

S1 COSMOGONY

2018–2022

VOLUPTAS

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- E2 ORDER
- E3 CONSTANTS
- E4 VARIABLES
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- S4 DECADENCE 2030–2034
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PROFESSUR
CHARBONNET
HEIZ

ETHZ



REPETITION

S1

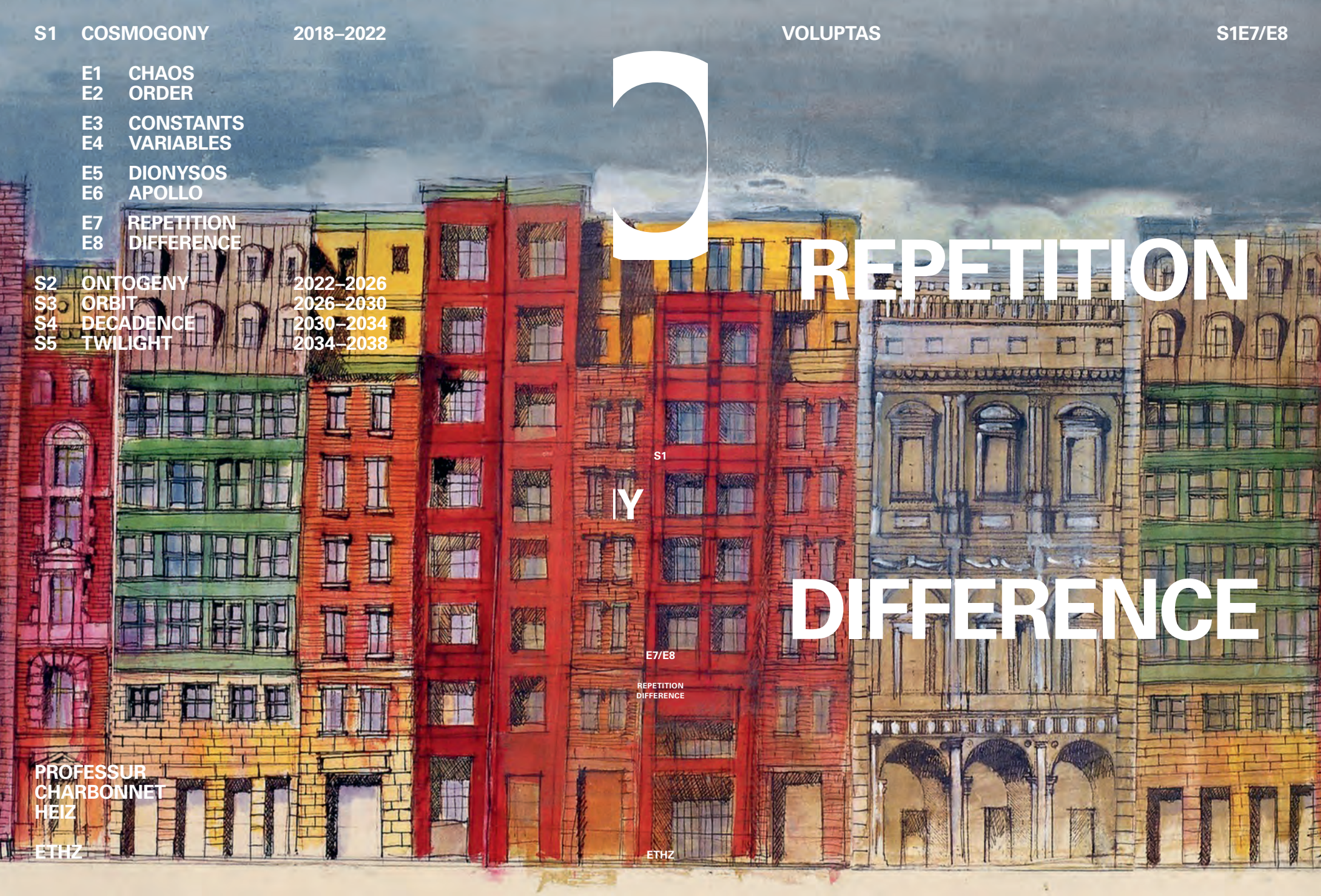
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E7/E8

REPETITION
DIFFERENCE

ETHZ

DIFFERENCE



VOLUPTAS

**PROFESSUR
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GUSTAVE COURBET, THE WOUNDED MAN, REPENTIR (1844-1854)

Voluptas is the euphoric daughter of its time—the intoxicating offspring of measure and spirit. Amending the millenary Vitruvian ordinances of *firmitas*, *utilitas* and *venustas*, Voluptas initiates a transversal investigation on contemporary issues and sets combinatory dynamics as the channel of proliferating singularities. Its looping trajectory toward a saturation of problem settings aims at the empirical emanation of an alternative view of the urban condition. Enforcing *desire* as its prevalent agent, Voluptas is the elegiac display of residual energy.

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing Heaven, and gazing
on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have
a different birth,—
And ever changing,
like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth
its constancy?

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, TO THE MOON [FRAGMENT] (1792–1822)

S1

COSMOGONY
A GENESIS
2018–2022

S2

ONTOGENY
A GROWTH
2022–2026

S3

ORBIT
AN EQUILIBRIUM
2026–2030

S4

DECADENCE
AN ATROPHY
2030–2034

S5

TWILIGHT
AN APOCALYPSE
2034–2038

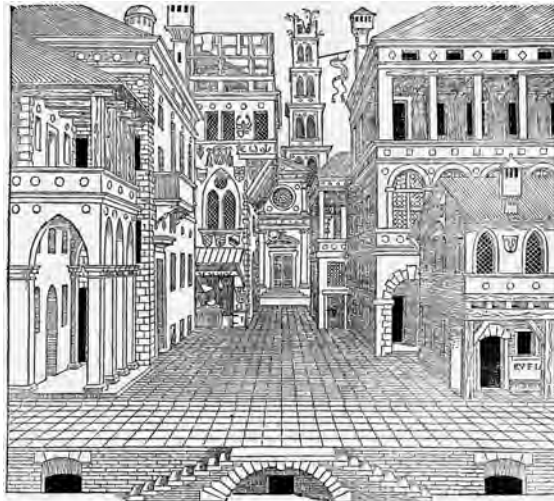


ABRAHAM BOSSE, FRONTISPIECE OF THOMAS HOBBS' *LEVIATHAN* (1651)

In the chapter XVI of his *Leviathan—Of Persons, Authors and Things Personated* (1651), Thomas Hobbes defines the person as he “whose words and actions are considered, either as his own or as representing the words and actions of another man [...]” accordingly delineating two subcategories: that of the natural person—when the words are his own—and that of the artificial person—when these are representing the words and actions of another; he further states: “Of persons artificial, some have their words and actions ‘owned’ by those whom they represent. And then the person is the ‘actor’, and he that owns his words and actions is the ‘author’, in which case the actor acts by authority—but is not the author [...]. So that by authority is always understood a right of doing any act, and ‘done by authority’, done by commission or license from him whose right it is.”

The distinction between authorship and actorship expediently polarizes the paramount questions of the content and of the form. The point is not to apply a literary notion to some emulative acceptance of its content, but rather to hypothetically submit a conceptual intendment to its potential adequation in the field of architecture; and as such, Hobbes’ axiomatic statement informs us on the condition of the architect, whose authority is fundamentally a licensed and commissioned one.

As a tributary of given programmatic, economic and legal prerequisites and impelled through exogeneous necessities, architecture resolutely assigns its agent to performing a given act in the name and interest of (x): the architect is a political actor.



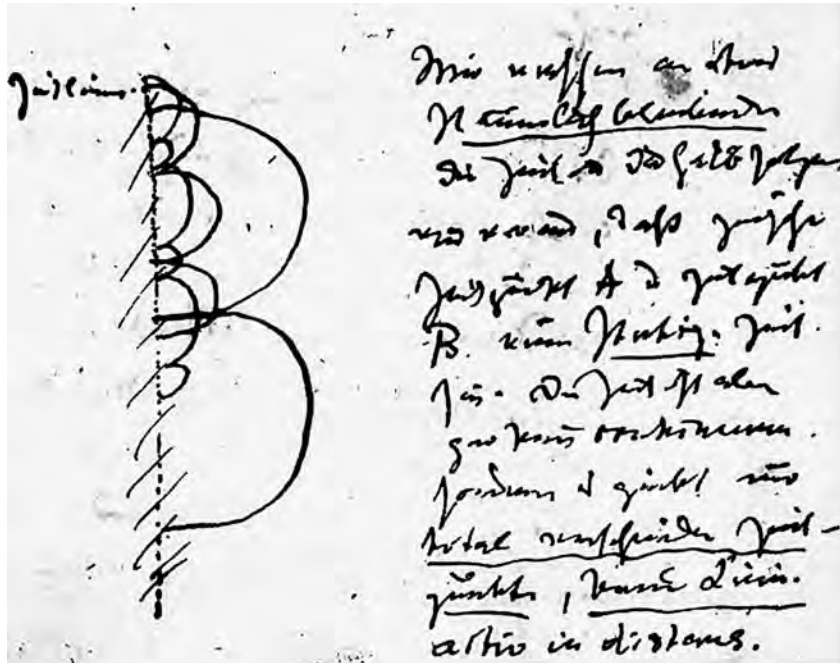
SEBASTIANO SERLIO, TRAGIC & COMIC SCENERIES (1545)

In the second book of Serlio's *Regole Generali di Architettura* (1545), the tragic scenery shows a series of court buildings, war memorials, civil monuments settled along the rigid axis of a central perspective and punctuated by a memorial threshold opening onto an unobstructed vanishing point; rigorously subordinated to the spinal street, the laminary lineup is ordered such as ingresses are staged perpendicular to the street avoiding frontal views of the representative entablatures. Corroborating the prevalence of the public over the private, a pair of outward orientated stairs lead to the set.

