A TREE FALLS IN THE FOREST: PHILSOPHY AND SOUND

Course Reader Autumn 2013 Seth Kim-Cohen

"Tease apart the threads [of the natural world] and the pattern vanishes. The design is in how the cloth-maker arranges the threads: this way and that, as fashion dictates. To say something is meaningful is to say that that is how we arrange it so; how we comprehend it to be, and what is comprehended by you or I may not be by a cat, for example. If a tree falls in a park and there is no-one to hand, it is silent and invisible and nameless. And if we were to vanish, there would be no tree at all; any meaning would vanish along with us. Other than what the cats make of it all, of course."

--William Fossett, *Natural States*, (1754)

Table of Contents

First Reading

Jonathan Sterne, “Hello?,” *The Audible Past* (2003)

Jonathan Sterne

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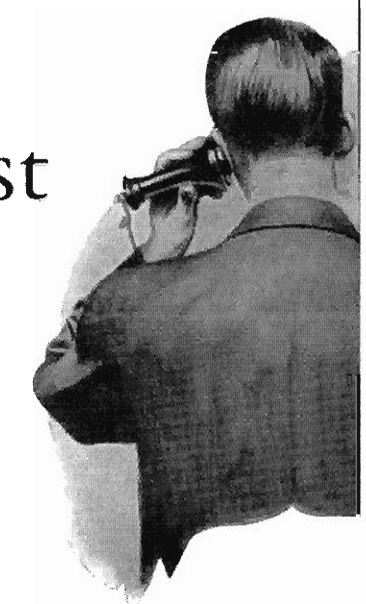
The Audible Past



CULTURAL ORIGINS OF SOUND REPRODUCTION

deserve much more lauding and gratitude than one can offer in the space of an acknowledgments section.

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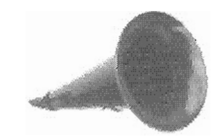


Hello!

Here are the tales currently told: Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Watson had their first telephone conversation in 1876. "Mr. Watson—Come here— I want to see you!" yelled Bell to Watson, and the world shook. Thomas Edison first heard his words—"Mary had a little lamb"—returned to him from the cylinder of a phonograph built by his assistants in 1878, and suddenly the human voice gained a measure of immortality. Guglielmo Marconi's wireless telegraph conquered the English channel in 1899. Unsuspecting navy personnel first heard voices coming over their radios in 1906. Each event has been claimed as a turning point in human history. Before the invention of sound-reproduction technologies, we are told, sound withered away. It existed only as it went out of existence. Once telephones, phonographs, and radios populated our world, sound had lost a little of its ephemeral character. The voice became a little more unmoored from the body, and people's ears could take them into the past or across vast distances.

These are powerful stories because they tell us that something happened to the nature, meaning, and practices of sound in the late nineteenth century. But they are incomplete.[1] If sound-reproduction technologies changed the way we hear, where did they come from? Many of the practices, ideas, and constructs associated with sound-reproduction technologies predated the machines themselves. The basic technology to make phonographs (and, by extension, telephones) existed for some time prior to their actual invention.[2] So why did sound-reproduction technologies emerge when they did and not at some other time? What preceded them that made them possible, desirable, effective, and meaningful? In what milieu did they dwell? How and why did sound-reproduction technologies take on the particular technological and cultural forms and functions that they did? To answer these questions, we move from considering simple mechanical possibility out into the social and cultural worlds from which the technologies emerged.

The Audible Past offers a history of the *possibility* of sound reproduction—the telephone, the phonograph, radio, and other related technologies. It examines the social and cultural conditions that gave rise to sound reproduction and, in turn, how those technologies crystallized and combined larger cultural currents. Sound-reproduction technologies are artifacts of vast transformations in the fundamental nature of sound, the human ear, the faculty of hearing, and practices of listening that occurred over the long nineteenth century. Capitalism, rationalism, science, colonialism, and a host of other factors—the "maelstrom" of modernity, to use Marshall Berman's phrase—all affected constructs and practices of sound, hearing, and listening.[3]

As there was an Enlightenment, so too was there an "Ensoniment." A series of conjunctures among ideas, institutions, and practices rendered the world audible in new ways and valorized new constructs of hearing and listening. Between about 1750 and 1925, sound itself became an object and a domain of thought and practice, where it had previously been conceptualized in terms of particular idealized instances like voice or music. Hearing was reconstructed as a physiological process, a kind of receptivity and capacity based on physics, biology, and mechanics. Through techniques of listening, people harnessed, modified, and shaped their powers of auditory perception in the service of rationality. In the modern age, sound and hearing were reconceptualized, objectified, imitated, transformed, reproduced, commodified, mass-produced, and industrialized. To be sure, the transformation of sound and hearing took well over a century. It is not that people woke up one day and found everything suddenly different. Changes in sound, listening, and hearing happened bit by bit, place by place, practice by practice, over a long period of time.

"The golden age of the ear never ended," writes Alan Burdick. "It continues, occluded by the visual hegemony."[4] *The Audible Past* tells a story where sound, hearing, and listening are central to the cultural life of modernity, where sound, hearing, and listening are foundational to modern modes of knowledge, culture, and social organization. It provides an alternative to the pervasive narrative that says that, in becoming modern, Western culture moved away from a culture of hearing to a culture of seeing. There is no doubt that the philosophical literature of the Enlightenment—as well as many people's everyday language—is littered with light and sight metaphors for truth and understanding.[5] But, even if sight is in some ways the privileged sense in European philosophical discourse since the Enlightenment, it is fallacious to think that sight alone or in its supposed difference from hearing explains modernity.

There has always been a heady audacity to the claim that vision is the social chart of modernity. While I do not claim that listening is *the* social chart of modernity, it certainly charts a significant field of modern practice. There is always more than one map for a territory, and sound provides a particular path through history. In some cases—as this book will demonstrate—modern ways of hearing prefigured modern ways of seeing. During the Enlightenment and afterward, the sense of hearing became an object of contemplation. It was measured, objectified, isolated, and simulated. Techniques of audition developed by doctors and telegraphers were constitutive characteristics of scientific medicine and early versions of modern bureaucracy. Sound was commodified; it became something that can be bought and sold. These facts trouble the cliché that modern science and rationality were outgrowths of visual culture and visual thinking. They urge us to rethink exactly what we mean by the *privilege* of vision and images.[6] To take seriously the role of sound and hearing in modern life is to trouble the visualist definition of *modernity*.

Today, it is understood across the human sciences that vision and visual culture are important matters. Many contemporary writers interested in various aspects of visual culture (or, more properly, visual aspects of various cultural domains)—the arts, design, landscape, media, fashion—understand their work as contributing to a core set of theoretical, cultural, and historical questions about vision and images. While writers interested in visual media have for some time gestured toward a conceptualization of *visual culture,* no such parallel construct—*sound culture* or, simply, *sound studies*—has broadly informed work on hearing or the other senses.[7] While sound is considered as a unified intellectual problem in some science and engineering fields, it is less developed as an integrated problem in the social and cultural disciplines.

Similarly, visual concerns populate many strains of cultural theory. The question of *the gaze* haunts several schools of feminism, critical race theory, psychoanalysis, and poststructuralism. The cultural status of *the image* and seeing occupies great minds in semiotics, film studies, several schools of literary and art-historical interpretation, architecture, and communication. While sound may interest individual scholars in these areas, it is still too often considered a parochial or specialized concern. While there are many scholars of sound active in communication, film studies, music, and other human sciences, sound is not usually a central theoretical problem for major schools of cultural theory, apart from the privilege of the voice in phenomenology and psychoanalysis and its negation in deconstruction.[8]

It would be possible to write a different book, one that explains and criticizes scholars' preference for visual objects and vision as an object of study. For now, it is enough to note that the fault lies with both cultural theorists and scholars of sound. Cultural theorists too easily accept pieties about the dominance of vision and, as a result, have elided differences between the privilege of vision and the totality of vision. Meanwhile, studies of sound tend to shy away from questions of sound culture as such (with a few notable exceptions) and prefer instead to work within other disciplinary or interdisciplinary intellectual domains. By *not* gesturing back toward a more general level of questioning, these works offer an implicitly cumulativist epistemology of the history of sound. The promise of cumulativist approaches is that one day we will have enough historical information to begin generalizing about society. The problem with this perspective is that such a remarkable day is always just over the horizon.[9] If sound and hearing are indeed significant theoretical problems, then now is as good a time as any to begin dealing with them as broad intellectual matters.

Many authors have claimed that hearing is the neglected sense in modernity, a novel sense for analysis.[10] It would perhaps be polemically acceptable at this point to lament the relative lack of scholarly work on sound as compared with images and vision, chart the pioneers, and then claim that this book will fill the gap. But the reality is somewhat different. There is a vast literature on the history and philosophy of sound; yet it remains conceptually fragmented. For the interested reader, there is a wealth of books and articles available on different aspects of sound written by scholars of communication, music, art, and culture.[11] But, without some kind of overarching, shared sensibility about what constitutes *the history of sound, sound culture,* or *sound studies,* piecing together a history of sound from the bewildering array of stories about speech, music, technology, and other sound-related practices has all the promise and appeal of piecing together a pane

of shattered glass. We know that the parts line up somehow, we know that they can connect, but we are unsure of how they actually link together. We have histories of concert audiences, telephones, speeches, sound films, soundscapes, and theories of hearing. But only rarely do the writers of histories of sound suggest how their work connects with other, related work or with larger intellectual domains. Because scholarship on sound has not consistently gestured toward more fundamental and synthetic theoretical, cultural, and historical questions, it has not been able to bring broader philosophical questions to bear on the various intellectual fields that it inhabits. The challenge, then, is to imagine sound as a problem that moves beyond its immediate empirical context. The history of sound is already connected to the larger projects of the human sciences; it is up to us to flesh out the connections.

In positing a history of sound, *The Audible Past* extends a long tradition of interpretive and critical social thought. Some authors have quoted the young Marx on the importance of sensory history: "The forming of the five senses is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present." Marx's passage signals that the very capacity to relate to the world through one's senses is organized and learned differently in different social settings. The senses are "cultivated or brought into being." "Man himself becomes the object" to be shaped and oriented through historical and social process.[12] Before the senses are real, palpable, concrete, or available for contemplation, they are already affected and effected through the particular historical conditions that also give rise to the subject who possesses them. We can fully consider the senses as historical only if we consider society, culture, technology, and the body as themselves artifacts of human history. A truly historicist understanding of the senses—or of a particular sense—therefore requires a commitment to the constructivist and contextualist strain of social and cultural thought. Conversely, a vigorous constructivism and a vigorous contextualism require a history of the senses. It is no accident that Marx's discussion of the senses appears in a section on communism in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.* Even to begin imagining (another) society, the young Marx had to consider the historical dynamics of sensation itself. As we imagine the possibilities of social, cultural, and historical change—in the past, present, or future—it is also our task to imagine histories of the senses. It is widely accepted that "the individual observer became an object of investigation and a locus of knowledge beginning in the first few decades of the 1800s" and that, during that same period, "the status of the observing subject was transformed."[13] So, too, transformations in sound, hearing, and listening were part of massive shifts in the landscapes of social and cultural life of the last three centuries.

The emergence of sound-reproduction technology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries provides a particularly good entry into the larger history of sound. It is one of the few extant sites in the human sciences where scholars have acknowledged and contemplated the historicity of hearing. As Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and countless other writers have argued, the problem of mechanical reproduction is central to understanding the changing shape of communication in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For them, the compelling problem of sound's reproducibility, like the reproduction of images, was its seeming abstraction from the social world even as it was manifested more dynamically within it.[14] Other writers have offered even stronger claims for sound reproduction: it has been described as a "material foundation" of the changing senses of space and time at the turn of the twentieth century, part of a "perceptual revolution" in the early twentieth century. Sound technologies are said to have amplified and extended sound and our sense of hearing across time and space.[15] We are told that telephony altered "the conditions of daily life"; that sound recording represented a moment when "everything suddenly changed," a "shocking emblem of modernity"; that radio was "the most important electronic invention" of the twentieth century, transforming our perceptual habits and blurring the boundaries of private, public, commercial, and political life.[16]

Taken out of context or with a little hostility, claims for the historical significance of sound reproduction may seem overstated or even grandiose. D. L. LeMahieu writes that sound recording was one of "a score of new technologies thrust upon a population increasingly accustomed to mechanical miracles. In a decade when men learned to fly, the clock-sprung motor of a portable gramophone or the extended playing time of a double-sided disk hardly provoked astonishment. Indeed, what may be most remarkable was the rapidity with which technological innovations became absorbed into everyday, commonplace experience."[17] The same could be said for telephony, radio, and many other technologies. Yet LeMahieu's more sober prose still leaves room for wonder—not at the revolutionary power of sound-reproduction technology, but at its banality. If modernity, in part, names the experience of rapid social and cultural change, then its "shocking emblems" may very well have been taken in stride by some of its people.

Because sound-reproduction technology's role in history is so easily treated as self-evidently decisive, it makes sense to begin rewriting the history of sound by reconsidering the historical significance of sound technologies. A focus on sound-reproduction technology has an added advantage for the historian of sound: during their early years, technologies leave huge paper trails, thus making them especially rich resources for historical research. In early writings about the telephone, phonograph, and radio, we find a rich archive of reflections on the nature and meaning of sound, hearing, and listening. Douglas Kahn writes that, "as a historical object, sound cannot furnish a good story or consistent cast of characters nor can it validate any ersatz notion of progress or generational maturity. The history is scattered, fleeting, and highly mediated—it is as poor an object in any respect as sound itself."[18] Prior to the twentieth century, very little of the sonic past was physically preserved for historical analysis at a later date. So it makes sense to look instead at a particular domain of practice associated with sound. The paper trail left by sound-reproduction technologies provides one useful starting point for a history of sound.

Like an examination of the sense organs themselves, an examination of sound technologies also cuts to the core of the nature/nurture debate in thinking about the causes of and possibilities for historical change. Even the most basic mechanical workings of sound-reproduction technologies are historically shaped. As I will argue, the vibrating diaphragm that allowed telephones and phonographs to function was itself an artifact of changing understandings of human hearing. Sound-reproduction technologies are artifacts of particular practices and relations "all the way down"; they can be considered archaeologically. The history of sound technology offers a route into a field of conjunctures among material, economic, technical, ideational, practical, and environmental changes. Situated as we are amid torrential rains of capitalist development and marketing that pelt us with new digital machinery, it is both easy and tempting to forget the enduring connection between any technology and a larger cultural context. Technologies sometimes enjoy a certain level of deification in social theory and cultural history, where they come to be cast as divine actors. In "impact" narratives, technologies are mysterious beings with obscure origins that come down from the sky to "impact" human relations. Such narratives cast technologies themselves as primary agents of historical change: technological deification is the religion behind claims like "the telephone changed the way we do business," "the phonograph changed the way we listen to music." Impact narratives have been rightly and widely criticized as a form of technological determinism; they spring from an impoverished notion of causality.[19]

At the same time, technologies are interesting precisely because they can play a significant role in people's lives. Technologies are repeatable social, cultural, and material processes crystallized into mechanisms. Often, they perform labor that had previously been done by a person. It is this process of crystallization that makes them historically interesting. Their mechanical character, the ways in which they commingle physics and culture, can tell us a great deal about the people who build and deploy them. Technologies manifest a designed mechanical agency, a set of functions cordoned off from the rest of life and delegated to them, a set of functions developed from and linked to sets of cultural practices. People design and use technologies to enhance or promote certain activities and discourage others. Technologies are associated with habits, sometimes crystallizing them and sometimes enabling them. They embody in physical form particular dispositions and tendencies. The door closer tends to close the door unless I stop it with my hand or a doorstop. The domestic radio set receives but does not broadcast unless I do a little rewiring and add a microphone. The telephone rings while I write the introduction to this book. After years of conditioning to respond to a ringing telephone, it takes some effort to ignore it and finish the sentence or paragraph. To study technologies in any meaningful sense requires a rich sense of their connection with human practice, habitat, and habit. It requires attention to the fields of combined cultural, social, and physical activity—what other authors have called *networks* or *assemblages*—from which technologies emerge and of which they are a part.[20]

The story presented in these pages spirals out from an analysis of the mechanical and physical aspects of the technologies themselves to the techniques, practices, and institutions associated with them. At each juncture in the argument, I show how sound-reproduction technologies are shot through with the tensions, tendencies, and currents of the culture from which they emerged, right on down to their most basic mechanical functions. Our most cherished pieties about sound-reproduction technologies—for instance, that they separated sounds from their sources or that sound recording allows us to hear the voices of the dead—were not and are not innocent empirical descriptions of the technologies' impact. They were wishes that people grafted onto sound-reproduction technologies—wishes that became programs for innovation and use.

For many of their inventors and early users, sound-reproduction technologies encapsulated a whole set of beliefs about the age and place in which they lived. Sound-reproduction technologies represented the promise of science, rationality, and industry and the power of the white man to co-opt and supersede domains of life that were previously considered to be magical. For their early users, sound technologies were—in a word—modern.[21] *Modernity* is of course a cloudy analytic category, fraught with internal contradictions and intellectual conflicts. Its difficulty probably stems from its usefulness as a heuristic term, and my use of it is deliberately heuristic. When I claim that sound-reproduction technology indexes an acoustic modernity, I do not mean quite the same thing as the subjects of my history. *The Audible Past* explores the ways in which the history of sound contributes to and develops from the "maelstrom" of modern life (to return to Berman): capitalism, colonialism, and the rise of industry; the growth and development of the sciences, changing cosmologies, massive population shifts (specifically migration and urbanization), new forms of collective and corporate power, social movements, class struggle and the rise of new middle classes, mass communication, nation-states, bureaucracy; confidence in progress, a universal abstract humanist subject, and the world market; and a reflexive contemplation of the constancy of change.[22] In modern life, sound becomes a problem: an object to be contemplated, reconstructed, and manipulated, something that can be fragmented, industrialized, and bought and sold.

But *The Audible Past* is not a simple modernization narrative for sound and hearing. *Modernization* can too easily suggest a brittle kind of universalism, where the specific historical developments referenced by *modernity* are transmogrified into a set of historical stages through which all cultures must pass. In Johannes Fabian's apt phrase, the idea of modernity as modernization turns relations of space—relations between cultures—into relations of time, where the white man stands at the pinnacle of world evolution.[23] While I am not an exponent of a developmental theory of modernity as "modernization," it is such a central element of some discourses about sound reproduction that we will confront it more than once in the following pages. A long line of inventors, scholars, businesspeople, phonographic anthropologists, and casual users thought of themselves as partaking in a modern way of life, as living at the pinnacle of the world's progress. They believed that their epoch rode the crest of modernization's unstoppable wave. So, in addition to being a useful heuristic for describing the context of the project as a whole, *modernity* and its conjugates are also important categories to be analyzed and carefully taken apart within this history.

The remainder of this introduction provides some conceptual background for the history that follows. The next section is an extended consideration of sound as an object of historical study: what does it mean to write a history of something so apparently natural and physical as sound and hearing? A more detailed map of the book's arguments then follows.

Rethinking Sound's Nature: Of Forests, Fallen Trees, and Phenomenologies

All this talk of modernity, history, and sound technology conjures an implied opposite: the *nature* of sound and hearing. Insofar as we treat sound as a fact of nature, writing something other than its natural history might seem like an immodest or inappropriate endeavor—at best it could aspire only to partiality. Although film scholars have been using the phrase *history of sound* for some time, it has an uneasy ring to it. After all, scholars of the visible world do not write "histories of light" (although perhaps they should), instead preferring to write histories of "visual culture," "images," "visuality," and the like. Bracketing light in favor of "the visual" may be a defensive maneuver since the various visual terms conveniently bracket questions of the nature of nature. But, besides sounding good, *history of sound* already embodies a hard-to-grasp but necessary paradox of nature and culture central to everything that follows in this book. At its core, the phenomenon of sound and the history of sound rest at the in-between point of culture and nature.

It is impossible to "merely describe" the faculty of hearing in its natural state. Even to try is to pretend that language has no figurative dimension of its own. The language that we use to describe sound and hearing comes weighted down with decades or centuries of cultural baggage. Consider the careers of two adjectives associated with the ear in the English language. The term *aural* began its history in 1847 meaning "of or pertaining to the organ of hearing"; it did not appear in print denoting something "received or perceived by the ear" until 1860. Prior to that period, the term *auricular* was used to describe something "of or pertaining to the ear" or perceived by the ear.[21] This was not a mere semantic difference: *auricular* carried with it connotations of oral tradition and hearsay as well as the external features of the ear visible to the naked eye (the folded mass of skin that is often synecdochally referred to as the ear is technically either the *auricle*, the *pinna*, or the *outer ear*). *Aural*, meanwhile, carried with it no connotations of oral tradition and referred specifically to the middle ear, the inner ear, and the nerves that turn vibrations into what the brain perceives as sound (as in *aural surgery*). The idea of the aural and its decidedly medical inflection is a part of the historical transformation that I describe in the following pages.

Generally, when writers invoke a binary coupling between culture and nature, it is with the idea that culture is that which changes over time and that nature is that which is permanent, timeless, and unchanging. The nature/culture binary offers a thin view of nature, a convenient straw figure for "social construction" arguments.[25] In the case of sound, the appeal to something static is also a trick of the language. We treat sound as a natural phenomenon exterior to people, but its very definition is anthropocentric. The physiologist Johannes Müller wrote over 150 years ago that, "without the organ of hearing with its vital endowments, there would be no such a thing as sound in the world, but merely vibrations."[26] As Müller pointed out, our other senses can also perceive vibration. Sound is a very particular perception of vibrations. You can take the sound out of the human, but you can take the human out of the sound only through an exercise in imagination. Sounds are defined as that class of vibrations perceived—and, in a more exact sense, sympathetically produced—by the functioning ear when they travel through a medium that can convey changes in pressure (such as air). The numbers for the range of human hearing (which absolutely do not matter for the purposes of this study) are twenty to twenty thousand cycles per second, although in practice most adults in industrial society cannot hear either end of that range. We are thus presented with a choice in our definition: we can say either that sound is a class of vibration that *might* be heard or that it is a class of vibration that *is* heard, but, in either case, the hearing of the sound is what makes it. My point is that human beings reside at the center of any meaningful definition of sound. When the hearing of other animals comes up, it is usually contrasted with human hearing (as in "sounds that only a dog could hear"). As part of a larger physical phenomenon of vibration, sound is a product of the human senses and not a thing in the world apart from humans. Sound is a little piece of the vibrating world.

Perhaps this reads like an argument that falling trees in the forest make no sounds if there are no people there to hear them. I am aware that the squirrels would offer another interpretation. Certainly, once we establish an operational definition of sound, there may be those aspects of it that can be identified by physicists and physiologists as universal and unchanging. By our definition of sound, the tree makes a noise whether or not anyone is there to hear it. But, even here, we are dealing in anthropocentric definitions. When a big tree falls, the vibrations extend outside the audible range. The boundary between vibration that is sound and vibration that is not-sound is not derived from any quality of the vibration in itself or the air that conveys the vibrations. Rather, the boundary between sound and not-sound is based on the understood possibilities of the faculty of hearing—whether we are talking about a person or a squirrel. Therefore, as people and squirrels change, so too will sound—by definition. Species have histories.

Sound history indexes changes in human nature and the human body—in life and in death. The very shape and functioning of technologies of sound reproduction reflected, in part, changing understandings of and relations to the nature and function of hearing. For instance, in the final chapter of this book, I discuss how Victorian writers' desire for permanence in sound recording was an extension of changing practices and understandings of preserving bodies and food following the Civil War. The connections among canning, embalming, and sound recording require that we consider practices of sound reproduction in relation to other bodily practices. In a phrase, the history of sound implies a history of the body.

Bodily experience is a product of the particular conditions of social life, not something that is given prior to it. Michel Foucault has shown that, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the body became "an object and target of power." The modern body is the body that is "is manipulated, shaped, trained," that "obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces." Like a machine, it is built and rebuilt, operationalized and modified.[27] Beyond and before Foucault, there are scores of authors who reach similar conclusions. Already in 1801, a Dr. Jean-Marc Gaspard Itard concluded, on the basis of his interactions with a young boy found living "wild" in the woods, that audition is learned. Itard named the boy Victor. Being a wild child, Victor did not speak—and his silence led to questions about his ability to hear. Itard slammed doors, jingled keys, and made other sounds to test Victor's hearing. The boy even failed to react when Itard shot off a gun near his head. But Victor was not deaf: the young doctor surmised that the boy's hearing was just fine. Victor simply showed no interest in the same sounds as "civilized" French people.[28]

While the younger Marx argued that the history of the senses was a core component of human history, the older Marx argued that the physical conditions under which laborers "reproduced" themselves would vary from society to society—that their bodies and needs were historically determined.[29] The French anthropologist Marcel Mauss, one of Foucault's many influences, offered that "man's first and most natural technical object, and at the same time technical means, is his body." What Mauss called *body techniques* were "one of the fundamental moments of history itself: education of the vision, education in walking—ascending, descending, running."[30] To Mauss's list we could add the education and shaping of audition. Phenomenology always presupposes culture, power, practice, and epistemology. "Everything is knowledge, and this is the first reason why there is no 'savage experience': there is nothing beneath or prior to knowledge."[31]

The history of sound provides some of the best evidence for a dynamic history of the body because it traverses the nature/culture divide: it demonstrates that the transformation of people's physical attributes is part of cultural history. For example, industrialization and urbanization decrease people's physical capacities to hear. One of the ways in which adults lose the upper range of their hearing is through encounters with loud machinery. A jackhammer here, a siren there, and the top edge of hearing begins to erode. Conflicts over what does and does not constitute environmental noise are themselves battles over what sounds are admissible in the modern landscape.[32] As Nietzsche would have it, modernity is a time and place where it becomes possible for people to be measured.[33] It is also a place where the human-built environment modifies the living body.

If our goal is to describe the historical dynamism of sound or to consider sound from the vantage point of cultural theory, we must move just beyond its shifting borders—just outside sound into the vast world of things that we think of as not being about sound at all. The history of sound is at different moments strangely silent, strangely gory, strangely visual, and always contextual. This is because that elusive inside world of sound—the sonorous, the auditory, the heard, the very density of sonic experience—emerges and becomes perceptible only through its exteriors. If there is no "mere" or innocent description of sound, then there is no "mere" or innocent description of sonic experience. This book turns away from attempts to recover and describe people's interior experience of listening—an auditory past—toward the social and cultural grounds of sonic experience. The "exteriority" of sound is this book's primary object of study. If sound in itself is a variable rather than a constant, then the history of sound is of necessity an externalist and contextualist endeavor. Sound is an artifact of the messy and political human sphere.

To borrow a phrase from Michel Chion, I aim to "disengage sound thinking . . . from its naturalistic rut."[34] Many theorists and historians of sound have privileged the static and transhistorical, that is, the "natural," qualities of sound and hearing as a basis for sound history. A surprisingly large proportion of the books and articles written about sound begin with an argument that sound is in some way a "special case" for social or cultural analysis. The "special case" argument is accomplished through an appeal to the interior nature of sound: it is argued that sound's natural or phenomenological traits require a special sensibility and special vocabulary when we approach it as an object of study. To fully appreciate the strangeness of beginning a history with a transhistorical description of human listening experience, consider how rare it is for histories of newspapers or literature to begin with naturalistic descriptions of light and phenomenologies of reading.

Sound certainly has natural dimensions, but these have been widely misinterpreted. I want to spend the next few pages considering other writers' claims about the supposed natural characteristics of sound in order to explain how and why *The Audible Past* eschews transhistorical constructs of sound and hearing as a basis for a history of sound. Transhistorical explanations of sound's nature can certainly be compelling and powerful, but they tend to carry with them the unacknowledged weight of a two-thousand-year-old Christian theology of listening.

Even if it comes at the beginning of a history, an appeal to the "phenomenological" truth about sound sets up experience as somehow outside the purview of historical analysis. This need not be so—phenomenology and the study of experience are not by definition opposed to historicism. For instance, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work has a rich sense of the historical dimensions of phenomenological experience.[35] But founding one's analysis on the supposed transhistorical phenomenological characteristics of hearing is an incredibly powerful move in constructing a cultural theory of sound. Certainly, it asserts a universal human subject, but we will see that the problem is less in the universality per se than in the universalization of a set of particular religious prejudices about the role of hearing in salvation. That these religious prejudices are embedded at the very center of Western intellectual history makes them all the more intuitive, obvious, or otherwise persuasive.

To offer a gross generalization, assertions about the difference between hearing and seeing usually appear together in the form of a list.[36] They begin at the level of the individual human being (both physically and psychologically). They move out from there to construct a cultural theory of the senses. These differences between hearing and seeing are often considered as biological, psychological, and physical facts, the implication being that they are a necessary starting point for the cultural analysis of sound. This list strikes me as a litany—and I use that term deliberately because of its theological overtones—so I will present it as a litany here:

—hearing is spherical, vision is directional;
—hearing immerses its subject, vision offers a perspective;
—sounds come to us, but vision travels to its object;
—hearing is concerned with interiors, vision is concerned with surfaces;
—hearing involves physical contact with the outside world, vision requires distance from it;
—hearing places us inside an event, seeing gives us a perspective on the event;
—hearing tends toward subjectivity, vision tends toward objectivity;
—hearing brings us into the living world, sight moves us toward atrophy and death;
—hearing is about affect, vision is about intellect;
—hearing is a primarily temporal sense, vision is a primarily spatial sense;
—hearing is a sense that immerses us in the world, vision is a sense that removes us from it.[37]

The audiovisual litany—as I will hereafter call it—idealizes hearing (and, by extension, speech) as manifesting a kind of pure interiority. It alternately denigrates and elevates vision: as a fallen sense, vision takes us out of the world. But it also bathes us in the clear light of reason. One can also see the same kind of thinking at work in Romantic conceptualizations of music. Caryl Flinn writes that nineteenth-century Romanticism promoted the belief that "music's immaterial nature lends it a transcendent, mystical quality, a point that then makes it quite difficult for music to speak to concrete realities. . . . Like all 'great art' so construed, it takes its place outside of history where it is considered timeless, universal, functionless, operating beyond the marketplace and the standard social relations of consumption and production."[38] Outlining the *differences* between sight and hearing begs the prior question of what we mean when we talk about their nature. Some authors refer back to physics; others refer back to transcendental phenomenology or even cognitive psychology. In each case, those citing the litany do so to demarcate the purportedly special capacities of each sense as the starting point for historical analysis. Instead of offering us an entry into the history of the senses, the audiovisual litany posits history as something that happens *between* the senses. As a culture moves from the dominance of one sense to that of another, it changes. The audiovisual litany renders the history of the senses as a zero-sum game, where the dominance of one sense by necessity leads to the decline of another sense. But there is no scientific basis for asserting that the use of one sense atrophies another. In addition to its specious zero-sum reasoning, the audiovisual litany carries with it a good deal of ideological baggage. Even if that were not so, it would still not be a very good empirical account of sensation or perception.

The audiovisual litany is ideological in the oldest sense of the word: it is derived from religious dogma. It is essentially a restatement of the longstanding spirit/letter distinction in Christian spiritualism. The spirit is living and life-giving—it leads to salvation. The letter is dead and inert—it leads to damnation. Spirit and letter have sensory analogues: hearing leads a soul to spirit, sight leads a soul to the letter. A theory of religious communication that posits sound as life-giving spirit can be traced back to the Gospel of John and the writings of Saint Augustine. These Christian ideas about speech and hearing can in turn be traced back to Plato's discussion of speech and writing in the *Phaedrus*.[39] The hearing-spirit/sight-letter framework finds its most coherent contemporary statement in the work of Walter Ong, whose later writing (especially *Orality and Literacy*) is still widely cited as an authoritative description of the phenomenology and psychology of sound. Because Ong's later work is so widely cited (usually in ignorance of the connections between his ideas on sound and his theological writings), and because he makes a positive statement of the audiovisual litany such a central part of his argument about cultural history, Ong's work warrants some consideration here.

To describe the balance sheet of the senses, Ong used the word *sensorium,* a physiological term that denoted a particular region of the brain that was thought to control all perceptual activity. *Sensorium* fell out of favor in the late nineteenth century as physiologists learned that there is no such center in the brain. Ong's use of the term should therefore be considered metaphoric. For him, the sensorium is "the entire sensory apparatus as an organizational complex," the combined balance among a fixed set of sensory capacities.

Although *Orality and Literacy* reads at times like a summary of scientific findings, Ong's earlier writings clearly state that his primary interest in the

senses is explicitly driven by theological concerns: "The question of the sensorium in the Christian economy of revelation is particularly fascinating because of the primacy which this economy accords to the word of God and thus in some mysterious way to sound itself, a primacy already suggested in the Old Testament pre-Christian [*sic*] tradition."[40] For Ong, "divine revelation itself . . . is indeed inserted in a particular sensorium, a particular mixture of the sensory activity typical of a given culture." Ong's balance-sheet history of the senses is clearly and urgently linked to the problem of how to hear the word of God in the modern age. The sonic dimension of experience is closest to divinity. Vision suggests distance and disengagement. Ong's history of the move from sound-based oral culture to sight-based literate culture is a history of "a certain silencing of God" in modern life. Ong's assertions about the difference between the world of "oral man" and the "hypertrophy of the visual" that marks the modern age parallel perfectly the spirit/letter distinction in Catholic spiritualism. It is a sophisticated and iconoclastic antimodernist Catholicism. Still, Ong argues that the audiovisual litany transcends theological differences: "Faith or no, we must all deal with the same data."[41]

Of course, parts of the audiovisual litany have come under heavy criticism. The work of Jacques Derrida can be read as an inversion of Ong's value system—Ong himself suggests as much.[42] Derrida uses his well-known phrase *the metaphysics of presence* to criticize and dismantle the connections among speech, sound, voice, and presence in Western thought. Although Derrida's most celebrated critiques of presence find him tarrying with Edmund Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory, and Martin Heidegger's ontology, his criticisms are certainly applicable to Ong's thought as well. Ong argues for exactly the metaphysics of presence that Jacques Derrida attacks as "ontotheological," as a creeping Christian spiritualism that inhabits Western philosophy: "The living act, the life-giving act [hearing oneself speak], the *Lebendigkeit,* which animates the body of the signifier and transforms it into a meaningful expression, the soul of language, seems not to separate itself from itself, from its own self-presence."[43] For Derrida, the elevation of speech as the center of subjectivity and the point of access into the divine is "essential to the history of the West, therefore to metaphysics in its entirety, even when it professes to be atheist."[44] Derrida uses this position to argue for the visual side of the audiovisual litany—an emphasis on vision, writing, difference, and absence. Deconstruction inverts, inhabits, and reanimates the sound/vision binary, privileging writing over speech and refusing both speech-based metaphysics and presence-based positive assertions.

Here, I want to make a slightly different move: the audiovisual litany carries with it the theological weight of the durable association among sound, speech, and divinity, even in its scientific guise. Rather than inverting the audiovisual litany, why not redescribe sound? Since this book is not bound by Christian doctrine, there is no law—divine or otherwise—requiring us to assume the interiority of sound and the connection between sound, subjective self-presence, and intersubjective experience. We do not need to assume that sound draws us into the world while vision separates us from it. We can reopen the question of the sources of rationality and modern ways of knowing. If history exists *within* the senses as well as *between* them, then we need not begin a history of sound with an assertion of the transhistorical dimensions of sound.

My criticism of the audiovisual litany goes far beyond the questions of essentialism or social construction, which usually degenerate into philosophical hygienics. Even if we grant the possibility of a transcendental subject of sensation, the audiovisual litany falls short on its own terms. Despite all the appeals to nature in the name of the litany, the phenomenology implied by the audiovisual litany is highly selective—it stands on shaky empirical (and transcendental) ground. As Rick Alman has argued, claims about the transhistorical and transcultural character of the senses often derive their support from culturally and historically specific evidence—limited evidence at that. In the audiovisual litany, "an apparently ontological claim about the role of sound [or vision] has been allowed to take precedence over actual analysis of sound's functioning."[45] Consider the purportedly unique temporal and spatial characteristics of auditory phenomenology. Ong argues that "sound is more real or existential than other sense objects, despite the fact that it is also more evanescent. Sound itself is related to present actuality rather than to past or future"; sounds exist only as they go out of existence.[46] But, strictly speaking, Ong's claim is true for any event—any *process* that you can possibly experience—and so it is not a quality special or unique to sound. To say that ephemerality is a special quality of sound, rather than a quality endemic to any form of perceptible motion or event in time, is to engage in a very selective form of nominalism.[47] The same criticism can be made of the litany's attribution of a "surface"-oriented spatiality to vision as opposed to an "interior" orientation to sound: it is a very selective notion of surface. Anyone who has heard fingernails on a chalkboard or footsteps in a concrete hallway (or on a wooden floor) can recognize that listening has the potential to yield a great deal of information about surfaces very quickly. The phenomenologist Don Ihde has shown that writers who take sound as a weakly spatial sense wholly disregard "the contemporary discoveries of very complex spatial attributes to auditory experience."[48] He demonstrates that hearing has many spatial aspects and possibilities to which we do not normally attend. We can learn a great deal about shape, surface, or texture from listening. Perhaps the biggest error of the audiovisual litany lies in its equation of hearing and listening. Listening is a directed, learned activity: it is a definite cultural practice. Listening requires hearing but is not simply reducible to hearing.

There is no "mere" or innocent description of interior auditory experience. The attempt to describe sound or the act of hearing in itself—as if the sonic dimension of human life inhabited a space prior to or outside history—strives for a false transcendence. Even phenomenologies can change. In this respect, we follow in Dr. Itard's footsteps. Like the studious Itard, who was perplexed by the wild boy who could hear but did not speak, historians of sound must surmise that our subjects' hearing is fine medically. But we can know their sonic world only through their efforts, expressions, and reactions. History is nothing but exteriorities. We make our past out of the artifacts, documents, memories, and other traces left behind. We can listen to recorded traces of past history, but we cannot presume to know exactly what it was like to hear at a particular time or place in the past. In the age of technological reproduction, we can sometimes experience an audible past, but we can do no more than presume the existence of an auditory past.

What Is Sound Reproduction? Plan of the Present Work

I have argued that technologies of sound reproduction provide us with a compelling entry into the history of sound, but sound-reproduction technology is not necessarily a well-bounded historical object. One could argue that ancient uses of animal horns to amplify the voice and aid the hard-of-hearing are, in a certain sense, sound-reproduction technologies. Certainly, musical instruments could have some claim to that status, as could speaking-head or piano-playing automatons and other sound-synthesis technologies from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. So what is different about telephones, phonographs, radios, and other technologies commonly conjured up as "sound reproduction"? A number of writers have offered semiexperiential definitions of modern sound-reproduction technologies based on their power to separate a sound from its "source."

Second Reading

Michel Foucault, “Preface,” *The Order of Things* (1966)

Jorge-Luis Borges, “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote” (1939)

PREFACE

This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – *our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other. This passage quotes a 'certain Chinese encyclopaedia' in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies'. In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*.

But what is it impossible to think, and what kind of impossibility are we faced with here? Each of these strange categories can be assigned a precise meaning and a demonstrable content; some of them do certainly involve fantastic entities – fabulous animals or sirens – but,

precisely because it puts them into categories of their own, the Chinese encyclopaedia localizes their powers of contagion; it distinguishes carefully between the very real animals (those that are frenzied or have just broken the water pitcher) and those that reside solely in the realm of imagination. The possibility of dangerous mixtures has been exorcized, heraldry and fable have been relegated to their own exalted peaks: no inconceivable amphibious maidens, no clawed wings, no disgusting, squamous epidermis, none of those polymorphous and demoniacal faces, no creatures breathing fire. The quality of monstrosity here does not affect any real body, nor does it produce modifications of any kind in the bestiary of the imagination; it does not lurk in the depths of any strange power. It would not even be present at all in this classification had it not insinuated itself into the empty space, the interstitial blanks *separating* all these entities from one another. It is not the 'fabulous' animals that are impossible, since they are designated as such, but the narrowness of the distance separating them from (and juxtaposing them to) the stray dogs, or the animals that from a long way off look like flies. What transgresses the boundaries of all imagination, of all possible thought, is simply that alphabetical series (a, b, c, d) which links each of those categories to all the others.

Moreover, it is not simply the oddity of unusual juxtapositions that we are faced with here. We are all familiar with the disconcerting effect of the proximity of extremes, or, quite simply, with the sudden vicinity of things that have no relation to each other; the mere act of enumeration that heaps them all together has a power of enchantment all its own: 'I am no longer hungry,' Eusthenes said. 'Until the morrow, safe from my saliva all the following shall be: Aspics, Acalephs, Acanthocephalates, Amoebocytes, Ammonites, Axolotls, Amblystomas, Aphislions, Anacondas, Ascarids, Amphisbaenas, Angleworms, Amphipods, Anaerobes, Annelids, Anthozoans. . . .' But all these worms and snakes, all these creatures redolent of decay and slime are slithering, like the syllables which designate them, in Eusthenes' saliva: that is where they all have their *common locus*, like the umbrella and the sewing-machine on the operating table; startling though their propinquity may be, it is nevertheless warranted by that *and*, by that *in*, by that *on* whose solidity provides proof of the possibility of juxtaposition. It was certainly improbable that arachnids, ammonites, and annelids should one day mingle on Eusthenes' tongue, but, after all, that welcoming and voracious mouth certainly provided them with a feasible lodging, a roof under which to coexist.

The monstrous quality that runs through Borges's enumeration consists, on the contrary, in the fact that the common ground on which such meetings are possible has itself been destroyed. What is impossible is not the propinquity of the things listed, but the very site on which their propinquity would be possible. The animals '(i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush' – where could they ever meet, except in the immaterial sound of the voice pronouncing their enumeration, or on the page transcribing it? Where else could they be juxtaposed except in the non-place of language? Yet, though language can spread them before us, it can do so only in an unthinkable space. The central category of animals 'included in the present classification', with its explicit reference to paradoxes we are familiar with, is indication enough that we shall never succeed in defining a stable relation of contained to container between each of these categories and that which includes them all: if all the animals divided up here can be placed without exception in one of the divisions of this list, then aren't all the other divisions to be found in that one division too? And then again, in what space would that single, inclusive division have its existence? Absurdity destroys the *and* of the enumeration by making impossible the *in* where the things enumerated would be divided up. Borges adds no figure to the atlas of the impossible; nowhere does he strike the spark of poetic confrontation; he simply dispenses with the least obvious, but most compelling, of necessities; he does away with the *site*, the mute ground upon which it is possible for entities to be juxtaposed. A vanishing trick that is masked or, rather, laughably indicated by our alphabetical order, which is to be taken as the clue (the only visible one) to the enumerations of a Chinese encyclopaedia. . . . What has been removed, in short, is the famous 'operating table'; and rendering to Roussel[1] a small part of what is still his due, I use that word 'table' in two superimposed senses: the nickel-plated, rubbery table swathed in white, glittering beneath a glass sun

[1] Raymond Roussel, the French novelist. Cf. Michel Foucault's *Raymond Roussel* (Paris, 1963). [Translator's note.]

devouring all shadow – the table where, for an instant, perhaps forever, the umbrella encounters the sewing-machine; and also a table, a *tabula*, that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world, to put them in order, to divide them into classes, to group them according to names that designate their similarities and their differences – the table upon which, since the beginning of time, language has intersected space.

That passage from Borges kept me laughing a long time, though not without a certain uneasiness that I found hard to shake off. Perhaps because there arose in its wake the suspicion that there is a worse kind of disorder than that of the *incongruous*, the linking together of things that are inappropriate; I mean the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the *heteroclite*; and that word should be taken in its most literal, etymological sense: in such a state, things are 'laid', 'placed', 'arranged' in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all. *Utopias* afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold; they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical. *Heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'. This is why utopias permit fables and discourse: they run with the very grain of language and are part of the fundamental dimension of the *fabula*; heterotopias (such as those to be found so often in Borges) desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences.

It appears that certain aphasiacs, when shown various differently coloured skeins of wool on a table top, are consistently unable to arrange them into any coherent pattern; as though that simple rectangle were unable to serve in their case as a homogeneous and neutral space in which things could be placed so as to display at the same time the continuous order of their identities or differences as well as the semantic field of their denomination. Within this simple space in which things are normally arranged and given names, the aphasiac will create a multiplicity of tiny, fragmented regions in which nameless resemblances agglutinate things into unconnected islets; in one corner, they will place the lightest-coloured skeins, in another the red ones, somewhere else those that are softest in texture, in yet another place the longest, or those that have a tinge of purple or those that have been wound up into a ball. But no sooner have they been adumbrated than all these groupings dissolve again, for the field of identity that sustains them, however limited it may be, is still too wide not to be unstable; and so the sick mind continues to infinity, creating groups then dispersing them again, heaping up diverse similarities, destroying those that seem clearest, splitting up things that are identical, superimposing different criteria, frenziedly beginning all over again, becoming more and more disturbed, and teetering finally on the brink of anxiety.

The uneasiness that makes us laugh when we read Borges is certainly related to the profound distress of those whose language has been destroyed: loss of what is 'common' to place and name. Atopia, aphasia. Yet our text from Borges proceeds in another direction; the mythical homeland Borges assigns to that distortion of classification that prevents us from applying it, to that picture that lacks all spatial coherence, is a precise region whose name alone constitutes for the West a vast reservoir of utopias. In our dreamworld, is not China precisely this privileged *site of space*? In our traditional imagery, the Chinese culture is the most meticulous, the most rigidly ordered, the one most deaf to temporal events, most attached to the pure delineation of space; we think of it as a civilization of dikes and dams beneath the eternal face of the sky; we see it, spread and frozen, over the entire surface of a continent surrounded by walls. Even its writing does not reproduce the fugitive flight of the voice in horizontal lines; it erects the motionless and still-recognizeable images of things themselves in vertical columns. So much so that the Chinese encyclopaedia quoted by Borges, and the taxonomy it proposes, lead to a kind of thought without space, to words and categories that lack all life and place, but are rooted in a ceremonial space, overburdened with complex figures, with tangled paths, strange places, secret passages, and unexpected communications.

There would appear to be, then, at the other extremity of the earth we inhabit, a culture entirely devoted to the ordering of space, but one that does not distribute the multiplicity of existing things into any of the categories that make it possible for us to name, speak, and think.

When we establish a considered classification, when we say that a cat and a dog resemble each other less than two greyhounds do, even if both are tame or embalmed, even if both are frenzied, even if both have just broken the water pitcher, what is the ground on which we are able to establish the validity of this classification with complete certainty? On what 'table', according to what grid of identities, similitudes, analogies, have we become accustomed to sort out so many different and similar things? What is this coherence – which, as is immediately apparent, is neither determined by an *a priori* and necessary concatenation, nor imposed on us by immediately perceptible contents? For it is not a question of linking consequences, but of grouping and isolating, of analysing, of matching and pigeon-holing concrete contents; there is nothing more tentative, nothing more empirical (superficially, at least) than the process of establishing an order among things; nothing that demands a sharper eye or a surer, better-articulated language; nothing that more insistently requires that one allow oneself to be carried along by the proliferation of qualities and forms. And yet an eye not consciously prepared might well group together certain similar figures and distinguish between others on the basis of such and such a difference: in fact, there is no similitude and no distinction, even for the wholly untrained perception, that is not the result of a precise operation and of the application of a preliminary criterion. A 'system of elements' – a definition of the segments by which the resemblances and differences can be shown, the types of variation by which those segments can be affected, and, lastly, the threshold above which there is a difference and below which there is a similitude – is indispensable for the establishment of even the simplest form of order. Order is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language; and it is only in the blank spaces of this grid that order manifests itself in depth as though already there, waiting in silence for the moment of its expression.

The fundamental codes of a culture – those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices – establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home. At the other extremity of thought, there are the scientific theories or the philosophical interpretations which explain why order exists in general, what universal law it obeys, what principle can account for it, and why this particular order has been established and not some other. But between these two regions, so distant from one another, lies a domain which, even though its role is mainly an intermediary one, is nonetheless fundamental: it is more confused, more obscure, and probably less easy to analyse. It is here that a culture, imperceptibly deviating from the empirical orders prescribed for it by its primary codes, instituting an initial separation from them, causes them to lose their original transparency, relinquishes its immediate and invisible powers, frees itself sufficiently to discover that these orders are perhaps not the only possible ones or the best ones; this culture then finds itself faced with the stark fact that there exists, below the level of its spontaneous orders, things that are in themselves capable of being ordered, that belong to a certain unspoken order; the fact, in short, that order *exists*. As though emancipating itself to some extent from its linguistic, perceptual, and practical grids, the culture superimposed on them another kind of grid which neutralized them, which by this superimposition both revealed and excluded them at the same time, so that the culture, by this very process, came face to face with order in its primary state. It is on the basis of this newly perceived order that the codes of language, perception, and practice are criticized and rendered partially invalid. It is on the basis of this order, taken as a firm foundation, that general theories as to the ordering of things, and the interpretation that such an ordering involves, will be constructed. Thus, between the already 'encoded' eye and reflexive knowledge there is a middle region which liberates order itself: it is here that it appears, according to the culture and the age in question, continuous and graduated or discontinuous and piecemeal, linked to space or constituted anew at each instant by the driving force of time, related to a series of variables or defined by separate systems of coherences, composed of resemblances which are either successive or corresponding,

organized around increasing differences, etc. This middle region, then, in so far as it makes manifest the modes of being of order, can be posited as the most fundamental of all: anterior to words, perceptions, and gestures, which are then taken to be more or less exact, more or less happy, expressions of it (which is why this experience of order in its pure primary state always plays a critical role); more solid, more archaic, less dubious, always more 'true' than the theories that attempt to give those expressions explicit form, exhaustive application, or philosophical foundation. Thus, in every culture, between the use of what one might call the ordering codes and reflections upon order itself, there is the pure experience of order and of its modes of being.

The present study is an attempt to analyse that experience. I am concerned to show its developments, since the sixteenth century, in the mainstream of a culture such as ours: in what way, as one traces – against the current, as it were – language as it has been spoken, natural creatures as they have been perceived and grouped together, and exchanges as they have been practised; in what way, then, our culture has made manifest the existence of order, and how, to the modalities of that order, the exchanges owed their laws, the living beings their constants, the words their sequence and their representative value; what modalities of order have been recognized, posited, linked with space and time, in order to create the positive basis of knowledge as we find it employed in grammar and philology, in natural history and biology, in the study of wealth and political economy. Quite obviously, such an analysis does not belong to the history of ideas or of science: it is rather an inquiry whose aim is to rediscover on what basis knowledge and theory became possible; within what space of order knowledge was constituted; on the basis of what historical *a priori*, and in the element of what positivity, ideas could appear, sciences be established, experience be reflected in philosophies, rationalities be formed, only, perhaps, to dissolve and vanish soon afterwards. I am not concerned, therefore, to describe the progress of knowledge towards an objectivity in which today's science can finally be recognized; what I am attempting to bring to light is the epistemological field, the *episteme* in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility; in this account, what should appear are those configurations within the *space* of knowledge which have given rise to the diverse forms of empirical science. Such an enterprise is not so much a history, in the traditional meaning of that word, as an 'archaeology'.[1]

Now, this archaeological inquiry has revealed two great discontinuities in the *episteme* of Western culture: the first inaugurates the Classical age (roughly half-way through the seventeenth century) and the second, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, marks the beginning of the modern age. The order on the basis of which we think today does not have the same mode of being as that of the Classical thinkers. Despite the impression we may have of an almost uninterrupted development of the European *ratio* from the Renaissance to our own day, despite our possible belief that the classifications of Linnaeus, modified to a greater or lesser degree, can still lay claim to some sort of validity, that Condillac's theory of value can be recognized to some extent in nineteenth-century marginalism, that Keynes was well aware of the affinities between his own analyses and those of Cantillon, that the language of *general grammar* (as exemplified in the authors of Port-Royal or in Bauzée) is not so very far removed from our own – all this quasi-continuity on the level of ideas and themes is doubtless only a surface appearance; on the archaeological level, we see that the system of positivities was transformed in a wholesale fashion at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. Not that reason made any progress: it was simply that the mode of being of things, and of the order that divided them up before presenting them to the understanding, was profoundly altered. If the natural history of Tournefort, Linnaeus, and Buffon can be related to anything at all other than itself, it is not to biology, to Cuvier's comparative anatomy, or to Darwin's theory of evolution, but to Bauzée's general grammar, to the analysis of money and wealth as found in the works of Law, or Véron de Fortbonnais, or Turgot. Perhaps knowledge succeeds in engendering knowledge, ideas in transforming themselves and actively modifying one another (but how? – historians have not yet enlightened us on this

[1] The problems of method raised by such an 'archaeology' will be examined in a later work.

point); one thing, in any case, is certain: archaeology, addressing itself to the general space of knowledge, to its configurations, and to the mode of being of the things that appear in it, defines systems of simultaneity, as well as the series of mutations necessary and sufficient to circumscribe the threshold of a new positivity.

In this way, analysis has been able to show the coherence that existed, throughout the Classical age, between the theory of representation and the theories of language, of the natural orders, and of wealth and value. It is this configuration that, from the nineteenth century onward, changes entirely; the theory of representation disappears as the universal foundation of all possible orders; language as the spontaneous *tabula*, the primary grid of things, as an indispensable link between representation and things, is eclipsed in its turn; a profound historicity penetrates into the heart of things, isolates and defines them in their own coherence, imposes upon them the forms of order implied by the continuity of time; the analysis of exchange and money gives way to the study of production, that of the organism takes precedence over the search for taxonomic characteristics, and, above all, language loses its privileged position and becomes, in its turn, a historical form coherent with the density of its own past. But as things become increasingly reflexive, seeking the principle of their intelligibility only in their own development, and abandoning the space of representation, man enters in his turn, and for the first time, the field of Western knowledge. Strangely enough, man – the study of whom is supposed by the naïve to be the oldest investigation since Socrates – is probably no more than a kind of rift in the order of things, or, in any case, a configuration whose outlines are determined by the new position he has so recently taken up in the field of knowledge. Whence all the chimeras of the new humanisms, all the facile solutions of an 'anthropology' understood as a universal reflection on man, half-empirical, half-philosophical. It is comforting, however, and a source of profound relief to think that man is only a recent invention, a figure not yet two centuries old, a new wrinkle in our knowledge, and that he will disappear again as soon as that knowledge has discovered a new form.

It is evident that the present study is, in a sense, an echo of my undertaking to write a history of madness in the Classical age; it has the same articulations in time, taking the end of the Renaissance as its starting-point, then encountering, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, just as my history of madness did, the threshold of a modernity that we have not yet left behind. But whereas in the history of madness I was investigating the way in which a culture can determine in a massive, general form the difference that limits it, I am concerned here with observing how a culture experiences the propinquity of things, how it establishes the *tabula* of their relationships and the order by which they must be considered. I am concerned, in short, with a history of resemblance: on what conditions was Classical thought able to reflect relations of similarity or equivalence between things, relations that would provide a foundation and a justification for their words, their classifications, their systems of exchange? What historical *a priori* provided the starting-point from which it was possible to define the great checkerboard of distinct identities established against the confused, undefined, faceless, and, as it were, indifferent background of differences? The history of madness would be the history of the Other – of that which, for a given culture, is at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded (so as to exorcize the interior danger) but by being shut away (in order to reduce its otherness); whereas the history of the order imposed on things would be the history of the Same – of that which, for a given culture, is both dispersed and related, therefore to be distinguished by kinds and to be collected together into identities.

And if one considers that disease is at one and the same time disorder – the existence of a perilous otherness within the human body, at the very heart of life – and a natural phenomenon with its own constants, resemblances, and types, one can see what scope there would be for an archaeology of the medical point of view. From the limit-experience of the Other to the constituent forms of medical knowledge, and from the latter to the order of things and the conceptions of the Same, what is available to archaeological analysis is the whole of Classical knowledge, or rather the threshold that separates us from Classical thought and constitutes our modernity. It was upon this threshold that the strange figure of knowledge called man first appeared and revealed a space proper to the human sciences. In attempting to uncover the deepest strata of Western culture, I am restoring to our silent and apparently immobile soil its rifts, its instability, its flaws; and it is the same ground that is once more stirring under our feet.

Part I

Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*

For Silvina Ocampo

The visible *œuvre* left by this novelist can be easily and briefly enumerated; unpardonable, therefore, are the omissions and additions perpetrated by Mme. Henri Bachelier in a deceitful catalog that a certain newspaper, whose Protestant leanings are surely no secret, has been so inconsiderate as to inflict upon that newspaper's deplorable readers—few and Calvinist (if not Masonic and circumcised) though they be. Menard's true friends have greeted that catalog with alarm, and even with a degree of sadness. One might note that only yesterday were we gathered before his marmoreal place of rest, among the dreary cypresses, and already Error is attempting to tarnish his bright Memory. . . . Most decidedly, a brief rectification is imperative.

I am aware that it is easy enough to call my own scant authority into question. I hope, nonetheless, that I shall not be prohibited from mentioning two high testimonials. The baroness de Bacourt (at whose unforgettable *vendredis* I had the honor to meet the mourned-for poet) has been so kind as to approve the lines that follow. Likewise, the countess de Bagnoregio, one of the rarest and most cultured spirits of the principality of Monaco (now of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, following her recent marriage to the international philanthropist Simon Kautzsch—a man, it grieves me to say, vilified and slandered by the victims of his disinterested operations), has sacrificed "to truth and to death" (as she herself has phrased it) the noble reserve that is the mark of her distinction, and in an open letter, published in the magazine *Luxe*, bestows upon me her blessing. Those commendations are sufficient, I should think.

