

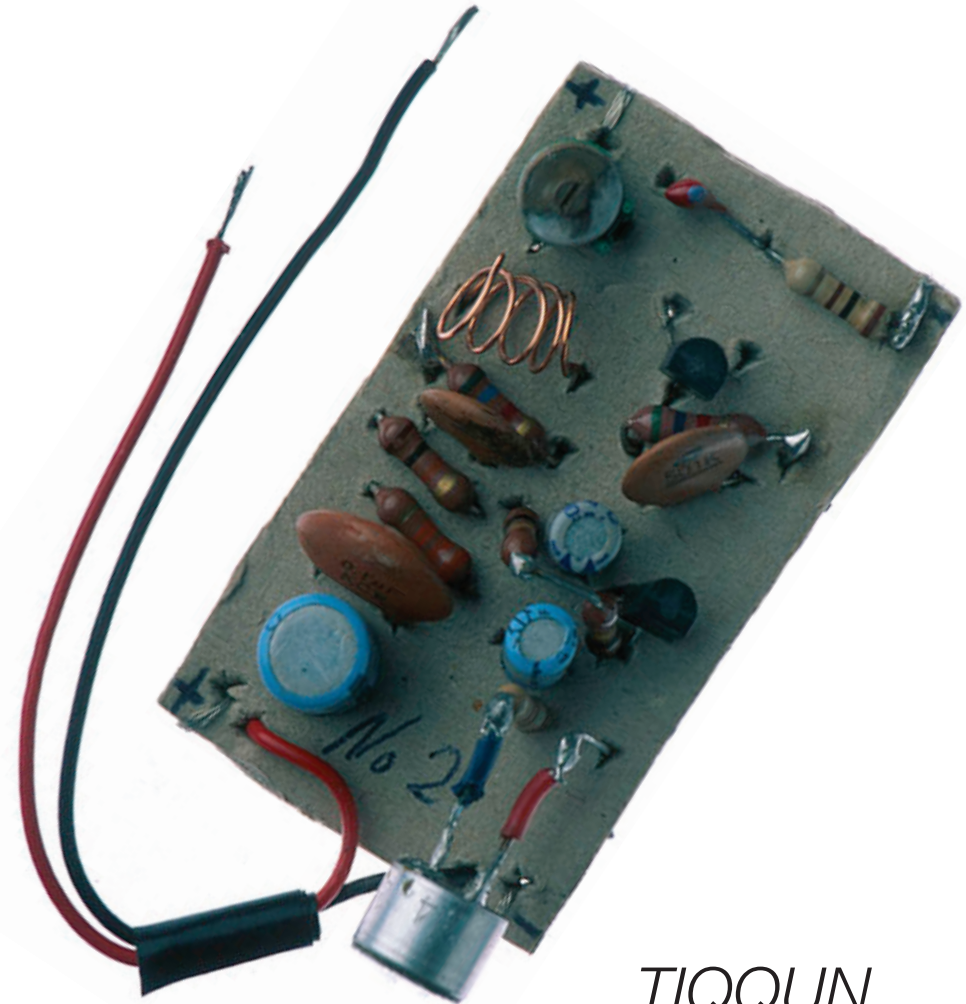
"[W]hat we call a science of apparatuses, or critical metaphysics, is nothing other than the science of crime. And here, as elsewhere, no initiation exists that isn't immediately experimentation, practice. One is never initiated into an apparatus, only into how it works. The three stages of this science are, successively: crime, opacity, and insurrection..." -TIQQUN




CRITICAL METAPHYSICS

AS A SCIENCE

OF APPARATUSES



TIQQUN



With the exception of some slight modifications, this is the translation by Joshua David Jordan. The original French text (“Une métaphysique critique pourrait naître comme science des dispositifs”) first appeared in *Tiqqun 2* in 2001. The footnotes that appear herein are not part of the original *Tiqqun* text but were added by Jordan. In bibliographic references, where no translator is given for a cited French text, the translation is his.

ON THE COVER: A RADIO TRANSMITTER / BUG made of radio recorder parts by an inmate of Wolfenbüttel prison, Germany (battery is missing). Prisoners occasionally manage to install gizmos like this one in guards’ rooms to be prepared for upcoming cell searches. Also suitable as a means of cell-to-cell communication among inmates. A standard radio serves as a receiver. All photos of d.i.y. prison tools are by Marc Steinmetz.

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ABOVE: the crime scene left by two inmates who escaped from the doubly-“brutalist” Metropolitan Correctional Center in Chicago. They tied bedsheets together to rappel 15 floors down to ground level of the city’s concrete heart. Both had been incarcerated for robbing banks.

BACK COVER: an inmate of Ludwigsburg prison, Germany, built this radio on the sly and hid it inside an encyclopedia.

CRITICAL
METAPHYSICS
AS A
SCIENCE
OF
APPARATUSES

TIQQUN

This text constitutes the founding act of The S.A.C.S., The Society for the Advancement of Criminal Science. The S.A.C.S. is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to anonymously collect and classify all useful know-how and circulate it amongst the anti-imperial war machines.

of what stands between us and things, for those who have never noticed the *solicitation* of the world? How could they understand the existence-without-why [*existence sans pourquoi*] of the world, those who are incapable of living without reasons? Will we be strong and numerous enough in the coming insurrection to create rhythms that prevent apparatuses from forming again, from assimilating that which in fact happens? Will we be silent enough to find the pressure point and the scansion that guarantee a veritable pogo effect? Will we know how to harmonize our actions with the pulse of power [*puissance*], with the fluidity of phenomena?

In a sense, the revolutionary question is now a *musical* one.



“A critical metaphysics could emerge as a science of apparatuses...”

The first philosophies provide power with its formal structures. More specifically, “metaphysics” designates that apparatus wherein action requires a principle to which words, things, and deeds can be related. In the age of the Turning, when presence as ultimate identity becomes presence as irreducible difference, action appears without principle.

— Reiner Schürmann, *What is to be Done with the End of Metaphysics?*¹

It may begin like this: there would be the sight, on a floor in one of these sinister glass hives of the service sector, this interminable scene, through panopticed space, of dozens of *settled* bodies, all in a row, arranged according to modular logic, dozens of apparently lifeless bodies, separated by thin glass walls, tapping away on their computers. Within the scene would in turn come the

¹ In the Tiquun text, the authors indicate the title given by Reiner Schürmann to his contribution to the “Cahiers de l’Herne” volume dedicated to Martin Heidegger (*Martin Heidegger* [Paris: Editions de l’Herne, 1983], 354-368), an article adapted by Schürmann from his *Principe d’anarchie: Heidegger et la question de l’agir* (Paris: Seuil, 1982). The present, modified English translation is taken from *Heidegger on Being and Acting. From Principles to Anarchy*, trans. Christine-Marie Gros (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 5-6.

revelation of the brutally *political* character of this frantic immobilization of bodies. And the obvious paradox of bodies growing stiller the more their mental functions are activated, captivated, mobilized, the more their mental functions seethe, responding in real time to the fluctuations of the information flow streaming across the screen. Let us take this scene or rather *what we find there* and bring it with us as we stroll through an exhibition at the New York MOMA, where enthusiastic cyberneticists, newly converted to the alibi of art, have presented to the public all the apparatuses of neutralization, of normalization through work that THEY² have in mind for the future. The exhibition would be entitled *Workspheres*: we would be shown how an iMac transforms work into leisure, work in itself having become as superfluous as it is intolerable; how a “user-friendly” environment disposes the average Bloom³ to endure the very bleakest existence and thereby maximize his social productivity; or how every inkling of anxiety, in Bloom, will pass once THEY have integrated all the parameters of his physiology, his habits, and his character into a personalized workspace. The cumulative effect of these “scenes” would give one the sense that THEY have finally succeeded in *producing* consciousness, in producing body as waste, as inert and cumbersome mass, the condition, but above all the *obstacle*, to *purely cerebral* development processes. The chair, the desk, the computer: an apparatus. A productive enframing. A methodical enterprise of attenuating all forms-of-life. Jünger indeed spoke of a “spiritualization of the earth” but

2 Tiqqun uses here and frequently elsewhere in the text the French indefinite subject pronoun on in all capitals. In general, the pronoun may be translated “we,” “one,” “you,” “they,” depending on the context. When it appears in all capitals, I have translated it throughout as “they,” although the reader should bear in mind the indeterminacy that the pronoun carries in French.

3 See Tiqqun, *Theorie du Bloom* [Theory of Bloom] (Paris: La Fabrique, 2004).

not having been designed to withstand it. Just a few years ago, a dozen determined people in a union or welfare office was enough to extort right then and there a thousand francs worth of aid per person who signed up. And today hardly more people are needed in order to carry out an “autoreduction”³⁴ at the supermarket.

The separation of bodies, the atomization of forms-of-life are the subsistence conditions of most imperial apparatuses. Today, “to want meaning” immediately implies the three stages we have already mentioned, and necessarily leads to insurrection. On this side of the zones of opacity, then of insurrection, there is only the reign of apparatuses, the desolate empire of machines producing *meaning, infusing meaning* in everything that passes through them according to the system of representations locally in effect.

Some people, who consider themselves particularly clever—the same who had to ask a century and a half ago what Communism *would be like*—today ask us what our so-called “reunion on the other side of significations” might look like. Is it really necessary that so many bodies have never known abandon, the exhilaration of sharing, familiar contact with other bodies, or perfect peace of mind for this kind of question to be asked with such a knowing air? And, indeed, what point could there be in the event, in striking out meanings, and in ruining their systematic correlations for those who have not carried out the ek-static conversion of attention? What could letting-be mean, the destruction

34 A practice associated with Italian and French autonomist movements, autoreduction (*autoréduction*) is a direct action by which one refuses to pay for public transport, gas, food, or other goods or services. After announcing as much, the *autoreducteur* simply—and politically—takes what he cannot afford, effectively reducing prices to zero.

life to a particular space in which ‘something’ can occur.”
THEY couldn’t have been clearer.