The comic stage setting on the other hand displays a turbulent sequence of doorways, storefronts and arcades disjointedly eroding the central political void; no convergence point here, but the richly ornamented porch of a religious shrine as the absolving sign to a collection of artifacts striving for attention. Converging steps to the stage achieve to portrait the manifest surrender of the public realm to the sphere of the intimate.

As a result of the transversal capitalist conformity, of its economical horizon and its inferent individualism, the city has long capitulated under the assaults of private interests; the ascendancy of the *oikos* over the *polis*, respectively of the *product* over the *process*, has disrated the urban content to a long accumulative array of equivocal signs.

Bowing under the conceited laughs of licentious opportunism and its compulsion for visibility, the contemporary city has deserted the tragedy: comic scenery is now its only stage.

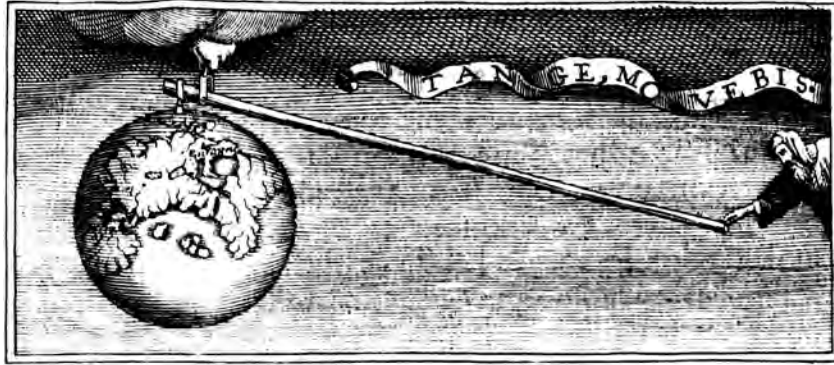
FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, DYNAMISCHES SCHEMA DER ZEIT (1873)

A byproduct of the pervasive theatricality of the metropole is its relentless need for the new, therein not only complying with the essence of its outcome, the product—which is to be consumed and therefore ever renewed—but also with the quickly evolving rules of comic features; whereas Aristophanes' rhetorics hardly trigger any hilarity anymore, we are still moved by Antigone's tragic audacity.

By indulging in an often irrelevant alterity, metropolitan actors seem to have made any meaningful difference hardly legible: however legitimate discordances may be, they are bound to the prerequisite of repetition as the dominant marker of singularities.

Derived from the late latin *repertorium*—storehouse—a repertory is the entire assortment of things available in a field or of a kind; inasmuch as the manifold identities of a repertoire account for its protean expertise—its range so to speak—yet its most essential attribute lies in its availability: a repertory is a potential to be constantly re-activated.

In its search for a dynamic consideration of time, withstanding the contemplative view of collective memory and its sententious unfolding of events, manner advocates for a deflexive handling of history, of its canons as much as of its failures, and generates anexact figures—rigorously inexact, that is “inexact by essence and not by accident”—Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari in: *Mille Plateaux* (1980). History is a beat.



ARCHIMEDES, LEVERAGE, IN: VARIGNON, PROJET D'UNE NOUVELLE MÉCHANIQUE (1687)

“Give me a place to stand and I will move the Earth”: in a time of relentless information where an undiscerning allegiance of the scientific proficiency to accumulative datas and a so called ‘economy of attention’ dictate the legitimacy of a vast majority of decisions, Archimedes’ remark quoted by Pappus of Alexandria (*in: Collection or Synagoge, Book VIII, c. AD 340*) suggests an alternative stand; echoing the metaphorical telescopic device of Marcel Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the admonition invites to deliberately distance the observer from its subject to stimulate greater leverage: now set on the fringe of its field of expertise, contemplating the invigorating complexity of phenomena, the observer records signs of transversal mutations.

As the blessed child of clashing progenitors – economy, environment, society, program, vanity – the condition of architecture not only stifles its product to a paradoxical figure, that of a radical consensus but also confines its agent to an imperative ductility to critically address conflicting demands; yet, the improbable fragmentation of competences and the persistent bias prevalence of *homo faber* over *homo sapiens* have disrated any non-utilitarian determinations to trivial scrutiny.

Driven by exogenous and contradictory requirements and at the converging point of manifold ruling interests, the architect’s expertise is protean by necessity rather than by inclination; aware of the trans-generational nature of the urban environment and accordingly resisting to the most immediate fervours of its time, the architect is the last generalist.



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WILLIAM GOWERS, OBTAINING THE KNEE REFLEX WITH
A PERCUSSION HAMMER (1881)

TWILIGHT OF THE IDOLS, OR, HOW TO PHILOSOPHIZE WITH THE HAMMER

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

1889

23

Foreword

It's no small trick to preserve your cheerfulness in the midst of a gloomy matter which is loaded with inordinate responsibility. Yet what could be more necessary than cheerfulness? Nothing goes right unless exuberance plays a part in it. Overabundance of strength is the only proof of strength. A *revaluation of all values*, this question mark so black, so monstrous that it casts a shadow on the one who poses it—such a fateful task forces one to run out into the sun at every moment, to shake off a heavy seriousness that has become all too heavy. Every means is right for this, every “case” is a lucky break. Above all, *war*. War has always been the great cleverness of all spirits who have become too inward, too deep; even wounds can have the power to heal. A saying whose source I withhold from scholarly curiosity has long been my motto:

increscunt animi, virescit vulnere virtus.

Another way to recover, which under certain circumstances I like even better, is *sounding out idols*... There are more idols than realities in the world: that's *my* “evil eye” on this

world, and my “evil ear” too... To pose questions here with a *hammer* for once, and maybe to hear in reply that well-known hollow tone which tells of bloated innards – how delightfull for one who has ears even behind his ears – for me the old psychologist and pied piper, in whose presence precisely what would like to stay quiet *has to speak up*...

This book too – the title gives it away – is above all a recovery, a sunny spot, a sidestep into a psychologist’s idleness. Maybe a new war as well? And are new idols sounded out?... This little book is a *great declaration of war*, and as for sounding out idols, this time they are not just idols of the age, but *eternal* idols that are touched here with the hammer as with a tuning fork – there aren’t any older idols at all, none more assured, none more inflated... And none more hollow... That doesn’t stop them from being the ones that are *believed* in the most – and, especially in the most prominent case, they aren’t called idols at all...

Turin, September 30, 1888, on the day when the first book of the *Revaluation of All Values* was finished. [...]

“Reason” in Philosophy

[...] 6

You will be thankful to me if I condense such an essential and new insight into four theses: I thus make it easier to understand, and I dare you to contradict it.

First proposition The grounds on which “this” world has been called apparent are instead grounds for its reality – *another* kind of reality is absolutely indemonstrable.

Second proposition The distinguishing marks which have been given to the “true being” of things are the distinguishing marks of nonbeing, of *nothingness* – the “true world” has been constructed by contradicting the actual world: this “true world” is in fact an apparent world, insofar as it is just a *moral-optical* illusion.

Third proposition It makes no sense whatsoever to tell fictional stories about “another” world than this one, as long as the instinct to slander, trivialize, and look down upon life is not powerful within us: in that case, we *revenge* ourselves on life with the phantasmagoria of “another,” “better” life.

Fourth proposition Dividing the world into a “true” and an “apparent” world, whether in the style of Christianity or in the style of Kant (a *sneaky* Christian to the end), is merely a move inspired by *décadence* – a symptom of *declining* life... The fact that the artist prizes appearance over reality is no objection to this proposition. For “appearance” here means reality *once again*, but in the form of a selection, an emphasis, a correction... Tragic artists are *not* pessimists – in fact, they say *yes* to everything questionable and terrible itself, they are *Dionysian*... [...]