I have said that the *visible* product of Menard's pen is easily enumerated. Having examined his personal files with the greatest care, I have established that his body of work consists of the following pieces:

a) a symbolist sonnet that appeared twice (with variants) in the review *La Conque* (in the numbers for March and October, 1899);

b) a monograph on the possibility of constructing a poetic vocabulary from concepts that are neither synonyms nor periphrastic locutions for the concepts that inform common speech, "but are, rather, ideal objects created by convention essentially for the needs of poetry" (Nîmes, 1901);

c) a monograph on "certain connections or affinities" between the philosophies of Descartes, Leibniz, and John Wilkins (Nîmes, 1903);

d) a monograph on Leibniz' *Characteristica universalis* (Nîmes, 1904);

e) a technical article on the possibility of enriching the game of chess by eliminating one of the rook's pawns (Menard proposes, recommends, debates, and finally rejects this innovation);

f) a monograph on Ramon Lull's *Ars magna generalis* (Nîmes, 1906);

g) a translation, with introduction and notes, of Ruy López de Segura's *Libro de la invención liberal y arte del juego del axedrez* (Paris, 1907);

h) drafts of a monograph on George Boole's symbolic logic;

i) a study of the essential metrical rules of French prose, illustrated with examples taken from Saint-Simon (*Revue des langues romanes*, Montpellier, October 1909);

j) a reply to Luc Durtain (who had countered that no such rules existed), illustrated with examples taken from Luc Durtain (*Revue des langues romanes*, Montpellier, December 1909);

k) a manuscript translation of Quevedo's *Aguja de navegar cultos*, titled *La boussole des précieux*;

l) a foreword to the catalog of an exhibit of lithographs by Carolus Hourcade (Nîmes, 1914);

m) a work entitled *Les problèmes d'un problème* (Paris, 1917), which discusses in chronological order the solutions to the famous problem of Achilles and the tortoise (two editions of this work have so far appeared; the second bears an epigraph consisting of Leibniz' advice *"Ne craignez point, monsieur, la tortue,"* and brings up to date the chapters devoted to Russell and Descartes);

n) a dogged analysis of the "syntactical habits" of Toulet (*N.R.F.*, March 1921) (Menard, I recall, affirmed that censure and praise were sentimental operations that bore not the slightest resemblance to criticism);

o) a transposition into alexandrines of Paul Valéry's *Cimetière marin* (*N.R.F.*, January 1928);

p) a diatribe against Paul Valéry, in Jacques Reboul's *Feuilles pour la suppression de la realité* (which diatribe, I might add parenthetically, states the exact reverse of Menard's true opinion of Valéry; Valéry understood this, and the two men's friendship was never imperiled);

q) a "definition" of the countess de Bagnoregio, in the "triumphant volume" (the phrase is that of another contributor, Gabriele d'Annunzio) published each year by that lady to rectify the inevitable biases of the popular press and to present "to the world and all of Italy" a true picture of her person, which was so exposed (by reason of her beauty and her bearing) to erroneous and/or hasty interpretations;

r) a cycle of admirable sonnets dedicated to the baroness de Bacourt (1934);

s) a handwritten list of lines of poetry that owe their excellence to punctuation.[1]

This is the full extent (save for a few vague sonnets of occasion destined for Mme. Henri Bachelier's hospitable, or greedy, *album des souvenirs*) of the *visible* lifework of Pierre Menard, in proper chronological order. I shall turn now to the other, the subterranean, the interminably heroic production—the *œuvre nonpareil,* the *œuvre* that must remain—for such are our human limitations!—unfinished. This work, perhaps the most significant writing of our time, consists of the ninth and thirty-eighth chapters of Part I of *Don Quixote* and a fragment of Chapter XXII. I know that such a claim is on the face of it absurd; justifying that "absurdity" shall be the primary object of this note.[2]

Two texts, of distinctly unequal value, inspired the undertaking. One was that philological fragment by Novalis—number 2005 in the Dresden edition, to be precise—which outlines the notion of *total identification* with a given author. The other was one of those parasitic books that set Christ on a boulevard, Hamlet on La Cannabière, or don Quixote on Wall Street. Like every man of taste, Menard abominated those pointless travesties, which, Menard would say, were good for nothing but occasioning a plebeian delight in anachronism or (worse yet) captivating us with the elementary

[1]Mme. Henri Bachelier also lists a literal translation of Quevedo's literal translation of St. Francis de Sales's *Introduction à la vie dévote.* In Pierre Menard's library there is no trace of such a work. This must be an instance of one of our friend's droll jokes, misheard or misunderstood.

[2]I did, I might say, have the secondary purpose of drawing a small sketch of the figure of Pierre Menard—but how dare I compete with the gilded pages I am told the baroness de Bacourt is even now preparing, or with the delicate sharp *crayon* of Carolus Hourcade?

notion that all times and places are the same, or are different. It might be more interesting, he thought, though of contradictory and superficial execution, to attempt what Daudet had so famously suggested: conjoin in a single figure (Tartarin, say) both the Ingenious Gentleman don Quixote and his squire. . . .

Those who have insinuated that Menard devoted his life to writing a contemporary *Quixote* besmirch his illustrious memory. Pierre Menard did not want to compose *another* Quixote, which surely is easy enough—he wanted to compose *the* Quixote. Nor, surely, need one be obliged to note that his goal was never a mechanical transcription of the original; he had no intention of *copying* it. His admirable ambition was to produce a number of pages which coincided—word for word and line for line—with those of Miguel de Cervantes.

"My purpose is merely astonishing," he wrote me on September 30, 1934, from Bayonne. "The final term of a theological or metaphysical proof—the world around us, or God, or chance, or universal Forms—is no more final, no more uncommon, than my revealed novel. The sole difference is that philosophers publish pleasant volumes containing the intermediate stages of their work, while I am resolved to suppress those stages of my own." And indeed there is not a single draft to bear witness to that years-long labor.

Initially, Menard's method was to be relatively simple: Learn Spanish, return to Catholicism, fight against the Moor or Turk, forget the history of Europe from 1602 to 1918—*be* Miguel de Cervantes. Pierre Menard weighed that course (I know he pretty thoroughly mastered seventeenth-century Castilian) but he discarded it as too easy. Too impossible, rather!, the reader will say. Quite so, but the undertaking was impossible from the outset, and of all the impossible ways of bringing it about, this was the least interesting. To be a popular novelist of the seventeenth century in the twentieth seemed to Menard to be a diminution. Being, somehow, Cervantes, and arriving thereby at the Quixote—that looked to Menard less challenging (and therefore less interesting) than continuing to be Pierre Menard and coming to the Quixote *through the experiences of Pierre Menard.* (It was that conviction, by the way, that obliged him to leave out the autobiographical foreword to Part II of the novel. Including the prologue would have meant creating another character—"Cervantes"—and also presenting Quixote through that character's eyes, not Pierre Menard's. Menard, of course, spurned that easy solution.) "The task I have undertaken is not *in essence* difficult," I read at another place in that letter. "If I could just be immortal, I could do it." Shall I confess that I often imagine that he did complete it, and that I read the Quixote—the *entire* Quixote—as if Menard had conceived it? A few nights ago, as I was leafing through Chapter XXVI (never attempted by Menard), I recognized our friend's style, could almost hear his voice in this marvelous phrase: "the nymphs of the rivers, the moist and grieving Echo." That wonderfully effective linking of one adjective of emotion with another of physical description brought to my mind a line from Shakespeare, which I recall we discussed one afternoon:

> Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk . . .

Why the Quixote? my reader may ask. That choice, made by a Spaniard, would not have been incomprehensible, but it no doubt is so when made by a *Symboliste* from Nîmes, a devotee essentally of Poe—who begat Baudelaire, who begat Mallarmé, who begat Valéry, who begat M. Edmond Teste. The letter mentioned above throws some light on this point. "The *Quixote*," explains Menard,

> deeply interests me, but does not seem to me—*comment dirai-je?*—inevitable. I cannot imagine the universe without Poe's ejaculation "Ah, bear in mind this garden was enchanted!" or the *Bateau ivre* or the *Ancient Mariner*, but I know myself able to imagine it without the *Quixote*. (I am speaking, of course, of my personal ability, not of the historical resonance of those works.) The *Quixote* is a contingent work; the *Quixote* is not necessary. I can premeditate committing it to writing, as it were—I can write it—without falling into a tautology. At the age of twelve or thirteen I read it—perhaps read it cover to cover, I cannot recall. Since then, I have carefully reread certain chapters, those which, at least for the moment, I shall not attempt. I have also glanced at the interludes, the comedies, the *Galatea*, the Exemplary Novels, the undoubtedly laborious *Travails of Persiles and Sigismunda*, and the poetic *Voyage to Parnassus*. . . . My general recollection of the *Quixote*, simplified by forgetfulness and indifference, might well be the equivalent of the vague foreshadowing of a yet unwritten book. Given that image (which no one can in good conscience deny me), my problem is, without the shadow of a doubt, much more difficult than Cervantes'. My obliging predecessor did not spurn the collaboration of chance; his method of composition for the immortal book was a bit *à la diable*, and he was often swept along by the inertiæ of the language and the imagination. I have assumed the mysterious obligation to reconstruct, word for word, the novel that for him was spontaneous. This game of solitaire I play is governed by two polar rules: the first allows me to try out formal or psychological variants; the second forces me to sacrifice them to the "original" text and to come, by irrefutable arguments, to those eradications. . . . In addition to these first two artificial constraints there is another, inherent to the project. Composing the *Quixote* in the early seventeenth century was a reasonable, necessary, perhaps even inevitable undertaking; in the early twentieth, it is virtually impossible. Not for nothing have three hundred years elapsed, freighted with the most complex events. Among those events, to mention but one, is the *Quixote* itself.

In spite of those three obstacles, Menard's fragmentary Quixote is more subtle than Cervantes'. Cervantes crudely juxtaposes the humble provincial reality of his country against the fantasies of the romance, while Menard chooses as his "reality" the land of Carmen during the century that saw the Battle of Lepanto and the plays of Lope de Vega. What burlesque brushstrokes of local color that choice would have inspired in a Maurice Barrès or a Rodríguez Larreta*! Yet Menard, with perfect naturalness, avoids them. In his work, there are no gypsy goings-on or conquistadors or mystics or Philip IIs or *autos da fé*. He ignores, overlooks—or banishes—local color. That disdain posits a new meaning for the "historical novel." That disdain condemns *Salammbô*, with no possibility of appeal.

No less amazement visits one when the chapters are considered in isolation. As an example, let us look at Part I, Chapter XXXVIII, "which treats of the curious discourse that Don Quixote made on the subject of arms and letters." It is a matter of common knowledge that in that chapter, don Quixote (like Quevedo in the analogous, and later, passage in *La hora de todos*) comes down against letters and in favor of arms. Cervantes was an old soldier; from him, the verdict is understandable. But that *Pierre Menard's* don Quixote—a contemporary of *La trahison des clercs* and Bertrand Russell—should repeat those cloudy sophistries! Mme. Bachelier sees in them an admirable (typical) subordination of the author to the psychology of the hero; others (lacking all perspicacity) see them as a *transcription* of the Quixote; the baroness de Bacourt, as influenced by Nietzsche. To that third interpretation (which I consider irrefutable), I am not certain I dare to add a fourth, though it agrees very well with the almost divine modesty of Pierre Menard: his resigned or ironic habit of putting forth ideas that were the exact opposite of those he actually held. (We should recall that diatribe against Paul Valéry in the ephemeral Surrealist journal edited by Jacques Reboul.) The Cervantes text and the Menard text are verbally identical, but the second is almost infinitely richer. (More *ambiguous,* his detractors will say—but ambiguity is richness.)

It is a revelation to compare the *Don Quixote* of Pierre Menard with that of Miguel de Cervantes. Cervantes, for example, wrote the following (Part I, Chapter IX):

> . . . truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor.

This catalog of attributes, written in the seventeenth century, and written by the "ingenious layman" Miguel de Cervantes, is mere rhetorical praise of history. Menard, on the other hand, writes:

> . . . truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor.

History, the *mother* of truth!—the idea is staggering. Menard, a contemporary of William James, defines history not as a *delving into* reality but as the very *fount* of reality. Historical truth, for Menard, is not "what happened"; it is what we *believe* happened. The final phrases—*exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor*—are brazenly pragmatic.

The contrast in styles is equally striking. The archaic style of Menard—who is, in addition, not a native speaker of the language in which he writes—is somewhat affected. Not so the style of his precursor, who employs the Spanish of his time with complete naturalness.

There is no intellectual exercise that is not ultimately pointless. A philosophical doctrine is, at first, a plausible description of the universe; the years go by, and it is a mere chapter—if not a paragraph or proper noun—in the history of philosophy. In literature, that "falling by the wayside," that loss of "relevance," is even better known. The Quixote, Menard remarked, was first and foremost a pleasant book; it is now an occasion for patriotic toasts, grammatical arrogance, obscene *de luxe* editions. Fame is a form—perhaps the worst form—of incomprehension.

Those nihilistic observations were not new; what was remarkable was the decision that Pierre Menard derived from them. He resolved to anticipate the vanity that awaits all the labors of mankind; he undertook a task of infinite complexity, a task futile from the outset. He dedicated his scruples and his nights "lit by midnight oil" to repeating in a foreign tongue a book that already existed. His drafts were endless; he stubbornly corrected, and he ripped up thousands of handwritten pages. He would allow no one to see them, and took care that they not survive him.[3] In vain have I attempted to reconstruct them.

I have reflected that it is legitimate to see the "final" Quixote as a kind of palimpsest, in which the traces—faint but not undecipherable—of our friend's "previous" text must shine through. Unfortunately, only a second Pierre Menard, reversing the labors of the first, would be able to exhume and revive those Troys. . . .

"Thinking, meditating, imagining," he also wrote me, "are not anomalous acts—they are the normal respiration of the intelligence. To glorify the occasional exercise of that function, to treasure beyond price ancient and foreign thoughts, to recall with incredulous awe what some *doctor universalis* thought, is to confess our own languor, or our own *barbarie.* Every man should be capable of all ideas, and I believe that in the future he shall be."

Menard has (perhaps unwittingly) enriched the slow and rudimentary art of reading by means of a new technique—the technique of deliberate anachronism and fallacious attribution. That technique, requiring infinite patience and concentration, encourages us to read the *Odyssey* as though it came after the *Æneid,* to read Mme. Henri Bachelier's *Le jardin du Centaure* as though it were written by Mme. Henri Bachelier. This technique fills the calmest books with adventure. Attributing the *Imitatio Christi* to Louis Ferdinand Céline or James Joyce—is that not sufficient renovation of those faint spiritual admonitions?

Nîmes, 1939

[3]I recall his square-ruled notebooks, his black crossings-out, his peculiar typographical symbols, and his insect-like handwriting. In the evening, he liked to go out for walks on the outskirts of Nîmes; he would often carry along a notebook and make a cheery bonfire.

Third Reading

Immanuel Kant, excerpt from *The Critique of Judgment* (1790)

IMMANUEL KANT, CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT
(Hafner Press, 1951)

Originally published in 1790.

FIRST DIVISION

Analytic of the Aesthetical Judgment

FIRST BOOK

ANALYTIC OF THE BEAUTIFUL

FIRST MOMENT

OF THE JUDGMENT OF TASTE,[1] ACCORDING TO QUALITY

§ 1. THE JUDGMENT OF TASTE IS AESTHETICAL

In order to distinguish whether anything is beautiful or not, we refer the representation, not by the understanding to the object for cognition, but by the imagination (perhaps in conjunction with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or pain. The judgment of taste is therefore not a judgment of cognition, and is consequently not logical but aesthetical, by which we understand that whose determining ground can be *no other than subjective*. Every reference of representations, even that of sensations, may be objective (and then it signifies the real [element] of an empirical representation),

[1] The definition of "taste" which is laid down here is that it is the faculty of judging of the beautiful. But the analysis of judgments of taste must show what is required in order to call an object beautiful. The moments to which this judgment has regard in its reflection I have sought in accordance with the guidance of the logical functions of judgment (for in a judgment of taste a reference to the understanding is always involved). I have considered the moment of quality first because the aesthetical judgment upon the beautiful first pays attention to it.

save only the reference to the feeling of pleasure and pain, by which nothing in the object is signified, but through which there is a feeling in the subject as it is affected by the representation.

To apprehend a regular, purposive building by means of one's cognitive faculty (whether in a clear or a confused way of representation) is something quite different from being conscious of this representation as connected with the sensation of satisfaction. Here the representation is altogether referred to the subject and to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or pain. This establishes a quite separate faculty of distinction and of judgment, adding nothing to cognition, but only comparing the given representation in the subject with the whole faculty of representations, of which the mind is conscious in the feeling of its state. Given representations in a judgment can be empirical (consequently, aesthetical); but the judgment which is formed by means of them is logical, provided they are referred in the judgment to the object. Conversely, if the given representations are rational, but are referred in a judgment simply to the subject (to its feeling), the judgment is so far always aesthetical.

§ 2. THE SATISFACTION WHICH DETERMINES THE JUDGMENT OF TASTE IS DISINTERESTED

The satisfaction which we combine with the representation of the existence of an object is called "interest." Such satisfaction always has reference to the faculty of desire, either as its determining ground or as necessarily connected with its determining ground. Now when the question is if a thing is beautiful, we do not want to know whether anything depends or can depend on the existence of the thing, either for myself or for anyone else, but how we judge it by mere observation (intuition or reflection). If anyone asks me if I find that palace beautiful which I see before me, I may answer: I do not like things of that kind which are made merely to be stared at. Or I can answer like that Iroquois Sachem, who was pleased in Paris by nothing more than by the cook shops. Or again, after the manner of

Rousseau, I may rebuke the vanity of the great who waste the sweat of the people on such superfluous things. In fine, I could easily convince myself that if I found myself on an uninhabited island without the hope of ever again coming among men, and could conjure up just such a splendid building by my mere wish, I should not even give myself the trouble if I had a sufficiently comfortable hut. This may all be admitted and approved, but we are not now talking of this. We wish only to know if this mere representation of the object is accompanied in me with satisfaction, however indifferent I may be as regards the existence of the object of this representation. We easily see that, in saying it is *beautiful* and in showing that I have taste, I am concerned, not with that in which I depend on the existence of the object, but with that which I make out of this representation in myself. Everyone must admit that a judgment about beauty, in which the least interest mingles, is very partial and is not a pure judgment of taste. We must not be in the least prejudiced in favor of the existence of the things, but be quite indifferent in this respect, in order to play the judge in things of taste.

We cannot, however, better elucidate this proposition, which is of capital importance, than by contrasting the pure disinterested[2] satisfaction in judgments of taste with that which is bound up with an interest, especially if we can at the same time be certain that there are no other kinds of interest than those which are to be now specified.

§ 3. THE SATISFACTION IN THE PLEASANT IS BOUND UP WITH INTEREST

That which pleases the senses in sensation is "pleasant." Here the opportunity presents itself of censuring a very common confusion of the double sense which the word "sensation" can have, and of calling attention to it. All satisfaction (it is said or

[2] A judgment upon an object of satisfaction may be quite *disinterested*, but yet very *interesting*, i.e. not based upon an interest, but bringing an interest with it; of this kind are all pure moral judgments. Judgments of taste, however, do not in themselves establish any interest. Only in society is it *interesting* to have taste; the reason of this will be shown in the sequel.

thought) is itself sensation (of a pleasure). Consequently everything that pleases is pleasant because it pleases (and according to its different degrees or its relations to other pleasant sensations it is *agreeable*, *lovely*, *delightful*, *enjoyable*, etc.) But if this be admitted, then impressions of sense which determine the inclination, fundamental propositions of reason which determine the will, mere reflective forms of intuition which determine the judgment, are quite the same as regards the effect upon the feeling of pleasure. For this would be pleasantness in the sensation of one's state; and since in the end all the operations of our faculties must issue in the practical and unite in it as their goal, we could suppose no other way of estimating things and their worth than that which consists in the gratification that they promise. It is of no consequence at all how this is attained, and since then the choice of means alone could make a difference, men could indeed blame one another for stupidity and indiscretion, but never for baseness and wickedness. For thus they all, each according to his own way of seeing things, seek one goal, that is, gratification.

If a determination of the feeling of pleasure or pain is called sensation, this expression signifies something quite different from what I mean when I call the representation of a thing (by sense, as a receptivity belonging to the cognitive faculty) sensation. For in the latter case the representation is referred to the object, in the former simply to the subject, and is available for no cognition whatever, not even for that by which the subject *cognizes* itself.

In the above elucidation we understand by the word "sensation" an objective representation of sense; and, in order to avoid misinterpretation, we shall call that which must always remain merely subjective and can constitute absolutely no representation of an object by the ordinary term "feeling." The green color of the meadows belongs to *objective* sensation, as a perception of an object of sense; the pleasantness of this belongs to *subjective* sensation by which no object is represented, i.e. to feeling, by which the object is considered as an object of satisfaction (which does not furnish a cognition of it).

Now that a judgment about an object by which I describe it as pleasant expresses an interest in it, is plain from the fact that by sensation it excites a desire for objects of that kind; consequently the satisfaction presupposes, not the mere judgment about it, but the relation of its existence to my state, so far as this is affected by such an object. Hence we do not merely say of the pleasant, *it pleases*, but, *it gratifies*. I give to it no mere assent, but inclination is aroused by it; and in the case of what is pleasant in the most lively fashion there is no judgment at all upon the character of the object, for those [persons] who always lay themselves out for enjoyment (for that is the word describing intense gratification) would fain dispense with all judgment.

§ 4. THE SATISFACTION IN THE GOOD IS BOUND UP WITH INTEREST

Whatever by means of reason pleases through the mere concept is *good*. That which pleases only as a means we call *good for something* (the useful), but that which pleases for itself is *good in itself*. In both there is always involved the concept of a purpose, and consequently the relation of reason to the (at least possible) volition, and thus a satisfaction in the *presence* of an object or an action, i.e. some kind of interest.

In order to find anything good, I must always know what sort of a thing the object ought to be, i.e. I must have a concept of it. But there is no need of this to find a thing beautiful. Flowers, free delineations, outlines intertwined with one another without design and called [conventional] foliage, have no meaning, depend on no definite concept, and yet they please. The satisfaction in the beautiful must depend on the reflection upon an object, leading to any concept (however indefinite), and it is thus distinguished from the pleasant, which rests entirely upon sensation.

It is true, the pleasant seems in many cases to be the same as the good. Thus people are accustomed to say that all gratification (especially if it lasts) is good in itself, which is very much the same as to say that lasting pleasure and the good are the same. But we can soon see that this is merely a confusion of words, for the concepts which properly belong to these expressions can in no way be interchanged. The pleasant, which, as such, represents the object simply in relation to sense, must first be brought by the concept of a purpose under principles of reason, in order to call it good, as an object of the will. But that there is [involved] a quite different relation to satisfaction in calling that which gratifies at the same time *good* may be seen from the fact that, in the case of the good, the question always is whether it is mediately or immediately good (useful or good in itself); but on the contrary in the case of the pleasant, there can be no question about this at all, for the word always signifies something which pleases immediately. (The same is applicable to what I call beautiful.)

Even in common speech men distinguish the pleasant from the good. Of a dish which stimulates the taste by spices and other condiments we say unhesitatingly that it is pleasant, though it is at the same time admitted not to be good; for though it immediately *delights* the senses, yet mediately, i.e. considered by reason which looks to the after results, it displeases. Even in the judging of health we may notice this distinction. It is immediately pleasant to everyone possessing it (at least negatively, i.e. as the absence of all bodily pains). But in order to say that it is good, it must be considered by reason with reference to purposes, viz. that it is a state which makes us fit for all our business. Finally, in respect of happiness, everyone believes himself entitled to describe the greatest sum of the pleasantness of life (as regards both their number and their duration) as a true, even as the highest, good. However, reason is opposed to this. Pleasantness is enjoyment. And if we were concerned with this alone, it would be foolish to be scrupulous as regards the means which procure it for us, or [to care] whether it is obtained passively by the bounty of nature or by our own activity and work. But reason can never be persuaded that the existence of a man who merely lives for *enjoyment* (however busy he may be in this point of view) has a

worth in itself, even if he at the same time is conducive as a means to the best enjoyment of others and shares in all their gratifications by sympathy. Only what he does, without reference to enjoyment, in full freedom and independently of what nature can procure for him passively, gives an [absolute][3] worth to his presence [in the world] as the existence of a person; and happiness, with the whole abundance of its pleasures, is far from being an unconditioned good.[4]

However, notwithstanding all this difference between the pleasant and the good, they both agree in this that they are always bound up with an interest in their object; so are not only the pleasant (§ 3), and the mediate good (the useful) which is pleasing as a means toward pleasantness somewhere, but also that which is good absolutely and in every aspect, viz. moral good, which brings with it the highest interest. For the good is the object of will (i.e. of a faculty of desire determined by reason). But to wish for something and to have a satisfaction in its existence, i.e. to take an interest in it, are identical.

§ 5. COMPARISON OF THE THREE SPECIFICALLY DIFFERENT KINDS OF SATISFACTION

The pleasant and the good have both a reference to the faculty of desire, and they bring with them, the former a satisfaction pathologically conditioned (by impulses, *stimuli*), the latter a pure practical satisfaction which is determined not merely by the representation of the object but also by the represented connection of the subject with the existence of the object. [It is not merely the object that pleases, but also its existence.][5] On the other hand, the judgment of taste is merely *contemplative*; i.e., it is a judgment which, indifferent as regards the existence of an

[3] [Second edition.]

[4] An obligation to enjoyment is a manifest absurdity. Thus the obligation to all actions which have merely enjoyment for their aim can only be a pretended one, however spiritually it may be conceived (or decked out), even if it is a mystical, or so-called heavenly, enjoyment.

[5] [Second edition.]

object, compares its character with the feeling of pleasure and pain. But this contemplation itself is not directed to concepts; for the judgment of taste is not a cognitive judgment (either theoretical or practical), and thus is not *based* on concepts, nor has it concepts as its *purpose*.

The pleasant, the beautiful, and the good designate then three different relations of representations to the feeling of pleasure and pain, in reference to which we distinguish from one another objects or methods of representing them. And the expressions corresponding to each, by which we mark our complacency in them, are not the same. That which *gratifies* a man is called *pleasant*; that which merely *pleases* him is *beautiful*; that which is *esteemed* [or *approved*][6] by him, i.e. that to which he accords an objective worth, is *good*. Pleasantness concerns irrational animals also, but beauty only concerns men, i.e. animal, but still rational, beings—not merely *quâ* rational (e.g. spirits), but *quâ* animal also—and the good concerns every rational being in general. This is a proposition which can only be completely established and explained in the sequel. We may say that, of all these three kinds of satisfaction, that of taste in the beautiful is alone a disinterested and *free* satisfaction; for no interest, either of sense or of reason, here forces our assent. Hence we may say of satisfaction that it is related in the three aforesaid cases to *inclination*, to *favor*, or to *respect*. Now *favor* is the only free satisfaction. An object of inclination and one that is proposed to our desire by a law of reason leave us no freedom in forming for ourselves anywhere an object of pleasure. All interest presupposes or generates a want, and, as the determining ground of assent, it leaves the judgment about the object no longer free.

As regards the interest of inclination in the case of the pleasant, everyone says that hunger is the best sauce, and everything that is eatable is relished by people with a healthy appetite; and thus a satisfaction of this sort shows no choice directed by taste. It is only when the want is appeased that we can distinguish which of many men has or has not taste. In the same way

[6] [Second edition.]

there may be manners (conduct) without virtue, politeness without good will, decorum without modesty, etc. For where the moral law speaks there is no longer, objectively, a free choice as regards what is to be done; and to display taste in its fulfillment (or in judging of another's fulfillment of it) is something quite different from manifesting the moral attitude of thought. For this involves a command and generates a want, while moral taste only plays with the objects of satisfaction, without attaching itself to one of them.

Explanation of the Beautiful Resulting from the First Moment

Taste is the faculty of judging of an object or a method of representing it by an *entirely disinterested* satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The object of such satisfaction is called *beautiful*.[7]

SECOND MOMENT

OF THE JUDGMENT OF TASTE, ACCORDING TO QUANTITY

§ 6. THE BEAUTIFUL IS THAT WHICH APART FROM CONCEPTS IS REPRESENTED AS THE OBJECT OF A UNIVERSAL SATISFACTION

This explanation of the beautiful can be derived from the preceding explanation of it as the object of an entirely disinterested satisfaction. For the fact of which everyone is conscious,

[7] [Ueberweg points out (*History of Philosophy, II*, 528, English translation) that Mendelssohn had already called attention to the disinterestedness of our satisfaction in the beautiful. "It appears," says Mendelssohn, "to be a particular mark of the beautiful, that it is contemplated with quiet satisfaction, that it pleases, even though it be not in our possession, and even though we be never so far removed from the desire to put it to our use." But, of course, as Ueberweg remarks, Kant's conception of disinterestedness extends far beyond the idea of merely not desiring to possess the object.]

that the satisfaction is for him quite disinterested, implies in his judgment a ground of satisfaction for all men. For since it does not rest on any inclination of the subject (nor upon any other premeditated interest), but since the person who judges feels himself quite *free* as regards the satisfaction which he attaches to the object, he cannot find the ground of this satisfaction in any private conditions connected with his own subject, and hence it must be regarded as grounded on what he can presuppose in every other person. Consequently he must believe that he has reason for attributing a similar satisfaction to everyone. He will therefore speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a characteristic of the object and the judgment logical (constituting a cognition of the object by means of concepts of it), although it is only aesthetical and involves merely a reference of the representation of the object to the subject. For it has this similarity to a logical judgment that we can presuppose its validity for all men. But this universality cannot arise from concepts; for from concepts there is no transition to the feeling of pleasure or pain (except in pure practical laws, which bring an interest with them such as is not bound up with the pure judgment of taste). Consequently the judgment of taste, accompanied with the consciousness of separation from all interest, must claim validity for every man, without this universality depending on objects. That is, there must be bound up with it a title to subjective universality.

§ 7. COMPARISON OF THE BEAUTIFUL WITH THE PLEASANT AND THE GOOD BY MEANS OF THE ABOVE CHARACTERISTIC

As regards the pleasant, everyone is content that his judgment, which he bases upon private feeling and by which he says of an object that it pleases him, should be limited merely to his own person. Thus he is quite contented that if he says, "Canary wine is pleasant," another man may correct his expression and remind him that he ought to say, "It is pleasant *to me*." And this is the case not only as regards the taste of the tongue, the palate, and the throat, but for whatever is pleasant

to anyone's eyes and ears. To one, violet color is soft and lovely; to another, it is washed out and dead. One man likes the tone of wind instruments, another that of strings. To strive here with the design of reproving as incorrect another man's judgment which is different from our own, as if the judgments were logically opposed, would be folly. As regards the pleasant, therefore, the fundamental proposition is valid: *everyone has his own taste* (the taste of sense).

The case is quite different with the beautiful. It would (on the contrary) be laughable if a man who imagined anything to his own taste thought to justify himself by saying: "This object (the house we see, the coat that person wears, the concert we hear, the poem submitted to our judgment) is beautiful *for me*." For he must not call it *beautiful* if it merely pleases him. Many things may have for him charm and pleasantness—no one troubles himself at that—but if he gives out anything as beautiful, he supposes in others the same satisfaction; he judges not merely for himself, but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things. Hence he says "the *thing* is beautiful"; and he does not count on the agreement of others with this his judgment of satisfaction, because he has found this agreement several times before, but he *demands* it of them. He blames them if they judge otherwise and he denies them taste, which he nevertheless requires from them. Here, then, we cannot say that each man has his own particular taste. For this would be as much as to say that there is no taste whatever, i.e. no aesthetical judgment which can make a rightful claim upon everyone's assent.

At the same time we find as regards the pleasant that there is an agreement among men in their judgments upon it in regard to which we deny taste to some and attribute it to others, by this not meaning one of our organic senses, but a faculty of judging in respect of the pleasant generally. Thus we say of a man who knows how to entertain his guests with pleasures (of enjoyment for all the senses), so that they are all pleased, "he has taste." But here the universality is only taken comparatively; and there emerge rules which are only *general* (like all empirical ones), and not *universal*, which latter the judgment of taste upon the beautiful undertakes or lays claim to. It is a judgment in reference to sociability, so far as this rests on empirical rules. In respect of the good it is true that judgments make rightful claim to validity for everyone; but the good is represented only *by means of a concept* as the object of a universal satisfaction, which is the case neither with the pleasant nor with the beautiful.

§ 8. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE SATISFACTION IS REPRESENTED IN A JUDGMENT OF TASTE ONLY AS SUBJECTIVE

This particular determination of the universality of an aesthetical judgment, which is to be met with in a judgment of taste, is noteworthy, not indeed for the logician, but for the transcendental philosopher. It requires no small trouble to discover its origin, but we thus detect a property of our cognitive faculty which without this analysis would remain unknown.

First, we must be fully convinced of the fact that in a judgment of taste (about the beautiful) the satisfaction in the object is imputed to *everyone*, without being based on a concept (for then it would be the good). Further, this claim to universal validity so essentially belongs to a judgment by which we describe anything as *beautiful* that, if this were not thought in it, it would never come into our thoughts to use the expression at all, but everything which pleases without a concept would be counted as pleasant. In respect of the latter, everyone has his own opinion; and no one assumes in another agreement with his judgment of taste, which is always the case in a judgment of taste about beauty. I may call the first the taste of sense, the second the taste of reflection, so far as the first lays down mere private judgments and the second judgments supposed to be generally valid (public), but in both cases aesthetical (not practical) judgments about an object merely in respect of the relation of its representation to the feeling of pleasure and pain. Now here is something strange. As regards the taste of sense, not only does experience show that its judgment (of pleasure or pain connected with anything) is not valid universally, but everyone is content not to impute agreement with it to others (although actually there is often found a very extended concurrence in these judgments). On the other hand, the taste of reflection has its claim to the universal validity of its judgments (about the beautiful) rejected often enough, as experience teaches, although it may find it possible (as it actually does) to represent judgments which can demand this universal agreement. In fact it imputes this to everyone for each of its judgments of taste, without the persons that judge disputing as to the possibility of such a claim, although in particular cases they cannot agree as to the correct application of this faculty.

Here we must, in the first place, remark that a universality which does not rest on concepts of objects (not even on empirical ones) is not logical but aesthetical; i.e. it involves no objective quantity of the judgment, but only that which is subjective. For this I use the expression *general validity*, which signifies the validity of the reference of a representation, not to the cognitive faculty, but to the feeling of pleasure and pain for every subject. (We can avail ourselves also of the same expression for the logical quantity of the judgment, if only we prefix "objective" to "universal validity," to distinguish it from that which is merely subjective and aesthetical.)

A judgment with *objective universal validity* is also always valid subjectively; i.e. if the judgment holds for everything contained under a given concept, it holds also for everyone who represents an object by means of this concept. But from a *subjective universal validity*, i.e. aesthetical and resting on no concept, we cannot infer that which is logical because that kind of judgment does not extend to the object. But, therefore, the aesthetical universality which is ascribed to a judgment must be of a particular kind, because it does not unite the predicate of beauty with the concept of the object, considered in its whole logical sphere, and yet extends it to the whole sphere of judging persons.

In respect of logical quantity, all judgments of taste are *singular* judgments. For because I must refer the object immediately to my feeling of pleasure and pain, and that not by means of concepts, they cannot have the quantity of objective generally valid judgments. Nevertheless, if the singular representation of the object of the judgment of taste, in accordance with the conditions determining the latter, were transformed by comparison into a concept, a logically universal judgment could result therefrom. E.g., I describe by a judgment of taste the rose that I see as beautiful. But the judgment which results from the comparison of several singular judgments, "Roses in general are beautiful," is no longer described simply as aesthetical, but as a logical judgment based on an aesthetical one. Again the judgment, "The rose is pleasant" (to use) is, although aesthetical and singular, not a judgment of taste but of sense. It is distinguished from the former by the fact that the judgment of taste carries with it an *aesthetic quantity* of universality, i.e. of validity for everyone, which cannot be found in a judgment about the pleasant. It is only judgments about the good which, although they also determine satisfaction in an object, have logical and not merely aesthetical universality, for they are valid of the object as cognitive of it, and thus are valid for everyone.

If we judge objects merely according to concepts, then all representation of beauty is lost. Thus there can be no rule according to which anyone is to be forced to recognize anything as beautiful. We cannot press [upon others] by the aid of any reasons or fundamental propositions our judgment that a coat, a house, or a flower is beautiful. People wish to submit the object to their own eyes, as if the satisfaction in it depended on sensation; and yet, if we then call the object beautiful, we believe that we speak with a universal voice, and we claim the assent of everyone, although on the contrary all private sensation can only decide for the observer himself and his satisfaction.

We may see now that in the judgment of taste nothing is postulated but such a *universal voice*, in respect of the satisfaction without the intervention of concepts, and thus the *possibility* of an aesthetical judgment that can, at the same time, be regarded as valid for everyone. The judgment of taste itself does not *postulate* the agreement of everyone (for that can only be done

by a logically universal judgment because it can adduce reasons); it only *imputes* this agreement to everyone, as a case of the rule in respect of which it expects, not confirmation by concepts, but assent from others. The universal voice is, therefore, only an idea (we do not yet inquire upon what it rests). It may be uncertain whether or not the man who believes that he is laying down a judgment of taste is, as a matter of fact, judging in conformity with that idea; but that he refers his judgment thereto, and consequently that it is intended to be a judgment of taste, he announces by the expression "beauty." He can be quite certain of this for himself by the mere consciousness of the separating off everything belonging to the pleasant and the good from the satisfaction which is left; and this is all for which he promises himself the agreement of everyone—a claim which would be justifiable under these conditions, provided only he did not often make mistakes, and thus lay down an erroneous judgment of taste.

§ 9. INVESTIGATION OF THE QUESTION WHETHER IN THE JUDGMENT OF TASTE THE FEELING OF PLEASURE PRECEDES OR FOLLOWS THE JUDGING OF THE OBJECT

The solution of this question is the key to the critique of taste, and so is worthy of all attention.

If the pleasure in the given object precedes, and it is only its universal communicability that is to be acknowledged in the judgment of taste about the representation of the object, there would be a contradiction. For such pleasure would be nothing different from the mere pleasantness in the sensation, and so in accordance with its nature could have only private validity, because it is immediately dependent on the representation through which the object *is given*.

Hence it is the universal capability of communication of the mental state in the given representation which, as the subjective condition of the judgment of taste, must be fundamental and must have the pleasure in the object as its consequent. But nothing can be universally communicated except cognition and representation, so far as it belongs to cognition. For it is only thus that this latter can be objective, and only through this has it a universal point of reference, with which the representative power of everyone is compelled to harmonize. If the determining ground of our judgment as to this universal communicability of the representation is to be merely subjective, i.e. is conceived independently of any concept of the object, it can be nothing else than the state of mind, which is to be met with in the relation of our representative powers to each other, so far as they refer a given representation to *cognition in general*.

The cognitive powers, which are involved by this representation, are here in free play, because no definite concept limits them to a definite[8] rule of cognition. Hence the state of mind in this representation must be a feeling of the free play of the representative powers in a given representation with reference to a cognition in general. Now a representation by which an object is given that is to become a cognition in general requires *imagination* for the gathering together the manifold of intuition, and *understanding* for the unity of the concept uniting the representations. This state of *free play* of the cognitive faculties in a representation by which an object is given must be universally communicable, because cognition, as the determination of the object with which given representations (in whatever subject) are to agree, is the only kind of representation which is valid for everyone.

The subjective universal communicability of the mode of representation in a judgment of taste, since it is to be possible without presupposing a definite concept, can refer to nothing else than the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding (so far as they agree with each other, as is requisite for *cognition in general*). We are conscious that this subjective relation, suitable for cognition in general, must be valid for everyone, and thus must be universally communicable, just as if it were a definite cognition, resting always on that relation as its subjective condition.

This merely subjective (aesthetical) judging of the object, or of the representation by which it is given, precedes the pleasure

[8] [First edition has "particular."]

in the same and is the ground of this pleasure in the harmony of the cognitive faculties; but on that universality of the subjective conditions for judging of objects is alone based the universal subjective validity of the satisfaction bound up by us with the representation of the object that we call beautiful.

That the power of communicating one's state of mind, even though only in respect of the cognitive faculties, carries a pleasure with it, this we can easily show from the natural propension of man toward sociability (empirical and psychological). But this is not enough for our design. The pleasure that we feel is, in a judgment of taste, necessarily imputed by us to everyone else, as if, when we call a thing beautiful, it is to be regarded as a characteristic of the object which is determined in it according to concepts, though beauty, without a reference to the feeling of the subject, is nothing by itself. But we must reserve the examination of this question until we have answered that other —if and how aesthetical judgments are possible *a priori*.

We now occupy ourselves with the easier question, in what way we are conscious of a mutual subjective harmony of the cognitive powers with one another in the judgment of taste—is it aesthetically by mere internal sense and sensation, or is it intellectually by the consciousness of our designed activity, by which we bring them into play?

If the given representation which occasions the judgment of taste were a concept uniting understanding and imagination in the judging of the object, into a cognition of the object, the consciousness of this relation would be intellectual (as in the objective schematism of the judgment of which the *Critique*[9] treats). But then the judgment would not be laid down in reference to pleasure and pain, and consequently would not be a judgment of taste. But the judgment of taste, independently of concepts, determines the object in respect of satisfaction and of the predicate of beauty. Therefore that subjective unity of relation can only make itself known by means of sensation. The excitement of both faculties (imagination and understanding) to indeterminate but yet, through the stimulus of the given sen-

[9] [*The Critique of Pure Reason*, "Analytic," Bk. II, Ch. 1.]

sation, harmonious activity, viz. that which belongs to cognition in general, is the sensation whose universal communicability is postulated by the judgment of taste. An objective relation can only be thought, but yet, so far as it is subjective according to its conditions, can be felt in its effect on the mind; and, of a relation based on no concept (like the relation of the representative powers to a cognitive faculty in general), no other consciousness is possible than that through the sensation of the effect, which consists in the more lively play of both mental powers (the imagination and the understanding) when animated by mutual agreement. A representation which, as individual and apart from comparison with others, yet has an agreement with the conditions of universality which it is the business of the understanding to supply, brings the cognitive faculties into that proportionate accord which we require for all cognition, and so regard as holding for everyone who is determined to judge by means of understanding and sense in combination (i.e. for every man).

Explanation of the Beautiful Resulting from the Second Moment

The *beautiful* is that which pleases universally without [requiring] a concept.

THIRD MOMENT

OF JUDGMENTS OF TASTE, ACCORDING TO THE RELATION OF THE PURPOSES WHICH ARE BROUGHT INTO CONSIDERATION IN THEM

§ 10. OF PURPOSIVENESS IN GENERAL

If we wish to explain what a purpose is according to its transcendental determinations (without presupposing anything em-

pirical like the feeling of pleasure), [we say that] the purpose is the object of a concept, in so far as the concept is regarded as the cause of the object (the real ground of its possibility); and the causality of a *concept* in respect of its *object* is its purposiveness (*forma finalis*). Where then not merely the cognition of an object but the object itself (its form and existence) is thought as an effect only possible by means of the concept of this latter, there we think a purpose. The representation of the effect is here the determining ground of its cause and precedes it. The consciousness of the causality of a representation, for *maintaining* the subject in the same state, may here generally denote what we call pleasure; while on the other hand pain is that representation which contains the ground of the determination of the state of representations into their opposite [of restraining or removing them].[10]

The faculty of desire, so far as it is determinable to act only through concepts, i.e. in conformity with the representation of a purpose, would be the will. But an object, or a state of mind, or even an action is called purposive, although its possibility does not necessarily presuppose the representation of a purpose, merely because its possibility can be explained and conceived by us only so far as we assume for its ground a causality according to purposes, i.e. in accordance with a will which has regulated it according to the representation of a certain rule. There can be, then, purposiveness without[11] purpose, so far as we do not place the causes of this form in a will, but yet can only make the explanation of its possibility intelligible to ourselves by deriving it from a will. Again, we are not always forced to regard what we observe (in respect of its possibility) from the point of view of reason. Thus we can at least observe a purposiveness accord-

[10] [Second edition. Mr. Herbert Spencer expresses much more concisely what Kant has in his mind here. "Pleasure . . . is a feeling which we seek to bring into consciousness and retain there; pain is . . . a feeling which we seek to get out of consciousness and to keep out." *Principles of Psychology*, § 125.]

[11] [The editions of Hartenstein and Kirchmann omit "*ohne*" before "*Zweck*," which makes havoc of the sentence. It is correctly printed by Rosenkranz.]

Fourth Reading

Jacques Derrida, excerpt from “Parergon,” *The Truth In Painting* (1978)

II. The Parergon

economize on the abyss: not only save oneself from falling into the bottomless depths by weaving and folding back the cloth to infinity, textual art of the reprise, multiplication of patches within patches, but also establish the laws of reappropriation, formalize the rules which constrain the logic of the abyss and which shuttle between the economic *and* the aneconomic, the raising [*la relève*][3] *and* the fall, the abyssal operation which can only work toward the *relève and* that in it which regularly reproduces collapse

what then is the object of the third *Critique*? The critique of pure theoretical reason assumes the exclusion (*Ausschliessung*) of all that is not theoretical knowledge: the affect (*Gefühl*) in its two principal values (pleasure/unpleasure) and the power to desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*). It cuts out its field only by cutting itself off from the interests of desire, by losing interest in desire. From the moment that understanding alone can give constitutive prin-

3. *Relève*, from the verb *relever* (to stand up again, to raise, to relieve), is also Derrida's translation of Hegel's *Aufhebung*.

ciples to knowledge, the exclusion bears simultaneously on reason which transgresses the limits of possible knowledge of nature. Now the *a priori* principles of reason, although regulative with regard to the faculty of knowing, are constitutive with regard to the faculty of desiring. The critique of pure theoretical reason thus excludes both reason *and* desire, desire's reason and reason's desire, the desire for reason.

What is it about, at bottom? The bottom.

The understanding and reason are not two disconnected faculties; they are articulated in a certain task and a certain number of operations which involve, precisely, articulation, i.e., discourse. For between the two faculties, an articulated member, a third faculty comes into play. This intermediary member which Kant names precisely *Mittelglied,* middle articulation, is judgment (*Urteil*). But what will be the nature of the *a priori* principles of the middle articulation? Will they be constitutive or regulative? Do they give *a priori* rules to pleasure and unpleasure? What is at stake in this question can be measured by the fact that regulative principles would not allow the demarcation of a *proper domain* (*eigenes Gebiet*).

Since the *Mittelglied* also forms the articulation of the theoretical and the practical (in the Kantian sense), we are plunging into a place that is *neither* theoretical *nor* practical or else *both* theoretical *and* practical. Art (in general), or rather the beautiful, if it takes place, is inscribed here. But this *here,* this place is announced as a place deprived of place. It runs the risk, in taking place, of not having its own proper domain. But this does not deprive it, for all that, of jurisdiction and foundation: what has no domain (*Gebiet*) or field (*Feld*) of its own, no "field of objects" defining its "domain," can have a "territory" and a "ground" (*Boden*) possessing a "proper legality" (*Introduction,* III).

The *Mittelglied,* intermediary member, must in effect be treated as a separable part, a particular part (*als ein besonderer Theil*). But also as a nonparticular, nondetachable part, since it forms the articulation between two others; one can even say, anticipating Hegel, an originary part (*Ur-teil*). It is indeed a question of judgment. The same paragraph recalls that a critique of pure reason, i.e., of our faculty of judging according to *a priori* principles, would be "incomplete" (*unvollständig*) if a theory of judgment, of the *Mittelglied,* did not form a "particular part" of it. But immediately after, in the following sentence, that in a pure philosophy the principles of judgment would not form a *detached* part, between the theoretical part and the practical part, but could be *attached, annexed* (*angeschlossen*) to each of the two. Kant thus seems to mean two contradictory things at the same time: that it is necessary to disengage the middle member as a detachable part, operate the partition of the part, but also that it is necessary to re-member the whole by re-forming the nexus, the connection, the reannexation of the part to the two major columns of the corpus. Let us not forget that it is here a question of judgment (*Urteil*), of the function of the copula: does it play a separable role, its own part, or does it work in the orchestra of reason, in the concert of the practical and the theoretical?

Let us look more closely at this paragraph in the preface to the third *Critique*. It does not involve any contradiction. The separation of the part is not prescribed and forbidden from the same point of view. Within a critique of pure reason, of our faculty of judging according to *a priori* principles, the part must be detached and examined separately. But in a pure philosophy, in a "system of pure philosophy," everything must be sewn back together. The critique detaches because it is itself only a moment and a part of the system. It is in the critique that, precisely, the critical suspension is produced, the *krinein*, the in-between, the question of knowing whether the theory of judgment is theoretical *or* practical, and whether it is then referred to a regulatory *or* constitutive instance. But the system of pure philosophy *will have had to* include the critical within itself, and construct a general discourse which will get the better of the detachable and account for it. This system of pure philosophy is what Kant calls *metaphysics*. It is not yet possible. Only the critique can have a program that is currently possible.

The question of desire, of pleasure and of unpleasure is thus also the question of a *detachment* (neither the word nor the concept appears *as such* in the *Critique*) which will itself be specified, dismembered or re-membered: *detachment*—separation of a member—, *detachment*—delegation of a representative, sign or symbol on assignment (the beautiful as *symbol* of morality, problems of the hypotyposis, of the trace (*Spur*), of "cipher-script" (*Chiffreschrift*), of the intermittent sign (*Wink*); see for example paragraphs 42 and 59), *detachment*—disinterested attitude as essence of aesthetic experience.

In order to express the relationship between the two possibles (the now-possible of the critique and the future-possible of metaphysics), Kant proposes another metaphor. He borrows it, already, from art, which has not yet been discussed, from the technique of architecture, architectonics: the pure philosopher, the metaphysician, will have to operate *like* a good architect, like a good *tekhnitēs* of edification. He will be a sort of artist. Now what does a good architect do, according to Kant? He must first of all be certain of the ground, the foundation, the fundament. "A Critique of pure reason, i.e., of our faculty of judging on *a priori* principles, would be incomplete if the critical examination of judgment, which is a faculty of knowledge, and, as such, lays claim to independent principles, were not dealt with separately. Still, however, its principles cannot, in a system of pure philosophy, form a separate constituent part intermediate between the theoretical and practical divisions, but may when needful (*im Nothfalle*) be annexed (*angeschlossen*) to one or other as occasion requires (*gelegentlich*). For if such a system is some day worked out (*zu Stande kommen*) under the general name of Metaphysic . . . , then the critical examination of the ground for this edifice must have been previously carried down to the very depths of the foundations (*Grundlage*) of the faculty of principles independent of experience, lest in some quarter (*an irgend einem Theile*) it might give way (collapse, *sinke*), and, sinking, inevitably bring with it the ruin (*Einsturz*) of all" (Meredith, 4–5).

The proper instance of the critique: the architect of reason searches, probes, prepares the ground. In search of the bedrock, the ultimate *Grund* on which to raise the whole of metaphysics. But also in search of roots, of the common root which then divides in the phenomenal light, and which never itself yields up to experience. Thus the critique as such attempts to descend to the *bythos,* to the *bottom* of the abyss, without knowing whether it exists.

It is still too early to interrogate the general functioning of metaphor and analogy in the third *Critique.* This functioning is perhaps not simply reflected by the theory which, in the book, both includes it and plunges into its abyss.

We have just encountered the first "metaphor": beginning of the preface (*Vorrede*). Now at the end of the introduction which follows (*Einleitung*), and as if to frame the whole prolegomenon, will be the metaphor of the artificial work securing the passage over the natural gulf, the bridge (*Brücke*) projected over the great abyss (*grosse Kluft*). Philosophy, which in this book has to think art through—art in general and fine art—as a part of its field or of its edifice, is here *representing itself* as a part of its part: philosophy as an art of architecture. It represents itself, it *detaches itself*, detaches from itself a proxy, a part of itself beside itself in order to think the whole, to saturate or heal over the whole that suffers from detachment. The philosophy of art presupposes an art of philosophizing, a major art, but also a miner's art in its critical preliminaries, an architect's art in its edifying erection. And if, as will be said further on, fine art is always an art of genius, then the *Anthropology from the Pragmatic Point of View* would for preference delegate a German to the post of critique: the German genius shows itself best on the side of the root, the Italian on that of the crown of leaves, the French on that of the flower and the English on that of the fruit. Finally, if this pure philosophy or fundamental metaphysics here proposes to account for, among other things, desire, pleasure and unpleasure, it exposes itself and represents itself first of all in its own desire. The desire of reason would be a fundamental desire, a desire for the fundamental, a desire to go to the *bythos*. Not an empirical desire since it leads toward the unconditioned, and that which yields itself up in the currency of a determinate metaphor ought, as a metaphor of reason, to account for [*rendre raison de*] all other metaphors. It would figure the being-desire of desire, the desire of/for reason as desire for a grounded structure. Edifying desire would be produced as an art of philosophizing, commanding all the others and accounting for [*rendant raison de*] all rhetoric.

"Great difficulties" arise. A theory of judgment as *Mittelglied* must be constructed. But there will be "great difficulties" (*grosse Schwierigkeiten*) in finding for judgment *a priori* principles which are proper to it and which would protect the theory from empiricism. One can find *a priori* concepts only in the understanding. The faculty of judgment uses them, it applies them, but it does not have at its disposal any concepts which belong to it or are specifically reserved for it. The only concept which it can produce is an empty concept, in a sense, and one which does not give anything to be known. By it, "nothing is properly known." It supplies a "rule" of usage which comprises no objectivity, no relation to the object, no knowledge. The rule is subjective, the faculty of judgment gives itself its own norms, and it must do so, failing which it would be necessary to call upon another faculty or arbitration, *ad infinitum*. And yet this *subjective* rule is applied to judgments, to statements which by their structure lay claim to universal objectivity.

Such would be the difficulty, the constraint, the confusion, the *Verlegenheit.* It seems to confirm a certain Hegelian and subsequently Heideggerian verdict: this discourse on the beautiful and on art, because it remains at the stage of a theory of judgment, gets tangled up in the—derived—opposition of subject and object.

Of the beautiful and of art it has not yet been question. Nothing, up to this point, suggested that it should be a question of these. And now here is Kant declaring that this "great difficulty" *of principle* (subjective *or* objective), "is found" (*findet sich*), that it is met with "principally" (*hauptsächlich*) in the judgments "which are called aesthetic." These could have constituted an example, however important, a major occurrence of the "difficulty." But in truth it is the principal example, the unique specimen which gives meaning and orients the multiplicity. The examination of this example, namely the aesthetic domain, forms the choice morsel, the "most important piece" (*das wichtigste Stück*) of the critique of the faculty of judgment. Although they bring *nothing* to knowledge, aesthetic judgments, insofar as they are judgments, come under the faculty of knowing alone, a faculty which they put in relation with pleasure or unpleasure according to an *a priori* principle. This relationship of knowledge to pleasure reveals itself here in its purity since there is nothing to know, but such is precisely the enigma, the enigmatic (*das Rätselhafte*) at the heart of judgment. It is why a "special section" (*besondere Abteilung*), a particular division, a cut-out sector, a detached part, form the object of the third *Critique.*

One must not expect from it what in principle it does not, in its declared intention, promise. This critique of taste does not concern production; it has in view neither "education" nor "culture," which can very well do without it. And as the *Critique* will show that one cannot assign conceptual rules to the beautiful, it will not be a question of constituting an *aesthetic,* even a general one, but of analyzing the formal conditions of possibility of an aesthetic judgment in general, hence of an aesthetic objectivity in general.

With this transcendental aim, Kant demands to be read without indulgence. But for the rest, he admits the lacks, the lacunary character (*Mangelhaftigkeit*) of his work. This is the word Hegel uses too.

What does the lack depend on? What lack is it?

And what if it were the frame. What if the lack formed the frame of the theory. Not its accident but its frame. More or less still: what if the lack were not only the lack of a theory of the frame but the place of the lack in a theory of the frame.

Edge [*arête*]/lack

The "lacunary character" of his work, according to Kant at least, hangs on the fact that nature has muddled up, complicated, tangled up (*verwickelt*) the problems. The author's excuses are limited to the first part of the work, to the critique of aesthetic judgment, and not to the critique of teleological judgment. It is only in the first part that the deduction will not have the clarity and distinctness (*Deutlichkeit*) which one would, however, be entitled to expect from a knowledge through concepts. After deploring that nature has mixed up the threads, at the moment when he is finishing his critical work (*Hiemit endige ich also mein ganzes kritisches Geschäft*), admitting the lacunae and projecting a bridge over the abyss of the other two critiques, Kant speaks of his age. He must gain time, not let the delay accumulate, hurry on toward the doctrine.

It's about pleasure. About thinking pure pleasure, the being-pleasure of pleasure. Starting out from pleasure, it was for pleasure that the third *Critique* was written, for pleasure that it should be read. A somewhat arid pleasure—without concept and without enjoyment—a somewhat strict pleasure, but one learns once more that there is no pleasure without stricture. In letting myself be guided by pleasure I recognize and simultaneously put astray an injunction. *I follow it* [je le suis]: the enigma of pleasure puts the whole book in movement. *I seduce it* [je le séduis]: in treating the third *Critique* as a work of art or a beautiful object, which it was not simply designed to be, I act as if the *existence* of the book were indifferent to me (which, as Kant explains, is a requirement of any aesthetic experience) and could be considered with an imperturbable detachment.

But what is the existence of a book?

1. *I follow it.* The possibility of pleasure is *the* question. Demonstration: the first two paragraphs of the "First moment of the

judgment of taste considered from the point of view of quality," book I ("Analytic of the Beautiful") of the first section ("Analytic of Aesthetic Judgment") of the first part "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment"). Why call a judgment of taste *aesthetic*? Because, in order to distinguish whether a thing can be called beautiful, I do not consult the relation of the representation to the *object*, with a view to knowledge (the judgment of taste does not give us any knowledge) but its relation to the *subject* and to its affect (pleasure or unpleasure). The judgment of taste is not a judgment of knowledge, it is not "logical" but subjective and therefore aesthetic: relation to the affect (*aisthesis*). Any relation of representation can potentially be objective, even a relation of the senses; but pleasure and unpleasure never can. Aesthetic representations can certainly give rise to logical judgments when they are related by the judgment to the object, but when the judgment itself relates to the subject, to the subjective affect—as is the case here—it is and can only be an aesthetic one.

What is generally translated by subjective satisfaction, the *Wohlgefallen*, the *pleasing* which determines aesthetic judgment, must, we know, be disinterested. Interest (*Interesse*) always relates us to the *existence* of an object. I am interested by an object when its existence (*Existenz*) matters to me in one way or another. Now the question of knowing whether I can say of a thing that it is beautiful has, according to Kant, nothing to do with the interest that I do or do not have in its existence. And my pleasure (*Lust*), that species of *pleasing* which is called pleasure and which I feel when faced with that which I judge to be beautiful, requires an indifference or more rigorously an absolute lack of interest for the existence of the thing.

This pure and disinterested pleasure (but not indifferent: Heidegger here reproaches Nietzsche with not having understood the nonindifferent structure of this letting-be), this pleasure which draws me toward a nonexistence or at least toward a thing (but what is a thing? Need here to graft on the Heideggerian question) the existence of which is indifferent to me, such a pleasure determines the judgment of taste and the enigma of the bereaved [*endeuillé*] relation—labor of mourning broached in advance—to beauty. Like a sort of transcendental reduction, the *ēpochē* of a thesis of existence the suspension of which liberates, in certain formal conditions, the pure feeling of pleasure.

