces look like, but we know all about their sexual habits, their dysfunctions, and their pathologies; we find out whether the urologist took them seriously or not; we learn about the frustration they suffer from their penetration problems. It’s almost as if we were looking at those pornographic photographs where one can distinguish the slightest details of the penis or vagina of the actors shown, but where an ironic black rectangle censors the faces, hiding from us any kind of a vision of their very being itself, and thus forbidding the eruption of anything that might painfully transcend the merely physical. Here we have entered into the indistinct domain where intimacy and foreignness overflow into one another, in a confusion where Bloom leads his mutilated

existence, between ambiguity and curiosity.

"It is often said that we've been incapable of imagining new pleasures. At the very least however we have invented another kind of pleasure: the pleasure of the truth of pleasure, the pleasure of knowing it, exposing it, discovering it, being fascinating by seeing it, saying it, captivating and capturing others with it, confiding it secretly, driving it out cunningly; the pleasure specific to a real discourse on pleasure." (M. Foucault, *The will to know*)

Naturally, it didn't take long for victims to start appearing in this chemical war declared against sexual inefficiency, this crusade for sex at all costs: as of August 26th 1998, the Food and Drug Administration has counted sixty-nine people who suffered "*death by Viagra*," all of whom were between forty-eight and eighty years of age and had cardio-vascular problems, regularly took one or more medications, and, we may add, aspired to a "normal sex life."

Our bodies speak, but we don't know how to listen; they are definitively separated from us, and in their discourse they only echo our intolerable absence from ourselves.

Each "dysfunction" represents a lack of efficiency that must be corrected, each somatization is but a troublesome obstacle to be removed. Disease is just a particular case of an improper functioning in the communications system our organism has become, a process where the limits of the strategic apparatus that the self comprises are misread or transgressed.

We are unable to conceive of ourselves as an "organism" the sum of whose parts could never equal the whole.

Orthodox modern medicine explains to us that each and every symptom has a treatment specific to it, that it is not indispensable to seek the root cause of disturbances, since our diseases now have no more meaning or roots to them, in the perfect image of the Bloom suffering from them; it's good enough now to learn by heart – like some profane litany – the list of secondary effects, and if we forget to render homage to biopower, which dominates us with its disturbing presence in our everyday upkeep of ourselves, we'll get a death sentence, as did those diabetics who'd hoped that they might be able to make love again.

Synthetic texts, where we can't decipher the characters they're written in, our bodies *have to* offer themselves docilely to the hermeneutics of the "specialists"; we aren't expected to read the body – just re-write it.

The danger that this articulated expropriation apparatus tends to ward off is that everything that our slaves' brains manage to tolerate might be rejected by our insufficiently docile bodies, because there's apparently still some residual ancestral instinct of rebellion hidden in them; but *where?* – to find it is the quest of the *conquistadors* of the pharmaceutical industry, and their goal will soon be achieved.

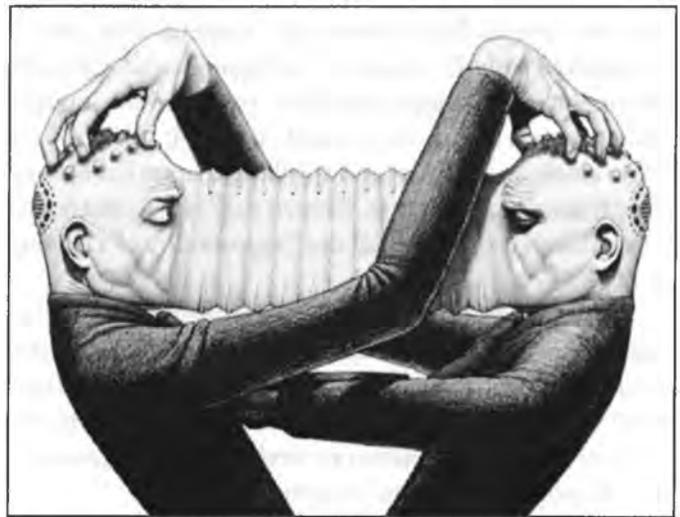
On Indifferent Desire

Our era, where a super-abundance of images overlaps with the co-existence of numerous symbolic planes, could be defined as neo-Baroque. But this apparent proliferation of chances given for the expression of desire is but the mask for the ever-probable agony of desire.

Desire has become *indifferent*, in the double sense where one can desire an object with no specific nature to it at all, an object deprived of particularity – the 'anybody-ness' of the YoungGirl which has been so prominent in these last generations, generations that have more and more managed to conform to her – or simply desire to remain unemotional and careless, that is, to cease responding to solicitations that are perpetual, but are deprived of any intensity of their own.

For all these people, human beings lost both in their bodies and their desires, there is still no remedy, and the doctors advise them not to take Viagra so as to keep them from being deceived: "this isn't an aphrodisiac," they never tire of repeating.

There is no mechanical remedy for the demise of desire among human beings in an era where "the opacity of sexual differences has been refuted by the transsexual body, the incommunicable foreignness of the singular *physis* abolished by its spectacular mediation, and doubt cast upon the mortality of the organic body by its promiscuity with the organ-less body of the commodity." (G. Agamben, *The coming*



community). Indifferent desire, kept vacillating between the poles of sexual anorexia and bulimia, is no longer bound to affirming its contradictory existence: chemistry has stamped out all its weaknesses, the press has labeled it pathological, and the pharmaceutical industry has established the new parameters for it. Either get it up on command or disappear.

We can perhaps date the first appearance of indifferent desire back to the date of birth of Don Juan, in the middle of the triumph of the Baroque and its *obsession with machines*. Surprising apparatuses were set in motion,

pulleys and carriages animating things with no souls; the prodigious exhibition of the *monstrum* put the sacred on stage and converted people to the faith. This was the era when in the cities the sacred melded with the profane in what was often a physical contiguity. Here a Neapolitan monk entered into legend; when seeing the crowds go off to see a *commedia dell'arte* show involving the comic personage Punchinello, this monk grabbed a crucifix and shook it over the whole sacred scene, shouting, “come see! This is the real Punchinello!” The phrase was not as gratuitous as one might believe, since Punchinello – symbol of the vulgar “body” and the trivial clown par excellence – was in reality also a familiar spirit of death, a psychopomp: one of those demons that escort the souls of the dead.

This Baroque, contrary to ours, was a spectacle that rendered death omnipresent and exorcised it through its very exhibition, instead of always relegating it to the domain of the unthought.

It was within this time of *perpetual memento mori* that Don Juan was born, from the pen of a Spanish monk dedicated to demonstrating that mechanical desire, eternally disquiet and indifferent (“*che sia brutta, che sia bella, purché porti la gonnella voi sapete quel che fa*”²) is not a sin against the community of the living, but against that of the dead, against transcendence. What Don Juan really desires is none other than death itself. His continual provocations, his acting *as if* death did not exist, and his pathetic invitations to dine sent out to a ghost, all only demonstrate the mechanical nature of his movement within the world of the living. Without transcendence, there can be no seduction. Don Juan is not free; he is enslaved to the one-dimensionality of a time that is already oblivious to death, and thus is oblivious to love.

Death slowly left the Western scene in a movement of “progressive disqualification”: “the great public ritualization of death disappeared – or was effaced at least – after the end of the 13th century... To the point where now, death – having ceased to be one of those brilliant ceremonies that individuals, the family, the group, and almost the whole society itself, participated in – has become, on the contrary, something people hide... And it’s almost like today it’s not so much sex as it is death that’s taboo.” (M. Foucault, *Society must be defended*). Once a passage from the earthly to the celestial kingdoms, the act of dying has now become unrepresentable within the frameworks of the new technological paradigm of power, and its mute disappearance, its frustrated ritualization, open the path to indifferent desire – desire that is indifferent to life and thus to death.

“Wherever power does not reign – nor initiative or decisiveness – living is dying, the passivity of life, escaped from itself and all mixed up with the disaster of a time with no present that we tolerate patiently; it is expecting mis-

fortune, not as something to come but as something that’s always already been there and yet doesn’t clearly show itself: in this sense, the future and the past are doomed to indifference, because both of them have no present.” (M. Blanchot, *Writing the disaster*)

In its implicit negation of death, indifferent desire – by refusing time – refuses life. Its very existence can only be grafted onto the *tabula rasa* of the passions, onto the degradation of the human being into a soulless machine. And the opposite of indifferent desire isn’t authentic desire; rather, the latter has always already disappeared when the former appears. In these conditions of production, this disappearance cannot be adequately expressed in what the Greeks called *ataraxia*, the strength of indifference to pain, nor by what the Buddhists call *upata*, or non-attachment. Authentic desire is thus only replaceable by indifferent desire, which, incapable of any transcendence, can only reverse itself to its bulimic donjuanesque pole: mechanical desire.

Authentic desire does not arise from deprivation, but is something rooted in the profound essence of the Self; it exists as a kind of inhalation, as a longing, as an effort to increase its own potential to be recognized by others. Contrary to a desire for things, it is human desire par excellence. It is an active desire, an auxiliary of the passions, whose metamorphoses are those of history. Enemy of the “private” as well as of property, authentic desire, the desire for desire, reveals the secret truth of the desirer, which renders him or her truly human.

“Desire (*cupiditas*),” writes Spinoza, “is the very essence of man, insofar as such essence is conceived as determinedness to act out of self-affection.” (*Ethics*, III), and, to put it in Spinozan terms, it is from his “essence” that man is exiled when he is inhabited by an indifference of desire. His Self becomes a strategic apparatus, and as such is deprived of its organic nature and exposed to the danger of becoming a *thing*, of being entirely objectivized.

But all that can arise from a Self that is a mere strategic apparatus are *men without qualities*, with no “self-affection,” anonymous beings that never manage to return to *another state of being*, but remain confined in the emptiness of their one-dimensionality – masks without faces whose absence from themselves no words can describe – Blooms, “destroyed men (destroyed without destruction) who are as if without appearance, invisible even when you’re looking at them; and if they speak it is in the voice of others, a voice that’s always somehow other, which in some way accuses them, indicts them, and always forces them to respond to the silent misery they unconsciously carry within.” (M. Blanchot)

But the indifference of desire – now restricted to its mechanical pole – which manages the present stage of the process of men becoming things and becoming lost to themselves, also contains the possibility of its reversal, in

the name of a reappropriation that must necessarily come through the body, which is all that the Self is still required to inhabit; this reappropriation also must necessarily come about through language, which before saying anything *always speaks to us as a body*, to the extent that the non-linguistic, the immediate, is the prior assumption present in language; after all, as Hegel explains, “the perfect element, where inwardness is as external as outwardness is internal, is language.” (Hegel, *Phenomenology of mind*).

That's why “the whatever singular who wishes to appropriate his very belonging itself, his being-in-language, and then rejects all identity and all conditions of belonging, is the State's primary enemy.” (Giorgio Agamben)

On Reification

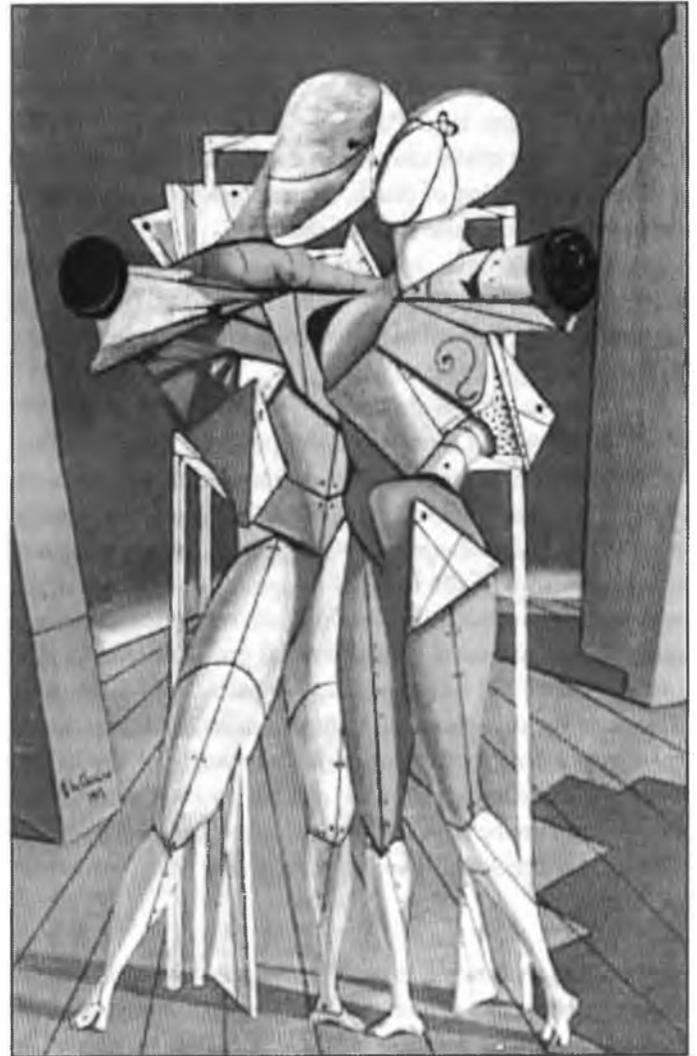
There is a way of using machine-men, but it's not mechanical in and of itself. On the contrary, commodity domination had to colonize mankind's very humanity in order to keep man in his machine-like state. But the present modalities of production can no longer make do with such slaves as these, as threatening as they are weary. They thus had to take apart assembly lines, where the community of workers had the detrimental tendency to remain palpable, and reconstruct them diffusely over the whole of the social body, even at the risk of revealing within them the metaphysical character of all slavery, of both the body and mind. Our times had to put the soul to work. And the soul must be sufficiently socialized; that is, it must have a sufficient number of sexual relations, but must at the same time remain foreign enough to itself that it wouldn't desire that which could really liberate it: *making a different use of the body*.

From this perspective, control over the communication between human inwardness and the world becomes of central importance, and such control is achieved through desires: desires to consume, to escape, desires for professional success – but above all, desires for humanity, for encounters with others that nevertheless are not pure connections.

“The historical particularities of the modern, Cartesian version of subjectivity have simply been replaced by a new post-modern configuration of detachment, a new ideal of substancelessness. It's a dream of *ubiquity*, ... but what kind of body is free to change form and place at its whim, can become anyone, and travel anywhere?” (S. Bordo, *Feminism-postmodernism*) *Nobody*, no-one; and that's what indifferent desire desires of the other: their nobody-ness, their mask. All indifferent desire can do is stage itself as a desire for *no one*.

A simple desire for the envelope, a “sartorial libido”; that's what men feel, those who feel themselves to be things-that-feel. “Instead of the teeming, confused vis-

cosity of life and death, a neutral sexuality opens out onto the timeless horizon of *things*.” (M. Perniola, *The sex-appeal of the inorganic*). People who have become *things* consider their sensations with a curious detachment; nothing belongs to them anymore but the things themselves, and it's only things that they are able to desire. And they can desire oth-



ers only to whatever extent the others themselves are things as well. Perniola, who has a decidedly short-sighted perspective, here gives as the unavoidable horizon a pointless, lazy sexuality among things. In his tranquil faith in the end of history, he goes on believing all the same that the coming humanity will have to liberate itself from performance anxiety by simply liberating itself from the desire to be human, trading it away for a reassuring, idle excitation of things. Quite the macabre perspective, one of a general exodus from living life, where thingified men will wander among things and commodities, nothing to one another but the obscure objects of object-desire. “If a vagina was just a vagina, and not an allegory for the earthly landscape, excitation couldn't be unlimited; in the same way, if the earthly landscape only called up the idea of itself, architecture would only be the construction and representation of the territory. We go

from the vagina to the cosmos along a path that leads from the same to the same, because the vagina, the world, and our bodies themselves have now become uninhabitable places.” (*Ibid.*)

On Post-Feminism

What woman has become in her relationship to male desire is the earthly realization of an archetype of sterile beauty, sufficient unto itself.