The Four Great Errors

[...] 4

Error of imaginary causes.—I'll begin with dreams: a particular sensation, for instance, a sensation due to a distant cannon shot, has a cause imputed to it afterwards (often a whole little novel in which precisely the dreamer is the protagonist). In the meantime, the sensation persists in a kind of resonance: it waits, as it were, until the drive to find causes allows it to come into the foreground—not as an accident anymore, but as “meaning”. The cannon shot shows up in a *causal* way, and time seems to flow backwards. What comes later, the motivation, is experienced first, often with a hundred details that flash by like lightning; the shot *follows*... What has happened? The representations *generated* by a certain state of affairs were misunderstood as the cause of this state of affairs.—In fact, we do just the same thing when we're awake. Most of our general feelings—every sort of inhibition, pressure, tension, explosion in the play and counter play of the organs, and in particular the state of the *nervus sympathicus* (sympathetic nervous system)—arouse our drive to find causes: we want to have a *reason* for feeling that we're in *such and such* a state—a bad state or a good state. It's never enough for us just to determine the mere fact *that* we find ourselves in such and such a state: we admit this fact—become *conscious* of it—only *if* we've given it some kind of motivation.—Memory, which comes into play in such cases without our knowing it, calls up earlier states of the same kind, and the causal interpretations that are rooted in them—but *not* their causation. Of course, memory also calls up the belief that the representations, the accompanying occurrences in consciousness, were the causes. In this way there arises a *habituation* to a particular interpretation of causes that actually inhibits and even excludes an *investigation* of the cause.

5

A psychological explanation of this error.—Tracing something unfamiliar back to something familiar alleviates us, calms us, pacifies us, and in addition provides a feeling of power. The unfamiliar brings with it danger, unrest, and care—our first instinct is to *do away* with these painful conditions. First principle: some explanation is better than none. Since at bottom all we want is to free ourselves from oppressive representations, we aren't exactly strict about the means of freeing ourselves from them: the first representation that serves to explain the unfamiliar as familiar is so beneficial that we “take it to be true”. Proof of *pleasure* (“strength”) as criterion of truth.—Thus, the drive to find causes is conditioned and aroused by the feeling of fear. Whenever possible, the “why?” should not so much provide the cause for its own sake, but instead provide a *type of cause*—a relaxing, liberating, alleviating cause. The fact that something already *familiar*, something we have experienced, something inscribed in memory is posited as the cause, is the first consequence of this requirement. The new, the unexperienced, the alien, is excluded as a cause.—So we not only look for some type of explanation as the cause, but we *single out* and *favor* a certain type of explanation, the type that eliminates the feeling of the alien, new, and unexperienced, as fast and as often as possible—the most *customary* explanations. Consequence: one kind of cause-positing becomes more and more prevalent, concentrates itself into a system, and finally comes to the fore as *dominant*, that is, as simply *excluding* any *other* causes and explanations.—The banker thinks right away about “business”, the Christian about “sin”, the girl about her love. [...]

What the Germans Are Missing

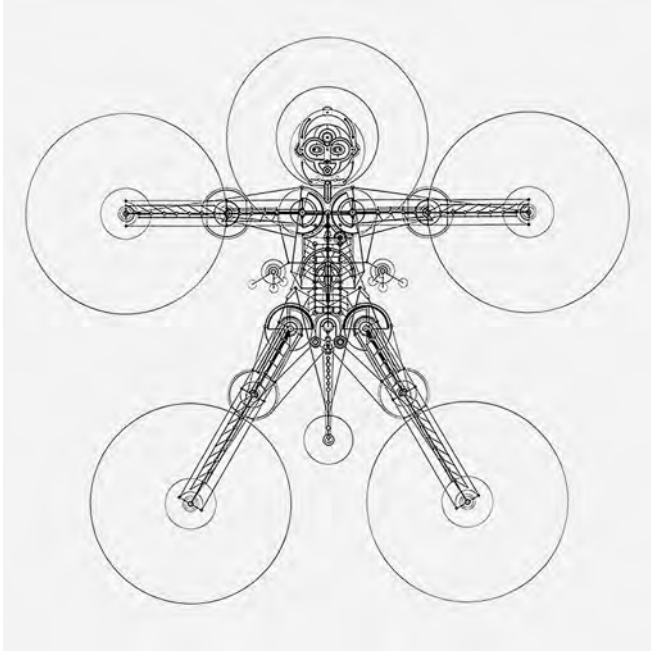
[...] 6

– In order not to be untrue to my type, which is a *yes-saying* type and deals in contradictions and criticism only indirectly, only unwillingly, I will set forth right away the three tasks for which educators are required. One must learn to *see*, one must learn to *think*, one must learn to *speak* and *write*. The goal of all three tasks is a noble culture. – To learn to *see* – to accustom the eye to composure, to patience, to letting things come to it; to put off judgment, to learn to walk around all sides of the individual case and comprehend it from all sides. That is the *first* preliminary schooling in spirituality: *not* to react to a stimulus right away, but to keep in check the instinct to restrict and exclude. Learning to *see*, as I understand it, is almost what is unphilosophically termed will-power: what is essential here is precisely *not* to “will”, to be *able* to put off a decision. All unspirituality, all commonness is based on the inability to resist a stimulus – one *has* to react, one follows every impulse. In many cases, such a compulsion is already sickliness, decline, a symptom of exhaustion – almost everything that unphilosophical coarseness calls vice is simply this physiological inability *not* to react. – A useful application of having learned to see: one will have become, as a *learner* in general, slow, suspicious, and resistant. It will be with a hostile composure that one will let strange *new* things of every sort make their initial approach – one will draw one’s hand back from them. Leaving all one’s doors open, submissively flopping belly-down before every little fact, a constant readiness to jump in and interfere, to *plunge into* other people and other things, in short, the celebrated “objectivity” of modern times is bad taste, is *ignoble* par excellence. – [...]

Raids of an Untimely Man

[...] 8

Towards a psychology of the artist – For there to be art, for there to be any aesthetic activity and observation, one physiological prerequisite is indispensable: *intoxication*. Intoxication must already have heightened the sensitivity of the whole machine: otherwise, no art will be forthcoming. All kinds of intoxication, as different as their causes may be, have this power: above all, the intoxication of sexual excitement, that oldest and most primordial form of intoxication. Likewise, the intoxication that follows all great cravings, all strong emotions; the intoxication of the festival, of the competition, of daredevilry, of victory, of every extreme commotion; the intoxication of cruelty; the intoxication of destruction; intoxication due to certain meteorological influences, such as the intoxication of spring; or under the influence of narcotics; finally, the intoxication of the will, the intoxication of an overloaded and swollen will. – What is essential in intoxication is the feeling of increased strength and fullness. This feeling leads us to donate to things, to *make* them take from us, to force ourselves on them – this process is called *idealizing*. Let’s get rid of a prejudice at this point: idealizing does *not* consist, as is commonly thought, in taking away or subtracting what is small and incidental. Instead, what is decisive is an immense drive to *bring out* the principal traits, so that the others disappear in the process. [...]



FRANÇOIS DALLEGRET, COSMIC OPERA SUIT (1966)

ANTI-ÆDIPUS

31

GILLES DELEUZE FÉLIX GUATTARI

1972

Desiring Machines

To a certain degree, the traditional logic of desire is all wrong from the very outset: from the very first step that the Platonic logic of desire forces us to take, making us choose between production and acquisition. From the moment that we place desire on the side of acquisition, we make desire an idealistic (dialectical, nihilistic) conception, which causes us to look upon it as primarily a lack: a lack of an object, a lack of the real object. It is true that the other side, the “production” side, has not been entirely ignored. Kant, for instance, must be credited with effecting a critical revolution as regards the theory of desire, by attributing to it “the faculty of being, through its representations, the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations.” But it is not by chance that Kant chooses superstitious beliefs, hallucinations, and fantasies as illustrations of this definition of desire: as Kant would have it, we are well aware that the real object can be produced only by an external causality and external mechanisms; nonetheless this knowledge does not prevent us from believing in the intrinsic power of desire to create its own object—if only in an unreal, hallucinatory, or delirious form—or from representing this causality as stemming from within desire itself. The reality of the object, insofar as it is produced by desire, is thus a psychic reality. Hence it can be said that Kant’s critical revolution

changes nothing essential: this way of conceiving of productivity does not question the validity of the classical conception of desire as a lack; rather, it uses this conception as a support and a buttress, and merely examines its implications more carefully. In point of fact, if desire is the lack of the real object, its very nature as a real entity depends upon an “essence of lack” that produces the fantasized object. Desire thus conceived of as production, though merely the production of fantasies, has been explained perfectly by psychoanalysis. On the very lowest level of interpretation, this means that the real object that desire lacks is related to an extrinsic natural or social production, whereas desire intrinsically produces an imaginary object that functions as a double of reality, as though there were a “dreamed-of object behind every real object,” or a mental production behind all real productions. This conception does not necessarily compel psychoanalysis to engage in a study of gadgets and markets, in the form of an utterly dreary and dull psychoanalysis of the object: psychoanalytic studies of packages of noodles, cars, or “thingumajigs.” But even when the fantasy is interpreted in depth, not simply as an object, but as a specific machine that brings desire itself front and center, this machine is merely theatrical, and the complementarity of what it sets apart still remains: it is now need that is defined in terms of a relative lack and determined by its own object, whereas desire is regarded as what produces the fantasy and produces itself by detaching itself from the object, though at the same time it intensifies the lack by making it absolute: an “incurable insufficiency of being,” an “inability-to-be that is life itself.” Hence the presentation of desire as something supported by needs, while these needs, and their relationship to the object as something that is lacking or missing, continue to be the basis of the productivity of desire (theory

of an underlying support). In a word, when the theoretician reduces desiring-production to a production of fantasy, he is content to exploit to the fullest the idealist principle that defines desire as a lack, rather than a process of production, of “industrial” production. Clement Rosset puts it very well: every time the emphasis is put on a lack that desire supposedly suffers from as a way of defining its object, “the world acquires as its double some other sort of world, in accordance with the following line of argument: there is an object that desire feels the lack of; hence the world does not contain each and every object that exists; there is at least one object missing, the one that desire feels the lack of; hence there exists some other place that contains the key to desire (missing in this world).”