The example is familiar. I am in front of a palace. I am asked if I find it beautiful, or rather if I can say "this is beautiful." It is a question of judgment, of a judgment of universal validity and everything must therefore be able to be produced in the form of statements, questions, and answers. Although the aesthetic affect cannot be reduced, the instance of the judgment commands that I be able to *say* "this is beautiful" or "this is not beautiful."

Is the palace I'm speaking about beautiful? All kinds of answers can miss the point of the question. If I say, I don't like things made for idle gawpers, or else, like the Iroquois sachem, I prefer the pubs, or else, in the manner of Rousseau, what we have here is a sign of the vanity of the great who exploit the people in order to produce frivolous things, or else if I were on a desert island and if I had the means to do so, I would still not go to the trouble of having it imported, etc., none of these answers constitutes an intrinsically aesthetic judgment. I have evaluated this palace in fact in terms of *extrinsic* motives, in terms of empirical psychology, of economic relations of production, of political structures, of technical causality, etc.

Now you have to know what you're talking about, what *intrinsically* concerns the value "beauty" and what remains external to your immanent sense of beauty. This permanent requirement—to distinguish between the internal or proper sense and the circumstance of the object being talked about—organizes all philosophical discourses on art, the meaning of art and meaning as such, from Plato to Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger. This requirement presupposes a discourse on the limit between the inside and outside of the art object, here a *discourse on the frame.* Where is it to be found?

What they want to know, according to Kant, when they ask me if I find this palace beautiful, is if I find that it *is beautiful,* in other words if the mere representation of the object—in itself, within itself—pleases me, if it produces in me a pleasure, however indifferent (*gleichgültig*) I may remain to the existence of that object. "It is quite plain that in order to say that the object *is beautiful,* and to show that I have taste, everything turns on the meaning which I can give to this representation, and not on any factor which makes me dependent on the real existence of the object. Every one must allow that a judgement on the beautiful which is tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste. One must not be in the least prepossessed in favour of the real existence of the thing (*Existenz der Sache*), but must preserve complete indifference in this respect, in order to play the part of judge in matters of taste.

"This proposition, which is of the utmost importance, cannot be better explained than by contrasting the pure disinterested delight (*uninteressirten Wohlgefallen*) which appears in the judgement of taste with that allied (*verbunden*) to an interest—especially if we can also assure ourselves that there are no other kinds of interest beyond those presently to be mentioned." These other kinds are the interest for the existence of the *agreeable* and for the existence of the *good* (Meredith, 43–44).

a disinterested pleasure: the formula is too well known, too received, as is the refusal it has never ceased to provoke. Anger of Nietzsche and Artaud: disinterest or uninterestedness are supererogatory. Meditative murmur from Heidegger, at the end of *The Origin*: pleasure is superfluous or insufficient.

Don't be in too much of a hurry to conclude when it's a matter of pleasure. In this case, of a pleasure which would thus be pure and disinterested, which would in this way deliver itself up in the purity of its essence, without contamination from outside. It no longer depends on any phenomenal empiricity, of any determined *existence,* whether that of the object or that of the subject, my empiricity relating me precisely to the existence of the beautiful object, or to the existence of my sensory motivation. As such, and considered intrinsically (but how to delimit the intrinsic, that which runs along, *secus,* the internal limit?), the pleasure presupposes not the disappearance pure and simple, but the neutralization, not simply the putting to death but the *mise en crypte* [entombment/encrypting] of all that exists in as much as it exists. This pleasure is purely subjective: in the aesthetic judgment it does not designate (*bezeichnet*) anything about the object. But its subjectivity is not an existence, nor even a relation to existence. It is an inexistent or anexistent subjectivity arising on the crypt of the empirical subject and its whole world.

But a subjectivity which nevertheless enjoys. No, does not enjoy: Kant distinguishes pleasure (*Wohlgefallen, Lust*) from enjoyment (*Genuss*). Takes pleasure. No, for it *receives* it just as much. If the translation of *Wohlgefallen* by *pleasure* is not entirely rigorous, and that by *satisfaction* even less so, the *pleasing* risks leaning toward the agreeable and letting us think that everything comes from the object which pleases. In truth, in the *Wohlgefallen* I *please myself*,[4] but without complaisance, I do not interest myself, especially not in myself insofar as I exist: I-please-myself-*in*. Not in any thing that exists, not in doing something or other. *I-please-myself-in pleasing-myself-in*—that which is beautiful. Insofar as it does not exist.

As this affect of the *pleasing-oneself-in* remains subjective through and through, one could here speak of an autoaffection. The role of imagination and hence of time in this whole discourse would confirm this. Nothing existent, as such, nothing in time or space can produce this affect which thus cathects itself with itself [*qui s'affecte donc lui-même de lui-même*]. And yet the *pleasing-oneself-in*, the *in* of the *pleasing-oneself* also indicates that this autoaffection immediately goes outside its inside: it is a pure heteroaffection. The purely subjective affect is provoked by what is called the beautiful, that which is said to be beautiful: *outside*, in the object and independently of its existence. Whence the critical and indispensable character of this recourse to judgment: the structure of autoaffection is such that it cathects itself with a pure objectivity of which one *must* say "it *is* beautiful" and "this statement has universal validity." Otherwise, there would be no problem—and no discourse on art. *The entirely-other cathects me with pure pleasure by depriving me both of concept and enjoyment.* Without this entirely-other, there would be no universality, no requirement of universality, but for the same reason, with respect to that entirely other, there is no enjoyment (singular, empirical, existent, interested) or determinant or knowledge concept. And nothing theoretical or practical yet. The most irreducible heteroaffection inhabits—intrinsically—the most closed autoaffection: that is the "*grosse Schwierigkeit*": it does not hang on the comfortable setting-up of a very derivative subject/object couple, in a supervening judicative space. Nor from some well-oiled mechanism of *mimēsis, homoiosis, adaequatio*. We know that Kant rejects the notion of imitation, at least initially. As for *homoiosis* or *adaequatio*, the matter becomes, to say the least, complicated as soon as one is dealing no longer with a determinant judgment but with a reflective judgment, and as soon as the *res* in question does not exist, or in any case is not considered in its existence as a thing. It is at the end of a quite different itinerary that we

4. "I please myself" here *not* in the sense "I do as I like."

shall verify the efficacy of these values (*mimēsis, homoiosis, adaequatio*) in Kant's discourse [5]

almost nothing remains (to me): neither the thing, nor its existence, nor mine, neither the pure object nor the pure subject, no interest of anything that is in anything that is. And yet I like: no, that's still going too far, that's still taking an interest in existence, no doubt. I do not like, but I take pleasure in what does not interest me, in something of which it is at least a matter of indifference whether I like it or not. I do not take this pleasure that I take, it would seem rather that I return it, I return what I take, I receive what I return, I do not take what I receive. And yet I give it to myself. Can I say that I give it to myself? It is so universally objective—in the claim made by my judgment and by common sense—that it can only come from a pure outside. Unassimilable. At a pinch, I do not even feel this pleasure which I give myself or rather to which I give myself, by which I give myself, if to feel [*éprouver*] means to experience [*ressentir*]: phenomenally, empirically, in the space and time of my interested or interesting existence. Pleasure which it is impossible to experience. I never take it, never receive it, never return it, never give it, never give it to myself because *I* (me, existing subject) never have access to the beautiful as such. I never have access to pure pleasure inasmuch as I exist.

And yet *there is* pleasure, some still remains; *there is, es gibt, it gives,* the pleasure is what *it gives*; to nobody but some remains and it's the best, the purest. And it is this remainder which causes *talk,* since it is, once again, primarily a question of *discourse* on the beautiful, of discursivity *in* the structure of the beautiful and not only of a discourse supposed to happen accidentally *to* the beautiful.

5. "Economimesis," in *Mimesis* [*des articulations*] (in collaboration with S. Agacinski, S. Kofman, Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe, J.-L. Nancy, B. Pautrat). In the collection "La Philosophie en effet" (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1975) [pp. 55–93; English translation in *Diacritics* 11, no. 2 (1981):3–25].—J.D.

2. *I seduce it*: by treating the third critique as a work of art, I neutralize or encrypt its existence. But I will not be able to find out whether, in order to do this, I must find my authority in the *Critique*, so long as I don't know what the existence of a thing is, and consequently interest in the existence of a thing. What is it to exist, for Kant? To be present, according to space and time, as an individual thing: according to the conditions of the transcendental aesthetic. There is nothing less aesthetic in this sense than the beautiful object which must not interest us *qua aistheton*. But this aesthetic inexistence must affect me and that is why the retention of the word aesthetic is justified, from the start.

When the (beautiful) object is a book, what exists and what no longer exists? The book is not to be confused with the sensory multiplicity of its existing copies. The object *book* thus presents itself as such, in its intrinsic structure, as independent of its *copies*. But what one would then call its ideality is not pure; a very discriminating analysis must distinguish it from ideality in general, from the ideality of other types of object, and in the area of art, from that of other classes of books (novel, poetry, etc.) or of nondiscursive or nonbook art objects (painting, sculpture, music, theater, etc.). In each case the structure of exemplarity (unique or multiple) is original and therefore prescribes a different affect. And in each case there remains to be found out what importance one gives to the case [*le cas qu'on fait du cas*], to know whether one drops it as an extrinsic excrement, or retains it as an intrinsic ideality.

Here is an example, but an example *en abyme*: the third *Critique*. How to treat this book. Is it a book. What would make a book of it. What is it to read this book. How to take it. Have I the right to say that it is beautiful. And first of all the right to ask myself that

for example the question of order. A spatial, so-called plastic, art object does not necessarily prescribe an order of reading. I can move around in front of it, start from the top or the bottom, sometimes walk round it. No doubt this possibility has an ideal limit. Let us say for the moment that the structure of this limit allows a greater play than in the case of temporal art objects (whether discursive or not), unless a certain fragmentation, a spatial *mise en scène,* precisely (an effective or virtual partition)[6] allows us to begin in various places, to vary direction or speed.

But a book. And a book of philosophy. If it is a book of metaphysics in the Kantian sense, hence a book of pure philosophy, one can in principle enter it from any point: it is a sort of architecture. In the third *Critique,* there is pure philosophy, there is talk of it and its plan is drawn. In terms of the analogy (but how to measure its terms) one ought to be able to begin anywhere and follow any order, although the quantity and the quality, the force of the reading may depend, as with a piece of architecture, on the point of view and on a certain relation to the ideal limit—which acts as a frame. There are only ever points of view: but the solidity, the existence, the structure of the edifice do not depend on them. Can one say the same, by analogy, of a book. One does not necessarily gain access to a piece of architecture by following the order of its production, starting at the foundations and arriving at the roof-ridge. And we must distinguish here between perception, analysis, penetration, utilization, even destruction. But does one read a book of pure philosophy if one does not begin with the foundations and follow the juridical order of its writing. What then is it to read philosophy and must one only read it. To be sure, the juridical order supported by the foundations does not coincide with the factual order: for example, Kant wrote his introduction after finishing the book and it is the most powerful effort to gather together the whole system of his philosophy, to give his whole discourse a *de jure* foundation, to articulate critique with philosophy. The introduction follows, the foundation comes after having come first. But even if it were established that in principle, in metaphysics in the Kantian sense, one must begin at the foundations, critique is not metaphysics: it is, *first, in search of* the foundation (and thus in fact comes *afterwards*), suspended like a crane or a dragline bucket above the pit, working to scrape, probe, clear, and open up a sure ground. In what order to read a critique. The *de facto* order or the *de jure* order. The *ordo inveniendi* or the *ordo exponendi.*

6. *Partition* here also has the meaning of "musical score."

All these questions differ/defer, each is subordinate to the others, and whatever their interminable breadth, they are valid in general for any critical text.

a supplementary complication constrains us to reconsider the way these questions fit together. The third *Critique* is not just one critique among others. Its specific object has the form of a certain type of judgment—the reflective judgment—which works (on) the example in a very singular way. The distinction between reflective and determinant judgment, a distinction that is both familiar and obscure, watches over all the internal divisions of the book. I recall it in its poorest generality. The faculty of judgment *in general* allows one to think the particular as contained under the general (rule, principle, law). When the generality is given first, the operation of judgment subsumes and *determines* the particular. It is determinant (*bestimmend*), it specifies, narrows down, comprehends, tightens. In the contrary hypothesis, the *reflective* judgment (*reflectirend*) has only the particular at its disposal and must climb back up to, return toward generality: the example (this is what matters to us here) is here given prior to the law and, in its very uniqueness as example, allows one to discover that law. Common scientific or logical discourse proceeds by determinant judgments, and the example follows in order to determine or, with a pedagogical intention, to illustrate. In art and in life, wherever one must, according to Kant, proceed to reflective judgments and assume (by analogy with art: we shall come to this rule further on) a finality[7] the concept of which we do not have, the *example precedes*. There follows a singular historicity and (counting the simulacrum-time) a certain (regulated, relative) ficture of the theoretical

7. "Finality" translates *finalité*, the received French translation of Kant's *Zweckmässigkeit*, traditionally rendered into English as "purposiveness." See below, n. 11.

on the authority of this reflective hinge,[8] I begin my reading of the third *Critique* with some examples.

Is this docility perverse. Nothing yet permits a decision.

So I begin with some examples: not with the introduction, which gives the laws, nor with the beginning of the book (the analytic of the beautiful). Nor with the middle nor the end, but somewhere near the conclusion of the analytic of the beautiful, paragraph 14. It is entitled "Clarification by Examples" (*Erlaüterung durch Beispiele*).

Its most obvious intention is to clarify the structure of "the proper object of the pure judgment of taste" (*den eigentlichen Gegenstand des reinen Geschmacksurtheils*). I shall not even cite all the examples, but only some of them, and I shall provisionally leave to one side the very complicated theory of colors and sounds, of drawing and composition, which is unfolded between the two fragments I translate here. Unless it be broached at the same time. I shall in any case assume you have read it.

"Aesthetic, just like theoretical (logical) judgements, are divisible into empirical and pure. The first are those by which agreeableness or disagreeableness, the second those by which beauty, is predicated of an object or its mode of representation. The former are judgements of sense (material aesthetic judgements), the latter (as formal) alone judgements of taste proper (*allein eigentliche Geschmacksurtheile*).

"A judgement of taste, therefore, is only pure so far as its determining ground (*Bestimmungsgrunde*) is tainted with no merely empirical delight (*Wohlgefallen*). But such a taint is always present where charm (*Reiz*) or emotion (*Rührung*) have a share in the judgement (*einen Antheil an dem Urtheile haben*) by which something is to be described as beautiful. . . .

"All form of objects of sense (both of external and also, mediately, of internal sense) is either *figure* (*Gestalt*) or *play* (*Spiel*). In the latter case it is either play of figures (in space: mimic and dance), or mere play of sensations (in time). The charm (*Reiz*) of colours, or of the agreeable tones of instruments, may be added (*hinzukom-*

8. "Hinge" translates *brisure,* which carries connotations of both breaking and joining; see *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), 96; translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as (*Grammatology*) Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 65ff.

men): but the *design* (*Zeichnung*) in the former and the composition (*Composition*) in the latter constitute the proper object of the pure judgement of taste. To say that the purity alike of colours and of tones, or their variety and contrast, seem to contribute (*beizutragen*) to beauty, is by no means to imply that, because in themselves agreeable, they therefore yield an addition (*einen . . . Zusatz*) to the delight in the form (*Wohlgefallen an der Form*) and one on a par with it (*gleichartigen*). The real meaning rather is that they make this form more clearly, definitely, and completely (*nur genauer, bestimmter und vollständiger*) intuitable (*anschaulich machen*), and besides stimulate the representation by their charm, as they excite and sustain the attention directed to the object itself.

"Even what is called *ornamentation* [*Zierathen*: decoration, adornment, embellishment] (*Parerga*) i.e., what is only an adjunct, and not an intrinsic constituent in the complete representation of the object (*was nicht in die ganze Vorstellung des Gegenstandes als Bestandstück innerlich, sondern nur äusserlich als Zuthat gehört*), in augmenting the delight of taste does so only by means of its form. Thus it is with the frames (*Einfassungen*) of pictures or the drapery on statues, or the colonnades of palaces. But if the ornamentation does not itself enter into the composition of the beautiful form—if it is introduced (*angebracht*: fixed on) like a gold frame (*goldene Rahmen*) merely to win approval for the picture by means of its charm—it is then called *finery* [*parure*] (*Schmuck*) and takes away from the genuine beauty" (Meredith, 65, 67–68).

a theory which would run along as if on wheels

the clothes on statues—for example—would thus be ornaments: *parerga.*

Kant explains himself elsewhere on the necessity of having recourse to dead or scholarly languages. The Greek here confers a quasi-conceptual dignity to the notion of this *hors-d'oeuvre* which however does not stand simply outside the work [*hors d'oeuvre*], also acting alongside, right up against the work (*ergon*). Dictionaries most often give "hors-d'oeuvre," which is the strictest translation, but also "accessory, foreign or secondary object," "supplement," "aside," "remainder." It is what the principal subject *must not become*, by being separated from itself: the education of children in legislation (*Laws* 766a) or the definition of science (*Theaetetus* 184a) *must not* be treated as *parerga*. In the search for the cause or the knowledge of principles, *one must avoid* letting the *parerga* get the upper hand over the essentials (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1098a 30). Philosophical discourse will always have been *against* the *parergon*. But what about this *against*.

A parergon comes against, beside, and in addition to the *ergon*, the work done [*fait*], the fact [*le fait*], the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. Neither simply outside nor simply inside. Like an accessory that one is obliged to welcome on the border, on board [*au bord, à bord*]. It is first of all the on (the) bo(a)rd(er) [*Il est d'abord l'à-bord*].

If we wanted to play a little—for the sake of poetics—at etymology, the *à-bord* would refer us to the Middle High German *bort* (table, plank, deck of a vessel). "The *bord* is thus properly speaking a plank; and etymology allows us to grasp the way its meanings link together. The primary meaning is the deck of a vessel, i.e., a construction made of planks; then, by metonymy, that which borders, that which encloses, that which limits, that which is at the extremity." Says Littré.

But the *etymon* will always have had, for whoever knows how to read, its border-effects.

Boats are never far away when one is handling figures of rhetoric.[9] Brothel [*bordel*] has the same etymology; it's an easy one, at first a little hut made of wood.

The *bord* is made of wood, and apparently indifferent like the frame of a painting. Along with stone, better than stone, wood names matter (*hylē* means wood). These questions of wood, of

9. Perhaps referring to hackneyed examples of rhetorical figures, such as "forty sails" for "forty ships" in Dumarsais, Fontanier, etc. But *bateau* used adjectivally also *means* "hackneyed."

matter, of the frame, of the limit between inside and outside, must, somewhere in the margins, be constituted together.

The *parergon,* this supplement outside the work, must, if it is to have the status of a philosophical quasi-concept, designate a formal and general predicative structure, which one can transport *intact* or deformed and reformed *according to certain rules,* into other fields, to submit new contents to it. Now Kant does use the word *parergon* elsewhere: the context is very different but the structure is analogous and just as problematical. It is to be found in a very long note added to the second edition of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone.* This place, the form of this place, is of great import.

To what is the "Note" appended? To a "General Remark" which closes the second part.

Now what is the *parergon*? It is the concept of the remark, of this "General Remark," insofar as it defines what comes to be added to *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* without being a part of it and yet without being absolutely extrinsic to it. Each part of the book comprises a "General Remark" (*Allgemeine Anmerkung*), a *parergon* concerning a *parergon.* As there are four parts to *Religion,* then the book is in a manner of speaking *framed* [*cadrée*], but also squared up [*quadrillée*][10] by these four remarks on *parerga,* hors-d'oeuvres, "additives" which are neither inside nor outside.

The beginning of the note appended, in the second edition, to the first of the "General Remarks," defines the status of the remark as *parergon*: "This general Remark is the first of four which have been added [*angehängt*: appended, like appendixes] to each piece of this text (*jedem Stück dieser Schrift*) and which might have as titles: (1) Of the effects of grace; (2) Of miracles; (3) Of mysteries; (4) Of the means of grace. They are in some measure *parerga* of religion within the limits of pure reason; they are not integral parts of it (*sie gehören nicht innerhalb dieselben*) but they verge on it [*aber stossen doch an sie an*: they touch it, push it, press it, press against it, seek contact, exert a pressure at the frontier]. Reason, conscious of its impotence (*Unvermögens*) to satisfy its moral need [the only need which should ground or should have grounded religion within the limits of reason alone],

10. *Quadrillée* insists on the "squareness" implied in *cadre* (see also p. 77), but it also carries an important sense of coverage, control, surveillance.

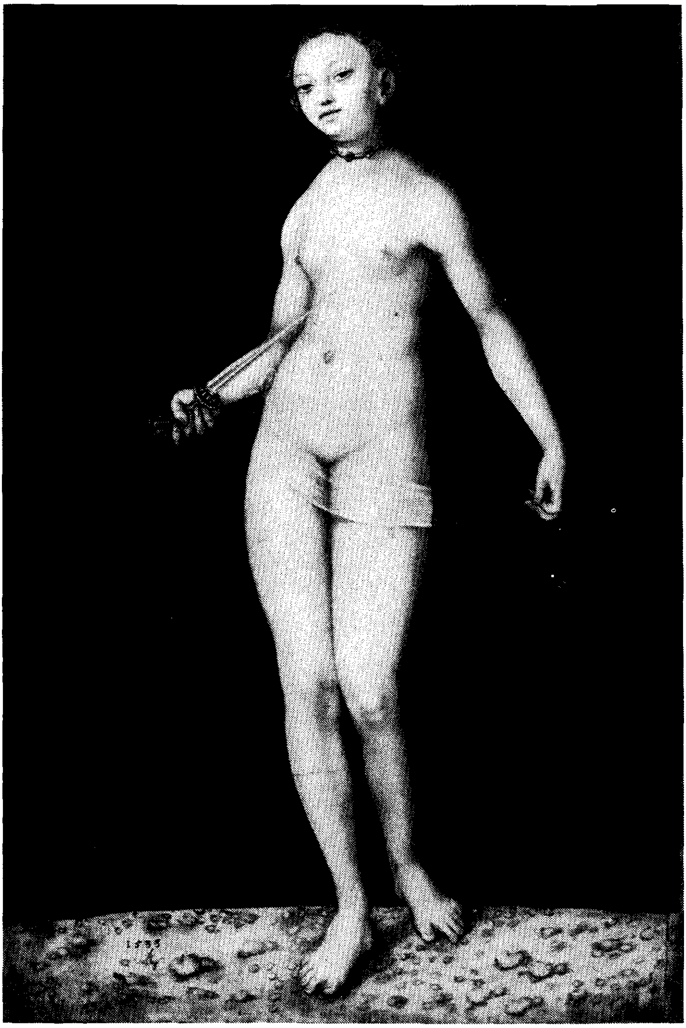
reaches as far as these transcendent ideas which are potentially able to make good the lack (*die jenen Mangel ergänzen*), without however appropriating them (*sich zuzueignen*) as extension of its domain (*Besitz*, possession). It contests neither the possibility nor the reality of the objects of these ideas but it cannot admit them into its maxims for thought and action. It even holds that if, in the unfathomable field of the supernatural, there is something more (*noch etwas mehr*) than what it can render intelligible to itself and which would however be necessary to supply [Gibelin's translation of *Ergänzung*] its moral insufficiency, this thing, even though unknown, will come to the aid (*zu statten kommen*) of its good will, thanks to a faith which one could call (as regards its possibility) *reflective* (*reflectirenden*) because the dogmatic faith which declares that it *knows* seems to it presumptuous and not very sincere; for to remove difficulties with regard to what is in itself (in practical terms) well established is only a secondary task (*parergon*) when those difficulties concern transcendent questions."

What is translated as "secondary task" is *Nebengeschäfte*: incidental business or bustle, activity or operation which comes *beside* or *against*. The *parergon* inscribes something which comes as an extra, *exterior* to the proper field (here that of pure reason and of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*) but whose transcendent exteriority comes to play, abut onto, brush against, rub, press against the limit itself and intervene in the inside only to the extent that the inside is lacking. It is lacking *in* something and it is lacking *from itself*. Because reason is "conscious of its impotence to satisfy its moral need," it has recourse to the *parergon*, to grace, to mystery, to miracles. It needs the supplementary work. This additive, to be sure, is threatening. Its use is critical. It involves a risk and exacts a price the theory of which is elaborated. To each *parergon* of *Religion* there is a corresponding damage, a detriment (*Nachteil*) and the four classes of dangers will correspond to the four types of *parergon*: (1) for the would-be internal experience (effects of grace), there is *fanaticism*; (2) for the would-be external experience (miracles), there is *superstition*; (3) for the would-be insight of the understanding into the supernatural order there is *illuminism*; (4) for the would-be actions on the supernatural (means of grace), there is *thaumaturgy*. These four aberrations or seductions of reason nevertheless also have in view a certain pleasing, pleasing-God (*gottgefälliger Absicht*).

So, as an example among examples, the clothing on statues (*Gewänder an Statuen*) would have the function of a *parergon* and an ornament. This means (*das heisst*), as Kant makes clear, that which is not internal or intrinsic (*innerlich*), as an integral part (*als Bestandstück*), to the total representation of the object (*in die ganze Vorstellung des Gegenstandes*) but which belongs to it only in an extrinsic way (*nur äusserlich*) as a surplus, an addition, an adjunct (*als Zuthat*), a supplement.

Hors-d'oeuvres, then, the clothes of statues, which both decorate and veil their nudity. Hors-d'oeuvres stuck onto the edging of the work nonetheless, and to the edging of the represented body to the extent that—such is the argument—they supposedly do not belong to the whole of the representation. What is represented in the representation would be the naked and natural body; the representative essence of the statue would be related to this, and the only beautiful thing in the statue would be that representation; it alone would be essentially, purely, and intrinsically beautiful, "the proper object of a pure judgment of taste."

This delimitation of the center and the integrity of the representation, of its inside and its outside, might already seem strange. One wonders, too, where to have clothing commence. Where does a *parergon* begin and end. Would any garment be a *parergon*. G-strings and the like. What to do with absolutely transparent veils. And how to transpose the statement to painting. For example, Cranach's Lucretia holds only a light band of transparent veil in front of her sex: where is the *parergon*? Should one regard as a *parergon* the dagger which is not part of her naked and natural body and whose point she holds turned toward herself, touching her skin (in that case only the point of the *parergon* would touch her body, in the middle of a triangle formed by her two breasts and her navel)? A *parergon*, the necklace that she wears around her neck? The question of the representative and objectivizing essence, of its outside and its inside, of the criteria engaged in this delimitation, of the value of naturalness which is presupposed in it, and, secondarily or primarily, of the place of the human body or of its privilege in this whole problematic. If any *parergon* is only added on by virtue of an internal lack in the system to which it is added (as was verified in *Religion*), what is it that is lacking in the representation of the body so that the garment should come



and supplement it? And what would art have to do with this? What would it give to be seen? Cause to be seen? Let us see? Let us cause to be seen? Or let itself be shown?

We are only at the beginning of our astonishment at this paragraph. (*Parergon* also means the exceptional, the strange, the extraordinary.) I have torn the "garment" a little too hastily from the middle of a series of three examples, of three parerga which are no less strange. Each in itself, first of all, and then in their association. The example immediately following is that of the columns around sumptuous buildings (*Säulengänge um Prachtgebäude*). These columns are also, then, supplementary *parerga*. After the garment, the column? Why would the column be external to the building? Where does the criterion, the critical organ, the organum of discernment come from here? It is no less obscure than in the previous case. It even presents an extra difficulty: the *parergon* is added this time to a work which *does not represent anything* and which is itself already *added to* nature. We think we know what properly belongs or does not belong to the human body, what is detached or not detached from it—even though the parergon is precisely an ill-detachable detachment. But in a work of architecture, the *Vorstellung*, the representation is not structurally representational or else is so only through detours complicated enough, no doubt, to disconcert anyone who tried to discern, in a critical manner, the inside from the outside, the integral part and the detachable part. So as not to add to these complications, I shall leave to one side, provisionally, the case of columns in the form of the human body, those that support or represent the support of a window (and does a window form part of the inside of a building or not? And what about the window of a building in a painting?), and which can be naked or clothed, can represent a man or a woman, a distinction to which Kant makes no reference.

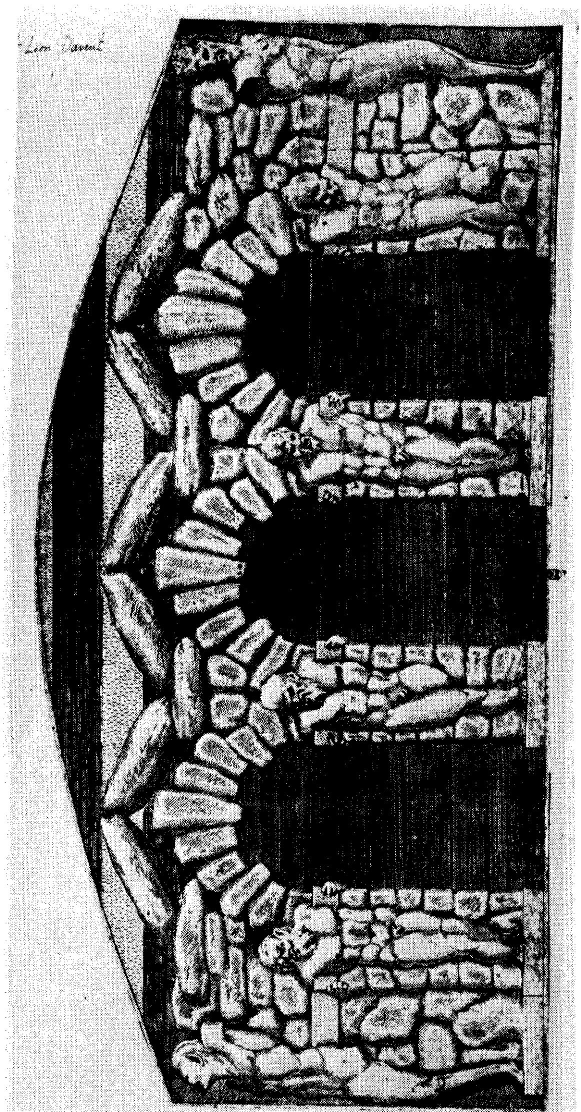
With this example of the columns is announced the whole problematic of inscription in a milieu, of the marking out of the work in a field of which it is always difficult to decide if it is natural or artificial and, in this latter case, if it is *parergon* or *ergon*. For not every milieu, even if it is contiguous with the work, constitutes a *parergon* in the Kantian sense. The natural site chosen for the erection of a temple is obviously not a *parergon*. Nor is an artificial site: neither the crossroads, nor the church, nor the museum, nor the other works around one or other. But the garment or the column is. Why? It is not because they are detached but on the contrary because they are more difficult to detach and above all because without them, without their quasi-detachment, the lack on the inside of the work would appear; or (which amounts to the same thing for a lack) would not appear. What constitutes them as *parerga* is not simply their exteriority as a surplus, it is the internal structural link which rivets them to the lack in the interior of the *ergon*. And this lack would be constitutive of the very unity of the *ergon*. Without this lack, the *ergon* would have no need of a *parergon.* The *ergon*'s lack is the lack of a *parergon,* of the garment or the column which nevertheless remains exterior to it. How to give *energeia* its due?

Can one attach the third example to this series of examples, to the question that they pose? It is in fact the first of the examples, and I have proceeded in reverse. In appearance it is difficult to associate it with the other two. It is to do with the frames for paintings (*Einfassungen der Gemälde*). The frame: a *parergon* like the others. The series might seem surprising. How can one assimilate the function of a frame to that of a garment on (in, around, or up against) a statue, and to that of columns around a building? And what about a frame framing a painting representing a building surrounded by columns in clothed human form? What is incomprehensible about the edge, about the *à-bord* appears not only at the internal limit, the one that passes between the frame and the painting, the clothing and the body, the column and the building, but also at the external limit. *Parerga* have a thickness,

a surface which separates them not only (as Kant would have it) from the integral inside, from the body proper of the *ergon*, but also from the outside, from the wall on which the painting is hung, from the space in which statue or column is erected, then, step by step, from the whole field of historical, economic, political inscription in which the drive to signature is produced (an analogous problem, as we shall see further on). No "theory," no "practice," no "theoretical practice" can intervene effectively in this field if it does not weigh up and bear on the frame, which is the decisive structure of what is at stake, at the invisible limit to (between) the interiority of meaning (put under shelter by the whole hermeneuticist, semioticist, phenomenologicalist, and formalist tradition) *and* (to) all the empiricisms of the extrinsic which, incapable of either seeing or reading, miss the question completely.

The *parergon* stands out [*se détache*] both from the *ergon* (the work) and from the milieu, it stands out first of all like a figure on a ground. But it does not stand out in the same way as the work. The latter also stands out against a ground. But the parergonal frame stands out against two grounds [*fonds*], but with respect to each of those two grounds, it merges [*se fond*] into the other. With respect to the work which can serve as a ground for it, it merges into the wall, and then, gradually, into the general text. With respect to the background which the general text is, it merges into the work which stands out against the general background. There is always a form on a ground, but the *parergon* is a form which has as its traditional determination not that it stands out but that it disappears, buries itself, effaces itself, melts away at the moment it deploys its greatest energy. The frame is in no case a background in the way that the milieu or the work can be, but neither is its thickness as margin a figure. Or at least it is a figure which comes away of its own accord [*s'enlève d'elle-même*].

What would Kant have said about a frame framing a painting representing a building surrounded by columns (examples of this are numerous), columns in the form of clothed human bodies (the frescoes on the vault of the Sistine Chapel—what is its frame?—whose represented, painted object is a sculpted volume itself representing, for example to the right of Jonah, naked children forming a column which supports a ceiling, etc. Same implication around the Persian Sibyl or around Zachariah holding a book in his hand, or around Jeremiah, or the Libyan Sibyl; it is difficult



to say whether the children-columns are clothed or unclothed: they are *bearing* clothes), the whole frame being placed on the easel of a painter who is himself represented by another painting.

It may appear that I am taking unfair advantage by persisting with two or three possibly fortuitous examples from a secondary subchapter; and that it would be better to go to less marginal places in the work, nearer to the center and the heart of the matter [*le fond*]. To be sure. The objection presupposes that one already knows what is the center or the heart of the third *Critique,* that one has already located its frame and the limit of its field. But nothing seems more difficult to determine. The *Critique* presents itself as a work (*ergon*) with several sides, and as such it ought to allow itself to be centered and framed, to have its ground delimited by being marked out, with a frame, against a general background. But this frame is problematical. I do not know what is essential and what is accessory in a work. And above all I do not know what this thing is, that is neither essential nor accessory, neither proper nor improper, and that Kant calls *parergon,* for example the frame. Where does the frame take place. Does it take place. Where does it begin. Where does it end. What is its internal limit. Its external limit. And its surface between the two limits. I do not know whether the passage in the third *Critique* where the *parergon* is defined is itself a *parergon.* Before deciding what is parergonal in a text which poses the question of the *parergon,* one has to know what a *parergon* is—at least, if there is any such thing.

To the impatient objector, if s/he insists on seeing the thing itself at last: the whole analytic of aesthetic judgment forever assumes that one can distinguish rigorously between the intrinsic and the extrinsic. Aesthetic judgment *must* properly bear upon intrinsic beauty, not on finery and surrounds. Hence one must know—this is a fundamental presupposition, presupposing what is fundamental—how to determine the intrinsic—what is framed—and know what one is excluding as frame *and* outside-the-frame. We are thus *already* at the unlocatable center of the problem. And when Kant replies to our question "What is a frame?" by saying: it's a *parergon,* a hybrid of outside and inside, but a hybrid which is not a mixture or a half-measure, an outside which is called to the inside of the inside in order to constitute it as an inside; and when he gives as examples of the *parergon,* alongside the frame, clothing and column, we ask to see, we say to ourselves that there are "great difficulties" here, and that the choice of examples, and their association, is not self-evident.

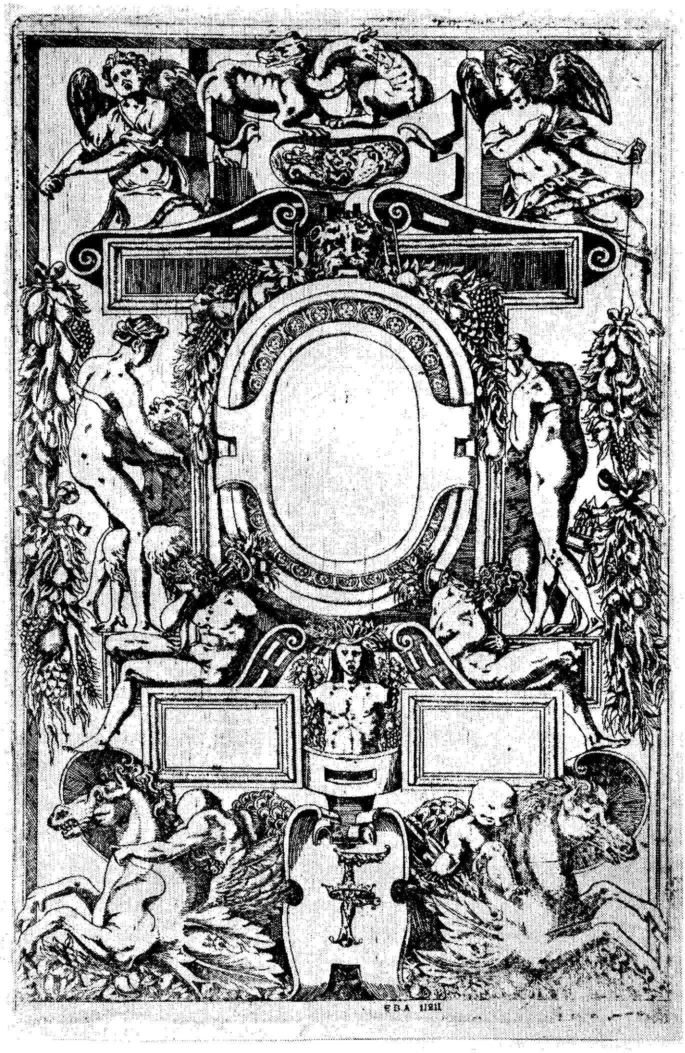
The more so because, according to the logic of the supplement, the parergon is divided in two. At the limit between work and absence of work, it divides in two. And this division gives rise to a sort of pathology of the *parergon*, the forms of which must be named and classified, just as *Religion* recognized four types of parergonal misdeeds or detriments. Kant is in the process of determining "the proper object of the pure judgment of taste." But he does not simply exclude from it the parergon as such and in general. Only in certain conditions. The criterion of exclusion is here a formality.

What must we understand by formality?

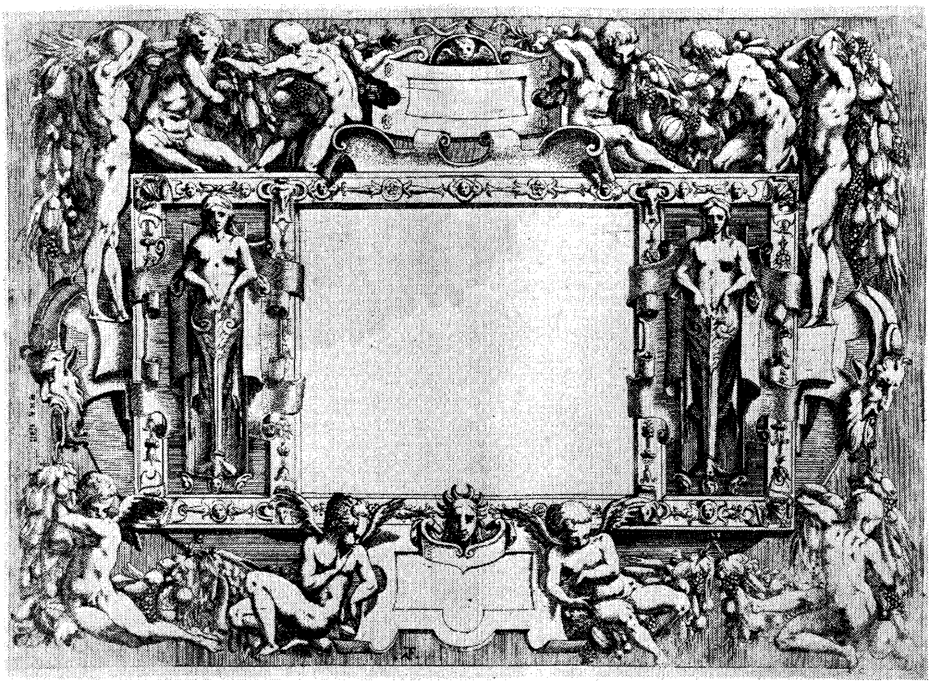
The *parergon* (frame, garment, column) can augment the pleasure of taste (*Wohlgefallen des Geschmacks*), contribute to the proper and intrinsically aesthetic representation if it intervenes *by its form* (*durch seine Form*) and only by its form. If it has a "beautiful form," it forms part of the judgment of taste properly speaking or in any case intervenes directly in it. This is, if you like, the normal *parergon*. But if on the other hand it is not beautiful, purely beautiful, i.e., of a formal beauty, it lapses into *adornment* (*Schmuck*) and harms the beauty of the work, it does it wrong and causes it detriment (*Abbruch*). This is analogous to the detriment or damage (*Nachteil*) of *Religion*.

Now the example of this degradation of the simple *parergon* into a seductive adornment is again a frame, this time the gilded frame (*goldene Rahmen*), the gilding of the frame done in order to recommend the painting to our attention by its attraction (*Reiz*). What is bad, external to the pure object of taste, is thus what seduces by an attraction; and the example of what leads astray by its force of attraction is a color, the gilding, in as much as it is nonform, content, or sensory matter. The deterioration of the *parergon*, the perversion, the adornment, is the attraction of sensory matter. As design, organization of lines, forming of angles, the frame is not at all an adornment and one cannot do without it. But in its purity, it ought to remain colorless, deprived of all empirical sensory materiality.

This opposition form/matter governs, as we know, the whole *Critique* and inscribes it within a powerful tradition. According to *The Origin of the Work of Art*, it is one of the three determinations (*hypokeimenon/symbebekos; aistheton/noeton, eidos-morphē/hylē*) which fall violently upon the thing. It procures a



"conceptual schema" (*Begriffsschema*) for any theory of art. It suffices to associate the rational with the formal, the irrational with matter, the irrational with the illogical, the rational with the logical, to couple the whole lot to the subject/object pair, in order to have at one's disposal a *Begriffsmechanik* that nothing can resist. But from what region does this determination of the thing as formed matter come? Its wholesale usage by aesthetics



allows us to conceive of it as a deportation from the domain of art. In any case, Christian creationism would, according to Heidegger, have brought with it a "particular incitement," a supplementary motivation for considering the form-matter complex as the structure of every entity, the *ens creatum* as the unity of *forma* and *materia.* Though faith has disappeared, the schemas of Christian philosophy remain effective. "Thus it is that the interpretation of the thing in terms of matter and form, whether it remains medieval or becomes transcendental in the Kantian sense, has become common and self-evident. But this does not make it any less than the other interpretations of the thingness of the thing a superimposition fallen onto (*Überfall*) the being-thing of the thing. This situation reveals itself already in the fact of naming things properly speaking (*eigentlichen Dinge*) things pure and simple [*bloss Dinge*: naked things]. This 'naked' (*bloss*) does however mean the stripping (*Entblössung*) of the character of usefulness (*Dienlichkeit*) and of being made. The naked thing (*blosse Ding*) is a sort of product (*Zeug*) but a product divested (*entkleidete*) of its being-as-product. Being-thing then consists in what still remains (*was noch übrigbleibt*). But this remainder (*Rest*) is not properly (*eigens*) determined in itself. . . ."

and what if the *Überfall* had the structure of the *parergon*? The violent superimposition which falls aggressively upon the thing, the "insult" as the French translator says for the *Überfall*, strangely but not without pertinence, which enslaves it and, literally, conjugates it, under matter/form—is this superimposition the contingency of a case, the fall of an accident, or a necessity which remains to be examined? And what if, like the *parergon*, it were neither the one nor the other? And what if the *remainder* could never, in its structure as remainder, be determined "properly," what if we must no longer even expect or question anything within that horizon

the word *parergon* intervenes, precisely (paragraphs 13 and 24) at the moment when Kant has just distinguished between *material* and *formal* judgments, the latter alone constituting judgments of taste in the proper sense. It is not, of course, a matter of a formalist aesthetic (we could show, from another point of view, that it is the contrary) but of formality as the space of aesthetics in general, of a "formalism" which, instead of representing a determinate system, merges with the history of art and with aesthetics itself. And the formality-effect is always tied to the possibility of a framing system that is both imposed and erased.

The question of the frame is already framed when it appears at a certain detour of the *Critique*.

Why framed?

The "Clarification by Examples" (paragraph 14) belongs to the "Analytic of the Beautiful," book 1 of the "Analytic of Aesthetic Judgment." This analytic of the beautiful comprises four parts, four sides, four moments. The judgment of taste is exam-

Fifth Reading

François Dosse, “Introduction,” *History of Structuralism* (1991)

Rosalind Krauss, “Poststructuralism and the Paraliterary” (1980)

HISTORY OF STRUCTURALISM

FRANÇOIS DOSSE

Volume 1

THE RISING SIGN, 1945-1966

TRANSLATED BY DEBORAH GLASSMAN

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Others were contacted but were not interviewed: Didier Anzieu, Alain Badiou, Christian Baudelot, Jean Baudrillard, Pierre Bourdieu, Georges Canguilhem, Cornelius Castoriadis, Hélène Cixous, Serge Cotte, Antoine Culioli, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Louis Dumont, Julien Freund, Luce Irigaray, Francis Jacques, Christian Jambet, Catherine Kerbrat-Oreccioni, Victor Karady, Serge-Christophe Kolm, Claude Lefort, Philippe Lejeune, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-François Lyotard, Gérard Miller, Jacques-Alain Miller, Jean-Claude Milner, Edgar Morin, Thérèse Parisot, Jean-Claude Passeron, Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, Paul Ricoeur, Jacqueline de Romilly, François Roustang, Michel Serres, Louis-Vincent Thomas.

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Introduction

Structuralism's success in France during the 1950s and 1960s is without precedent in the history of the intellectual life of this country. There was such widespread support for structuralism among most of the intelligentsia that the resistance and minor objections put forth during what we can call the structuralist moment were simply moot. We can better understand how so many intellectuals could be at home in the same program if we understand the context. There were two fundamental reasons for this spectacular success. First, structuralism promised a rigorous method and some hope for making decisive progress toward scientificity. But even more fundamentally, it was a particular moment in the history of thought, which we can characterize as a key moment of critical consciousness; for the structuralist program attracted a particularly broad range of enthusiasts, including the trainer of the national football team who, in the sixties, announced a "structuralist" reorganization of his team in order to win more games.

The triumph of the structuralist paradigm is therefore first of all the product of a particular historical context, characterized since the end of the nineteenth century, and particularly since 1945, by the West's progressive slide toward what Lévi-Strauss called a cooler temporality. But it is also the product of the remarkable growth in the social sciences, which ran up against the hegemony of the aged Sorbonne, bearer of scholarly legitimacy and dispenser of the classical humanities. The structuralist program was a veritable unconscious strategy to move beyond the academicism in power, and it served the twofold purposes of contestation and counterculture. In the academic realm, the structural paradigm successfully cleared the ground for proscribed knowledge that had long been kept at bay, in the margins of the canonical institutions.

Structuralism was contestatory and corresponded to a particular moment in Western history. It expressed a certain degree of self-hatred, of the rejection of traditional Western culture, and of a desire for modernism in search of new models. Antique values were no longer glorified; structuralism demonstrated an extreme sensitivity to everything that had been repressed in Western history. Indeed, it is no accident that the two leading sciences of the period—anthropology and psychoanalysis—privilege the unconscious, the nether side of manifest meaning, the inaccessible repressed of Western history.

The structuralist period was also a time when linguistics was a pilot science guiding the steps of the social sciences as a whole toward scientificity. In this respect, structuralism was the banner of the moderns in their struggle against the ancients. As the disillusionment of the second half of the twentieth century grew, structuralism also became an instrument of de-ideologization for many politically committed intellectuals. A specific political moment characterized by disenchantment and a particular configuration of knowledge requiring a revolution in order to successfully carry through a reform made it possible for structuralism to become the rallying point for an entire generation. This generation discovered the world behind the structural grid.

The important quest for a solution to existential confusion produced a tendency to ontologize structure that, in the name of Science and Theory, became an alternative to traditional Western metaphysics. Ambitions were boundless during this period in which boundaries were being redefined and the limits of imposed figures extended. Many struck out along the newest paths opened up by the flowering of the social sciences.

Suddenly, however, everything changed. Tragedy struck structuralism at the beginning of the eighties. In the same fell swoop, most of the French heroes of this international epic left the stage of the living, as if the theoreticians of the end of humanity had all allowed themselves to be carried off simultaneously in a spectacular death. Nicos Poulantzas killed himself by leaping from his window on October 3, 1979, just after having justified his refusal to betray Pierre

Goldmann; his suicide was concrete punishment for a purely imaginary crime. After lunching with Jacques Berques and François Mitterrand, then chairman of the Socialist Party, Roland Barthes was run down by a dry cleaner's truck on the rue des Écoles. Barthes suffered only a slight cranial trauma, but, according to the witnesses who visited him at the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital, he let himself decline, and died on March 26, 1980. During the night of November 16, 1980, Louis Althusser strangled his faithful wife, Helen. The eminent representative of the most rigorous rationalism was judged not to be responsible for his act, and was hospitalized at Sainte-Anne, a Parisian psychiatric hospital, before being admitted to a private clinic in the Paris area, thanks to the help of his former philosophy teacher, Jean Guitton. The man of words, the great shaman of modern times, Jacques Lacan, died on September 9, 1981, aphasic. Barely a few years went by before the ill wind of death carried off Michel Foucault. At the height of his popularity and completely immersed in his work on a history of sexuality, Foucault was struck with the new scourge of the century, AIDS. He died on June 25, 1984.

So many dramatic and proximate deaths reinforced the impression of the end of an era. Some went so far as to theorize the coincidence of these tragedies as the revelation of the impasse of a common way of thinking popularly called structuralism. In this view, the break between speculative thinking and the real world leads to self-destruction. Such a juxtaposition is even more artificial than the mediatized glorification of the sixties, when the structuralist banquet rose to the heights of its glory, and along with it, the four musketeers, who were five at the time: Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, and their common father, Claude Lévi-Strauss.

This collective shipwreck nonetheless remains a milestone on the French intellectual landscape. The disappearance of the master thinkers, and Jean-Paul Sartre must be counted among them, opened up a new period of doubt. Nostalgia was already in the air at the beginning of the 1980s, when it was fashionable to evoke these figures with an ambivalent mixture of awe and fascination heightened by their unusual fates, which had transformed them into something resembling heroes. While some took pleasure in signing the death certificate of structuralism, the body was still alive and kicking hard, according to the survey published in *Lire* in April 1981. When hundreds of writers, journalists, professors, students, and politicians were asked, "Who are the three living intellectuals of the French language whose work seems to you to have the greatest and most profound influence on philosophy, letters, arts, and sciences, etc.?" they answered: Claude Lévi-Strauss (101), Raymond Aron (84), Michel Foucault (83), and Jacques Lacan (51).

The concept of structuralism has stirred as much enthusiasm as opprobrium. From the Latin *struere*, derived from *structura*, the term "structure" initially had an architectural meaning. Structure designated "the manner in which a building is constructed" (*Trévoux Dictionary* [1771]). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the meaning was modified and broadened by analogy to include living creatures. Fontenelle saw the human body as a construction; Vaugelas and Bernot saw language as a construction. The term came to describe the way in which the parts of a concrete being are structured into a whole, and it could apply to a variety of structures—anatomical, psychological, geological, mathematical. It was only later that the structural approach appropriated the social sciences. For Spencer, Morgan, and Marx, the term described an enduring phenomenon linking the parts of a whole together, in a complex manner, and in a more abstract way. The term "structure"—nowhere to be found in Hegel and only infrequently in Marx, with the exception of the preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* (1859)—was established in 1895 by Durkheim, in *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Between 1900 and 1926, structure gave birth to *structuralism*, which André Lalande, in his *Vocabulaire*, calls a neologism. For psychologists, structuralism is born at the beginning of the century, by opposition to functional psychology. But the true origins of the practice, in its modern sense, and on the scale of all the human sciences, comes from developments in the field of linguistics. Saussure used the term "structure" only three times in his *Course on General Linguistics*. Later, the Prague school (Trubetzkoy and Jakobson) generalized the use of the terms "structure" and "structuralism." The Danish linguist Hjelmslev claimed to make reference to the term "structuralism" as a founding program, a tendency made explicit by his activity. In 1939, he founded the review *Acta linguistica*, and its first article addressed "structural linguistics." From this linguistic kernel, the term produced a veritable revolution in all the social sciences that were at the core of the twentieth century, and each in its turn believed that it received a scientific baptism.

Miracle or mirage? The history of science is nothing more, after all, than the history of the graveyard of its theories. This is not at all to say that each of the stages left behind is no longer effective, but simply that any program loses its productivity and necessarily undergoes methodological renewal. With structuralism, however, the changes risked falling into the same traps that the previous method had avoided. Whence the necessity of illuminating the richness and productivity of structuralism before seizing upon its limits. This is the adventure that we will undertake here. Notwithstanding the dead ends into which structuralism has run on occasion, it has changed the way we consider human society so much that it is no longer even possible to think without taking the structuralist revolution into account.

The structuralist moment is a piece of our intellectual history that opened up a particularly fertile period of research in the social sciences. Reconstructing its history is complicated because the contours of the "structuralist" reference are particularly vague. In order to understand the principal positions of the period, we have to reconstruct its many methods and personalities, while at the same time, and without being reductionist about it, seeking some coherent centers. Beyond the multiplicity of objects and disciplines, these centers reveal the matrix of a procedure. Different levels are to be sorted out and the many structuralisms underlying the term "structuralist" differentiated. We can clarify the fundamental intellectual issues, which are as theoretical as they are disciplinary, and explore the wealth of individual trajectories, which cannot be summed up in a group history. As it presents the contingencies of fortuitous but essential meetings, this history proposes to amalgamate bodies and bring many explanatory factors to bear without in any way reducing them to any single causality.

The social sciences appropriated structuralism in a number of ways. But beyond the interplay of borrowed ideas, analogies, and a contiguity that we will be obliged to sketch out, as Barthes counseled the future historians of structuralism to do, we can make a distinction that does not coincide with disciplinary boundaries. Scientifistic structuralism is represented in particular by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Algirdas Julien Greimas, and Jacques Lacan, and simultaneously involved anthropology, semiotics, and psychoanalysis. Contiguous with this search for the Law was a more supple, undulating, and shimmering structuralism to be found particularly in the work of Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, Tzvetan Todorov, and Michel Serres, and which we might call semiological structuralism. There is also, finally, a historicized or epistemic structuralism. The work of Louis Althusser, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Pierre Vernant, and, more broadly, the third generation of the *Annales* falls into this group. Beyond these distinctions, however, we can identify a community of language and goals that sometimes gives the impression that we are reading the same book despite the variations in style and discipline that distinguish a Barthes from a Foucault, a Derrida, or a Lacan. Structuralism was the *koine* of an entire intellectual generation, even if there is no doctrinal solidarity and even less a school or a battle among its various representatives.

It is no less difficult to reconstruct the history of this moment than it is to periodize the structuralist moment. The fifties clearly saw an irresistible increase in structural phenomena that in the sixties became a veritable structuralist mode that most intellectuals adopted. Until 1966, structuralism was in an ascending phase and its growth seemed unstoppable. The year 1966 is a central point of reference. This was the year structuralist activity beamed forth most forcefully in intellectual life and the intensity of the mixture of a universe of signs shone forth beyond all established disciplinary frontiers. Nineteen sixty-seven, however, saw the beginning of the ebb, of criticisms, of distantiation from the structuralist phenomenon, which was everywhere showered with praise by the press. If the ebb was latent in 1967, it began before 1968, when the four musketeers endlessly took their distance from the structuralist phenomenon.

There was another temporality, however, that was less affected by changes in intellectual fashion. University research continued to thrive even as the body was about to be buried. This research was like so many wellsprings of a program that had lost in media glamour what it had gained in pedagogical effectiveness. Not that there was a single academic temporality, for there are always numerous lag times among the humanistic disciplines. For linguistics, sociology, anthropology, or psychoanalysis, for example, structuralism offered an adaptable scientific model. Other disciplines, which were better rooted in the university and better sheltered from epistemological turbulences, such as history, would only be transformed later, and adopt the structuralist program at the moment when its wane was becoming general. Temporal lags and disciplinary uncertainties in these intellectual exchange games notwithstanding, structuralism made many conversations possible, multiplied the numbers of fruitful colloquia, generated much research, and sparked an interest in the work and progress of related disciplines. This was an intense period enlivened by thinkers who were seeking, in the main, to harmonize their research and their lives. Our vision of the world is still shaped by this veritable revolution.

Some call ours the *era of emptiness* and others call it *postmodern*; in either case it invites an approach to man in which a binary opposition, every bit as illusory, is played out between the human dissolution proferred by structuralism, and in reaction, the divinization of man. Man the creator, beyond the constraints of his time, is a mirror image of the death of man. Humanity, the lost paradigm of the structural approach, burst forth again in its narcissistic image of the era of the pre-social sciences. The great structural wave carried the social sciences toward shores on which historicity was a stranger. But we are at an important turning point, expressed as a return to an ancient form of writing in the name of a decline in thinking, a loss of values, and a reliance upon our heritage. The old sawhorses are back: the discreet charms of a Vidalian landscape, the heroes of Lavissian history, the masterpieces of the national literary patrimony in Lagarde and Michard. Beyond this return to a very particular nineteenth century is a particular eighteenth-century vision of man perceived as an abstraction, free from temporal constraints and master of the legal-political system bodying forth his rationalism.

Can we, however, reflect upon man as if the Copernican-Galilean revolution, the Freudian and Marxist fractures, and the progress of the social sciences had not taken place? Pointing out the shortcomings of structuralism does not imply returning to the golden age of the Enlightenment. To the contrary, it means moving forward toward a future in which a historical humanism can be established. It is important that the false convictions and the true dogmatisms as well as the reductionist and mechanistic procedures be clearly pointed out, and the validity of transversal concepts used across disciplines by the social sciences questioned. Not in order to establish a catchall procedure or a shapeless flow, but to wrest from the Brownian motion the prolegomena of a science of man wrought from a certain number of concepts and operational structuring levels.