Each woman is now but a synthetic being, manipulated by the pharmaceutical and cosmetic industry if not by aesthetic surgery. Her model is but the synthetic advertised body, and her assistants for her self-reformatting are the women’s magazines, closed and self-referential semiotic production systems paradoxically impermeable to male interference.

The fall of the patriarchal order and the womanization of the world can be partially explained by looking at the autonomization of the female body relative to male desire and to desire in general; the more the female body is the object of reformatting and remodeling, the more it loses its sensitive capacity to feel pleasure and express sensuality metaphysically.

Modern woman is concerned with being *desirable*, not with being desired.

The only order that replaced the fallen patriarchal order was a contradictory kind of *hedonist categorical imperative*, which marks the flesh with the stigmata of pain and impotence.

With Viagra, sexual relations become definitively autonomous from subjects, [and] the pharmaceutical industry copulates with itself in the form of woman chemically modified by birth-control pills and meal-replacement diet plans.

Viagra is not really a *drug for men*, because it’s not so much about the kind of male inefficiency it remedies as it is about the female disturbance it puts an end to – if we can believe Erica Jong³, that is, according to whom for women “the utmost dilemma is to find herself faced with a soft penis.”

In the Greek *polis*, the difference between the domestic home and the *agora* was implicit and fundamental, because it corresponded to the separation between the domain of the absence of freedom, where violence was used on slaves and unfree creatures – women and children – and the domain of free discussion, where persuasion was applied by citizen-men among their peers. But, as Hannah Arendt puts it, “In our understanding, the dividing line is entirely blurred, because we see the body of peoples and political communities in the image of a family whose everyday affairs have to be taken care of by a gigantic, nationwide administration of housekeeping. The scientific thought that corre-

sponds to this development is no longer political science but ‘national economy’ or ‘social economy’ or *Volkswirtschaft*, all of which indicate a kind of ‘collective house-keeping.’”

Whereas leaving the domestic home could have expressed itself for women as a liberation from *oiko nomos*, from the law of the home, we see today that on the contrary that law has extended to the whole operation of society.

We can now speak of a feminization of the world, inasmuch as we live in a society of slaves with no masters.

Woman has never been so far from her sexual liberation, and thus from her corporeal liberation, than she is in the age of Viagra. The reason for the fall of male desire is in this exodus of woman from the body.

Quasi Unum Corpus

The female body has never been so public and at the same time so deserted as it is in the years of post-feminism: it is no longer more than a mere package, where every difference not codified by the languages of advertising is an imperfection to be ironed out, where every deviation from the well-known parameters is a handicap relative to the norms for the desirable.

The bitter truth of the Spectacle would seem to show us an obvious fact that has never found a place to affirm itself: *it’s not beauty that inflames desire*; desire is a metaphysical entity. Plato wrote: “Eros is neither ugly nor beautiful, neither young nor old”; in other words, it does not inhabit the ephemeral space of the flesh.

Today, bodies are but sad edifices built and inhabited by chemistry. Bloom’s body is an uninhabitable architecture.

The collapse of a symbolic order, instead of announcing an era of new freedoms, has been resolved in the decomposition of the body of society itself and consequently of the bodies of the individuals that comprise it.

As Titus Livius already explained in his *Apology for the members and stomach of Menenius Agrippa*, and as a vast literature has discussed both in the Middle Ages and the Baroque era, the bond between the political body of society and the personal bodies of the subjects is far beyond being just a pretty metaphor. To Saint Thomas, men comprised *quasi unum corpus* – almost one body – and all antiquity insisted on the equal necessity of the various members to the wellbeing of the organism as a whole. Rufus even went so far as to say that if the mind loses itself in vain imagining, it is necessary to “subjugate the soul and make the body obey.”

In fact, “what makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily,” but the fact that individuals are as if plunged into a spiritualist séance where, by some unexplainable miracle, the table disappears and everyone is suddenly “sitting op-

posite each other no longer separated but also entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible." (Hannah Arendt, *The human condition*) Members detached from the body; bodiless organs exposed to an inevitable decomposition.

Faced with the economic demand that bodies survive the necrosis of the *bios politikos* abandoning them, what we're seeing now is an artificial reconstitution of the limits of organisms, a delimitation of their physical form and their aptitude for praxis.

Reformatting consists in the following: reproducing purely immanent impulses and potentials within a new, domesticated *form* deprived of any memory and almost completely devoid of psychological and metaphysical substance, making people into ever more predictable artificial intelligences and making their bodies into ever more docile apparatuses.

Indiscreet Jewels and Shekhina

The feminist movements of the seventies said "the personal is political"; they were demanding a place for the individual economy of desires far away from the Spectacle's reflectors. They evoked a public that was not conditioned by advertisements and that produced a *different* meaning for the normativity informing all "private" space that believes itself to be singular.

The event that is Viagra proves not only the bankruptcy of this project but also – and this is the direct consequence of all of it – that everything that was growing in the shadows of the intimate space of feelings that people carried within themselves has now been thrust into the pitiless floodlights of the generalized media confessional.

What Viagra has conquered is not so much impotence as it is the residue of what Foucault called the "essential latency" of sexuality, which is what all forms of domination tend to unmask and which is not so much something the subject would like to hide, but is rather what remains hidden even to the subject him or herself.

In its final consequences, the so-called "sexual liberation" has translated into no more than a liberalization of sex and its secrets, on a market of desire autonomized from its object and from its subject; a market for which coitus, the new form of general abstract equivalency, *must* take place, like any other kind of commerce, independent of the persons involved, the feelings they feel, or the atmosphere and humor they are in. The mechanical erection, payable to the bearer on sight, has won out over all the metaphysics of Eros.

The *scientia sexualis* which replaced the *ars erotica* after the 18th century, is a kind of knowledge constructed and produced in order to defuse the disturbing potential that sex carries within it as a physical manifestation of the

metaphysical: "the fragile point through which the threat of sickness invades us; the fragments of night that each of us carries within ourselves." (*Ibid.*)

If formerly it was sufficient to drown sexuality in an eloquent censorship in order to render it harmless, the whole problem today for domination is to figure out how to resuscitate it at a time when it is dying, having been emptied out of its hidden meaning, exiled from its accursed share.

And so its silence must be prevented from bringing up questions, and the shadow of its absence kept from appearing in the forced light of commodity society's eternal noon.

In Diderot's *The Indiscreet Jewels*, the genie Cucufa fishes into the bottom of his pocket, and, among a few magic beans, some little toy pagodas made of lead and some moldy candy, finds a silver ring that when its bezel is turned makes the genital organs of those he meets start speaking.

In our times, domination, having abandoned its ancient logic of injunctions to non-existence and mutism, now works like Cucufa's ring.

And what goes for sexual language goes for language *itself*: now, working even more effectively than silence itself, where thought can always take refuge, cell phones fully realize the heideggerian kingdom of chatter.

The objective of this impalpable sensations-market where all cultural commodities have a fully proper place is to be able to make us consume images and words at every instant of our lives everywhere, so as to break all continuity and meaning, and convince us that our lives have no end nor form.

It has become obvious that the commodity and consumption were essentially from the beginning a mode of communication, now that the communication of symbols and signs has won over the totality of human life and being.

The so-called "post-fordist" modes of production were not content to add to the expropriation of productive activity the alienation of the linguistic and communicative nature of men, the *logos* with which Heraclitus identified the Common; they have above all revealed, in the very same movement with which they dematerialized labor, that this expropriation *always* takes place on the metaphysical plane.

Certain kabbalists took account of this divorce of meaning and speech with the classic theme of "exile from the Shekhina."

The Shekhina is the last of the ten Sephiroth or attributes of divinity, the one that expresses its very presence, its manifestation on Earth: speech.

A Talmudic tale tells of the admission to paradise of four rabbis: one of them broke the branches off the tree of the Sephiroth, a gesture that in the Kabbalah symbolizes Adam's sin, separating the tree of Life from the tree of Knowledge. As a result of this separation, "the universe falls,

Adam falls, everything is affected and disturbed ... nothing remained where it should be and as it should be; nothing therefore was from then on in its proper place. Everything is in Exile. The spiritual light of the Shekhina was dragged down into the darkness of the demonic world of evil. The result is the mixture of good and evil which must be dissolved by restoring the element of light to its former position [...] Thus there came into being the material world in which we live, and the existence of man as a part spiritual, part material being." (Gershom Scholem, *Major trends in jewish mysticism*) The flesh, in the Kabbalists' view, is but the clothing of mystic man, exiled from himself since the original sin; before then, man had a spiritual condition that was higher than that of the highest angel in the celestial hierarchy.

Had Adam not sinned, *Tiqqun*, Reunification, would have been accomplished; everything would have gone back to its place, and the universe would have been saved. And yet this fall into the commingling of good and evil, which were supposed to remain separate, and this tearing apart into artificial separations of what should have remained united, does not condemn us to definitive exile and irreversible impotence. The hell into which we have fallen is our restless wandering, and the desert that we traverse today is history; in a certain sense, "we are not only masters of our own destiny, and in the last resort are ourselves responsible for the continuation of our exile [*Galuth*], but we also fulfill a mission which reaches far beyond that." (*Ibid.*) The great mistake of the Blooms rests in their incomprehension of the path that they are completing, in their lack of a *point of view* on the history they're living out, in their ignorance of the place they occupy among people and things. The Kabbalah says that man falls into isolation when he wants to put himself in the place of God, in other words when man intends that freedom should serve him and that it is not for him to serve freedom.

Midway between transcendence and immanence, the Shekhina stands at the window that opens between our own nothingness and our own freedom. The language with which mystic man – who was higher than the angels – returns to his worldly clothing and is reconciled with his body is a language that tells of the individual, that makes the individual rediscover him or herself, that opens man up to the recognition of others. Certainly such language is different for each person, but it is comprehensible to all those who follow the same path, that is: "to the extent that each individual has a particular task in the struggle for the realization of *Tiqqun*, according to the degree and state proper to his own soul" (*Ibid.*) Marx said essentially the same thing, but put it more precisely: "Only when real, individual man resumes the abstract citizen into himself... when man has recognized and organized his *own forces* as *social forces* so that social force is no longer separated from him in the form of

political force, only then will human emancipation be completed." (Marx, *The jewish question*)

The Shekhina, intimate as it is with the celestial sphere, still stays lovingly close among all men, as it was in Israel and everywhere man is in exile; and in the same way, "whenever two men sit down to interpret the words of the Torah, the Shekhina is among them" (J. Abelson, *The immanence of god in rabbinical literature*), because there is nowhere that the Shekhina is not to be found, nowhere that it does not suffer the same pain as man, "not even in the burning bush" (Exodus Rabbah, on Exodus 2:5). "When man endures sufferings, what does the Shekhina say? 'My hand is hurting, my head is hurting.'" (G. Scholem).

Even if the Shekhina never leaves us, because of its exile, it leaves us constantly exposed to the risk that "speech – that is, the non-latency and revelation of a given thing – might separate from that which it reveals, and acquire an autonomous consistency. In this condition of exile, the Shekhina loses its positive power and turns evil (the kabbalists say that it 'sucks the milk of evil')" (G. Agamben)

But there is something that can put an end to this exile: the consciousness that "speech in its original essence is a commitment to a third party on behalf of our neighbor: the act *par excellence*, the institution of society. The original function of speech consists not in designating an object in order to communicate with the other in a game with no consequences, but in assuming towards someone a responsibility on behalf of someone else. To speak is to engage the interests of men. Responsibility is the essence of language." (E. Levinas, *Nine talmudic readings*)

Biopolitics and Virile Currency

In these times, when an erection is purchased and planned, and when the historical emblem of domination has become something reproducible *in vitro*, separated from its sting and its meaning, all the obstacles to universal prostitution have been removed.

Sex does not just *have* a market, it *is* a market, the final fragment of night that we carry within us; it cedes to the pure positivity of the denatured, characterless body of our times.

The "threshold of biological modernity" of a society is located at the moment when bare life becomes what's at stake in political strategies – assuming, that is, that life separated from its form can still be called life.

"For millennia, man has remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal, and moreover one that is capable of a political existence; modern man is an animal, in the politics where what's at issue is his life as a living being." (M. Foucault) Death is no longer an instrument of domination, but has become the whole administration of the living within the domain of "value and utility," a domain where

commerce is perfectly immaterial, and where the currency used is that very faculty of desire which comprises the totality of biological and cultural life.

"Let's imagine," writes Klossowski, that "we were to find ourselves in an industrial era where the producers have the means to demand, as payment, objects of feeling from consumers.

"These objects are living beings. Following this example of such exchange, producers and consumers come to constitute collections of 'persons' supposedly destined for pleasure, emotion, feelings. How can a human 'person' fill the function of currency? How could producers, instead of 'paying for' women, end up getting paid 'in women'? How would businessmen and industrialists pay their engineers and their workers? 'In women.' And who will do the upkeep on this living currency? Other women. Which implies the opposite: women with professional careers would get paid 'in boys.' And who will do upkeep on, and sustain this virile currency? Those who have feminine currency at their disposal." (P. Klossowski, *Living currency*).

The Coming Community

"In other words, to the persecution that works me over most patiently and which is the anonymous passion in myself, I must not only respond by off-loading it out of my consent; I must also respond to it with refusal, resistance and combat, returning to knowledge, to the self that knows, and knows that it is exposed." (M. Blanchot)

The coming community is a community that will liberate itself *thanks* to the body and consequently thanks to the words it will use in *speaking* the body.

Whereas in the fordist production model, the body was condemned to the assembly line by its repetitive gestures, and the mind remained "free" to think about ways of emancipating it (and the forms of its emancipation), now that work in advanced capitalist societies today is almost exclusively intellectual labor, the body, incredulous and forgotten, merely watches this new exploitation taking place. Forgotten during working hours, but constantly present in free time in the form of an obsession, the body is the most material of our determinations at the same time as it is the entry pass that allows access to the dematerialized labor mar-

ket. It is the *person*, that mask whose upkeep must be taken care of in detail, so that it cannot express the self in its own language, the language of non-submission.

In this immense "desirability" market, we have to rely on commodity society's abstract and empty desire if we want to "fit in socially" and work. This new market does not comprise a space that we officially inhabit as singularities, but a general parameter to which we must conform.

Stuart Ewen cites an exemplary marketing brochure from the twenties with an early advertisement for female beauty products: on the cover there was an "impeccably clean, nude woman, all done up with powder and makeup, accompanied by the following caption: 'your masterpiece: yourself.'" (Stuart Ewen, *Captains of consciousness: advertising and the social roots of consumer culture*).