If desire produces, its product is real. If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality. Desire is the set of passive syntheses that engineer partial objects, flows, and bodies, and that function as units of production. The real is the end product, the result of the passive syntheses of desire as autoproduction of the unconscious. Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it. Hence the product is something removed or deducted from the process of producing: between the act of producing and the product, something becomes detached, thus giving the vagabond, nomad subject a residuum. The objective being of desire is the Real in and of itself. There is no particular form of existence that can be labeled “psychic reality.” As Marx notes, what exists in fact is not lack, but passion, as a “natural

and sensuous object.” Desire is not bolstered by needs, but rather the contrary; needs are derived from desire: they are counter products within the real that desire produces. Lack is a countereffect of desire; it is deposited, distributed, vacuolized within a real that is natural and social. Desire always remains in close touch with the conditions of objective existence; it embraces them and follows them, shifts when they shift, and does not outlive them. For that reason, it so often becomes the desire to die, whereas need is a measure of the withdrawal of a subject that has lost its desire at the same time that it loses the passive syntheses of these conditions. This is precisely the significance of need as a search in a void: hunting about, trying to capture or become a parasite of passive syntheses in whatever vague world they may happen to exist in. It is no use saying: We are not green plants; we have long since been unable to synthesize chlorophyll, so it’s necessary to eat... Desire then becomes this abject fear of lacking something. But it should be noted that this is not a phrase uttered by the poor or the dispossessed. On the contrary, such people know that they are close to grass, almost akin to it, and that desire “needs” very few things—not those leftovers that chance to come their way, but the very things that are continually taken from them—and that what is missing is not things a subject feels the lack of somewhere deep down inside himself, but rather the objectivity of man, the objective being of man, for whom to desire is to produce, to produce within the realm of the real. The real is not impossible; on the contrary, within the real everything is possible, everything becomes possible. Desire does not express a molar lack within the subject; rather, the molar organization deprives desire of its objective being. Revolutionaries, artists, and seers are content to be objective, merely objective: they know that desire clasps life in its powerfully productive embrace and

reproduces it in a way that is all the more intense because it has few needs. And never mind those who believe that this is very easy to say, or that it is the sort of idea to be found in books. “From the little reading I had done I had observed that the men who were most in life, who were molding life, who were life itself, ate little, slept little, owned little or nothing. They had no illusions about duty, or the perpetuation of their kith and kin, or the preservation of the State... The phantasmal world is the world which has never been fully conquered over. It is the world of the past, never of the future. To move forward clinging to the past is like dragging a ball and chain.” The true visionary is a Spinoza in the garb of a Neapolitan revolutionary. We know very well where lack—and its subjective correlative—come from. Lack (*manque*) is created, planned, and organized in and through social production. It is counter produced as a result of the pressure of antiproduction; the latter falls back on (*se rabat sur*) the forces of production and appropriates them. It is never primary; production is never organized on the basis of a pre-existing need or lack (*manque*). It is lack that infiltrates itself, creates empty spaces or vacuoles, and propagates itself in accordance with the organization of an already existing organization of production. The deliberate creation of lack as a function of market economy is the art of a dominant class. This involves deliberately organizing wants and needs (*manque*) amid an abundance of production; making all of desire teeter and fall victim to the great fear of not having one’s needs satisfied; and making the object dependent upon a real production that is supposedly exterior to desire (the demands of rationality), while at the same time the production of desire is categorized as fantasy and nothing but fantasy.



EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHICS (3000 BC)

THE ELECTRONIC REVOLUTION

37

WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS

1970

[...] The *is* of identity. You are an animal. You are a body. Now whatever you may be you are not an *animal*, you are not a *body*, because these are verbal labels. The *is* of identity always carries the assignment of permanent condition. To stay that way. All name calling presupposes the *is* of identity. This concept is unnecessary in a hieroglyphic language like ancient Egyptian and in fact frequently omitted. No need to say that the sun *is* in the sky, sun in sky suffices. The verb *to be* can easily be omitted from any languages and the followers of Count Korzybski have done this, eliminating the verb *to be* in English. However, it is difficult to tidy up the English language by arbitrary exclusion of concepts which remain in force so long as the unchanged language is spoken.

The *definite article the*. *The* contains the implication of one and only: *the* God, *the* universe, *the* way, *the* right, *the* wrong; if there is another, then *that* universe, *that* way is no longer *the* universe, *the* way. The definite article *the* will be deleted and the indefinite article *a* will take its place.

The whole concept of *either/or*. Right or wrong, physical or mental, true or false, the whole concept of *or* will be deleted from the language and replaced by juxtaposition, by *and*. This is done to some extent in any pictorial language where two concepts stand literally side by side. These falsifications inherent in the English and other western alphabetical languages given the reactive mind commands their overwhelming force in these

languages. Consider the *is* of identity. When I say to be me, to be you, to be myself, to be others—whatever I may be called upon to be or to say that I am—I am not the verbal label *myself*. The word *be* in the English language contains, as a virus contains, its precoded message of damage, the categorical imperative of permanent condition. To be a body, to be an animal. If you see the relation of a pilot to his ship, you see crippling forces of the reactive mind command to be a body. Tell the pilot to be the plane, then who will pilot the plane?

The *is* of identity, assigning a rigid and permanent status was greatly reinforced by the customs and passport control that came in after World War I. Whatever you may be, you are not the verbal labels in your passport any more than you are the word *self*. So you must be prepared to prove at all times that you are what you are not. Much of the falsification inherent in the categorical definite *the*: *the* now, *the* past, *the* time, *the* space, *the* energy, *the* matter, *the* universe. The definite article *the* contains the implications of no other. *The* universe locks you in *the* and denies the possibility of any other. If other universes are possible, then the universe is no longer *the*; it becomes *a*. The definite article *the* is deleted and replaced by *a*. Many of the RM commands are in point of fact contradictory commands and a contradictory command gains its force from the Aristotelian concept of *either/or*. To do everything, to do nothing, to have everything, to have nothing, to do it all, to do not any, to stay up, to stay down, to stay in, to stay out, to stay present, to stay absent. These are in point of fact *either/or* propositions. To do nothing *or* everything, to have it all, *or* not any, to stay present *or* to stay absent. *Either/or* is more difficult to formulate in a written language where both alternatives are pictorially represented and can be deleted entirely from the spoken

language. The whole reactive mind can be in fact reduced to three little words—to be *the*. That is to be what you are not, verbal formulations.

I have frequently spoken of word and image as viruses or as acting as viruses and this is not an allegorical comparison. It will be seen that the falsifications of syllabic western languages are in point of fact actual virus mechanisms. The *is* of identity, the purpose of a virus is to *survive*. To survive at any expense to the host invaded. To be an animal, to be a body. To be an animal body that the virus can invade. To be animals, to be bodies. To be more animal bodies, so that the virus can move from one body to another. To stay present as an animal body, to stay absent as antibody or resistance to the body invasion.

The categorical *the* is also a virus mechanism, locking you in *the* virus universe. *Either/or* is another virus formula. It is always you *or* the virus. *Either/or*. This is in point of fact the conflict formula which is seen to be an archetypal virus mechanism. The proposed language will delete these virus mechanisms and make them impossible of formulation in the language. This language will be a tonal language like Chinese, it will also have a hieroglyphic script as pictorial as possible without being too cumbersome or difficult to write. The language will give one option of silence. When not talking, the user of this language can take in the silent images of the written, pictorial and symbol languages.

I have described here a number of weapons and tactics in the war game. Weapons that change consciousness could call the war game in question. All games are hostile. Basically there is only one game from here to eternity. Mr. Hubbard says that scientology is a game where everybody wins. There are no games where everybody wins. That's what games are all about, winning and losing... The

Versailles Treaty... Hitler the occupation Jig... War criminals hang at Nuremberg... It is a rule of this game that there can be no final victory since this means the end of the war game. Yet every player must believe in final victory and strive for it with all his power. Face by the nightmare of the final defeat, he has no alternative. So, all technologies with escalating efficiency produce more and more total weapons until we have the atom bomb which could end the game by destroying all players. Now mock up a miracle. The so stupid players decide to save the game. They sit down around a big table and draw up a plan for the immediate deactivation and eventual destruction of all atomic weapons. Why stop there? Conventional bombs are unnecessarily destructive if nobody has them, hein? Let's turn back the war clock to 1917:

Keep the home fires burning
Through the hearts are yearning
There's a long, long trail winding...
Back to the American Civil War...