We call upon the advances made in the social sciences to answer to the emergence of a humanism of the possible, perhaps around the transitory figure of a dialogic man. Moving beyond structuralism requires returning to it in order to examine the method that was broadly adopted by all the social sciences, sketching out the stages of its hegemonic conquest, valorizing the processes that made it possible for a single method to be adopted by the many humanistic disciplines, and understanding the limits and impasses in which the vitality of this attempted renewal waned.

In order to give an account of this French intellectual chapter of the fifties and sixties, we have asked authors and disciples to comment upon the major works of the period; members of other schools and supporters of other trends have also been asked to cast a critical eye upon these works. A great many interviews with philosophers, linguists, sociologists, historians, anthropologists, psychoanalysts, and economists have been incorporated into these pages, and they raise the question of structuralism's importance for their own work and research, and the ways of moving beyond it. This two-volume inquiry reveals the centrality of the structuralist phenomenon, despite and beyond the diversity of viewpoints, and makes it possible to periodize.*

That form of criticism that tries to go ever further in deconstructing Western metaphysics and penetrating the fissure in the foundations of semiology, to empty out every signified and all meaning so that the pure Signifer can circulate more effectively, belongs to a moment in the Western history of self-hate that we have left behind, thanks to a progressive reconciliation between the intelligentsia and democratic values. But it is not possible, in moving beyond a period denominated by the critical paradigm, to simply return to what preceded. A return is nonetheless necessary in order to better understand this period whose contributions have irrevocably changed our understanding of humankind.

*This inquiry is organized in two volumes, corresponding to the two major phases of the structuralist adventure: the ascension (vol. 1, *The Rising Sign, 1945–1966*), and the decline (vol. 2, *The Sign Sets, 1967–Present*).

Part I

The Fifties: The Epic Epoch

Poststructuralism and the "Paraliterary"

ROSALIND KRAUSS

Last fall Partisan Review *conducted a two-day symposium under the general title "The State of Criticism." Although various sessions were designed to treat a variety of topics, most presentations were dominated by one continuing theme: structuralist and poststructuralist critical theory and the threat that it somehow poses for literature. My own role in these proceedings was limited to that of discussant; I was to comment on the main paper, written by Morris Dickstein and delivered as the substance of a session dedicated to the influence of recent critical theory on the vehicles of mass culture. As will become obvious, Dickstein's paper was yet another statement of the general sense that literary criticism (understood as an academic discipline) had fallen hostage to an invading force, that this force was undermining critical practice (understood as close reading) and, through that corrosive effect, was eating away at our concept of literature itself.*

My comments had, then, a very particular point of origin. But the views against which those comments were directed are extremely widespread within the literary establishment—both inside and outside the academy—where a sense of the pernicious nature of poststructuralism has led to more recent projects devoted to "How to Rescue Literature."[1] *Thus, despite the specific occasion that gave rise to my discussion of the "paraliterary," I believe this is of much wider conceptual interest. I therefore reproduce in full my remarks.*

The title of this morning's session—"The Effects of Critical Theories on Practical Criticism, Cultural Journalism, and Reviewing"—suggests that what is at issue is the dissemination, or integration, of certain theoretical perspectives into an apparatus of critical practice that reaches well beyond the graduate departments of English or Comp. Lit. at Harvard, Yale, Cornell, and Johns Hopkins. The subject appears to be the effect of theory on what Mr. Dickstein describes as "the mediating force between an increasingly difficult literature and an increas-

1. Two particularly vociferous attacks on poststructuralism have appeared recently in *The New York Review of Books*: Roger Shattuck, "How to Rescue Literature," *NYR*, XXVI, 6 (April 17, 1980), 29–35; and Denis Donoghue "Deconstructing Deconstruction," *NYR*, XXVII, 10 (June 12, 1980), 37–41.

ingly diverse audience," a mediating force represented in this country by a long list of magazines and journals, headed, undoubtedly, by *The New York Review of Books*. Now this is a subject on which Mr. Dickstein's paper—obsessed by what he sees as the deepening technocratization of graduate studies—does not touch. If by this omission he means to imply that he thinks that advanced critical theory has had *no* effect whatsoever on that wider critical apparatus, then he and I are in complete agreement.

But the question would seem to be—Mr. Dickstein's laments aside—*why* has there been no such effect? In order to broach that subject I would like to recall briefly two lectures I attended by two of the technocrats in Mr. Dickstein's account: Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes. Derrida's lecture was the presentation of part of an essay called "Restitutions," which, in examining the claims Heidegger makes in "The Origin of the Work of Art," focuses on a painting by Van Gogh commonly thought to be the depiction of a pair of shoes. In that lecture, Derrida placed special emphasis on the role of a voice that continually interrupted the flow of his own more formal discourse as it spun out the terms of philosophical debate. Enacted in a slight falsetto, this voice was, Derrida explained, that of a woman who repeatedly breaks into the measured order of the exposition with questions that are slightly hysterical, very exasperated, and above all *short*. "What pair?" she keeps insisting, "Who said they were a *pair* of shoes?" Now this voice, cast as a woman's, is of course Derrida's own, and it functions to telegraph in a charged and somewhat disguised way the central argument which for other reasons must proceed at a more professorial pace. But aside from its rather terroristic reductiveness, this voice functions to open and theatricalize the space of Derrida's writing, alerting us to the dramatic interplay of levels and styles and speakers that had formerly been the prerogative of literature but not of critical or philosophical discourse.

This arrogation of certain terms and ruses of literature leads me to the lecture by Roland Barthes entitled *"Longtemps je me suis couché de bonne heure"* in which, by analogizing his own career to that of Proust, Barthes more explicitly pointed to an intention to blur the distinction between literature and criticism. Indeed, much of Barthes's recent work—I am thinking of *The Pleasure of the Text*, *A Lover's Discourse*, and *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*—simply cannot be called criticism, but it cannot, for that matter, be called not-criticism either. Rather, criticism finds itself caught in a dramatic web of many voices, citations, asides, divigations. And what is created, as in the case of much of Derrida, is a kind of paraliterature. Since Barthes's and Derrida's projects are extremely different, it is perhaps only in this matter of inaugurating a paraliterary genre that their work can be juxtaposed.

The paraliterary space is the space of debate, quotation, partisanship, betrayal, reconciliation; but it is not the space of unity, coherence, or resolution that we think of as constituting the work of literature. For both Barthes and Derrida have a deep enmity towards that notion of the literary work. What is left is drama without the Play, voices without the Author, criticism without the Argument. It is no wonder that this country's critical establishment—outside the university, that is—remains unaffected by this work, simply cannot use it. Because the paraliterary cannot be a model for the systematic unpacking of the meanings of a work of art that criticism's task is thought to be.

The creation of the paraliterary in the more recent work of these men is, of course, the result of theory—their own theories in operation, so to speak. These theories run exactly counter to the notion that there is a work, x, behind which there stands a group of meanings, a, b, or c, which the hermeneutic task of the critic unpacks, reveals, by breaking through, peeling back the literal surface of the work. By claiming that there is not, *behind* the literal surface, a set of meanings to which it points or models to which it refers, a set of originary terms onto which it opens and from which it derives its own authenticity, this theory is not prolonging the life of formalism and saying what Mr. Dickstein claims "we all know"—that writing is about writing. For in that formula a different object is substituted for the term "about"; instead of a work's being "about" the July Monarchy or death and money, it is "about" its own strategies of construction, its own linguistic operations, its own revelation of convention, its own surface. In this formulation it is the Author or Literature rather than the World or Truth that is the source of the text's authenticity.

Mr. Dickstein's view of this theory is that it is a jazzed-up, technocratized version of formalism, that its message is that writing is about writing, and that in a work like *S/Z*, "Barthes's purpose is to preserve and extract the multiplicity of the text's meanings." Here we arrive not only at the point where there is no agreement whatsoever between us, but also at the second reason why this theory has left the wider critical establishment of this country in such virginal condition. For where that establishment has not been largely ignorant of the work of Barthes or Derrida or Lacan, it has misconceived or misconstrued it. To use the example that Mr. Dickstein has provided, *S/Z* is precisely not the preservation and extraction of "the multiplicity of the text's meanings." Nor is it what the jacket copywriter for the American edition claims: the semantic dissection of a Balzac novella, "in order to uncover layers of unsuspected meanings and connotations." For both these notions—"extraction" and "dissection"—presuppose an activity that is not Barthes's own, just as they arise from a view of the literary object that Barthes wishes not so much to attack as to dispel. For *extract* and *dissect* assume a certain relation between denotation and connotation as they function within the literary text; they assume, that is, the primacy of the denotative, the literal utterance, beyond which lies the rich vein of connotation or association or meaning. Common sense conspires to tell us that this should be so. But Barthes—for whom common sense is the enemy, due to its unshakable habit of fashioning everything on the model of nature—demonstrates the opposite: that denotation is the effect of connotation, the last block to be put in place. *S/Z* is a demonstration of the way that systems of connotation, stereotype, cliché, gnomic utterance—in short, the always already-known, already-experienced, already-given-within-a-culture—concatenate to produce a text. Further, he claims that it is not only this connotational system that writes the text, but that it is, literally, what we read when we read the literary work. Nothing is buried that must be "extracted"; it is all part of the surface of the text.

Thus, in introducing the three women who surround the narrator of *Sarrasine,* Balzac describes Marianina as "a girl of sixteen whose beauty embodied the fabled imaginings of the Eastern poets! Like the sultan's daughter, in the story of the Magic Lamp, she should have been kept veiled." To this description Barthes responds, "This is a vast commonplace of literature: the Woman copies the Book. In other words, every body is a citation: of the 'already-written.' The origin of desire is the statue, the painting, the book." Then Marianina's mother is introduced with the question, "Have you ever encountered one of those women whose striking beauty defies the inroads of age?" To which Barthes's response is: "Mme de Lanty's body is drawn [with the words *one of those women*] from another Book: the Book of Life." Again, after the opening description of Mme de Rochefide as a woman "delicately formed, with one of those faces as fresh as that of a child," Barthes pounces again on the term "one of those faces": "The body is a duplicate of the Book: the young woman originates in the Book of Life, the plural refers to a total of stored-up and recorded experiences." The text's invocation of those books, those vast storehouses of cliché, creates what Barthes refers to as the "stereographic space of writing," as well as the illusion that there is a denotational object—Marianina, or Mme de Lanty—that precedes the connotational system signaled by "one of those faces." But if writing sets up the pretense that denotation is the first meaning, for Barthes denotation is "no more than the last of the connotations (the one which seems both to establish and to close the reading)." Identifying these connotational systems as codes, Barthes writes, "To depict is to unroll the carpet of the codes, to refer not from a language to a referent, but from one code to another. Thus, realism consists not in copying the real but in copying a (depicted) copy of the real. . . . This is why realism cannot be designated a 'copier' but rather a 'pasticheur' (through secondary mimesis, it copies what is already a copy)."

The painstaking, almost hallucinatory slowness with which Barthes proceeds through the text of *Sarrasine* provides an extraordinary demonstration of this chattering of voices which is that of the codes at work. If Barthes has a purpose, it is to isolate these codes by applying a kind of spotlight to each instance of them, to expose them "as so many fragments of something that has always been already read, seen, done, experienced." It is also to make them heard as voices "whose origin," he says, "is lost in the vast perspective of the already-written" and whose interweaving acts to "de-originate the utterance." It is as impossible to reconcile this project with formalism as it is to revive within it the heartbeat of humanism. To take the demonstration of the de-originated utterance seriously would obviously put a large segment of the critical establishment out of business;

it is thus no wonder that poststructuralist theory should have had so little effect in that quarter.

There is however another place where this work has met with a rather different reception: in graduate schools where students, whatever their other concerns might be, are interested in reading. These students, having experienced the collapse of modernist literature, have turned to the literary products of postmodernism, among the most powerful examples of which are the paraliterary works of Barthes and Derrida. If one of the tenets of modernist literature had been the creation of a work that would force reflection on the conditions of its own construction, that would insist on reading as a much more consciously *critical* act, then it is not surprising that the medium of a *post*modernist literature should be the critical text wrought into a paraliterary form. And what is clear is that Barthes and Derrida are the *writers,* not the critics, that students now read.

Sixth Reading

Martin Heidegger, excerpt from *Being and Time* (1927)

. . . δῆλον γὰρ ὡς ὑμεῖς μὲν ταῦτα (τί ποτε βούλεσθε σημαίνειν ὁπόταν ὂν φθέγγησθε) πάλαι γιγνώσκετε, ἡμεῖς δὲ πρὸ τοῦ μὲν ᾠόμεθα, νῦν δ᾽ ἠπορήκαμεν . . . 1

[Plato, *Sophist* 244a]

"For manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression '*being*.' We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed."

Do we in our time have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word 'being'? Not at all. So it is fitting that we should raise anew *the question of the meaning* of *being*. But are we nowadays even perplexed at our inability to understand the expression 'being'? Not at all. So first of all we must reawaken an understanding for the meaning of this question. Our aim in the following treatise is to work out the question of the meaning of *being* and to do so concretely. Our provisional aim is the interpretation of *time* as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of being.

But the reasons for making this our aim, the investigations which such a purpose requires, and the path to its achievement, call for some introductory remarks.

INTRODUCTION

The Exposition of the Question of the Meaning of Being

I

The Necessity, Structure, and Priority of the Question of Being

1. The Necessity of an Explicit Retrieve of the Question of Being

This question has today been forgotten—although our time considers itself progressive in again affirming "metaphysics." All the same we believe that we are spared the exertion of rekindling a *gigantomachia peri tēs ousias* ["a Battle of Giants concerning Being," Plato, *Sophist* 245e6–246e1]. But the question touched upon here is hardly an arbitrary one. It sustained the avid research of Plato and Aristotle but from then on ceased to be heard *as a thematic question of actual investigation.* What these two thinkers achieved has been preserved in various distorted and "camouflaged" forms down to Hegel's *Logic.* And what then was wrested from phenomena by the highest exertion of thought, albeit in fragments and first beginnings, has long since been trivialized.

Not only that. On the foundation of the Greek point of departure for the interpretation of being a dogma has taken shape which not only declares that the question of the meaning of being is superfluous but sanctions its neglect. It is said that "being" is the most universal and the emptiest concept. As such it resists every attempt at definition. Nor does this most universal and thus indefinable concept need any definition. Everybody uses it constantly and also already understands what is meant by it. Thus what troubled ancient philosophizing and kept it so by virtue of its obscurity has become obvious, clear as day, such that whoever persists in asking about it is accused of an error of method.

At the beginning of this inquiry the prejudices that constantly instill and repeatedly promote the idea that a questioning of being is not
3 needed cannot be discussed in detail. They are rooted in ancient ontology itself. That ontology can in turn only be interpreted adequately under the guidance of the question of being which has been clarified and answered beforehand. One must proceed with regard to the soil from which the fundamental ontological concepts grew and with reference to the suitable demonstration of the categories and their completeness. We therefore wish to discuss these prejudices only to the extent that the necessity of a retrieve of the question of the meaning of being becomes evident. There are three such prejudices.

1. "Being"* is the most "universal" concept: *to on esti katholou malista pantōn.*[1] *Illud quod primo cadit sub apprehensione est ens, cuius intellectus includitur in omnibus, quaecumque quis apprehendit.* "An understanding of being is always already contained in everything we apprehend in beings."[2] But the "universality" of "being" is not that of *genus.* "Being" does not delimit the highest region of beings so far as they are conceptually articulated according to genus and species: *oute to on genos* ["Being is not a genus"].[3] The "universality" of being "surpasses" the universality of genus. According to the designation of medieval ontology, "being" is a *transcendens.* Aristotle himself understood the unity of this transcendental "universal," as opposed to the manifold of the highest generic concepts with material content, as the *unity of analogy.* Despite his dependence upon Plato's ontological position, Aristotle placed the problem of being on a fundamentally new basis with this discovery. To be sure, he too did not clarify the obscurity of these categorial connections. Medieval ontology discussed this problem in many ways, above all in the Thomist and Scotist schools, without gaining fundamental clarity. And when Hegel finally defines "being" as the "indeterminate immediate," and makes this definition the foundation of all the further categorial explications of his *Logic,* he remains within the perspective of ancient ontology—except that he does give up the problem, raised early on by Aristotle, of the unity of being in contrast to the manifold of "categories" with material content. If one says accordingly that "Being" is the most universal concept, that cannot mean that it is the clearest and that it needs no further discussion. The concept of "being" is rather the most obscure of all.

4 2. The concept of "being" is indefinable. This conclusion was drawn from its highest universality.[4] And correctly so—if *definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam* [if "definition is achieved through the proximate genus and the specific difference"]. Indeed, "being" cannot be understood as a being. *Enti non additur aliqua natura:* "Being"

* the being [das Seiende], beingness

cannot be defined by attributing beings to it. Being cannot be derived from higher concepts by way of definition and cannot be represented by lower ones. But does it follow from this that "being" can no longer constitute a problem? Not at all. We can conclude only that "being" is not something like a being.* Thus the manner of definition of beings which has its justification within limits—the "definition" of traditional logic which is itself rooted in ancient ontology—cannot be applied to being. The indefinability of being does not dispense with the question of its meaning but forces it upon us.

3. "Being" is the self-evident concept. "Being" is used in all knowing and predicating, in every relation to beings and in every relation to oneself, and the expression is understandable "without further ado." Everybody understands, "The sky *is* blue," "I *am* happy," and similar statements. But this average comprehensibility only demonstrates the incomprehensibility. It shows that an enigma lies *a priori* in every relation and being toward beings as beings. The fact that we live already in an understanding of being and that the meaning of being is at the same time shrouded in darkness proves the fundamental necessity of repeating the question of the meaning of "being."

If what is "self-evident" and this alone—"the covert judgments of common reason" (Kant)—is to become and remain the explicit theme of our analysis (as "the business of philosophers"), then the appeal to self-evidence in the realm of basic philosophical concepts, and indeed with regard to the concept "being," is a dubious procedure.

But consideration of the prejudices has made it clear at the same time that not only is the *answer* to the question of being lacking but even the question itself is obscure and without direction. Thus to retrieve the question of being means first of all to work out adequately the *formulation* of the question.

2. The Formal Structure of the Question of Being 5

The question of the meaning of being must be *formulated.* If it is a—or even *the*—fundamental question, such questioning needs the suitable transparency. Thus we must briefly discuss what belongs to a question in general in order to be able to make clear that the question of being is an *eminent* one.

Every questioning is a seeking. Every seeking takes its direction beforehand from what is sought. Questioning is a knowing search for beings in their thatness and whatness. The knowing search can become an

* no! rather: no decision about being [Seyn] can be made with the help of such conceptuality

"investigation," as the revealing determination of what the question aims at. As questioning about . . . questioning has *what it asks about.* All asking about . . . is in some way an inquiring of . . . . Besides what is asked, what is *interrogated* also belongs to questioning. What is questioned is to be defined and conceptualized in the investigating, that is, the specifically theoretical, question. As what is really intended, what is to be *ascertained* lies in what is questioned; here questioning arrives at its goal. As an attitude adopted by a being, the questioner, questioning has its own character of being. Questioning can come about as "just asking around" or as an explicitly formulated question. What is peculiar to the latter is the fact that questioning first becomes lucid in advance with regard to all the above-named constitutive characteristics of the question.

The question to be *formulated* is about the meaning of being. Thus we are confronted with the necessity of explicating the question of being with regard to the structural moments cited.

As a seeking, questioning needs prior guidance from what it seeks. The meaning of being must therefore already be available to us in a certain way. We intimated that we are always already involved in an understanding of being. From this grows the explicit question of the meaning of being and the tendency toward its concept. We do not *know* what "being" means. But already when we ask, "What is being'?" we stand in an understanding of the "is" without being able to determine conceptually what the "is" means. We do not even know the horizon upon which we are supposed to grasp and pin down the meaning. *This average and vague understanding of being is a fact.*

No matter how much this understanding of being wavers and fades and borders on mere verbal knowledge, this indefiniteness of the understanding of being that is always already available is itself a positive phe-
6 nomenon which needs elucidation. However, an investigation of the meaning of being will not wish to provide this at the outset. The interpretation of the average understanding of being attains its necessary guideline only with the developed concept of being. From the clarity of that concept and the appropriate manner of its explicit understanding we shall be able to discern what the obscure or not yet elucidated understanding of being means, what kinds of obfuscation or hindrance of an explicit elucidation of the meaning of being are possible and necessary.

Furthermore, the average, vague understanding of being can be permeated by traditional theories and opinions about being in such a way that these theories, as the sources of the prevailing understanding, remain hidden. What is sought in the question of being is not completely unfamiliar, although it is at first totally ungraspable.

What is *asked about* in the question to be elaborated is being, that which determines beings as beings, that in terms of which beings have

always been understood no matter how they are discussed. The being of beings "is" itself not a being. The first philosophical step in understanding the problem of being consists in avoiding the *mython tina diēgeisthai,*[5] in not "telling a story," that is, not determining beings as beings by tracing them back in their origins to another being—as if being had the character of a possible being. As what is asked about, being thus requires its own kind of demonstration which is essentially different from the discovery of beings. Hence what is to be *ascertained,* the meaning of being, will require its own conceptualization, which again is essentially distinct from the concepts in which beings receive their determination of meaning.

Insofar as being constitutes what is asked about, and insofar as being means the being of beings, beings themselves turn out to be what is *interrogated* in the question of being. Beings are, so to speak, interrogated with regard to their being. But if they are to exhibit the characteristics of their being without falsification they must for their part have become accessible in advance as they are in themselves. The question of being demands that the right access to beings be gained and secured in advance with regard to what it interrogates. But we call many things "existent" [*seiend*], and in different senses. Everything we talk about,
mean, and are related to is in being in one way or another. What and 7
how we ourselves are is also in being. Being is found in thatness and whatness, reality, the objective presence of things [*Vorhandenheit*], subsistence, validity, existence [Da-sein],* and in the "there is" [*es gibt*]. In *which* being is the meaning of being to be found;† from which being is the disclosure of being to get its start? Is the starting point arbitrary, or does a certain being have priority in the elaboration of the question of being? Which is this exemplary‡ being and in what sense does it have priority?

If the question of being is to be explicitly formulated and brought to complete clarity concerning itself, then the elaboration of this question requires, in accord with what has been elucidated up to now, explication of the ways of regarding being and of understanding and conceptually grasping its meaning, preparation of the possibility of the right choice of the exemplary being, and elaboration of the genuine mode of access to this being. Regarding, understanding and grasping, choosing, and gaining access to, are constitutive attitudes of inquiry and are thus

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* neither the usual concept nor any other

† two different questions are aligned here; misleading, above all in relation to the role of Da-sein.

‡ Misleading. Da-sein is exemplary because it is the co-player (das Bei-spiel) that in its essence as Da-sein (perduring the truth of being) plays to and with being—brings it into the play of resonance.

themselves modes of being of a particular being, of *the* being we inquirers ourselves in each case are. Thus to work out the question of being means to make a being—one who questions—transparent in its being. Asking this question, as a mode of *being* of a being, is itself essentially determined by what is asked about in it—being.* This being which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of its being we formulate terminologically as Da-sein. The explicit and lucid formulation of the question of the meaning of being requires a prior suitable explication of a being (Da-sein) with regard to its being.†

But does not such an enterprise fall into an obvious circle? To have to determine beings *in their being* beforehand and then on this foundation first pose the question of being—what else is that but going around in circles? In working out the question do we not presuppose something that only the answer can provide? Formal objections such as the argument of "circular reasoning," an argument that is always easily raised in the area of investigation of principles, are always sterile when one is weighing concrete ways of investigating. They do not offer anything to the understanding of the issue and they hinder penetration into the field of investigation.

But in fact there is no circle at all in the formulation of our question. Beings can be determined in their being without the explicit concept
8 of the meaning of being having to be already available. If this were not so there could not have been as yet any ontological knowledge. And probably no one would deny the factual existence of such knowledge. It is true that "being" is "presupposed" in all previous ontology, but not as an available *concept*—not as the sort of thing we are seeking. "Presupposing" being has the character of taking a preliminary look at being in such a way that on the basis of this look beings that are already given are tentatively articulated in their being. This guiding look at being grows out of the average understanding of being in which we are always already involved *and which ultimately*‡ *belongs to the essential constitution of Da-sein itself.* Such "presupposing" has nothing to do with positing a principle from which a series of propositions is deduced. A "circle in reasoning" cannot possibly lie in the formulation of the question of the meaning of being, because in answering this question it is not a matter of grounding by deduction but rather of laying bare and exhibiting the ground.

"Circular reasoning" does not occur in the question of the meaning of being. Rather, there is a notable "relatedness backward or forward" of what is asked about (being) to asking as a mode of being of a

* Da-sein: being held out into the nothingness of being, held as relation.
† But the meaning of being is not drawn from this being.
‡ i.e., from the beginning

being. The way what is questioned essentially engages our questioning belongs to the innermost meaning of the question of being. But this only means that the being that has the character of Da-sein has a relation to the question of being itself, perhaps even a distinctive one. But have we not thereby demonstrated that a particular being has a priority with respect to being and that the exemplary being that is to function as what is primarily *interrogated* is pregiven?* In what we have discussed up to now neither has the priority of Da-sein been demonstrated nor has anything been decided about its possible or even necessary function as the primary being to be interrogated. But certainly something like a priority of Da-sein has announced itself.

3. The Ontological Priority of the Question of Being

The characterization of the question of being, under the guideline of the formal structure of the question as such, has made it clear that this question is a unique one, such that its elaboration and even its solution require a series of fundamental reflections. However, what is distinctive about the question of being will fully come to light only when that question is sufficiently delineated with regard to its function, intention, and motives.

Up to now the necessity of a retrieve of the question was moti-
vated partly by its venerable origin but above all by the lack of a definite 9
answer, even by the lack of any adequate formulation. But one can demand to know what purpose this question should serve. Does it remain solely, or *is* it at all, only a matter of free-floating speculation about the most general generalities—*or is it the most basic and at the same time most concrete question?*

Being is always the being of a being. The totality of beings can, with respect to its various domains, become the field where particular areas of knowledge are exposed and delimited. These areas—for example, history, nature, space, life, human being, language, and so on—can in their turn become thematized as objects of scientific investigations. Scientific research demarcates and first establishes these areas of knowledge in a rough and ready fashion. The elaboration of the area in its fundamental structures is in a way already accomplished by prescientific experience and interpretation of the domain of being to which the area of knowledge is itself confined. The resulting "fundamental concepts" comprise the guidelines for the first concrete disclosure of the area.

* Again as above, an essential simplification and yet correctly thought. Da-sein is not an instance of being for the representational abstraction of being; rather, it is the site of the understanding of being.

Whether or not the importance of the research always lies in such establishment of concepts, its true progress comes about not so much in collecting results and storing them in "handbooks" as in being forced to ask questions about the basic constitution of each area, these questions being chiefly a reaction to increasing knowledge in each area.

The real "movement" of the sciences takes place in the revision of these basic concepts, a revision which is more or less radical and lucid with regard to itself. A science's level of development is determined by the extent to which it is *capable* of a crisis in its basic concepts. In these immanent crises of the sciences the relation of positive questioning to the matter in question becomes unstable. Today tendencies to place research on new foundations have cropped up on all sides in the various disciplines.

The discipline which is seemingly the strictest and most securely structured, mathematics, has experienced a "crisis in its foundations." The controversy between formalism and intuitionism centers on obtaining and securing primary access to what should be the proper object of this science. Relativity theory in physics grew out of the tendency to expose nature's own coherence as it is "in itself." As a theory of the conditions of access to nature itself it attempts to preserve the
10 immutability of the laws of motion by defining all relativities; it is thus confronted by the question of the structure of its pre-given area of knowledge, that is, by the problem of matter. In biology the tendency has awakened to get behind the definitions mechanism and vitalism have given to "organism" and "life" and to define anew the kind of being of living beings as such. In the historical and humanistic disciplines the drive toward historical actuality itself has been strengthened by the transmission and portrayal of tradition: the history of literature is to become the history of critical problems. Theology is searching for a more original interpretation of human being's being toward God, prescribed by the meaning of faith itself and remaining within it. Theology is slowly beginning to understand again Luther's insight that its system of dogma rests on a "foundation" that does not stem from a questioning in which faith is primary and whose conceptual apparatus is not only insufficient for the range of problems in theology but rather covers them up and distorts them.

Fundamental concepts are determinations in which the area of knowledge underlying all the thematic objects of a science attain an understanding that precedes and guides all positive investigation. Accordingly these concepts first receive their genuine evidence and "grounding" only in a correspondingly preliminary research into the area of knowledge itself. But since each of these areas arises from the domain of beings themselves, this preliminary research that creates the fundamental concepts amounts to nothing else than interpreting these beings in terms of

the basic constitution of their being. This kind of investigation must precede the positive sciences—and it *can* do so. The work of Plato and Aristotle is proof of this. Laying the foundations of the sciences in this way is different in principle from "logic" limping along behind, investigating here and there the status of a science in terms of its "method." Such laying of foundations is productive logic in the sense that it leaps ahead, so to speak, into a particular realm of being, discloses it for the first time in its constitutive being, and makes the acquired structures available to the positive sciences as lucid directives for inquiry. Thus, for example, what is philosophically primary is not a theory of concept-formation in historiology, nor the theory of historical knowledge, nor even the theory of history as the object of historiology; what is primary is rather the interpretation of genuinely historical beings with regard to their historicality. Similarly, the positive result of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* consists in its
approach to working out what belongs to any nature whatsoever, and not 11
in a "theory" of knowledge. His transcendental logic is an *a priori* logic of the realm of being called nature.

But such inquiry—ontology taken in its broadest sense without reference to specific ontological directions and tendencies—itself still needs a guideline. It is true that ontological inquiry is more original than the ontic inquiry of the positive sciences. But it remains naïve and opaque if its investigations into the being of beings leave the meaning of being in general undiscussed. And precisely the ontological task of a genealogy of the different possible ways of being (a genealogy which is not to be construed deductively) requires a preliminary understanding of "what we really mean by this expression 'being.'"

The question of being thus aims at an *a priori* condition of the possibility not only of the sciences which investigate beings of such and such a type—and are thereby already involved in an understanding of being; but it aims also at the condition of the possibility of the ontologies which precede the ontic sciences and found them. *All ontology, no matter how rich and tightly knit a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains fundamentally blind and perverts its innermost intent if it has not previously clarified the meaning of being sufficiently and grasped this clarification as its fundamental task.*

Ontological research itself, correctly understood, gives the question of being its ontological priority over and above merely resuming an honored tradition and making progress on a problem until now opaque. But this scholarly, scientific priority is not the only one.

4. The Ontic Priority of the Question of Being

Science in general can be defined as the totality of fundamentally coherent true propositions. This definition is not complete, nor does it get at

the meaning of science. As ways in which human beings behave, sciences have this being's (the human being's) kind of being. We are defining this being terminologically as Da-sein. Scientific research is neither the sole nor the most immediate kind of being of this being that is pos-
12 sible. Moreover, Da-sein itself is distinctly different from other beings. We must make this distinct difference visible in a preliminary way. Here the discussion must anticipate subsequent analyses which only later will become truly demonstrative.

Da-sein is a being that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned *about* its very being. Thus it is constitutive of the being of Da-sein to have, in its very being, a relation of being to this being. And this in turn means that Da-sein understands itself in its being in some way and with some explicitness. It is proper to this being that it be disclosed to itself with and through its being. *Understanding of being is itself a determination of being of Da-sein.** The ontic distinction of Da-sein lies in the fact that it *is* ontological.

To be ontological does not yet mean to develop ontology. Thus if we reserve the term ontology for the explicit, theoretical question of the meaning of beings, the intended ontological character of Da-sein is to be designated as pre-ontological. That does not signify being simply ontical, but rather being in the manner of an understanding of being.

We shall call the[†] very being to which[‡] Da-sein can relate in one way or another, and somehow always does relate, existence [*Existenz*]. And because the essential definition of this being cannot be accomplished by ascribing to it a "what" that specifies its material content, because its essence lies rather in the fact that it in each instance has to be its being as its own, the term Dasein, as a pure expression of being, has been chosen to designate this being.

Da-sein always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of its possibility to be itself or not to be itself. Da-sein has either chosen these possibilities itself, stumbled upon them, or in each instance already grown up in them. Existence is decided only by each Da-sein itself in the manner of seizing upon or neglecting such possibilities. We come to terms with the question of existence always only through existence itself. We shall call *this* kind of understanding of itself *existentiell* understanding. The question of existence is an ontic "affair" of Da-sein. For this the theoretical transparency of the ontological structure of existence is not

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* But in this case being not only as the being of human being (Existenz). That becomes clear from the following. Being-in-the-world includes *in itself* the relation of existence to being in the whole: the understanding of being.

[†] that

[‡] as its own

necessary. The question of structure aims at the analysis of what constitutes existence.* We shall call the coherence of these structures *existentiality*. Its analysis does not have the character of an existentiell understanding but rather an *existential* one. The task of an existential analysis 13
of Da-sein is prescribed with regard to its possibility and necessity in the ontic constitution of Da-sein.

But since existence defines Da-sein, the ontological analysis of this being always requires a previous glimpse of existentiality. However, we understand existentiality as the constitution of being of the being that exists. But the idea of being already lies in the idea of such a constitution of being. And thus the possibility of carrying out the analysis of Da-sein depends upon the prior elaboration of the question of the meaning of being in general.

Sciences and disciplines are ways of being of Da-sein in which Dasein also relates to beings that it need not itself be. But *being in a world* belongs essentially to Da-sein. Thus the understanding of being that belongs to Da-sein just as originally implies the understanding of something like "world" and the understanding of the being of beings accessible within the world. Ontologies which have beings unlike Da-sein as their theme are accordingly founded and motivated in the ontic structure of Da-sein itself. This structure includes in itself the determination of a pre-ontological understanding of being.

Thus *fundamental ontology*, from which alone all other ontologies can originate, must be sought in the *existential analysis of Da-sein*.

Da-sein accordingly takes priority in several ways over all other beings. The first priority is an *ontic* one: this being is defined in its being by existence. The second priority is an *ontological* one: on the basis of its determination as existence Da-sein is in itself "ontological." But just as originally Da-sein possesses—in a manner constitutive of its understanding of existence—an understanding of the being of all beings unlike itself. Da-sein therefore has its third priority as the ontic-ontological condition of the possibility of all ontologies. Da-sein has proven to be what, before all other beings, is ontologically the primary being to be interrogated.

However, the roots of the existential analysis, for their part, are ultimately *existentiell*—they are *ontic*. Only when philosophical research and inquiry themselves are grasped in an existentiell way—as a possibility of being of each existing Da-sein—does it become possible at all to disclose the existentiality of existence and therewith to get hold of a sufficiently grounded set of ontological problems. But with this the ontic 14
priority of the question of being has also become clear.

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*Thus not a philosophy of existence [Existenzphilosophie].

The ontic-ontological priority of Da-sein was already seen early on, without Da-sein itself being grasped in its genuine ontological structure or even becoming a problem with such an aim. Aristotle says, *hē psychē ta onta pōs estin*.[6] The soul (of the human being) is in a certain way beings. The "soul" which constitutes the being of human being discovers in its ways to be—*aisthēsis* and *noēsis*—all beings with regard to their thatness and whatness, that is to say, always also in their being. Thomas Aquinas discussed this statement—which refers back to Parmenides' ontological thesis—in a manner characteristic of him. Thomas is engaged in the task of deriving the "transcendentals," the characteristics of being that lie beyond every possible generic determination of a being in its material content, every *modus specialis entis*, and that are necessary attributes of every "something," whatever it might be. For him the *verum* too is to be demonstrated as being such a *transcendens*. This is to be accomplished by appealing to a being which in conformity with its kind of being is suited to "come together" with any being whatsoever. This distinctive being, the *ens quod natum est convenire cum omni ente* ["the being whose nature it is to meet with all other beings"], is the soul (*anima*).[7] The priority of Da-sein over and above all other beings which emerges here without being ontologically clarified obviously has nothing in common with a vapid subjectivizing of the totality of beings.

The demonstration of the ontic-ontological distinctiveness of the question of being is grounded in the preliminary indication of the ontic-ontological priority of Da-sein. But the analysis of the structure of the question of being as such (section 2) came up against the distinctive function of this being within the formulation of that very question. Da-sein revealed itself to be that being which must first be elaborated in a sufficiently ontological manner if the inquiry is to become a lucid one. But now it has become evident that the ontological analysis of Da-sein in general constitutes fundamental ontology, that Da-sein consequently functions as the being that is to be *interrogated* fundamentally in advance with respect to its being.

If the interpretation of the meaning of being is to become a task,
15 Da-sein is not only the primary being to be interrogated; in addition to this it is the being that always already in its being is related to *what is sought* in this question. But then the question of being is nothing else than the radicalization of an essential tendency of being that belongs to Da-sein itself, namely, of the pre-ontological understanding of being.

II

The Double Task in Working Out the Question of Being: The Method of the Investigation and Its Outline

5. The Ontological Analysis of Da-sein as the Exposure of the Horizon for an Interpretation of the Meaning of Being in General

In designating the tasks involved in "formulating" the question of being, we showed that not only must we pinpoint the particular being that is to function as the primary being to be interrogated but also that an explicit appropriation and securing of correct access to this being is required. We discussed which being it is that takes over the major role within the question of being. But how should this being, Da-sein, become accessible and, so to speak, be envisaged in a perceptive interpretation?

The ontic-ontological priority that has been demonstrated for Da-sein could lead to the mistaken opinion that this being would have to be what is primarily given also ontically-ontologically, not only in the sense that such a being could be grasped "immediately" but also that the prior giveness of its manner of being would be just as "immediate." True, Da-sein is ontically not only what is near or even nearest—we ourselves *are* it, each of us. Nevertheless, or precisely for this reason, it is ontologically what is farthest removed. True, it belongs to its most proper being to have an understanding of this being and to sustain a certain

cussum ["unshakable foundation"]. The *res cogitans* is ontologically determined as *ens*, and for medieval ontology the meaning of the being of the *ens* is established in the understanding of it as *ens creatum*. As the *ens infinitum* God is the *ens increatum*. But createdness, in the broadest sense
25 of something having been produced, is an essential structural moment of the ancient concept of being. The ostensibly new beginning of philosophizing betrays the imposition of a fatal prejudice. On the basis of this prejudice later times neglect a thematic ontological analysis of "the mind" ["*Gemüt*"] which would be guided by the question of being; likewise they neglect a critical confrontation with the inherited ancient ontology.

Everyone familiar with the medieval period sees that Descartes is "dependent" upon medieval scholasticism and uses its terminology. But with this "discovery" nothing is gained philosophically as long as it remains obscure to what a profound extent medieval ontology influences the way posterity determines or fails to determine the *res cogitans* ontologically. The full extent of this influence cannot be estimated until the meaning and limits of ancient ontology have been shown by our orientation toward the question of being. In other words, the destructuring sees itself assigned the task of interpreting the foundation of ancient ontology in light of the problem of temporality. Here it becomes evident that the ancient interpretation of the being of beings is oriented toward the "world" or "nature" in the broadest sense and that it indeed gains its understanding of being from "time." The outward evidence of this—but of course *only* outward—is the determination of the meaning of being as *parousia* or *ousia*, which ontologically and temporally means "presence" ["*Anwesenheit*"]. Beings are grasped in their being as "presence"; that is to say, they are understood with regard to a definite mode of time, the *present*.

The problem of Greek ontology must, like that of any ontology, take its guideline from Da-sein itself. In the ordinary and also the philosophical "definition," Da-sein, that is, the being of human being, is delineated as *zōon logon echon*, that creature whose being is essentially determined by its ability to speak. *Legein* (cf. section 7, b) is the guideline for arriving at the structures of being of the beings we encounter in speech and discussion. That is why the ancient ontology developed by Plato becomes "dialectic." The possibility of a more radical conception of the problem of being grows with the continuing development of the ontological guideline itself, that is, with the "hermeneutics" of the *logos*. "Dialectic," which was a genuine philosophic embarrassment, becomes superfluous. Aristotle "no longer has any understanding" of it for *this* reason, that he places it on a more radical foundation and transcends it. *Legein* itself, or *noein*—the simple apprehension of something objectively
26 present in its pure objective presence [*Vorhandenheit*], which Parmenides already used as a guide for interpreting being—has the temporal structure of a pure "making present" of something. Beings, which show themselves in and for this making present and which are understood as genuine beings, are accordingly interpreted with regard to the present; that is to say, they are conceived as presence (*ousia*).

However, this Greek interpretation of being comes about without any explicit knowledge of the guideline functioning in it, without taking cognizance of or understanding the fundamental ontological function of time, without insight into the ground of the possibility of this function. On the contrary, time itself is taken to be one being among others. The attempt is made to grasp time itself in the structure of its being on the horizon of an understanding of being which is oriented toward time in an inexplicit and naïve way.

Within the framework of the following fundamental elaboration of the question of being we cannot offer a detailed temporal interpretation of the foundations of ancient ontology—especially of its scientifically highest and purest stage, that is, in Aristotle. Instead, we offer an interpretation of Aristotle's treatise on time,[2] which can be taken as a way of discerning the basis and limits of the ancient science of being.

Aristotle's treatise on time is the first detailed interpretation of this phenomenon that has come down to us. It essentially determined all the following interpretations, including that of Bergson. From our analysis of Aristotle's concept of time it becomes retrospectively clear that the Kantian interpretation moves within the structures developed by Aristotle. This means that Kant's fundamental ontological orientation—despite all the differences implicit in a new inquiry—remains Greek.

The question of being attains true concreteness only when we carry out the destructuring of the ontological tradition. By so doing we can thoroughly demonstrate the inescapability of the question of the meaning of being and so demonstrate the meaning of our talk about a "retrieve" of this question.

In this field where "the matter itself is deeply veiled,"[3] any investigation will avoid overestimating its results. For such inquiry is constantly forced to face the possibility of disclosing a still more original and more universal horizon from which it could draw the answer to the question
"What does 'being' mean?" We can discuss such possibilities seriously 27
and with a positive result only if the question of being has been reawakened and we have reached the point where we can come to terms with it in a controlled fashion.

7. *The Phenomenological Method of the Investigation*

With the preliminary characterization of the thematic object of the investigation (the being of beings, or the meaning of being in general) its method would appear to be already prescribed. The task of ontology is to set in relief the being of beings and to explicate being itself. And the method of ontology remains questionable in the highest degree as long as we wish merely to consult historically transmitted ontologies or similar efforts. Since the term "ontology" is used in a formally broad sense for this investigation, the approach of clarifying its method by tracing the history of that method is automatically precluded.

In using the term "ontology" we do not specify any particular philosophical discipline standing in relation to others. It should not at all be our task to satisfy the demands of any established discipline. On the contrary, such a discipline can be developed only from the objective necessity of particular questions and procedures demanded by the "things themselves."

With the guiding question of the meaning of being the investigation arrives at the fundamental question of philosophy in general. The treatment of this question is *phenomenological.* With this term the treatise dictates for itself neither a "standpoint" nor a "direction," because phenomenology is neither of these and can never be as long as it understands itself. The expression "phenomenology" signifies primarily a *concept of method.* It does not characterize the "what" of the objects of philosophical research in terms of their content but the "how" of such research. The more genuinely effective a concept of method is and the more comprehensively it determines the fundamental conduct of a science, the more originally is it rooted in confrontation with the things themselves and the farther away it moves from what we call a technical device—of which there are many in the theoretical disciplines.

The term "phenomenology" expresses a maxim that can be for-
28 mulated: "To the things themselves!" It is opposed to all free-floating
constructions and accidental findings; it is also opposed to taking over concepts only seemingly demonstrated; and likewise to pseudo-questions which often are spread abroad as "problems" for generations. But one might object that this maxim is, after all, abundantly self-evident and, moreover, an expression of the principle of all scientific knowledge. It is not clear why this commonplace should be explicitly put in the title of our research. In fact, we are dealing with "something self-evident" which we want to get closer to, insofar as that is important for the clarification of procedure in our treatise. We shall explicate only the preliminary concept of phenomenology.

The expression has two components, phenomenon and logos. Both go back to the Greek terms *phainomenon* and *logos.* Viewed extrinsically, the word "phenomenology" is formed like the terms theology, biology, sociology, translated as the science of God, of life, of the community. Accordingly, phenomenology would be the *science of phenomena.* The preliminary concept of phenomenology is to be exhibited by characterizing what is meant by the two components, phenomenon and logos, and by establishing the meaning of the *combined* word. The history of the word itself, which originated presumably with the Wolffian school, is not important here.

(a) The Concept of Phenomenon. The Greek expression *phainomenon,* from which the term "phenomenon" derives, comes from the verb *phainesthai,* meaning "to show itself." Thus *phainomenon* means what shows itself, the self-showing, the manifest. *Phainesthai* itself is a "middle voice" construction of *phainō,* to bring into daylight, to place in brightness. *Phainō* belongs to the root *pha-*, like *phōs,* light or brightness, that is, that within which something can become manifest, visible in itself. Thus the meaning of the expression "phenomenon" is *established as what shows itself in itself,* what is manifest. The *phainomena,* "phenomena," are thus the totality of what lies in the light of day or can be brought to light. Sometimes the Greeks simply identified this with *ta onta* (beings). Beings can show themselves from themselves in various ways, depending on the mode of access to them. The possibility even exists that they can show themselves as they are *not* in themselves. In this self-showing beings "look
like . . . ." Such self-showing we call *seeming* [*Scheinen*]. And so the expres- 29
sion *phainomenon,* phenomenon, means in Greek: what looks like something, what "seems," "semblance." *Phainomenon agathon* means a good that looks like—but "in reality" is not what it gives itself out to be. It is extremely important for a further understanding of the concept of phenomenon to see how what is named in both meanings of *phainomenon* ("phenomenon" as self-showing and "phenomenon" as semblance) are structurally connected. Only because something claims to show itself in accordance with its meaning at all, that is, claims to be a phenomenon, *can* it show itself *as* something it is *not,* or *can* it "only look like. . . ." The original meaning (phenomenon, what is manifest) already contains and is the basis of *phainomenon* ("semblance"). We attribute to the term "phenomenon" the positive and original meaning of *phainomenon* terminologically, and separate the phenomenon of semblance from it as a privative modification. But what *both* terms express has at first nothing at all to do with what is called "appearance" or even "mere appearance."

One speaks of "appearances or symptoms of illness." What is meant by this are occurrences in the body that show themselves and in this self-showing as such "indicate" something that does *not* show itself. When such occurrences emerge, their self-showing coincides with the objective presence [*Vorhandensein*] of disturbances that do not show themselves. Appearance, as the appearance "of something," thus precisely does *not* mean that something shows itself; rather, it means that something makes itself known which does not show itself. It makes itself known through something that does show itself. Appearing is* a *not showing itself.* But this "not" must by no means be confused with the privative not which determines the structure of semblance. What does *not* show itself, in the manner of what appears, can also never seem. All indications, presentations, symptoms, and symbols have this fundamental formal structure of appearing, although they do differ among themselves.

Although "appearing" is never a self-showing in the sense of phenomenon, appearing is possible only *on the basis* of a *self-showing* of something. But this, the self-showing that makes appearing possible, is not appearing itself. Appearing is a *making itself known* through something that shows itself. If we then say that with the word "appearance" we are pointing to something in which something appears without itself being an appearance, then the concept of phenomenon is not thereby delim-
30 ited but *presupposed.* However, this presupposition remains hidden because the expression "to appear" in this definition of "appearance" is used in two senses. That in which something "appears" means that in which something makes itself known, that is, does not show itself; in the expression "without itself being an 'appearance'" appearance means the *self-showing.* But this self-showing essentially belongs to the "wherein" in which something makes itself known. Accordingly, phenomena are *never* appearances, but every appearance is dependent upon phenomena. If we define phenomenon with the help of a concept of "appearance" that is still unclear, then everything is turned upside down, and a "critique" of phenomenology on this basis is surely a remarkable enterprise.

The expression "appearance" itself in turn can have a double meaning. First, *appearing* in the sense of making itself known as something that does not show itself and, second, in the sense of what does the making itself known—what in its self-showing indicates something that does not show itself. Finally, one can use appearing as the term for the genuine meaning of phenomenon as self-showing. If one designates these three different states of affairs as "appearance" confusion is inevitable.

However, this confusion is considerably increased by the fact that "appearance" can take on still another meaning. If one understands what does the making itself known—what in its self-showing indicates the nonmanifest—as what comes to the fore in the nonmanifest itself, and radiates from it in such a way that what is nonmanifest is thought of as

* in this case

what is essentially *never* manifest—if this is so, then appearance is tantamount to production [*Hervorbringung*] or to what is produced [*Hervorgebrachtes*]. However, this does not constitute the real being of the producing or productive [*Hervorbringende*], but is rather appearance in the sense of "mere appearance." What does the making itself known and is brought forward indeed shows itself in such a way that, as the emanation of what it makes known, it precisely and continually veils what it is in itself. But then again this not-showing which veils is not semblance. Kant uses the term "appearance" in this twofold way. On the one hand, appearances are for him the "objects of empirical intuition," what shows itself in intuition. This self-showing (phenomenon in the genuine, original sense) is, on the other hand, "appearance" as the emanation of something that makes itself known but *conceals* itself in the appearance.

Since a phenomenon is constitutive for "appearance" in the sense of making itself known through a self-showing, and since this phenomenon can turn into semblance in a privative way, appearance can also turn into mere semblance. Under a certain kind of light someone
can look as if he were flushed. The redness that shows itself can be 31
taken as making known the objective presence of fever; this in turn would indicate a disturbance in the organism.

Phenomenon—the self-showing in itself—means a distinctive way something can be encountered. On the other hand, *appearance* means a referential relation in beings themselves such that what does the *referring* (the making known) can fulfill its possible function only if it shows itself in itself—only if it is a "phenomenon." Both appearance and semblance are themselves founded in the phenomenon, albeit in different ways. The confusing multiplicity of "phenomena" designated by the terms phenomenon, semblance, appearance, mere appearance, can be unraveled only if the concept of phenomenon is understood from the very beginning as the self-showing in itself.

But if in the way we grasp the concept of phenomenon we leave undetermined which beings are to be addressed as phenomena, and if we leave altogether open whether the self-showing is actually a particular being or a characteristic of the being of beings, then we are dealing solely with the *formal* concept of phenomenon. If by the self-showing we understand those beings that are accessible, for example, in Kant's sense of empirical intuition, the formal concept of phenomenon can be used legitimately. In this usage phenomenon has the meaning of the *common* concept of phenomenon. But this common one is not the phenomenological concept of phenomenon. In the horizon of the Kantian problem what is understood phenomenologically by the term phenomenon (disregarding other differences) can be illustrated when we say that what already shows itself in appearances prior to and always accompanying what we commonly understand as phenomena, though unthematically, can be brought thematically to self-showing. What thus shows itself in itself ("the forms of intuition") are the phenomena of phenomenology. For, clearly, space and time must be able to show themselves in this way. They must be able to become phenomena if Kant claims to make a valid transcendental statement when he says that space is the *a priori* "wherein" of an order.

Now if the phenomenological concept of phenomenon is to be understood at all (regardless of how the self-showing may be more closely determined), we must inevitably presuppose insight into the sense of the formal concept of phenomenon and the legitimate use of phenomenon in its ordinary meaning. However, before getting hold of the preliminary concept of phenomenology we must delimit the meaning of *logos*, in order to make clear in which sense phenomenology can be "a science of" phenomena.

32 *(b) The Concept of Logos.* The concept of *logos* has many meanings in Plato and Aristotle, indeed in such a way that these meanings diverge without a basic meaning positively taking the lead. This is in fact only an illusion which lasts so long as an interpretation is not able to grasp adequately the basic meaning in its primary content. If we say that the basic meaning of *logos* is speech, this literal translation becomes valid only when we define what speech itself means. The later history of the word *logos*, and especially the manifold and arbitrary interpretations of subsequent philosophy, conceal constantly the real meaning of speech—which is manifest enough. *Logos* is "translated," and that always means interpreted, as reason, judgment, concept, definition, ground, relation. But how can "speech" be so susceptible of modification that *logos* means all the things mentioned, and indeed in scholarly usage? Even if *logos* is understood in the sense of a statement, and statement as "judgment," this apparently correct translation can still miss the fundamental meaning—especially if judgment is understood in the sense of some contemporary "theory of judgment." *Logos* does not mean judgment, in any case not primarily, if by judgment we understand "connecting two things" or "taking a position" either by endorsing or rejecting.

Rather, *logos* as speech really means *dēloun*, to make manifest "what is being talked about" in speech. Aristotle explicates this function of speech more precisely as *apophainesthai*.[4] *Logos* lets something be seen (*phainesthai*), namely what is being talked about, and indeed *for* the speaker (who serves as the medium) or for those who speak with each other. Speech "lets us see," from itself, *apo* . . . , what is being talked about. In speech (*apophansis*), insofar as it is genuine, *what* is said should be derived *from* what is being talked about. In this way spoken communication, in what it says, makes manifest what it is talking about and thus makes it accessible to another. Such is the structure of *logos* as *apophansis*. Not every "speech" suits *this* mode of making manifest, in the sense of letting something be seen by indicating it. For example, requesting (*euchē*) also makes something manifest, but in a different way.

When fully concrete, speech (letting something be seen) has the character of speaking or vocalization in words. *Logos* is *phonē*, indeed 33
phonē meta phantasias—vocalization in which something always is sighted.

Only *because* the function of *logos* as *apophansis* lies in letting something be seen by indicating it can *logos* have the structure of *synthesis*. Here synthesis does not mean to connect and conjoin representations, to manipulate psychical occurrences, which then gives rise to the "problem" of how these connections, as internal, correspond to what is external and physical. The *syn* [of *synthesis*] here has a purely apophantical meaning: to let something be seen in its *togetherness* with something, to let something be seen *as* something.

Furthermore, because *logos* lets something be seen, it can *therefore* be true or false. But everything depends on staying clear of any concept of truth construed in the sense of "correspondence" or "accordance" [*Übereinstimmung*]. This idea is by no means the primary one in the concept of *alētheia*. The "being true" of *logos* as *alētheuein* means: to take beings that are being talked *about* in *legein* as *apophainesthai* out of their concealment; to let them be seen as something unconcealed (*alēthes*); to *discover* them. Similarly "being false," *pseudesthai*, is tantamount to deceiving in the sense of covering up: putting something in front of something else (by way of letting it be seen) and thereby passing it off *as* something it is *not*.

But because "truth" has this meaning, and because *logos* is a specific mode of letting something be seen, *logos* simply may *not* be acclaimed as the primary "place" of truth. If one defines truth as what "genuinely" pertains to judgment, which is quite customary today, and if one invokes Aristotle in support of this thesis, such a procedure is without justification and the Greek concept of truth thoroughly misunderstood. In the Greek sense what is "true"—indeed more originally true than the *logos* we have been discussing—is *aisthēsis*, the simple sense perception of something. To the extent that an *aisthēsis* aims at its *idia* [what is its own]—the beings genuinely accessible only *through* it and *for* it, for example, looking at colors—perception is always true. This means that looking always discovers colors, hearing always discovers tones. What is in the purest and most original sense "true"—that is, what only discovers in such a way that it can never cover up anything—is pure *noein*, straightforwardly observant apprehension of the simplest determinations of the being of beings as such. This *noein* can never cover up, can never be false; at worst it can be a nonapprehending, *agnoein*, not sufficing for straightforward, appropriate access.

34 What no longer takes the form of a pure letting be seen, but rather in its indicating always has recourse to something else and so always lets something be seen *as* something, acquires with this structure of synthesis the possibility of covering up. However, "truth of judgment" is only the opposite of this covering up; it is a *multiply-founded* phenomenon of truth. Realism and idealism alike thoroughly miss the meaning of the Greek concept of truth from which alone the possibility of something like a "theory of Ideas" can be understood as philosophical *knowledge*. And because the function of *logos* lies in letting something be seen straightforwardly, in *letting* beings be *apprehended*, *logos* can mean *reason*. Moreover, because *logos* is used in the sense not only of *legein* but also of *legomenon*–what is pointed to as such; and because the latter is nothing other than the *hypokeimenon*–what always already lies present at the *basis* of all relevant speech and discussion; for these reasons logos qua *legomenon* means ground, *ratio*. Finally, because *logos* as *legomenon* can also mean what is addressed, as something that has become visible in its relation to something else, in its "relatedness," *logos* acquires the meaning of *relation* and *relationship*.

This interpretation of "apophantic speech" may suffice to clarify the primary function of logos.

(c) The Preliminary Concept of Phenomenology. When we bring to mind concretely what has been exhibited in the interpretation of "phenomenon" and "*logos*" we are struck by an inner relation between what is meant by these terms. The expression "phenomenology" can be formulated in Greek as *legein ta phainomena*. But *legein* means *apophainesthai*. Hence phenomenology means: *apophainesthai ta phainomena*–to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself. That is the formal meaning of the type of research that calls itself "phenomenology." But this expresses nothing other than the maxim formulated above: "To the things themselves!"

Accordingly, the term "phenomenology" differs in meaning from such expressions as "theology" and the like. Such titles designate the objects of the respective disciplines in terms of their content. "Phenomenology" neither designates the object of its researches nor is it a title that describes their content. The word only tells us something about
35 the *how* of the demonstration and treatment of *what* this discipline considers. Science "of" the phenomena means that it grasps its objects in *such* a way that everything about them to be discussed must be directly indicated and directly demonstrated. The basically tautological expression "descriptive phenomenology" has the same sense. Here description does not mean a procedure like that of, say, botanical morphology. The term rather has the sense of a prohibition, insisting that we avoid all nondemonstrative determinations. The character of description itself, the specific sense of the *logos*, can be established only from the "material content" ["*Sachheit*"] of what is "described," that is, of what is to be brought to scientific determinateness in the way phenomena are encountered. The meaning of the formal and common concepts of the phenomenon formally justifies our calling every way of indicating beings as they show themselves in themselves "phenomenology."

Now what must be taken into account if the formal concept of phenomenon is to be deformalized to the phenomenological one, and how does this differ from the common concept? What is it that phenomenology is to "let be seen"? What is it that is to be called "phenomenon" in a distinctive sense? What is it that by its very essence becomes the *necessary* theme when we indicate something *explicitly*? Manifestly it is something that does *not* show itself initially and for the most part, something that is *concealed*, in contrast to what initially and for the most part does show itself. But at the same time it is something that essentially belongs to what initially and for the most part shows itself, indeed in such a way that it constitutes its meaning and ground.*

But what remains *concealed* in an exceptional sense, or what falls back and is *covered up* again, or shows itself only in a *distorted* way, is not this or that being but rather, as we have shown in our foregoing observations, the *being* of beings. It can be covered up to such a degree that it is forgotten and the question about it and its meaning altogether omitted. Thus what demands to become a phenomenon in a distinctive sense, in terms of its most proper content, phenomenology has taken into its "grasp" thematically as its object.