If the imperial perspective had a slogan it would be “ALL POWER TO THE APPARATUSES!” It is true that in the coming insurrection it will most often suffice to liquidate the apparatuses sustaining enemies in order to break them, enemies that in times past would have had to be shot. At bottom, the slogan has less to do with cybernetic utopianism than with imperial pragmatism: the fictions of metaphysics, these grand barren constructions which now compel neither faith nor admiration, are no longer able to unify the debris of universal disintegration. Under Empire, the old Institutions are deteriorating one after the other in a cascade of apparatuses. What is happening, and what is the truly imperial mission, is the concerted demolition of each Institution into a multiplicity of apparatuses, into an arborescence of relative and unpredictable norms. The educational system, for example, no longer bothers to present itself as a coherent order. It is now by a hodgepodge of classes, schedules, subjects, buildings, departments, programs, and projects that are so many apparatuses meant to keep bodies immobilized. With the imperial extinction of every event thus comes the worldwide, managed dissemination of apparatuses. Many voices can now be heard lamenting such a dreadful age. Some denounce a pervasive “loss of meaning,” while others, the optimists, swear every morning to “give meaning” to this or that misery only, invariably, to fail. All, in fact, agree to *want meaning without wanting the event*. They seem not to notice that apparatuses are by nature hostile to meaning, whose absence it is their job to maintain. *All those who speak of “meaning” without giving themselves the means to upend apparatuses are our direct enemies*. Giving oneself the means sometimes entails only renouncing the comfort of Bloomesque isolation. Most apparatuses are indeed vulnerable to collective insubordination of whatever kind,

in a sense that *was less than celebratory*.

One can imagine a different genesis. This time, in the beginning, there would be a certain irritation, the irritation associated with the widespread use of surveillance equipment in stores and in particular the spread of metal detectors. There would be the slight anxiety as you pass through them wondering if they will go off, if you will be extracted from the anonymous stream of consumers and labeled “the undesirable customer,” “the thief.” This time, then, it would begin with the irritation—perhaps even the resentment—of occasionally getting nabbed, and the clear intuition that these apparatuses have been *running* for some time. That the task of surveillance, for example, is more and more exclusively entrusted to an army of security guards, who are *all eyes* since they are themselves former thieves. Who are, in every one of their movements, *walking apparatuses*.

Let us now imagine a beginning—this time, completely unlikely—for the least credulous among us. The only possible starting point in this case would be the question of *determinity* [*déterminité*], because there is, inexorably, determination; but also because this inexorability can *also* mean a formidable freedom of play with determinations, an inflationary subversion of cybernetic control.

In the beginning, there would be nothing, finally. Nothing but the refusal to play innocently even one of the games THEY have devised to beguile us.

And who knows, the

FEROCIOUS

desire
to create

vertiginous

ones of our own.

What exactly is the *Theory of Bloom*? An attempt to *historicize* presence, to record, for starters, the current state of our being-in-the-world. Other similar attempts preceded the *Theory of Bloom*, the most remarkable of which, after Heidegger's *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, was certainly De Martino's *The World of Magic*. Sixty years before the *Theory of Bloom*, the Italian anthropologist offered what remains to this day an unequaled contribution to the history of presence. But whereas philosophers and anthropologists take that as their *endpoint*—with an account of where we are at with the world, with an account of our abasement—we concede the point only because it is from there that we *begin*.

A man of his times, De Martino seems to believe in the whole modern fairytale of the classical subject, of the objective world, etc. He thus distinguishes between two ages of presence, one common to the primitive “World of magic” and one to “modern man.” The whole misunderstanding in the West with regard to magic, and more generally to traditional societies, De Martino essentially says, arises from the fact that we attempt to apprehend them from the exterior, starting from the modern presupposition of established presence, of guaranteed being-in-the-world, founded on a clear-cut distinction between self and world. In the traditional, magic world the frontier that defines the modern subject as a solid, stable substratum, confident in his being-there and before whom opens out a world brimming with objectivity, is still problematic. The frontier still has to be won, to be fixed; for human presence is always under threat, is experienced as in constant danger. And this instability places it at the mercy of every intense perception, every situation saturated with affects, every inassimilable event. In extreme cases, known by various names in primitive civilizations, being-there is totally

event appear as *having been possible*. “The possible,” says Bergson, “is only the real with an act of mind which throws its image back into the past once it has been enacted.”³² “To the extent that the possible is open to ‘realization,’” adds Deleuze, “it is understood as an image of the real, while the real is supposed to resemble the possible. That is why it is difficult to understand what existence adds to the concept when all it does is double like with like. Such is the defect of the possible: a defect which serves to condemn it as produced after the fact, as retroactively fabricated in the image of that which resembles it.”³³

Everything that is, in an apparatus, is referred either to the norm or to the accident. As long as the apparatus holds, nothing can occur within it. The event, *this act that keeps its power [puissance] within itself*, can come only from outside, as that which demolishes the very thing that should keep it at bay. When noise music burst on the scene, THEY said: “That’s not music.” When 68 irrupted, THEY said: “That’s not political.” When ’77 had Italy by the throat, THEY said: “That’s not Communism.” Faced with the old Artaud, THEY said: “That’s not literature.” Then, when the event lasts, THEY say: “Well, it was possible, it’s *one* possibility for music, for politics, for communism, for literature.” And finally, after the initial moment of shock brought about by the inexorable *work of power [puissance]*, the apparatus reforms itself: THEY include, defuse, and remap the event; they ascribe it to a possibility, to a *local* possibility—that of the literary apparatus, for example. The jackasses at CNRS, who handle language with such casuistic caution, conclude delicately: “If the apparatus [*dispositif*] prepares for something and makes it possible, that still doesn’t guarantee its actualization. It simply gives

³² Ibid., 100.

³³ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 212.

apparatus, is *possibility*. Possibility can be distinguished, on the one hand, from an act and, on the other hand, from power [*puissance*]. Power, in the activity of writing this text, is language, language as the generic ability to signify, to communicate. Possibility is language, that is, the set of utterances considered correct according to French syntax, grammar, and vocabulary as they currently exist.

The act is speech, the enunciation, the production here and now of a particular utterance. Unlike power, possibility is always the possibility of something. *Within the apparatus, everything exists as a possibility* means that everything that occurs in the apparatus occurs *as the actualization of a possibility that preceded it* and that as such is MORE REAL. Every act, every event, is thus reduced to its possibility and emerges within the apparatus as a predictable consequence, as a pure contingency, of its possibility. What happens isn't more real for having happened. This is how the apparatus excludes the event, and excludes it *in the form of an inclusion*, for example, by declaring it possible afterwards.

What apparatuses accomplish is only the most notorious of the impostures of Western metaphysics, which is summed up in the adage "essence precedes existence." For metaphysics, existence is but a predicate of essence; for that matter, every existent is supposed to do nothing more than actualize an essence that supposedly comes first. According to this preposterous doctrine, possibility, that is, *the idea of things* would precede things; every reality would be a possibility *that has, in addition, acquired existence*. When this way of thinking is put right side up, one finds that it is the fully developed reality of a thing whose possibility is postulated *in the past*. Of course, an event has had to happen in the totality of its determinations in order to isolate certain of them, in order to extract the representation of these determinations that will make the

engulfed by the world, by an emotion, by a perception. It is what the Malay call *latah*, the Tungus *olon*, certain Melanesians *atai* and to which is related, among the same Malay, *amok*. In such states, singular presence fades, becomes indistinct from phenomena, breaks down into a simple mechanical echo of the surrounding world. Thus a *latah*, a body affected with *latah*, will place his hand over a flame following the vaguest gesture that one makes to do so oneself; or, suddenly finding himself face to face with a tiger, he will start to imitate it furiously, possessed by this unexpected perception. Cases of collective *olon* have also been reported. During a Russian officer's training of a Cossack regiment, the men, instead of executing the colonel's orders, suddenly began to repeat them in unison; and the more the officer heaped insults on the men and the more irate he became at their refusing to obey, the more they returned his abuse and mimicked his anger. This is how De Martino, using his approximate categories, describes *latah*: "Presence tends to remain focused on a certain content, beyond which it cannot go; as a consequence, it disappears, withdraws as presence. The distinction between presence and the world that makes itself present collapses."⁴

For De Martino, then, there is an "existential drama," the "historical drama of the magic world," which is a drama of presence; and all magic beliefs, techniques, and institutions exist in order to respond to the situation—to save, protect, or restore threatened presence. The latter are therefore endowed with special efficiency, with objectivity inaccessible to the classical subject. One of the ways in which the Mota natives overcome the crisis of presence provoked by a strong emotional reaction is thus to link the victim of such a reaction with the thing that caused it or

⁴ Ernesto De Martino, *The World of Magic*, trans. Paul Saye White (New York: Pyramid Communications, 1972). Translation modified.

something that symbolizes the cause, During a ceremony this thing is declared *atai*. The Shaman establishes a common destiny between these two bodies which are from then on inextricably, ritually linked, to the point that *atai* quite simply means *soul* in the native language. “Presence that is in danger of losing control masters itself by attaching its own problematic unity to that of the object,” De Martino concludes. The commonplace practice of inventing an *alter ego* object for oneself is what Westerners term “fetishism,” thereby refusing to understand that through magic “primitive” man reconstructs, recaptures a presence for himself. As he reenacts the drama of his disintegrating presence, although this time accompanied, supported by the Shaman—in trance, for example—he stages the disintegration in such a way that he regains control of it. What modern man so bitterly resents in the “primitive,” after all, is not so much his practice of magic as his audacity in appropriating for himself a right that is judged obscene: that of *evoking* the alterability of presence and in so doing of making it *participable*. For the “primitives” have found the means to overcome the kind of dereliction whose more familiar images are the hipster stripped of his cell phone, the petty-bourgeois family deprived of TV, the driver whose car has been scratched, the executive without an office, the speechless intellectual, or the Young-Girl⁵ without her purse.