"He has loosed the fatal lightning of this terrible swift sword".
His fatal lightning didn't cost as much in those days. Save a lot on the defense budget this way on, back to flintlocks, matchlocks, swords, armors, lances, bows and arrows, spears, stone axes and clubs. Why stop there? Why not grow teeth and claws, poison fangs, stingers, spines, quills, beaks and suckers and stink glands and fight in out in the muck hein?

That is what this revolution is about. End of game. New games? There are no new games from here to eternity.
End of the war game.

of maps. He coloured them in, inverted them, superimposed them, populated them with their leaders: England and Churchill, Germany and Hitler. It is the libido's business to haunt history and geography, to organize formations of worlds and constellations of universes, to make continents drift and to populate them with races, tribes, and nations. What beloved being does not envelope landscapes, continents, and populations that are more or less known, more or less imaginary? [...]

The libido does not undergo metamorphoses, but follows world-historical trajectories. From this point of view, it does not seem that the real and the imaginary form a pertinent distinction. A real voyage, by itself, lacks the force necessary to be reflected in the imagination; the imaginary voyage, by itself, does not have the force, as Proust says, to be verified in the real. This is why the imaginary and the real must be, rather, like two juxtaposable or superimposable parts of a single trajectory, two faces that ceaselessly interchange with one another, a mobile mirror. Thus, the Australian Aboriginals link nomadic itineraries to dream voyages, which together compose "an interstitching of routes,"... in an immense cut-out [*découpe*] of space and time that must be read like a map." At the limit, the imaginary is a virtual image that is interfused with the real object, and vice versa, thereby constituting a crystal of the unconscious. It is not enough for the real object or the real landscape to evoke similar or related images; it must disengage its own virtual image at the same time than the latter, as an imaginary landscape, makes its entry into the real, following a circuit where each of the two terms pursues the other, is interchanged with the other. "Vision" is the product of this doubling or splitting in two [*doublement ou dédoublement*], this coalescence. It is in such crystals of the unconscious that the trajectories of the libido are made visible.

A cartographic conception is very distinct from the archaeological conception of psychoanalysis. The latter establishes a profound link between the unconscious and memory: it is a memorial, commemorative, or monumental conception that pertains to persons or objects, the milieus being nothing more than terrains capable of conserving, identifying, or authenticating them. From such a point of view, the superposition of layers is necessarily traversed by a shaft that goes from top to bottom, and it is always a question of penetration. Maps, on the contrary, are superimposed in such a way that each map finds itself modified in the following map, rather than finding its origin in the preceding one: from one map to the next, it is not a matter of searching for an origin, but of evaluating displacements. Every map is a redistribution of impasses and breakthroughs, of thresholds and enclosures, which necessarily go from bottom to top. There is not only a reversal of directions, but also a difference in nature; the unconscious no longer deals with persons and objects, but with trajectories and becomings; it is no longer an unconscious of commemoration but one of mobilization, an unconscious whose objects take flight rather than remaining buried in the ground. In this regard, Félix Guattari has defined a schizoanalysis that opposes itself to psychoanalysis. "Lapses, parapraxes and symptoms are like birds that strike their beaks against the window. It is not a question of interpreting them. It is a question instead of identifying their trajectory to see if they can serve as indicators of new universes of reference capable of acquiring a consistency sufficient for turning a situation upside down." The pharaoh's tomb, with its inert central chamber at the base of the pyramid, gives way to more dynamic models: from the drifting of continents to the migration of peoples, these are all means through which the unconscious maps the universe. The Indian model

replaces the Egyptian: the Indians pass into the thickness of the rocks themselves, where aesthetic form is no longer identified with the commemoration of a departure or an arrival, but with the creation of paths without memory, all the memory of the world remaining in the material.

Maps should not be understood only in extension, in relation to a space constituted by trajectories. There are also maps of intensity, of density, that are concerned with what fills space, what subtends the trajectory. Little Hans defines a horse by making out a list of its affects, both active and passive: having a big widdler, hauling heavy loads, having blinkers, biting, falling down, being whipped, making a row with its feet. It is this distribution of affects (with the widdler playing the role of a transformer or convener) that constitutes a map of intensity. It is always an affective constellation. [...] And just as the map of movements or intensities was not a derivation from or an extension of the father-mother, the map of forces or intensities is not a derivation from the body, an extension of a prior image, or a supplement or afterword. Pollack and Sivadon have made a profound analysis of the cartographic activity of the unconscious; perhaps their sole ambiguity lies in seeing it as a continuation of the image of the body. On the contrary, it is the map of intensity that distributes the affects, and it is their links and valences that constitute the image of the body in each case—an image that can always be modified or transformed depending on the affective constellations that determine it.

A list or constellation of affects, an intensive map, is a becoming. [...] The image is not only a trajectory, but also a becoming. Becoming is what subtends the trajectory, just as intensive forces subtend motor forces. Hans' becoming-horse refers to a trajectory, from the apartment house to the warehouse. The passage alongside the warehouse, or even the visit to the henhouse, may be

customary trajectories, but they are not innocent promenades. We see clearly why the real and the imaginary were led to exceed themselves, or even to interchange with each other: a becoming is not imaginary, any more than a voyage is real. It is becoming that turns the most negligible of trajectories, or even a fixed immobility, into a voyage; and it is the trajectory that turns the imaginary into a becoming. Each of the two types of maps, those of trajectories and those of affects, refers to the other.

What concerns the libido, what the libido invests, presents itself with an indefinite article, or rather is presented by the indefinite article: *an* animal as the qualification of a becoming or the specification of a trajectory (*a* horse, *a* chicken); a body or an organ as the power to affect and to be affected (*a* stomach, *some* eyes...); and even the characters that obstruct a pathway and inhibit affects, or on the contrary that further them (*a* father, *some* people...). Children express themselves in this manner—a father, a body, a horse. These indefinites often seem to result from a lack of determination due to the defences of consciousness. [...] The indefinite lacks nothing; above all, it does not lack determination. It is the determination of a becoming, its characteristic power, the power of an impersonal that is not a generality but a singularity at its highest point. For example, I do not play the horse, any more than I imitate *this* or *that* horse, but I become *a* horse, by reaching a zone of proximity where I can no longer be distinguished from what I am becoming.

Art also attains this celestial state that no longer retains anything of the personal or rational. In its own way, art says what children say. It is made up of trajectories and becomings, and it too makes maps, both extensive and immersive. There is always a trajectory in the work of art, and Stevenson, for example, shows the decisive importance of a coloured map in his conception of *Treasure Island*, this

is not to say that a milieu necessarily determines the existence of characters, but rather that the latter are defined by the trajectories they make in reality or in spirit, without which they would not become. A coloured map can be present in painting insofar as a painting is less a window on the world, *l'italienne*, than an arrangement [*agencement*] on a surface. In Vermeer, for example, the most intimate, most immobile becomings (the girl seduced by the soldier, the woman who receives a letter, the painter in the process of painting...) nonetheless refer to the vast distances [*parcours*] displayed on a map. I studied maps, said Fromentin “not in geography but in painting.” And just as trajectories are no more real than becomings are imaginary, there is something unique in their joining together that belongs only to art. Art is defined, then, as an impersonal process in which the work is composed somewhat like a *cairn*, with stones carried in by different voyagers and beings in becoming (rather than ghosts) [*devenant plutôt que revenant*] that may or may not depend on a single author.

Only a conception such as this can tear art away from the personal process of memory and the collective ideal of commemoration. To an archaeology-art, which penetrates the millennia in order to reach the immemorial, is opposed a cartography-art built on “things of forgetting and places of passage.” The same thing happens when sculpture ceases to be monumental in order to become hodological: it is not enough to say that it is a landscape and that it lays out a place or territory. What it lays out are paths—it is itself a voyage. A sculpture follows the paths that give it an outside; it works only with non-closed curves that divide up and traverse the organic body and has no other memory than that of the material (hence its procedure of direct cutting and its frequent utilization of wood). Carmen Perrin clears out erratic blocks from the greenery

that integrates them into the undergrowth and delivers them to the memory of the glacier that carried them there, not in order to assign an origin to them but to make their *displacement* something visible. One might object that a walking tour, as an art of paths, is no more satisfactory than the museum as a monumental or commemorative art. But there is something that distinguishes cartography-art from a walking tour in an essential way: it is characteristic of this new sculpture to assume a position on external trajectories, but this position depends primarily on paths internal to the work itself; the external path is a creation that does not exist before the work, and depends on its internal relations. One circles around a sculpture, and the viewing axes that belong to it make us grasp the body, sometimes along its entire length, sometimes in an astonishing foreshortening, sometimes in two or more diverging directions: its position in the surrounding space is strictly dependent on these internal trajectories. It is as if the real path were intertwined with virtual paths that give it new courses or trajectories. A map of virtualities, drawn up by art, is superimposed onto the real map, whose distances [*parcours*] it transforms. Such internal paths or courses are implied not only in sculpture, but in any work of art, including music: in each case, the choice of a particular path can determine three variable positions of the work in space. Every work is made up of a plurality of trajectories that coexist and are readable only on a map, and that change direction depending on the trajectories that are retained. These internalized trajectories are inseparable from becomings. *Trajectories and becomings*: art makes each of them present in the other, it renders their mutual presence perceptible. Thus defined, it invokes Dionysos as the god of places of passage and things of forgetting.