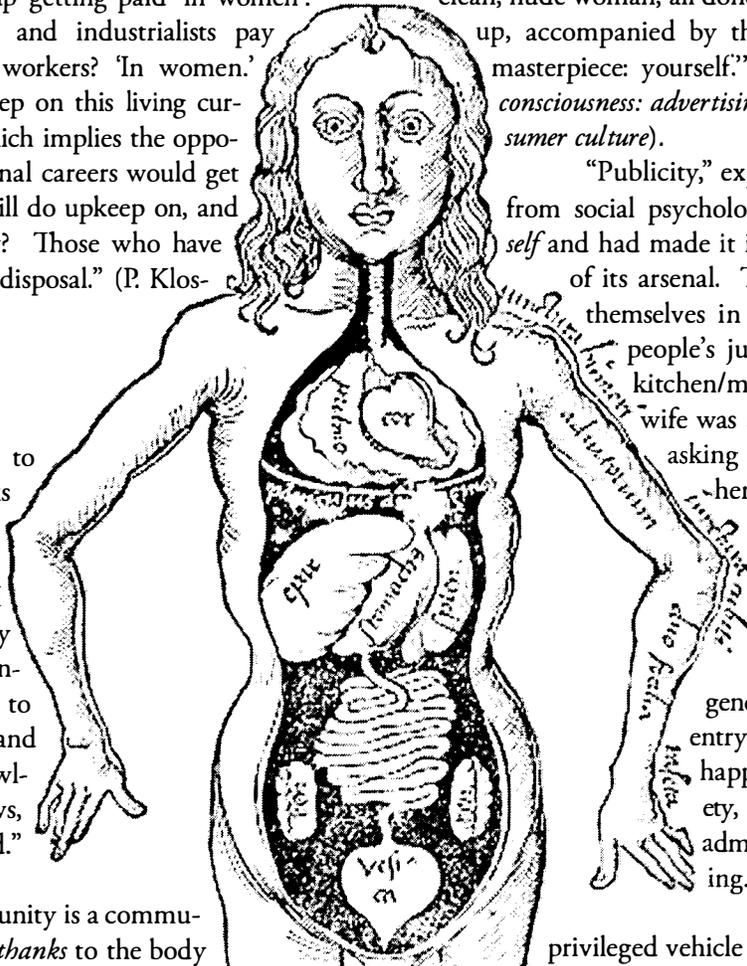
"Publicity," explains Ewen, "had borrowed from social psychology the notion of the *social self* and had made it into an essential centerpiece of its arsenal. Thus everyone would define themselves in terms established by other people's judgments." Hence, "in her kitchen/machine room, the modern wife was supposed to spend her time asking herself whether her 'me,' her body, her personality, were competitive on the socio-sexual market defined by her workstation." (*Ibid.*)

What happened to wives on the eve of their emergence from the home and their entry into the factories is now happening to the whole of society, transformed into a "gigantic administration of housekeeping."

The female body is the privileged vehicle of biopower, as the Pygmalion myth shows. Society desires it as a doll capable of desiring, and oversees its becoming a "thing that feels."

Though female frigidity comes as no surprise to Western man, since the West is tacitly in agreement with creating this sad subtext, male impotence is still quite shocking, and speaks a language of suffering that up to now was unheard.

The invention of a remedy for obtaining an orgasm, which in the end is faked on both sides, will not stop the discourse of the un-docile body but will merely constrain and repress it into a forced activity that will inevitably soon seek out a path of its own to self-liberation.



“Discipline is a political anatomy of details” that “dissociates the power of the body; it makes it on the one hand into an ‘aptitude,’ a ‘capacity’ that it seeks to increase, and on the other hand inverts its energy, the potential/power that might result from it, and puts it in a strict relation of subjugation. While economic exploitation separates the force and strength from labor, disciplinary coercion establishes the prohibitive bond between improved aptitude and increased domination.” (M. Foucault, *Discipline and punish*).

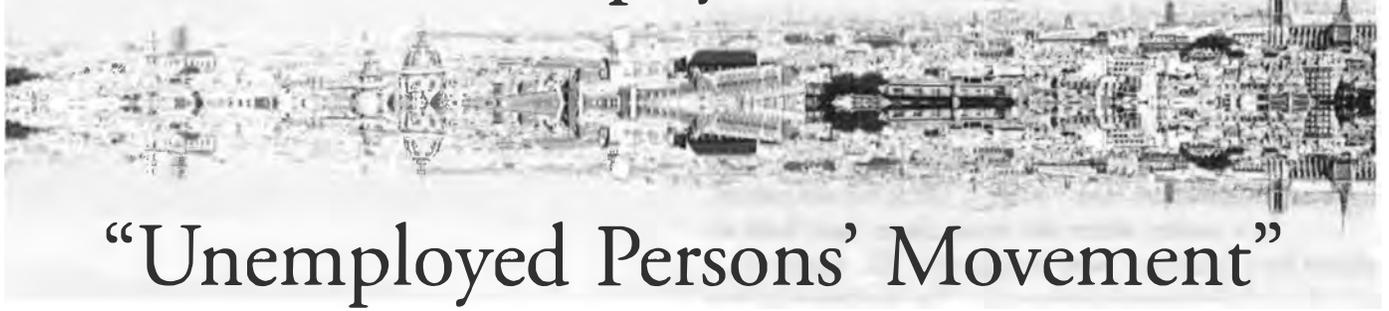
In a society where the social classes have been replaced by a “planetary petty bourgeoisie” (G. Agamben), a *new form of consciousness* is emerging. The battleground that is now sketching itself out is metaphysical in the sense of its immanence in the body, and it’s because it is symbolic and immaterial that it liberates the concrete and material. The microphysics of domination keeps the body in check with the use of meticulous techniques, “little tricks with a great power of diffusion; subtle arrangements with an innocent look to them but which are profoundly insinuating; devices that obey unavowable economies or carry out the tiniest coercions.” (M. Foucault) The struggles to come will be waged against this subtle form of expropriation; the new fight for liberation from the grip of microphysics will be metaphysical or will not be at all.

NOTES

1. “A Californian corporation, Health Network, requires a medical report attesting to erectile dysfunction; Cigna Healthcare, an insurance firm where 15 million Americans have policies, requires documents that not only describe the symptoms but attest to its appearance before Viagra’s appearance on the market; Kaiser Permanente asks for clinical documentation and regardless will only reimburse Viagra prescriptions at 50%, not 70% as it does for all other medications.” (*L’Espresso*, no. 19, year XLVI)
2. “He cares not whether she be ugly or handsome; as long as she wears a petticoat – you know the rest!” Mozart/Da Ponte, *Don Giovanni*
3. Author of the novel-bible of the feminine sexual revolution, *Fear of flying*.



The Critical Metaphysicians beneath the



It's well understood: there is no "unemployed persons' movement." The good fortune that this phrase had immediately within a certain spectacular leftism, where it had already been a figure of historical reference, demonstrates that sufficiently, since nothing named by the Spectacle has any chance of bringing any kind of contestation to bear against it. Moreover, one would have to be in the terminal phase of some nephritic Trotskyism or other, or otherwise aspiring to some position in the joint management of human misery to fail to acknowledge that the very concept of a "movement," and *a fortiori* of a "social movement" has

worker" is just as stripped of all meaning as is the concept of "movement," and that their coupling, in the absence of some miracle or another, is hardly gifted with many genestic virtues. Whoever consents to take the slightest glance can easily see that the concept of "unemployed worker" doesn't express any real attribute in particular, but on the contrary the absence of an attribute, the fact of *not working*, that it specifies nothing, nothing positive at least, nothing existent. An individual can only be labeled as "not working" within a society where to work, that is, to enter into a certain type of domination-relations, is the norm. The concept of "unem-

Santa Claus indignantly insists: "The unemployed persons' movement is garbage!"

"More profoundly, here at the end of 1998, the opinion that for the most part went through a revival this year has shown itself to be less receptive and has not let itself be distracted from the preparation of its festive events. Furthermore the novelty effect that the media are generally so fond of, which the unemployed persons' movement benefited from in 1997, has gone flat. The welfare occupations have appeared to have so totally gotten a 'make-over' that the government has taken great care this year to not let these kinds of actions come about."

(Le Monde, December 31st 1998)

no other content besides the operations that they permit: a general rendering equivalent of all intentions on the basis of a generalized fidgeting quite in compliance with the ends that commodity nihilism commands. That some swarm of human beings with a pretense to critique gets labeled as a "movement" must in the future be considered as an irrefutable proof of its innocuousness; that is, in the present configuration of hostilities, as a manifestation of an intimate connivance with domination. There will certainly be no lack of fidgeters to object to the fact that we aren't dealing here with *any particular* movement, but with the "unemployed persons' movement," a strictly determined object, and to put it another way, an empirical one. But the unfortunate thing, in this instance, is that the concept of "unemployed

ployed worker" thus has in the last resort nothing to do with any tangible, isolable reality, it just expresses the *obligation* to work, and the fact that this obligation, in commodity society, is operative on the individual level. The innocent little maneuver where the lack of a given quality transforms into being itself a particular quality, and non-belonging to a category becomes a distinct category of its own has in fact nothing neutral about it at all; it is precisely that which gives the foundation to the whole exorbitant power of constraint in the world of the authoritarian commodity.

Even in the context of an accelerated disintegration of the classical wage system, the notion of "unemployed person" remains doubtless a war machine of the highest caliber

in domination's arsenal; however, there its use is flipped upside-down. From being a weapon of attack, it has now gone into use as a defensive apparatus, and now serves to prevent the eruption into commodity Publicity of the alarming inflation of its negation: Bloom. For the time being, the crisis of labor, which at a certain point managed, *as an ethos*, to substitute itself for all singular *ethos*, must be understood as a crisis of domination, which only imperfectly controls – with its present means – what subsists outside of labor; that is, outside of its influence over appearances. The “jobless person,” the “precarious worker,” the this-less people, the that-less people, are just so many masks that the Spectacle imposes on the Blooms when they try to openly¹ force open the doors of Publicity. The “excluded” thus can be included precisely *as excluded*. But the growing haste and tactlessness with which *people* ban the bare man, mankind as human beings, from access to an acknowledged existence, indicate with certainty that there's a crack in the very heart of social appearances. Certainly, the ordinary recipe for preserving the regime of separation, which consists in *sociologizing metaphysics*, in making what is in fact the truth for everyone appear as if it were just a particular fraction of the population, still provides significant service, but to be duped by that requires a faculty of illusion that our contemporaries appear to be less and less capable of. And so, with the exception of an inexorable handful of assholes, the feeling that we're inhabiting our own lives like sparrows in the Montparnasse train station, as exiles, has tended to spread among all mankind. This is what the forces of concealment have a heavy interest in hiding behind some harmless and noisy “unemployed persons' movement.”

If the “unemployed persons' movement” were in spite of all related to any reality at all, it certainly wouldn't resemble in any way what *people* would like to understand by that – an adventure in contestation. Because before assuming its autonomy as a spectacular creature, the latter had to be born from one as a surprise event *within domination*, that is, in less oracular terms, *of a conflict of interests*, and *as a conflict of interests* between union putrefactions, having to do with the management and monopolizing of the gigantic masses of money that circulate around the welfare allocations and their distribution. As for their unexpected duration, it must be imputed to another kind of competition, this time between the classic, decomposing unionism – although it suffices to merely glance a bit at the methods of

A new race of assholes: the managers of misery

“There were more than 30,000 of us at the demonstration this morning. I don't want to shine your shoes or nothing, but I really find you quite extraordinary. I'm proud of you. Proud to be in charge of the poor people's union.” (Charles Hoareau, leader of the CGT unemployed persons' committees in Bouches-du-Rhône, quoted by *Libération*, December 4th 1998)

the CGT-unemployed or SUD to remember that in effect “in history as in nature, decomposition is the laboratory of life” (Marx) – and the young emerging bureaucracies of associations like AC!, Droits Devant!, DAL, etc., who've popped up with a highly suspicious spontaneity to cauterize one by one all the new wounds of the social disaster, as licensed specialists, demanding in exchange a few crumbs and a little recognition. In all this *bullaballoo*, all this *merry mess*, there's not even the shadow of any contradiction, and above all in the rotting role-playing that “opposed” the bosses' government regarding the 35 hour work-week, an obvious plagiarism of the most burlesque exploits of the Comité des Forges in the 20s. And so if the “unemployed persons' movement” was anything at all, it was but that and nothing else. For those who know the kind of fanaticism that our contemporaries so enjoy putting into their submission, there's no doubt that domination can afford to have a movement like that every winter, and maybe even a few at a time.

However, *something* did happen, on the margins of this ever-so artistically mastered orchestration, which even went beyond it at many points. It was something that didn't start with the “unemployed persons' movement” and didn't end with it. Something that can't be named, and that all the critical metaphysicians participated in, in one way or another. Lasting a number of weeks, assemblies gathered in the Jussieu amphitheaters that could only be defined by their suspensory refusal to define themselves, or more probably the impossibility of their doing so. There's no room here to say more. It will suffice for the reader to know that neither patient discussions, nor actions carried out in common, nor even the shared hostility towards this society were enough to overcome the separation; the first consequence of this was the assemblies' powerlessness to delimit themselves, but above all – and this is a more serious problem – to designate their enemy. It goes without saying that external circumstances and the isolation of the assembly were not uninvolved in this, as was our failure to make ourselves understood. Since then, the *problem* of constituting a collective subject has remained the only question that we have deserved in any way to be measured by. Transcending Bloom; such is the task. All Critical Metaphysics tends towards this exclusive goal, and it is in that light alone that we may be read, in all honesty. Our perspective is *purely practical*. Nothing in the world besides the spectacle of paralysis into which thirty years of emaciated thinking have ended up leading critical activity could explain the need and reason

1 Unmaskedly – TRANS.

behind our theoretical investigations. The question of community, which from now on poses itself as the stakes of the free creation of an autonomous Common, is the only issue that can bring us out of nihilism through social contestation. And as long as it speaks the language of domination, as long as it doesn't put itself explicitly on the metaphysical terrain, it will hardly deserve more than the mere curiosity that one might legitimately feel when faced with this unusual form of fascination with lost causes. We have to start from the historical pre-emption of the totality of commodity categories and of the world they build. "It is not an indifferent matter whether we forget metaphysical concepts or obstinately prolong their use without examining them." (Heidegger) – a text entitled *Fragments of a theoretical discourse*, to appear in *Tiqqun* number 2, will be dedicated to just such a clarification of the strategic function of the metaphysical categories in force in the management and organization of social misery. And so for the concept of "work" for example, which is no longer anything more than an empty form susceptible to indifferently containing any kind of manifestation at all in its definitive abstraction, and is thus appropriate to none – the proof being that the Negriists can even include in it the breastfeeding of newborns by their mothers (they then poetically talk about "producing infants" without even having needed to read Swift), and that *people* can knock themselves out trying to replace it with "employment," or even "employability." Since the element of self-production that participation in social functioning was once able to contain has totally evaporated, work appears at last for what it really is: a contingent, limited, and confusional mode of disclosure, a fallacious qualification for pure servitude. If the affirmation that "there's no more work" has any meaning, it's not because it's becoming harder and harder to get yourself exploited, but because now there's nothing left but jobless negativity and negativity-less jobs. From this point of view, any contestation that already considers itself sufficiently radical to be able to limit itself to a critique of work, which regardless domination has already domesticated by and large, is falling behind the new mutations of capitalism. We have to take as our point of departure – and it is on this level we consider ourselves to have a chance of confronting the enemy – that *work does not exist*, outside of the system of domination's representations, that is, another mode of reality-disclosure, true community, needs to be invented *through war*. It's not about exterminating the dominators, or espousing the cause of the dominated from the lofty heights of the sociology chair at the College of France, but of destroying a world where certain Blooms exist *as the dominators* and others, the majority, *as the dominated*. For the rest, we can just let the slaves – whether of Trotskyist, Negriist, or Bourdieuan obe-

dience – go on disputing the straw men of their servitude.