But De Martino commits an egregious error, a substantive error, no doubt inherent to *every anthropology*. De Martino misjudges the scope of the concept of presence; he still conceives of it as *an attribute of the human subject*, which inevitably leads him to oppose presence and “the world that makes itself present.” The difference between modern and primitive man does not lie, as De Martino has it, in the fact

⁵ See Tiqqun’s *Theorie de la jeune fille* (Theory of the Young Girl) (Paris: Fayard, 2001).

ever happens in an apparatus. Nothing ever happens, that is, EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS IN AN APPARATUS EXISTS IN IT AS A POSSIBILITY. Apparatuses even have the power to dissolve an event that has actually occurred—one THEY call a “catastrophe,” for example—into its possibility. When a defective airliner explodes in midflight and straightaway THEY deploy a whole panoply of apparatuses which THEY keep running with facts, background stories, declarations, statistics that reduce the event of the death of several hundred people to the status of an *accident*. In no time at all they will have erased the obvious fact that the invention of railroads was necessarily also the invention of railroad catastrophes; and the invention of the Concord the invention of its midflight explosion. THEY thus separate that which belongs to the *essence* of “progress” from that which rightly belongs to its *accident*. And the latter, in the face of all the evidence, THEY throw out. After a few weeks THEY will have reduced the event of the crash to its *possibility*, to its statistical eventuality. From then on the crash will no longer have happened, ITS POSSIBILITY—NATURALLY INFINITESIMAL—HAS BEEN MADE A REALITY.

In a word, nothing happened: the essence of technological progress has escaped unharmed. The colossal, composite, signifying monument, which THEY will have constructed for the occasion, realizes here the objective of every apparatus: *maintaining the phenomenal order*. For such is the purpose, within Empire, of every apparatus: *to run and to govern a certain plane of phenomenality, to ensure that a certain economy of presence persists*, to maintain the epochal suspension IN THE SPACE allocated to it. Hence the strikingly ABSENT, LETHARGIC character of existence within apparatuses, this Bloomesque feeling of being carried away by the comforting flow of phenomena.

We are saying that the mode of being of all things, within the

you, summon you, never react and above all never deny anything. For the counter-subjectivation THEY would then force from you forms the prison from which you will always have the hardest time escaping.

RULE NO. 4 Greater freedom does not lie in the absence of a predicate, in anonymity by default. Greater freedom results instead from the saturation of predicates, from their anarchical accumulation. Overpredication automatically cancels itself out in permanent unpredictability. “When we no longer have any secrets, we no longer have anything to hide. It is we who have become a secret, it is we who are hidden” (Deleuze-Parnet, *Dialogues*).³⁰

RULE NO. 5 Counter-attack is never a response, but the establishment of a new order.

7

[T]he possible implies the corresponding reality with, moreover, something added, since the possible is the combined effect of reality once it has appeared and of a condition [dispositif] which throws it back in time.

—Bergson, *The Creative Mind*³¹

Apparatuses and Bloom co-determine each other like two poles interdependent with the epochal suspension. Nothing

30 Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 46. Translation modified.

31 Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: The Citadel Press, 1992), 101.

that the latter may be *lacking* vis-à-vis the former, primitive man having not yet acquired modern man’s certainty. Quite the contrary, it lies in the fact that the “primitive” displays a greater openness, greater *attention* to the COMING INTO PRESENCE OF BEINGS and, consequently, a greater vulnerability to its fluctuations. Modern man, the classical subject, doesn’t represent a leap beyond the primitive, he is simply a primitive who has been made indifferent to the event of beings, who no longer knows how to heed the coming into presence of things, who is *poor in world*. In fact, all of De Martino’s work is filled with an unhappy love for the classical subject. Unhappy because De Martino, like Janet, has an all too intimate understanding of the magic world, an all too rare sensitivity to Bloom not to experience fully, secretly, its effects. The only thing is, for a man in Italy in the forties, certainly one was better-advised to stifle this sensitivity and to dedicate ones unbridled passion to the majestic and henceforth *perfectly kitsch* plasticity of the classical subject. De Martino was thus driven to the comical position of denouncing the methodological error of wanting to apprehend the magic world from the standpoint of an already certain presence, all the while maintaining that presence as the horizon of reference. As a last resort, he made his own the modern utopia of an objectivity purified of all subjectivity and of a subjectivity freed of all objectivity.

In reality, presence is hardly an attribute of the human subject; it is what *is given*. “The phenomenon to bear in mind is neither being alone nor its mode of being present, but the entry into presence—an always new entry—whatever the historical apparatus in which the given appears” (Reiner Schürmann, *From Principles to Anarchy*).⁶ This describes the ontological ek-stasis of human being-there, its co-belonging *to each lived situation*. Presence

6 *From Principles to Anarchy*, op. cit.

in itself is INHUMAN, an inhumanity that triumphs in the crisis of presence, when being imposes itself with overwhelming urgency. The gift of presence can then no longer be received; every form-of-life, that is, every way to *receive* this gift, vanishes. What must be historicized is not, therefore, the progress of presence toward final stability, but the different ways in which presence is given, the different *economies of presence*. And if today, in the age of Bloom, there is in fact a generalized crisis of presence, this is simply due to the ubiquity of the economy in crisis; the WEST'S MODERN HEGEMONIC ECONOMY OF CONSTANT PRESENCE. An economy characterized by the denegation of the mere possibility of its crisis through the use of the classical subject—master and measure of all things—as a menace in order to keep things in line. Bloom historically marks the end of the socio-magic effectiveness of this kind of blackmail, of this fairytale. The horizon of human existence once again comprises the crisis of presence, although THEY don't respond to it in the same way as in the traditional world, although THEY don't recognize the crisis as such.

In the age of Bloom, the crisis of presence becomes chronic and objectified through an immense accumulation of *apparatuses*. Each apparatus functions as an existential prosthesis which THEY administer to Bloom so that he is able to live within the crisis of presence, albeit unwittingly, and to remain there day after day without succumbing: a cell phone, a sedative, a shrink, a lover, a movie—all make for decent crutches provided they can be changed up often enough. Taken singularly, apparatuses are so many bulwarks erected against the event of things; taken together, they constitute the icy veil that THEY lay over the fact that each thing, in its coming into presence, carries with it a world. The purpose: to maintain at all costs and everywhere the dominant economy by managing authoritatively, omnipresently, the crisis of presence; to

keep the apparatus and its possessed at bay. *Calling for transgression, monstrosity, abnormality is the most insidious trap that apparatuses set. Wanting to be—that is, wanting to be unique—within an apparatus is our principal weakness. Because of it we remain held, entangled, by the apparatus. Conversely, the desire to be controlled, so frequent among our contemporaries, primarily represents the latter's desire to be. For us, this same desire would instead be the desire to be mad, or monstrous, or criminal. But this is the very desire through which THEY control and neutralize us. Devereux has shown that every culture holds a model negation, a marked-out exit, for those who want to escape, an outlet that allows the culture to harness the driving force behind every transgression into a higher-order stabilization. Among the Malay, this is called amok, in the West, schizophrenia. The Malay are “preconditioned—perhaps unwittingly but certainly quite automatically—by [their] culture to react to almost any violent inner or outer stress by running amok. In the same sense, the Western man of today is conditioned by his own culture to react to any state of stress by schizophrenia-like behavior... [I]n our society, being schizophrenic is the ‘proper’ way of being ‘mad’” (Schizophrenia: An Ethnic Psychosis, or Schizophrenia without Tears).*²⁹

RULE NO. 1 Every apparatus produces singularity in the form of monstrosity. This is how the apparatus reinforces itself.

RULE NO. 2 One never breaks free of an apparatus by engaging with its minor premise.

RULE NO. 3 When THEY predicate you, subjectivate

²⁹ Included as Chapter 10 in George Devereux, *Basic Problems of Ethnopsychiatry*, trans. Basia Miller Gulati and George Devereux (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 218, 220.

Janet, who a century ago studied all the precursors of Bloom, consecrated a tome to what he called “psychological automatism.” In it, he focuses on all the positive forms of the crisis of presence: suggestion, sleepwalking, obsession, hypnosis, mediumism, automatic writing, psychological disintegration, hallucination, possession, etc. He traces the cause, or rather the *condition* of all these heterogeneous symptoms to what he calls “psychological misery.” By “psychological misery” he means a generalized, inextricably physical and metaphysical weakness of being, which is akin to what we call *Bloom*. This state of weakness, he observes, also provides the conditions for a cure, in particular through hypnosis. The more Bloomified the subject, the more open he is to suggestion and, thus, curable. And the more he recovers, the less effective the medicine, the less suggestible he is. Bloom is therefore the operating condition of apparatuses; Bloom is our vulnerability to them. But contrary to suggestion, the apparatus never aims at some kind of recovery, but rather to become part of us, an indispensable prosthesis to our presence, like a *natural* crutch. There is a need for the apparatus, which the latter satisfies only in order to intensify it. As the undertakers at CNRS would put it, apparatuses “encourage the expression of individual differences.”