CHRIS MARKER, *LA JETÉE* (1962)

ESSAYS CRITICAL AND CLINICAL

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GILLES DELEUZE

1997

Bartleby; or, the Formula

The Confidence-Man (much as one says the *Medicine-Man*) is sprinkled with Melville's reflections on the novel. The first of these reflections consists in claiming the rights of a superior irrationalism. Why should the novelist believe he is obligated to explain the behaviors of his characters, and to supply them with reasons, whereas life for its part never explains anything and leaves in its creatures so many indeterminate, obscure, indiscernible zones that defy any attempt at clarification? It is life that justifies; it has no need of being justified. The English novel, and even more so the French novel, feels the need to rationalize, even if only in the final pages, and psychology is no doubt the last form of rationalism; the Western reader awaits the final word. In this regard, psychoanalysis has revived the claims of reason. [...] The founding act of the American novel, like that of the Russian novel, was to take the novel far from the order of reasons, and to give birth to characters who exist in nothingness, survive only in the void, defy logic and psychology and keep their mystery until the end. Even their soul, says Melville, is "an immense and terrifying void", and Ahab's body is an "empty shell". If they have a formula, it is certainly not explanatory. *I prefer not to* remains just as much a cabalistic formula as that of the *Underground Man*, who cannot keep two and two from making four, but who will not resign himself to it either (*he prefers that two and two not make four*). What counts for a great novelist—Melville,

Dostoyevsky, Kafka, or Musil—is that things remain enigmatic yet nonarbitrary: in short, a new logic, definitely a logic, but one that grasps the innermost depths of life and death without leading us back to reason. The novelist has the eye of a prophet, not the gaze of a psychologist. For Melville, the three great categories of characters belong to this new logic, just as much as this logic belongs to them. Once it has reached that sought-after zone, the hyperborean zone, far from the temperate regions, the novel, like life, needs no justification. And in truth, there is no such thing as reason; it exists only in bits and pieces. In *Billy Budd*, Melville defines monomaniacs as the Masters of reason, which is why they are so difficult to surprise; but this is because theirs is a delirium of action, because they make use of reason, make it serve their own sovereign ends, which in truth are highly unreasonable. Hypochondriacs are the Outcasts of reason, without us being able to know if they have excluded themselves from it in order to obtain something reason cannot give them—the indiscernible, the unnameable with which they will be able to merge. In the end, even prophets are only the Castaways of reason: if Vere, Ishmael, or the attorney clings so tightly to the debris of reason, whose integrity they try so hard to restore, it is because they have *seen* so much, and because what they have seen has marked them forever.

But a second remark by Melville introduces an essential distinction between the characters in a novel, Melville says that we must above all avoid confusing true Originals with characters that are simply remarkable or singular, particular. This is because the particulars, who tend to be quite populous in a novel, have characteristics that determine their form, properties that make up their image; they are influenced by their milieu and by each other, so that their actions and reactions are governed by general laws, though in each case they retain a particular

value. Similarly, the sentences they utter are their own, but they are nonetheless governed by the general laws of language. By contrast, we do not even know if an original exists in an absolute sense, apart from the primordial God, and it is really something extraordinary when we encounter one. Melville admits that it is difficult to imagine how a novel might include several of them. Each original is a powerful, solitary Figure that exceeds any explicable form: it projects flamboyant traits of expression that mark the stubbornness of a thought without image, a question without response, an extreme and nonrational logic. Figures of life and knowledge, they know something inexpressible, live something unfathomable. They have nothing general about them, and are not particular—they escape knowledge, defy psychology. Even the words they utter surpass the general laws of language (presuppositions) as well as the simple particularities of speech, since they are like the vestiges or projections of a unique, original language. (*langue*), and bring all of language (*langage*) to the limit of silence and music. There is nothing particular or general about Bartleby: he is an Original.

Originals are beings of Primary Nature, but they are inseparable from the world or from secondary nature, where they exert their effect: they reveal its emptiness, the imperfection of its laws, the mediocrity of particular creatures... the world as masquerade (this is what Musil, for his part, will call “parallel action”). The role of prophets, who are not originals, is to be the only ones who can recognize the wake that originals leave in the world, and the unspeakable confusion and trouble they cause in it. The original, says Melville, is not subject to the influence of his milieu; on the contrary, he throws a livid white light on his surroundings, much like the light that “accompanies the beginning of things in Genesis”.



et le plus étrange
c'est que les morts
vivants de ce monde
sont construits
sur le monde d'avant
leurs réflexions, leurs sensations
sont d'avant

JEAN-LUC GODARD, HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA (1998)



The image is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's 'Homo Vitruvianus' drawing. It depicts a male figure inscribed within a square and a circle. The figure has two sets of arms and legs, one set extended horizontally and the other vertically. The figure is shown from the waist up, with a detailed anatomical drawing of the torso and legs. The drawing is on aged, stained paper. The word 'ABSOLUTE' is superimposed in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the figure's torso.

ABSOLUTE

ABUNDANCE

ACCELERATION



ACCI DENT

AFTER MATH

68

VOLUPTAS

AGENTS

69

CONTAMI NATION

a decretis: ut post equos rufos varios
nigros: et albos: et dissipatas sordidas
et effecim: et equum de iherlm. pauperem
regem varietur: et predicet regem se-
dentem super pullum filium alie subin-
galis. Malachias aperit: et in fine o-
mnium prophetarum. de abiectioe isra-
hel et uocatione gentium. non est michi
ait voluntas in uobis dicit dñs ege-
ritum: et munus non suscipiam de manu
uestra. Ab orto enim solis usque ad oc-
casum magnus est nomen meum in gen-
tibus: et in omni loco sacrificatur et
offertur nomini meo oblato munda.
Maiam. iheremiam. ezechiel et daniel.
quis potest uel intelligere uel repone-
re? Quorum primum non prophetiam uide-
tur michi regere sed euangelium. Secun-
dus uirgam nucem et ollam accen-
sam a facie aquilonis: et pardum spo-
liatum suis coloribus: et quadruplex di-
uersis metris nedit alphabetum. Ter-
tius principia et finem tantis habet
obscuritatibus involuta: ut apud he-
breos ipse partes cum eordio gene-
sis ante annos triginta non legatur.
Quartus uero qui et regitur inter qua-
tuor prophetas temporum conscius. et
totius mundi philohistoricus lapide
precipuum de monte sine manibus. et
regna omnia subuertentem clario ser-
mone pronuntiat. David symonides
nostris. pindarus et alcheus flaccus
quosque catulus atque serenus cithara
predicat: et in decacordo psalterio ab
inferis egreditur resurgentem. Salomō
pacificus et amabilis dñi. mores cor-
rigit. naturā docet: ecclesiam iungit et
cithara. sandarum nuptiarum dulce canit
epithalamium. Hester in eccle typō pplm
liberat de periculo: et interfecto amari qui
interpretat iniquas partes conuincit et die

celebre mittit et posteros. Paralipome-
non liber instrumenti ueteris prophetone
tantus ac talis est: ut absque illo si quis sci-
entia scripturarum sibi uoluerit arrogare
seipsum irideat. Per singula quippe nomina
indurasque uerborum: et premisse et regu-
bris tagunt historie: et innumerabiles
replicant euangelii questiones. Ebra-
et neuias. adiutor uidelicet et consola-
tor a dño. in uno volumine artan-
tur: instaurant templum. muros restu-
unt ciuitatis: omnisque illa turba ppli
reuerunt in patriam. et descriptio sacer-
dotum. leuitarum israelitis. plebitorum ac
p singulas familias muros et turrim
opera diuina. aliud in cortice preterunt:
aliud in medulla retinent. Ceteris me
scripturarum amore captum. recessisse mo-
dum epistole: et tamen non implese quod
uolui. Audiuimus tantum quod nolle quid
cupere debeamus: ut et nos non possimus
dicere: concupiscit animus meus. De-
rare instructiones tuas. omni te. re.
Ceterum illud socerati cum in uobis
his. Hoc tantum scio quod nescio. Tangam
et non uel breuiter testamentum. Mathe-
marcus. lucas. et iohannes quadriga
dñi. et uerum cherubin quod interpretat sci-
entie plenitudo per totum corpus ocula-
ti sunt: scintille rutilant. discuntur ful-
gura. pedes habent rectos. et in sub-
lime tendentes: regna perueniunt et ubique
uolantia tenent se mutuo sibi: perple-
xi sunt: et quasi rota in rotam uolu-
tur. et pergit quocumque eos flatus spiritus
sancti perduxerit. Paulus apostolus ad septem
scribit ecclesias: ostendit enim ad hebreos
a plebibus recta numerum ponit. Thimo-
teum instruit et tyrum et philemonem pro
fugiuo famulo deprecatur: super quo
melius tacere puto. quam pauca scribere.
Adus apostolorum nudam quidem uidentur.