The defeat of what we took part in designates negatively a task to be accomplished. Only those who understand it as such can inherit this infinite debt. To the attention of those that don't think themselves free of the duty to carry into the future the "tradition of the oppressed," we hereby reproduce two texts that were distributed during this short campaign of agitation. The first, distributed in the second week of our practical engagement, exposed an analysis that nothing that has come afterwards has yet contradicted. One of our weaknesses is that we believe that in spite of formulations which in places are naïve and have since been surpassed by us, it sketches out a position which at all points remains ours. The second was distributed to the employees of the INSEE² on Friday the 13th of March, by forty of our comrades, invited to a luncheon there. Its interest lies in the fact that it constitutes the remaining traces of a direct attack on those that manufacture the form of appearance of the alienated social totality. We have as a indication of how hardly susceptible to the procedure they were the fact that we were called "Le Pen-ist Pol Pots" by the big despot around there because of its content. It goes without saying that the faculties that we engaged in this war only grew greater as a result of their expenditure. The history of our detrimental effects has only just started. And we'd like to be able to swear, like Leon Bloy, that:

"From now on there will be no more oaths mumbled on street corners by shivering, starving people as you pass by. There will be no more demands or bitter recriminations. All that is over. We are going totally silent... You can keep your money, bread, wine, trees, and flowers. You can keep all the joys of life and your inalterable serenity of conscience. We won't demand anything anymore; we don't want any of the things we've desired and demanded in vain for so many centuries anymore. Our complete desperation will from now on carry out, *against ourselves*, the definitive ban you've placed on our enjoyment of them.

"But be warned! We are keeping up the *fire*, and we beg you not to be too surprised at the coming fricassee. Your palaces and hotels will burn quite nicely, when one day we decide to set them ablaze, because we've listened very attentively to the lessons your chemistry professors give, and we've invented a few little contraptions of our own that will amaze you." (*The hopeless one*)

2 Statistics and economic studies institute – TRANS.

MARGINAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PRESENT MOVEMENT

These few remarks have been primitively jotted down in haste as personal reflections on a bad record. A comrade thought they might be useful to the movement, so I've transcribed them in identical haste, which should excuse their imperfections. They should be thought of as disorderly suggestions read over a stranger's shoulder.

1. It's rare to have a movement that's popular in proportion to its radicalness, which is true of ours. The sympathy that it gets provisionally comes from the fact that in a society without community, each person's identity is *exclusively* determined by their function in the production process, by their *work*. It follows that outside of that work which is the whole of the social existence of the Man of our times, he is but a being without identity, classless, anonymous, just any old singularity, *unwaged*. As such, the bum is the hidden truth *behind* all workers when they're not at work; a figure of their existence as a *free individual*. But the scandal of an *empty* freedom, a freedom without content, figures in to that as well: the bum's freedom is the freedom to *do nothing*, since as an individual, all the means of production are refused to him or her. Thus it is around the unwaged/the bum that the primary contradiction of the present social organization is woven: its maintenance requires, as part of the same movement, each person's exclusion from mastery over his or her own activity, participation in his own life, and the total mobilization of his energy in the form of work. For that mobilization, a kind of miracle has to take place where each person is simultaneously at peak enthusiasm and peak passivity. The bum is dangerous to the extent that he seeks to give content to his freedom, and power has understood that. If power is trembling now, it is because it knows that the networks of the unwaged are not only universal but above all *radical*: not a protest against any *particular* injustice, but against the *pure and simple* injustice of their having been marginalized in life; and the particular liberation of each of them is the liberation of all.
2. There's little doubt that the dominant language presupposes the dominant order. So it can't be adequately contested while the petty, bickering opposition continues between waged work and joblessness. Upon reflection, it quickly becomes clear that the function of an opposition like that is to hide the essentially *passive* nature of wage work and the truly *active* nature of the unwaged or the welfare recipient, busy with their own freedom. And so, the real choice here isn't between wage labor and joblessness, but rather between free activity and alienated activity, which is just a kind of agitated passivity. Though it isn't wrong of the movement to go on advancing, disguised with the name "movement of the unwaged and precarious," which is the only way that the present order can understand and thus falsify it, it should certainly not hide its own radicalness from itself: its true aim is the suppression of work as alienated activity.

3. We're lucky that we have the benefit of exceptional historical circumstances. Never, perhaps, has there been a society as hated as this one. The excessive nature of the present social crisis can be grasped positively as a gigantic individual and collective act of sabotage. There's not a housewife left that hasn't entertained the idea that a complete overturning of the present social organization is necessary. It's up to us to make the most obvious contradiction of this society burst, which is that it shows itself to be detestable, absurd, and irreparable, while simultaneously claiming that it's eternal. The present social situation is a "violent state that cannot last, because our fellow citizens are far too disunited to preserve the ancient form of the Republic much longer." In many minds the thought creeps up that there's no more time for secretly deploring our miseries, but that we must risk everything to free ourselves from them, that since the illness is a violent one, the remedy must be as well. We are many, we who silently curse this social order which we must either be the slaves or enemies of. It's already clear that our movement is an unheard of crystallization agent, that it is beginning a chaotic process the result of which will hinge on the slightest differences in its initial conditions: we will either have an entirely liberated society, or an even more totalitarian regime.
4. It is up to us to realize the hatred that this society devotes to itself, and make it conscious of the object of that hatred: commodity relations, which have devastated everything that once was human about our society. Our movement's function could be to constitute a plateau, a platform for the articulation of all the partial struggles in which we've managed to recognize the universal content of the struggle against the commodity. As pathetic as they may appear, the fight against genetically modified corn, resisting the continued degradation of the most elementary conditions of existence, or the search for alternatives to commodity relations that are awkwardly being sketched out in the Local Exchange Systems (S.E.L.), both have plenty to do with our movement.
5. Our movement's essential contradiction counterposes the party of partial demands, represented by the associations of the unemployed, and the party of disruption, which so freely expressed itself in the General Assemblies at Jussieu. Insofar as they are comprised of reformist and bureaucratic organizations, the unemployed workers' associations have corporatist, categorial, separate interests, and cannot truly desire an effective end to joblessness because it would mean they would have to come to an end. Their only objective is to eternally wage a fight without victory and with absurd content. They have anything but an interest in expanding the movement, which would then escape their control. Their collusion with the spectacular order and its sad soliloquy, ever full of reason, is proven by the nature of their so-called "spectacular" or "symbolic" actions. Because they remain within the sphere/register of representation, they make themselves the necessary allies of the Spectacle, and speak its language of numbers and despicable acts. Thus, when they end up wanting to loot a supermarket, they only do so *virtually*. They work in such a way as to make the mass of the people that they organize continue going to the cash registers, rather than just going in and consuming right there in the shop, sharing with other customers. Then they *negotiate* with the *management* to

try to get the right to take out the shopping carts that their henchmen have filled, without having to pay. In so doing, they only work to confirm the sovereignty of power and property, by giving it a chance to make an exception to a new kind of *privileged ones*: they merely ask for the right to infringe upon rights. Anyway, it's only natural that they speak the language of separation, blind as they are to the political aspects of economics - they can't understand the obvious fact that work now presents itself as a simple process of the maintenance of order by *occupying* the energies/attention of the greatest possible number of persons; no more than they can see that it is the police forces that in the final analysis provide the foundations for private property. Thus they only express themselves either in the jargon of specialized politics, or in the jargon of economy, but never in the "language of real life," which is the Common attribute of re-appropriated life, of autonomous existence. It should be remarked, finally, that they are not invulnerable, far from it, indeed, because in their internal functioning, as in that of this society as a whole, the management is autonomous of the "base," which is quite often more radical than its own spectacular bureaucracy. We can base ourselves on and draw an advantage from this weakness, there as elsewhere.

6. A global movement of social contestation has at the least one dimension insusceptible to recuperation: the new and real forms of life that it experiences *in practice*. Its explosive power depends on the extent to which it attains to making *felt* the planetary distance that separates the possible from the real, through its own partial realizations. It is by making the movement of disruption and upheaval passionate that its aims can be made desirable. At such a point of social devastation and desertification as commodity society has brought us to, it's not just love that needs to be reinvented, but the whole of human relationships. Our success will mostly depend on our ability to give a *living example* of a free and authentic sociality. "Real life" is not mere vain words, nor a poet's chimera; it is so far from being such a thing that one single day of rioting suffices to render death preferable to an alienated everyday life. The experience of such a brutal transfiguration of consciousness is one of those rare things that can bring on a *mass* desertion from wage society. It's not with any kind of repugnant commiseration that we will win over the other sectors of the population to our cause, but by making them discover their own misery. The disappearance of the masters has not abolished slavery; it has generalized it. It is no longer a question of fighting against the fictitious management/administration of this society, but of self-organizing our lives with scorn for the survival of a Power structure that has only a *police* existence. The Spectacle colonizes the future; we must take over/occupy the present.
7. It appears that one of the most urgent problems that our movement has to deal with is how to get out of the ghetto of corporatist demands regarding joblessness, and how to find that exponential tipping point of unrest which will rally the other categories of the population to our side, of achieving a suspension in the tyrannical tempo of production. Such an effect was in part produced in 68 - the difference between the present context and that of 68 has to do with the fact that because the absurdity of this society is today *concretely* shown, it can be *concretely* resolved;

the 60s had the means to give themselves a revolution without consequence, but we don't - by appealing in the form of written tracts for the constitution of action committees, tracts which would describe what an action committee is, how it can function, etc... The movement's progress saw them flourishing in a celebratory proliferation that alone was able to save the general strike from passivity. But the bureaucratic leftist organizations, which at the time had so much power, managed to infiltrate them, as was to be expected. The present non-existence of such parties allows one to speculate that they would not suffer the same fate today. We then saw the reversing effect of these little groups of a few dozen persons, who carried out their decisions the very second they were adopted. It wasn't just action that liberated them, anyway, but also speech, insofar as it is only to the extent that men have something to do together that they have something to say. The call to self-organization that concludes our communiqué to the headquarters of the Socialist Party only makes sense if we give this abstract formulation an effective, *lived* content. That still remains to be done.

8. The strategy adopted by the Spectacle to defeat us is quite clear, it's totally unoriginal. The regime's news organizations, in this first stage, last week sang a funeral hymn for our movement. Then, faced with the relative failure of this maneuver, they resolved to criminalize those who they had not managed to discourage. Finally, the unemployed workers' associations, in their sad struggle for recognition, could easily have undertaken a prudent little war of harassment while waiting for Tuesday's demonstrations, when the CGT and the various allies of the present order had their dreamed-of opportunity to make social contestation into a pretty little funeral procession. Though this movement must soon be defeated, according to their plans, it will only be because it trembled in light of its own radicalness, and because it didn't grasp the universal content of its goal - the abolition of commodity relations - which should have allowed it to gather together in unity within it all the isolated and fragmentary struggles aiming towards said goal. It could also be that it wasn't able to organize its diffusion and communications with the use of its own means. But the last word has still not been said in that respect. Though this whole undertaking is doomed to end in disaster, it will succeed in provisionally shattering the separation of men of good will. And domination has good reason to be disturbed by this, since it's just as dangerous for it as the gathering of a few beings determined to destroy it is - since in normal times it has reason to congratulate itself for its effectiveness in preventing encounters that might be dangerous to it. On this point at least, we've beaten them.

"You're only equal to anyone else if you can prove it, and you only deserve freedom if you can conquer it." (Baudelaire, *Knock down the poor!*)

Paris, Monday, January 26th, 1998.

THE JOBLESS SPEAK

If anything should be more surprising than our presence here today at the INSEE¹, it might be the fact that we didn't think to pay you a visit sooner. Motives aren't lacking. The commendable and well-known effort to falsify unemployment figures that the INSEE makes such sacrifices for so consistently already gave all of us quite the occasion to hear come clean then and there, all those for whom the adjusted lie of seasonal variations is a profession. We cannot let slide the insolence of such specialists, who talk about us without knowing us, and who, hiding in the corners of their fine offices, are so afraid to meet us. Well then, fine, you see; we've taken the first step ourselves!

But the obviousness of this primary motive might make it appear somewhat superficial. The second and more profound motive has to do with the very principle behind statistics and surveys. They're one of the most powerful instruments of domination and social control in use today. If the master of a society is he who holds control over the representations that it makes of itself, then the INSEE is the most zealous and efficient of servants in the hands of power. It is the INSEE in effect that pulls out of its ass the false self-consciousness that this society gives itself, and then spreads it all over whole pages of journalistic shitheadery; it does so in accord with interests that are plain to see. They're the ones who fill up the empty concepts with numbers, thus forcing assent to the ignominy of the commodity society whose language it's never ceased to speak. But they are above all the active symbol of the murderous quantification of life that is at work everywhere. The encrypted language of modern domination contains all the impudent arbitrariness of those who, acting behind closed doors, think there's no one they can't figure into their accounts. Polling opportunely takes the place of any real debate; the limitless horror of exclusion always appears ever so very moderate in the columns of numbers; and truth can always be silenced with surveys – all you have to know how to do is put the question the wrong way.

But today we've come in person to meet the men of the INSEE in person. If we can't expect anything at all from this institution which ought by all rights to be destroyed, it's not the same for those who comprise it: they are capable of some consciousness at least. They can recognize the social function that they are made to fill, which makes them the sad manservants of oppression. They can still recognize their statistician's misery: in their desolate offices, at the ends of hospital-looking corridors, where they waste their lives in the mute company of white noise, vectorial spaces, loose averages, and deviation-types, doing joyless, useless work. And having seen it clearly, they'll have to acknowledge the truth that they've become parasites, weakened men, their own executioners. And so then perhaps they will come to share with us the disgust they inspire in us, both them and the world that they relentlessly build. Perhaps they might even join us. And they'll be welcome, bag and baggage.

1 Statistics and economics institute – TRANS.



A FEW SCANDALOUS ACTIONS OF THE IMAGINARY PARTY

“Not a party, but perhaps a new kind of partisans, who would abandon the classical kinds of agitation to instead make highly exemplary *disturbing gestures*.”

Georges Henein, *Prestige of terror*

At the time of writing, the first phase of the critical metaphysicians’ activity can be considered complete. Its dominant trait was *experimentation*. In general we expected nothing to come of our actions except for us alone. It was most often about interrupting the predictable course of behaviors at a selected point in social space-time, of creating situations where the truth of our era would be forced to unveil itself. Such aims were opportunely in accord with our strength and capacities; and, like them, they have now been surpassed. Thus our victory or our defeat can’t really be measured in the ordinary terms of effectiveness; after all, up to the present we have voluntarily situated ourselves *outside* of those terms.



The situation that the critical metaphysicians started from was no less than the bankruptcy of the ensemble of modern political practices. *Demonstrations* hence have become incapable of demonstrating anything that the Spectacle hasn’t already said, and from one year to the next have progressively taken on the dimensions of a fastidious ritual, offered as an amusement to the benevolence of the dominant chatter, and to the emissaries of the various city authorities. *Strikes*, for decades now, have only served the sinister function of punctuating the low water marks of “democratic life,” and are only any good for occasionally stirring up the monochromatic festering of the rotting union system. And so, *organized scandal* has ended up

withdrawing in the face of domination’s having liquidated all objective morality, meaning, and effectiveness. From this observation was born the naïve hypothesis of the first critical metaphysicians, who considered that if the most modern procedures, properly speaking, were today also the most worn out, it followed logically that the most ancient would also prove the newest. The first consequence drawn from this cursory analysis was the decision to try out the use of *sermons*, which, as we know, Gramsci devoted more than a little time to over the course of his detention. The first “sermon to the Blooms” was thus put on the agenda for the 15th of May, 1998, at 2 pm, in Sorbonne square. At the pre-set time, then, a critical metaphysician, for lack of a pulpit, climbed up on a statute of the pitiful Auguste Comte and began to harangue those present. Well aware of the deafening heights of human sleep that our contemporaries have climbed to in spite of so many slips and falls, we gave a tone of invective to the oration for the majority of its length. Either way at least, we didn’t expect any real awakening to happen. Indeed, it was far from being obtained on that occasion, but we couldn’t feel any grief about having been excessively conciliatory or anything, as can be seen from these few extracts:

“These gentlemen order you to smile; France Telecom swears to you that it will make you simply love the year 2000; the SNCF¹ explains politely that you can’t act like you’re at home when you’re on its platforms; your prime minister orders you to work, and you go without saying a

1 French train company – TRANS.

word into this landscape of infamy... You were wrong to think that you were safe from everything in your humid and glacial withdrawal into private life, where the walls drip with muck; and that's how – agglomerated into clusters, overcome with trembling, terrified, bald, and scrawny – the phantoms have put you at their mercy. You, the Shivering Ones, the Kneeling Ones, the Cave Dwellers, you the Cowards, the Frightened Slaves. It's time for you to come out of your holes. You are truly sinister.”