Phenomenology is the way of access to, and the demonstrative manner of determination of, what is to become the theme of ontology. *Ontology is possible only as phenomenology*. The phenomenological concept of phenomenon, as self-showing, means the being of beings–its meaning, modifications, and derivatives. This self-showing is nothing arbitrary, nor is it something like an appearing. The being of beings
can least of all be something "behind which" something else stands, 36
something that "does not appear."

Essentially, nothing else stands "behind" the phenomena of phenomenology. Nevertheless, what is to become a phenomenon can be concealed. And precisely because phenomena are initially and for the most part *not* given phenomenology is needed. Being covered up is the counterconcept to "phenomenon."

* Truth of being.

There are various ways phenomena can be covered up. In the first place, a phenomenon can be covered up in the sense that it is still completely *undiscovered.* There is neither knowledge nor lack of knowledge about it. In the second place, a phenomenon can be *buried over.* This means it was once discovered but then got covered up again. This covering up can be total, but more commonly, what was once discovered may still be visible, though only as semblance. However, where there is semblance there is "being." This kind of covering up, "distortion," is the most frequent and the most dangerous kind because here the possibilities of being deceived and misled are especially pernicious. Within a "system" the structures and concepts of being that are available but concealed with respect to their autochthony may perhaps claim their rights. On the basis of their integrated structure in a system they present themselves as something "clear" which is in no need of further justification and which therefore can serve as a point of departure for a process of deduction.

The covering up itself, whether it be understood in the sense of concealment, being buried over, or distortion, has in turn a twofold possibility. There are accidental coverings and necessary ones, the latter grounded in the enduring nature of the discovered. It is possible for every phenomenological concept and proposition drawn from genuine origins to degenerate when communicated as a statement. It gets circulated in a vacuous fashion, loses its autochthony, and becomes a free-floating thesis. Even in the concrete work of phenomenology lurks possible inflexibility and the inability to grasp what was originally "grasped." And the difficulty of this research consists precisely in making it self-critical in a positive sense.

The way of encountering being and the structures of being in the mode of phenomenon must first be *wrested* from the objects of phenomenology. Thus the *point of departure* of the analysis, the *access* to the phenomenon, and *passage through* the prevalent coverings must secure
37 their own method. The idea of an "originary" and "intuitive" grasp and explication of phenomena must be opposed to the naïveté of an accidental, "immediate," and unreflective "beholding."

On the basis of the preliminary concept of phenomenology just delimited, the terms "phenomenal" and "phenomenological" can now be given fixed meanings. What is given and is explicable in the way we encounter the phenomenon is called "phenomenal." In this sense we speak of phenomenal structures. Everything that belongs to the manner of indication and explication, and constitutes the conceptual tools this research requires, is called "phenomenological."

Because phenomenon in the phenomenological understanding is always just what constitutes being, and furthermore because being is

always the being of beings, we must first of all bring beings themselves forward in the right way if we are to have any prospect of exposing being. These beings must likewise show themselves in the way of access that genuinely belong to them. Thus the common concept of phenomenon becomes phenomenologically relevant. The preliminary task of a "phenomenological" securing of that being which is to serve as our example, as the point of departure for the analysis proper, is always already prescribed by the goal of this analysis.

As far as content goes, phenomenology is the science of the being of beings—ontology. In our elucidation of the tasks of ontology the necessity arose for a fundamental ontology which would have as its theme that being which is ontologically and ontically distinctive, namely, Da-sein. This must be done in such a way that our ontology confronts the cardinal problem, the question of the meaning of being in general.* From the investigation itself we shall see that the methodological meaning of phenomenological description is *interpretation.* The *logos* of the phenomenology of Da-sein has the character of *hermēneuein,* through which the proper meaning of being and the basic structures of the very being of Da-sein are *made known* to the understanding of being that belongs to Da-sein itself. Phenomenology of Da-sein is *hermeneutics* in the original signification of that word, which designates the work of interpretation. But since discovery of the meaning of being and of the basic structures of Da-sein in general exhibits the horizon for every further ontological research into beings unlike Da-sein, the present hermeneutic is at the same time "hermeneutics" in the sense that it works out the conditions of the possibility of every ontological investigation. Finally, since Da-sein has ontological priority over all other beings—as a being in the
possibility of existence [*Existenz*]—hermeneutics, as the interpretation 38
of the being of Da-sein, receives a specific third and, philosophically understood, *primary* meaning of an analysis of the existentiality of existence. To the extent that this hermeneutic elaborates the historicity of Da-sein ontologically as the ontic condition of the possibility of the discipline of history, it contains the roots of what can be called "hermeneutics" only in a derivative sense: the methodology of the historical humanistic disciplines.

As the fundamental theme of philosophy being is not a genus of beings; yet it pertains to every being. Its "universality" must be sought in a higher sphere. Being and its structure transcend every being and every possible existent determination of a being. *Being is the transcendens pure*

* being—not a genus, not being for beings generally; the "in general"=*katholou*=as the whole of: *being of* beings; meaning of difference.

*and simple.** The transcendence of the being of Da-sein is a distinctive one since in it lies the possibility and necessity of the most radical *individuation*. Every disclosure of being as the *transcendens* is *transcendental* knowledge. *Phenomenological truth* (*disclosedness of being*) is *veritas transcendentalis*.

Ontology and phenomenology are not two different disciplines which among others belong to philosophy. Both terms characterize philosophy itself, its object and procedure. Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, taking its departure from the hermeneutic of Da-sein, which, as an analysis of *existence*,† has fastened the end of the guideline of all philosophical inquiry at the point from which it *arises* and to which it *returns*.

The following investigations would not have been possible without the foundation laid by Edmund Husserl; with his *Logical Investigations* phenomenology achieved a breakthrough. Our elucidations of the preliminary concept of phenomenology show that its essential character does not consist in its *actuality* as a philosophical "movement."‡ Higher than actuality stands *possibility*. We can understand phenomenology solely by seizing upon it as a possibility.[5]

With regard to the awkwardness and "inelegance" of expression in the following analyses, we may remark that it is one thing to report nar-
39 ratively about *beings* and another to grasp beings in their *being*. For the latter task not only most of the words are lacking but above all the "grammar." If we may allude to earlier and in their own right altogether incomparable researches on the analysis of being, then we should compare the ontological sections in Plato's *Parmenides* or the fourth chapter of the seventh book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* with a narrative passage from Thucydides. Then we can see the stunning character of the formulations with which their philosophers challenged the Greeks. Since our powers are essentially inferior, and also since the area of being to be disclosed ontologically is far more difficult than that presented to the Greeks, the complexity of our concept-formation and the severity of our expression will increase.

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* of course not transcendens—despite every metaphysical resonance—scholastic and greek-platonic *koinon*, rather transcendence as the ecstatic—temporal [*Zeitlichkeit*]—temporality [*Temporalitat*]; but "horizon"! Being has "thought beyond" ["*überdacht*"] beings. However, transcendence from the truth of being: the event [*das Ereignis*].

† "Existence"—fundamental ontologically, i.e., itself related to the truth of being, and only in this way!

‡ i.e., not in the transcendental-philosophic direction of Kantian critical idealism.

8. The Outline of the Treatise

The question of the meaning of being is the most universal and the emptiest. But at the same time the possibility inheres of its most acute individualization in each particular Da-sein.* If we are to gain the fundamental concept of "being" and the prescription of the ontologically requisite conceptuality in all its necessary variations, we need a concrete guideline. The "special character" of the investigation does not belie the universality of the concept of being. For we may advance to being by way of a special interpretation of a particular being, Da-sein, in which the horizon for an understanding and a possible interpretation of being is to be won. But his being is in itself "historic," so that its most proper ontological illumination necessarily becomes a "historical" interpretation.

The elaboration of the question of being is a two-pronged task; our treatise therefore has two divisions.

Part One: The interpretation of Da-sein on the basis of temporality and the explication of time as the transcendental horizon of the question of being.

Part Two: Basic features of a phenomenological destructuring of the history of ontology on the guideline of the problem of temporality.

The first part consists of three divisions:

1. The preparatory fundamental analysis of Da-sein.
2. Da-sein and temporality.
3. Time and being.†

The second part likewise has three divisions: 40

1. Kant's doctrine of the schematism and of time, as preliminary stage of a problem of temporality.
2. The ontological foundation of Descartes' *cogito sum* and the incorporation of medieval ontology in the problem of the *res cogitans*.
3. Aristotle's treatise on time as a way of discerning the phenomenal basis and the limits of ancient ontology.

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* authentic: bringing about standing-within the there [*Inständigkeit*].

† The difference bound to transcendence [*transzendenzhafte Differenz*]. The overcoming of the horizon as such. The return into the source [*Herkunft*]. The presencing out of this source.

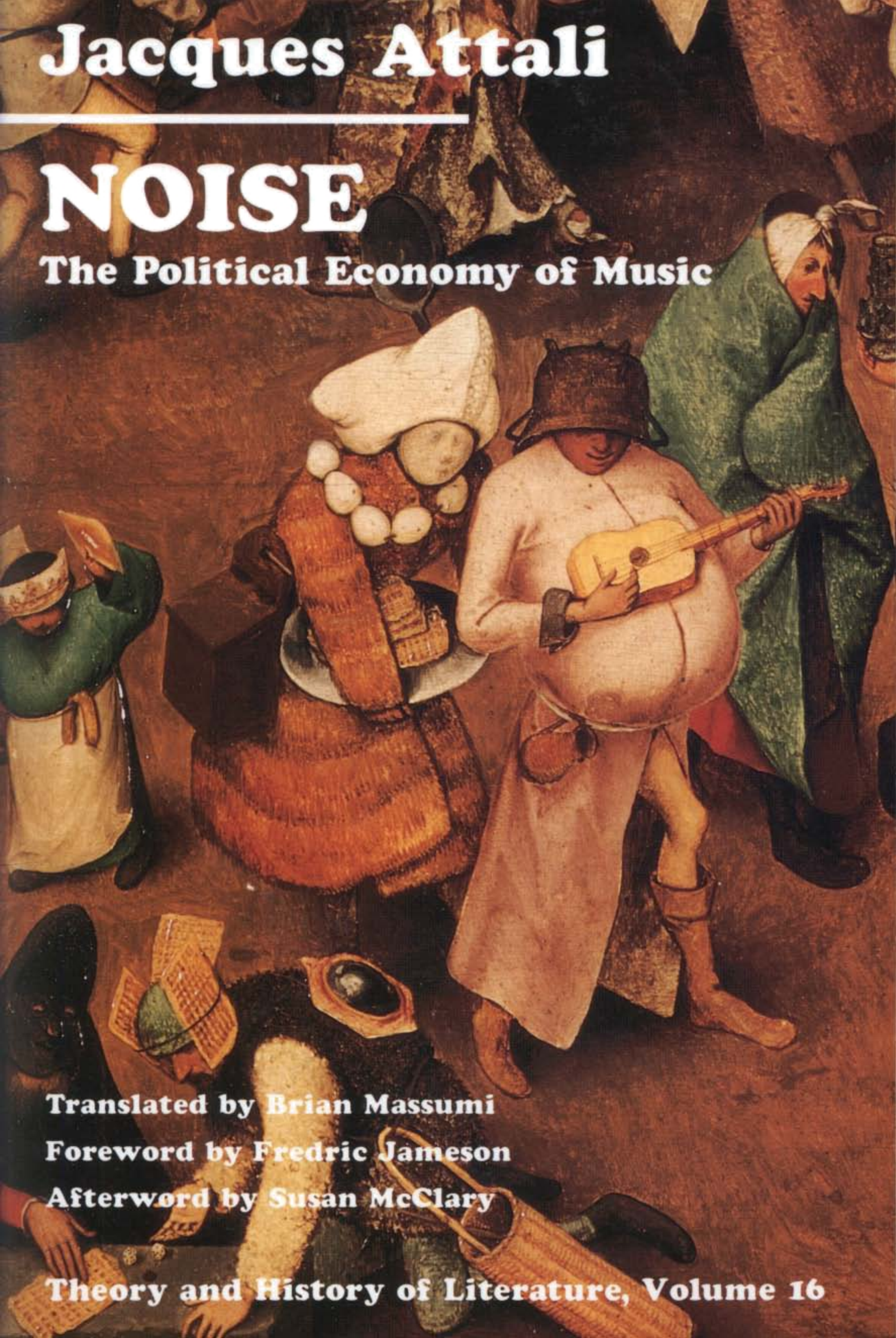
Seventh Reading

Jacques Attali, "Listening," *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1977)

Jacques Attali

NOISE

The Political Economy of Music



Translated by Brian Massumi

Foreword by Fredric Jameson

Afterword by Susan McClary

Theory and History of Literature, Volume 16

Noise
The Political Economy of Music

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MIN NE SO TA

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Chapter One
Listening

For twenty-five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for the beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible.

Our science has always desired to monitor, measure, abstract, and castrate meaning, forgetting that life is full of noise and that death alone is silent: work noise, noise of man, and noise of beast. Noise bought, sold, or prohibited. Nothing essential happens in the absence of noise.

Today, our sight has dimmed; it no longer sees our future, having constructed a present made of abstraction, nonsense, and silence. Now we must learn to judge a society more by its sounds, by its art, and by its festivals, than by its statistics. By listening to noise, we can better understand where the folly of men and their calculations is leading us, and what hopes it is still possible to have.

In these opening pages, I would like to summarize the essential themes of this book. The supporting argument will follow.

Among sounds, music as an autonomous production is a recent invention. Even as late as the eighteenth century, it was effectively submerged within a larger totality. Ambiguous and fragile, ostensibly secondary and of minor importance, it has invaded our world and daily life. Today, it is unavoidable, as if, in a world now devoid of meaning, a background noise were increasingly necessary to give people a sense of security. And today, wherever there is music, there is money. Looking only at the numbers, in certain countries more money is spent on music than on reading, drinking, or keeping clean. Music, an immaterial pleasure turned commodity, now heralds a society of the sign, of the immaterial up for sale, of the social relation unified in money.

It heralds, for it is *prophetic*. It has always been in its essence a herald of times to come. Thus, as we shall see, if it is true that *the political organization of the twentieth century is rooted in the political thought of the nineteenth, the latter is almost entirely present in embryonic form in the music of the eighteenth century*.

In the last twenty years, music has undergone yet another transformation. This mutation forecasts a change in social relations. Already, material production has been supplanted by the exchange of signs. Show business, the star system, and the hit parade signal a profound institutional and cultural colonization. Music makes mutations audible. It obliges us to invent categories and new dynamics to regenerate social theory, which today has become crystallized, entrapped, moribund.

Music, as a mirror of society, calls this truism to our attention: society is much more than economistic categories, Marxist or otherwise, would have us believe.

Music is more than an object of study: it is a way of perceiving the world. A tool of understanding. Today, no theorizing accomplished through language or mathematics can suffice any longer; it is incapable of accounting for what is essential in time—the qualitative and the fluid, threats and violence. In the face of the growing ambiguity of the signs being used and exchanged, the most well-established concepts are crumbling and every theory is wavering. The available representations of the economy, trapped within frameworks erected in the seventeenth century or, at latest, toward 1850, can neither predict, describe, nor even express what awaits us.

It is thus necessary to imagine radically new theoretical forms, in order to speak to new realities. Music, the organization of noise, is one such form. It reflects the manufacture of society; it constitutes the audible waveband of the vibrations and signs that make up society. *An instrument of understanding, it prompts us to decipher a sound form of knowledge.*

My intention here is thus not only to theorize *about* music, but to theorize *through* music. The result will be unusual and unacceptable conclusions about music and society, the past and the future. That is perhaps why music is so rarely listened to and why—as with every facet of social life for which the rules are breaking down (sexuality, the family, politics)—it is censored, people refuse to draw conclusions from it.

In the chapters that follow, music will be presented as originating in ritual murder, of which it is a simulacrum, a minor form of sacrifice heralding change. We will see that in that capacity it was an attribute of religious and political power, that it signified order, but also that it prefigured subversion. Then, after entering into commodity exchange, it participated in the growth and creation of capital and the spectacle. Fetishized as a commodity, music is illustrative of the evolution of our entire society: deritualize a social form, repress an activity of the body, specialize its practice, sell it as a spectacle, generalize its consumption, then see to it that it is stockpiled until it loses its meaning. Today, music heralds—regardless of what the property mode of capital will be—the establishment of a society of repetition in which nothing will happen anymore. But at the same time, it heralds the emergence of a formidable subversion, one leading to a radically new organization never yet theorized, of which self-management is but a distant echo.

In this respect, music is not innocent: unquantifiable and unproductive, a pure sign that is now *for sale*, it provides a rough sketch of the society under construction, a society in which the informal is mass produced and consumed, in which difference is artificially recreated in the multiplication of semi-identical objects.

No organized society can exist without structuring differences at its core. No market economy can develop without erasing those differences in mass production. The self-destruction of capitalism lies in this contradiction, in the fact that music leads a deafening life: an instrument of differentiation, it has become a locus of repetition. It itself becomes undifferentiated, goes anonymous in the commodity, and hides behind the mask of stardom. It makes audible what is essential in the contradictions of the developed societies: *an anxiety-ridden quest for lost difference, following a logic from which difference is banished.*

Art bears the mark of its time. Does that mean that it is a clear image? A strategy for understanding? An instrument of struggle? In the codes that structure noise and its mutations we glimpse a new theoretical practice and reading: *establishing relations between the history of people and the dynamics of the economy on the one hand, and the history of the ordering of noise in codes on the other; predicting the evolution of one by the forms of the other; combining economics and aesthetics; demonstrating that music is prophetic and that social organization echoes it.*

This book is not an attempt at a multidisciplinary study, but rather *a call to theoretical indiscipline*, with an ear to sound matter as the herald of society. The risk of wandering off into poetics may appear great, since music has an essential metaphorical dimension: "For a genuine poet, metaphor is not a rhetorical figure but a vicarious image that he actually beholds in place of a concept."[1]

Yet music is a credible metaphor of the real. It is neither an autonomous activity nor an automatic indicator of the economic infrastructure. It is a herald, for change is inscribed in noise faster than it transforms society. Undoubtedly, music is a play of mirrors in which every activity is reflected, defined, recorded, and distorted. If we look at one mirror, we see only an image of another. But at times a complex mirror game yields a vision that is rich, because unexpected and prophetic. At times it yields nothing but the swirl of the void.

Mozart and Bach reflect the bourgeoisie's dream of harmony better than and prior to the whole of nineteenth-century political theory. There is in the operas of Cherubini a revolutionary zeal rarely attained in political debate. Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, and Jimi Hendrix say more about the liberatory dream of the 1960s than any theory of crisis. The standardized products of today's variety shows, hit parades, and show business are pathetic and prophetic caricatures of future forms of the repressive channeling of desire.

The cardinal importance of music in announcing a vision of the world is nothing new. For Marx, music is the "mirror of reality"; for Nietzsche, the "expression of truth";[2] for Freud, a "text to decipher." It is all of that, for it is one of the sites where mutations first arise and where science is secreted: "If you close your eyes, you lose the power of abstraction" (Michel Serres). It is all of that, even if it is only a detour on the way to addressing man about the works of man, to hearing and making audible his alienation, to sensing the unacceptable immensity of his future silence and the wide expanse of his fallowed creativity. Listening to music is listening to all noise, realizing that its appropriation and control is a reflection of power, that it is essentially political.

The Sounds of Power

Noise and Politics

More than colors and forms, it is sounds and their arrangements that fashion societies. With noise is born disorder and its opposite: the world. With music is born power and its opposite: subversion. In noise can be read the codes of life, the relations among men. Clamor, Melody, Dissonance, Harmony; when it is fashioned by man with specific tools, when it invades man's time, when it becomes sound, noise is the source of purpose and power, of the dream—Music. It is at the heart of the progressive rationalization of aesthetics, and it is a refuge for residual irrationality; it is a means of power and a form of entertainment.

Everywhere codes analyze, mark, restrain, train, repress, and channel the primitive sounds of language, of the body, of tools, of objects, of the relations to self and others.

All music, any organization of sounds is then a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality. It is what links a power center to its subjects, and thus, more generally, it is an attribute of power in all of its forms. Therefore, any theory of power today must include a theory of the localization of noise and its endowment with form. Among birds a tool for marking territorial boundaries, noise is inscribed from the start within the panoply of power. Equivalent to the articulation of a space, it indicates the limits of a territory and the way to make oneself heard within it, how to survive by drawing one's sustenance from it.[3] And since noise is the source of power, power has always listened to it with fascination. In an extraordinary and little known text, Leibnitz describes in minute detail the ideal political organization, the "Palace of Marvels," a harmonious machine within which all of the sciences of time and every tool of power are deployed.

> These buildings will be constructed in such a way that the master of the house will be able to hear and see everything that is said and done without himself being perceived, by means of mirrors and pipes, which will be a most important thing for the State, and a kind of political confessional.[4]

Eavesdropping, censorship, recording, and surveillance are weapons of power. The technology of listening in on, ordering, transmitting, and recording noise is at the heart of this apparatus. The symbolism of the Frozen Words,[5] of the Tables of the Law, of recorded noise and eavesdropping—these are the dreams of political scientists and the fantasies of men in power: to listen, to memorize—this is the ability to interpret and control history, to manipulate the culture of a people, to channel its violence and hopes. Who among us is free of the feeling that this process, taken to an extreme, is turning the modern State into a gigantic, monopolizing noise emitter, and at the same time, a generalized eavesdropping device. Eavesdropping on what? In order to silence whom?

The answer, clear and implacable, is given by the theorists of totalitarianism. They have all explained, indistinctly, that it is necessary to ban subversive noise because it betokens demands for cultural autonomy, support for differences or marginality: a concern for maintaining tonalism, the primacy of melody, a distrust of new languages, codes, or instruments, a refusal of the abnormal—these characteristics are common to all regimes of that nature. They are direct translations of the political importance of cultural repression and noise control. For example, in the opinion of Zhdanov (according to a speech he gave in 1947 and never really disclaimed), music, an instrument of political pressure, must be tranquil, reassuring, and calm:

> And, indeed, we are faced with a very acute, although outwardly concealed struggle between two trends in Soviet music. One trend represents the healthy, progressive principle in Soviet music, based upon recognition of the tremendous role of the classical heritage, and, in particular, the traditions of the Russian musical school, upon the combination of lofty idea content in music, its truthfulness and realism, with profound, organic ties with the people and their music and songs—all this combined with a high degree of professional mastery. The other trend is that of a formalism alien to Soviet art; it is marked by rejection of the classical heritage under the cover of apparent novelty, by rejection of popular music, by rejection of service to the people, all for the sake of catering to the highly individualistic emotions of a small group of aesthetes. . . . Two extremely important tasks now face Soviet composers. The chief task is to *develop* and per-

> fect Soviet music. The second is to *protect* Soviet music from the infiltration of elements of bourgeois decadence. Let us not forget that the U.S.S.R. is now the guardian of universal musical culture, just as in all other respects it is the *mainstay of human civilization and culture against bourgeois decadence and decomposition of culture*. . . . Therefore, not only the musical, but also the political, ear of Soviet composers must be very keen. . . . Your task is to prove the superiority of Soviet music, *to create great Soviet music*.[6]

All of Zhdanov's remarks are strategic and military: music must be a bulwark against difference; for that, it must be powerful and protected.

We find the same concern, the same strategy and vocabulary, in National Socialist theorists. Stege, for example:

> If Negro jazz is banned, if enemies of the people compose intellectual music that is soulless and heartless, and find no audience in Germany, these decisions are not arbitrary. . . . What would have happened if the aesthetic evolution of German music had followed the course it was taking in the postwar period? The people would have lost all contact with art. It would have been spiritually uprooted, all the more so since it would find little satisfaction in degenerate and intellectual music that is better suited to being read than heard. The gulf between the people and art would have become an unbridgeable abyss, the theater and concert halls would have gone empty, the composers working counter to the soul of the people would have been left with only themselves for an audience, assuming they were still able to understand their own wild fancies.[7]

The economic and political dynamics of the industrialized societies living under parliamentary democracy also lead power to invest art, and to invest in art, without necessarily theorizing its control, as is done under dictatorship. Everywhere we look, the monopolization of the broadcast of messages, the control of noise, and the institutionalization of the silence of others assure the durability of power. Here, this channelization takes on a new, less violent, and more subtle form: laws of the political economy take the place of censorship laws. Music and the musician essentially become either objects of consumption like everything else, recuperators of subversion, or meaningless noise.

Musical distribution techniques are today contributing to the establishment of a system of eavesdropping and social surveillance. Muzak, the American corporation that sells standardized music, presents itself as the "security system of the 1970s" because it permits use of musical distribution channels for the circulation of orders. The monologue of standardized, stereotyped music accompanies and hems in a daily life in which in reality no one has the right to speak any more. Except those among the exploited who can still use their music to shout their suffering, their dreams of the absolute and freedom. What is called music today is all too often only a disguise for the monologue of power. However, and this is the supreme irony of it all, never before have musicians tried so hard to communicate with their audience, and never before has that communication been so deceiving. Music now seems hardly more than a somewhat clumsy excuse for the self-glorification of musicians and the growth of a new industrial sector. Still, it is an activity that is essential for knowledge and social relations.

Science, Message and Time

"This remarkable absence of texts on music"[8] is tied to the impossibility of a general definition, to a fundamental ambiguity. "The science of the rational use of sounds, that is, those sounds organized as a scale"—that is how the *Littré*, at the end of the nineteenth century, defined music in order to reduce it to its harmonic dimension, to confuse it with a pure syntax. Michel Serres, on the contrary, points to the "extreme simplicity of the signals," "the message at its extreme, a ciphered mode of communicating universals" as a way of reminding us that beyond syntax there is meaning. But which meaning? Music is a "dialectical confrontation with the course of time."[9]

Science, message, and time—music is all of that simultaneously. It is, by its very presence, a mode of communication between man and his environment, a mode of social expression, and duration itself. It is therapeutic, purifying, enveloping, liberating; it is rooted in a comprehensive conception of knowledge about the body, in a pursuit of exorcism through noise and dance. But it is also past time to be produced, heard, and exchanged.

Thus it exhibits the three dimensions of all human works: joy for the creator, use-value for the listener, and exchange-value for the seller. In this seesaw between the various possible forms of human activity, music was, and still is, ubiquitous: "Art is everywhere, for artifice is at the heart of reality."[10]

Mirror

But even more than that, it is "the Dionysian mirror of the world" (Nietzsche).[11] "Person-to-person described in the language of things" (Pierre Schaeffer).

It is a mirror, because as a mode of immaterial production it relates to the structuring of theoretical paradigms, far ahead of concrete production. It is thus an immaterial recording surface for human works, the mark of something missing, a shred of utopia to decipher, information in negative, a collective *memory* allowing those who hear it to record their own personalized, specified, modeled meanings, affirmed in time with the beat—a collective memory of order and genealogies, the repository of the word and the social score.[12]

But it reflects a fluid reality. The only thing that primitive polyphony, classical counterpoint, tonal harmony, twelve-tone serial music, and electronic music have in common is the principle of giving form to noise in accordance with changing syntactic structures. The history of music is the "Odyssey of a wandering, the adventure of its absences."[13]

However, the historical and musicological tradition would still, even today, like to retain an evolutionary vision of music, according to which it is in turn "primitive," "classical," and "modern." This schema is obsolete in all of the human sciences, in which the search for an evolution structured in a linear fashion is illusory. Of course, one can perceive strong beats, and we will even see later on that every major social rupture has been preceded by an essential mutation in the codes of music, in its mode of audition, and in its economy. For example, in Europe, during three different periods with three different styles (the liturgical music of the tenth century, the polyphonic music of the sixteenth century, and the harmony of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries), music found expression within a single, stable code and had stable modes of economic organization; correlatively, these societies were very clearly dominated by a single ideology. In the intervening periods, times of disorder and disarray prepared the way for what was to follow. Similarly, it seems as though a fourth (and shorter) period was ushered in during the 1950s, with a coherent style forged in the furnace of black American music; it is characterized by stable production based on the tremendous demand generated by the youth of the nations with rapidly expanding economies, and on a new economic organization of distribution made possible by recording.

Like the cattle herd of the Nuer discussed by Girard,[14] a herd that is the mirror and double of the people, music runs parallel to human society, is structured like it, and changes when it does. It does not evolve in a linear fashion, but is caught up in the complexity and circularity of the movements of history.

This simultaneity of economic and musical evolution is everywhere present. We can, for example, toy with the idea that it is not by chance that the half-tone found acceptance during the Renaissance, at precisely the same time the merchant class was expanding; that it is not by coincidence that Russolo wrote his *Arte Dei Rumori* ("The Art of Noise") in 1913; that noise entered music and industry entered painting just before the outbursts and wars of the twentieth century, before the rise of social noise. Or again, that it is not by coincidence that the unrestricted use of large orchestras came at a time of enormous industrial growth; that with the disappearance of taboos there arose a music industry that takes the channelization of desire into commodities to such an extreme as to become a caricature; that rock and soul music emerged with the youth rebellion, only to dissolve in the cooptation of the young by light music programming; or finally, that the cautious and repressive form of musical production condoned today in countries with State-owned property designates "socialism" (if that is truly what it is) as simply the successor to capitalism, slightly more efficient and systematic in its normalization of men and its frantic quest for sterilized and monotonous perfection.

At a time when values are collapsing and commodities converse in place of people in an impoverished language (which in advertising is becoming increasingly musical), there is glaring evidence that the end of aesthetic codes is at hand. "The musical odyssey has come to a close, the graph is complete."[15]

Can we make the connections? Can we hear the crisis of society in the crisis of music? Can we understand music through its relations with money? Notwithstanding, the political economy of music is unique; only lately commodified, it soars in the immaterial. It is an economy without quantity. An aesthetics of repetition. That is why the political economy of music is not marginal, but premonitory. The noises of a society are in advance of its images and material conflicts.

Our music foretells our future. Let us lend it an ear.

Prophecy

Music is prophecy. Its styles and economic organization are ahead of the rest of society because it explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code. It makes audible the new world that will gradually become visible, that will impose itself and regulate the order of things; it is not only the image of things, but the transcending of the everyday, the herald of the future. For this reason musicians, even when officially recognized, are dangerous, disturbing, and subversive; for this reason it is impossible to separate their history from that of repression and surveillance.

Musician, priest, and officiant were in fact a single function among ancient peoples. Poet laureate of power, herald of freedom—the musician is at the same time within society, which protects, purchases, and finances him, and outside it, when he threatens it with his visions. Courtier and revolutionary: for those who care to hear the irony beneath the praise, his stage presence conceals a break. When he is reassuring, he alienates; when he is disturbing, he destroys; when he speaks too loudly, power silences him. Unless in doing so he is announcing the new clamor and glory of powers in the making.

A creator, he changes the world's reality. This is sometimes done consciously, as with Wagner, writing in 1848, the same year the *Communist Manifesto* was published:

> I will destroy the existing order of things, which parts this one mankind into hostile nations, into powerful and weak, privileged and outcast, rich and poor; for it makes unhappy men of all. I will destroy the order of things that turns millions into slaves of a few, and these

> few into slaves of their own might, own riches. I will destroy this order of things, that cuts enjoyment off from labor.[16]

A superb modern rallying cry by a man who, after the barricades of Dresden, would adopt "the attitude of the rebel who betrayed the rebellion" (Adorno). Another example is Berlioz's call to insurrection:

> Music, today in the flush of youth, is emancipated, free: it does as it pleases. Many of the old rules are no longer binding: they were made by inattentive observers or ordinary spirits for other ordinary spirits. New needs of the spirit, the heart, and the sense of hearing are imposing new endeavors and, in some cases, even infractions of the old laws.

Rumblings of revolution. Sounds of competing powers. Clashing noises, of which the musician is the mysterious, strange, and ambiguous forerunner—after having been long emprisoned, a captive of power.

The Musician before Capital

The musician, like music, is ambiguous. He plays a double game. He is simultaneously *musicus* and *cantor*, reproducer and prophet. If an outcast, he sees society in a political light. If accepted, he is its historian, the reflection of its deepest values. He speaks of society and he speaks against it. This duality was already present before capital arrived to impose its own rules and prohibitions. The distinction between musician and nonmusician—which separates the group from the speech of the sorcerer—undoubtedly represents one of the very first divisions of labor, one of the very first social differentiations in the history of humanity, even predating the social hierarchy. Shaman, doctor, musician. He is one of society's first gazes upon itself; he is one of the first catalyzers of violence and myth. I will show later that the musician is an integral part of the sacrifice process, a channeler of violence, and that the primal identity *magic-music-sacrifice-rite* expresses the musician's position in the majority of civilizations: simultaneously *excluded* (relegated to a place near the bottom of the social hierarchy) and *superhuman* (the genius, the adored and deified star). Simultaneously a separator and an integrator.

In the civilizations of antiquity, the musician was often a slave, sometimes an untouchable. Even as late as the twentieth century, Islam prohibited believers from eating at the same table as a musician. In Persia, music was for a long time an activity restricted to prostitutes or, at least, considered shameful. But at the same time, the ancient religions produced a caste of musician-priests attached to the service of the temple, and mythology endowed musicians with supernatural and civilizing powers. Orpheus domesticated animals and transplanted trees; Amphion attracted fish; Arion built the walls of Thebes. The medicinal powers of music made musicians into therapists: Pythagoras and Empedocles cured the possessed, and Ismenias cured sciatica. David cured Saul's madness by playing the harp.

Despite the absence of an economic hierarchy in these societies, music was inscribed with precision into their systems of power. It is a reflection of the political hierarchy. So much so that many musicologists reduce the history of music to the history of the music of the princes.

Of course, in wealthy monarchies an orchestra has always been a display of power. In China, the musical code comprised five words: Palace, Deliberation, Horn, Manifestation, Wings.[17] Words of power. Words of subversion. What is more, in China the number and arrangement of the musicians indicated the position in the nobility of the lord who owned the orchestra: a square for the emperor, three rows for high dignitaries. The emperor authorized the forms of music that would assure good order within society, and prohibited those that might trouble the people. In Greece, even though there was no state supervision of music (with the exception of Sparta), and in Rome, where the emperors ensured their popularity by financing popular entertainment, music was essential to the workings of power. Throughout antiquity, then, we find the same concern for controlling music—the implicit or explicit channeler of violence, the regulator of society. Montesquieu understood this; he stated that for the Greeks music was a necessary pleasure—necessary for social pacification—and a mode of exchange—the only one compatible with good morals. He explicitly contrasted music to homosexuality and proclaimed their interchangeability:

> Why should music be pitched upon as preferable to any other entertainment? It is, because of all sensible pleasures, there is none that less corrupts the soul. We blush to read in Plutarch that the Thebans, in order to soften the manners of their youth, authorized by law a passion that ought to be proscribed by all nations.[18]

But a subversive strain of music has always managed to survive, subterranean and pursued, the inverse image of this political channelization: popular music, an instrument of the ecstatic cult, an outburst of uncensored violence. I am referring to the Dionysian rites in Greece and Rome, and to other cults originating in Asia Minor. Here, music is a locus of subversion, a transcendence of the body. At odds with the official religions and centers of power, these rites gathered marginals together in forest clearings and caves: women, slaves, expatriates. At times society tolerated them, or attempted to integrate them into the official religion; but at other times it brutally repressed them. There was a well-known incident in Rome that ended with hundreds receiving the death sentence.

Music, the quintessential mass activity, like the crowd, is simultaneously a threat and a necessary source of legitimacy; trying to channel it is a risk that every system of power must run.

Later, Charlemagne would forge the cultural and political unity of his kingdom by imposing the universal practice of the Gregorian chant, resorting to armed force to accomplish that end. In Milan, which remained faithful to the Ambrosian liturgy, hymnals were burned in the public square. A vagabond until the end of the thirteenth century, the musician subsequently became a domestic.

Vagabond

It took centuries for music to enter commodity exchange. Throughout the Middle Ages, the jongleur remained outside society; the Church condemned him, accusing him of paganism and magical practices. His itinerant life-style made him a highly unrespectable figure, akin to the vagabond or the highwayman.

The term *jongleur*, derived from the Latin *joculare* (''to entertain''), designated both musicians (instrumentalists and vocalists) and other entertainers (mimes, acrobats, buffoons, etc.). At the time, these functions were inseparable. The jongleur had no fixed employment; he moved from place to place, offering his services in private residences. He *was* music and the spectacle of the body. He alone created it, carried it with him, and completely organized its circulation within society.

The consumers of music belonged to every social class: peasants during the cyclic festivals and at weddings; artisans and journeymen at patron-saint celebrations; and at annual banquets, the bourgeoisie, nobles. A jongleur could very well play at a country wedding one night, and the next evening in the chateau, where he would eat and sleep with the servants. The same musical message made the rounds, and at each of these occasions the repertory was identical. Popular airs were performed at court; melodies composed in the palaces made it out to the villages and, in more or less modified form, became peasant songs. In the same way, the troubadours often wrote their poems to country airs.

Except for religious music, written music had not yet appeared. The jongleurs played from memory, an unvaried selection of melodies of their own composition, either very old peasant dances drawn from all over Europe and the Near East, or songs by noblemen or men of letters. If a melody was popular, numerous texts were based on it. All these styles functioned essentially within the same structures and were used interchangeably by the jongleurs, who effected a permanent circulation between popular music and court music.

In this precapitalist world in which music was an essential form of the social circulation of information, the jongleurs could be utilized for purposes of political propaganda. As an example, Richard the Lionhearted hired jongleurs to compose songs to his glory and to sing them in the public squares on market days. In wartime, jongleurs were often hired to compose songs against the enemy. Conversely, independent jongleurs composed songs about current events and satirical songs, and kings would forbid them to sing about certain delicate subjects, under threat of imprisonment.

We should, however, note two distinctive characteristics of the court musicians: first, certain highly learned and abstract texts of the troubadours were not sung in the villages. Second, only the courts had the means to hire, for major occasions, orchestras of jongleurs, composed of five or six musicians.

But with these two exceptions, music remained the same in the village, the marketplace, and the courts of the lords throughout the Middle Ages. The circulation of music was neither elitist nor monopolistic of creativity. The feudal world, with its polyphony, remained a world of circulation in which music in daily life was inseparable from lived time, in which it was active and not something to be watched.

In the fourteenth century, everything changed. On the one hand, church music became secularized and autonomous from the chant; it started to use an increasing number of instruments, incorporated melodies of popular and profane origin, and stopped relying exclusively on its Gregorian sources. On the other hand, the techniques of written and polyphonic music spread from court to court and distanced the courts from the people: nobles would buy musicians trained in church choirs and order them to play solemn songs to celebrate their victories, light songs for entertainment, orchestrated dances, etc. Musicians became professionals bound to a single master, *domestics*, producers of spectacles exclusively reserved for a minority.

Domestic

Within three centuries, from the fourteenth century to the sixteenth, the courts had banished the jongleurs, the voice of the people, and no longer listened to anything but scored music performed by salaried musicians. Power had taken hold, becoming hierarchical and distant. A shift in vocabulary confirms this mutation: the term *jongleur* was no longer used to designate a musician, but rather *ménestrel* [''minstrel''] or *ménestrier* [also ''minstrel''], from the Latin *ministerialis*, ''functionary.'' The musician was no longer a nomad. He had settled down, attached to a court, or was the resident of a town. When they were not domestics in the service of a lord, the minstrels organized themselves into guilds modeled after those of craftsmen or merchants, with a patron saint (St. Julian of the Minstrels), annual banquets, a retirement and disability fund, and dues set by municipal legislation. In exchange, they demanded and won a monopoly over marriages and ceremonies, shutting out the jongleurs, who were independent and often nonprofessional musicians. Since the courts had the means to finance resident musicians whom they held under exclusive control, the musicians acquired a new social position in Western society.

Until that time, the musician had been a free craftsman at one with the people and worked indifferently at popular festivals or at the court of the lord. Afterward, he would have to sell himself entirely and exclusively to a single social class.

Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773), who became flute-master to the Prussian king Frederick II after performing at town fairs, changing from jongleur to minstrel, gives a marvelous description of his experience of this mutation—from a time when music was a job like any other to a time when it was the occupation of specialists. From a time of the vagabond to a time of the domestic:

> My father was a blacksmith in the village. . . . In my ninth year, he began my training in the smithy's trade; even on his deathbed he declared that I had to continue in the trade. But . . . as soon as my father died, two brothers, one of whom was a tailor and the other a musician in the court of the town of Merseburg, offered to take me in and teach me their professions; I was free to choose which I preferred to adopt. From the age of eight, when I knew not a note of music, I insisted on accompanying my brother, who served as village musician in the peasant festivals, on a German bass viol, and this music, bad as it was, dominated my preference to such a degree that all I wanted was to be a musician. So I left for my apprenticeship in August of the year 1708, in Merseburg, under the above-mentioned Justus Quantz. . . . The first instrument I had to learn was the violin; I appear to have taken great pleasure in it and to have shown great skill. Then came the oboe and the trumpet. I worked especially hard on these three instruments during my three years of apprenticeship. As for the other instruments, like the cornet, the trombone, the hunting horn, the recorder, the bassoon, the German bass viol, the viola da gamba, and who knows how many others that a good musician must be able to play, I did not neglect them. It is true that, because of the number of different instruments one has in hand, one remains something of a bungler. However, with time one acquires that knowledge of their properties which is nearly indispensable for composers, especially those who write church music. The ducal chapel of Merseburg was not exactly rich at the time. We had to perform in church and at meals as well as at the court. When I finally finished my apprenticeship in December of the year 1713, I played several solos by Corelli and Telemann for the examination. My master excused me from three-quarters of a year of apprenticeship, but on the condition that I serve him a year longer in return for only half a journeyman's allowance. In March of 1718, the "Polish Chapel" was founded, which was to have twelve members. Since eleven members had already been chosen and

> they needed an oboe player, I applied and, after an examination before the chapel master, Baron von Seyferitz, I was engaged into service. The annual salary was 150 taler, with free lodging in Poland. . . . I set about seriously studying the transverse flute, which I had also worked on: for I had no fear it would bring me animosity in the circle I was in. As a result of this new occupation, I began to think more seriously about composing. At that time there were not many pieces written specifically for the flute. . . . I left Dresden in December 1741, at which time I entered the king of Prussia's service. . . . [19]

Behind a mutation in the status of the musician, a rupture between two types of music.

The relations of reversibility between popular music and court music did not, however, end suddenly. Inspiration continued to circulate, to move between the classes. Since the capitalist system did not immediately replace the feudal system, the rupture between the two musical organizations was neither sudden nor total.

On the one hand, court musicians continued to draw from the popular repertory: they composed motets or masses based on songs from the streets, but they were unrecognizable in their polyphonic complexity. In the sixteenth century, collections of printed scores destined for customers in the courts—music's debut in the commercial world—offered orchestrations of popular dances and songs: "collections of songs both rustic and musical."

On the other hand, the jongleur did not disappear, and has not even to this day. Relegated to the villages, he suffered a decline in social status: he became the village minstrel, an ambulant musician who was often a beggar, or simply an amateur who knew how to sing or play the violin. But popular music no longer received much from music of the court, whose composers wrote works exclusively on demand, in particular for important events such as royal weddings, victory celebrations, coronations, funerals, or simply the visit of a foreign prince. One or two decades after its invention by the Florentine Camerata, opera became the most prominent sign of princely prestige. Every prince's marriage had its own original opera, the prologue of which would include an aria in praise of the sponsoring prince, a dedicatory epistle.

The musician, then, was from that day forward economically bound to a machine of power, political or commercial, which paid him a salary for creating what it needed to affirm its legitimacy. Like the notes of tonal music on the staff, he was cramped, chaneled. A domestic, his livelihood depended on the goodwill of the prince. The constraints on his work became imperative, immodest, similar to those a valet or cook was subjected to at the time. For example, the consistory of Arnstadt, on February 21, 1706, reproached the organist of its new church, Johann Sebastian Bach, for his private behavior:

Actum: The Organist of the New Church, Bach, is interrogated as to where he has lately been for so long and from whom he obtained leave to go.

Ille: He has been to Lübeck in order to comprehend one thing and another about his art, but had asked leave beforehand from the Superintendent.

Dominus Superintendens: He had asked only for four weeks, but had stayed about four times as long . . .

Nos: Reprove him for having hitherto made many curious variations in the chorale, and mingled many strange tones in it, and for the fact that the Congregation had been confused by it. In the future, if he wished to introduce a *tonus peregrinus*, he was told to hold it out, and not to turn too quickly to something else, or, as had hitherto been his habit, even play a *tonus contrarius*.[20]

A petty and impossible control to which the musician would be unceasingly subjected, even if in the bourgeois world of representation that control would be more subtle, more abstract than that which plagued Bach his entire life.

For all of that, however, the musician is not a mirror of the productive relations of his time. Gesualdo and Bach do not reflect a single ideological system any more than John Cage or the Tangerine Dream. They are, and remain, witnesses of the impossible imprisonment of the visionary by power, totalitarian or otherwise.

Understanding through Music

If we wish to elaborate a theory of the relations between music and money, we must first look at the existing theories of music. Disappointment. They are a succession of innumerable typologies and are never innocent. From Aristotle's three kinds of music—"ethical" (useful for education), "of action" (which influences even those who do not know how to perform it), and "cathartic" (the aim of which is to perturb and then appease)[21]—to Spengler's distinction between "Apollonian" music (modal, monodic, with an oral tradition) and "Faustian" music (tonal, polyphonic, with a written tradition), all we find are nonfunctional categories. Today, the frenzy with which musical theories, general surveys, encyclopedias, and typologies are elaborated and torn down crystallizes the spectacle of the past. They are nothing more than signs of the anxiety of an age confronted with the disappearance of a world, the dissolution of an aesthetic, and the slipping away of knowledge. They are no more than collections of classifications with no real significance, a final effort to preserve linear order for a material in which time takes on a new dimension, inaccessible to measurement. Roland Barthes is correct when he writes that "if we examine the current practice of music criticism, it is evident that the work (or its performance) is always translated with the poorest of linguistic categories: the adjective."[22]

So which path will lead us through the immense forest of noise with which history presents us? How should we try to understand what the economy has made of music and what economy music foreshadows?

Music is inscribed between noise and silence, in the space of the social codification it reveals. Every code of music is rooted in the ideologies and technologies of its age, and at the same time produces them. If it is deceptive to conceptualize a succession of musical codes corresponding to a succession of economic and political relations, it is because time traverses music and music gives meaning to time.

In this book, I would like to trace the political economy of music as a succession of *orders* (in other words, differences) done violence by *noises* (in other words, the calling into question of differences) that are *prophetic* because they create new orders, unstable and changing. The simultaneity of multiple codes, the variable overlappings between periods, styles, and forms, prohibits any attempt at a genealogy of music, a hierarchical archeology, or a precise ideological pinpointing of particular musicians. But it is possible to discern who among them are innovators and heralds of worlds in the making. For example, Bach alone explored almost the entire range of possibilities inherent in the tonal system, and more. In so doing, he heralded two centuries of industrial adventure. What must be constructed, then, is more like a map, a structure of interferences and dependencies between society and its music.

In this book, I will attempt to trace the history of their relations with the world of production, exchange, and desire; the slow degradation of use into exchange, of representation into repetition; and the prophecy, announced by today's music, of the potential for a new political and cultural order.

Briefly, we will see that it is possible to distinguish on our map three zones, three stages, three strategic usages of music by power.

In one of these zones, it seems that music is used and produced in the ritual in an attempt to make people *forget* the general violence; in another, it is employed to make people *believe* in the harmony of the world, that there is order in exchange and legitimacy in commercial power; and finally, there is one in which it serves to *silence*, by mass-producing a deafening, syncretic kind of music, and censoring all other human noises.

Make people Forget, make them Believe, Silence them. In all three cases, music is a tool of power: of ritual power when it is a question of making people forget the fear of violence; of representative power when it is a question of making them believe in order and harmony; and of bureaucratic power when it is a question of silencing those who oppose it. Thus music localizes and specifies power, because it marks and regiments the rare noises that cultures, in their normalization of behavior, see fit to authorize. Music accounts for them. It makes them audible.

When power wants to make people *forget*, music is ritual *sacrifice*, the scapegoat; when it wants them to *believe*, music is enactment, *representation*; when it wants to *silence* them, it is reproduced, normalized, *repetition*. Thus it heralds the subversion of both the existing code and the power in the making, well before the latter is in place.

Today, in embryonic form, beyond repetition, lies freedom: more than a new music, a fourth kind of musical practice. It heralds the arrival of new social relations. Music is becoming *composition*.

Representation against fear, repetition against harmony, composition against normality. It is this interplay of concepts that music invites us to enter, in its capacity as the herald of organizations and their overall political strategies—noise that destroys orders to structure a new order. A highly illuminating foundation for social analysis and a resurgence of inquiry about man.

For Fear, Clarity, Power, and Freedom correspond in their succession to the four stages Carlos Castaneda distinguishes in his mysterious description of the initiatory teachings of his master, the sorcerer Don Juan Mateus. This convergence is perhaps more than coincidental, if music is a means of understanding, like the unbalanced relation to ecstasy created by drugs. Is the sorcerer speaking of drugs when he explains that:

> When a man starts to learn, he is never clear about his objectives. His purpose is faulty; his intent is vague. He hopes for rewards that will never materialize, for he knows nothing of the hardships of learning. He slowly begins to learn—bit by bit at first, then in big chunks. And his thoughts soon clash. What he learns is never what he pictured or imagined, and so he begins to be afraid. Learning is never what one expects. Every step of learning is a new task, and the fear the man is experiencing begins to mount mercilessly, unyieldingly. . . . This is the time when a man has no more fears, no more impatient clarity of mind—a time when all his power is in check. . . . If a man . . . lives his fate through, he can then be called a man of knowledge, if only for the brief moment when he succeeds in fighting off his last, invincible enemy. That moment of clarity, power, and knowledge is enough.[23]

Don Juan's knowledge by peyote is reminiscent of the prophetic knowledge of the shaman, of the ritual function of the pharmakon. And of the interference between stages in the deployment of systems of music.

Music, like drugs, is intuition, a path to knowledge. A path? No—a battlefield.

Eighth Reading

Jean-François Lyotard, "Answer to the Question: What is Postmodernism?," *The Postmodern Condition* (1979)

Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?
Translated by Régis Durand

A Demand

This is a period of slackening—I refer to the color of the times. From every direction we are being urged to put an end to experimentation, in the arts and elsewhere. I have read an art historian who extols realism and is militant for the advent of a new subjectivity. I have read an art critic who packages and sells "Transavantgardism" in the marketplace of painting. I have read that under the name of postmodernism, architects are getting rid of the Bauhaus project, throwing out the baby of experimentation with the bathwater of functionalism. I have read that a new philosopher is discovering what he drolly calls Judaeo-Christianism, and intends by it to put an end to the impiety which we are supposed to have spread. I have read in a French weekly that some are displeased with *Mille Plateaux* [by Deleuze and Guattari] because they expect, especially when reading a work of philosophy, to be gratified with a little sense. I have read from the pen of a reputable historian that writers and thinkers of the 1960 and 1970 avant-gardes spread a reign of terror in the use of language, and that the conditions for a fruitful exchange must be restored by imposing on the intellectuals a common way of speaking, that of the historians. I have been reading a young philosopher of language who complains that Continental thinking, under the challenge of speaking machines, has surrendered to the machines the concern for reality, that it has substituted for the referential paradigm that of "adlinguisticity" (one speaks about speech, writes about writing, intertextuality), and who thinks that the time has now come to restore a solid anchorage of language in the referent. I have read a talented theatrologist for whom postmodernism, with its games and fantasies, carries very little weight in front of political authority, especially when a worried public opinion encourages authority to a politics of totalitarian surveillance in the face of nuclear warfare threats.

I have read a thinker of repute who defends modernity against those he calls the neoconservatives. Under the banner of postmodernism, the latter would like, he believes, to get rid of the uncompleted project of modernism, that of the Enlightenment. Even the last advocates of *Aufklärung,* such as Popper or Adorno, were only able, according to him, to defend the project in a few particular spheres of life—that of politics for the author of *The Open Society,* and that of art for the author of *Ästhetische Theorie.* Jürgen Habermas (everyone had recognized him) thinks that if modernity has failed, it is in allowing the totality of life to be splintered into independent specialties which are left to the narrow competence of experts, while the concrete individual experiences "desublimated meaning" and "destructured form," not as a liberation but in the mode of that immense *ennui* which Baudelaire described over a century ago.

Following a prescription of Albrecht Wellmer, Habermas considers that the remedy for this splintering of culture and its separation from life can only come from "changing the status of aesthetic experience when it is no longer primarily expressed in judgments of taste," but when it is "used to explore a living historical situation," that is, when "it is put in relation with problems of existence." For this experience then "becomes a part of a language game which is no longer that of aesthetic criticism"; it takes part "in cognitive processes and normative expectations"; "it alters the manner in which those different moments *refer* to one another." What Habermas requires from the arts and the experiences they provide is, in short, to bridge the gap between cognitive, ethical, and political discourses, thus opening the way to a unity of experience.

My question is to determine what sort of unity Habermas has in mind. Is the aim of the project of modernity the constitution of sociocultural unity within which all the elements of daily life and of thought would take their places as in an organic whole? Or does the passage that has to be charted between heterogeneous language games—those of cognition, of ethics, of politics—belong to a different order from that? And if so, would it be capable of effecting a real synthesis between them?

The first hypothesis, of a Hegelian inspiration, does not challenge the notion of a dialectically totalizing *experience;* the second is closer to the spirit of Kant's *Critique of Judgment;* but must be submitted, like the *Critique,* to that severe reexamination which postmodernity imposes on the thought of the Enlightenment, on the idea of a unitary end of history and of a subject. It is this critique which not only Wittgenstein and Adorno have initiated, but also a few other thinkers (French or other) who do not have the honor to be read by Professor Habermas—which at least saves them from getting a poor grade for their neoconservatism.

Realism

The demands I began by citing are not all equivalent. They can even be contradictory. Some are made in the name of postmodernism, others in order to combat it. It is not necessarily the same thing to formulate a demand for some referent (and objective reality), for some sense (and credible transcendence), for an addressee (and audience), or an addressor (and subjective expressiveness) or for some communicational consensus (and a general code of exchanges, such as the genre of historical discourse). But in the diverse invitations to suspend artistic experimentation, there is an identical call for order, a desire for unity, for identity, for security, or popularity (in the sense of *Öffentlichkeit,* of "finding a public"). Artists and writers must be brought back into the bosom of the community, or at least, if the latter is considered to be ill, they must be assigned the task of healing it.

There is an irrefutable sign of this common disposition: it is that for all those writers nothing is more urgent than to liquidate the heritage of the avant-gardes. Such is the case, in particular, of the so-called transavantgardism. The answers given by Achille Bonito Oliva to the questions asked by Bernard Lamarche-Vadel and Michel Enric leave no room for doubt about this. By putting the avant-gardes through a mixing process, the artist and critic feel more confident that they can suppress them than by launching a frontal attack. For they can pass off the most cynical eclecticism as a way of going beyond the fragmentary character of the preceding experiments; whereas if they openly turned their backs on them, they would run the risk of appearing ridiculously neoacademic. The *Salons* and the *Académies,* at the time when the bourgeoisie was establishing itself in history, were able to function as purgation and to grant awards for good plastic and literary conduct under the cover of realism. But capitalism inherently possesses the power to derealize familiar objects, social roles, and institutions to such a degree that the so-called realistic representations can no longer evoke reality except as nostalgia or mockery, as an occasion for suffering rather than for satisfaction. Classicism seems to be ruled out in a world in which reality is so destabilized that it offers no occasion for experience but one for ratings and experimentation.

This theme is familiar to all readers of Walter Benjamin. But it is necessary to assess its exact reach. Photography did not appear as a challenge to painting from the outside, any more than industrial cinema did to narrative literature. The former was only putting the final touch to the program of ordering the visible elaborated by the quattrocento; while the latter was the last step in rounding off diachronies as organic wholes, which had been the ideal of the great novels of education since the eighteenth century. That the mechanical and the industrial should appear as substitutes for hand or craft was not in itself a disaster—except if one believes that art is in its essence the expression of an individuality of genius assisted by an elite craftsmanship.

The challenge lay essentially in that photographic and cinematographic processes can accomplish better, faster, and with a circulation a hundred thousand times larger than narrative or pictorial realism, the task which academicism had assigned to realism: to preserve various consciousnesses from doubt. Industrial photography and cinema will be superior to painting and the novel whenever the objective is to stabilize the referent, to arrange it according to a point of view which endows it with a recognizable meaning, to reproduce the syntax and vocabulary which enable the addressee to decipher images and sequences quickly, and so to arrive easily at the consciousness of his own identity as well as the approval which he thereby receives from others—since such structures of images and sequences constitute a communication code among all of them. This is the way the effects of reality, or if one prefers, the fantasies of realism, multiply.

If they too do not wish to become supporters (of minor importance at that) of what exists, the painter and novelist must refuse to lend themselves to such therapeutic uses. They must question the rules of the art of painting or of narrative as they have learned and received them from their predecessors. Soon those rules must appear to them as a means to deceive, to seduce, and to reassure, which makes it impossible for them to be "true." Under the common name of painting and literature, an unprecedented split is taking place. Those who refuse to reexamine the rules of art pursue successful careers in mass conformism by communicating, by means of the "correct rules," the endemic desire for reality with objects and situations capable of gratifying it. Pornography is the use of photography and film to such an end. It is becoming a general model for the visual or narrative arts which have not met the challenge of the mass media.

As for the artists and writers who question the rules of plastic and narrative arts and possibly share their suspicions by circulating their work, they are destined to have little credibility in the eyes of those concerned with "reality" and "identity"; they have no guarantee of an audience. Thus it is possible to ascribe the dialectics of the avant-gardes to the challenge posed by the realisms of industry and mass communication to painting and the narrative arts. Duchamp's "ready made" does nothing but actively and parodistically signify this constant process of dispossession of the craft of painting or even of being an artist. As Thierry de Duve penetratingly observes, the modern aesthetic question is not "What is beautiful?" but "What can be said to be art (and literature)?"

Realism, whose only definition is that it intends to avoid the question of reality implicated in that of art, always stands somewhere between academicism and kitsch. When power assumes the name of a party, realism and its neoclassical complement triumph over the experimental avant-garde by slandering and banning it—that is, provided the "correct" images, the "correct" narratives, the "correct" forms which the party requests, selects, and propagates can find a public to desire them as the appropriate remedy for the anxiety and depression that public experiences. The demand for reality—that is, for unity, simplicity, communicability, etc.—did not have the same intensity nor the same continuity in German society between the two world wars and in Russian society after the Revolution: this provides a basis for a distinction between Nazi and Stalinist realism.