sonare historiam et nascentis ecclesie
infantiam regere: sed si nouerim? scripto-
rem eorum lucam esse medicum. cuius
laus est in euangelio. animaduertimus
pariter omnia uerba illius anime lan-
guentis esse medicinam. Iacobus. per-
iohannes. iudas. septem epistolas edi-
derunt tam multas quam succindas. et
breues pariter et longas: breues in uer-
bis. longas in sententijs: ut rarus sit
qui non in eorum recitat lectione. Apo-
calypsis iohannis tot habet sacramen-
ta quot uerba. Parum dixi: et pro me-
rito voluminis laus omnis inferior est.
In uerbis singulis. multiplices latent
intelligentie. Oro te frater carissime
inter hec uiuere ista meditari. nil ali-
ud nosse. nichilque aliud querere: nonne
uidetur tibi iam hic in terris regni ce-
lestis habitaculum? Solo uel offendaris
in futuris laudis simplicitate et ipsi
uere uerborum: que uel uicio interpretum
uel de industria sic prolata sunt. ut ru-
tham conuentionem facilius instrueret:
et in una eademque sententia aliter do-
ctus. aliter sentiret indoctus. Non sum
tam petulans et hebes ut hec me nos-
se possitear: et eorum fructus carere i ter-
ra quorum radices in celo fixe sunt. sed
uelle fateor: sedetis me prefato: magi-
strum reuens comitem spondeo. Pe-
tenti datur: pulsanti aperitur: queres
inuenit. Discam? i terris: quos scientia
nobis preluet in celo. Obuijs te ma-
nibus recipiam: et ut inepte aliquid ac de
cunagore tumiditate effundam. quicquid
questiens tecum scire conabor. **Cap. vii.**
Habes hic amantissimum cum fratre
eusebio. qui litterarum tuarum michi
gratia duplicauit: referens honestate
morum tuorum. et tempore seculi. fidem anti-
cristi: amorem christi. Nam prudentiam et

eloquij ueritate etiam absque illo ipsa
epistola precebat. Festina queso te: et
heretici in salo nauicula funem magis pre-
scinde quam solue. Nemo remittaturus
seculo bene potest uendere. que contem-
plur ut uenderet. Quicquid in sumptibus
de tuo tuleris: pro lucro computa. An-
tiquum dictum est. Auaro dest tam quod
habet: quam quod non habet. Cedenti
totus mundus diuitiarum est. Infidelis
autem etiam obulo indiger. Sic uiuam
quasi nil habentes et omnia possiden-
tes. Vidus atque uestitus diuitie christi-
anorum. Si habes in potestate rem tuam
uende: si non habes proice. Tollenti
tunicam: et pallium relinquendum est.
Nisi scilicet tu semper recedens et
diem de die trahes caute et preceptum
tuas possessiones uendidit: non
habet christus unde alat pauperes suos.
Totum deo dedit: qui se obtulit. Apo-
stoli tantum nauem et rema relinquerunt: ui-
dua duo era mittit in gazophylaium:
et preterit celi diuitijs. Facile despicit
dona: qui se semper cogitat esse moriturus.

Explicit epistola Insuper plaga libris moris

Elideni mei desideratas
accepi litteras. qui quodam
presagio futurorum. cum
daniele sortis est nomen
obsecantis. ut translatum in latinam
linguam de hebreo sermone perit-
heum nostrorum auribus traher. Pe-
riculosum opus certe. et obsecratorum
meorum lacrimis patens: qui me asse-
runt i septuaginta interpretum sigilla-
tionem. noua per ueteribus credere. ita
ingentium quasi uinum probantes: cum ego
sepissime testatur sum me pro uili por-
tione in tabernaculo dei offerre quam possunt:
nec opes aliorum aliorum paupertate fede-
ri. Quod ut audirem origenis me studium



CORRUPTION



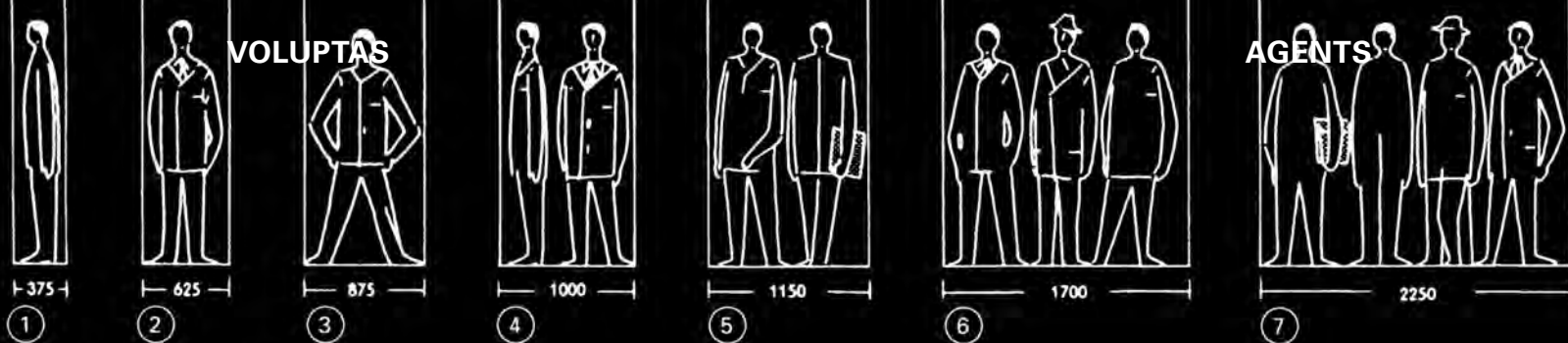
DE CAY

DECONSTRUCTION

DERIVATIVES



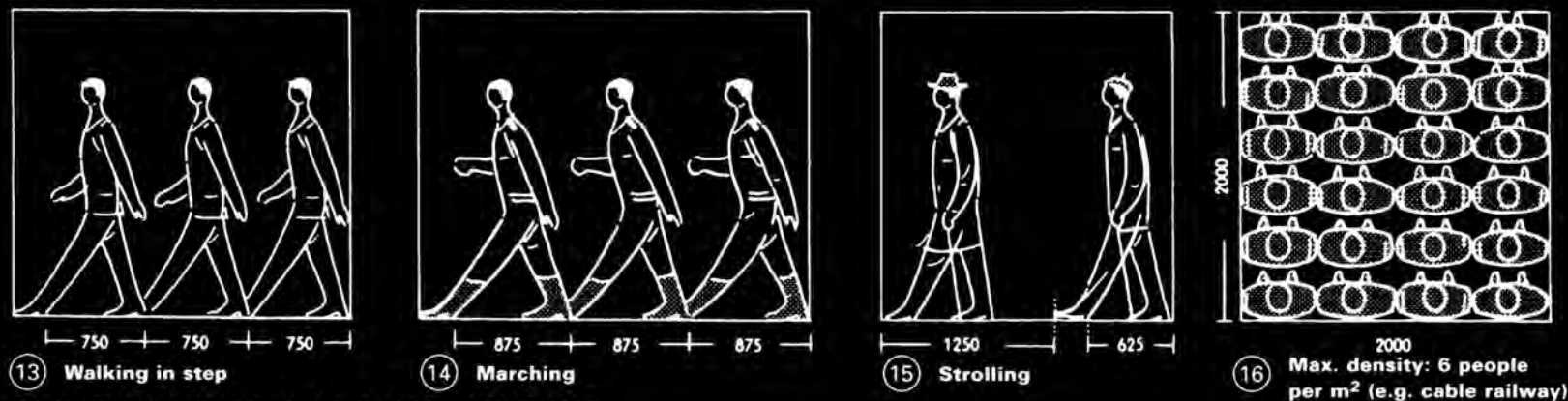
DOMINATION



SPACE REQUIREMENTS OF GROUPS



STEP MEASUREMENTS



SPACE REQUIREMENTS OF VARIOUS BODY POSTURES







HABIT



HARM ONLY



LEIS URE

LIM IT



LUN ACY

VOLUPTAS

AGENTS



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MONITORING

NANCY HOLT, SUN TUNNELS (1973)