“...It takes you eighty years to die of the absurdity of an existence where you've ended up confusing subjective life with the banal irony of your caprices. You work, you consume, and between these two unchanging poles of the empire of nothingness, you just wish to be allowed to sleep. You think *that's* living!? ... We aren't counting on you ever forgiving yourselves for having to such an extent and for such a long while failed to know real life; and we expect you to do that all the less since this whole society has sworn to never pay for anything but alienation, and lavishly so. The most blinkered among you will then flatter yourselves that you are being reasonable while refraining of course from making the humiliating admission that if you think for yourselves it's just that you've been *thought for by others*. Some will certainly condemn us for being unjust. Because, after all, they're suffering from the present state of things. They certainly do suffer, but their suffering touches no one and evokes no compassion because they're martyrs of nothing, nothing but themselves, which isn't much. The misery that their nullity and finiteness imposes on them is itself null and finite; it's not a human misery, it's an animal's. The most refined among you will condemn the domination and tyranny of a handful of corrupt leaders, and wink knowingly. But indeed your submission is

the whole reality of the world of domination. It's not you and the “system,” its dictatorship, its poor people, and its suicides. It's just you *in* the system, subjugated, blind, and guilty. We reproach you for your harmlessness.” And then the preaching ended with these words, the consequences of which were immediately felt: “Show us that you are not the subjects of your actions. But if you are, I hope you *die* of your indifference.”

Unable to refuse such a radiant chance to play the innocent bystander, a good number of passers by stopped and, hearing what was happening, a few tried to applaud the spectacle. But the weight of the insults they received in response dissuaded them from persisting in their effrontery. Unfortunately, by and large the spectators weren't gifted with enough of an attention span to be able to listen to a speech much longer than an ad spot. So, quite soon they had to give up trying to use us as entertainment, and went off to listen to some group of failed musicians who, a few meters away, were offering infinite comfort with some music that sounded like a dog food ad. A little while after our sermon, there was a demonstration by some bikers whose pride had been wounded by an odious ministerial decree, which for a few moments blocked Saint-Michel boulevard, and the indifference they were treated to for it was comparatively less sustained. Thus, it seems that among our contemporaries *people* are somewhat more sensitive to the noise of motors than to calls for truth. “Indifference,” wrote the divine Hello, “is a hatred of a kind all its own: a cold, lasting hatred that hides itself from others and sometimes from itself behind an air of tolerance, since indifference is never real. It is hatred coupled with a lie.” Later on, in his work *Mankind*, he added: “death, indifference, and separation are three synonymous words.”



A few of the sermonized

 Considering:

- 1 – all the inexhaustible perseverance that the French Philosophy Society (SFP) has shown ever since it has held sway to ensure that “dangerous thoughts be put aside until their poisons evaporate” (Nizan),
- 2 – the universal stakes involved in the conflict between our chthonic comrade Raguet and the president of said society, Bernard Bourgeois,
- 3 – the person of Jean-François Raguet himself, that raw artist of agitation, who for the great edification of the centuries will remain the inventor of the dig-it-ist dialectic and more generally of a *Weltanschauung* founded on coupling the principles of Hi-Lo poker and projective geometry, which also forms the foundation that (as the perpetual secretary of the Commission for the Repression of Anti-Philosophical Activities) he has made it our duty to uphold in a good number of circumstances, in keeping with the line of the Politburo of the Shit-Fuckers’ International (IFM),
- 4 – that said comrade was among us that day,
- 5 – that an objectively perfectly random chance gave rise to the SFP having one of their superfluous meetings at the nearby university at 4 pm on the Saturday in question,

the critical metaphysicians could not, without infringing upon their duties, do otherwise than to support comrade Raguet, and second him in the distribution of his tract *We’re not fucking around anymore! Total war on these dogs!* Let no one be mistaken: the sympathy we might feel towards comrade Raguet in no way prejudices our agreement with his obligations (Jean-François Raguet persists in believing that he can infiltrate and undermine the French Communist Party all by himself), or with his theoretical positions; this is a man who *speaks a totally different language*. We feel that the reproduction here of the first paragraph of his tract as well as the last gives the reader rather a good idea of its content and spirit:

“What?! 30 years and 10 days ago, May 4th, 1968, I was one of the first seven students to be sent to jail by the De Gaulle regime, when Georges Pompidou was prime minister and you, Bernard Bourgeois, were a professor at the Sorbonne and the President of the Board of Admissions at the College of Philosophy, and you think you can impress me now by threatening me with exclusion from the University because I insulted you? Revolting pig! Pathetic little shit! Count your pellets, cretin, because you’re made like a rat! You didn’t have to distort the facts! And since you have distorted the facts and have been caught red handed, of course now you want to try to flail about defending yourself ignorantly. You’re just sinking deeper in the shit, you fuck; you’re predictable like clockwork, you abortion. But tell me, you filthy bastard, once you’d kick me out, how did you think you were going to make me shut up? [...]

“I’d like to piss in your hair-part, but you’re too low for that, Bernard Bourgeois, you snotty eruption on a termite’s anus! Go ahead and hold your head high as long as you can. A surprising clinical case you are – an aberration like you really does belong in one of the formaldehyde jars in the Dupuytren museum as an archetype of the perfect specimen of a mother fucker.” (We note that since then, the sordid maneuvering of the abovementioned Bourgeois worked out for him, because Jean-François Raguet was indeed suspended from the University for one year.)

By a reflex that points out what they *really are* rather well, these gentlemen “philosophers,” thus having encountered some difficulty making good on their right to speculate innocently, quite naturally called their security guards, and then, faced with the diffuse impotence of the latter, they called the police. Thus could they unrestrainedly free themselves from their mask of vain and pretentious clowning. And although there was already something fishy about anyone with even the slightest illusions about the decrepit state of the University, that “grand, tender, warm free-masonry of useless erudition” (Foucault), it has now become abundantly clear: its sleep is the sleep of death.



On May 23, 1998, that is, exactly five hundred years to the day after the good Savonarola was hung and then burnt by his enemies the odious Roman Curia and the little oligarchs of Florence, a second sermon was given, interrupting a “free party.” And from Savonarola’s time until now, it’s been a constant that domination rarely pardons those who conceive of “politics” as anything other than a separate sphere of social activity. The project of a politicized rave – a number of “collectives” were to intervene in the same way as us – was not tasteful in the eyes of the Political Intelligence Service, which thought the idea sufficiently seditious to send a few of their piggies out, even starting the day before, to keep people away from the entrance to the quarry where the techno-fest was going to happen. And so the first people to show up, who were in charge of setting up the equipment and smoothing out a rough path down to the party spot, got themselves democratically “enforced” out of the area. The next ones to come were dissuaded by the example. This kind of episode shows the point where the apparent incoherence of domination on the issue of raves finally fades. Obviously, it’s not drugs or techno themselves that they fear, but just the constitution of any kind of infra-spectacular world, whatever the form and whatever the content. We consider that it would not be superfluous for us to reproduce here the text of the sermon, as it was to be read at the end of the morning on the second day of the rave.

Sermon to the ravers

Enough convulsing!

It's almost noon, and the high tide of chemical drunkenness is slowly starting to roll back. In ebbing it has given greater acuity to our perception of the *dryness of things*. All this sonic commotion, with everyone's nerves crashing against one another; all this streaming of electronic lightning bolts, cracking through time and streaking across space; all the colossal amounts of calories burned off by our bodies shaking – all this has returned to nothingness now that the sun is shining and the implacable, calm, triumphant *prose of the world* besieges you once more. All this agitation is incapable of holding it off for more than one day, and its only function is to cover up for a few hours the immeasurable extent of our aphasia, our unfitness for community. One more time we come out of it all alone, forlorn, and with our clothes reduced to rags by the pandemonium on parade. But above all, we come out of it deaf. Because every time a little more of our ability to hear is gone, and that's just fine for those who *don't want to hear anything*. The cataclysm of decibels, like all the recourse to drugs, just serves to erode, numb, and methodically devastate all your organs of perception, peeling away all the flesh of your sensitivity layer by layer, as you inure yourselves like Mithridates to a *world made of poisons*. Moreover, it's urgent that you be inured to it when it comes to sound, since, as De Sade once said: "the sensations communicated by the sense of hearing are the most vivid." And so, hardly even past the age of adolescence, some of us will already be stricken by *tinnitus*, that acute buzzing in the ear produced by the ear itself, which makes a person forever incapable of *hearing silence*, even in the most distant solitary places. And thus, they will have lost the most *physical* of their metaphysical faculties: that of perceiving the nothingness and consequently *their own* nothingness. Beyond that point, the flow of time is but a more or less rapid process of inner petrification into hardheartedness, fatigue, and death. And so we come to enjoy the growing violence that is needed to affect us emotionally even a little, and in this sense we are absolutely *modern*, because "modern man has obtuse senses; he is subject to perpetual trepidation; he needs brutal excitements, strident sounds, hellish drinks, and short, bestial emotions." (Valéry) So we see how these nights are the mirror image of the suicidal resignation of these days: the rave is the most imposing form of our *leisurely self-punishment*, where each of us commune with each other in the jubilatory self-destruction of all. As you can see now, *this is a call to desertion*.

All the tragic truth of the *raver* comes down to this: what he's looking for he doesn't find, and what he finds is not what he's looking for. And thus he has to coat his brain with ever more fantastic illusions, so that he can remain totally unaware of the abyss that separates what *is* from what he *thinks* is. And in the last resort he drugs himself so as not to die of truth.

What the raver is after, in the first place, is a certain *romanticism of illegality*, a certain adventure in marginality. In fact, he's entered into a desperate quest after a *real* exteriority to the total organization of society, an *existing* place where its laws would be suspended, a space where he could at last abandon himself to what he thinks is his "freedom." But in the same way as it's this society that commands the necessity of the phantom of revolt against it, this society dispenses, authorizes, and organizes its own exteriority too. The Law also decrees where and when the Law will be suspended. The interruption of the program is itself part of the program. These *free parties*, which aren't really free in any sense of the word, are *tolerated*, in a *gracious* gesture, by the City Administration, when it's not the cops themselves that distribute the access maps, or, more pleasantly, save the facilities from being overtaken by mudslides, as happened recently at pH4. And so, *nothing*, in this illusory space of freedom, escapes domination, which, undeniably, has attained a remarkable level of sophistication. But this lapse of judgment on the part of the raver would be but a comical irrationality were the reality not *exactly the opposite* of what he thinks it to be, in its principles and – almost invisibly – at its very heart. Because *the rave is today the most precise metaphor that this society has come up with for itself*. In both the one and the other, there are just these crowds of

puppets shaking themselves to exhaustion in a sterile chaos, responding mechanically to audio commands given by a handful of invisible technophile operators, who they think are there at their service, and who *create nothing*; in both the one and the other, what we have is an absolute equality of social atoms to which nothing organic aggregates besides the unreal and booming cacophony of the world, obtained by the submission of the *masses* to the program; and in both, finally, we see the commodity and its hallucinatory universe centrally guaranteeing that *people* will tolerate the generalized drying out of emotionality, because all commodities are *drugs*. If, in spite of the obvious, the raver clings so dementedly to his blindness, it's only because he must at all costs maintain his illusions about the resolute hostility of Power and the furious energy of police repression. Otherwise he'd be forced to open his eyes to the frightening novelty of the most recent forms of domination, which no longer rest in a palpable "outside," simultaneously close by and far away – not in the authoritarian figure of a tyrannical master – but rather in the heart of all the social codes, even the very words we use, and carried in each of our gestures and in each of our thoughts. However, if he would for just a moment let go of his chimeras, he would have to recognize the *revolutionary essence* of his quest. Because this society's only authentic exteriority is *political conspiracy* undertaken collectively, aiming to overturn and transfigure the *totality* of the social world and move it towards a real, substantial freedom. And that's precisely what domination, which surrounds us so regularly with plain clothes cops, has now confusedly grasped.

But the raver is pursuing something different, and that is a certain tribal feeling of *community*, whether he's participating in organizing the rave or if he's just at the rave itself. Everything about his life shows his search for a perfect and immediate community where egos will have ceased to comprise obstacles between people. He seeks this so blindly that he's ended up confusing it with the *hellish* fanaticism of a collective quest for depersonalization, where the artificial and molecular explosion of individuality through chemicals has taken the place of inter-subjective development, and where an external negation of the self by the *sadistic* stomping of machinelike music takes place, and each person slowly erases the lines delimiting his or her singularity. From one confusion to the next, the raver, who intended to escape the false community of the commodity and the paranoiac separation of corporal and psychic egos, finds no other means of reducing his distance from the Other than reducing himself to nothingness. He thus certainly will have no Other left, but he won't have any Self left either. He'll just remain there at the center of himself, in the lunar landscape of his inner desert, which rushes him along, obsesses him, and stalks him. If he continues down the path of annihilation that *people* have *deliberately* directed him down, so as to turn him away from the *revolutionary* project of producing *socially* the conditions for a possible authentic community, he will only make his every moment of lucidity all the more painful. In the end he will have to choose to abrogate his suffering in one way or another – by regularly ingesting ketamine for example. For the raver, the cure has always been the same as the disease.

And that, at bottom, is the third object of his quest: a certain *self-destructive pathos*. But since what he's destroying has no value, that self-destruction itself is insignificant. As a kind of suicide, it's pathetic. That act, which once was the most dazzling affirmation of sovereignty, has now been stripped by this world of all its grandeur. *People* have now found a *social function* for suicide: it serves domination. This kind of leisure is exactly what the post-industrial society demands to bury any too-flagrant signs of its *decomposition* beneath striking colors, since it serially produces the kinds of brainless ectoplasms that productivity-hypnosis requires. One might even see a sort of overtime work in this kind of leisure where people submit *voluntarily* to traumas that only make them all the more resistant to the growing hardness of the world and of work. But to put it plainly, we don't believe in this desperate and premeditated pursuit of death at all. Everyone, at a rave, is quite simply behaving in the image of this society as a whole: it self-destructs in the most frenetic unconsciousness, entrusting the repair of the damage done to some hypothetical future technology, ignoring the fact that redemption does not count among technology's competencies. Because in the end, the raver is "the most contemptuous of people, who doesn't even know how to have any contempt for himself;" the *last man*, who skips along on the now quite cramped surface of the earth, and shrinks everything down to size; he is of a species even more indestructible than the aphid. "We

invented happiness,” he says, and gives a sly wink. “A little bit of poison now, here and there, to get yourself some pleasant dreams. And a lot of poison in the end, to die pleasantly.” Certainly, he goes on working, but his work most often is little more than a distraction. And he sees to it that that distraction will be maintained. “We don’t get rich or poor anymore; too boring. Who still wants to govern? Who still wants to obey? Both of those are too boring. No shepherds at all, just one big flock! Everyone wants the same thing, they’re all equal: whoever has other feelings can be put away; they’ll fit in perfectly at the madhouse. ‘In the old days, everyone was insane,’ he says, and gives a sly wink.” (Nietzsche). He’s prudent, in fact; he doesn’t want to spoil his appetite. But there’s ice in his laughter.