What is clear, however, is that when it is launched by the political apparatus, the attack on artistic experimentation is specifically reactonary: aesthetic judgment would only be required to decide whether such or such work is in conformity with the established rules of the beautiful. Instead of the work of art having to investigate what makes it an art object and whether it will be able to find an audience, political academicism possesses and imposes a priori criteria of the beautiful, which designate some works and a public at a stroke and forever. The use of categories in aesthetic judgment would thus be of the same nature as in cognitive judgment. To speak like Kant, both would be determining judgments: the expression is "well formed" first in the understanding, then the only cases retained in experience are those which can be subsumed under this expression.

When power is that of capital and not that of a party, the "trans-avantgardist" or "postmodern" (in Jencks's sense) solution proves to be better adapted than the antimodern solution. Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and "retro" clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games. It is easy to find a public for eclectic works. By becoming kitsch, art panders to the confusion which reigns in the "taste" of the patrons. Artists, gallery owners, critics, and public wallow together in the "anything goes," and the epoch is one of slackening. But this realism of the "anything goes" is in fact that of money; in the absence of aesthetic criteria, it remains possible and useful to assess the value of works of art according to the profits they yield. Such realism accommodates all tendencies, just as capital accommodates all "needs," providing that the tendencies and needs have purchasing power. As for taste, there is no need to be delicate when one speculates or entertains oneself.

Artistic and literary research is doubly threatened, once by the "cultural policy" and once by the art and book market. What is advised, sometimes through one channel, sometimes through the other, is to offer works which, first, are relative to subjects which exist in the eyes of the public they address, and second, works so made ("well made") that the public will recognize what they are about, will understand what is signified, will be able to give or refuse its approval knowingly, and if possible, even to derive from such work a certain amount of comfort.

The interpretation which has just been given of the contact between the industrial and mechanical arts, and literature and the fine arts is correct in its outline, but it remains narrowly sociologizing and historicizing—in other words, one-sided. Stepping over Benjamin's and Adorno's reticences, it must be recalled that science and industry are no more free of the suspicion which concerns reality than are art and writing. To believe otherwise would be to entertain an excessively humanistic notion of the mephistophelian functionalism of sciences and technologies. There is no denying the dominant existence today of techno-science, that is, the massive subordination of cognitive statements to the finality of the best possible performance, which is the technological criterion. But the mechanical and the industrial, especially when they enter fields traditionally reserved for artists, are carrying with them much more than power effects. The objects and the thoughts which originate in scientific knowledge and the capitalist economy convey with them one of the rules which supports their possibility: the rule that there is no reality unless testified by a consensus between partners over a certain knowledge and certain commitments.

This rule is of no little consequence. It is the imprint left on the politics of the scientist and the trustee of capital by a kind of flight of reality out of the metaphysical, religious, and political certainties that the mind believed it held. This withdrawal is absolutely necessary to the emergence of science and capitalism. No industry is possible without a suspicion of the Aristotelian theory of motion, no industry without a refutation of corporatism, of mercantilism, and of physiocracy. Modernity, in whatever age it appears, cannot exist without a shattering of belief and without discovery of the "lack of reality" of reality, together with the invention of other realities.

What does this "lack of reality" signify if one tries to free it from a narrowly historicized interpretation? The phrase is of course akin to what Nietzsche calls nihilism. But I see a much earlier modulation of Nietzschean perspectivism in the Kantian theme of the sublime. I think in particular that it is in the aesthetic of the sublime that modern art (including literature) finds its impetus and the logic of avant-gardes finds its axioms.

The sublime sentiment, which is also the sentiment of the sublime, is, according to Kant, a strong and equivocal emotion: it carries with it both pleasure and pain. Better still, in it pleasure derives from pain. Within the tradition of the subject, which comes from Augustine and Descartes and which Kant does not radically challenge, this contradiction, which some would call neurosis or masochism, develops as a conflict between the faculties of a subject, the faculty to conceive of something and the faculty to "present" something. Knowledge exists if, first, the statement is intelligible, and second, if "cases" can be derived from the experience which "corresponds" to it. Beauty exists if a certain "case" (the work of art), given first by the sensibility without any conceptual determination, the sentiment of pleasure independent of any interest the work may elicit, appeals to the principle of a universal consensus (which may never be attained).

Taste, therefore, testifies that between the capacity to conceive and the capacity to present an object corresponding to the concept, an undetermined agreement, without rules, giving rise to a judgment which Kant calls reflective, may be experienced as pleasure. The sublime is a different sentiment. It takes place, on the contrary, when the imagination fails to present an object which might, if only in principle, come to match a concept. We have the Idea of the world (the totality of what is), but we do not have the capacity to show an example of it. We have the Idea of the simple (that which cannot be broken down, decomposed), but we cannot illustrate it with a sensible object which would be a "case" of it. We can conceive the infinitely great, the infinitely powerful, but every presentation of an object destined to "make visible" this absolute greatness or power appears to us painfully inadequate. Those are Ideas of which no presentation is possible. Therefore, they impart no knowledge about reality (experience); they also prevent the free union of the faculties which gives rise to the sentiment of the beautiful; and they prevent the formation and the stabilization of taste. They can be said to be unpresentable.

I shall call modern the art which devotes its "little technical expertise" (*son "petit technique"*), as Diderot used to say, to present the fact that the unpresentable exists. To make visible that there is something which can be conceived and which can neither be seen nor made visible: this is what is at stake in modern painting. But how to make visible that there is something which cannot be seen? Kant himself shows the way when he names "formlessness, the absence of form," as a possible index to the unpresentable. He also says of the empty "abstraction" which the imagination experiences when in search for a presentation of the infinite (another unpresentable): this abstraction itself is like a presentation of the infinite, its "negative presentation." He cites the commandment, "Thou shalt not make graven images" (*Exodus*), as the most sublime passage in the Bible in that it forbids all presentation of the Absolute. Little needs to be added to those observations to outline an aesthetic of sublime paintings. As painting, it will of course "present" something though negatively; it will therefore avoid figuration or representation. It will be "white" like one of Malevitch's squares; it will enable us to see only by making it impossible to see; it will please only by causing pain. One recognizes in those instructions the axioms of avant-gardes in painting, inasmuch as they devote themselves to making an allusion to the unpresentable by means of visible presentations. The systems in the name of which, or with which, this task has been able to support or to justify itself deserve the greatest attention; but they can originate only in the vocation of the sublime in order to legitimize it, that is, to conceal it. They remain inexplicable without the incommensurability of reality to concept which is implied in the Kantian philosophy of the sublime.

It is not my intention to analyze here in detail the manner in which the various avant-gardes have, so to speak, humbled and disqualified reality by examining the pictorial techniques which are so many devices to make us believe in it. Local tone, drawing, the mixing of colors, linear perspective, the nature of the support and that of the instrument, the treatment, the display, the museum: the avant-gardes are perpetually flushing out artifices of presentation which make it possible to subordinate thought to the gaze and to turn it away from the unpresentable. If Habermas, like Marcuse, understands this task of derealization as an aspect of the (repressive) "desublimation" which characterizes the avant-garde, it is because he confuses the Kantian sublime with Freudian sublimation, and because aesthetics has remained for him that of the beautiful.

The Postmodern

What, then, is the postmodern? What place does it or does it not occupy in the vertiginous work of the questions hurled at the rules of image and narration? It is undoubtedly a part of the modern. All that has been received, if only yesterday (*modo, modo,* Petronius used to say), must be suspected. What space does Cézanne challenge? The Impressionists'. What object do Picasso and Braque attack? Cézanne's. What presupposition does Duchamp break with in 1912? That which says one must make a painting, be it cubist. And Buren questions that other presupposition which he believes had survived untouched by the work of Duchamp: the place of presentation of the work. In an amazing acceleration, the generations precipitate themselves. A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant.

Yet I would like not to remain with this slightly mechanistic meaning of the word. If it is true that modernity takes place in the withdrawal of the real and according to the sublime relation between the presentable and the conceivable, it is possible, within this relation, to distinguish two modes (to use the musician's language). The emphasis can be placed on the powerlessness of the faculty of presentation, on the nostalgia for presence felt by the human subject, on the obscure and futile will which inhabits him in spite of everything. The emphasis can be placed, rather, on the power of the faculty to conceive, on its "inhumanity" so to speak (it was the quality Apollinaire demanded of modern artists), since it is not the business of our understanding whether or not human sensibility or imagination can match what it conceives. The emphasis can also be placed on the increase of being and the jubilation which result from the invention of new rules of the game, be it pictorial, artistic, or any other. What I have in mind will become clear if we dispose very schematically a few names on the chessboard of the history of avant-gardes: on the side of melancholia, the German Expressionists, and on the side of *novatio*, Braque and Picasso, on the former Malevitch and on the latter Lissitsky, on the one Chirico and on the other Duchamp. The nuance which distinguishes these two modes may be infinitesimal; they often coexist in the same piece, are almost indistinguishable; and yet they testify to a difference (*un différend*) on which the fate of thought depends and will depend for a long time, between regret and assay.

The work of Proust and that of Joyce both allude to something which does not allow itself to be made present. Allusion, to which Paolo Fabbri recently called my attention, is perhaps a form of expression indispensable to the works which belong to an aesthetic of the sublime. In Proust, what is being eluded as the price to pay for this allusion is the identity of consciousness, a victim to the excess of time (*au trop de temps*). But in Joyce, it is the identity of writing which is the victim of an excess of the book (*au trop de livre*) or of literature.

Proust calls forth the unpresentable by means of a language unaltered in its syntax and vocabulary and of a writing which in many of its operators still belongs to the genre of novelistic narration. The literary institution, as Proust inherits it from Balzac and Flaubert, is admittedly subverted in that the hero is no longer a character but the inner consciousness of time, and in that the diegetic diachrony, already damaged by Flaubert, is here put in question because of the narrative voice. Nevertheless, the unity of the book, the odyssey of that consciousness, even if it is deferred from chapter to chapter, is not seriously challenged: the identity of the writing with itself throughout the labyrinth of the interminable narration is enough to connote such unity, which has been compared to that of *The Phenomenology of Mind.*

Joyce allows the unpresentable to become perceptible in his writing itself, in the signifier. The whole range of available narrative and even stylistic operators is put into play without concern for the unity of the whole, and new operators are tried. The grammar and vocabulary of literary language are no longer accepted as given;

rather, they appear as academic forms, as rituals originating in piety (as Nietzsche said) which prevent the unpresentable from being put forward.

Here, then, lies the difference: modern aesthetics is an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It allows the unpresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer to the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure. Yet these sentiments do not constitute the real sublime sentiment, which is in an intrinsic combination of pleasure and pain: the pleasure that reason should exceed all presentation, the pain that imagination or sensibility should not be equal to the concept.

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable. A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done.* Hence the fact that work and text have the characters of an *event;* hence also, they always come too late for their author, or, what amounts to the same thing, their being put into work, their realization (*mise en oeuvre*) always begin too soon. *Post modern* would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (*post*) anterior (*modo*).

It seems to me that the essay (Montaigne) is postmodern, while the fragment (*The Athaeneum*) is modern.

Finally, it must be clear that it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented. And it is not to be expected that this task will effect the last reconciliation between language games (which, under the name of faculties, Kant knew to be separated by a chasm), and that only the transcendental illusion (that of Hegel) can hope to totalize them into a real unity. But Kant also knew that the price to pay for such an illusion is terror. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given us as much terror as we can take. We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience. Under the general demand for slackening and for appeasement, we can hear the mutterings of the desire for a return of terror, for the realization of the fantasy to seize reality. The answer is: Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name.

Ninth Reading

Judith Butler, excerpt from *Gender Trouble* (1990)

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1

Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire

One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one.
—Simone de Beauvoir

Strictly speaking, "women" cannot be said to exist.
—Julia Kristeva

Woman does not have a sex.
—Luce Irigaray

The deployment of sexuality . . . established this notion of sex.
—Michel Foucault

The category of sex is the political category that founds society as heterosexual.
—Monique Wittig

i. "Women" as the Subject of Feminism

For the most part, feminist theory has assumed that there is some existing identity, understood through the category of women, who not only initiates feminist interests and goals within discourse, but constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued. But *politics* and *representation* are controversial terms. On the one hand, *representation* serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects; on the other hand, representation is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women. For feminist theory, the development of a language that fully or adequately represents women has seemed necessary to foster the political visibility of women. This has seemed obviously important considering the pervasive cultural condition in which women's lives were either misrepresented or not represented at all.

Recently, this prevailing conception of the relation between feminist theory and politics has come under challenge from within feminist discourse. The very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms. There is a great deal of material that not only questions the viability of "the subject" as the ultimate candidate for representation or, indeed, liberation, but there is very little agreement after all on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category of women. The domains of political and linguistic "representation" set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject. In other words, the qualifications for being a subject must first be met before representation can be extended.

Foucault points out that juridical systems of power *produce* the subjects they subsequently come to represent.[1] Juridical notions of power appear to regulate political life in purely negative terms—that is, through the limitation, prohibition, regulation, control and even "protection" of individuals related to that political structure through the contingent and retractable operation of choice. But the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures. If this analysis is right, then the juridical formation of language and politics that represents women as "the subject" of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representational politics. And the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation. This becomes politically problematic if that system can be shown to produce gendered subjects along a differential axis of domination or to produce subjects who are presumed to be masculine. In such cases, an uncritical appeal to such a system for the emancipation of "women" will be clearly self-defeating.

The question of "the subject" is crucial for politics, and for feminist politics in particular, because juridical subjects are invariably produced through certain exclusionary practices that do not "show" once the juridical structure of politics has been established. In other words, the political construction of the subject proceeds with certain legitimating and exclusionary aims, and these political operations are effectively concealed and naturalized by a political analysis that takes juridical structures as their foundation. Juridical power inevitably "produces" what it claims merely to represent; hence, politics must be concerned with this dual function of power: the juridical and the productive. In effect, the law produces and then conceals the notion of "a subject before the law"[2] in order to invoke that discursive formation as a naturalized foundational premise that subsequently legitimates that law's own regulatory hegemony. It is not enough to inquire into how women might become more fully represented in language and politics. Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of "women," the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought.

Indeed, the question of women as the subject of feminism raises the possibility that there may not be a subject who stands "before" the law, awaiting representation in or by the law. Perhaps the subject, as

well as the invocation of a temporal "before," is constituted by the law as the fictive foundation of its own claim to legitimacy. The prevailing assumption of the ontological integrity of the subject before the law might be understood as the contemporary trace of the state of nature hypothesis, that foundationalist fable constitutive of the juridical structures of classical liberalism. The performative invocation of a nonhistorical "before" becomes the foundational premise that guarantees a presocial ontology of persons who freely consent to be governed and, thereby, constitute the legitimacy of the social contract.

Apart from the foundationalist fictions that support the notion of the subject, however, there is the political problem that feminism encounters in the assumption that the term *women* denotes a common identity. Rather than a stable signifier that commands the assent of those whom it purports to describe and represent, *women,* even in the plural, has become a troublesome term, a site of contest, a cause for anxiety. As Denise Riley's title suggests, *Am I That Name?* is a question produced by the very possibility of the name's multiple significations.[3] If one "is" a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered "person" transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.

The political assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally, often accompanies the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination. The notion of a universal patriarchy has been widely criticized in recent years for its failure to account for the workings of gender oppression in the concrete cultural contexts in which it exists. Where those various contexts have been consulted within such theories, it has been to find "examples" or "illustrations" of a universal principle that is assumed from the start. That form of feminist theorizing has come under criticism for its efforts to colonize and appropriate non-Western cultures to support highly Western notions of oppression, but because they tend as well to construct a "Third World" or even an "Orient" in which gender oppression is subtly explained as symptomatic of an essential, non-Western barbarism. The urgency of feminism to establish a universal status for patriarchy in order to strengthen the appearance of feminism's own claims to be representative has occasionally motivated the shortcut to a categorial or fictive universality of the structure of domination, held to produce women's common subjugated experience.

Although the claim of universal patriarchy no longer enjoys the kind of credibility it once did, the notion of a generally shared conception of "women," the corollary to that framework, has been much more difficult to displace. Certainly, there have been plenty of debates: Is there some commonality among "women" that preexists their oppression, or do "women" have a bond by virtue of their oppression alone? Is there a specificity to women's cultures that is independent of their subordination by hegemonic, masculinist cultures? Are the specificity and integrity of women's cultural or linguistic practices always specified *against* and, hence, within the terms of some more dominant cultural formation? If there is a region of the "specifically feminine," one that is both differentiated from the masculine as such and recognizable in its difference by an unmarked and, hence, presumed universality of "women"? The masculine/feminine binary constitutes not only the exclusive framework in which that specificity can be recognized, but in every other way the "specificity" of the feminine is once again fully decontextualized and separated off analytically and politically from the constitution of class, race, ethnicity, and other axes of power relations that both constitute "identity" and make the singular notion of identity a misnomer.[4]

My suggestion is that the presumed universality and unity of the subject of feminism is effectively undermined by the constraints of the representational discourse in which it functions. Indeed, the premature insistence on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of women, inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category. These domains of exclusion reveal the coercive and regulatory consequences of that construction, even when the construction has been elaborated for emancipatory purposes. Indeed, the fragmentation within feminism and the paradoxical opposition to feminism from "women" whom feminism claims to represent suggest the necessary limits of identity politics. The suggestion that feminism can seek wider representation for a subject that it itself constructs has the ironic consequence that feminist goals risk failure by refusing to take account of the constitutive powers of their own representational claims. This problem is not ameliorated through an appeal to the category of women for merely "strategic" purposes, for strategies always have meanings that exceed the purposes for which they are intended. In

this case, exclusion itself might qualify as such an unintended yet consequential meaning. By conforming to a requirement of representational politics that feminism articulate a stable subject, feminism thus opens itself to charges of gross misrepresentation.

Obviously, the political task is not to refuse representational politics—as if we could. The juridical structures of language and politics constitute the contemporary field of power; hence, there is no position outside this field, but only a critical genealogy of its own legitimating practices. As such, the critical point of departure is *the historical present,* as Marx put it. And the task is to formulate within this constituted frame a critique of the categories of identity that contemporary juridical structures engender, naturalize, and immobilize.

Perhaps there is an opportunity at this juncture of cultural politics, a period that some would call "postfeminist," to reflect from within a feminist perspective on the injunction to construct a subject of feminism. Within feminist political practice, a radical rethinking of the ontological constructions of identity appears to be necessary in order to formulate a representational politics that might revive feminism on other grounds. On the other hand, it may be time to entertain a radical critique that seeks to free feminist theory from the necessity of having to construct a single or abiding ground which is invariably contested by those identity positions or anti–identity positions that it invariably excludes. Do the exclusionary practices that ground feminist theory in a notion of "women" as subject paradoxically undercut feminist goals to extend its claims to "representation"?[5]

Perhaps the problem is even more serious. Is the construction of the category of women as a coherent and stable subject an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations? And is not such a reification precisely contrary to feminist aims? To what extent does the category of women achieve stability and coherence only in the context of the heterosexual matrix?[6] If a stable notion of gender no longer proves to be the foundational premise of feminist politics, perhaps a new sort of feminist politics is now desirable to contest the very reifications of gender and identity, one that will take the variable construction of identity as both a methodological and normative prerequisite, if not a political goal.

To trace the political operations that produce and conceal what qualifies as the juridical subject of feminism is precisely the task of *a feminist genealogy* of the category of women. In the course of this effort to question "women" as the subject of feminism, the unproblematic invocation of that category may prove to *preclude* the possibility of feminism as a representational politics. What sense does it make to extend representation to subjects who are constructed through the exclusion of those who fail to conform to unspoken normative requirements of the subject? What relations of domination and exclusion are inadvertently sustained when representation becomes the sole focus of politics? The identity of the feminist subject ought not to be the foundation of feminist politics, if the formation of the subject takes place within a field of power regularly buried through the assertion of that foundation. Perhaps, paradoxically, "representation" will be shown to make sense for feminism only when the subject of "women" is nowhere presumed.

ii. The Compulsory Order of Sex/Gender/Desire

Although the unproblematic unity of "women" is often invoked to construct a solidarity of identity, a split is introduced in the feminist subject by the distinction between sex and gender. Originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. The unity of the subject is thus already potentially contested by the distinction that permits of gender as a multiple interpretation of sex.[7]

If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of "men" will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that "women" will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution (which will become a question), there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two.[8] The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one.

This radical splitting of the gendered subject poses yet another set of problems. Can we refer to a "given" sex or a "given" gender without first inquiring into how sex and/or gender is given, through what means? And what is "sex" anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal, and how is a feminist critic to assess the

scientific discourses which purport to establish such "facts" for us?[9] Does sex have a history?[10] Does each sex have a different history, or histories? Is there a history of how the duality of sex was established, a genealogy that might expose the binary options as a variable construction? Are the ostensibly natural facts of sex discursively produced by various scientific discourses in the service of other political and social interests? If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called "sex" is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all.[11]

It would make no sense, then, to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex, if sex itself is a gendered category. Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which "sexed nature" or "a natural sex" is produced and established as "prediscursive," prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts. This construction of "sex" as the radically unconstructed will concern us again in the discussion of Lévi-Strauss and structuralism in chapter 2. At this juncture it is already clear that one way the internal stability and binary frame for sex is effectively secured is by casting the duality of sex in a prediscursive domain. This production of sex *as* the prediscursive ought to be understood as the effect of the apparatus of cultural construction designated by *gender*. How, then, does gender need to be reformulated to encompass the power relations that produce the effect of a prediscursive sex and so conceal that very operation of discursive production?

iii. Gender: The Circular Ruins of Contemporary Debate

Is there "a" gender which persons are said *to have*, or is it an essential attribute that a person is said *to be*, as implied in the question "What gender are you?"? When feminist theorists claim that gender is the cultural interpretation of sex or that gender is culturally constructed, what is the manner or mechanism of this construction? If gender is constructed, could it be constructed differently, or does its constructedness imply some form of social determinism, foreclosing the possibility of agency and transformation? Does "construction" suggest that certain laws generate gender differences along universal axes of sexual difference? How and where does the construction of gender take place? What sense can we make of a construction that cannot assume a human constructor prior to that construction? On some accounts, the notion that gender is constructed suggests a certain determinism of gender meanings inscribed on anatomically differentiated bodies, where those bodies are understood as passive recipients of an inexorable cultural law. When the relevant "culture" that "constructs" gender is understood in terms of such a law or set of laws, then it seems that gender is as determined and fixed as it was under the biology-is-destiny formulation. In such a case, not biology, but culture, becomes destiny.

On the other hand, Simone de Beauvoir suggests in *The Second Sex* that "one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one."[12] For Beauvoir, gender is "constructed," but implied in her formulation is an agent, a *cogito*, who somehow takes on or appropriates that gender and could, in principle, take on some other gender. Is gender as variable and volitional as Beauvoir's account seems to suggest? Can "construction" in such a case be reduced to a form of choice? Beauvoir is clear that one "becomes" a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion to become one. And clearly, the compulsion does not come from "sex." There is nothing in her account that guarantees that the "one" who becomes a woman is necessarily female. If "the body is a situation,"[13] as she claims, there is no recourse to a body that has not always already been interpreted by cultural meanings; hence, sex could not qualify as a prediscursive anatomical facticity. Indeed, sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along.[14]

The controversy over the meaning of *construction* appears to founder on the conventional philosophical polarity between free will and determinism. As a consequence, one might reasonably suspect that some common linguistic restriction on thought both forms and limits the terms of the debate. Within those terms, "the body" appears as a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed or as the instrument through which an appropriative and interpretive will determines a cultural meaning for itself. In either case, the body is figured as a mere *instrument* or *medium* for which a set of cultural meanings are only externally related. But "the body" it itself a construction, as are the myriad "bodies" that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. Bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender; the question then emerges: To what extent does the body *come into being* in and through the mark(s) of gender? How do we reconceive the body no longer as a passive medium or instrument awaiting the enlivening capacity of a distinctly immaterial will?[15]

Whether gender or sex is fixed or free is a function of a discourse which, it will be suggested, seeks to set certain limits to analysis or to safeguard certain tenets of humanism as presuppositional to any analysis of gender. The locus of intractability, whether in "sex" or "gender" or in the very meaning of "construction," provides a clue to what cultural possibilities can and cannot become mobilized through any further analysis. The limits of the discursive analysis of gender presuppose and preempt the possibilities of imaginable and realizable gender configurations within culture. This is not to say that any and all gendered possibilities are open, but that the boundaries of analysis suggest the limits of a discursively conditioned experience. These limits are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures that appear as the language of universal rationality. Constraint is thus built into what that language constitutes as the imaginable domain of gender.

Although social scientists refer to gender as a "factor" or a "dimension" of an analysis, it is also applied to embodied persons as "a mark" of biological, linguistic, and/or cultural difference. In these latter cases, gender can be understood as a signification that an (already) sexually differentiated body assumes, but even then that signification exists only *in relation* to another, opposing signification. Some feminist theorists claim that gender is "a relation," indeed, a set of relations, and not an individual attribute. Others, following Beauvoir, would argue that only the feminine gender is marked, that the universal person and the masculine gender are conflated, thereby defining women in terms of their sex and extolling men as the bearers of a body-transcendent universal personhood.

In a move that complicates the discussion further, Luce Irigaray argues that women constitute a paradox, if not a contradiction, within the discourse of identity itself. Women are the "sex" which is not "one." Within a language pervasively masculinist, a phallogocentric language, women constitute the *unrepresentable*. In other words, women represent the sex that cannot be thought, a linguistic absence and opacity. Within a language that rests on univocal signification, the female sex constitutes the unconstrainable and undesignatable. In this sense, women are the sex which is not "one," but multiple.[16] In opposition to Beauvoir, for whom women are designated as the Other, Irigaray argues that both the subject and the Other are masculine mainstays of a closed phallogocentric signifying economy that achieves its totalizing goal through the exclusion of the feminine altogether. For Beauvoir, women are the negative of men, the lack against which masculine identity differentiates itself; for Irigaray, that particular dialectic constitutes a system that excludes an entirely different economy of signification. Women are not only represented falsely within the Sartrian frame of signifying-subject and signified-Other, but the falsity of the signification points out the entire structure of representation as inadequate. The sex which is not one, then, provides a point of departure for a criticism of hegemonic Western representation and of the metaphysics of substance that structures the very notion of the subject.

What is the metaphysics of substance, and how does it inform thinking about the categories of sex? In the first instance, humanist conceptions of the subject tend to assume a substantive person who is the bearer of various essential and nonessential attributes. A humanist feminist position might understand gender as an *attribute* of a person who is characterized essentially as a pregendered substance or "core," called the person, denoting a universal capacity for reason, moral deliberation, or language. The universal conception of the person, however, is displaced as a point of departure for a social theory of gender by those historical and anthropological positions that understand gender as a *relation* among socially constituted subjects in specifiable contexts. This relational or contextual point of view suggests that what the person "is," and, indeed, what gender "is," is always relative to the constructed relations in which it is determined.[17] As a shifting and contextual phenomenon, gender does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations.

Irigaray would maintain, however, that the feminine "sex" is a point of linguistic *absence,* the impossibility of a grammatically denoted substance, and, hence, the point of view that exposes that substance as an abiding and foundational illusion of a masculinist discourse. This absence is not marked as such within the masculine signifying economy—a contention that reverses Beauvoir's argument (and Wittig's) that the female sex *is* marked, while the male sex is not. For Irigaray, the female sex is not a "lack" or an "Other" that immanently and negatively defines the subject in its masculinity. On the contrary, the female sex eludes the very requirements of representation, for she is neither "Other" nor the "lack," those categories remaining relative to the Sartrian subject, immanent to that phallogocentric scheme. Hence, for Irigaray, the feminine could never be the *mark of a subject,* as Beauvoir would suggest. Further, the feminine could not be theorized in terms of a determinate *relation* between the masculine and the feminine within any given discourse, for discourse is not a relevant notion here. Even in their variety, discourses constitute so many modalities of phallogocentric language. The female sex is thus also *the subject* that is not one. The relation between masculine and feminine cannot be represented in a signifying economy in which the masculine constitutes the closed circle of signifier and signified. Paradoxically enough, Beauvoir prefigured this impossibility in *The Second Sex* when she argued that men could not settle the question of women because they would then be acting as both judge and party to the case.[18]

The distinctions among the above positions are far from discrete; each of them can be understood to problematize the locality and meaning of both the "subject" and "gender" within the context of socially instituted gender asymmetry. The interpretive possibilities of gender are in no sense exhausted by the alternatives suggested above. The problematic circularity of a feminist inquiry into gender is underscored by the presence of positions which, on the one hand, presume that gender is a secondary characteristic of persons and those which, on the other hand, argue that the very notion of the person, positioned within language as a "subject," is a masculinist construction and prerogative which effectively excludes the structural and semantic possibility of a feminine gender. The consequence of such sharp disagreements about the meaning of gender (indeed, whether *gender* is the term to be argued about at all, or whether the discursive construction of *sex* is, indeed, more fundamental, or perhaps *women* or *woman* and/or *men* and *man*) establishes the need for a radical rethinking of the categories of identity within the context of relations of radical gender asymmetry.

For Beauvoir, the "subject" within the existential analytic of misogyny is always already masculine, conflated with the universal, differentiating itself from a feminine "Other" outside the universalizing norms of personhood, hopelessly "particular," embodied, condemned to immanence. Although Beauvoir is often understood to be calling for the right of women, in effect, to become existential subjects and, hence, for inclusion within the terms of an abstract universality, her position also implies a fundamental critique of the very disembodiment of the abstract masculine epistemological subject.[19] That subject is abstract to the extent that it disavows its socially marked embodiment and, further, projects that disavowed and disparaged embodiment on to the feminine sphere, effectively renaming the body as female. This association of the body with the female works along magical relations of reciprocity whereby the female sex becomes restricted to its body, and the male body, fully disavowed, becomes, paradoxically, the incorporeal instrument of an ostensibly radical freedom. Beauvoir's analysis implicitly poses the question: Through what act of negation and disavowal does the masculine pose as a disembodied universality and the feminine get constructed as a disavowed corporeality? The dialectic of master-slave, here fully reformulated within the nonreciprocal terms of gender asymmetry, prefigures what Irigaray will later describe as the masculine signifying economy that includes both the existential subject and its Other.

Beauvoir proposes that the female body ought to be the situation and instrumentality of women's freedom, not a defining and limiting essence.[20] The theory of embodiment informing Beauvoir's analysis is clearly limited by the uncritical reproduction of the Cartesian distinction between freedom and the body. Despite my own previous efforts to argue the contrary, it appears that Beauvoir maintains the mind/body dualism, even as she proposes a synthesis of those terms.[21] The preservation of that very distinction can be read as symptomatic of the very phallogocentrism that Beauvoir underestimates. In the philosophical tradition that begins with Plato and continues through Descartes, Husserl, and Sartre, the ontological distinction between soul (consciousness, mind) and body invariably supports relations of political and psychic subordination and hierarchy. The mind not only subjugates the body, but occasionally entertains the fantasy of fleeing its embodiment altogether. The cultural associations of mind with masculinity and body with femininity are well documented within the field of philosophy and feminism.[22] As a result, any uncritical reproduction of the mind/body distinction ought to be rethought for the implicit gender hierarchy that the distinction has conventionally produced, maintained, and rationalized.

The discursive construction of "the body" and its separation from "freedom" in Beauvoir fails to mark along the axis of gender the very mind-body distinction that is supposed to illuminate the persistence of gender asymmetry. Officially, Beauvoir contends that the female body is marked within masculinist discourse, whereby the masculine body, in its conflation with the universal, remains unmarked. Irigaray clearly suggests that both marker and marked are maintained within a masculinist mode of signification in which the female body is "marked off," as it were, from the domain of the signifiable. In post-Hegelian terms, she is "cancelled," but not preserved. On Irigaray's reading, Beauvoir's claim that woman "is sex" is reversed to mean that she is not the sex she is designated to be, but, rather, the masculine sex *encore* (and *en corps*) parading in the mode of otherness. For Irigaray, that phallogocentric mode of signifying the female sex perpetually

reproduces phantasms of its own self-amplifying desire. Instead of a self-limiting linguistic gesture that grants alterity or difference to women, phallogocentrism offers a name to eclipse the feminine and take its place.

iv. Theorizing the Binary, the Unitary, and Beyond

Beauvoir and Irigaray clearly differ over the fundamental structures by which gender asymmetry is reproduced; Beauvoir turns to the failed reciprocity of an asymmetrical dialectic, while Irigaray suggests that the dialectic itself is the monologic elaboration of a masculinist signifying economy. Although Irigaray clearly broadens the scope of feminist critique by exposing the epistemological, ontological, and logical structures of a masculinist signifying economy, the power of her analysis is undercut precisely by its globalizing reach. Is it possible to identify a monolithic as well as a monologic masculinist economy that traverses the array of cultural and historical contexts in which sexual difference takes place? Is the failure to acknowledge the specific cultural operations of gender oppression itself a kind of epistemological imperialism, one which is not ameliorated by the simple elaboration of cultural differences as "examples" of the selfsame phallogocentrism? The effort to *include* "Other" cultures as variegated amplifications of a global phallogocentrism constitutes an appropriative act that risks a repetition of the self-aggrandizing gesture of phallogocentrism, colonizing under the sign of the same those differences that might otherwise call that totalizing concept into question.[23]

Feminist critique ought to explore the totalizing claims of a masculinist signifying economy, but also remain self-critical with respect to the totalizing gestures of feminism. The effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms. That the tactic can operate in feminist and antifeminist contexts alike suggests that the colonizing gesture is not primarily or irreducibly masculinist. It can operate to effect other relations of racial, class, and heterosexist subordination, to name but a few. And clearly, listing the varieties of oppression, as I began to do, assumes their discrete, sequential coexistence along a horizontal axis that does not describe their convergences within the social field. A vertical model is similarly insufficient; oppressions cannot be summarily ranked, causally related, distributed among planes of "originality" and "derivativeness."[24] Indeed, the field of power structured in part by the imperializing gesture of dialectical appropriation exceeds and encompasses the axis of sexual difference, offering a mapping of intersecting differentials which cannot be summarily hierarchized either within the terms of phallogocentrism or any other candidate for the position of "primary condition of oppression." Rather than an exclusive tactic of masculinist signifying economies, dialectical appropriation and suppression of the Other is one tactic among many, deployed centrally but not exclusively in the service of expanding and rationalizing the masculinist domain.

The contemporary feminist debates over essentialism raise the question of the universality of female identity and masculinist oppression in other ways. Universalistic claims are based on a common or shared epistemological standpoint, understood as the articulated consciousness or shared structures of oppression or in the ostensibly transcultural structures of femininity, maternity, sexuality, and/or *écriture feminine*. The opening discussion in this chapter argued that this globalizing gesture has spawned a number of criticisms from women who claim that the category of "women" is normative and exclusionary and is invoked with the unmarked dimensions of class and racial privilege intact. In other words, the insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of women has effectively refused the multiplicity of cultural, social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of "women" are constructed.

Some efforts have been made to formulate coalitional politics which do not assume in advance what the content of "women" will be. They propose instead a set of dialogic encounters by which variously positioned women articulate separate identities within the framework of an emergent coalition. Clearly, the value of coalitional politics is not to be underestimated, but the very form of coalition, of an emerging and unpredictable assemblage of positions, cannot be figured in advance. Despite the clearly democratizing impulse that motivates coalition building, the coalitional theorist can inadvertently reinsert herself as sovereign of the process by trying to assert an ideal form for coalitional structures *in advance,* one that will effectively guarantee unity as the outcome. Related efforts to determine what is and is not the true shape of a dialogue, what constitutes a subject-position, and, most importantly, when "unity" has been reached, can impede the shelf-shaping and self-limiting dynamics of coalition.

The insistence in advance on coalitional "unity" as a goal assumes that solidarity, whatever its price, is a prerequisite for political action. But what sort of politics demands that kind of advance purchase on unity? Perhaps a coalition needs to acknowledge its contradictions and take action with those contradictions intact. Perhaps also part of what dialogic understanding entails is the acceptance of divergence, breakage, splinter, and fragmentation as part of the often tortuous

process of democratization. The very notion of "dialogue" is culturally specific and historically bound, and while one speaker may feel secure that a conversation is happening, another may be sure it is not. The power relations that condition and limit dialogic possibilities need first to be interrogated. Otherwise, the model of dialogue risks relapsing into a liberal model that assumes that speaking agents occupy equal positions of power and speak with the same presuppositions about what constitutes "agreement" and "unity" and, indeed, that those are the goals to be sought. It would be wrong to assume in advance that there is a category of "women" that simply needs to be filled in with various components of race, class, age, ethnicity, and sexuality in order to become complete. The assumption of its essential incompleteness permits that category to serve as a permanently available site of contested meanings. The definitional incompleteness of the category might then serve as a normative ideal relieved of coercive force.

Is "unity" necessary for effective political action? Is the premature insistence on the goal of unity precisely the cause of an ever more bitter fragmentation among the ranks? Certain forms of acknowledged fragmentation might faciliate coalitional action precisely because the "unity" of the category of women is neither presupposed nor desired. Does "unity" set up an exclusionary norm of solidarity at the level of identity that rules out the possibility of a set of actions which disrupt the very borders of identity concepts, or which seek to accomplish precisely that disruption as an explicit political aim? Without the presupposition or goal of "unity," which is, in either case, always instituted at a conceptual level, provisional unities might emerge in the context of concrete actions that have purposes other than the articulation of identity. Without the compulsory expectation that feminist actions must be instituted from some stable, unified, and agreed upon identity, those actions might well get a quicker start and seem more congenial to a number of "women" for whom the meaning of the category is permanently moot.

This antifoundationalist approach to coalitional politics assumes neither that "identity" is a premise nor that the shape or meaning of a coalitional assemblage can be known prior to its achievement. Because the articulation of an identity within available cultural terms instates a definition that forecloses in advance the emergence of new identity concepts in and through politically engaged actions, the foundationalist tactic cannot take the transformation or expansion of existing identity concepts as a normative goal. Moreover, when agreed-upon identities or agreed-upon dialogic structures, through which already established identities are communicated, no longer constitute the theme or subject of politics, then identities can come into being and dissolve depending on the concrete practices that constitute them. Certain political practices institute identities on a contingent basis in order to accomplish whatever aims are in view. Coalitional politics requires neither an expanded category of "women" nor an internally multiplicitous self that offers its complexity at once.

Gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time. An open coalition, then, will affirm identities that are alternately instituted and relinquished according to the purposes at hand; it will be an open assemblage that permits of multiple convergences and divergences without obedience to a normative telos of definitional closure.

v. Identity, Sex, and the Metaphysics of Substance

What can be meant by "identity," then, and what grounds the presumption that identities are self-identical, persisting through time as the same, unified and internally coherent? More importantly, how do these assumptions inform the discourses on "gender identity"? It would be wrong to think that the discussion of "identity" ought to proceed prior to a discussion of gender identity for the simple reason that "persons" only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility. Sociological discussions have conventionally sought to understand the notion of the person in terms of an agency that claims ontological priority to the various roles and functions through which it assumes social visibility and meaning. Within philosophical discourse itself, the notion of "the person" has received analytic elaboration on the assumption that whatever social context the person is "in" remains somehow externally related to the definitional structure of personhood, be that consciousness, the capacity for language, or moral deliberation. Although that literature is not examined here, one premise of such inquiries is the focus of critical exploration and inversion. Whereas the question of what constitutes "personal identity" within philosophical accounts almost always centers on the question of what internal feature of the person establishes the continuity or self-identity of the person through time, the question here will be: To what extent do *regulatory practices* of gender formation and division constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed, the self-identical status of the person? To what extent is "identity" a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience? And how do the regulatory practices that govern gender also govern culturally intelligible notions of identity? In other words, the "coherence" and "continuity" of "the person" are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility. Inasmuch as "identity" is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of "the person" is called into question by the cultural emergence of those "incoherent" or "discontinuous" gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined.

"Intelligible" genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire. In other words, the spectres of discontinuity and incoherence, themselves thinkable only in relation to existing norms of continuity and coherence, are constantly prohibited and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or expressive lines of connection among biological sex, culturally constituted genders, and the "expression" or "effect" of both in the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice.

The notion that there might be a "truth" of sex, as Foucault ironically terms it, is produced precisely through the regulatory practices that generate coherent identities through the matrix of coherent gender norms. The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between "feminine" and "masculine," where these are understood as expressive attributes of "male" and "female." The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of "identities" cannot "exist"—that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not "follow" from either sex or gender. "Follow" in this context is a political relation of entailment instituted by the cultural laws that establish and regulate the shape and meaning of sexuality. Indeed, precisely because certain kinds of "gender identities" fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain. Their persistence and proliferation, however, provide critical opportunities to expose the limits and regulatory aims of that domain of intelligibility and, hence, to open up within the very terms of that matrix of intelligibility rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder.

Before such disordering practices are considered, however, it seems crucial to understand the "matrix of intelligibility." Is it singular? Of what is it composed? What is the peculiar alliance presumed to exist between a system of compulsory heterosexuality and the discursive categories that establish the identity concepts of sex? If "identity" is an *effect* of discursive practices, to what extent is gender identity, construed as a relationship among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire, the effect of a regulatory practice that can be identified as compulsory heterosexuality? Would that explanation return us to yet another totalizing frame in which compulsory heterosexuality merely takes the place of phallogocentrism as the monolithic cause of gender oppression?

Within the spectrum of French feminist and poststructuralist theory, very different regimes of power are understood to produce the identity concepts of sex. Consider the divergence between those positions, such as Irigaray's, that claim there is only one sex, the masculine, that elaborates itself in and through the production of the "Other," and those positions, Foucault's, for instance, that assume that the category of sex, whether masculine or feminine, is a production of a diffuse regulatory economy of sexuality. Consider also Wittig's argument that the category of sex is, under the conditions of compulsory heterosexuality, always feminine (the masculine remaining unmarked and, hence, synonomous with the "universal"). Wittig concurs, however paradoxically, with Foucault in claiming that the category of sex would itself disappear and, indeed, *dissipate* through the disruption and displacement of heterosexual hegemony.

The various explanatory models offered here suggest the very different ways in which the category of sex is understood depending on how the field of power is articulated. Is it possible to maintain the complexity of these fields of power and think through their productive capacities together? On the one hand, Irigaray's theory of sexual difference suggests that women can never be understood on the model of a "subject" within the conventional representational systems of Western culture precisely because they constitute the fetish of representation and, hence, the unrepresentable as such. Women can never "be," according to this ontology of substances, precisely because they are the relation of difference, the excluded, by which that domain marks itself off. Women are also a "difference" that cannot be understood as the simple negation or "Other" of the always-already-masculine subject. As discussed earlier, they are neither the subject nor its Other, but a difference from the economy of binary opposition, itself a ruse for a monologic elaboration of the masculine.

Central to each of these views, however, is the notion that sex appears within hegemonic language as a *substance,* as, metaphysically speaking, a self-identical being. This appearance is achieved through

a performative twist of language and/or discourse that conceals the fact that "being" a sex or a gender is fundamentally impossible. For Irigaray, grammar can never be a true index of gender relations precisely because it supports the substantial model of gender as a binary relation between two positive and representable terms.[25] In Irigaray's view, the substantive grammar of gender, which assumes men and women as well as their attributes of masculine and feminine, is an example of a binary that effectively masks the univocal and hegemonic discourse of the masculine, phallogocentrism, silencing the feminine as a site of subversive multiplicity. For Foucault, the substantive grammar of sex imposes an artificial binary relation between the sexes, as well as an artificial internal coherence within each term of that binary. The binary regulation of sexuality suppresses the subversive multiplicity of a sexuality that disrupts heterosexual, reproductive, and medicojuridical hegemonies.

For Wittig, the binary restriction on sex serves the reproductive aims of a system of compulsory heterosexuality; occasionally, she claims that the overthrow of compulsory heterosexuality will inaugurate a true humanism of "the person" freed from the shackles of sex. In other contexts, she suggests that the profusion and diffusion of a nonphallocentric erotic economy will dispel the illusions of sex, gender, and identity. At yet other textual moments it seems that "the lesbian" emerges as a third gender that promises to transcend the binary restriction on sex imposed by the system of compulsory heterosexuality. In her defense of the "cognitive subject," Wittig appears to have no metaphysical quarrel with hegemonic modes of signification or representation; indeed, the subject, with its attribute of self-determination, appears to be the rehabilitation of the agent of existential choice under the name of the lesbian: "the advent of individual subjects demands first destroying the categories of sex. . . . the lesbian is the only concept I know of which is beyond the categories of sex."[26] She does not criticize "the subject" as invariably masculine according to the rules of an inevitably patriarchal Symbolic, but proposes in its place the equivalent of a lesbian subject as language-user.[27]

The identification of women with "sex," for Beauvoir as for Wittig, is a conflation of the category of women with the ostensibly sexualized features of their bodies and, hence, a refusal to grant freedom and autonomy to women as it is purportedly enjoyed by men. Thus, the destruction of the category of sex would be the destruction of an *attribute,* sex, that has, through a misogynist gesture of synecdoche, come to take the place of the person, the self-determining *cogito.* In other words, only men are "persons," and there is no gender but the feminine:

> Gender is the linguistic index of the political opposition between the sexes. Gender is used here in the singular because indeed there are not two genders. There is only one: the feminine, the "masculine" not being a gender. For the masculine is not the masculine, but the general.[28]

Hence, Wittig calls for the destruction of "sex" so that women can assume the status of a universal subject. On the way toward that destruction, "women" must assume both a particular and a universal point of view.[29] As a subject who can realize concrete universality through freedom, Wittig's lesbian confirms rather than contests the normative promise of humanist ideals premised on the metaphysics of substance. In this respect, Wittig is distinguished from Irigaray, not only in terms of the now familiar oppositions between essentialism and materialism,[30] but in terms of the adherence to a metaphysics of substance that confirms the normative model of humanism as the framework for feminism. Where it seems that Wittig has subscribed to a radical project of lesbian emancipation and enforced a distinction between "lesbian" and "woman," she does this through the defense of the pregendered "person," characterized as freedom. This move not only confirms the presocial status of human freedom, but subscribes to that metaphysics of substance that is responsible for the production and naturalization of the category of sex itself.

The metaphysics of substance is a phrase that is associated with Nietzsche within the contemporary criticism of philosophical discourse. In a commentary on Nietzsche, Michel Haar argues that a number of philosophical ontologies have been trapped within certain illusions of "Being" and "Substance" that are fostered by the belief that the grammatical formulation of subject and predicate reflects the prior ontological reality of substance and attribute. These constructs, argues Haar, constitute the artificial philosophical means by which simplicity, order, and identity are effectively instituted. In no sense, however, do they reveal or represent some true order of things. For our purposes, this Nietzschean criticism becomes instructive when it is applied to the psychological categories that govern much popular and theoretical thinking about gender identity. According to Haar, the critique of the metaphysics of substance implies a critique of the very notion of the psychological person as a substantive thing:

> The destruction of logic by means of its genealogy brings with it as well the ruin of the psychological categories founded upon this logic. All psychological categories (the ego, the individual, the person) derive from the illusion of substantial identity. But this illusion goes back basically to a superstition that deceives not only common sense but also philosophers—namely, the belief in language and, more precisely, in the truth of grammatical categories. It was grammar (the structure of subject and predicate) that inspired Descartes' certainty that "I" is the subject of "think," whereas it is rather the thoughts that come to "me": at bottom, faith in grammar simply conveys the will to be the "cause" of one's thoughts. The subject, the self, the individual, are just so many false concepts, since they transform into substances fictitious unities having at the start only a linguistic reality.[31]

Wittig provides an alternative critique by showing that persons cannot be signified within language without the mark of gender. She provides a political analysis of the grammar of gender in French. According to Wittig, gender not only designates persons, "qualifies" them, as it were, but constitutes a conceptual episteme by which binary gender is universalized. Although French gives gender to all sorts of nouns other than persons, Wittig argues that her analysis has consequences for English as well. At the outset of "The Mark of Gender" (1984), she writes:

> The mark of gender, according to grammarians, concerns substantives. They talk about it in terms of function. If they question its meaning, they may joke about it, calling gender a "fictive sex." . . . as far as the categories of the person are concerned, both [English and French] are bearers of gender to the same extent. Both indeed give way to a primitive ontological concept that enforces in language a division of beings into sexes. . . . As an ontological concept that deals with the nature of Being, along with a whole nebula of other primitive concepts belonging to the same line of thought, gender seems to belong primarily to philosophy.[32]

For gender to "belong to philosophy" is, for Wittig, to belong to "that body of self-evident concepts without which philosophers believe they cannot develop a line of reasoning and which for them go without saying, for they exist prior to any thought, any social order, in nature."[33] Wittig's view is corroborated by that popular discourse on gender identity that uncritically employs the inflectional attribution of "being" to genders and to "sexualities." The unproblematic claim to "be" a woman and "be" heterosexual would be symptomatic of that metaphysics of gender substances. In the case of both "men" and "women," this claim tends to subordinate the notion of gender under that of identity and to lead to the conclusion that a person *is* a gender and *is* one in virtue of his or her sex, psychic sense of self, and various expressions of that psychic self, the most salient being that of sexual desire. In such a prefeminist context, gender, naively (rather than critically) confused with sex, serves as a unifying principle of the embodied self and maintains that unity over and against an "opposite sex" whose structure is presumed to maintain a parallel but oppositional internal coherence among sex, gender, and desire. The articulation "I feel like a woman" by a female or "I feel like a man" by a male presupposes that in neither case is the claim meaninglessly redundant. Although it might appear unproblematic *to be* a given anatomy (although we shall later consider the way in which that project is also fraught with difficulty), the experience of a gendered psychic disposition or cultural identity is considered an achievement. Thus, "I feel like a woman" is true to the extent that Aretha Franklin's invocation of the defining Other is assumed: "You make me feel like a natural woman."[34] This achievement requires a differentiation from the opposite gender. Hence, one is one's gender to the extent that one is not the other gender, a formulation that presupposes and enforces the restriction of gender within that binary pair.

Gender can denote a *unity* of experience, of sex, gender, and desire, only when sex can be understood in some sense to necessitate gender—where gender is a psychic and/or cultural designation of the self—and desire—where desire is heterosexual and therefore differentiates itself through an oppositional relation to that other gender it desires. The internal coherence or unity of either gender, man or woman, thereby requires both a stable and oppositional heterosexuality. That institutional heterosexuality both requires and produces the univocity of each of the gendered terms that constitute the limit of gendered possibilities within an oppositional, binary gender system. This conception of gender presupposes not only a causal relation among sex, gender, and desire, but suggests as well that desire reflects or expresses gender and that gender reflects or expresses desire. The metaphysical unity of the three is assumed to be truly known and expressed in a differentiating desire for an oppositional gender—that is, in a form of oppositional heterosexuality. Whether as a naturalistic paradigm which establishes a causal continuity among sex, gender, and desire, or as an authentic-expressive paradigm in which some true self is said to be revealed simultaneously or successively in sex, gender, and desire, here "the old dream of symmetry," as Irigaray has called it, is presupposed, reified, and rationalized.

This rough sketch of gender gives us a clue to understanding the political reasons for the substantializing view of gender. The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term

is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire.

The strategic displacement of that binary relation and the metaphysics of substance on which it relies presuppose that the categories of female and male, woman and man, are similarly produced within the binary frame. Foucault implicitly subscribes to such an explanation. In the closing chapter of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* and in his brief but significant introduction to *Herculine Barbin, Being the Recently Discovered Journals of a Nineteenth-Century Hermaphrodite,*[35] Foucault suggests that the category of sex, prior to any categorization of sexual difference, is itself constructed through a historically specific mode of *sexuality*. The tactical production of the discrete and binary categorization of sex conceals the strategic aims of that very apparatus of production by postulating "sex" as "a cause" of sexual experience, behavior, and desire. Foucault's genealogical inquiry exposes this ostensible "cause" as "an effect," the production of a given regime of sexuality that seeks to regulate sexual experience by instating the discrete categories of sex as foundational and causal functions within any discursive account of sexuality.

Foucault's introduction to the journals of the hermaphrodite, Herculine Barbin, suggests that the genealogical critique of these reified categories of sex is the inadvertent consequence of sexual practices that cannot be accounted for within the medicolegal discourse of a naturalized heterosexuality. Herculine is not an "identity," but the sexual impossibility of an identity. Although male and female anatomical elements are jointly distributed in and on this body, that is not the true source of scandal. The linguistic conventions that produce intelligible gendered selves find their limit in Herculine precisely because she/he occasions a convergence and disorganization of the rules that govern sex/gender/desire. Herculine deploys and redistributes the terms of a binary system, but that very redistribution disrupts and proliferates those terms outside the binary itself. According to Foucault, Herculine is not categorizable within the gender binary as it stands; the disconcerting convergence of heterosexuality and homosexuality in her/his person are only occasioned, but never caused, by his/her anatomical discontinuity. Foucault's appropriation of Herculine is suspect,[36] but his analysis implies the interesting belief that sexual heterogeneity (paradoxically foreclosed by a naturalized "hetero"-sexuality) implies a critique of the metaphysics of substance as it informs the identitarian categories of sex. Foucault imagines Herculine's experience as "a world of pleasures in which grins hang about without the cat."[37] Smiles, happinesses, pleasures, and desires are figured here as qualities without an abiding substance to which they are said to adhere. As free-floating attributes, they suggest the possibility of a gendered experience that cannot be grasped through the substantializing and hierarchizing grammar of nouns (*res extensa*) and adjectives (attributes, essential and accidental). Through his cursory reading of Herculine, Foucault proposes an ontology of accidental attributes that exposes the postulation of identity as a culturally restricted principle of order and hierarchy, a regulatory fiction.

If it is possible to speak of a "man" with a masculine attribute and to understand that attribute as a happy but accidental feature of that man, then it is also possible to speak of a "man" with a feminine attribute, whatever that is, but still to maintain the integrity of the gender. But once we dispense with the priority of "man" and "woman" as abiding substances, then it is no longer possible to subordinate dissonant gendered features as so many secondary and accidental characteristics of a gender ontology that is fundamentally intact. If the notion of an abiding substance is a fictive construction produced through the compulsory ordering of attributes into coherent gender sequences, then it seems that gender as substance, the viability of *man* and *woman* as nouns, is called into question by the dissonant play of attributes that fail to conform to sequential or causal models of intelligibility.

The appearance of an abiding substance or gendered self, what the psychiatrist Robert Stoller refers to as a "gender core,"[38] is thus produced by the regulation of attributes along culturally established lines of coherence. As a result, the exposure of this fictive production is conditioned by the deregulated play of attributes that resist assimilation into the ready made framework of primary nouns and subordinate adjectives. It is of course always possible to argue that dissonant adjectives work retroactively to redefine the substantive identities they are said to modify and, hence, to expand the substantive categories of gender to include possibilities that they previously excluded. But if these substances are nothing other than the coherences contingently created through the regulation of attributes, it would seem that the ontology of substances itself is not only an artificial effect, but essentially superfluous.

In this sense, *gender* is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse

of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. The challenge for rethinking gender categories outside of the metaphysics of substance will have to consider the relevance of Nietzsche's claim in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything."[39] In an application that Nietzsche himself would not have anticipated or condoned, we might state as a corollary: There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results.

vi. Language, Power, and the Strategies of Displacement

A great deal of feminist theory and literature has nevertheless assumed that there is a "doer" behind the deed. Without an agent, it is argued, there can be no agency and hence no potential to initiate a transformation of relations of domination within society. Wittig's radical feminist theory occupies an ambiguous position within the continuum of theories on the question of the subject. On the one hand, Wittig appears to dispute the metaphysics of substance, but on the other hand, she retains the human subject, the individual, as the metaphysical locus of agency. While Wittig's humanism clearly presupposes that there is a doer behind the deed, her theory nevertheless delineates the performative construction of gender within the material practices of culture, disputing the temporality of those explanations that would confuse "cause" with "result." In a phrase that suggests the intertextual space that links Wittig with Foucault (and reveals the traces of the Marxist notion of reification in both of their theories), she writes:

> A materialist feminist approach shows that what we take for the cause or origin of oppression is in fact only the *mark* imposed by the oppressor; the "myth of woman," plus its material effects and manifestations in the appropriated consciousness and bodies of women. Thus, this mark does not preexist oppression . . . sex is taken as an "immediate given," a "sensible given," "physical features," belonging to a natural order. But what we believe to be a physical and direct perception is only a sophisticated and mythic construction, an "imaginary formation."[40]

Because this production of "nature" operates in accord with the dictates of compulsory heterosexuality, the emergence of homosexual desire, in her view, transcends the categories of sex: "If desire could liberate itself, it would have nothing to do with the preliminary marking by sexes."[41]

Wittig refers to "sex" as a mark that is somehow applied by an institutionalized heterosexuality, a mark that can be erased or obfuscated through practices that effectively contest that institution. Her view, of course, differs radically from Irigaray's. The latter would understand the "mark" of gender to be part of the hegemonic signifying economy of the masculine that operates through the self-elaborating mechanisms of specularization that have virtually determined the field of ontology within the Western philosophical tradition. For Wittig, language is an instrument or tool that is in no way misogynist in its structures, but only in its applications.[42] For Irigaray, the possibility of another language or signifying economy is the only chance at escaping the "mark" of gender which, for the feminine, is nothing but the phallogocentric erasure of the female sex. Whereas Irigaray seeks to expose the ostensible "binary" relation between the sexes as a masculinist ruse that excludes the feminine altogether, Wittig argues that positions like Irigaray's reconsolidate the binary between masculine and feminine and recirculate a mythic notion of the feminine. Clearly drawing on Beauvoir's critique of the myth of the feminine in *The Second Sex,* Wittig asserts, "there is no 'feminine writing.' "[43]

Wittig is clearly attuned to the power of language to subordinate and exclude women. As a "materialist," however, she considers language to be "another order of materiality,"[44] an institution that can be radically transformed. Language ranks among the concrete and contingent practices and institutions maintained by the choices of individuals and, hence, weakened by the collective actions of choosing individuals. The linguistic fiction of "sex," she argues, is a category produced and circulated by the system of compulsory heterosexuality in an effort to restrict the production of identities along the axis of heterosexual desire. In some of her work, both male and female homosexuality, as well as other positions independent of the heterosexual contract, provide the occasion either for the overthrow or the proliferation of the category of sex. In *The Lesbian Body* and elsewhere, however, Wittig appears to take issue with genitally organized sexuality *per se* and to call for an alternative economy of pleasures which would both contest the construction of female subjectivity marked by women's supposedly distinctive reproductive function.[45] Here the proliferation of pleasures outside the reproductive economy suggests both a specifically feminine form of erotic diffusion, understood as a counterstrategy to the reproductive construction of genitality. In a sense, *The Lesbian Body* can be understood, for Wittig, as an "inverted" reading of Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,* in which he argues for the developmental superiority of genital sexuality over and against the less restricted and more diffuse infantile sexuality. Only the "invert," the medical classification invoked by Freud for "the homosexual," fails to "achieve" the genital norm. In waging a political critique against genitality, Wittig appears to deploy "inversion" as a critical reading practice, valorising precisely those features of an undeveloped sexuality designated by Freud and effectively inaugurating a "post-genital politics."[46] Indeed, the notion of development can be read only as normalization within the heterosexual matrix. And yet, is this the only reading of Freud possible? And to what extent is Wittig's practice of "inversion" committed to the very model of normalization that she seeks to dismantle? In other words, if the model of a more diffuse and antigenital sexuality serves as the singular, oppositional alternative to the hegemonic structure of sexuality, to what extent is that binary relation fated to reproduce itself endlessly? What possibility exists for the disruption of the oppositional binary itself?