We must learn to keep ourselves out of sight, to pass unnoticed into the gray band of each apparatus, to *camouflage* ourselves behind its major premise. Even if our first instinct is to oppose a proclivity for the abnormal with the desire for conformity, we have to develop the art of becoming perfectly anonymous, of offering the appearance of pure conformity. We have to develop the pure art of the surface *in order to conduct our operations*. This means, for example, that we must drop the pseudo-transgression of no less pseudosocial conventions, stop opting for revolutionary “sincerity,” “truth,” and “scandal,” for the sake of a tyrannical politeness through which to

establish globally *a present* opposed to the free play of comings into presence. In a word: THE WORLD GROWS HARD.

Since Bloom first penetrated the heart of civilization, they have done everything THEY can to isolate him, to neutralize him. Most often and already very biopolitically, he has been treated as a disease—first called *psychasthenia* by Janet, then *schizophrenia*. Today THEY prefer to speak of *depression*. Terms change, of course, but the sleight of hand is always the same: reduce those extreme manifestations of Bloom to purely “subjective problems.” By defining him as a disease, THEY individualize him, THEY localize him, THEY isolate him such that he can no longer be assumed collectively, commonly.

On closer inspection, biopolitics has never had any other aim but to thwart the formation of worlds, techniques, shared dramatizations, *magic* in which the crisis of presence might be overcome, appropriated, might become a center of energy, a war machine. The rupture in the transmission of experience, the rupture in historical tradition exists, is vehemently maintained, in order to ensure that Bloom is always left—entirely driven back onto “himself,” onto his own solitary derision—to his unbearable mythical “freedom.” *Biopolitics holds a monopoly over remedies to presence in crisis, which it is always ready to defend with the most extreme violence.*

A politics that challenges this monopoly takes as its starting point and center of energy the crisis of presence, Bloom. We call this politics *ecstatic*. Its aim is not to abstractly rescue—through successive re-presentations—human presence from dissolution, but instead to create participable magic, techniques for inhabiting not a territory but a *world*. And this creation, this play between different economies of presence, between different forms-

of-life, entails the subversion and the *liquidation* of all apparatuses.

Those who, as a final reprieve from their passivity, insist on calling for a theory of the subject must understand that in the age of Bloom *a theory of the subject is now only possible as a theory of apparatuses.*

2

For a long time, I believed that what distinguished theory from, say, literature, was its impatience to transmit content, its special capacity to *make* itself understood. And that effectively defines theory, theory as the unique form of writing *that is not a practice*. Thus it is that the infinite has its origin in theory, which can say everything without ever saying anything at all, in the end, of any consequence—to bodies, that is. One will see clearly enough that our texts are neither theory, nor its negation, but simply *something else*.

What is the perfect apparatus, the model-apparatus that would eliminate all misunderstandings with regard to the very notion of apparatus? The perfect apparatus, it seems to me, is THE HIGHWAY.⁷ In it *maximum circulation coincides with maximum control*. Nothing moves that isn't both incontestably "free" and strictly classified, identified, individuated in exhaustive files of digitized registrations. A network endowed with its own fueling stations, its own police, its autonomous, neutral, empty, and abstract spaces, the highway system perfectly represents the territory, as if laid out in bands over the land, a heterotopia, the cybernetic heterotopia. Everything has been carefully parameterized

⁷ The French word is *autoroute*, whose translation as "highway" obviously does not capture the *auto-*, "automobile" and "self," "self-same," etc., of the French highway.

always-already inscribed in *common* language, in grammar, in metaphysics, in the they. The only gratification that we can take from this kind of *exercise* is to have performed in the apparatus with some panache. *Virtuosity is the only freedom—a pathetic freedom—gained by submitting to signifying determinisms.*

Whoever speaks, acts, "lives" in an apparatus is in some way *justified* by it. He is made the author of his acts, his words, his behavior. The apparatus ensures the integration, the conversion into an *identity* of a heterogeneous collection of discourses, gestures, attitudes: haecceities. It is by reducing every event to an identity that apparatuses impose a local tyrannical order on the global chaos of Empire. The production of differences, of subjectivities, is also governed by the binary imperative: imperial pacification depends entirely on the production of false antinomies, on the production of simulated conflicts: "For or against Milosevic," "For or against Saddam Hussein," "For or against violence"... Galvanizing these antinomies produces the Bloomifying effect with which we are so familiar. In the end it secures from us the omnilateral indifference on which the full-bore intervention of the imperial police relies. This—the utter astonishment produced by impeccable acting, by the autonomous life, by the artistic machinery of apparatuses and significations—is what we experience in watching any televised debate, if the actors have any talent. In this way, the "anti-globalization" crowd will pit their predictable arguments against "neoliberal" ones. The "unions" will forever replay 1936 facing an eternal *Comité des Forges*. The police will fight scum. "Fanatics" will face off against the "democrats." The cult of disease will think it is challenging the cult of health. And all the binary unrest will only go to further ensure world slumber. This is how, day after day, THEY carefully spare us the painful obligation to exist.

defined as its negation, as *abnormal*. That which is only other is reintegrated as *other than the norm*, as that which *opposes* the norm. The medical apparatus will in this way bring the “sick” into existence as that which is not well; the educational apparatus the “good-for-nothing” as that which *is not obedient*; the legal apparatus “crime” as that which *is not legal*. Within the biopolitical, that which is not normal will thus be presented as pathological, when we know from experience that pathology is itself *a norm of life* for the sick organism and that health is not linked to a particular norm of life but to a state of *robust normativity*, to an ability to confront and to create *other* norms of life. The essence of every apparatus is to impose an authoritarian distribution of the sensible in which everything that comes into presence is confronted with the threat of its binarity.

The formidable aspect of every *apparatus* is that it is built around the original structure of human presence to which we are called, *summoned* by the world. All our “qualities,” our “specific being,” are established within a play among beings [*étants*] such that our *disposition* towards beings is not primary. Nonetheless, within the most banal of apparatuses, like a boozy Saturday night among suburban petit-bourgeois couples, it often happens that we experience the characteristic—not request—but *possession*, and even the extreme *possessiveness* involved with every apparatus. And it is during the vacuous conversations punctuating the dreadful dinner party that we experience it. One of the Blooms “present” will launch into his tirade against perpetually-on-strike-government-workers; once performed (the role being well known), a counter-polarization of the social-democratic type will issue from one of the other Blooms, who will play his part more or less convincingly, etc., etc. Throughout, these aren’t bodies speaking to each other, but rather *an apparatus functioning*. Each of the protagonists sets in motion the series of ready-to-use signifying machines, which are

so that *nothing happens*, ever. The undifferentiated daily flow is punctuated only by the statistical, foreseen, and foreseeable series of *accidents*, about which THEY keep us all the better informed as we never see them with our own eyes—accidents which are not experienced as events, as *deaths*, but as a passing disruption whose every trace is erased within the hour. In any case, THEY die a lot less on state highways than on the interstates, as the DOT reminds us. And it is hardly as if the flattened animals, noticed only in the slight swerve they induce in passing cars, remind us what it means to *LIVE WHERE OTHERS PASS*. No atom of the molecularized flow, none of the impervious monads of the apparatus needs us to remind it that it should *get moving*. The highway system was made—with its wide turns, its calculated, signalized uniformity—solely in order to merge all types of behavior into a single one: the non-surprise, sensible and smooth, consistently steered toward a destination, the whole traveled at an average and regular speed. Still, the slight sense of absence, spanning the distance from end to end, as if one could stay in an apparatus only if struck by the prospect of getting out, without ever having really been in it, been *there*. In the end, the pure space of the highway captures the abstraction of all *place* more than of all distance. Nowhere have THEY so perfectly substituted places with *names* through their nominalist *reduction*. Nowhere is separation so mobile, so convincing, and armed with a vocabulary, road signs, less apt to subversion. Thus the highway: the *concrete* utopia of cybernetic Empire. And to think that some have heard of the “information superhighway” without sensing the total police surveillance to come.

The metro, the *metropolitan* network, is another kind of mega-apparatus—in this case, underground. Given that the passion for policing has, since Vichy, never left

the RATP,⁸ no doubt a certain consciousness along the same lines has pervaded its every level, right down to its foundations. Thus a few years ago, in the corridors of the Parisian metro, we had the privilege of reading a long RATP statement adorned with a regal-looking lion. The title of the statement, written in huge bold type, read: “WHOEVER ORGANIZES THE WORKPLACE CONTROLS IT.” Whoever deigned to stop for a second learned of the intransigence with which the local Authority was ready to defend its monopoly over management of the apparatus. Since then, it would seem that the *Weltgeist* has again made progress, this time among its followers in RATP public relations, because every PR campaign is now signed “RATP, *l’esprit libre*.” “*L’esprit libre*”—the strange fate of a phrase that has run from Voltaire to ads for new banking services⁹ by way of Nietzsche—*having* one’s mind free from care [*l’esprit libre*] more than *being* a free thinker [*un esprit libre*]: that is what Bloom in his hunger for Bloomification demands. *To have one’s mind free*, that is: the apparatus takes over for those who submit to it. There is real comfort in this—the power to forget, until further notice, that one is in the world.

In each apparatus, there is a hidden decision. The Good Cyberneticists from the CNRS¹⁰ spin it this way: “The apparatus can be defined as the realization of an intention through the implementation of planned environments” (*Hermès*, no. 25).¹¹ Flow is necessary to the maintenance of

8 The RATP (*Régie autonome des transports parisiens*) is the public authority operating the Parisian public transportation network.

9 *Esprit Libre* refers to the motto of the French bank BNP Parisbas’ campaign to market its services to 18-24 year-olds.

10 *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (National Center for Scientific Research).