Finally, what the raver seeks is *Festival*. He wants by all means to escape the hopeless mediocrity of alienated everyday life, as it is planned out for him by organized capitalism. In his own way, he is engaged, as were so many others, in the pursuit of *truly lived time*, and its agonizing intensity. But in all the apparent chaos of his dancing, we only see the imperious boredom of identical lives, identically uninhabited. The time when he’s at raves is no less hollow and empty than the rest of his time is, and it fills his excited, consumer passivity only all too imperfectly. And when you watch him thrash about in it, what you’re seeing is just *absence* gnawing away at him from the inside. But these aren’t really parties: they’re *get-togethers*. That is, they’re additive multitudes of beings gathering in places where a few other people will have the decency to get them to SHUT UP. There, at the rave, there are but the shadows of men who have forgotten what they wanted to forget, runaways who think they’re safe in the folds and recesses of their measly discourse-less sensations, the sterile rioters of a chemical happiness stupidly communing in a supermarket hedonism. Because the real Festival is none other than revolution, which contains within it the whole *Tragedy*, and the whole sovereign conscience, of an upside-down world. Whereas the revolution is the being at the highest summit of being, the rave is but the nothingness at the deepest depths of nothingness. This apparent negation of the rest of his existence is really nothing but the *custom-built* supplement that makes that existence tolerable to the raver: the chimerical abolition of time and consciousness, individuality and the world. All of this is little more than crystallized diarrhea for domesticated pigs.

We claim that the energy that’s squandered to pure loss in raves should be spent otherwise, and that what we’re dealing with here is the end of a world. We’ve just said a lot of things. It is urgent that they be discussed.



On May 21st, 1998, at 8:05 AM, Kipland Kinkel, 15 years of age, entered the cafeteria of his high school in Springfield, Oregon, dressed in a beige overcoat and a hat, climbed up on a table and calmly began to fire into the crowd of his little schoolmates gathered there for a school function. At first they thought it was a joke, or a show put on by a candidate for class president, and didn’t immediately react. “*I thought it was all a show. I’d never heard a gunshot before. It was like we were in a movie,*” remarked Stephanie Quimby, 16 years old. When the first spurts of blood appeared, the high schoolers’ torpor came to a sudden end, and, screaming, they rushed to the doors and dove under the tables among the gunshots. A few of them were so petrified they couldn’t even move, and stood there incredulously, staring at their executioner, probably because “*he looked totally calm, like someone who*

was doing something quite normal,” as one of them recalls. It was only when the young man went to look in his bag to get out his 9 mm pistol, since his semi-automatic rifle was out of ammunition, that he was finally tackled by a courageous student. Barely an hour after the events, which left two dead and twenty-three wounded, Kipland Kinkel lunged with a knife at the police officer interrogating him; he had stolen the knife at the police station and hidden it in an inner pants pocket. But there were no victims that time; he was immediately subdued. Upon searching the house, five homemade bombs were soon found which had been set to welcome the police, only one of which actually exploded; they also found the corpses of Kip’s father and mother. According to investigators, they had been shot the evening before the massacre. While waiting for his sixteenth birthday, the suspect was placed in solitary confinement in a juvenile detention center. Because of his suicidal impulses, all solid objects were kept out of his reach, and he was put under constant video surveillance; a report on his behavior

was made every fifteen minutes and he was provided with only paper clothes.

To this day, nothing has come out to explain the reasons behind this act. "Efforts to find an explanation for this tragedy are being made once again." (*Liberation*, Saturday-Sunday, 23-24 May 1998). Kipland Kinkel's professors considered him as an "American high schooler like any other," and the school's principal maintained that as far as he could tell "there were no exterior signs of anything like this." As for the murderer's mom and dad, they were unanimously praised by those close to them as model parents, who always made sure at least one of them would be at home when their son was there so as not to leave him there all alone, and who were very imaginative in coming up with things to do to interest their son, often taking walks together and going on family sailing and skiing trips. "Their friends described the Kinkel couple as patient but strict, very devoted, loving, attentive and enthusiastic parents" (*Chicago Tribune*, May 25th, 1998). Like her husband Bill, Faith Kinkel taught Spanish at a nearby University. Passionate about her job, radiant and dynamic, she was as well-liked by her colleagues as by her students. "Violence was something totally foreign to her approach to life; she always promoted mutual understanding among cultures through education, communication, and travel." (*Scripps Howard News Service*, May 26th, 1998). "Kip's father, a distinguished tennis player, had tried to get his son into the sport, but he never really caught on to it. He was a loner, a timid child, small and slight, who clowned around in class to get attention" (*Chicago Tribune*, May 25th, 1998). It must indeed be admitted that Kipland Kinkel was a problem child. Not just because he "rejected any kind of authority," as Barry Kessinger, Bill Kinkel's friend and tennis partner put it, but above all because of his inexplicable fascination with destruction; no one knew where it came from, and it had never ceased to grow within him, in spite of his being on Prozac. His friend Aaron Keeney, 14 years old, "had stopped hanging out with him as much recently because he'd started doing strange things" (*Associated Press*, May 22nd 1998); it seems that Kipland Kinkel had a dark side. We have various corroborating evidence about this: "he dressed in black, and used to brag about having dismembered his cat and blown up a cow. He often put little bombs in people's mailboxes, and used to like to throw stones at passing cars from overpasses. The evening before, he'd wrapped his neighbors' house in toilet paper... His schoolmates had voted him the student 'most likely to set off the third world war.'" (*Le Monde*, May 26th, 1998). Two of his classmates, Walter Fix and Shawn Davidson, even said that he'd shown them a black list of enemies one day, which he kept in a folder in his desk. And so, when it was his turn in literature class to read from his personal diary, he stood up on the podium and in a controlled voice revealed to the

class his plans to "kill everybody." "Everyone laughed at him, because we thought he was kidding," recalls Jeffrey Anderson, 15 years old. It was in that same school semester, moreover, that he'd done an detailed, serious exposé in Spanish class about how to make a homemade bomb, even illustrating it with a drawing of his own where you could see how to attach the explosive charge to a clock. "He spent most of his time in class talking about weapons and blowing stuff up," says Sarah Keeler, 18 years old, his neighbor. "He'd tell you just like that about how he wanted to kill stuff; I think he just likes how it feels to kill things. He was obsessed with weapons, bombs, and anarchy," said his friend Jeff Anderson. At his fifteenth birthday party, he'd offered Jeff a tool for breaking into cars, and then gone and painted the word "KILL" in whip cream on the driveway leading to his house. Jeff's mother didn't appreciate these little jokes much, and she forbade him to ever come to her house again. The day before his bloody rampage, Kip Kinkel had been suspended for having brought a gun to school. His father had then called the Oregon National Guard to sign his son up for their youth program.

As goes without saying, with the mysterious proliferation of motiveless massacres perpetrated by children – Kip Kinkel was the fifth case in one year in the United States alone – school killings have now taken on a real ritual aspect. They've even come to compete with the profession of postal employee, so infamous for these kinds of tragedies that it's even used as a generic term to designate them ("going postal") – and have given rise to a good number of debates, which always have a certain fundamental aspect in common: should gun ownership be prohibited? Should the age of criminal responsibility be lowered? Should the death penalty age be lowered? "Have we entered into a new culture of violence where children can no longer distinguish between reality and fiction? ... Why are we so reticent to recognize the ever growing evidence that when children kill it's most often the result of a brain dysfunction?" (*ABC News*, September 9th, 1998) In such conditions as these, how can we not be afraid of our own children? Should we double-bolt our bedroom doors at night before we go to sleep? What kinds of hints could parents look out for to indicate that their child could be a natural born killer? What's left to do with them when antipsychotic drugs and behaviorist techniques aren't enough anymore? Do they have to be put in cages, be given injections?



Unable to tolerate any longer the inept blather of those ideologues of capitalism's next modernization process, the Negriists, on June 15th 1998 the critical metaphysicians sabotaged their monthly seminar. By our use here of the

word “Negriists” we aren’t just talking about that handful of morons that come to Paris to hear the official interpreters of their imprisoned master’s pomposity, nor even just those who more generally consider themselves close to the “thinking” of Toni Negri. By “negriism,” we are referring to all the whole pseudo-leftist, post-workerist, para-autonomist nebula of those who, since they’ve now grown old and currently occupy a slightly envied position in society, would like to believe that capitalism can still be revolutionary, and that therefore all they have to do is earn their living as employees, community militants, or artists in order to advance the communist cause. Moreover, it’s his way of still preserving his heroic vision of himself as a “dragon rider” (the expression is his) even in the most ordinary and banal situations, even in the depths of the most notorious servitude, that lets one recognize the Negriist. So in his nullity he’ll never fail to quote Spinoza, Leopardi, Deleuze, Marx – the flattest parts of Marx, that is – Foucault, from whom he’ll only retain what’s accessible to him and which he can’t really even understand, the old senile Gorz, or even a hint of situationism. Indeed, if the Negriists could ever manage to discover the existence of the concept of “contradiction,” they’d have to abandon their sole ambition, which is to critique capitalism without critiquing its categories. But such a possibility is not to be feared among these slobberers, who can’t help but be profoundly fascinated by the commodity’s faculty for subsumption – nothing touches the Negriist emotionally so much as the “parable of Apple Corp,” since it shows that people like him, cagey leftist parasites, can become millionaires and even sit on the board of directors of a multinational corporation without ever renouncing their penchant for posing as revolutionaries and champions of freedom. In any case, if he’s allowed to talk theory he’ll always limit himself to describing the contemporary mutations of the capitalist mode of production, while religiously cleaning out of it even the slightest trace of the negative. Thus the Negriist can deliver dissertations all day long about “affect-value,” “free labor,” “precarious hipsters,” “inflationist biopolitical entrepreneurs,” “subjective capital,” “machine-brains,” “cyber-resistance,” “living wages,” or “putting emotions to work,” and do it without even the slightest touch of irony. The Negriist’s biased unilaterality makes his discourse easily recognizable; it’s supposed to compensate, comically, for the frustrated reality he’s condemned to by his refusal to take the negative into account. It’s not rare to find, in Negri himself, that dense, pedantic gabble of university-professor logorrhea, that Deleuze and Guattari have left us the most undying examples of. Thus we can read from his pen, in number 42 – so early! – of *Future anterior*, such lightning bolts as this: “expansivity, in all the directions of affect, exhibits the moment that transvalues its concept even so far as to make it able to

sustain the shock of the postmodern.” Well, how about that! As for their utopia – because these people are utopians, the *utopians of capital* – it consists in the fine hope that when the world has in every way become a gigantic supermarket, there will be no more cash registers. It’s this aspiration to a kind of *commodity communism* that allows the Negriists to applaud every new bit of progress made by capitalism in the chorus with all the other assholes, while reserving the sovereign right to do it with a sly wink. The “Benetton ideology” offers a spontaneously repugnant example of this manner of delivering oneself over to the existing order of things with hands and feet tied, and still putting on airs of intelligence. In spite of all our efforts in this direction, we’ve been unable to separate out what’s just naïveté and what’s just opportunism in all these aberrations. Unless it’s all just plain stupidity. It seems, in effect, that the negriists are incapable of conceiving that we don’t just want to live in a world without cash registers, but one without commodities too.

Faced with the progress of Negriism diffused throughout the pseudo-contestation milieu – primarily within AC! – and the upcoming launch of the Negriist meteorology magazine *Alice*, the critical metaphysicians decided to make these worms know the fate they’ve got coming to them. A poem for four voices was therefore recorded, with very nice letterist wordplay, such as an ecstatic “trilili!” accompanied the howling of our hydrocephalic friends’ most fetishized concepts, all over a background voice chattering in Negriish. No one was surprised that our ferocious little revolutionaries were gathering in the *Protestant Students’* hall – not much changes, apparently – in Paris, right in the middle of a famously red neighborhood, the 6th *arrondissement*. Upon arriving we found a little social climber from said magazine in the middle of entertaining them all with his defecations. These specters of theory proved worthy of themselves in practice, because they didn’t manage even to come together enough to stop us from playing our tape recording, or even responding to our insults, and in the end they sat there frozen with fear at the red hot cast iron voice of comrade Raguet. Thus it is our glorious duty to report the death of this newborn Negriist group. We’ll take care of informing the victims’ families.



“The psychiatrists found nothing to explain the act of 23 year old Alain on Father’s day, when he coldly killed his father and shot his mother.”

Marius Oreiller, 51 years old, a model employee at the SNCF, never saw who killed him on Sunday, the 18th of June 1995, Father’s Day. And the only gift given him by his only son was a 8 mm bullet in the neck, fired point-

blank.

Alain Oreiller is 25 years old now. But he doesn't like talking about "that story." When asked by the president of the Creteil criminal court, he responds: *"I've told the story fifty times, both to the police and the judges. It's the past; talking about it won't bring anyone back!"* But President Yves Corneloup insists. Visibly infuriated, the young man consents to giving a short summary again, which he tells with a scornful grin. *"I'd taken a pill of ecstasy at some friends' house, and I hadn't gotten much sleep. My dad woke me up. We didn't argue about it or anything, nothing special. I went up behind him; he was watching TV and didn't hear me coming. I fired. Then my dad was dead, that's all."* Yves Corneloup gets angry: *"Your father isn't dead, you killed him!"*

"Yeah, same thing."

"No, it's not the same thing at all!"

"Alright, fine, I killed my father, that's it!"

François, his mother, who survived it all, comes up to the bar to tell about her son's sudden explosion of hate and violence.

Her voice shows no rancor or anger, just an immense sadness.