Wittig's oppositional relationship to psychoanalysis produces the unexpected consequence that her theory presumes precisely that psychoanalytic theory of development, now fully "inverted," that she seeks to overcome. Polymorphous perversity, assumed to exist prior to the marking by sex, is valorised as the telos of human sexuality.[47] One possible feminist psychoanalytic response to Wittig might argue that she both undertheorizes and underestimates the meaning and function of *the language* in which "the mark of gender" occurs. She understands that marking practice as contingent, radically variable, and even dispensable. The status of a primary *prohibition* in Lacanian theory operates more forcefully and less contingently than the notion of a *regulatory practice* in Foucault or a materialist account of a system of heterosexist oppression in Wittig.

In Lacan, as in Irigaray's post-Lacanian reformulation of Freud, sexual difference is not a simple binary that retains the metaphysics of substance as its foundation. The masculine "subject" is a fictive construction produced by the law that prohibits incest and forces an infinite displacement of a heterosexualizing desire. The feminine is never a mark of the subject; the feminine could not be an "attribute" of a gender. Rather, the feminine is the signification of lack, signified by the Symbolic, a set of differentiating linguistic rules that effectively create sexual difference. The masculine linguistic position undergoes individuation and heterosexualization required by the founding prohibitions of the Symbolic law, the law of the Father. The incest taboo that bars the son from the mother and thereby instates the kinship relation between them is a law enacted "in the name of the Father." Similarly, the law that refuses the girl's desire for both her mother and father requires that she take up the emblem of maternity and perpetuate the rules of kinship. Both masculine and feminine positions are thus instituted through prohibitive laws that produce culturally intelligible genders, but only through the production of an unconscious sexuality that reemerges in the domain of the imaginary.[48]

The feminist appropriation of sexual difference, whether written in opposition to the phallogocentrism of Lacan (Irigaray) or as a critical reelaboration of Lacan, attempts to theorize the feminine, not as an expression of the metaphysics of substance, but as the unrepresentable absence effected by (masculine) denial that grounds the signifying economy through exclusion. The feminine as the repudiated/excluded within that system constitutes the possibility of a critique and disruption of that hegemonic conceptual scheme. The works of Jacqueline Rose[49] and Jane Gallop[50] underscore in different ways the constructed status of sexual difference, the inherent instability of that construction, and the dual consequentiality of a prohibition that at once institutes a sexual identity and provides for the exposure of that construction's tenuous ground. Although Wittig and other materialist feminists within the French context would argue that sexual difference is an unthinking replication of a reified set of sexed polarities, these criticisms neglect the critical dimension of the unconscious which, as a site of repressed sexuality, reemerges within the discourse of the subject as the very impossibility of its coherence. As Rose points out very clearly, the construction of a coherent sexual identity along the disjunctive axis of the feminine/masculine is bound to fail;[51] the disruptions of this coherence through the inadvertent reemergence of the repressed reveal not only that "identity" is constructed, but that the prohibition that constructs identity is inefficacious (the paternal law ought to be understood not as a deterministic divine will, but as a perpetual bumbler, preparing the ground for the insurrections against him).

The differences between the materialist and Lacanian (and post-Lacanian) positions emerge in a normative quarrel over whether there is a retrievable sexuality either "before" or "outside" the law in the mode of the unconscious or "after" the law as a postgenital sexuality. Paradoxically, the normative trope of polymorphous perversity is understood to characterize both views of alternative sexuality. There is no agreement, however, on the manner of delimiting that "law" or set of "laws." The psychoanalytic critique succeeds in giving an account of the construction of "the subject"—and perhaps also the

illusion of substance—within the matrix of normative gender relations. In her existential-materialist mode, Wittig presumes the subject, the person, to have a presocial and pregendered integrity. On the other hand, "the paternal Law" in Lacan, as well as the monologic mastery of phallogocentrism in Irigaray, bear the mark of a monotheistic singularity that is perhaps less unitary and culturally universal than the guiding structuralist assumptions of the account presume.[52]

But the quarrel seems also to turn on the articulation of a temporal trope of a subversive sexuality that flourishes *prior* to the imposition of a law, *after* its overthrow, or during its reign as a constant challenge to its authority. Here it seems wise to reinvoke Foucault who, in claiming that sexuality and power are coextensive, implicitly refutes the postulation of a subversive or emancipatory sexuality which could be free of the law. We can press the argument further by pointing out that "the before" of the law and "the after" are discursively and performatively instituted modes of temporality that are invoked within the terms of a normative framework which asserts that subversion, destabilization, or displacement requires a sexuality that somehow escapes the hegemonic prohibitions on sex. For Foucault, those prohibitions are invariably and inadvertently productive in the sense that "the subject" who is supposed to be founded and produced in and through those prohibitions does not have access to a sexuality that is in some sense "outside," "before," or "after" power itself. Power, rather than the law, encompasses both the juridical (prohibitive and regulatory) and the productive (inadvertently generative) functions of differential relations. Hence, the sexuality that emerges within the matrix of power relations is not a simple replication or copy of the law itself, a uniform repetition of a masculinist economy of identity. The productions swerve from their original purposes and inadvertently mobilize possibilities of "subjects" that do not merely exceed the bounds of cultural intelligibility, but effectively expand the boundaries of what is, in fact, culturally intelligible.

The feminist norm of a postgenital sexuality became the object of significant criticism from feminist theorists of sexuality, some of whom have sought a specifically feminist and/or lesbian appropriation of Foucault. This utopian notion of a sexuality freed from heterosexual constructs, a sexuality beyond "sex," failed to acknowledge the ways in which power relations continue to construct sexuality for women even within the terms of a "liberated" heterosexuality or lesbianism.[53] The same criticism is waged against the notion of a specifically feminine sexual pleasure that is radically differentiated from phallic sexuality. Irigaray's occasional efforts to derive a specific feminine sexuality from a specific female anatomy have been the focus of anti-essentialist arguments for some time.[54] The return to biology as the ground of a specific feminine sexuality or meaning seems to defeat the feminist premise that biology is not destiny. But whether feminine sexuality is articulated here through a discourse of biology for purely strategic reasons,[55] or whether it is, in fact, a feminist return to biological essentialism, the characterization of female sexuality as radically distinct from a phallic organization of sexuality remains problematic. Women who fail either to recognize that sexuality as their own or understand their sexuality as partially constructed within the terms of the phallic economy are potentially written off within the terms of that theory as "male-identified" or "unenlightened." Indeed, it is often unclear within Irigaray's text whether sexuality is culturally constructed, or whether it is only culturally constructed within the terms of the phallus. In other words, is specifically feminine pleasure "outside" of culture as its prehistory or as its utopian future? If so, of what use is such a notion for negotiating the contemporary struggles of sexuality within the terms of its construction?

The pro-sexuality movement within feminist theory and practice has effectively argued that sexuality is always constructed within the terms of discourse and power, where power is partially understood in terms of heterosexual and phallic cultural conventions. The emergence of a sexuality constructed (not determined) in these terms within lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual contexts is, therefore, *not* a sign of a masculine identification in some reductive sense. It is not the failed project of criticizing phallogocentrism or heterosexual hegemony, as if a political critique could effectively undo the cultural construction of the feminist critic's sexuality. If sexuality is culturally constructed within existing power relations, then the postulation of a normative sexuality that is "before," "outside," or "beyond" power is a cultural impossibility and a politically impracticable dream, one that postpones the concrete and contemporary task of rethinking subversive possibilities for sexuality and identity within the terms of power itself. This critical task presumes, of course, that to operate within the matrix of power is not the same as to replicate uncritically relations of domination. It offers the possibility of a repetition of the law which is not its consolidation, but its displacement. In the place of a "male-identified" sexuality in which "male" serves as the cause and irreducible meaning of that sexuality, we might develop a notion of sexuality constructed in terms of phallic relations of power that replay and redistribute the possibilities of that phallicism precisely through the subversive operation of "identifications" that are, within the power field of sexuality, inevitable. If "identifications," following Jacqueline Rose, can be exposed as phantasmatic, then it must be possible to enact an identification that displays its phantasmatic structure. If there is no radical repudiation of a culturally constructed sexuality, what is left is the question of how to acknowledge and "do" the construction one is invariably in. Are there forms of repetition that do not constitute a simple imitation, reproduction, and, hence, consolidation of the law (the anachronistic notion of "male identification" that ought to be discarded from a feminist vocabulary)? What possibilities of gender configurations exist among the various emergent and occasionally convergent matrices of cultural intelligibility that govern gendered life?

Within the terms of feminist sexual theory, it is clear that the presence of power dynamics within sexuality is in no sense the same as the simple consolidation or augmentation of a heterosexist or phallogocentric power regime. The "presence" of so-called heterosexual conventions within homosexual contexts as well as the proliferation of specifically gay discourses of sexual difference, as in the case of "butch" and "femme" as historical identities of sexual style, cannot be explained as chimerical representations of originally heterosexual identities. And neither can they be understood as the pernicious insistence of heterosexist constructs within gay sexuality and identity. The repetition of heterosexual constructs within sexual cultures both gay and straight may well be the inevitable site of the denaturalization and mobilization of gender categories. The replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original. Thus, gay is to straight *not* as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy. The parodic repetition of "the original," discussed in the final sections of chapter 3 of this text, reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original.[56] Even if heterosexist constructs circulate as the available sites of power/discourse from which to do gender at all, the question remains: What possibilities of recirculation exist? Which possibilities of doing gender repeat and displace through hyperbole, dissonance, internal confusion, and proliferation the very constructs by which they are mobilized?

Consider not only that the ambiguities and incoherences within and among heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual practices are suppressed and redescribed within the reified framework of the disjunctive and asymmetrical binary of masculine/feminine, but that these cultural configurations of gender confusion operate as sites for intervention, exposure, and displacement of these reifications. In other words, the "unity" of gender is the effect of a regulatory practice that seeks to render gender identity uniform through a compulsory heterosexuality. The force of this practice is, through an exclusionary apparatus of production, to restrict the relative meanings of "heterosexuality," "homosexuality," and "bisexuality" as well as the subversive sites of their convergence and resignification. That the power regimes of heterosexism and phallogocentrism seek to augment themselves through a constant repetition of their logic, their metaphysic, and their naturalized ontologies does not imply that repetition itself ought to be stopped—as if it could be. If repetition is bound to persist as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of identities, then the crucial question emerges: What kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself?

If there is no recourse to a "person," a "sex," or a "sexuality" that escapes the matrix of power and discursive relations that effectively produce and regulate the intelligibility of those concepts for us, what constitutes the possibility of effective inversion, subversion, or displacement within the terms of a constructed identity? What possibilities exist *by virtue of* the constructed character of sex and gender? Whereas Foucault is ambiguous about the precise character of the "regulatory practices" that produce the category of sex, and Wittig appears to invest the full responsibility of the construction to sexual reproduction and its instrument, compulsory heterosexuality, yet other discourses converge to produce this categorial fiction for reasons not always clear or consistent with one another. The power relations that infuse the biological sciences are not easily reduced, and the medicolegal alliance emerging in nineteenth-century Europe has spawned categorial fictions that could not be anticipated in advance. The very complexity of the discursive map that constructs gender appears to hold out the promise of an inadvertent and generative convergence of these discursive and regulatory structures. If the regulatory fictions of sex and gender are themselves multiply contested sites of meaning, then the very multiplicity of their construction holds out the possibility of a disruption of their univocal posturing.

Clearly this project does not propose to lay out within traditional philosophical terms an *ontology* of gender whereby the meaning of *being* a woman or a man is elucidated within the terms of phenomenology. The presumption here is that the "being" of gender is *an effect,* an object of a genealogical investigation that maps out the political parameters of its construction in the mode of ontology. To claim that gender is constructed is not to assert its illusoriness or artificiality, where those terms are understood to reside within a binary that counterposes the "real" and the "authentic" as oppositional. As a genealogy of gender ontology, this inquiry seeks to understand the discursive production of the plausibility of that binary relation and to suggest that certain cultural configurations of gender take the place of "the real" and consolidate and augment their hegemony through that felicitous self-naturalization.

If there is something right in Beauvoir's claim that one is not born, but rather *becomes* a woman, it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. Even when gender seems to congeal into the most reified forms, the "congealing" is itself an insistent and insidious practice, sustained and regulated by various social means. It is, for Beauvoir, never possible finally to become a woman, as if there were a *telos* that governs the process of acculturation and construction. Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender. To expose the contingent acts that create the appearance of a naturalistic necessity, a move which has been a part of cultural critique at least since Marx, is a task that now takes on the added burden of showing how the very notion of the subject, intelligible only through its appearance as gendered, admits of possibilities that have been forcibly foreclosed by the various reifications of gender that have constituted its contingent ontologies.

The following chapter investigates some aspects of the psychoanalytic structuralist account of sexual difference and the construction of sexuality with respect to its power to contest the regulatory regimes outlined here as well as its role in uncritically reproducing those regimes. The univocity of sex, the internal coherence of gender, and the binary framework for both sex and gender are considered throughout as regulatory fictions that consolidate and naturalize the convergent power regimes of masculine and heterosexist oppression. The final chapter considers the very notion of "the body," not as a ready surface awaiting signification, but as a set of boundaries, individual and social, politically signified and maintained. No longer believable as an interior "truth" of dispositions and identity, sex will be shown to be a performatively enacted signification (and hence not "to be"), one that, released from its naturalized interiority and surface, can occasion the parodic proliferation and subversive play of gendered meanings. This text continues, then, as an effort to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power, to make gender trouble, not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity.

2

Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix

The straight mind continues to affirm that incest, and not homosexuality represents its major interdiction. Thus, when thought by the straight mind, homosexuality is nothing but heterosexuality.
—Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind"

On occasion feminist theory has been drawn to the thought of an origin, a time before what some would call "patriarchy" that would provide an imaginary perspective from which to establish the contingency of the history of women's oppression. Debates have emerged over whether prepatriarchal cultures have existed, whether they were matriarchal or matrilineal in structure, whether patriarchy could be shown to have a beginning and, hence, be subject to an end. The critical impetus behind these kinds of inquiry sought understandably to show that the antifeminist argument in favor of the inevitability of patriarchy constituted a reification and naturalization of a *historical* and contingent phenomenon.

Although the turn to a prepatriarchal state of culture was intended to expose the self-reification of patriarchy, that prepatriarchal scheme has proven to be a different sort of reification. More recently, some feminists have offered a reflexive critique of some reified constructs within feminism itself. The very notion of "patriarchy" has threatened to become a universalizing concept that overrides or reduces distinct articulations of gender asymmetry in different cultural contexts. As feminism has sought to become integrally related to struggles against racial and colonialist oppression, it has become increasingly important to resist the colonizing epistemological strategy that would subordinate different configurations of domination under the rubric of a transcultural notion of patriarchy. The articulation of the law of patriarchy as a repressive and regulatory structure also requires reconsideration from this critical perspective. The feminist recourse to an imaginary past needs to be cautious not to promote a politically problematic reification of women's experience in the course of debunking the self-reifying claims of masculinist power.

Tenth Reading

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, excerpt from *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980)

gilles

DELEUZE

félix

GUATTARI

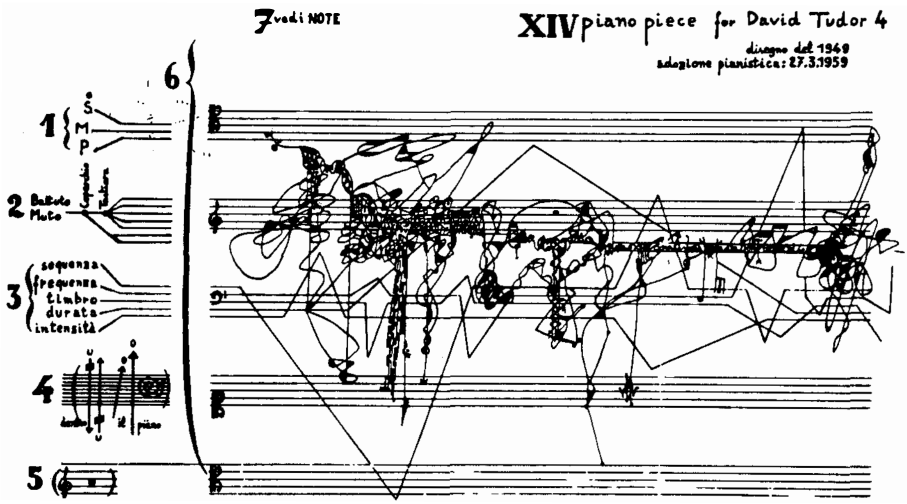
a thousand plateaus

capitalism and schizophrenia

translation and
foreword by

brian massumi

1. Introduction: Rhizome



SYLVANO BUSSOTI

The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd. Here we have made use of everything that came within range, what was closest as well as farthest away. We have assigned clever pseudonyms to prevent recognition. Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of habit. To make ourselves unrecognizable in turn. To render imperceptible, not ourselves, but what makes us act, feel, and think. Also because it's nice to talk like everybody else, to say the sun rises, when everybody knows it's only a manner of speaking. To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I. We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own. We have been aided, inspired, multiplied.

A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds. To attribute the book to a subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations. It is to fabricate a beneficent God to explain geological movements. In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an *assemblage.* A book is an assemblage of this kind, and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity—but we don't know yet what the multiple entails when it is no longer attributed, that is, after it has been elevated to the status of a substantive. One side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless make it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side facing a *body without organs,* which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity. What is the body without organs of a book? There are several, depending on the nature of the lines considered, their particular grade or density, and the possibility of their converging on a "plane of consistency" assuring their selection. Here, as elsewhere, the units of measure are what is essential: *quantify writing.* There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made. Therefore a book also has no object. As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge. A book exists only through the outside and on the outside. A book itself is a little machine; what is the relation (also measurable) of this literary machine to a war machine, love machine, revolutionary machine, etc.—and an *abstract machine* that sweeps them along? We have been criticized for overquoting literary authors. But when one writes, the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work. Kleist and a mad war machine, Kafka and a most extraordinary bureaucratic machine . . . (What if one became animal or plant *through* literature, which certainly does not mean literarily? Is it not first through the voice that one becomes animal?) Literature is an assemblage. It has nothing to do with ideology. There is no ideology and never has been.

All we talk about are multiplicities, lines, strata and segmentarities, lines of flight and intensities, machinic assemblages and their various types, bodies without organs and their construction and selection, the plane of consistency, and in each case the units of measure. *Stratometers, deleometers, BwO units of density, BwO units of convergence*: Not only do these constitute a quantification of writing, but they define writing as always the measure of something else. Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.

A first type of book is the root-book. The tree is already the image of the world, or the root the image of the world-tree. This is the classical book, as noble, signifying, and subjective organic interiority (the strata of the book). The book imitates the world, as art imitates nature: by procedures specific to it that accomplish what nature cannot or can no longer do. The law of the book is the law of reflection, the One that becomes two. How could the law of the book reside in nature, when it is what presides over the very division between world and book, nature and art? One becomes two: whenever we encounter this formula, even stated strategically by Mao or understood in the most "dialectical" way possible, what we have before us is the most classical and well reflected, oldest, and weariest kind of thought. Nature doesn't work that way: in nature, roots are taproots with a more multiple, lateral, and circular system of ramification, rather than a dichotomous one. Thought lags behind nature. Even the book as a natural reality is a taproot, with its pivotal spine and surrounding leaves. But the book as a spiritual reality, the Tree or Root as an image, endlessly develops the law of the One that becomes two, then of the two that become four . . . Binary logic is the spiritual reality of the root-tree. Even a discipline as "advanced" as linguistics retains the root-tree as its fundamental image, and thus remains wedded to classical reflection (for example, Chomsky and his grammatical trees, which begin at a point S and proceed by dichotomy). This is as much as to say that this system of thought has never reached an understanding of multiplicity: in order to arrive at two following a spiritual method it must assume a strong principal unity. On the side of the object, it is no doubt possible, following the natural method, to go directly from One to three, four, or five, but only if there is a strong principal unity available, that of the pivotal taproot supporting the secondary roots. That doesn't get us very far. The binary logic of dichotomy has simply been replaced by biunivocal relationships between successive circles. The pivotal taproot provides no better understanding of multiplicity than the dichotomous root. One operates in the object, the other in the subject. Binary logic and biunivocal relationships still dominate psychoanalysis (the tree of delusion in the Freudian interpretation of Schreber's case), linguistics, structuralism, and even information science.

The radicle-system, or fascicular root, is the second figure of the book, to which our modernity pays willing allegiance. This time, the principal root has aborted, or its tip has been destroyed; an immediate, indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development. This time, natural reality is what aborts the principal root, but the root's unity subsists, as past or yet to come, as possible. We must ask if reflexive, spiritual reality does not compensate for this state of things by demanding an even more comprehensive secret unity, or a more extensive totality. Take William Burroughs's cut-up method: the folding of one text onto another, which constitutes multiple and even adventitious roots (like a cutting), implies a supplementary dimension to that of the texts under consideration. In this supplementary dimension of folding, unity continues its spiritual labor. That is why the most resolutely fragmented work can also be presented as the Total Work or Magnum Opus. Most modern methods for making series proliferate or a multiplicity grow are perfectly valid in one direction, for example, a linear direction, whereas a unity of totalization asserts itself even more firmly in another, circular or cyclic, dimension. Whenever a multiplicity is taken up in a structure, its growth is offset by a reduction in its laws of combination. The abortionists of unity are indeed angel makers, *doctores angelici*, because they affirm a properly angelic and superior unity. Joyce's words, accurately described as having "multiple roots," shatter the linear unity of the word, even of language, only to posit a cyclic unity of the sentence, text, or knowledge. Nietzsche's aphorisms shatter the linear unity of knowledge, only to invoke the cyclic unity of the eternal return, present as the nonknown in thought. This is as much as to say that the fascicular system does not really break with dualism, with the complementarity between a subject and an object, a natural reality and a spiritual reality: unity is consistently thwarted and obstructed in the object, while a new type of unity triumphs in the subject. The world has lost its pivot; the subject can no longer even dichotomize, but accedes to a higher unity, of ambivalence or overdetermination, in an always supplementary dimension to that of its object. The world has become chaos, but the book remains the image of the world: radicle-chaosmos rather than root-cosmos. A strange mystification: a book all the more total for being fragmented. At any rate, what a vapid idea, the book as the image of the world. In truth, it is not enough to say, "Long live the multiple," difficult as it is to raise that cry. No typographical, lexical, or even syntactical cleverness is enough to make it heard. The multiple *must be made*, not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available—always $n - 1$ (the only way the one belongs to the multiple: always subtracted). Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted; write at $n - 1$ dimensions. A system of this kind could be called a rhizome. A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes. Plants with roots or radicles may be rhizomorphic in other respects altogether: the question is whether plant life in its specificity is not entirely rhizomatic. Even some animals are, in their pack form. Rats are rhizomes. Burrows are too, in all of their functions of shelter, supply, movement, evasion, and breakout. The rhizome itself assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers. When rats swarm over each other. The rhizome includes the best and the worst: potato and couchgrass, or the weed. Animal and plant, couchgrass is crabgrass. We get the distinct feeling that we will convince no one unless we enumerate certain approximate characteristics of the rhizome.

1 and 2. Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order. The linguistic tree on the Chomsky model still begins at a point S and proceeds by dichotomy. On the contrary, not every trait in a rhizome is necessarily linked to a linguistic feature: semiotic chains of every nature are connected to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic, etc.) that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of differing status. *Collective assemblages of enunciation* function directly within *machinic assemblages*; it is not impossible to make a radical break between regimes of signs and their objects. Even when linguistics claims to confine itself to what is explicit and to make no presuppositions about language, it is still in the sphere of a discourse implying particular modes of assemblage and types of social power. Chomsky's grammaticality, the categorical S symbol that dominates every sentence, is more fundamentally a marker of power than a syntactic marker: you will construct grammatically correct sentences, you will divide each statement into a noun phrase and a verb phrase (first dichotomy . . .). Our criticism of these linguistic models is not that they are too abstract but, on the contrary, that they are not abstract enough, that they do not reach the *abstract machine* that connects a language to the semantic and pragmatic contents of statements, to collective assemblages of enunciation, to a whole micropolitics of the social field. A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages. There is no ideal speaker-listener, any more than there is a homogeneous linguistic community. Language is, in Weinreich's words, "an essentially heterogeneous reality."[1] There is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity. Language stabilizes around a parish, a bishopric, a capital. It forms a bulb. It evolves by subterranean stems and flows, along river valleys or train tracks; it spreads like a patch of oil.[2] It is always possible to break a language

down into internal structural elements, an undertaking not fundamentally different from a search for roots. There is always something genealogical about a tree. It is not a method for the people. A method of the rhizome type, on the contrary, can analyze language only by decentering it onto other dimensions and other registers. A language is never closed upon itself, except as a function of impotence.

3. Principle of multiplicity: it is only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, "multiplicity," that it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world. Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudomultiplicities for what they are. There is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject. There is not even the unity to abort in the object or "return" in the subject. A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows). Puppet strings, as a rhizome or multiplicity, are tied not to the supposed will of an artist or puppeteer but to a multiplicity of nerve fibers, which form another puppet in other dimensions connected to the first: "Call the strings or rods that move the puppet the weave. It might be objected that *its multiplicity* resides in the person of the actor, who projects it into the text. Granted; but the actor's nerve fibers in turn form a weave. And they fall through the gray matter, the grid, into the undifferentiated. . . . The interplay approximates the pure activity of weavers attributed in myth to the Fates or Norns."[3] An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines. When Glenn Gould speeds up the performance of a piece, he is not just displaying virtuosity, he is transforming the musical points into lines, he is making the whole piece proliferate. The number is no longer a universal concept measuring elements according to their emplacement in a given dimension, but has itself become a multiplicity that varies according to the dimensions considered (the primacy of the domain over a complex of numbers attached to that domain). We do not have units (*unités*) of measure, only multiplicities or varieties of measurement. The notion of unity (*unité*) appears only when there is a power takeover in the multiplicity by the signifier or a corresponding subjectification proceeding: This is the case for a pivot-unity forming the basis for a set of biunivocal relationships between objective elements or points, or for the One that divides following the law of a binary logic of differentiation in the subject. Unity always operates in an empty dimension supplementary to that of the system considered (overcoding).

The point is that a rhizome or multiplicity never allows itself to be overcoded, never has available a supplementary dimension over and above its number of lines, that is, over and above the multiplicity of numbers attached to those lines. All multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions: we will therefore speak of a *plane of consistency* of multiplicities, even though the dimensions of this "plane" increase with the number of connections that are made on it. Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities. The plane of consistency (grid) is the outside of all multiplicities. The line of flight marks: the reality of a finite number of dimensions that the multiplicity effectively fills; the impossibility of a supplementary dimension, unless the multiplicity is transformed by the line of flight; the possibility and necessity of flattening all of the multiplicities on a single plane of consistency or exteriority, regardless of their number of dimensions. The ideal for a book would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations. Kleist invented a writing of this type, a broken chain of affects and variable speeds, with accelerations and transformations, always in a relation with the outside. Open rings. His texts, therefore, are opposed in every way to the classical or romantic book constituted by the interiority of a substance or subject. The war machine-book against the State apparatus-book. *Flat multiplicities of n dimensions* are asignifying and asubjective. They are designated by indefinite articles, or rather by partitives (*some* couchgrass, *some* of a rhizome . . .).

4. Principle of asignifying rupture: against the oversignifying breaks separating structures or cutting across a single structure. A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines. You can never get rid of ants because they form an animal rhizome that can rebound time and again after most of it has been destroyed. Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of the good and the bad. You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still a danger that you will reencounter organizations that restratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier, attributions that reconstitute a subject—anything you like, from Oedipal resurgences to fascist concretions. Groups

and individuals contain microfascisms just waiting to crystallize. Yes, couchgrass is also a rhizome. Good and bad are only the products of an active and temporary selection, which must be renewed.

How could movements of deterritorialization and processes of reterritorialization not be relative, always connected, caught up in one another? The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid's reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome. It could be said that the orchid imitates the wasp, reproducing its image in a signifying fashion (mimesis, mimicry, lure, etc.). But this is true only on the level of the strata—a parallelism between two strata such that a plant organization on one imitates an animal organization on the other. At the same time, something else entirely is going on: not imitation at all but a capture of code, surplus value of code, an increase in valence, a veritable becoming, a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp. Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further. There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying. Rémy Chauvin expresses it well: "the *aparallel evolution* of two beings that have absolutely nothing to do with each other."[4] More generally, evolutionary schemas may be forced to abandon the old model of the tree and descent. Under certain conditions, a virus can connect to germ cells and transmit itself as the cellular gene of a complex species; moreover, it can take flight, move into the cells of an entirely different species, but not without bringing with it "genetic information" from the first host (for example, Benveniste and Todaro's current research on a type C virus, with its double connection to baboon DNA and the DNA of certain kinds of domestic cats). Evolutionary schemas would no longer follow models of arborescent descent going from the least to the most differentiated, but instead a rhizome operating immediately in the heterogeneous and jumping from one already differentiated line to another.[5] Once again, there is *aparallel evolution*, of the baboon and the cat; it is obvious that they are not models or copies of each other (a becoming-baboon in the cat does not mean that the cat "plays" baboon). We form a rhizome with our viruses, or rather our viruses cause us to form a rhizome with other animals. As François Jacob says, transfers of genetic material by viruses or through other procedures, fusions of cells originating in different species, have results analogous to those of "the abominable couplings dear to antiquity and the Middle Ages."[6] Transversal communications between different lines scramble the genealogical trees. Always look for the molecular, or even submolecular, particle with which we are allied. We evolve and die more from our polymorphous and rhizomatic flus than from hereditary diseases, or diseases that have their own line of descent. The rhizome is an antigenealogy.

The same applies to the book and the world: contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world, there is an aparallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world (if it is capable, if it can). Mimicry is a very bad concept, since it relies on binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature. The crocodile does not reproduce a tree trunk, any more than the chameleon reproduces the colors of its surroundings. The Pink Panther imitates nothing, it reproduces nothing, it paints the world its color, pink on pink; this is its becoming-world, carried out in such a way that it becomes imperceptible itself, asignifying, makes its rupture, its own line of flight, follows its "aparallel evolution" through to the end. The wisdom of the plants: even when they have roots, there is always an outside where they form a rhizome with something else—with the wind, an animal, human beings (and there is also an aspect under which animals themselves form rhizomes, as do people, etc.). "Drunkenness as a triumphant irruption of the plant in us." Always follow the rhizome by rupture; lengthen, prolong, and relay the line of flight; make it vary, until you have produced the most abstract and tortuous of lines of *n* dimensions and broken directions. Conjugate deterritorialized flows. Follow the plants: you start by delimiting a first line consisting of circles of convergence around successive singularities; then you see whether inside that line new circles of convergence establish themselves, with new points located outside the limits and in other directions. Write, form a rhizome, increase your territory by deterritorialization, extend the line of flight to the point where it becomes an abstract machine covering the entire plane of consistency. "Go first to your old plant and watch carefully the watercourse made by the rain. By now the rain must have carried the seeds far away. Watch the crevices made by the runoff, and from them determine the direction of the flow. Then find the plant that is growing at the farthest point from your plant. All the devil's weed plants that are growing in between are yours. Later . . . you can extend the size of your territory by following the watercourse from each point along the way."[7] Music has always sent out lines of flight, like so many "transformational multiplicities," even overturning the very codes that structure or arborify it; that is why musical form, right down to its ruptures and proliferations, is comparable to a weed, a rhizome.[8]

5 and 6. Principle of cartography and decalcomania: a rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model. It is a stranger to any idea of genetic axis or deep structure. A genetic axis is like an objective pivotal unity upon which successive stages are organized; a deep structure is more like a base sequence that can be broken down into immediate constituents, while the unity of the product passes into another, transformational and subjective, dimension. This does not constitute a departure from the representative model of the tree, or root—pivotal taproot or fascicles (for example, Chomsky's "tree" is associated with a base sequence and represents the process of its own generation in terms of binary logic). A variation on the oldest form of thought. It is our view that genetic axis and profound structure are above all infinitely reproducible principles of *tracing*. All of tree logic is a logic of tracing and reproduction. In linguistics as in psychoanalysis, its object is an unconscious that is itself representative, crystallized into codified complexes, laid out along a genetic axis and distributed within a syntagmatic structure. Its goal is to describe a de facto state, to maintain balance in intersubjective relations, or to explore an unconscious that is already there from the start, lurking in the dark recesses of memory and language. It consists of tracing, on the basis of an overcoding structure or supporting axis, something that comes ready-made. The tree articulates and hierarchizes tracings; tracings are like the leaves of a tree.

The rhizome is altogether different, a *map and not a tracing*. Make a map, not a tracing. The orchid does not reproduce the tracing of the wasp; it forms a map with the wasp, in a rhizome. What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields, the removal of blockages on bodies without organs, the maximum opening of bodies without organs onto a plane of consistency. It is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways; in this sense, the burrow is an animal rhizome, and sometimes maintains a clear distinction between the line of flight as passageway and storage or living strata (cf. the muskrat). A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back "to the same." The map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged "competence." Unlike psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic competence (which confines every desire and statement to a genetic axis or overcoding structure, and makes infinite, monotonous tracings of the stages on that axis or the constituents of that structure), schizoanalysis rejects any idea of pretraced destiny, whatever name is given to it—divine, anagogic, historical, economic, structural, hereditary, or syntagmatic. (It is obvious that Melanie Klein has no understanding of the cartography of one of her child patients, Little Richard, and is content to make ready-made tracings—Oedipus, the good daddy and the bad daddy, the bad mommy and the good mommy—while the child makes a desperate attempt to carry out a performance that the psychoanalyst totally misconstrues.)[9] Drives and part-objects are neither stages on a genetic axis nor positions in a deep structure; they are political options for problems, they are entryways and exits, impasses the child lives out politically, in other words, with all the force of his or her desire.

Have we not, however, reverted to a simple dualism by contrasting maps to tracings, as good and bad sides? Is it not of the essence of the map to be traceable? Is it not of the essence of the rhizome to intersect roots and sometimes merge with them? Does not a map contain phenomena of redundancy that are already like tracings of its own? Does not a multiplicity have strata upon which unifications and totalizations, massifications, mimetic mechanisms, signifying power takeovers, and subjective attributions take root? Do not even lines of flight, due to their eventual divergence, reproduce the very formations their function it was to dismantle or outflank? But the opposite is also true. It is a question of method: *the tracing should always be put back on the map.* This operation and the previous one are not at all symmetrical. For it is inaccurate to say that a tracing reproduces the map. It is instead like a photograph or X ray that begins by selecting or isolating, by artificial means such as colorations or other restrictive procedures, what it intends to reproduce. The imitator always creates the model, and attracts it. The tracing has already translated the map into an image; it has already transformed the rhizome into roots and radicles. It has organized, stabilized, neutralized the multiplicities according to the axes of signifiance and subjectification belonging to it. It has generated, structuralized the rhizome, and when it thinks it is reproducing something else it is in fact only reproducing itself. That is why the tracing is so dangerous. It injects redundancies and propagates them. What the tracing reproduces of the map or rhizome are only the impasses, blockages, incipient taproots, or points of structuration. Take a look at psychoanalysis and linguistics: all the former has ever made are tracings or photos of the unconscious, and the latter of language, with all the betrayals that implies (it's not surprising that psychoanalysis tied its fate to that of linguistics).

Look at what happened to Little Hans already, an example of child psychoanalysis at its purest: they kept on BREAKING HIS RHIZOME and BLOTCHING HIS MAP, setting it straight for him, blocking his every way out, until he began to desire his own shame and guilt, until they had rooted shame and guilt in him, PHOBIA (they barred him from the rhizome of the building, then from the rhizome of the street, they rooted him in his parents' bed, they radicled him to his own body, they fixated him on Professor Freud). Freud explicitly takes Little Hans's cartography into account, but always and only in order to project it back onto the family photo. And look what Melanie Klein did to Little Richard's geopolitical maps: she developed photos from them, made tracings of them. Strike the pose or follow the axis, genetic stage or structural destiny—one way or the other, your rhizome will be broken. You will be allowed to live and speak, but only after every outlet has been obstructed. Once a rhizome has been obstructed, arborified, it's all over, no desire stirs; for it is always by rhizome that desire moves and produces. Whenever desire climbs a tree, internal repercussions trip it up and it falls to its death; the rhizome, on the other hand, acts on desire by external, productive outgrowths.

That is why it is so important to try the other, reverse but nonsymmetrical, operation. Plug the tracings back into the map, connect the roots or trees back up with a rhizome. In the case of Little Hans, studying the unconscious would be to show how he tries to build a rhizome, with the family house but also with the line of flight of the building, the street, etc.; how these lines are blocked, how the child is made to take root in the family, be photographed under the father, be traced onto the mother's bed; then how Professor Freud's intervention assures a power takeover by the signifier, a subjectification of affects; how the only escape route left to the child is a becoming-animal perceived as shameful and guilty (the becoming-horse of Little Hans, a truly political option). But these impasses must always be resituated on the map, thereby opening them up to possible lines of flight. The same applies to the group map: show at what point in the rhizome there form phenomena of massification, bureaucracy, leadership, fascization, etc., which lines nevertheless survive, if only underground, continuing to make rhizome in the shadows. Deligny's method: map the gestures and movements of an autistic child, combine several maps for the same child, for several different children.[10] If it is true that it is of the essence of the map or rhizome to have multiple entryways, then it is plausible that one could even enter them through tracings or the root-tree, assuming the necessary precautions are taken (once again, one must avoid any Manichaean dualism). For example, one will often be forced to take dead ends, to work with signifying powers and subjective affections, to find a foothold in formations that are Oedipal or paranoid or even worse, rigidified territorialities that open the way for other transformational operations. It is even possible for psychoanalysis to serve as a foothold, in spite of itself. In other cases, on the contrary, one will bolster oneself directly on a line of flight enabling one to blow apart strata, cut roots, and make new connections. Thus, there are very diverse map-tracing, rhizome-root assemblages, with variable coefficients of deterritorialization. There exist tree or root structures in rhizomes; conversely, a tree branch or root division may begin to burgeon into a rhizome. The coordinates are determined not by theoretical analyses implying universals but by a pragmatics composing multiplicities or aggregates of intensities. A new rhizome may form in the heart of a tree, the hollow of a root, the crook of a branch. Or else it is a microscopic element of the root-tree, a radicle, that gets rhizome production going. Accounting and bureaucracy proceed by tracings: they can begin to burgeon nonetheless, throwing out rhizome stems, as in a Kafka novel. An intensive trait starts working for itself, a hallucinatory perception, synesthesia, perverse mutation, or play of images shakes loose, challenging the hegemony of the signifier. In the case of the child, gestural, mimetic, ludic, and other semiotic systems regain their freedom and extricate themselves from the "tracing," that is, from the dominant competence of the teacher's language—a microscopic event upsets the local balance of power. Similarly, generative trees constructed according to Chomsky's syntagmatic model can open up in all directions, and in turn form a rhizome.[11] To be rhizomorphous is to produce stems and filaments that seem to be roots, or better yet connect with them by penetrating the trunk, but put them to strange new uses. We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They've made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics. Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes. Amsterdam, a city entirely without roots, a rhizome-city with its stem-canals, where utility connects with the greatest folly in relation to a commercial war machine.

Thought is not arborescent, and the brain is not a rooted or ramified matter. What are wrongly called "dendrites" do not assure the connection of neurons in a continuous fabric. The discontinuity between cells, the role of the axons, the functioning of the synapses, the existence of synaptic microfissures, the leap each message makes across these fissures, make the brain a multiplicity immersed in its plane of consistency or neuroglia, a whole uncertain, probabilistic system ("the uncertain nervous system"). Many people have a tree growing in their heads, but the brain itself is much more a grass than a tree. "The axon and the dendrite twist around each other like bindweed around brambles, with synapses at each of the thorns."[12] The same goes for memory. Neurologists and psychophysiologists distinguish between long-term memory and short-term memory (on the order of a minute). The difference between them is not simply quantitative: short-term memory is of the rhizome or diagram type, and long-term memory is arborescent and centralized (imprint, engram, tracing, or photograph). Short-term memory is in no way subject to a law of contiguity or immediacy to its object; it can act at a distance, come or return a long time after, but always under conditions of discontinuity, rupture, and multiplicity. Furthermore, the difference between the two kinds of memory is not that of two temporal modes of apprehending the same thing; they do not grasp the same thing, memory, or idea. The splendor of the short-term Idea: one writes using short-term memory, and thus short-term ideas, even if one reads or rereads using long-term memory of long-term concepts. Short-term memory includes forgetting as a process; it merges not with the instant but instead with the nervous, temporal, and collective rhizome. Long-term memory (family, race, society, or civilization) traces and translates, but what it translates continues to act in it, from a distance, off beat, in an "untimely" way, not instantaneously.

The tree and root inspire a sad image of thought that is forever imitating the multiple on the basis of a centered or segmented higher unity. If we consider the set, branches-roots, the trunk plays the role of *opposed segment* for one of the subsets running from bottom to top: this kind of segment is a "link dipole," in contrast to the "unit dipoles" formed by spokes radiating from a single center.[13] Even if the links themselves proliferate, as in the radicle system, one can never get beyond the One-Two, and fake multiplicities. Regenerations, reproductions, returns, hydras, and medusas do not get us any further. Arborescent systems are hierarchical systems with centers of signifiance and subjectification, central automata like organized memories. In the corresponding models, an element only receives information from a higher unit, and only receives a subjective affection along preestablished paths. This is evident in current problems in information science and computer science, which still cling to the oldest modes of thought in that they grant all power to a memory or central organ. Pierre Rosenstiehl and Jean Petitot, in a fine article denouncing "the imagery of command trees" (centered systems or hierarchical structures), note that "accepting the primacy of hierarchical structures amounts to giving arborescent structures privileged status. . . . The arborescent form admits of topological explanation. . . . In a hierarchical system, an individual has only one active neighbor, his or her hierarchical superior. . . . The channels of transmission are preestablished: the arborescent system preexists the individual, who is integrated into it at an allotted place" (signifiance and subjectification). The authors point out that even when one thinks one has reached a multiplicity, it may be a false one—of what we call the radicle type—because its ostensibly nonhierarchical presentation or statement in fact only admits of a totally hierarchical solution. An example is the famous *friendship theorem*: "If any two given individuals in a society have precisely one mutual friend, then there exists an individual who is the friend of all the others." (Rosenstiehl and Petitot ask who that mutual friend is. Who is "the universal friend in this society of couples: the master, the confessor, the doctor? These ideas are curiously far removed from the initial axioms." Who is this friend of humankind? Is it the *philo*-sopher as he appears in classical thought, even if he is an aborted unity that makes itself felt only through its absence or subjectivity, saying all the while, I know nothing, I am nothing?) Thus the authors speak of dictatorship theorems. Such is indeed the principle of roots-trees, or their outcome: the radicle solution, the structure of Power.[14]

To these centered systems, the authors contrast acentered systems, finite networks of automata in which communication runs from any neighbor to any other, the stems or channels do not preexist, and all individuals are interchangeable, defined only by their *state* at a given moment—such that the local operations are coordinated and the final, global result synchronized without a central agency. Transduction of intensive states replaces topology, and "the graph regulating the circulation of information is in a way the opposite of the hierarchical graph. . . . There is no reason for the graph to be a tree" (we have been calling this kind of graph a map). The problem of the war machine, or the firing squad: is a general necessary for n individuals to manage to fire in unison? The solution without a General is to be found in an acentered multiplicity possessing a finite number of states with signals to indicate corresponding speeds, from a war rhizome or guerrilla logic point of view, without any tracing, without any copying of a central order. The authors even demonstrate that this kind of machinic multiplicity, assemblage, or society rejects any centralizing or unifying automaton as an "asocial intrusion."[15] Under these conditions, n is in fact always $n - 1$. Rosenstiehl and Petitot emphasize that the opposition, centered-acentered, is valid less as a designation for things than as a mode of calculation applied to things. Trees may correspond to the rhizome, or they may burgeon into a rhizome. It is true that the same thing is generally susceptible to both modes of calculation or both types of regulation, but not without undergoing a change in state. Take psychoanalysis as an example again: it subjects the unconscious to arborescent structures, hierarchical graphs, recapitulatory memories, central organs, the phallus, the phallus-tree—not only in its theory but also in its practice of calculation and treatment. Psychoanalysis cannot change its method in this regard: it bases its own dictatorial power upon a dictatorial conception of the unconscious. Psychoanalysis's margin of maneuverability is therefore very limited. In both psychoanalysis and its object, there is always a general, always a leader (General Freud). Schizoanalysis, on the other hand, treats the unconscious as an acentered system, in other words, as a machinic network of finite automata (a rhizome), and thus arrives at an entirely different state of the unconscious. These same remarks apply to linguistics; Rosenstiehl and Petitot are right to bring up the possibility of an "acentered organization of a society of words." For both statements and desires, the issue is never to reduce the unconscious or to interpret it or to make it signify according to a tree model. The issue is to *produce the unconscious*, and with it new statements, different desires: the rhizome is precisely this production of the unconscious.

It is odd how the tree has dominated Western reality and all of Western thought, from botany to biology and anatomy, but also gnosiology, theology, ontology, all of philosophy . . . : the root-foundation, *Grund*, *racine*, *fondement*. The West has a special relation to the forest, and deforestation; the fields carved from the forest are populated with seed plants produced by cultivation based on species lineages of the arborescent type; animal raising, carried out on fallow fields, selects lineages forming an entire animal arborescence. The East presents a different figure: a relation to the steppe and the garden (or in some cases, the desert and the oasis), rather than forest and field; cultivation of tubers by fragmentation of the individual; a casting aside or bracketing of animal raising, which is confined to closed spaces or pushed out onto the steppes of the nomads. The West: agriculture based on a chosen lineage containing a large number of variable individuals. The East: horticulture based on a small number of individuals derived from a wide range of "clones." Does not the East, Oceania in particular, offer something like a rhizomatic model opposed in every respect to the Western model of the tree? André Haudricourt even sees this as the basis for the opposition between the moralities or philosophies of transcendence dear to the West and the immanent ones of the East: the God who sows and reaps, as opposed to the God who replants and unearths (replanting of offshoots versus sowing of seeds).[16] Transcendence: a specifically European disease. Neither is music the same, the music of the earth is different, as is sexuality: seed plants, even those with two sexes in the same plant, subjugate sexuality to the reproductive model; the rhizome, on the other hand, is a liberation of sexuality not only from reproduction but also from genitality. Here in the West, the tree has implanted itself in our bodies, rigidifying and stratifying even the sexes. We have lost the rhizome, or the grass. Henry Miller: "China is the weed in the human cabbage patch. . . . The weed is the Nemesis of human endeavor. . . . Of all the imaginary existences we attribute to plant, beast and star the weed leads the most satisfactory life of all. True, the weed produces no lilies, no battleships, no Sermons on the Mount. . . . Eventually the weed gets the upper hand. Eventually things fall back into a state of China. This condition is usually referred to by historians as the Dark Age. Grass is the only way out. . . . The weed exists only to fill the waste spaces left by cultivated areas. *It grows between*, among other things. The lily is beautiful, the cabbage is provender, the poppy is maddening—but the weed is rank growth . . . : it points a moral."[17] Which China is Miller talking about? The old China, the new, an imaginary one, or yet another located on a shifting map?

America is a special case. Of course it is not immune from domination by trees or the search for roots. This is evident even in the literature, in the quest for a national identity and even for a European ancestry or genealogy (Kerouac going off in search of his ancestors). Nevertheless, everything important that has happened or is happening takes the route of the American rhizome: the beatniks, the underground, bands and gangs, successive lateral offshoots in immediate connection with an outside. American books are different from European books, even when the American sets off in pursuit of trees. The conception of the book is different. *Leaves of Grass*. And directions in America are different: the search for arborescence and the return to the Old World occur in the East. But there is the rhizomatic West, with its Indians without ancestry, its ever-receding limit, its shifting and displaced frontiers. There is a whole American "map" in the West, where even the trees form rhizomes. America reversed the directions: it put its Orient in the West, as if it were precisely in America that the earth came full circle; its West is the edge of the East.[18] (India is not the intermediary between the Occident and the Orient, as Haudricourt believed: America is the pivot point and mechanism of reversal.) The American singer Patti Smith sings the bible of the American dentist: Don't go for the root, follow the canal . . .

Are there not also two kinds of bureaucracy, or even three (or still more)? Western bureaucracy: its agrarian, cadastral origins; roots and fields; trees and their role as frontiers; the great census of William the Conqueror; feudalism; the policies of the kings of France; making property the basis of the State; negotiating land through warfare, litigation, and marriages. The kings of France chose the lily because it is a plant with deep roots that clings to slopes. Is bureaucracy the same in the Orient? Of course it is all too easy to depict an Orient of rhizomes and immanence; yet it is true that in the Orient the State does not act following a schema of arborescence corresponding to preestablished, arborified, and rooted classes; its bureaucracy is one of channels, for example, the much-discussed case of hydraulic power with "weak property," in which the State engenders channeled and channelizing classes (cf. the aspects of Wittfogel's work that have not been refuted).[19] The despot acts as a river, not as a fountainhead, which is still a point, a tree-point or root; he flows with the current rather than sitting under a tree; Buddha's tree itself becomes a rhizome; Mao's river and Louis's tree. Has not America acted as an intermediary here as well? For it proceeds both by internal exterminations and liquidations (not only the Indians but also the farmers, etc.), and by successive waves of immigration from the outside. The flow of capital produces an immense channel, a quantification of power with immediate "quanta," where each person profits from the passage of the money flow in his or her own way (hence the reality-myth of the poor man who strikes it rich and then falls into poverty again): in America everything comes together, tree and channel, root and rhizome. There is no universal capitalism, there is no capitalism in itself; capitalism is at the crossroads of all kinds of formations, it is neocapitalism by nature. It invents its eastern face and western face, and reshapes them both—all for the worst.

At the same time, we are on the wrong track with all these geographical distributions. An impasse. So much the better. If it is a question of showing that rhizomes also have their own, even more rigid, despotism and hierarchy, then fine and good: for there is no dualism, no ontological dualism between here and there, no axiological dualism between good and bad, no blend or American synthesis. There are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots. Moreover, there are despotic formations of immanence and channelization specific to rhizomes, just as there are anarchic deformations in the transcendent system of trees, aerial roots, and subterranean stems. The important point is that the root-tree and canal-rhizome are not two opposed models: the first operates as a transcendent model and tracing, even if it engenders its own escapes; the second operates as an immanent process that overturns the model and outlines a map, even if it constitutes its own hierarchies, even if it gives rise to a despotic channel. It is not a question of this or that place on earth, or of a given moment in history, still less of this or that category of thought. It is a question of a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing, and of a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again. No, this is not a new or different dualism. The problem of writing: in order to designate something exactly, anexact expressions are utterly unavoidable. Not at all because it is a necessary step, or because one can only advance by approximations: anexactitude is in no way an approximation; on the contrary, it is the exact passage of that which is under way. We invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another. We employ a dualism of models only in order to arrive at a process that challenges all models. Each time, mental correctives are necessary to undo the dualisms we had no wish to construct but through which we pass. Arrive at the magic formula we all seek—PLURALISM = MONISM—via all the dualisms that are the enemy, an entirely necessary enemy, the furniture we are forever rearranging.

Let us summarize the principal characteristics of a rhizome: unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five, etc. It is not a multiple derived from the One, or to which One is added ($n + 1$). It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overspills. It constitutes linear multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the One is always subtracted ($n - 1$). When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimension, it necessarily changes in nature as well, undergoes a metamorphosis. Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points and biunivocal relationships between the positions, the rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature. These lines, or lineaments, should not be confused with lineages of the arborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions. Unlike the tree, the rhizome is not the object of reproduction: neither external reproduction as image-tree nor internal reproduction as tree-structure. The rhizome is an antigenealogy. It is a short-term memory, or antimemory. The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots. Unlike the graphic arts, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. It is tracings that must be put on the map, not the opposite. In contrast to centered (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states. What is at question in the rhizome is a relation to sexuality—but also to the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, things natural and artificial—that is totally different from the arborescent relation: all manner of "becomings."

A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus. Gregory Bateson uses the word "plateau" to designate something very special: a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end. Bateson cites Balinese culture as an example: mother-child sexual games, and even quarrels among men, undergo this bizarre intensive stabilization. "Some sort of continuing plateau of intensity is substituted for [sexual] climax," war, or a culmination point. It is a regrettable characteristic of the Western mind to relate expressions and actions to exterior or transcendent ends, instead of evaluating them on a plane of consistency on the basis of their intrinsic value.[20] For example, a book composed of chapters has culmination and termination points. What takes place in a book composed instead of plateaus that communicate with one another across microfissures, as in a brain? We call a "plateau" any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome. We are writing this book as a rhizome. It is composed of plateaus. We have given it a circular form, but only for laughs. Each morning we would wake up, and each of us would ask himself what plateau he was going to tackle, writing five lines here, ten there. We had hallucinatory experiences, we watched lines leave one plateau and proceed to another like columns of tiny ants. We made circles of convergence. Each plateau can be read starting anywhere and can be related to any other plateau. To attain the multiple, one must have a method that effectively constructs it; no typographical cleverness, no lexical agility, no blending or creation of words, no syntactical boldness, can substitute for it. In fact, these are more often than not merely mimetic procedures used to disseminate or disperse a unity that is retained in a different dimension for an image-book. Technonarcissism. Typographical, lexical, or syntactic creations are necessary only when they no longer belong to the form of expression of a hidden unity, becoming themselves dimensions of the multiplicity under consideration; we only know of rare successes in this.[21] We ourselves were unable to do it. We just used words that in turn function for us as plateaus. RHIZOMATICS = SCHIZOANALYSIS = STRATOANALYSIS = PRAGMATICS = MICROPOLITICS. These words are concepts, but concepts are lines, which is to say, number systems attached to a particular dimension of the multiplicities (strata, molecular chains, lines of flight or rupture, circles of convergence, etc.). Nowhere do we claim for our concepts the title of a science. We are no more familiar with scientificity than we are with ideology; all we know are assemblages. And the only assemblages are machinic assemblages of desire and collective assemblages of enunciation. No signifiance, no subjectification: writing to the *n*th power (all individuated enunciation remains trapped within the dominant significations, all signifying desire is associated with dominated subjects). An assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously (independently of any recapitulation that may be made of it in a scientific or theoretical corpus). There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject. In short, we think that one cannot write sufficiently in the name of an outside. The outside has no image, no signification, no subjectivity. The book as assemblage with the outside, against the book as image of the world. A rhizome-book, not a dichotomous, pivotal, or fascicular book. Never send down roots, or plant them, however difficult it may be to avoid reverting to the old procedures. "Those things which occur to me, occur to me not from the root up but rather only from somewhere about their middle. Let someone then attempt to seize them, let someone attempt to seize a blade of grass and hold fast to it when it begins to grow only from the middle."[22] Why is this so difficult? The question is directly one of perceptual semiotics. It's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that everything changes. It's not easy to see the grass in things and in words (similarly, Nietzsche said that an aphorism had to be "ruminated"; never is a plateau separable from the cows that populate it, which are also the clouds in the sky).

History is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even when the topic is nomads. What is lacking is a Nomadology, the opposite of a history. There are rare successes in this also, for example, on the subject of the Children's Crusades: Marcel Schwob's book multiplies narratives like so many plateaus with variable numbers of dimensions. Then there is Andrzejewski's book, *Les portes du paradis* (The gates of paradise), composed of a single uninterrupted sentence; a flow of children; a flow of walking with pauses, straggling, and forward rushes; the semiotic flow of the confessions of all the children who go up to the old monk at the head of the procession to make their declarations; a flow of desire and sexuality, each child having left out of love and more or less directly led by the dark posthumous pederastic desire of the count of Vendôme; all this with circles of convergence. What is important is not whether the flows are "One or multiple"—we're past that point: there is a collective assemblage of enunciation, a machinic assemblage of desire, one inside the other and both plugged into an immense outside that is a multiplicity in any case. A more recent example is Armand Farrachi's book on the Fourth Crusade, *La dislocation*, in which the sentences space themselves out and disperse, or else jostle together and coexist, and in which the letters, the typography begin to dance as the crusade grows more delirious.[23] These are models of nomadic and rhizomatic writing. Writing weds a war machine and lines of flight, abandoning the strata, segmentarities, sedentarity, the State apparatus. But why is a model still necessary? Aren't these books still "images" of the Crusades? Don't they still retain a unity, in Schwob's case a pivotal unity, in Farrachi's an aborted unity, and in the most beautiful example, *Les portes du paradis*, the unity of the funereal count? Is there a need for a more profound nomadism than that of the Crusades, a nomadism of true nomads, or of those who no longer even move or imitate anything? The nomadism of those who only assemble (*agencent*). How can the book find an adequate outside with which to assemble in heterogeneity, rather than a world to reproduce? The cultural book is necessarily a tracing: already a tracing of itself, a tracing of the previous book by the same author, a tracing of other books however different they may be, an endless tracing of established concepts and words, a tracing of the world present, past, and future. Even the anticultural book may still be burdened by too heavy a cultural load: but it will use it actively, for forgetting instead of remembering, for underdevelopment instead of progress toward development, in nomadism rather than sedentarity, to make a map instead of a tracing. RHIZOMATICS = POP ANALYSIS, even if the people have other things to do besides read it, even if the blocks of academic culture or pseudoscientificity in it are still too painful or ponderous. For science would go completely mad if left to its own devices. Look at mathematics: it's not a science, it's a monster slang, it's nomadic. Even in the realm of theory, especially in the realm of theory, any precarious and pragmatic framework is better than tracing concepts, with their breaks and progress changing nothing. Imperceptible rupture, not signifying break. The nomads invented a war machine in opposition to the State apparatus. History has never comprehended nomadism, the book has never comprehended the outside. The State as the model for the book and for thought has a long history: logos, the philosopher-king, the transcendence of the Idea, the interiority of the concept, the republic of minds, the court of reason, the functionaries of thought, man as legislator and subject. The State's pretension to be a world order, and to root man. The war machine's relation to an outside is not another "model"; it is an assemblage that makes thought itself nomadic, and the book a working part in every mobile machine, a stem for a rhizome (Kleist and Kafka against Goethe).