11 Hugues Peeters and Philippe Charlier, “*Contributions à une théorie du dispositif*,” *Hermès* 25, “*Le dispositif: entre usage et concept*,” 1999, p. 18-19.

couple is asymmetrical, includes a major and a minor premise. The major and minor premises are not only nominally distinct—two “contrary” terms can perfectly designate the same property, and in a sense that is most often the case—they name two *different modalities of aggregating phenomena*. Within the apparatus, the major premise is the norm. The apparatus aggregates what is compatible with the norm through the simple fact of *not distinguishing*, of leaving it submerged in the anonymous mass that upholds what is “normal.” Thus, in a movie theater, whoever doesn’t scream, or hum, or undresses, etc., remains indistinct, incorporated into the welcoming crowd of spectators, *signifying insofar as insignificant*, short of any recognition. The minor premise of the apparatus is therefore *the abnormal*. That is what the apparatus brings into existence, singles out, isolates, recognizes, differentiates, then reintegrates, *but as disintegrated, separated, different from the rest of the phenomena*. Here we have the minor premise, composed of the whole of what the apparatus individuates, predicates, and in so doing, disintegrates, spectralizes, suspends; a whole, then, that THEY make sure never condenses, never *finds its way*, nor ever conspires. This is where the elementary mechanism of Biopower feeds directly into the logic of representation such as it dominates Western metaphysics.

The logic of representation aims at *reducing* all alterity, effacing what is *there*, what comes into presence, in its pure haecceity, what *makes one think*. All alterity, all radical difference, according to the logic of representation, is apprehended as a negation of the Same, the latter posited by this same logic to begin with. That which differs abruptly, and which thus has nothing in common with the Same, is therefore reduced, projected onto a common plane *which doesn’t exist* and within which a contradiction now appears, one of whose terms the Same fears. In the apparatus, that which is not the norm is consequently

immense apparatus ever created was obviously the East-West geostrategic macro-apparatus, which opposed term for term the “socialist bloc” and the “capitalist bloc.” Every rebellion, every alterity that happened to appear *anywhere* either had to pledge allegiance to one of these two sides or would find itself unwittingly thrown into the official enemy camp of the power it challenged. One can gauge the violence of currents running through apparatuses, and the incredible noxiousness of Western metaphysics in its decay, by the staying power of the Stalinist rhetoric of “you’re playing X’s game”—Le Pen’s,²⁷ the right’s, globalization’s, it doesn’t matter—which is but a reflexive transposition of the old rhetoric of “class against class.” A geopolitical commonplace involves mocking these “Third-World” Marxist-Leninist ex-guerillas who, since the fall of the East-West macroapparatus, are supposed to have reformed themselves into mere mafias or adopted an ideology which the gentleman of the Rue Saint-Guillaume²⁸ consider deranged simply because they fail to understand its vocabulary. In fact, what is now emerging is rather the intolerable effect of the reduction, obstruction, formatting, and disciplining that every apparatus brings to bear on the *untamed anomaly* of phenomena. *A posteriori*, national liberation struggles look less like stratagems of the USSR than the stratagem of *something else*, something which mistrusts the system of representation and refuses to play a part in it.

What must be understood, in fact, is that every apparatus functions starting from a *couple*—conversely, experience shows that a couple that *functions* is a couple that *is an apparatus*. A couple, and not a pair or double, for every

27 Jean-Marie Le Pen, founder and former head of the far-right French political party the Front National (fn).

28 The Rue Saint-Guillaume in Paris is the location of the *Université Institut d’Études Politiques* (Institute of Political Science).

the apparatus, because it conceals this decision. “Nothing is more fundamental to the survival of shopping than a steady stream of customers and products,” observe, for their part, the assholes of the Harvard Project on the City.¹² But ensuring the durability and management of the molecularized flow, linking together the different apparatuses, demands an equivalency principle, a *dynamic* principle distinct from the norm common to each apparatus. The equivalency principle is merchandise. Merchandise, that is, *money*, which individualizes, separates all the social atoms, and places them alone before their bank accounts like Christians before their God; money, which at the same time allows us to continually enter every apparatus and, with each entry to record a *trace* of our position, our traffic. Merchandise, that is, *work*, which holds the largest number of bodies within a certain number of standardized apparatuses, forces them to pass through them and to *stay* there, each body, through its *curriculum vitae*, arranging for its own traceability. For isn’t it the case that working no longer means *doing* something so much as *being* something, and first of all being *available*? Merchandise, that is, the *recognition* thanks to which everyone self-manages their submission to the policing of qualities and maintains with other bodies a prestidigitatory distance, sufficiently large to neutralize but not large enough to exclude them from social valorization. Thus guided by merchandise, the flow of Blooms quietly *necessitates* the apparatus that contains it. A whole fossilized world still survives within this architecture; it no longer needs to celebrate sovereign power *since it is itself, now, the sovereign power*: it need only configure space, while the crisis of presence does the rest.

Under Empire, the classical forms of capitalism survive, but as empty forms, as pure conduits serving to maintain

12 Harvard Project on the City, “Shopping,” in *Mutations* (Bordeaux: Arc en rêve centre d’architecture: Barcelona: ACTAR, 2000), 140.

apparatuses. Although their persistence shouldn't fool us: they are no longer self-contained, for they have become a function of something else. THE POLITICAL NOW DOMINATES THE ECONOMIC. What is ultimately at stake is no longer the extraction of surplus value, but *Control*. Now the level of surplus value extracted solely indicates the level of Control, which is the local condition of extraction. Capital is no longer but a *means* to generalized Control. And if commodity imperialism still exists, it is above all as an imperialism of apparatuses that it makes itself felt; an imperialism that responds to a single necessity: the TRANSITIVE NORMALIZATION OF EVERY SITUATION. This entails increasing circulation *between* apparatuses, for circulation provides the best vector for universal traceability and the *order of flows*. Here again our Good Cyberneticists show their flair for a phrase: "In general, the autonomous individual, understood as having his proper intentionality, stands as the central figure of the apparatus. [...] The individual is no longer positioned, the individual positions himself within the apparatus."¹³

There is nothing mysterious about why Blooms submit so overwhelmingly to apparatuses. Why, on certain days, at the supermarket, I don't steal anything; whether because I am feeling too weak or I am just lazy: not stealing provides a certain comfort. Not stealing means completely disappearing in the apparatus, means conforming to it in order to avoid the violence that underlies it: the violence between a body and the aggregate of employees, surveillance personnel, and, potentially, the police. Stealing compels me to a presence, to an attention, to expose my bodily surface to an extent that, on certain days, it is just too much for me. Stealing compels me to *think my situation*. And sometimes I don't have the strength, so I pay; I pay for sparing myself the very experience of the

¹³ Hugues Peeters and Philippe Charlier, op. cit.

registers. [...] Every day the inspectors had to visit every house, stopping outside and summoning the occupants. Each individual was assigned a window in which he had to appear, and when his name was called he had to present himself at the window, it being understood that if he failed to appear it had to be because he was in bed, and if he was in bed he was ill, and if he was ill he was dangerous and so intervention was called for." What Foucault describes here is how a paleo-apparatus, the anti-plague apparatus, worked; its essence was, much more than fighting the plague, to produce this or that body as plague-stricken. With apparatuses, then, we pass from "a technology of power that drives out, excludes, banishes, marginalizes, and represses, to a fundamentally positive power that fashions, observes, knows, and multiplies itself on the basis of its own effects. [A] power that does not act by separating into large confused masses, but by distributing according to differential individualities."²⁶

The West's dualism has long consisted in establishing two antagonistic entities: the divine and the worldly, subject and object, reason and madness, soul and flesh, good and evil, life and death, being and nothingness, etc., etc. Civilization developed as the struggle of one against the other. This was an exceedingly costly way of going about things. Empire clearly proceeds differently. It still deals in these dualities, *but it no longer believes in them*. In fact, it merely *uses* each couple of classical metaphysics with the purpose of maintaining order, that is, as a binary machine. By apparatus, one should therefore understand a space polarized by a false antimony such that everything that passes through it and happens within it is *reducible* to one or the other of its terms. In this regard, the most

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: lectures at the College de France 1974-1975*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2004), 45-46, 48.

productive power of apparatuses. It is therefore within administrative monarchies themselves that the form of power which was to supplant them was first exploited; a form of power that no longer operates through exclusion but through inclusion, no longer through public execution but through therapeutic punishment, no longer through arbitrary taxation but through vital maximization, no longer through personal sovereignty but through the impersonal application of faceless norms. The emblem of this transfer of power, according to Foucault, is the *management* of plague-victims as opposed to the *banishment* of lepers. Indeed, plague-victims are not excluded from the town, relegated to an outside, as lepers were. Instead, the plague offers the opportunity to deploy a whole interlinked machinery; a whole systematized distribution, an immense architecture of surveillance, identification, and selection apparatuses. The town Foucault says, “was divided up into districts, the districts were divided into quarters, and then the streets within these quarters were isolated. In each street there were overseers, in each quarter inspectors, in each district someone in charge of the district, and in the town itself either someone was nominated as governor or the deputy mayor was given supplementary powers when plague broke out. There is, then, an analysis of the territory into its smallest elements and across this territory the organization of a power that is continuous [...] a power that was continuous not only in this pyramidal, hierarchical structure, but also in its exercise, since surveillance had to be exercised uninterruptedly. The sentries had to be constantly on watch at the end of the streets, and twice a day the inspectors of the quarters and districts had to make their inspection in such a way that nothing that happened in the town could escape their gaze. And everything thus observed had to be permanently recorded by means of this kind of visual examination and by entering all information in big registers. At the start of the quarantine, in fact, all citizens present in the town had to give their name. The names were entered in a series of

apparatus in all of its hostile reality. I pay with my *right to absence*.

3

What can be shown cannot be said.