"Around 1 o'clock, Marius and I had finished preparing our meal. My husband went to wake up Alain, who was still asleep in his room." At the time, his being woken up at any time whatsoever was always a subject for arguments. So was Alain's refusal to work. The evening before, the boy had told his friends: *"Man, I'm sick of my parents always hassling me to get a job."* But since June 18th was a day off, the couple weren't thinking about such things. In their small living room loaded with rustic furniture, Marius and Françoise had even opened up a bottle of champagne. When Alain went into the room, he found his parents sitting there holding their glasses. *"Oh yeah, that's right, it's Father's Day. Happy father's day, dad!"* he said. His father offers a toast to him; Alain refuses; it just so happens that he's on a fast. Since the whole family's there, François invites Marius and Alain to go into the dining room and she goes into the kitchen to fetch some snails. *"When I came back, Alain pointed a revolver at me; I thought it was a toy. And then I saw my husband slumped over the table, his bleeding head lying in the leftovers. I approached him; I really didn't grasp what was happening. And then Alain hit me in the face with the butt of the gun and knocked me down. 'My son,' I asked; 'what's got into you?'"*

The reply froze her in fear. *"There's no more son. You're going to suffer. I'm not acting out of sentiment anymore!"* Then Alain Oreiller shot his mother. But the gun, a smuggled pellet pistol, didn't work. He pulled the trigger a dozen times with no effect. He opened the barrel, and aimed again. *"I put my hand in front of my eyes*

and then a shot went off." Françoise went on. *"Everything went black; I felt like I was dying and I was so angry because I couldn't help my husband."* The shot Alain fired passed through his mother's hand before lodging itself in her forehead. When she opened her eyes again, Alain had put music on, and poured himself a glass of Veuve Clicquot. *"Things are gonna change around here. I'm the boss around here now!"* Françoise tried to get up. *"I thought I was dreaming. But he said, 'What, you want another one?' and fired again."* This shot only grazed Françoise. Alain stood up, hands in his pockets and his body hunched over, and said: *"I want a bitch, see? So you're gonna be my bitch now!"*

Having made this declaration Alain left, leaving his mother for dead. He spent two days wandering around the Vitry-sur-Seine area, then hit up the Vincennes forest area; *"I was thinking I could find a whore."* He was arrested by the police a few steps away. Neither the two days full of debate, nor the reports from all the experts, were able to explain Alain Oreiller's act. The psychiatrists talked about him having an Oedipus complex, but no one could explain the action itself. It was *"an enigma,"* said one of them; others suggested he was *"too spoiled"* a kid, blamed a *"suffocating"* climate, a *"scant"* environment, an *"authoritarian"* upbringing. Just like Marius the railwayman, Françoise, the daughter of a peace officer and an accountant at the same corporation since 1972, had dreamed of having a child that would share the same faith in her fundamental values: honesty and hard work. But, even early on, Alain, *"an adorable, very well behaved child,"* would just sit there looking out his window with envy at his friends playing in the courtyard in front of the building. *"I had lots of toys but I always stayed cooped up."*

Later, in spite of the private schooling, scooter, and car offered him by his mother, the adolescent Alain went off this all too straight and narrow track. *"When I was nine years old I dreamed that if it weren't for my parents I could conquer the world,"* he wrote as an adolescent. Except that he was never brave enough to just leave the familial cocoon. He even went in for a test to be a TGV¹ driver; he alone was accepted out of 500 candidates. *"We were in heaven!"* said Françoise. But for Alain work and authority were *"just annoying stuff."* After five days' professional training, he quit the job. And the tragedy happened not long after that. For the past three years, Françoise has visited the prison every other month. She brings him money and clothes. She started making visits as soon as she was able to move about again: *"no matter what he did, I can't abandon him; he's still my son,"* she told the court. The mother and her son write long letters to one another; Françoise's letters are really beautiful, simple, and poignant. Without the

1 High speed train – TRANS.

slightest affectation, she tries to explain her suffering to her son, and how she misses her husband, the man she loved. She wants Alain to understand that he still is and will always be his murdered father's son. Alain responds that he thinks he'll come back to live with her when he's free in their little apartment in Vitry-sur-Seine. "*We can't be separated, we're a family.*" Françoise trembles with fear at such prospects. When Maurice Papon was freed at the beginning of the Bordeaux trial, she phoned her lawyer in a panic: "*Could it be possible that Alain might get the same treatment?*"

However, the three psychiatrists agree on one point at least: they've found no trace of any mental illness in Alain Oreiller. They can't even find the slightest sign of any "*psychotic episode*" having taken place at the moment of his deed. One of them, because he had to report something, put forth the hypothesis that Alain was in a "*hypnopompic state*," in other words, an "*incomplete awakesness in a twilight state*," which received only a polite skepticism from the magistrates.

On June 1st, the attorney for the prosecution, Marie-Dominique Trabet, requested twenty years' imprisonment for this "*egocentric little pick up artist, this big narcissist who can't stand anyone resisting him.*" And after three hours of debate, the jury passed that sentence. (*Liberation*, Thursday, June 18, 1998)



On June 19th, 1998, a handful of critical metaphysicians publicly humiliated "the young and effervescent Laurent Gutmann," who with his complacent theatrical direction had dared to transform Calderon's metaphysical masterwork *Life is a dream* into a hipster boulevard-theater show. The fact that his Pygmalion had just been rebuked and gotten told to look out or else one day he and his peers will be strung up "*for lack of profundity*" didn't prevent the lead actor in this buffoonish play from proving us right and admitting that he'd been taken advantage of. And so yapping whores of both sexes there that day – mostly from the "cultural milieus" – got to experience true silence, probably for the first time in their lives. They don't have to worry; they'll get plenty more chances.



On Sunday, July 12th, on the fringes of the International Summit of Critical Metaphysicians at Arcachon (SIMCA), the motion to "politicize the beach" was adopted. A banner to such effect was thus painted, reading "You're going to die – and your mediocre vacations can't do anything about it." And so, in the afternoon of

that same day, at the time of the biggest crowds, the critical metaphysicians marched many hundreds of meters down the whole length of the beach called "Pereire" carrying said banner. If the sun can now be stared directly into, thanks to advances in the optics industry, it appears that such is not always the case with death, as the reactions of the beachgoers proved. The operation was a complete success. It revealed all the unimaginable disquiet hidden beneath the whole seaside meat rack. One sunbather thus came and asked us "why" he was going to die, and another inquired of us "what" he was going to die of. A third, certainly more familiar with the art of clairvoyance than the first little Heidegger, even tried to get us to tell him "when" he was going to die. A last one, clearly under the illusion that we were his peers, pushed the envelope of perceptiveness by observing, "Oh yeah, you guys; you sure are positive about life!" All the same, the eight year old kid that replied to his little brother, who was traumatized by this singular manifestation, "ah forget it, those guys are nuts!" and the old bearded fisherman who asked in a loud voice with a knowingly exaggerated Gascony accent, "what, you think they're from around here?" showed at the very least a slight degree of dereliction of duty.



"Cases of poisoning proliferating in Japan. TOKYO. A fifty-eight year old Japanese man was found dead Monday August 31st after having drunk from a can of tea containing a poison that same day, reported a police spokesman on Thursday, September 3rd. This death is part of an increasing spread of poisoning cases in Japan. On Tuesday, the manager of a supermarket in Suzuka, in the center of the country, spat out some canned tea because it tasted so bitter; police later found traces of cyanide in the can. On Wednesday, a taxi driver drank from a can containing a pesticide in Koryo (West). Four people died in July after eating a plate of curry containing arsenic, and at the end of August, an unknown person sent bottles of disinfectant labeled as a weight loss drink to twenty-three students at a school." (*Le Monde*, Friday, September 3rd, 1998)



Faced with the spectacle of so many bitter calumnies, so many predictable machinations, so many misunderstandings maintained on purpose, we feel it is necessary to make public what was probably the first ever honest critique of the bourdieu-ian imposture. We got our chance when one of the critical metaphysicians was invited, with near-total contempt, to participate in the

2nd International Marx Congress and speak on the impertinent theme, “daring to research critically.” None of them obviously would have ever consented to make such a grotesque engagement – everyone knows the role the Communist Party has in organizing these kinds of buffooneries – if the other puppets that’d been invited to pontificate hadn’t been two editors of *“the ‘December’ of the French Intellectuals,”* published in the collection *Liber/Reasons to Act*, under the protuberant eye of the much-worshipped Bourdieu himself. The decision was thus made to accept the invitation for Thursday October 1st 1998, on the grounds of Nanterre University, building L, at 2 pm, but the subject of the presentation was not explicitly clarified. When the day arrived, a sudden attack of courtesy permitted the critical metaphysician to let the two dismal doctors of sociology go first to enumerate their ordered list of complaints about the University, which so contemptuously deigns to give audience to “critical researchers,” and in so doing slows the progress of the Sociological Sciences, whose marble-white objectivity is sacrificed so scandalously in futile “political arguments,” etc... Once his turn had come at last, after so many terrifying platitudes, he delivered his contribution to the debate. It began like this: “It must be considered one of the most singular manifestations of the present face of domination that under the auspices of a party in a position of power a handful of State employees have publicly gathered here today with the otherwise quite healthy concern of ‘daring to research critically.’ In other times, this might have been taken as a kind of provocation, or at least as showing some spirit, but since then domination has effectively adjudged to itself the monopoly on critique – that is, the inalienable right to denounce its failings and jeopardize itself – because that jeopardy is precisely the permanent state of emergency that it needs in order to force general consent to the proliferation of its *diktats*. It’s now considered extremely rude to not ask a worm-eaten social organization for its permission before demolishing it. But the extreme insolence with which this society speaks of its vices is in no way a sign that it’s all-powerful; it’s just part of the final phase of its decomposition.” One of the first paragraphs drew up the death certificate for the University: “That the right to critique is a privilege only enjoyed by the powerful is as true in the University as it is in the rest of this society. But that’s hardly a significant scandal. It’s no less absurd to want to reform the university than it is to intend to destroy it. ... Because within the heart of nihilism there is no true teaching or even any real technique possible anymore.” The conclusion went as follows: “All in all, the decline of the university and the disappearance of the student subject are but minor de-

tails within a much more titanic process: the decomposition of commodity society.” A second paragraph gave an easily recognizable analysis of the function of Bourdieu and his peers in the disaster economy: “The role of the intellectual within this movement, a movement which domination intends to freeze, must be measured in exactly inverse proportions. The intellectual’s strategic importance cannot be overestimated, and that’s all the more true if you take that as a critique. The intellectual certainly does in essence have a repressive social function. We say that as long as there are intellectuals – that is, as long as contestation, thought, and knowledge are seen as specialized, and not general activities of mankind – there will be no intelligence... And when at last the artificially prolonged survival of an evil and expired social order has been entirely stripped of its aptitude for rendering invisible the gangrene consuming it, that is, for preserving in the new reality the appearance of the old reality, the intellectual then finally ends up having a kind of power, even in all the powerlessness that he’s agreed to – a power that many people, especially those who sign up to get doctorates in sociology, even envy him for. The monstrous media inflation must also in the same way be considered connected to the absolute need – even beyond simple denial as imposed on him by everyday experience – to maintain the commodity mode of disclosure and all the categories it commands: usefulness, work, property, value, exchange, interest, etc... All these patched-together concepts, now so obviously unfit for use in understanding anything really experienced by anyone, which do no more than render it unintelligible, must be maintained, kept-up, and recycled at all costs by the intellectuals, naturally with the use of an ever more aberrant range of terminology, which brings the more scrupulous among them to talk, for example, about such things as a ‘calculus of impartiality,’ which is certainly no small thing...” ... “The critical intellectual ensures the fine-tuned production of clear consciences. Simply by his long-winded existence, moreover, he reminds his listeners of the necessity of scientific analysis, the reasonable reform of everything, and the categorical imperative of dialogue – that is, of everyone’s duty to express themselves in the only language domination understands: its own. It is not at all paradoxical that the critical intellectual is the most useful objective ally of domination precisely where he is the most critical; it is, for instance, by attacking ‘market journalism’ that he most effectively maintains the illusion that there can be such a thing as good journalism, and by stigmatizing ‘the state nobility’ that he implicitly permits people to talk of States without immediately implying their equation with enslavement ... Even when there’s no other real critique in the “closed universe of discourse” besides practical critique,

besides the most naked violence, even when critique unquestionably implies just absolute hostility and foreignness to the world of the commodity, the critical intellectual still puts forth his dreary considerations about symbolic domination. And it is at this point that he unfailingly goes back over to the side of this society: in the dedication he puts into totally emptying the realm of the politically sayable of the Unsayable. The Infinite does not fall within his field of study, which only comprehends the determined and given. According to him, it doesn't exist. And having said that, he thinks the last word has been said. Anguish, passion, suffering, freedom, destruction, and, more generally, all the manifestations of human negativity are among the various things that he conscientiously works to hold back at the gates of Publicity. Just like Jünger's dominant-type characters, the social sciences "live ceaselessly with the terrifying idea that not just a few isolated individuals but whole masses might one day cease to be afraid of them; that would mean their certain downfall. This is also the reason for their rage against all doctrines of transcendence. Those kinds of ideas, after all, hide the supreme threat: that men might lose their fear." There are certain places in the University where the mere word 'metaphysics' is hounded like heresy. And so the social sciences assiduously work to keep man stuck within the shattered horizons of his finiteness, his scattered understanding, his mortal remains and his miserable limitations. "It's impossible to imagine an institution where just to preserve it for the sake of preserving it would be of any value," wrote Lukacs; "but it is this society as a whole that can no longer justify its being preserved for any other reason than for the simple fact that it exists, aside, perhaps, from its remarkable way of portraying itself so clearly in every one of its perversions. Its nothingness calls for its destruction more distinctly each day. That's why the critical researcher needs to do his research – because what needs to be critiqued (i.e. pulverized) is so blindingly obvious that it takes years and years of schooling to not see it." Up to this point, the audience's only reaction to the content of the speech and its somewhat martial tone was one of extreme atmospheric tension; after all, there was little chance that even a single future critical metaphysician might have happened to have been astray among so many brains so eager to have the French Communist Party indulge them. But it was the end of the lecture that brought that tension to its peak, which among certain spectators was signaled by a clearly recognizable hiccup-like hysterical snickering. And in fact the text's conclusion could hardly have let any doubts persist about our intentions: "But for the time being, critique only makes for doctorates in Sociology, and on

all fronts, everyone agrees to just let them starve to death among the dried-up teats of their Science. Because what critique needs now is poets and theologians, not conscientious functionaries of social intelligence... Indeed, it has no more immediate enemy than this ever all-knowing "sociology," which works so hard to make the disturbing familiar, with all the unbelievable patience that mediocrity can be capable of. And so we'll have to leave the critical researchers to their miserable lamentations about the precariousness of their professional positions, and about how weak the resources the enemy allocates to them to make their dissertations about it are. All those who can't bring themselves to abandon the ship when it's already so obviously sinking, just because even as it's being swallowed up they esteem their careers more highly than the perilous freedom of the partisan, tie their fates to that of a world which is doomed. Their mediocre yet detailed indignation gets no more than contempt from everyone. No one's about to follow them, and no one's even about to like them. Because they critique domination in terms that even domination itself isn't averse to using, they'll most likely end up facing the same firing squads as will those who, to the bitter end, they remained merely the fault-finding accomplices of. Whatever happens, they've no longer been keeping up with the times. Sociology is dead. We won't have any good memories of it." To finish it off, a codicil was uttered: "in spite of what one might have hastily concluded from the official documents for this congress, Marx was the man who wrote that 'in order to pardon itself its sins, humanity only needs to recognize them as such.'" Reduced to their primordial nothingness, and incapable of citing any of the master's books in his own defense, nor any of the books in his collection, we don't expect to see any expression of resentment on the part of the comic buffoon Bourdieu towards Critical Metaphysics before at least 2002.² The biggest big-shot doctor of Sociology of the doctors of Sociology there tried to act like the whole thing was just "some kind of joke." But he quickly realized that it was certainly no joke, when the crowd, having nervously applauded the intervention, attacked him without the slightest regard. In a cruel irony, he happened to be a kind of post-marxist confusionist whose speech was dependent on the newspaper *Le Monde Diplomatique*, and was forced by the virulence of their charges to leave the room before the conference was over. And having finished reading his text, the critical metaphysician just kept silent.



Illusion is not just one of the things we try to protect

2 Three years after the time of writing – TRANS

ourselves from each day; it is also among the various blemishes we need to annihilate. Not out of caprice, much less on orders from the *Weltgeist*, but simply because illusion is complicit in everything and we are not prepared to forgive this society a single one of its cowardly acts. But if there's any one "milieu" that has most particularly taken up the position as official janitor of *all* illusions, even illusion *as such*, it's indeed the infamous, suffocating, and noxious "cultural milieu." In the years to come it should be expected that domination will more and more authorize "art" to give the *ukases* that it couldn't otherwise dress up as truth anymore without being ridiculed. That is something that it is somewhat urgent to undermine, before it gets too comfortably engaged. Though people might harbor other, more reprehensible kinds of indifference towards the present production of cultural commodities, this kind is nonetheless probably the most dangerous, for it is our most insidious enemy operating under cover of insignificance.