Write to the *n*th power, the $n - 1$ power, write with slogans: Make rhizomes, not roots, never plant! Don't sow, grow offshoots! Don't be one or multiple, be multiplicities! Run lines, never plot a point! Speed turns the point into a line![24] Be quick, even when standing still! Line of chance, line of hips, line of flight. Don't bring out the General in you! Don't have just ideas, just have an idea (Godard). Have short-term ideas. Make maps, not photos or drawings. Be the Pink Panther and your loves will be like the wasp and the orchid, the cat and the baboon. As they say about old man river:

> He don't plant 'tatos
> Don't plant cotton
> Them that plants them is soon forgotten
> But old man river he just keeps rollin' along

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and . . . and . . . and . . ." This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be." Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions. Making a clean slate, starting or beginning again from ground zero, seeking a beginning or a foundation—all imply a false conception of voyage and movement (a conception that is methodical, pedagogical, initiatory, symbolic. . .). But Kleist, Lenz, and Büchner have another way of traveling and moving: proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing.[25] American literature, and already English literature, manifest this rhizomatic direction to an even greater extent; they know how to move between things, establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings. They know how to practice pragmatics. The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. *Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.

Eleventh Reading

Christoph Cox, “Beyond Representation and Signification: Toward A Sonic Materialism” (2011)

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Beyond Representation and Signification: Toward a Sonic Materialism

Christoph Cox

Abstract

Why does sound art remain so profoundly undertheorized, and why has it failed to generate a rich and compelling critical literature? It is because the prevailing theoretical models are inadequate to it. Developed to account for the textual and the visual, they fail to capture the nature of the sonic. In this article, the author proposes an alternative theoretical framework, a materialist account able to grasp the nature of sound and to enable analysis of the sonic arts. He suggests, moreover, that this theoretical account can provide a model for rethinking the arts in general and for avoiding the pitfalls encountered in theories of representation and signification.

Keywords

materialism • music • realism • representation • signification • sound art • the virtual

Sound art emerged in the late 1960s as a confluence of experimental strategies in music with Postminimalist installation practices in the visual arts (see Cox, 2009b). From the outset, the spatial and temporal concerns of sound artists such as Max Neuhaus, La Monte Young, and Alvin Lucier resonated richly with the work of visual artists such as Robert Morris, Michael Asher, and Bruce Nauman, who, around the same time, began to experiment with sound. Yet, while these visual artists have attracted an enormous amount of scholarly attention, their sonic output has gone almost unnoticed; and the broader field of sound art has been ignored by musicologists, art historians, and aesthetic theorists. The open-ended sonic forms and often site-specific location of sound installations thwart artists musicological analysis, which remains oriented to the formal examination of

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discrete sound structures and performances, while the purely visual purview of art history allows its practitioners not only to disregard sound art but also to gloss over the sonic strategies of Postminimalism and Conceptualism.

The increasing prominence of sound art over the past decade has done little to alter this situation. Why does sound art remain so profoundly undertheorized, and why has it failed to generate a rich and compelling critical literature? The primary reason, I suggest, is that the prevailing theoretical models are inadequate to it. Developed to account for the textual and the visual, they fail to capture the nature of the sonic. In this article, I propose an alternative theoretical framework, a materialist account able to grasp the nature of sound and to enable analysis of the sonic arts. I suggest, moreover, that this theoretical account can provide a model for rethinking the arts in general and for avoiding the pitfalls encountered in theories of representation and signification. More broadly still, this article aims to contribute to the general revival of realism in contemporary philosophy and its challenge to the idealism and humanism that have characterized philosophy and cultural theory since the 'linguistic turn'.[1]

Representation, Signification, and Materialism

For the past few decades, aesthetic theory has been dominated by a set of critical approaches (most prominently, semiotics, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and deconstruction) concerned with signification, representation, and mediation. Epistemologically, these approaches reject naive conceptions of representation and signification that construe images and signs as picturing or designating a pre-given world. Ontologically, they reject essentialism, which construes the world as manifesting fixed conceptual or material essences to which images and signs would refer. In contrast with the fixity and inflexibility of essentialism, contemporary cultural theory aims to account for and foster the contingency of meaning, the multiplicity of interpretation, and the possibility of change. Culture is construed as a field or system of signs that operate in complex relations of referral to other signs, subjects, and objects. Cultural criticism and theory is taken to be an interpretive enterprise that consists in tracking signs or representations (images, texts, symptoms, etc.) through the associative networks that give them meaning, networks that are always in flux, thus ensuring that meaning is never fixed or stable. Rejecting realism, which would claim direct access to reality, contemporary cultural theory and criticism tends to maintain that experience is always mediated by the symbolic field. Indeed, these approaches often have a deep suspicion of the extra-symbolic, extra-textual, or extra-discursive, viewing such a domain as either inaccessible or non-existent. Thus, for example, Ferdinand de Saussure (1983[1916]: 116–17) banishes from semiotics the physical stuff of sound; Jacques Lacan (1998[1972–3]) declares that 'there is no such thing as a prediscursive reality' and casts aside the material substrate of culture that 'resists all symbolization' (pp. 32, 66);[2] Jacques Derrida (1976[1967]) maintains that 'there is nothing outside of the text' (p. 158); and Stuart Hall (2002) maintains that 'nothing meaningful exists outside of discourse.'[3]

These theoretical approaches are philosophically rich and have proven to be powerful tools for cultural analysis. They rightly reject essentialism and insist on the contingency and indeterminacy of meaning and being. Yet the price of this freedom has often been an epistemological and ontological insularity.[4] Theories of textuality or discursivity implicitly support a separation between culture (the domain of signification, representation, and meaning) and nature (the domain of inert, dumb matter). Nature is either cast aside as in-significant or deemed a cultural projection, a social construction. Contemporary cultural theory often falls prey to a provincial and chauvinistic anthropocentrism as well, for it treats human symbolic interaction as a unique and privileged endowment from which the rest of nature is excluded. It thus accords with the deep-seated metaphysics and theology it aims to challenge, joining Platonism, Christianity, and Kantianism in maintaining that, by virtue of some special endowment (soul, spirit, mind, reason, language, etc.), human beings inhabit a privileged ontological position elevated above the natural world. Contemporary cultural theory thus manifests a problematic Kantian epistemology and ontology, a dualistic program that divides the world into two domains, a phenomenal domain of symbolic discourse that marks the limits of the knowable, and a noumenal domain of nature and materiality that excludes knowledge and intelligible discourse.

These presuppositions and conclusions are fully evident in one of the very few sustained theoretical examinations of sound art and kindred musical forms, Seth Kim-Cohen's recent book *In the Blink of an Ear* (2009).[5] Kim-Cohen attributes the absence of a rich theoretical discourse on sound art to the tendency of composers, such as John Cage and Pierre Schaeffer, and sound artists, such as Francisco López and Christina Kubisch, to treat sound as a material substance external to signification and discursivity. Committed to raising sound art discourse to the level of theoretical analyses of the visual arts and literature, Kim-Cohen sees no other way than to adopt the textualist paradigm of those fields. On Kim-Cohen's account, realist claims concerning the materiality of sound can only be essentialist, since they posit a domain outside discourse, a substance the existence and nature of which is not determined by the field of signification. Such a substance and domain, Kim-Cohen concludes, is meaningless at best and non-existent at worst. 'Since being human is a state inexorably tied to language', he remarks, 'then, presumably, linguisticity is the order that obtains.' He continues:

> The suggestion of an unadulterated, untainted purity of experience prior to linguistic capture seeks a return to a never-present, Romanticized, pre-Enlightenment darkness … if some stimuli actually convey an experiential effect that precedes linguistic processing, what are we to do with such experiences? ... If there is such a strata of experience, we must accept it mutely. It finds no voice in thought or discourse. Since there is nothing we can do with it, it seems wise to put it aside and concern ourselves with that of which we can speak. (p. 112)

Attempting to bring sound art discourse within the neo-Kantian conceptual purview of contemporary cultural theory, Kim-Cohen accepts the presuppositions of textualism and discursivity, affirming a distinction between phenomena and noumena rendered as the distinction between language and the extra-linguistic, culture and nature, text and matter. The limits of discourse are the limits of meaning and being, affirms Kim-Cohen. If the sonic arts are to be meaningfully examined, we will need to conceive them within the realm of representation and signification.

Yet, as Kim-Cohen rightly notes, the sonic arts are resistant to description and analysis via theories of textuality and representation, which accounts for the near silence about sound in contemporary aesthetic theory. The sonic arts, I suggest, require a different sort of theoretical analysis – not a theory particular to sound, but one capable of accounting for sound *and* the other arts. The materialist theory I propose here maintains that contemporary cultural theory's critiques of representation and humanism are not thorough enough. A rigorous critique of representation would altogether eliminate the dual planes of culture/nature, human/non-human, sign/world, text/matter, not in the manner of Hegel, toward an idealism that would construe all of being as mental, but in the manner of Nietzsche and Deleuze, toward a thoroughgoing materialism that would construe human symbolic life as a specific instance of the transformative process to be found throughout the natural world – from the chemical reactions of inorganic matter to the rarefied domain of textual interpretation – a process Nietzsche called by various names, among them 'becoming', 'interpretation', and 'will to power'.[6]

Representation and the Sonic Arts

Musical composition and sound installation are surely historically situated and socially embedded practices that are culturally meaningful. Yet music has always been recognized to be a peculiarly non-representational art, lacking the two-tiered structure of reference characteristic of words and images. Leaving aside instances of *musique concrète* to which I will return later, musical tones and works are not signifiers, not media for the expression of a semantic content. They do not, for the most part, symbolize or stand for some other thing. They are not icons, indices, or symbols, to use C.S. Peirce's tripartite division of signs.[7]

Perception of these various cultural objects highlights this difference as well. Written texts and images require the distance of vision that separates subject from object. By contrast, sound is immersive and proximal, surrounding and passing through the body. And while texts and images involve the spatial juxtaposition of elements, the sonic arts involve a temporal flux in which elements interpenetrate one another. In Henri Bergson's (1960[1889]) terms, texts and images present us with 'discrete multiplicities' while, in the sonic arts, we encounter 'continuous multiplicities' (ch. II).

Music has long eluded analysis in terms of representation and signification and, as a result, has been considered to be purely formal and abstract. However, the most significant sound art work of the past half-century – the work of Max Neuhaus, Alvin Lucier, Christina Kubisch, Christian Marclay, Carsten Nicolai, Francisco Lopez, and Toshiya Tsunoda, for example – has explored the *materiality* of sound: its texture and temporal flow, its palpable effect on, and affection by the materials through and against which it is transmitted. What these works reveal, I think, is that the sonic arts are not more *abstract* than the visual but rather more *concrete*, and that they require not a *formalist* analysis but a *materialist* one.

Historically, music's non-representational status has led it to be construed in two distinct ways. The composer and theorist R. Murray Schafer (1994[1977]: 6) traces these to the two Greek myths concerning the origin of music. Pindar's 12th Pythian Ode, writes Schafer, locates the origin of music in Athena's invention of aulos playing to honor the wailing sisters of the beheaded Medusa. The Homeric hymn to Hermes, by contrast, accounts for the origin of music in Hermes' discovery that the shell of a tortoise could be used to form the resonant chamber for a lyre. The first myth celebrates music as the subjective eruption of raw emotion, while the second construes it as the discovery of the objective sonic properties of the universe. Music is thus conceived to be either sub-representational, a primitive eruption of desire and emotion (hence its suppression by moral conservatives from Plato to the Taliban), or super-representational, pure mathematics. Thus, Descartes (1961[1618]) could write of music that 'its aim is to please and to arouse various emotions in us' (p. 11) while Leibniz (1989[1714]) could claim that the beauty of music 'consists only in the harmonies of numbers and in a calculation that we are not aware of, but which the soul nevertheless carries out' (p. 212).

Schopenhauer: Beneath Representation

Two important 19th-century theories of art, those of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, richly combine these two poles in ways that are instructive for building a materialist theory of music and sound. Schopenhauer's metaphysics is explicitly Kantian and, as Kant distinguishes between the world of phenomena and world of noumena, appearance and things-in-themselves, so Schopenhauer (1969[1819])distinguishes between the world of 'representation' and the world of 'will'.[8] In essence, argues Schopenhauer, the world is will: an undifferentiated, propulsive energy or force. Yet, for the most part, will is manifested and experienced only indirectly, through the mediation of the representations that make up the familiar world of appearance, which consists of discrete entities that inhabit time and space and are subject to natural laws. For Kant, the thing-in-itself was a theoretical posit, a necessary supposition of his epistemological and moral system. Schopenhauer, however, argues that each of us has a direct internal experience of the will as the force of desire, action, and movement that animates us and distinguishes our experience of ourselves from our experience of other human beings, who, for us, remain objects among objects, representations among representations. Through scientific study of these representations, we can see (though not feel) such internal forces at work throughout the natural world, from gravity, electricity, and magnetism to organic growth, animal desire, and human knowing and willing.

Awareness of the fact that the natural world is pervaded and driven by a blind, irrational force is, for Schopenhauer, cause for despair, vitiating any specifically human or individual projects or purpose. Art, however, is able to offer temporary relief from this despair, since it presents us with what Schopenhauer calls 'Platonic Ideas', pure formal types disconnected from the practical concerns of everyday life. Contemplation of such aesthetic Ideas allows us, momentarily, to transcend the life of desire and struggle to become, in Schopenhauer's famous phrase, '*pure*, will-less, painless, timeless *subject[s] of knowledge*' (p. 179,emphases in original).

Schopenhauer notably distinguishes music from the visual and literary arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, and poetry), according it a special status. For Schopenhauer, music has nothing to do with the world of representation or with the presentation of Platonic Ideas. In an astonishing passage, he writes that music is 'quite independent of the apparent world, positively ignores it, and to a certain extent, could still exist even if there were no world at all, which cannot be said of the other arts' (p. 257). This would seem to be the most hyperbolic declaration of musical autonomy. But it is precisely the opposite. Schopenhauer liberates music from the world of appearance, the world of representation, only to plunge it into the world of things-in-themselves, the world of will. For music, he argues, is a direct expression of the will.

> Music differs from all the other arts by the fact that it is not a copy of appearance, or, more exactly, of the will's adequate objectivity, but is directly a copy of the will itself, and therefore expresses the metaphysical to everything physical in the world, the thing-in-itself to every appearance. Accordingly, we could just as well call the world embodied music as embodied will. (pp. 262–3; cf. p. 257)

For Schopenhauer, then, music is still, in some sense, a copy. What it renders, however, is not the world of objects and things that make up the apparent world, but the primary forces of which those objects and things are composed. That is, it offers an audible expression of nature in all its dynamic power.

Schopenhauer's theory of music is constrained by his Kantian metaphysics and by the Kantian language of representation, appearance, and thing-in-itself. Yet it offers an important start toward the construction of a materialist philosophy of sound and music. It acknowledges the non-representational character of music and accommodates both its Pindaric connection to emotion and desire and its Homeric grasp of fundamental truths about nature.[9] Yet its rejection of musical representation is not an assertion of musical autonomy but an argument for the groundedness of music in the patterns of becoming immanent to nature.

Nietzsche: The Naturalization of Music

Nietzsche takes us considerably further toward a materialist theory of music and sound. His first book, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* (1992a[1872]), draws on Schopenhauer's account while divesting it of its Kantian metaphysical baggage.[10] *The Birth of Tragedy* is, in the first place, a philological investigation into the origins of tragic drama and its profound importance for the Attic Greeks. Yet Nietzsche gives this study a wider significance, construing it as a critique of late 19th-century culture and an account of art and music in general. The Greeks, argues Nietzsche, distinguished between the visual, plastic arts, on the one hand, and music, on the other – the discrete forms and serene composure of visual art honoring the god Apollo, the wild fluidity of music honoring Dionysus. *The Birth of Tragedy* presents this opposition between the Apollonian and the Dionysian as isomorphic with Schopenhauer's distinctions between representation and will, appearance and the thing-in-itself. Yet, as Nietzsche himself recognized, the account of art and music presented in the *Birth of Tragedy* departs considerably from Schopenhauer.[11] Schopenhauer's Kantianism led him to subsume the natural, physical world within the world of appearance, and to situate the will in a metaphysical domain outside of space and time and not subject to natural laws such as that of causality. For Nietzsche, however, both the Apollonian and the Dionysian are thoroughly immanent to nature. Indeed he describes them first and foremost as 'artistic energies [*Mächte*] which burst forth from nature herself, ***without the mediation of the human artist*** – energies in which nature's art impulses [*Kunsttriebe*] are satisfied in the most immediate and direct way' (p. 38, emphases in original).

What Nietzsche is offering here is a deeply naturalistic theory of art. Art is not some unique achievement of human beings that defines a province of 'culture' distinct from, and elevated above, 'nature'. On the contrary, for Nietzsche, nature itself is artistic, creative, productive; and we human beings 'have our highest dignity in our significance as [one of nature's] works of art'. Human beings themselves are artists, Nietzsche concludes, only insofar as they 'coalesce' with nature as the 'Ur-artist of the world' (p. 52, translation modified).

It is not difficult to see that nature is extravagantly creative, endlessly generating an immense variety of inorganic and organic forms: from crystals and canyons to biological species of the most astonishing variety within which no two individuals are identical – a vast proliferation of material difference. Yet we are likely to take Nietzsche's rhapsodic celebration of nature's creative powers as rhetorical, for we generally believe that art and creativity require conscious agency. Nietzsche's assertion of the nature-as-artist, then, will be read as metaphorical at best and theological at worst, since 'the creativity of nature' seems to imply a divine creator.

Nietzsche (1974[1882/1887]), however, operates in the wake of the 'death of God' and commits himself to tracking down and eliminating all the vestiges of theological thought (pp. 167–9, 279–82). Among these is the ancient and venerable *hylomorphic* model according to which the genesis of entities requires the external imposition of form upon an inert matter. Such is the account of formation in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, Plato, and Aristotle; and it continues its grip on the scientific and aesthetic imagination today. Nietzsche anticipates contemporary scientific and philosophical materialists – among them Gilbert Simondon (1992[1964]), Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers (1984[1979]: 7, 9), Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987[1980]: 329, 408ff), and Manuel DeLanda (1997a, 1997b) – in rejecting hylomorphism, opting instead for a theory of self-organization. For Nietzsche (2003[1885–8]), matter itself is creative and transformative without external agency, a ceaseless becoming and overcoming that temporarily congeals into forms and beings only to dissolve them back into the natural flux, an ‘eternal self-creating’ and ‘eternal self-destroying … monster of force, without beginning, without end’ (p. 38). Nietzsche’s name for this flux is ‘will to power’, his effort to formulate a theory of natural causality and effectivity internal to matter and proceeding without any external agency. For Nietzsche (1992c[1887]), ‘there is no “being” behind doing, effecting, becoming; the “doer” is only a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything’ (p. 481); and there exist only ‘dynamic quanta in a relationship of tension with all other dynamic quanta, whose essence consists in their relation to all other quanta’ (Nietzsche, 2003[1885–8]: 247).[12] Natural change, then, is the result of intensive forces that generate new configurations and assemblages. As a thoroughgoing naturalist and materialist, Nietzsche draws no fundamental distinctions between inorganic and organic nature, or between nature and culture. The operations of will to power are as evident in the procedures of chemical reaction and bonding as they are in organic growth and competition, artistic creation and interpretation. (Indeed, Nietzsche often polemically extends the term ‘interpretation’ to cover all natural processes.)[13] For Nietzsche (1992b[1886]: 238, 2003[1885–8]: 39), then, ‘the world viewed from inside’ is ‘will to power and nothing besides’, and ‘you yourselves are also this will to power — and nothing besides!’

Dionysus, or The Virtual

The world as will to power is described by Nietzsche (2003[1885–8]: 38) as a ‘*Dionysian* world’, which brings us back to music and to the dichotomy proposed in *The Birth of Tragedy* between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Nietzsche’s description of these two modalities as ‘art impulses of nature’ shows how little they have in common with Kant’s distinctions between phenomena and noumena, appearance and thing-in-itself, or with Schopenhauer’s distinction between representation and will. Instead, they anticipate a distinction that naturalizes these Schopenhauerian and Kantian oppositions: Gilles Deleuze’s distinction between ‘the actual’ and ‘the virtual’.[14] This pair of terms marks the difference, within the flux of nature, between empirical individuals and the forces, powers, differences, and intensities that give rise to them. Deleuze (1994[1968]) writes:

> Difference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse. Difference is not the phenomenon but the noumenon closest to the phenomenon … Every phenomenon refers to an inequality by which it is conditioned. Every diversity and every change refers to a difference which is its sufficient reason. Everything which happens and everything which appears is correlated with orders of differences: differences of level, temperature, pressure, tension, potential, *difference of intensity* … Disparity – in other words, difference or intensity (difference of intensity) – is the sufficient reason of all phenomena, the condition of that which appears. (p. 222, emphasis in original)

Deleuze uses Kantian language, here, to express a thoroughly non-Kantian point.[15] It is true, Deleuze argues, that an important distinction must be drawn between *what appears* and the *conditions for the possibility of this appearance*; but those conditions of possibility are not conceptual or cognitive, as they are for Kant; they are thoroughly material, immanent in nature itself. 'That which appears' (the diversity of the actual, empirical individuals that populate the world of our experience) are the products or manifestations of material intensive 'differences' that operate at the micro-level of physical, chemical, and biological matter but that remain virtual, unapparent at the level of actual, extensive things. This emphasis on the constitutive nature of difference has allowed Deleuze to be linked with theorists of difference such as Saussure, Derrida, Lacan, Irigaray, and Levinas. Yet Deleuze's differences are not linguistic, conceptual, or cultural in origin. Operating beneath the level of representation and signification, these differences subsist in nature itself.

Beneath representation and signification, music and sound manifest this virtuality, which both Deleuze and Nietzsche term 'Dionysian' (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 214). 'This primordial phenomenon of Dionysian art is difficult to grasp', writes Nietzsche (1992a[1872]), 'and there is only one direct way to make it intelligible and grasp it immediately: through the wonderful significance of *musical dissonance*' (p. 141). Music makes audible the dynamic, differential, discordant flux of becoming that precedes and exceeds empirical individuals and the *principium individuationis*. Representing and symbolizing nothing, it presents a play of sonic forces and intensities. 'This [Dionysian] world [of music] has a coloring, a causality, and a velocity quite different from those of the world of the plastic artist and the epic poet', Nietzsche writes (p. 50). Yet it is also the condition of possibility for empirical individuals and the stable forms of the visual and textual arts. The relationship between the Dionysian and the Apollonian, music and the visual and textual arts is not one of opposition but of transcendental conditioning. For just as the virtual world of will to power or difference is manifested in actual entities, so too does the 'inchoate', 'intangible' world of music, for Nietzsche, 'discharge itself in images', 'emit image sparks', manifest itself 'as a specific symbol or example' (pp. 49, 50, 54).

The Auditory Real

On Nietzsche's account, Greek tragedy is born 'out of the spirit of music'. Its essence lies in the tragic insight that the flux of becoming forms empirical individuals – dramatic poems, the figure of the hero on stage, the stage itself, we spectators – and equally dissolves them back into its cauldron of forces and intensities. Beyond its analysis of classical drama, *The Birth of Tragedy* offers a theory of music and art in general. Nietzsche asks us to forgo talk of representation and signification in favor of an account of heterogeneous forces in complex relations of attraction and repulsion, consistency, and dissolution.

Of course, the world of music has its own forms of representation and signification, its own imaginary and symbolic. Since the late Middle Ages, music has appeared in the form of staff notation, its fluidity arrested into a set of alphabetically-named pitches distributed on five parallel lines. Musical notation was a form of recording, but a static one, and one that privileged the eye over the ear. Standardized and codified by the 16th century, the musical score is an exemplary instance of the reification characteristic of capitalism, in which *processes* are transformed into exchangeable, saleable *products* and *objects* (see Lukács, 1971[1923]: 83ff). Thrust onto the open market by the decline of feudal patronage, the composer was confronted by the problem of how to commodify the inherently transitory nature of sound and the fluid matter of music. Musical notation arose as a solution to that problem. Unable to capture music itself, the score came to stand in for the musical work, both legally and conceptually. What began as a mnemonic aid for performance – the score – became an autonomous entity that governed performances and to which they were held accountable. This is precisely the Platonist move that both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein warn us against: the pre-post-erous inversion by which the concept 'leaf' becomes the cause of actual, particular leaves – or, in the musical case, an abstract, silent entity becomes the cause of actual sonic events (see Nietzsche, 1979[1873]: 83; and Wittgenstein, 1958: 17–18).

Yet, five years after Nietzsche published *The Birth of Tragedy*, Thomas Edison and Charles Cros inaugurated a revolution that subverted this symbolic and imaginary realm. The invention of the phonograph challenged musical notation as a recording apparatus, replacing the mute, static score with a form of recording that restored the aurality and temporality of sound. It captured not an idealized visual representation but actual musical performances. But it did much more than this. For, as Friedrich Kittler (1999[1986]) notes:

> The phonograph does not hear as do ears that have been trained immediately to filter voices, words, and sounds out of noise; *it registers acoustic events as such*. Articulateness becomes a second-order exception in a spectrum of noise. (p. 23, emphasis added; cf. Cutler, 1993[1980])

Beyond music, audio recording opened up what John Cage (1961) termed 'the entire field of sound' (p. 4), leaving the rarefied world of pitch, interval, and meter for the infinitely broader world of frequency, vibration, and physical time (Kittler, 1999[1986]: 24). Audio recording registers the messy, asignifying noise of the world that, for Kittler, in a heterodox, materialist rendering of Lacan, corresponds to 'the real' – the perceptible plenitude of matter that obstinately resists the symbolic and imaginary orders. 'The real', Kittler concludes, 'has the status of phonography' (p. 16).

On Kittler's account, Richard Wagner – musical hero of *The Birth of Tragedy* – was the first to affirm this world of noise beyond articulate sound. Exploration of the auditory real – the virtual, Dionysian domain of sound – has marked the entire history of the sonic arts ever since. Sound poetry from Aleksei Kruchenyk and Hugo Ball through Henri Chopin and François Dufrêne withdrew language from representation and signification, shifting it, in poet Steve McCaffery's (1996) words, 'from phonic to sonic'. The stuff of sound poetry is precisely what Saussure (1983[1916]) banished from the realm of signification (pp. 116–17), what Kittler (1999[1986]) calls 'the waste or residue that neither the mirror of the imaginary nor the grid of the symbolic can catch: the physiological accidents and stochastic order of bodies' (p. 16). Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète* relinquished the traditional apparatus of musical culture – traditional musical instruments, musicians, live performance – in favor of worldly sound recorded onto disk and tape. John Cage even more directly celebrated worldly sound in *4'33"*, the so-called 'silent' composition that invites audiences to perceive environmental noise as an aesthetic field. Cage collapsed the distinction between 'silence' and 'noise' – the dense virtual field that subtends all signal and meaning; and, for the past hundred years, 'noise' has been a constant resource for the sonic arts, from Luigi Russolo's *intonarumori* and Schaeffer's *Étude de Bruits* through Merzbow and Zbigniew Karkowski, whose series of recordings titled *The World as Will* explicitly acknowledges the debt to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.[16]

Nietzsche's account of the sonic as a flow of forces and intensities is matched by the composer Edgard Varèse (2004[1936–62]), who discarded the term 'music' in favor of 'organized sound' and described his own compositions as presenting 'the movement of sound-masses, of shifting planes … moving at different speeds and at different angles' and engaged in relationships of 'penetration and repulsion' (p. 20). Varèse's conception of music anticipated electronic music, which, since its arrival in the 1950s, has worked with nothing but flows of electrons run through filters and modulators that contract, dilate, and otherwise transform them to produce a deeply physical and elemental form of music that belies the epithet 'abstract' often applied to it.

Sound as an Anonymous Flux

'Music is continuous; only listening is intermittent', remarked John Cage (2004[1982]: 224), paraphrasing Henry David Thoreau. That is, for Cage, sound is an anonymous flux akin to the flows of minerals, biomass, and language examined by Manuel DeLanda in *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (1997b). Making no discrimination on the basis of the sources of these sounds (inorganic, biological, human, technological), Cage conceives this flux as a ceaseless production of heterogeneous sonic matter, the components of which move at different speeds and with different intensities, and involve complex relationships of simultaneity, interference, conflict, concord, and parallelism. This flux precedes and exceeds individual listeners and, indeed, composers, whom Cage came to conceive less as *creators* than as *curators* of this sonic flux.[17] This Cagean conception of music and composition recalls Nietzsche's notion of the creative powers of nature and of the artist as one who coalesces with this flux. In a brief but suggestive passage, Deleuze (1998[1980]) concurs: 'One can … conceive of a continuous acoustic flow … that traverses the world and that even encompasses silence', he writes. 'A musician is someone who appropriates something from this flow' (p. 78).

One might object to this notion on the grounds that sound is not an independent entity but a product of human hearing. Were this the case, any analysis of sound would, from the start, be committed to an unbridgeable divide between phenomenal apprehension and noumenal emission. Yet this orthodoxy is undermined by a number of arguments ably presented by the philosopher Casey O'Callaghan in his recent book *Sounds* (2007), which argues for a sonic realism. Philosophical accounts of perception, O'Callaghan notes, have typically treated vision as the primary sense and objects of vision as paradigmatic objects of sensory perception. Visual experience encounters physical objects with attributes (or properties) such as color, shape, and size. From Descartes and Locke on, it has been customary to distinguish between primary and secondary qualities, the former (for example, size and shape) taken to be qualities objects have independent of observers, the latter (for example, color and taste) qualities that objects have only relative to observers and their perceptual capacities. Invisible, intangible, and ephemeral entities, sounds have little in common with ordinary visual objects and substances. Hence, philosophers have been inclined to regard them as secondary attributes of the objects we see: the sound *of* a bird, the sound *of* an air conditioner by analogy with the color *of* a door or the smell *of* a flower. On this view, then, sounds exist only relative to their apprehension and are, at least partially, products of our minds.

Such is the idealist, phenomenalist conception of sound that has prevailed in philosophy. But once we stop taking vision as paradigmatic and investigate sound itself, a different ontological conception emerges. Visual objects persist through time and survive the alteration of their properties. (The door, for example, remains when it is painted a different color.) By contrast, properties do not survive in this way. (The redness of the door does not survive its repainting.) In this respect, sounds appear to be much more akin to independently existing objects, since they survive changes to their qualities. A sound that begins as a low rumble may become a high-pitched whine, while remaining a single sound. In such an occurrence, the object that produces it (a car, for example) does not lose one sound and gain another. The sound remains what it is throughout, though its sensible qualities change. Sounds have sources, of course; and these are often relatively durable objects. But we can experience a sound without experiencing its source, and the source without the sound. So while sources *generate* or *cause* sounds, sounds are not bound to their sources as properties. Sounds, then, are distinct individuals or particulars like objects.

This is precisely what – albeit in the idealist language of phenomenology – Pierre Schaeffer (2004[1966]) aimed to show in his analysis of the *objet sonore*, the sonorous object, which, he maintained, has a peculiar existence distinct from both its source and the listening subject. The sonorous object, Schaeffer insisted, is not the instrument that produces it, not the medium in or on which it exists, and not the mind of the listener. Sounds are ontological particulars and individuals rather than qualities of objects or subjects. And this is why works of *musique concrète* are not representations – of objects in the world or of worldly sounds – but presentations of sonorous objects. Yet Schaeffer's language of the 'sonorous *object*' misses the mark. For sounds are peculiarly temporal and durational, tied to the qualities they exhibit over time. This temporal quality is not incidental but definitive, distinguishing, for example, the call of the cardinal from that of the robin, or the spoken words 'proton' and 'protein'. If sounds are particulars or individuals, then, they are so not as static *objects* but as temporal *events*.

The hegemony of the visual treats sounds as anomalous entities that it exiles to the domain of mind-dependent qualities. If we begin with sound, however, a different ontological conception emerges. For sounds support an ontology of events, what Nietzsche calls 'becomings' and Deleuze 'haecceities'. Indeed to begin with sound is to upset the ontology of 'objects' and 'beings', suggesting that the latter are themselves events and becomings that, however, operate at relatively slow speeds. The priority of sound and music in Nietzsche's philosophy, then, is not an aesthetic choice but an ontological commitment: the commitment to the primacy of becoming, time, and change.

This materialist theory of sound, then, suggests a way of rethinking the arts in general. Sound is not a world apart, a unique domain of non-signification and non-representation. Rather, sound and the sonic arts are firmly rooted in the material world and the powers, forces, intensities, and becomings of which it is composed. If we proceed from sound, we will be less inclined to think in terms of representation and signification, and to draw distinctions between culture and nature, human and nonhuman, mind and matter, the symbolic and the real, the textual and the physical, the meaningful and the meaningless. Instead, we might begin to treat artistic productions not as complexes of signs or representations but complexes of forces materially inflected by other forces and force-complexes. We might ask of an image or a text not what it *means* or *represents*, but what it *does*, how it *operates*, what changes it effectuates. This is precisely the sort of analysis Deleuze offers in his books on Proust and Kafka, Francis Bacon and cinema. Of a painting, film, or novel, Deleuze writes: 'It represents nothing, but it produces. It means nothing, but it works' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983[1972]: 109). In a materialist analysis, notes Deleuze, 'language is no longer defined by what it says, even less by what makes it a signifying thing, but by what causes it to move, to flow, to explode' (p. 133). Likewise, for Deleuze, 'images aren't in our head, in our brain'; rather, 'things are themselves images … The brain's just one image among others. Images are constantly acting and reacting on each other, producing and consuming. There's no difference at all between *images*, *things*, and *motion*' (Deleuze, 1995[1976]: 42, emphases in original).[18]

For a theory of signification and representation, the realist conception of sound as an asignifying material flux will prompt the charge of essentialism (see Kim-Cohen, 2009: 12–13, ch. 5). But the charge is misplaced, for essentialism names a transcendent entity immune from change. On the materialist account I have outlined here, sound is thoroughly immanent, differential, and ever in flux. Indeed, thinking about sound in this way provokes us to conceive difference beyond the domain of 'culture', signification, and representation, and to see these as particular manifestations of a broader differential field: the field of nature and matter themselves.[19] Only by way of such a materialist, realist account will we be able to theorize the sonic arts, and to raise such a theory to the level of sophistication characteristic of literary theory and theories of the visual arts. Conversely, such a theory of sound enjoins us to abandon the idealist and humanist language of representation and signification that has characterized theoretical discourses on literature and the visual arts over the past half-century, and to reconceive aesthetic production and reception via a materialist model of force, flow, and capture.

Notes

1. I have in mind the recent work of DeLanda (2002), Harman (2002, 2005), Grant (2006), and Meillassoux (2008[2006]), despite the differences among them.
2. 'There is no such thing as a prediscursive reality … Every reality is founded and defined by a discourse', remarks Lacan (1998[1972–3]: 32].
3. Derrida's infamous claim 'there is nothing outside the text' is equivocal in this respect. On the one hand, it can (and often has) been read as the Hegelian, idealist claim that the symbolic field encompasses all there is without remainder or residue. Distancing himself from this position, Derrida himself (1986) construes it along more Nietzschean lines. He writes:

    > The text is always a field of forces: heterogeneous, differential, open, and so on. That's why deconstructive readings and writings are concerned not only with library books, with discourses, with conceptual and semantic contents. They are not simply analyses of discourse ... They are also effective or active (as one says) interventions, in particular political or institutional interventions that transform contexts without limiting themselves to theoretical or constative utterances even though they must also produce such utterances. (p. 168, see also note 19)
4. For a critique along these lines, see Massumi (2002) and DeLanda (1999).
5. It is worth mentioning another recent study, LaBelle (2006), which, somewhat like Kim-Cohen, attempts to shift sound art discourse away from the naturalistic interpretation toward a discussion of the embodied, relational, contextual, social, and political nature of sound.
6. For a more extended reading of these notions, see Cox (1999).
7. Since the 1970s, Anglo-American philosophers have engaged in a long debate about whether or not, and to what degree, music can be considered a 'representational' art. For an overview of this debate, see Davies (1994) and Ridley (2004: ch. 2).
8. While Kant used the Greek philosophical term *phenomena* interchangeably with the German *Erscheinung* (appearance), and *noumena* interchangeably with the German *Ding an sich* (thing-in-itself), Schopenhauer rejects the Greek pair in favor of the German pair, though his English translators persisted in rendering *Erscheinung* as 'phenomena'. My quotations from Payne's translation are altered accordingly.
9. Schopenhauer (1969[1819] grants that 'music is the language of feeling and passion' and, at the same time, that it 'is in the highest degree a universal language ... like geometrical figures and numbers' (pp. 259, 262).
10. In what follows, I draw from the reading of *The Birth of Tragedy* I present in Cox (2005).
11. In his preface to the second edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche (1992a[1872]) writes that the book 'tried laboriously to express by means of Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas strange and new valuations which were basically at odds with Kant's and Schopenhauer's spirit and taste!' (p. 24).
12. For an extended examination and interpretation of will to power, see Cox (1999: ch. 5).
13. For examples, see Cox (1999: 239ff). Compare Deleuze's extension of the term 'contemplation' to describe the activities of 'not only people and animals, but plants, the earth, and rocks' (Deleuze, 1994[1968]: 74–5; Deleuze and Guattari, 1994[1991]: 212).
14. Deleuze (1994[1968]: 213–14) himself suggests such a connection.
15. Deleuze also retains Kant's distinction between the transcendental and the empirical, though he divests it of the conceptual and metaphysical framework with which Kant invests this distinction. Kant describes his epistemological position as 'transcendental idealism', which aims to discover the conceptual and cognitive

'conditions for all possible experience'. By contrast, Deleuze (1994[1968]: 56–7, 1988[1968]: 23) describes his own philosophical position as 'transcendental empiricism', which aims to describe the material 'conditions for real experience'.

16. On noise as a virtual field, see Cox (2009a).
17. Cage's *4'33"* exemplifies this curatorial relationship to sound insofar as it simply provides a temporal and spatial frame in which 'to let sounds be themselves' (Cage, 1961: 10). Compare the remarks of musical producers Kevin Martin and Brian Eno on music and art in the digital age. In the culture of musical remixing, Martin writes, 'neither the artist nor the remixer are "creators" in the traditional sense'; rather both 'act as "filters" for a sort of cultural flow' (quoted in Reynolds, 1998: 280). Similarly, for Eno (1995): 'An artist is now much more seen as a connector of things, a person who scans the enormous field of possible places for artistic attention, and says, What I am going to do is draw your attention to *this* sequence of things' (p. 207, emphasis in original).
18. Similarly, in his book on Francis Bacon, Deleuze (2003[1981]) writes: 'In art, and in painting as in music, it is not a question of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing forces. For this reason, no art is figurative' (p. 40). This rejection of representation and signification in favor of a materialist analysis of expression and force runs throughout Deleuze's work.
19. In some rare passages, Derrida (1982a[1968]) suggests just this; and, where he does, he does so by way of Deleuze and Nietzsche (p. 17ff). Derrida's (1982b[1971]) analysis of the performative also suggests that language might be subsumed under a broader theory of force. For the most part, however, Derrida and Derrideans have remained within the analysis of difference and textuality more narrowly defined.

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Twelfth Reading

Jane Bennett, “Systems and Things” (2012)

Systems and Things: A Response to Graham Harman and Timothy Morton

Jane Bennett

Objects could not hope for more staunch or loyal advocates than Graham Harman and Timothy Morton. I, too, am sympathetic to things, but Harman and Morton have challenged me to sharpen dimensions of my approach.[1] Before I turn to what their essays say, let me say more about what they do. How, in other words, have the bodies of these texts affected my (page-turning, doodling, head-shaking, head-nodding) body?

The short answer is that they induced a dizziness—they were overfull. This was an alluring, slightly compulsive dizziness, like the kind you got when you were a kid doing dizzy circles. Or maybe the texts' affectivity is better described as like that of a shadowy thicket whose fast-growing vines begin encircling your legs as soon as you enter, but instead of hightailing it out of there, you are drawn further in.

Such an account of the essays' affections lends credence to Harman's and Morton's claim that texts, as much as alcohol or vines or bodies that read, qualify as "objects." They define an object as a "weird entity withdrawn from access, yet somehow manifest" (M 208). Withdrawn *and* manifest. Withdrawn: even as the essays were having effects on me, none of the bodies on the scene were wholly present to each other, for objects exist as "entities . . . quite apart from any relations with or effects upon other entities in the world" (H 187). Manifest: despite this apartness, objects are *coy*, always leaving hints of a secret other world, "alluding" to an "inscrutable" reality "behind the accessible theoretical, practical, or perceptual qualities." Objects play hide-and-seek.

Myself a player of childhood games, I will consider the figure of the "object" that Morton and Harman defend. I will focus on the way it is positioned as a repudiation of "holisms." They include in that category assemblage theories in which circulate bits and pieces of Gilles Deleuze, Bruno Latour, Manuel De Landa, Brian Massumi, Alfred North Whitehead, ecophilosophers like Val Plumwood and Barry Lopez, Spinoza, and Heidegger. I will also try to make explicit just what turns—politically, ethically—on Morton's and Harman's strong claims about the apartness

New Literary History, 2012, 43: 225–233

of objects. What difference would it make if I came to experience myself more explicitly as one essentially *elusive* object among others? What is at stake for social life in the fight against systems- or process-theories, especially since all parties share a critique of linguistic and social constructivism? The question of the ethical-political stakes precedes, I think, the task of spelling out its implications for literary theory.

Relationality

At the heart of object-oriented ontology, says Harman, is a "deeply *non-relational* conception of the reality of things" (H 187). Perhaps equally deep is Harman's wariness of relational ontologies. Why? One minor motive may be the pleasure of iconoclasm: for Harman and Morton "networks, negotiations, relations, interactions, and dynamic fluctuations" (H 187) are golden calves—and who doesn't enjoy smashing idols? System-oriented theory has, they say, already had its day and no longer yields philosophically interesting problems: the "programmatic movement toward holistic interaction is an idea once but no longer liberating," and "the real discoveries now lie on the other side of the yard" (H 187–188).

But the stakes are higher, too. In "Aesthetics as First Philosophy," Harman implies that there are ethical-political as well as philosophical liabilities to a relational or network or open-systems approach: a "vision of holistic interactions in a reciprocal web . . . this blurring of boundaries between one thing and another, has held the moral high ground in philosophy for too long. . . . The political reflexes associated with terms such as essence ('bad') and reciprocal interplay ('good') must be recalibrated."[2] And in his *NLH* essay, Harman goes so far as to call it a "prejudice" to approach the world in terms of "complex feedback networks rather than integers" (188). I'm not sure what the alternative to "prejudice" here is. It could be something like reasoned judgment, in which case the claim would be that object-oriented philosophy is more rationally defensible, a newbie perspective less encrusted with unthinking habit, mainstream culture, or normal subjectivity than relation-oriented theory. Or it may be that Harman would acknowledge that object-oriented philosophy itself includes a prejudice in favor of (a theoretical privileging of or conceptual honing in on) the mysterious object. But what this would then call for is an explicit account of the *virtues* or *stakes* of favoring mysterious objects over complex systems of relations. It is just such an account that I am trying to bring to the fore from these two texts.

But perhaps there is no need to choose between objects or their relations. Since everyday, earthly experience routinely identifies some effects as coming from individual objects and some from larger systems (or, better put, from individuations within material configurations and from the complex assemblages in which they participate), why not aim for a theory that toggles between both kinds or magnitudes of "unit"? One would then understand "objects" to be those swirls of matter, energy, and incipience that hold themselves together long enough to vie with the strivings of other objects, including the indeterminate momentum of the throbbing whole. The project, then, would be to make both objects and relations the periodic focus of theoretical attention, even if it is impossible to articulate fully the "vague" or "vagabond" essence of any system or any things, and even if it is impossible to give equal attention to both at once.[3]

This is, I think, just what those passé philosophers Deleuze and Guattari do in *A Thousand Plateaus*. One of their figures for (what I am calling) the system dimension is "assemblage," another is "plane of consistency." The latter is characterized by Deleuze and Guattari as "in no way an undifferentiated aggregate of unformed matter."[4] Neither assemblage nor plane of consistency qualifies as what Harman describes as a "relational wildfire in which all individual elements are consumed" (191). My point, in short, is that despite their robust attempts to conceptualize groupings, Deleuze and Guattari also manage to attend carefully to many specific objects, to horses, shoes, orchids, packs of wolves, wasps, priests, metals, etc. Indeed, I find nothing in their approach inconsistent with the object-oriented philosopher's claim that things harbor a *differential* between their inside and outside or an irreducible moment of (withdrawn-from-view) interiority.

The example of *A Thousand Plateaus* also highlights the point that not all theories of relationality are holistic on the model of a smooth organism. There are harmonious holisms but also fractious models of systematicity that allow for heterogeneity and even emergent novelty within. These ontopictures are formally monistic but substantively plural. The whole can be imaged as fractious and self-diversifying process of territorializations and deterritorializations (Deleuze and Guattari) or as creative process (Bergson, Whitehead) or as some combination thereof (the various new materialisms).[5] Or take the model of relationality that William Connolly, following William James, calls "protean connectionism": in contrast to both methodological individualism and organic holism, connectionism figures relations as "typically loose, incomplete, and themselves susceptible to potential change. . . . The connections are punctuated by 'litter' circulating in, between, and around them.

Viewed temporally . . . connectionism presents a world in the making in an evolving universe that is open to an uncertain degree."[6]

I find such attempts to do justice both to systems and things, to acknowledge the stubborn reality of individuation and the essentially distributive quality of their affectivity or capacity to produce effects, to remain philosophically and (especially) politically productive—for consumerist culture still needs reminding of the fragile, fractious connectedness of earthly bodies.

Harman rejects the very framing of the issue as things-operating-in-systems, in favor of an object-oriented picture in which aloof objects are positioned as the sole locus of all the acting. And yet, in the quotation below from "Aesthetics as First Philosophy," Harman, against that object-prejudice, finds himself theorizing a kind of relation—"communication"—between objects. He tries to insulate this object-to-object encounter from depictions that *also* locate activity in the relationships themselves or at the systemic level of operation, but I do not think that this parsing attempt succeeds. To be honest, I don't quite see why it is worth the trouble, though it does testify to the purity of Harman's commitment to the aloof object: "The real problem is not how beings interact in a system: instead, the problem is how they withdraw from that system as independent realities while somehow communicating through the proximity, the touching without touching, that has been termed allusion or allure." I concur that some dimensions of bodies are withdrawn from presence, but see this as partly due to the role they play in this or that relatively open system.

In the text quoted above, Harman goes on to defend the view that communication via proximity is not limited to that between *human* bodies. I like this point! Morton makes a similar, antianthropocentric claim when he says that "What spoons do when they scoop up soup is not very different from what I do when I talk about spoons. . . . [N]ot because the spoon is alive or intelligent (panpsychism), but because intelligence and being alive are aesthetic appearances—for some other phenomenon, including the object in question" (215). By engaging in what Bruno Latour might call a "horizontalizing" of the ontological plane, Morton and Harman allow their ecological sympathies to come to the fore, sympathies which, in Harman's case, might not be so apparent given his philosopher's concern to always include *objects of thought* in the category of objects. In the following quotation, however, Harman concerns himself explicitly with *earthy*, ordinary objects: "If it is true that other humans signal to me without being fully present, and equally true that I never exhaust the depths of non-sentient beings such as apples and sandpaper, this is not some special pathos of human finitude. . . .

When avalanches slam into abandoned cars, or snowflakes rustle the needles of the quivering pine, even these objects cannot touch the full reality of one another. Yet they affect one another nonetheless."[7]

Hyperobjects

Morton also agrees that process or assemblage are undesirable conceptualizations ("objects are [ontologically] prior to relations" [217]), and shares the judgment that attempts to juggle both system and thing are ultimately "reductionist." The reduction consists in the fact that for Deleuze et al. "some things are more real than others: flowing liquids become templates for everything else" and thus there is a failure to "explain the givenness of the ontic phenomenon" (208). Morton succeeds in making me think twice about my own attraction to ontologies of becoming when he points out that they are biased toward the peculiar rhythms and scale of the human body.

And I also take his point about the human-body-centric nature of the figure of a "flowing liquids" ontology: "I marvel at the way . . . syrup lugubriously slimes its way out of [a] bottle. . . But to a hypothetical four-dimensional sentient being, such an event would be an unremarkable static object, while to a neutrino the slow gobs of syrup are of no consequence whatsoever. There is no reason to elevate the lava lamp fluidity . . . into the archetypical thing" (208). Perhaps there is no reason to do so, *if*, that is, we are capable of transcending the provincial, pro-human-conatus perspective from which we apprehend the world. If we are not, then a good tack might be to stretch and strain those modes to make room for the outlooks, rhythms, and trajectories of a greater number of actants, to, that is, get a better sense of the "operating system" upon which we humans rely.

Morton also offers a pragmatic, political rationale for his devotion to the coy object: no model of the whole (flowing or otherwise) can today help us cope with what he elsewhere calls "hyperobjects."[8] And this is the part of his position that raises the strongest objection, I think, to even a fractious-assemblage kind of "holism."

"Hyperobjects are phenomena such as radioactive materials and global warming." They are "mind-blowing" entities, because their ahuman timescales and the extremely large or vastly diffused quality of their occupation of space unravel the very notion of "entity." It also becomes hard to see how it is possible to think hyperobjects by placing them within a larger "whole" within which we humans are a meaningful part, for hyperobjects render *us* kind of moot. For Morton, "this means that we need some other basis for making decisions about a future to which we have no real sense of connection." Evidence of the unthinkability of the hyperobject "climate change" is the fact that conversations about it often devolve into the more conceptualizable and manageable topic of weather. Weather, even with its large theater of operation, remains susceptible to probabilistic analysis, and it can still be associated with the idea of a (highly complex) natural order. Weather, in short, is still an "object." But with "climate change," it's much harder, impossible, really, says Morton, to sustain a sense of the existence of "a neutral background against which human events can become meaningful. . . . Climate change represents the possibility that the cycles and repetitions we come to depend on for our sense of stability and place in the world may be the harbingers of cataclysmic change."[9]

I agree, but also note that the terms "mind-blowing" and "ahuman timescales" imply that we can indeed stretch ourselves to study how climate *systems* interact with capitalist *systems* to threaten our future on earth.

Modesty

In the essays at hand, Morton and Harman focus their objection to relationism around the claim that "'everything is connected' is one of those methods that has long since entered its decadence, and must be abandoned" (H 201). Here again we see that one of the reasons for their rejection of "relationism" is that it distracts attention from the "nonconnections" between objects (their withdrawn nature). But what, precisely, are the ill effects they fear? Harman and Morton don't say it outright, I believe that their target is human hubris. Their claim about the withdrawal of the object operates with the force of a litany, and I take this rhetorical tic to indicate something about the ethical impetus behind their position: object-orientedness is (what Foucault would call) a technique of self that seeks to counter the conceit of human reason and to chastise (what Nietzsche called) the "will to truth."

I, too, share the desire to cultivate theoretical modesty. But object-oriented philosophy has no monopoly on the means to this end. Contemporary materialisms (inspired by Deleuze, Thoreau, Spinoza, Latour, neuroscience, or other sources) that affirm a vitality or creative power of bodies and forces at all ranges or scales also cut against the hubris of human exceptionalism. I am a bit perplexed by Morton's rejection of materiality as a term of art; he seems to recognize no version except that associated with "matter" as a flat, fixed, or lawlike substrate (21–23). What is more, does not a focus on the sensuous stuff of earthy bodies save relationism from the "hologram" version that Harman rightly criticizes?[10]

I find myself living in a world populated by materially diverse, lively bodies. In this materialism, things—what is special about them given their sensuous specificity, their particular material configuration, and their distinctive, idiosyncratic history—matter a lot. But so do the eccentric assemblages that they form. Earthly bodies, of various but always finite durations, affect and are affected by one another. And *they form noisy systems or temporary working assemblages* which are, as much as any individuated thing, loci of affection and allure. These (sometimes stubborn and voracious but never closed or sovereign) systems enact real change. They give rise to new configurations, individuations, patterns of leanings, and affections. Networks of things display differential degrees of creativity, for good or for ill from the human point of view.[11] There may be creative evolution at the system level, if Bergson and contemporary complexity theorists are on the right track.[12] I say this because Harman argues that a philosophy such as mine, which connects hiding-and-seeking objects to assemblages, can have no account of change. This is because, the argument continues, there must be an unactualized surplus for something to happen differently. But systems as well as things can house an underdetermined surplus, and assemblage theories can offer an account of the emergence of novelty without also rendering the trajectory, impetus, drive, or energetic push of any existing body epiphenomenal to its relations.

Objects/Things/Bodies

Harman says that the distinction between "objects" and "things" is irrelevant for his purposes, perhaps because he does not want to restrict himself unduly to the (weird) *physicality* of objects or to the power that they exhibit in (relatively) direct, *bodily* encounters with us. I am more focused on this "naturalist" realm, and here I find the term "thing" or "body" better as a marker for individuation, better at highlighting the way certain edges within an assemblage tend to stand out to certain classes of bodies. (The smell and movement of the mammal to the tick, to invoke Uexküll's famous example.[13]) "Thing" or "body" has advantages over "object," I think, if one's task is to disrupt the political parsing that yields only active (American, manly) subjects and passive objects. Why try to disrupt this parsing? Because we are daily confronted with evidence of nonhuman vitalities actively at work around and within us. I also do so because the frame of subjects and objects is unfriendly to the intensified ecological awareness that we need if we are to respond intelligently to signs of the breakdown of the earth's carrying capacity for human life.

Texts as Special Bodies

I will close with a few tentative comments about those things that are literary, using the essay and the poem as my examples. Like all bodies, these literary objects are affected by other bodies, or, as Morton puts it, "A poem is not simply a representation, but rather a nonhuman agent" (215). I would also proclaim that the effectivity of a text-body, including its ability to gesture toward a something more than itself, is a function of a *distributive network* of bodies: words on the page, words in the reader's imagination, sounds of words, sounds and smells in the reading room, etc., etc.—all these bodies coacting are what "plunge [us] into the abyss" (M 212). It is worth noting in this regard that Morton and Harman and I and our objects are all in the game together, and that the object-oriented philosophers' *figuration* of the thing *as* a secret (as having a "hidden surplus") has a performative dimension. The figures of "withdrawal" and "allure" help to induce into being the aloof star of the philosophy. All three objects also operate *in relation* to human, reading bodies who enjoy getting to the bottom of a mystery.

But there are also, it seems, some features of the text-body that are not shared or shared differentially by bodies that rely more heavily on smell and touch, and less heavily on the conveyances that are words. I'm not qualified to say too much about the affectivity of a text as a material body, and can only gesture in the direction that Walt Whitman takes when he says that poetry, if enmeshed in a fortuitous assemblage of other (especially nontext) bodies, can have material effects as real as any. If you read *Leaves of Grass* in conjunction with "the open air every season of every year of your life," and also bound in affection to "the earth and sun and the animals," while also going "freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families," then "your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body."[14]

Texts are bodies that can light up, by rendering human perception more acute, those bodies whose favored vehicle of affectivity is less wordy: plants, animals, blades of grass, household objects, trash. One of the stakes for me of the turn to things in contemporary theory is how it might help us live more sustainably, with less violence toward a variety of bodies. Poetry can help us feel more of the liveliness hidden in such things and reveal more of the threads of connection binding our fate to theirs.

Harman and Morton press me to reconsider the balances between system and thing in my own perspective. I hope that I have helped them a little, too.

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NOTES

1 I thank also Levi Bryant for conversations at CUNY Graduate Center last September, and Nathan Gies, Chad Shomura, Katherine Goktepe, Anatoli Ignatov, and Bill Connolly for their comments and criticisms of this response.

2 Graham Harman, "Aesthetics as First Philosophy: Levinas and the Non-Human," *Naked Punch* 9 (Summer/Fall 2007), 21–30.

3 The terms are those of Deleuze and Guattari: "It seems to us that Husserl brought thought a decisive step forward when he discovered a region of *vague and material* essences (in other words, essences that are vagabond, anexact and yet rigorous), distinguishing them from fixed, metric and formal, essences. . . . They constitute fuzzy aggregates. They relate to a *corporeality* (materiality) that is not to be confused either with an intelligible, formal essentiality or a sensible, formed and perceived, thinghood." Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986), 407.

4 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 70.

5 As Katrin Pahl shows in *Tropes of Transport: Hegel and Emotions* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 2012), Hegel too offers a holism or relationism at odds with the organic model.

6 William Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2011), 35.

7 Harman, "Aesthetics as First Philosophy," 30.

8 And in defining the stakes *ecologically*, I reveal the presence in me of a bias toward *human* bodies (even as I share Harman's and Morton's desire to become more alert to the power, beauty, and danger of the nonhumans around and within a human body).

9 Timothy Morton, "Hyperobjects and the End of Common Sense," March 18, 2010, http://contemporarycondition.blogspot.com/2010/03/hyperobjects-and-end-of-common-sense.html.

10 Harman is right, I think, to note that "both philosophical and political problems arise when individual selves and texts are described as holograms, as the relational effects of hostile others and disciplinary power." But I do not think that there are many theorists in the humanities who still today would endorse such a strong version of constructivism.

11 To offer a political example of this creative power, I cite William Connolly's account of how the "evangelical-capitalist resonance machine" induced from out of the (human and nonhuman) bodies of American culture a new set of actants: Christian-fundamentalist-free marketeers.

12 See, for example, Stuart A. Kauffman, *Reinventing the Sacred: A New View of Science, Reason, and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 2008) and Terence Deacon, *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter* (New York: Norton, 2012).

13 See Jakob von Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans. with A Theory of Meaning*, trans. Joseph D. O'Neil (Minneapolis : Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2011).

14 Walt Whitman, "Preface 1855," in *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*, ed. Michael Moon (New York: Norton, 2002), 622.