—Wittgenstein¹⁴

Saying does not stand over against what is said. —Heidegger¹⁵

There is a materialist approach to language based on the idea that what we perceive is inseparable from what we know about what we perceive. *Gestalt* has long shown how, when we look at a confusing image, the fact that someone tells US that it represents a man seated on a chair or a half-opened can of food is sufficient for US to see those things. A body’s nervous reactions and, obviously, therefore, its metabolism are closely linked to the entirety of its representations, even if they aren’t directly dependent on them. Such must be assumed in order to determine less the value than the *vital significance* of every metaphysics, its impact in terms of forms-of-life.

Given that, imagine a civilization whose grammar would hold at its center, particularly in the use of the most

¹⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden (New York: Routledge, 2005), 79 (§4.1212).

¹⁵ Tiqqun writes, “*Le dire n’est pas le dit.*” The English translation of the passage, taken from Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth May (Indiana Univ. Press, 1999), 4, reads “This saying [that of the “thinking-saying of philosophy”] does not describe or explain, does not proclaim or teach. This saying does not stand over against what is said. Rather, the saying itself *is* the ‘to be said,’ as the essential swaying of being.”

common verb in its vocabulary, a kind of vice, a defect, such that everything would be perceived from not only a distorted perspective but in most cases a *morbid* one. Imagine the effect on the common physiology of its users, the mental and relational pathologies, the vital impairment to which they would be prone. Such a civilization would surely be unbearable, producing only disaster and desolation everywhere it spread. The civilization is Western civilization; the verb is quite simply the verb *to be*. The verb *to be* not in its auxiliary or existential uses— “such and such is”—which are relatively harmless, but in its attributive uses—“this rose *is* red”—and its use in identity statements—“the rose *is* a flower”— which make the most egregious falsifications possible. In the statement “this rose is red,” for example, I don’t attribute to the subject “rose” a predicate that inherently belongs to it, but instead a predicate of *my perception*: I am the one—who isn’t color-blind, who is “normal”—who perceives this wavelength as “red.” To say that “I perceive the rose as red” would already be specious. As for the statement, “the rose is a flower,” it conveniently allows me to hide behind the classifying operation that *I* carry out. It would instead be better to say “I classify the rose as a flower”—which is the common wording in Slavic languages. It goes without saying, then, that the effects of the *is* of identity have an entirely different emotional impact when it allows one to say of a man with white skin, “he is white,” of someone with money, “he is rich,” or of a woman who enjoys a little freedom, “she is a slut.” The point is not at all to condemn the supposed “violence” of such statements and thus to pave the way for a new language police, for a more expansive political correctness which would ensure that every sentence carries with it its own guarantee of scientificity. The point is rather to know what we are doing, what THEY are doing to *us* when we speak, and to know it *together*.

The logic underlying these uses of the verb *to be* has

of solidarity is maintained within a context of generalized fragmentation.”²⁵

Confronted with an apparatus, a turnstile in the Parisian metro, for example, the wrong question is: “why is it there?” and the wrong answer, in this particular case: “to prevent illicit behavior.” The correct, materialist question, the *critical-metaphysical* question is rather: “what exactly does the apparatus do, what *operation* does it perform?” The response would then be: “The apparatus singles out, removes illicit bodies from the indistinct mass of ‘users’ by forcing them to move in an easily identifiable way (jumping over the turnstile or slipping in behind a ‘legal’ user). The apparatus in this way *gives life* to the predicate ‘fare evader,’ that is, it gives existence to a body defined *as a fare evader*.” The essential thing here is the *as*, or more exactly the way in which the apparatus *naturalizes*, conjures away the *as*. For the apparatus has a way of making itself scarce, of *vanishing* behind the flow of bodies passing through it; its permanence depends on the continuous renewal of bodies’ submission to it, to its *settled*, routine, and definitive existence. The established apparatus configures space such that the configuration itself remains in the background, as a pure given. From this it follows that what the apparatus brings into existence doesn’t appear as having been made *by it*. In this way, the turnstile apparatus meant to stop “fare evasion” *produces* the predicate “evader” rather than preventing fare evasion, THE APPARATUS MATERIALLY PRODUCES A GIVEN BODY AS THE SUBJECT OF THE DESIRED PREDICATE.

The fact that each being, as a *determined* being, is now produced by apparatuses represents a new paradigm of power. In *Abnormal*, Foucault takes the plague-stricken town as the historical model of this new power, of the

25 Hugues Peeters and Philippe Charlier, op. cit., 20.

[*quelconque*] presence and a second, this time whole, intensive, and internal presence in which every detail of the apparatus that surrounds me comes to life—with its cameras, its security guards, the security guards' *gaze*, the sightlines, the other customers, the way the other customers' *look*. Theft, crime, and fraud are the conditions of solitary existence at war with Bloomification, with Bloomification *through apparatuses*. The insubordination specific to the isolated body, the resolution to leave—even alone, even in a precarious way, through willful engagement—a certain state of stupefaction, half-sleep, self-absence: that is the essence of “life” in apparatuses. Given this, given this *necessary* experience, the question is how to move from there to conspiracy, to an actual circulation of illegal knowledge, an actual circulation of criminal science. It is the move to collective action that S.A.C.S. is here to facilitate.

6

Power speaks of “measures” [*dispositifs*]: national security measures, welfare measures, education measures, surveillance measures, etc. This allows it to give its interventions an air of reassuring insecurity. Then, as time dissolves the novelty of its introduction, the apparatus [*dispositif*] becomes part of “the order of things,” and one only notices the insecurity of those drowned within it. The sellouts writing for the revue *Hermès*, particularly issue 25, didn't have to be asked to begin the work of legitimating this at once discreet and massive domination, which is capable of containing as well as distributing the general implosion of the social. “The social,” they write, “seeks new regulatory methods to confront these difficulties. The apparatus [*dispositif*] is one attempt to do this. It helps to adapt to the fluctuation while at the same time delimiting it. [...] It is the product of a new way of articulating the individual and the collective, ensuring that a minimum

been termed *Aristotelian* by Korzybski; we call it, simply, “metaphysics,” and in this we are not far from thinking, with Schürmann, that “metaphysical culture in its entirety reveals itself to be a universalization of the syntactic operation of predicative attribution.” At work in metaphysics, and in particular in the social hegemony of the *is* of identity, is just as much the negation of becoming, of the *event* of things and beings—“I am tired? First of all, that doesn't mean much. For my tiredness is not mine; I am not the one who is tired. ‘There is something tiring.’ My tiredness is part of the world in the form of an objective consistency, of a limp thickness to things themselves, of the sun and the rising road, and the dust and the stones” (Deleuze, “*Dires et profils*,” 1947).¹⁶ Instead of the event (“there is something tiring”), the metaphysical grammar compels us to state a subject then refer it to its predicate: “I am tired”—a covert position, the omission of being-in-situation, a position that effaces the form-of-life expressing itself behind its utterance, behind the autarkic pseudo-symmetry of the subject-predicate relation. Naturally, the justification of such an evasion opens *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the cornerstone of the West's repression of determinity and forms-of-life, the manual to all future absence. “To the question: ‘What is Now?’” writes our Bloom-in-chief, “let us answer, e.g. ‘Now is Night.’ In order to test the truth of this sense-certainty a simple experiment will suffice. We write down this truth; a truth cannot lose anything by being written down, any more than it can lose anything through our preserving it. If *now, this noon*, we look again at the written truth we shall have to say that it has become stale.”¹⁷ The crude sleight-of-hand here consists in reducing, as if innocuously, the enunciation

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, “*Dires et profils*,” in *Poesie* 36 (December 1947): 68-78.

¹⁷ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 60.

to the utterance, in postulating the equivalence of the utterance made by a body in situation, the utterance *as event*, and the objectified, written utterance, which persists *as a trace* regardless of the situation. In either case, here time, *presence* are written off. In his last work, whose title, *On Certainty*, sounds like a kind of response to the first chapter of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Wittgenstein considers the question further. From §588: “But don’t I use the words ‘I know that...’ to say that I am in a certain state, whereas the mere assertion ‘that is a...’ does not say this? And yet one often does reply to such an assertion by asking ‘how do you know?’—‘But surely, only because the fact that I assert this gives to understand that I think I know it.’—This point could be made in the following way; In a zoo there might be a notice ‘this is a zebra’; but never ‘I know that this is a zebra.’ ‘I know’ has meaning only when it is uttered by a person.”¹⁸

The power that has made itself the heir of Western metaphysics, Empire draws its entire strength as well as the enormity of its weakness from this same metaphysics. Through the plethora of control devices, of continuous-tracking equipment with which it has covered the globe, through its very excess, it betrays the excess of its blindness. The mobilization of all these “intellects” which it prides itself on counting among its ranks only confirms its stupidity. It is striking to see, year in, year out, how beings increasingly slip between their predicates, between the identities that THEY give them. As surely as ever, Bloom makes progress. Everything becomes indistinguishable. THEY find it increasingly difficult to make “an intellectual” of those who think, “a wage-earner” of those who work, “a murderer” of those who kill, “an activist” of those who engage in activism. Formalized language, the arithmetic of

¹⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. Wright (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1975), 77c.

penetrate not only his own instability, but also that in other people. The magician knows how to *go beyond himself* not in the ideal sense, but actually, in the existential sense, The man whose being-there is made a problem and who has the power to establish his own presence, is not just an ordinary presence, but a being-there that makes itself present to others, understands their existential drama and influences its course.”²⁴ Such is the starting point of the communist program.