However repugnant and deeply absurd an idea it would appear to grant even a second's attention to the case of a man who still claims to make "art" and even "literature," the critical metaphysicians felt it would be unacceptable to let the wrong ideas spreading around about the para-buddhist Xeroxer Michel Houellebecq go on subsisting. This total abortion is certainly especially deserving of our hostility; after all he was among the first examples of the perfect Bloom to proclaim himself publicly as such, and this, beyond all his exaggerated self-adoration, would alone have gotten him a good place on our black list. Equally contributing to that, moreover, is the fact that he's constantly spurting from his putrefied buccal meatus the adjective "metaphysical," and using it as just some unusual synonym for "profound" or "spiritual," all terms which make for excellent marketing gimmicks on the new-age consumers' market. But experience has shown us well enough that it is vain to want to do battle with maggots, since the most you can do is crush them. We have no particular complaint against the person of Michel Houellebecq, since no such person exists. "Michel Houellebecq" is merely a pseudonym for nothingness. On the other hand, it was left up to *Tiqqun* itself, and as well to the efforts of the critical metaphysicians, to draw attention to the brutal outbursts of the language of flattery that the houellebecq's appearance on the surface of Publicity gave rise to in the "cultural milieu." The fact that in this matter we saw the journalist "opinion-makers" denounce the dictatorship of "self-righteousness," and a

large publishing house opine that one of its writer-clerks had been the victim of "shopkeepers," and that the clerk in question, though unanimously praised by the puppet critics, had complained about his being persecuted, in the end was just a question of a difference in degree from the normal self-serving confusionism of the publishing industry. What is not so typical on the other hand is the *consciousness* with which everyone took their role-playing to the limit, enthusiasts and detractors alike, in faking a passion about it. The air of false absolutes in which the different gestures involved in the "literary comeback event" (which is how the various press organizations announced it, complying with Flammarion's instructions) took place objectively cried out for us to disturb the course of events a bit, while being careful to never let ourselves fall into the trap of being propelled onto the stage. When the Spectacle is impudent enough to try to glad-hand the masses, that's what it's exposing itself to. It wasn't a smart move for them to try to promote their trash in a "public" space like FNAC³, as they did on the Saturday afternoon of October 24th, 1998. Above all because it's a delicate matter when the Spectacle has to explain to its consumers that it's fed them false advertising about its commodities, while assuring them that it won't do any good to complain about it anyway. And so it was not without discomfort that Michel Houellebecq went down to the FNAC that day to confess his point of view. What he said was basically: sure, the book was sold and bought on the pretext that it supposedly "passed judgment on society and civilization," that is, on the pretext of its political nature, and for the critical element it contained; but that that wasn't really the author's concern, since after all he's just another producer of cultural commodities like any other, who happened to have decided to exploit the quite promising opportunity that the "death of ideologies" – this is the euphemism *people* use to designate hostility towards thought – has given to bastards like him. Insufficiently trained in the proper use of the language of flattery, the high school kids that happened to be there saw that as a glaring impropriety and didn't understand why not drawing the consequences of what you write nevertheless had to be called "literature." Once he'd acknowledged to them all that he was a "worm," they let him know that they considered him to be more like a "buffoon." In a word, the houellebecq didn't manage to render his shame less shameful by offering it up to Publicity, for the kids that were there at least. As for the critical metaphysicians, they began by distributing a tract, which we reproduce here.

3 A large French entertainment retail chain – TRANS.

• Michel Houellebecq, biographical note

(an excerpt from the *Encyclopedia of Redemptions*, 24th revised edition, Paris, 2074; translated from the future Latin)

Author and know-it-all born in 1958 on Réunion island, then a province of France. We know very little about what he did or what he was, since the newspapers, which set the era's standards for the literary genre, have all but disappeared in the course of the great conflicts that local historians are today dedicating their efforts to taking an inventory of. None of his works has survived, even in fragmentary form. We have no direct witnesses of his person, but it seems that none of those that he called his "friends" – in the very strange sense that that era understood the word – considered it worthwhile to pay any homage to him. At most we have a short-lived wave of insults, from the years 2004-2005, which either transparently or just plausibly alluded to this obscure personage, among which we have: "houellebecq-for-brains," "supermarket taxidermist," "visionary little lapdog," or the classic, "Houellebecq's your mom." It appears however that over a number of years he enjoyed a certain notoriety



difficult to explain today, and was the subject of a mass of polemic arguments. One way or another, it is mostly from one of these that we draw the majority of what information is left about this person and his ideas. Thus we find in the archives of the Imaginary Party, entry number H.492-B-58, a tract entitled *Michel Houellebecq, biographical note*, as well as a text from number 2 of the historical magazine *Tiqqun* with the title, "Function of the houellebecq."

From these documents we derive a large number of elements whose comprehension would require a deep knowledge of the sinister Anthracite Age, which lasted from 1990-2005. It should not be forgotten that the Houellebecq era was the backdrop for a formidable social regression in all the territories which at the time were called "developed," and in all domains. A chronicler of those times thus reports that the confusion that reigned then even gave rise to the formation of a scientist, pro-state "revolutionary" party, headed by a mysterious character named Jean-Paul Bourdieu. Commodity society had long before given its last gasp, and was at the time only surviving thanks to an ever more glaring, ferocious, and spastic tyranny. Since this order with no more justification couldn't defer the general acknowledgement of its bankruptcy, it needed to develop a kind of language where recognizing the kind of human suffering it engendered wouldn't imply any kind of a project of liberation from it, but where it would simply be condemned and then put at the service of another new modernization of domination. Various concurring sources indicate that there was such thing at the time, in these "developed" societies, as a kind of "cultural milieu," – since there were people around back then who really believed, without laughing, in the existence of a phantasmagoric "cultural milieu," and some of them were even demented enough to claim to be "part of it" – which collaborated in the spread of this *language of flattery*, which as we know from the venerable Hegel, "knows *being for itself* as separate from *being in itself*, or the aims and goal as separate from the truth" – in other words, this "cultural milieu's" impotent expression was an example of such language. In France, the singularly proselyte role of a certain press organ entitled "Les Inrockuptibles"¹, can be pointed to as an example of this kind of disaster-aesthetics, or more precisely, an aestheticization of disaster.

It appears that it was said "cultural milieu's" special assignment to carry out this kind of underhanded repression. Their concrete use of language, symbols, and thought within the modes of production had the effect of reducing literature and art in general to a sadly ridiculous, showy, and weak-willed form of social activity, and they seem to have prided themselves on being cut off from any effectiveness at all. The most remarkable consequence of this state of things was the massive proletarianization of the whole fringe infatuated with that milieu, a fringe that otherwise was particularly averse to supplying the market with its share of spiritual tranquilizers, mundane topics of conversation, and miscellaneous curios, such as were required by the universal need for Entertainment which was the norm in those times. And so that fringe would go on producing this kind of "culture," totally neutralized because it was separate from everything else, with an irrepressible hint

¹ Glossy French alternative cultural magazine; its name is a play on words mixing 'rock' and 'incorruptible' – TRANS.

of *resentment* in the face of its own decline. Because it was not merely that the whole of society no longer had more than a gentlemanly indifference to the miserable agitations of the so called “cultural” milieu and its futile preoccupations; it was above all that it had disintegrated it, declassified it, left it alone, and basically starved it. It’s clear how easy it would be in such conditions for a few soulless thugs, a few infamous failures, to want to make a career out of nihilism and drag it out as long as they could. Michel Houellebecq, it appears, was merely another one of them.

In this era of absolute darkness, the function of the houellebecqs – and we are not talking about the individual person of the abovementioned Michel, who after all we don’t know much about, but who appears to have been something rather repugnant, viscous, flaccid, and insignificant, at least according to our sources – was to lift the state of degradation that man was in at the time to the level of a *philosophia perennis*. They contributed to integrating a fragmentary critique of consumption into the dominant discourse of the time, but only in the interest of making that misery out to be something ontological – that is, of excluding from all reflection the idea of any practice that might destroy this curse, and if possible even exclude the Idea itself. They critiqued alienation not in order to work towards its suppression, but towards depression, which at the time was the subject of the production of whole industrial sectors. At all points, their business was similar to that of the pitiful Huxley, who would certainly have been forgotten had he not been so superbly put in his place by the Super-essential Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno: they eternalize all the reified antinomies, and all the arbitrary inconsistencies, proper to bourgeois thought... Hence the essential thing is not just the fact that in the deceptive choice between the abundance of traditional societies and the cybernetic “best of possible worlds” they’d chosen the latter; indeed, the choice itself and its very falsehood are the essential things, as the history of our century has so clearly demonstrated. Identically, the important thing wasn’t what they said – and everything leads us to believe that they said nothing consistent at all in the end – but the language they managed to get themselves heard by using. And so, the houellebecq chose chimeras for his enemies, i.e., the typical fictions of the bourgeois aberration (the individual, liberalism, sexuality, etc.). And for these, above all, it was a question of making *people* grant an existence to them by their very faith in them. In so doing, the houellebecq offered to the “Clear Conscience of the Left,” the stupefying hypocrisy of which it is impossible to imagine today, its dreamed-of chance to have a few obscure, hollow, and immensely boring debates – not like the good Boredom of today that we know and love, but the horrifying boredom of those times – to feast upon with total satisfaction, knowing that the lie would remain intact no matter what. Thus it gave to the most hackneyed commonplaces from the old bourgeois trash-heap a sophisticated form, and a kind of second youth. Like so many of his contemporaries, he was incapable of imagining that anybody might somehow refuse to be reduced to being either part of the coercive collective system, or to being a contingent individual, and refused to imagine any meaning not totally contrary to life and a consciousness not totally opposed to happiness. In fact, it was a mere matter of sitting at the bedside of domination as it lay dying, soothing it by conjuring up a non-problematic version of reality, and describing society as if it had no contradictions in it which had just been due to a temporary technological backwardness. Michel Houellebecq and his peers did no more than to slightly stave off the unavoidable process of *Tiqqun*. As for us, we’d known for a long while that “humanity doesn’t have to choose between the totalitarian Universal State and individualism.” (Saint T.W. Adorno)

Too weak to overcome his profoundly ignoble nature, Michel Houellebecq regardless couldn’t even make his abjection durably likeable. And, in the first years of our century, he was swept into the black hole of history. Doubtless having judged that Nothingness wouldn’t let itself be annihilated but would instead contaminate its enemies, its real enemies took care to attack it directly, and abandoned it to its insipid decomposition. Legend has it (cf. *Cruel Tales of the Anthracite Era XCVI*, 25) that he died some time around the year 2017-2018, thrown out of the window of a Pat Pong whorehouse by an authentic Thai virgin. It is also claimed that the stinking pile of his gangrenous viscera and his broken skeleton were thrown out to that area’s famed wandering dogs to nibble on, and that even they didn’t want to eat them. That at least was the hardly believable doom that was foretold for him by the Imaginary Party’s tract, entitled *Michel Houellebecq, biographical note*, dated October 24th, 1998.

A conscious fraction of the Imaginary Party, October 24th, 1998.

The critical metaphysicians didn't need to let the Houellebecq blather on for long before realizing that a dwarf like him wasn't on their level, and wouldn't be even if he climbed on the shoulders of his toad of a publisher. So they at first they were just going to limit themselves to verifying whether he still maintained what he'd told *Les Inrockuptibles* – namely that he liked Stalin “because he killed lots of anarchists (laughs),” a statement that could just have been some kind of a vulgar promotional provocation, intended to get a few impenitent leftists all worked up – and what he'd written in his epilogue to Valerie Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto*: “in the middle of the sixties, in the middle of an unprecedented ideological mess, and in spite of a few nazi slip-ups, Valerie Solanas had the courage to maintain a progressive and reasoned attitude, which was in line with the most noble aspirations of the western project: man's establishment of absolute technological control over nature, including his own biological nature and evolution. And that's part of working towards the long term goal of rebuilding a new kind of nature, on a basis conforming to moral law – that is, establishing the universal reign of love, period.” What we found, however, was a public comprised of around a hundred persons, groveling there to lap up the words of the panicky, bilious little minstrel, talking about how interested he was in freedom, man, meaning, and language, and from the depths of his sophisticated nihilism was trumpeting the advantages of a herd future in an all-encompassing technological dictatorship, something a bit more worthy of us attacking. But this moribund bunch hardly had a chance to react with even a few imperceptible gelatinous vibrations when it was insulted with the qualifier “amorphous.” After we'd shown it the nightmare and the impossibility of such an end of history as that, and asked it whether that was what it wanted, a total silence, a viscid silence of hatred, swept in among the crowd. Finally a lethargic voice came up from some kind of a homunculus lurking in the middle of the room, speculating in a blubbery, resigned tone: “Well, one way or another that's what's going to happen, after all!” Upon hearing this, the audience, seeing its right to sleep questioned, hastily clamored that we ought to be talking about the book and only the book. Finally, the privilege of the last word went to a depressing old housewife around sixty years old, an old bag who devoured novels in the insomnia of her retiree's nullity: “Well, I don't know whether I'm amorphous or whatever, myself personally, but I'd just like to thank mister Michel Houellebecq. I just discovered his first novel. Me, I don't care about politics. I read novels from the extreme right, I read novels from the extreme left. And I have nothing to do with ideology. For twenty years I wasn't allowed to read Raymond Abellio. What's important to me is the pleasure of reading, letting myself be swept away by the story, the style, etc.” Clearly Michel Houellebecq can pride himself

on having gotten himself at least some readers who are as much flightless little creeps as he is. But as fanatically resigned as they are, and as numerous, the Houellebecqs are of no account on the scales of fate, since even in their enthusiastic moments they side with this dead civilization.

Obviously after that there was no lack of stuck up old loonies from the literary milieu cropping up to take advantage of the situation and churn out a few pages full of stupidity, bleating, and bad faith in *Le Monde*. And after all it's perfectly understandable: these days hardly anyone makes any kind of criticism, so of course it makes people talk. Hence we read about “Houellebecq on trial” – as if it were the real person and not just his function that was attacked here – a trial presided over by some diabolic invisible authority, doubtless by this “group of youths methodically spread throughout the conference room” at the FNAC on October 24th 1998 (*Le Monde*, 8 - 9 November 1998). The whole thing was related in detail, of course without the writers being able to resist the reflex to falsify the events and propositions at least a little; but they were especially careful not to mention the existence of any tract, which could have hinted that the people from the Imaginary Party were able to engage in discourse articulate enough to shatter “the whole old, cracking edifice.” Other articles followed, all in the same gallant, hysterical mold, all invariably taking up the defense of Houellebecq against his supposed (yet never named) enemies, as is the rule in the Spectacle. They all called everyone's attention to the urgent need to save “art” and “literature” from “ideologico-political constraints” (*Le Monde*, November 11th, 1998), even though it's so painfully obvious that on the contrary it's art that, *since it's nothing anymore on its own*, is now forced to stick its dirty fingers into the “ideologico-political.” It's only natural that the little decomposed literary milieu chose the moment when cultural commodities show themselves to be the very model of “ideologico-political” production to start whimpering and whining, and to cry out in defense of literature's inalienable right to insignificance. Oh eternal spinelessness of art! Suffice it to say that we were not very surprised at all to receive, in the days following the incident, a variety of overtures coming specifically from that milieu, not the most harebrained of which was an offer to publish us. If the fact that they'd left it up to Houellebecq to raise a little hell wasn't enough to prove how shipwrecked of a state they're in, that right there should prove their total collapse. But we don't connive with defunct bureaucrats of the mind. Rather, we're proclaiming the dawn of a new kingdom. Already the vermin are trembling, since they know that sooner or later the enormous task of delousing will begin. And that they're just part of the ruins.



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