Crime, contrary to what the Law implies, is never an act, a deed, but a *condition of existence*, a modality of presence, common to all agents of the Imaginary Party. To convince oneself one need only think of the experience of theft or fraud, the elementary, and among the most routine—NOWADAYS, EVERYONE STEALS—forms of crime. The experience of theft is phenomenologically *other than* the so-called motives said to “push” us to it, and which we ourselves invoke. Theft is only a transgression from the point of view of representation: *it is an operation carried out on presence*, a reappropriation, an *individual* recovery of presence, a recovery of oneself *as a body in space*. The *how* of “theft” has nothing to do with its apparent legal occurrence. The *how* is the *physical* awareness of space and environment, the physical awareness of the *apparatus*, to which theft drives me. It is the extreme attention of the body illicitly on the subway, alert to the slightest sign of ticket inspectors. It is the nearly scientific understanding of the conditions in which I operate required for preparing a crime of some scope. With crime, there is a whole incandescence to the body, a transformation of the body into an ultrasensitive impact surface: that is its genuine experience. When I steal, I split myself into an apparent, unsubstantial, evanescent, absolutely nondescript

²⁴ Ernesto De Martino, *The World of Magic*, op. cit. Translation modified.

each apparatus possesses its own little music, which must be put slightly out of tune, incidentally distorted, pushed to decay, to destruction, to become unhinged. Those who *flow* into the apparatus don't notice the music, their steps stick too close to the rhythm to hear it distinctly. For the latter, another temporality is needed, a specific rhythmicity, so that, although we enter the apparatus, we remain attentive to the *prevailing norm*. That is what the thief, the criminal learns: to unsync internal and external tempos, to split, to layer one's consciousness, being at once mobile and static, on the lookout and deceptively distracted. To accept the dissolution of presence in the name of a simultaneous, asynchronous multiplication of its modalities. To turn the imposed schizophrenia of self-control into an offensive conspiratorial instrument, TO BECOME A SORCERER. "[T]o prevent this disintegration, one must go deliberately to the limit of one's own presence through a clearly-defined practice: one must go to the very essence of the outer limits and master it; the 'spirits' must be identified and evoked and one must develop the power to call upon them at will and profit professionally from their activity. These are the steps taken by the sorcerer: he transforms being-in-the-world's critical moments into a courageous and dramatic decision, that of establishing himself in the world. If being-in-the-world is taken as a *given*, it runs the risk of being dissolved: it has not yet been given. The magician, through the establishment of his vocation and successful initiation, *undoes* this presumed given and *reforms* it through a second birth; he goes to the limits of his presence in order to reform himself into a new and clearly-defined entity. The techniques he uses to increase the instability of presence, the trance itself and other related states, are the expressions of this being-there that disintegrates so that it may be reformed, the being that goes to the very end of its confines in order to discover itself as a sustained and guaranteed presence. The mastery that the magician has acquired allows him to

the norm, has no hold on substantial distinction. Bodies no longer allow themselves to be reduced to the qualities that THEY intended to assign to them. Bodies refuse to *incorporate* them. They silently slip away. Recognition, which first designates a *certain distance between bodies*, is overrun at every point. It can no longer account for what is really happening *between bodies*. Thus the need for apparatuses, more and more apparatuses: in order to stabilize the relationship between predicates and "subjects" that stubbornly elude them; to thwart the diffuse creation of complex, asymmetric, perverse relationships with those predicates; to produce information, to produce the real *as information*. Clearly, the deviations measured by the norm, those according to which THEY individualize-apportion bodies, are no longer enough to maintain order; in addition, terror must be made to reign, terror of straying *too far* from the norm. A completely new policing of qualities, an entirely ruinous network of microsurveillance, of microsurveillance of every instant and every space, have become necessary to ensure the artificial stability of an imploding world. Attaining universal self-control demands a completely new densification. Mass dissemination of always more integrated, always more insidious control apparatuses. "The Apparatus: Helping Identities in Crisis," write the fuckers at CNRS.¹⁹ But regardless of what THEY do to ensure the dreary linearity of the subject-predicate relation in order to submit all being to its representation, despite their historial detachment, despite *Bloom*, it is no use. Apparatuses may very well fix, conserve outmoded economies of presence, make them last beyond their event, but they cannot stop *the seat of phenomena*, which will, sooner or later, overwhelm them. For now, the fact that most often it isn't being [*étant*] that possesses the qualities

19 Translation of "*Le dispositif: une aide aux identités en crise?*" the title of an essay by Annabelle Klein and Jean-Luc Brackelaire in *Hermès* 25, op. cit., 67-81.

we attach to it, but rather our perception, which always shows itself most clearly in our metaphysical poverty, the poverty of our ability to perceive, makes us experience everything as having no qualities, makes us produce the world as devoid of qualities. In this historial collapse, things themselves, free of all attachments, come more and more urgently into presence.

Indeed, it is as an *apparatus* that each detail of the world appears to us—a world which has become foreign, precisely, in each of its details.

4

*Our reason is the difference of discourses,
our history the difference of times, our
selves the difference of masks.*

—Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*²⁰

It is characteristic of an abruptly major thought to know what it is doing, to know in which operations it is involved. Not in view of reaching some final, cautious, and measured Reason, but rather in order to intensify the dramatic pleasure of the play of existence even in its very inevitabilities. This is obscene, of course. And I have to say that, wherever one goes, in whatever circle one runs, every thought of the situation is immediately understood and conjured away as a perversion. To forestall this unfortunate reaction, there is always, of course, at least one respectable way out, which is to pass the thought off as a critique. In France, by the way, this is something THEY are more than eager to do. By revealing my hostility to a thing whose functions and determinisms I have grasped, I protect the very thing I

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), 131.

Spectacle, Empire consummates—I remember this run-in with a Negrist from *Chimères*,²³ an old hag in a gothic outfit (which wasn't bad), who claimed, as an indisputable gain for feminism and her materialist radicalism, that she hadn't raised her two children, but had produced them... it consummates the metaphysical interpretation of being [*étant*] as either being produced or nothing at all, produced, that is, caused to be produced in such a way that its creation and its ostension would be one and the same thing. Being produced always means at once being created and being made visible. In Western metaphysics, entering into presence has never been anything but entering into visibility. It is therefore inevitable that Empire, dependent on productive hysteria, should also be dependent on transparential hysteria. The surest way to prevent the free coming into presence of things is to induce it constantly, tyrannically.

Our ally—in this world given over to the most ferocious enframing, abandoned to *apparatuses*, in this world centered on fanatically controlling the visible, which wants to be in control of Being—our ally is none other than Time. Time is on our side. The time of our experience; the time that drives and rends our intensities; the time that breaks, wrecks, spoils, destroys, deforms; the time that is an abandon and an abandonment, that is at the very heart of both; the time that condenses and thickens into clusters of *moments* when all unification is defied, ruined, cut short, scratched out on the surface by *bodies themselves*. WE HAVE THE TIME. And whenever we don't have it, we can still give ourselves the time. To give oneself time: that is the condition to every communizable study of apparatuses. To identify the patterns, links, dissonances;

²³ Review founded by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in 1987. “Negrist” refers to an adherent of Antonio Negri’s brand of Marxist political philosophy.

of all be distinguished from *bricolage*, since the bricoleur accumulates knowledge of apparatuses only in order to improve their design, to turn them into a niche, that is, he accumulates all the knowledge of apparatuses *that is not power*. From the consensus point of view, what we call a science of apparatuses or critical metaphysics is finally nothing other than the science of crime. And here, as elsewhere, no initiation exists that isn't immediately experimentation, practice. ONE IS NEVER INITIATED INTO AN APPARATUS, ONLY INTO HOW IT WORKS. The three stages of this particular science are, successively: crime, opacity, and insurrection. Crime is the period of—necessarily individual—study of how an apparatus works. Opacity is the condition in which knowledge-powers acquired through study are shared, communized, circulated. Under Empire, the zones of opacity in which this communication takes place must by definition be seized and defended. This second stage therefore requires greater coordination. All S.A.C.S. activity is devoted to this opaque phase. The third level is insurrection, the moment when knowledge-powers and cooperation among forms-of-life—with an aim to destroying-enjoying imperial apparatuses—can be carried out freely, in the open air. Given our project, the present text can only serve as the most modest of introductions, passing somewhere between silence and tautology.

One begins to sense the necessity of a science of apparatuses as people, human *bodies*, finally settle into an entirely manufactured world. Few among those who find something wrong with the exorbitant misery that THEY would like to impose have yet to really understand what it means to live in an *entirely produced* world. To begin with, it means that even what at first glance has seemed to us “authentic” reveals itself on contact as produced, that is, as possessing its non-production as a useful modality of general production. In terms of both Biopower and

want to destroy *from myself, from my practice*. And that—this innocuousness—is exactly what THEY expect when they urge me to declare myself a critic.

The freedom of play that follows from the acquisition of knowledge-power terrifies everyone everywhere. Empire continuously exudes this terror—terror of crime—among bodies, thus ensuring its monopoly over knowledge-powers, that is, in the end, its monopoly over *all power*. Domination and Critique have always formed an apparatus covertly directed against a common *hostis*: the conspirator, who works *under cover*, who uses everything they give him and everything they attribute to him *as a mask*. The conspirator is everywhere hated, although they will never hate him as much as he *enjoys* playing his game. No doubt a certain amount of what one usually calls “perversion” accounts for the pleasure, since what he enjoys, among other things, is his opacity. But that isn't the reason THEY continue to push the conspirator to make himself a critic, to *subjectivate* himself as critic, nor the reason for the hate THEY so commonly express. The reason is quite simply the *danger* he represents. The danger, for empire is war machines: that one person, that people transform themselves into war machines, ORGANICALLY JOIN THEIR TASTE FOR LIFE AND THEIR TASTE FOR DESTRUCTION.

The moralizing at the heart of every critique should not, in its turn, be critiqued; we need only recognize how little penchant we have for what is in fact at work: a love exclusively of sad affects, impotence, contrition; a desire to *pay*, to atone, to be punished; a passion for accusations; a hatred of the world, of life; the herd instinct; the expectation of martyrdom. The whole business of “conscience” has never truly been understood. There is in fact a *necessity* to conscience that is in no way a necessity to “rise up,” but a necessity to raise, to refine, to spur *our pleasure*, to intensify *our enjoyment*. A science of apparatuses, a critical

metaphysics is thus truly necessary, but not in order to sketch out some kind of pretty certainty to hide behind, nor even to *add* to life the thought of such a certainty, as some have said. We need to think our life in order to *intensify* it dramatically. What do I care about a refusal if it isn't at the same time a meticulous understanding of destruction? What do I care about knowledge that doesn't increase my strength—which THEY hypocritically call "lucidity"?

As for apparatuses, the vulgar tendency—of a body *that knows nothing of joy*—would be to reduce the present revolutionary perspective to the prospect of their immediate destruction. Apparatuses would thus provide a kind of scapegoat about which everyone could once again thoroughly agree. And we would revive the oldest of modern fantasies, the romantic fantasy that closes *Steppenwolf*. that of a war of men against machines. Reduced to that, the revolutionary perspective would once again be but an icy abstraction.

However, the revolutionary process is either a process of a general increase in power or it is nothing at all. Its Hell is the experience and science of apparatuses, its purgatory the distribution of this science and the flight from apparatuses, its Paradise insurrection, the destruction of apparatuses. And it falls *to each of us* to play out this divine comedy, like an irrevocable experiment.

For the time being the petit-bourgeois terror of language still reigns everywhere. On the one hand, in the sphere of "the everyday," THEY tend to take things for words, that is, apparently, for what they are—"a cat is a cat," "a penny is a penny," "I am me"—on the other hand, as soon as the THEY is subverted and language unleashed as an agent of potential disorder within the clinical regularity of the already-known, THEY cast it out into the nebulous regions of "ideology," of "metaphysics," of "literature," or, more

real reason for his faith: Marxism serves as an existential crutch for many people who are scared that their world may not in fact be so self-evident. In the name of materialism, Marxism lets us smuggle in, draped in the robes of the noblest dogmatism, the most *vulgar* of metaphysics. There is no doubt that without the practical, *vital* contribution of Blanquism, Marxism alone would have been incapable of the October "Revolution."

Thus the task, for a science of apparatuses, isn't to denounce the fact that apparatuses *possess us*, that there may be *something magic* in them. It goes without saying that even behind the wheel we rarely actually act like drivers—and we don't need anyone explaining to us how a television, a PlayStation, or a "built environment" conditions us. *Instead, a science of apparatuses, a critical metaphysics, recognizes the crisis of presence and is prepared to compete with capitalism on the playing field of magic.*

WE WANT NEITHER VULGAR MATERIALISM NOR AN "ENCHANTED MATERIALISM;" WHAT WE ARE DESCRIBING IS A MATERIALISM OF ENCHANTMENT.

5

A science of apparatuses can only be *local*. It can only consist in the regional, circumstantial, and circumstanced mapping of how one or several apparatuses work. Totalization cannot occur without its cartographers' knowing, for rather than in forced systematicity, its unity lies in the question that determines its progress—the question: "*How does it work?*"

The science of apparatuses competes directly with the imperial monopoly over knowledge-powers. This is why its dissemination and communication, the circulation of its discoveries are essentially *illegal*. In this it should first

the classical-subject-with-guaranteed-presence, viewing “commodities as material, that is, as use values,” against the general, indeed mysterious, blindness of the exploited. Even if he realizes that the latter must be in one way or another immobilized, made spectators to the circulation of things, in order for relations among them to resemble relations among things, he doesn’t see the *apparatus* character of the mode of capitalist production. He fails to see what is happening, in terms of being-in-the-world, between these “men” and these “things.” The very man who wants so badly to explain the necessity of everything doesn’t understand the necessity of this “mystical illusion,” its mooring in the vacillation of presence, *and in the suppression of this vacillation*. He simply dismisses the fact by attributing it to obscurantism, to theological and religious backwardness, to “metaphysics.” “The religious reflections of the real world can, in any case, vanish only when the practical relations of everyday life between man and man, and man and nature, generally present themselves to him in a transparent and rational form.”²² So here we are: at the heart of the enlightenment catechism, with everything programmatic that that implies for the world *such that it has been constructed ever since*. Since one cannot mention one’s own relation to presence, the singular modality of one’s being-in-the-world, nor that in which one is invested *here and now*, one inevitably draws on the same used-up tricks as one’s predecessors: entrusting to a teleology—as implacable as it is derelict—to execute the sentence that one is in fact in the process of pronouncing. The failure of Marxism, like its historical success, is absolutely tied to the *classical* fallback position that it justifies, because, in the end, it remains within the fold of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity. A single discussion with a Marxist is enough to understand the

22 Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990), 173.

commonly, of “bullshit.” And yet there have been and there will be insurrectional moments when, under the effect of a flagrant denial of the everyday, common sense overcomes terror, THEY then understand that what is real in words is not what the words refer to—a cat is not “a cat”; a penny is less than ever “a penny”; I am no longer “myself.” *What is real in language are the operations it performs*. To describe a being [étant] as an *apparatus*, or as being produced by an apparatus, *denatures* the given world, serves to *distance* us from the familiar, or at least that is what it is meant to do. But you know all this already.

Keeping the given world at a distance has until now been the characteristic feature of critique. Only critique believed that, once at a distance, the die was cast. For at bottom it was less important for critique to keep the world away than to keep itself out of the world’s reach—and in some nebulous region. Critique wanted THEM to know its hostility to the world, its inherent transcendence. It wanted THEM to believe, to assume it operates elsewhere, in some Grand Hotel Abyss²¹ or in the Republic of Letters. What matters to us is exactly the opposite. We impose a distance between us and the world, which is not to say that we could ever be elsewhere, but in order to *be in the world differently*. The distance we introduce is the space of play our gestures require; gestures that are engagements and disengagements, love and extermination, sabotage, abandon. The thought of apparatuses, critical metaphysics, prolongs a long-paralyzed critical gesture, prolongs it and in so doing *nullifies* it. In particular, it nullifies

21 The reference is to Georg Lukacs’s 1962 preface to *The Theory of the Novel*: “A considerable part of the German intelligentsia, including Adorno, have taken up residence in the ‘Grand Hotel Abyss’ [...] a beautiful hotel, equipped with every comfort, on the edge of an abyss, of nothingness, of absurdity. And the daily contemplation of the abyss between excellent meals or artistic entertainments, can only heighten the enjoyment of the subtle comforts offered.” Trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), 22.

what, for more than seventy years, has stood as the center of energy of whatever life has been left in Marxism—I mean the famous chapter in *Capital* on “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof.” Nowhere is it more lamentably obvious that Marx failed to think beyond the Enlightenment, that his *Critique of Political Economy* was nothing *but a critique*, than in these few paragraphs.

Marx came across the notion of fetishism as early as 1842, in his reading of that Enlightenment classic *Du Culte des Dieux-Fétiches* [*On the Worship of Fetish-gods*] by Charles de Brosses. Starting with his famous article on “Thefts of Wood” Marx compared gold to a fetish, basing the comparison on an anecdote taken from De Brosses’ book. De Brosses invented the concept of fetishism, expanding the illuminist interpretation of certain African religions to all civilizations. For him, fetishism is the form of worship specific to “primitives” in general. “So many like facts, or those of similar kind, establish with the utmost certainty that as the Religion of African Negroes and other Barbarians is today, such was that of ancient peoples in earlier times; and that through the centuries, as well as throughout the world, we find this direct cult consecrated to animal and plant objects rejected,” What most shocks the man of the Enlightenment, and especially Kant, in fetishism is the way an African perceives things, which Bosman reports in *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (1705): “We make and break our Gods, and [...] are the inventors and the masters of that to which we sacrifice.” Fetishes are those objects or those beings, those *things*, in any case, with which the “primitive” magically links himself in order to restore a presence that some strange, violent, or simply unexpected phenomenon has made uncertain. In fact, the thing may be anything at all that the Savage “deifies directly,” as the disgusted *Aufklärer* puts it, seeing only things and not the magic operation that restores presence. And if he can’t see the operation, this is because

for him no less than for the “primitive”—except for the witch, of course—faltering presence, the dissolution of the self are inadmissible. The difference between the modern and the primitive hinges solely on the fact that the former denies destabilized presence, having established himself *in the existential denegation* [*dénégation*] of his own fragility, whereas the latter accepts it providing a remedy is found at all cost. Thus the *Aufklärer’s* polemical—anything but easy—relationship with the “magic world,” whose very *possibility* scares him to death. Thus, too, the invention of “madness,” for those who refuse to submit to such harsh discipline.

In this first chapter of *Capital*, Marx’s position is no different from Charles de Brosses’: the gesture is typical of the *Aufklärer*, of the critic. “Commodities have a secret, and I will reveal it. As you will soon see, they won’t have their secret for long!” Neither Marx nor Marxism has ever got past the metaphysics of subjectivity, which is why feminism, or cybernetics, has had so little trouble undermining both. Because Marx historicizes everything *except human presence*, because he studies all economies *except those of presence*, he conceives of exchange value the way Charles de Brosses, in the eighteenth century, conceived of fetish religions among “primitives.” He refuses to understand *what is at stake* in fetishism. He fails to see the *apparatuses* through which THEY make the commodity exist as commodity, how, materially—by accumulating *stock* at the factory; by orchestrating individuating *best-sellers* in a bookstore, a shop window or advertisement; by ruining the mere possibility of immediate use as well as that of any connection with places—THEY produce objects as *objects*, commodities *as commodities*. He acts *as if* everything that falls under sensible experience counted for nothing in his famous “fetish character,” as if the idea of phenomenality that makes commodities as such exist weren’t itself *materially produced*. Marx sets his misunderstanding of