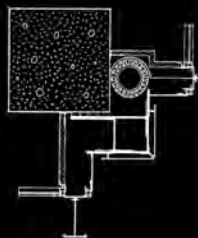
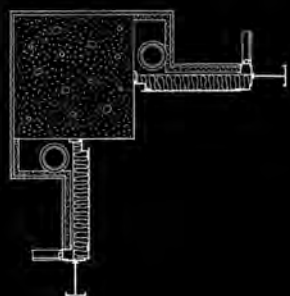
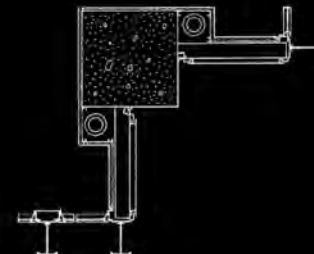
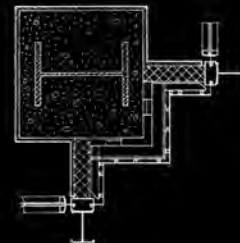
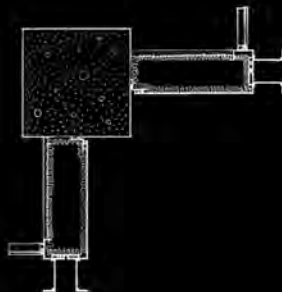
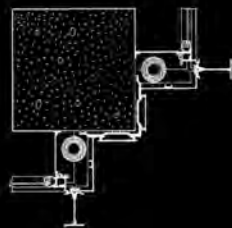
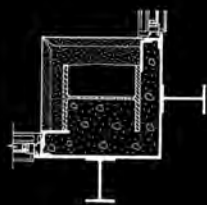
A high-magnification micrograph of onion root cells, showing several cells in various stages of mitosis. The cells are rectangular and arranged in a brick-like pattern. The nuclei are stained dark purple, and the cytoplasm is a lighter purple. In the center, a cell is in the middle of mitosis, with chromosomes visible as dark, condensed structures. To its right, another cell is in the late stage of mitosis, with chromosomes beginning to separate. The text "MY TH" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

MY TH

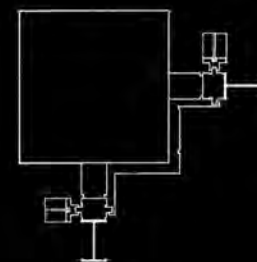
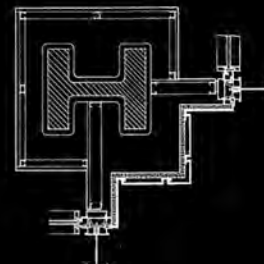
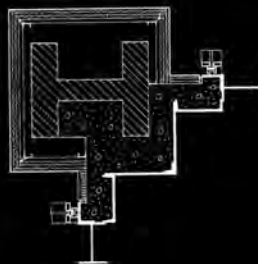
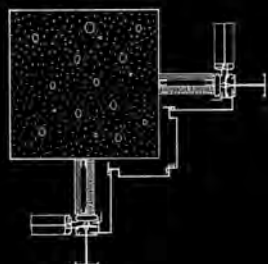
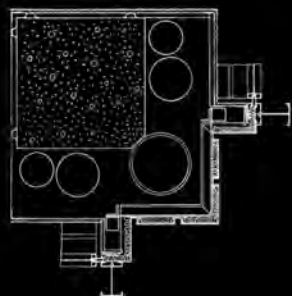
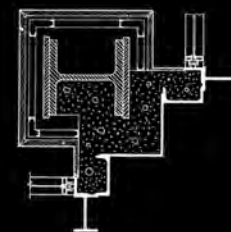
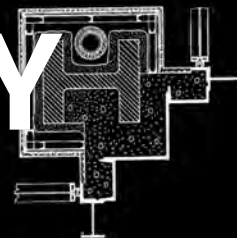


NOISE

NO MAD

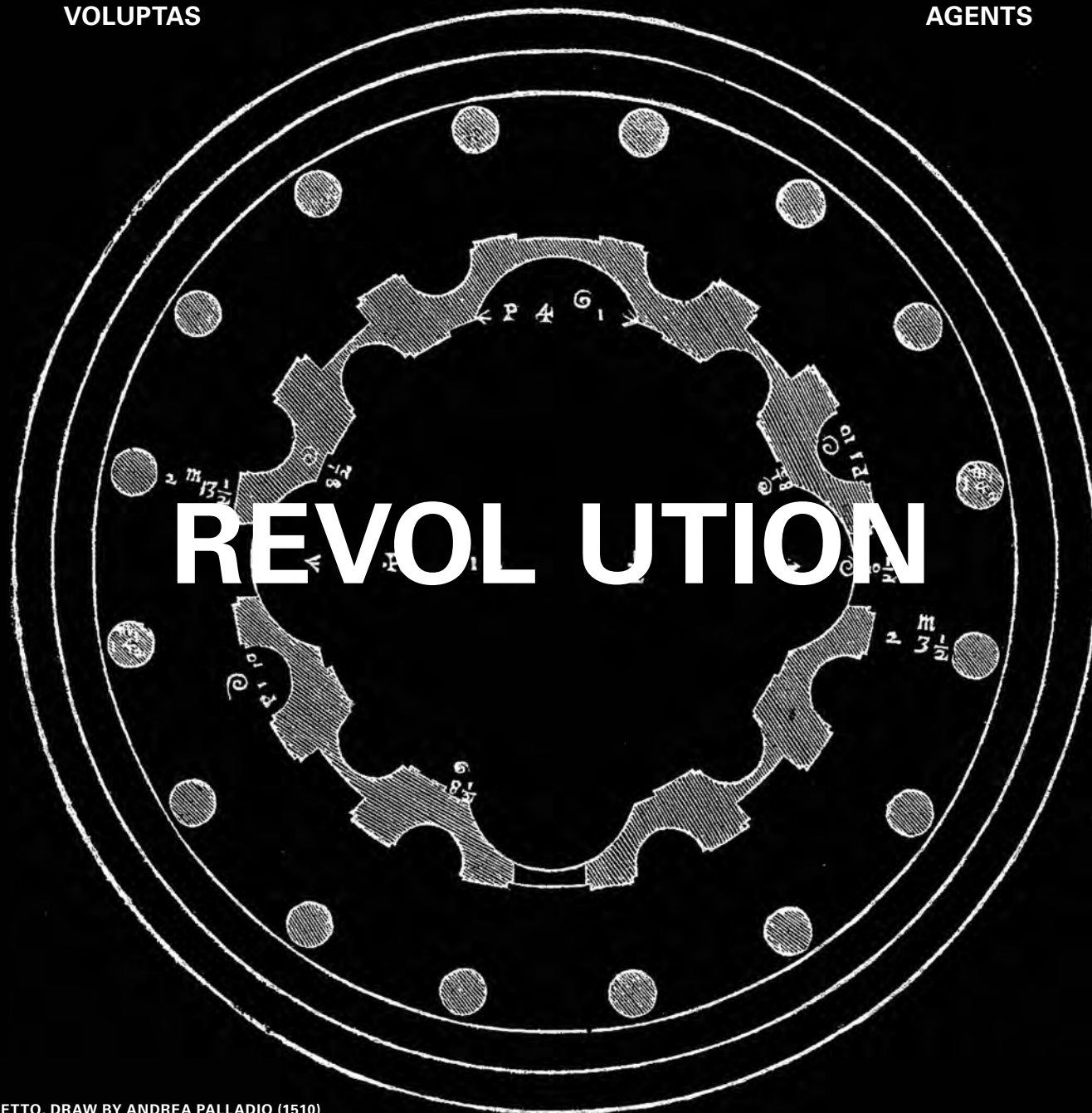


PARODY





RELATIVITY





SCAR CITY



Each house in a development is a lightly constructed 'shell' although this fact is often concealed by fake (half-stone) brick walls. Shells can be added or subtracted easily. The standard unit is a box or a series of boxes, sometimes contemptuously called 'pillboxes.' When the box has a sharply oblique roof it is called a Cape Cod. When it is longer than wide it is a 'ranch.' A



A The Sonata
B The Concerto
C The Overture
D The Ballet
E The Prelude
F The Serenade
G The Nocturne
H The Rhapsody



In addition, there is a choice of eight exterior colors:

- 1 White
- 2 Moonstone Grey
- 3 Nickel



- 4 Seafoam Green
5 Lawn Green
6 Bamboo
7 Coral Pink
8 Colonial Red

As the color series usually varies independently of the model series, a block of eight houses utilizing four models and four colors might have



Each block of houses is a self-contained sequence — there is no development — selected from the possible acceptable arrangements. As an example, if a section was to contain eight houses of which four model types were to be used, any of these permutational possibilities could be used:

[illegible]

AGENTS

Male

Female

Skyway
Colonial Red
Patio White
Yellow Chiffon
Lawn Green
Nickle
Fawn
Moonstone Green

Skyway Blue
Lawn Green
Nickle
Colonial Red
Yellow Chiffon
Patio White
Moonstone Grey
Fawn



'Dislike'

Male

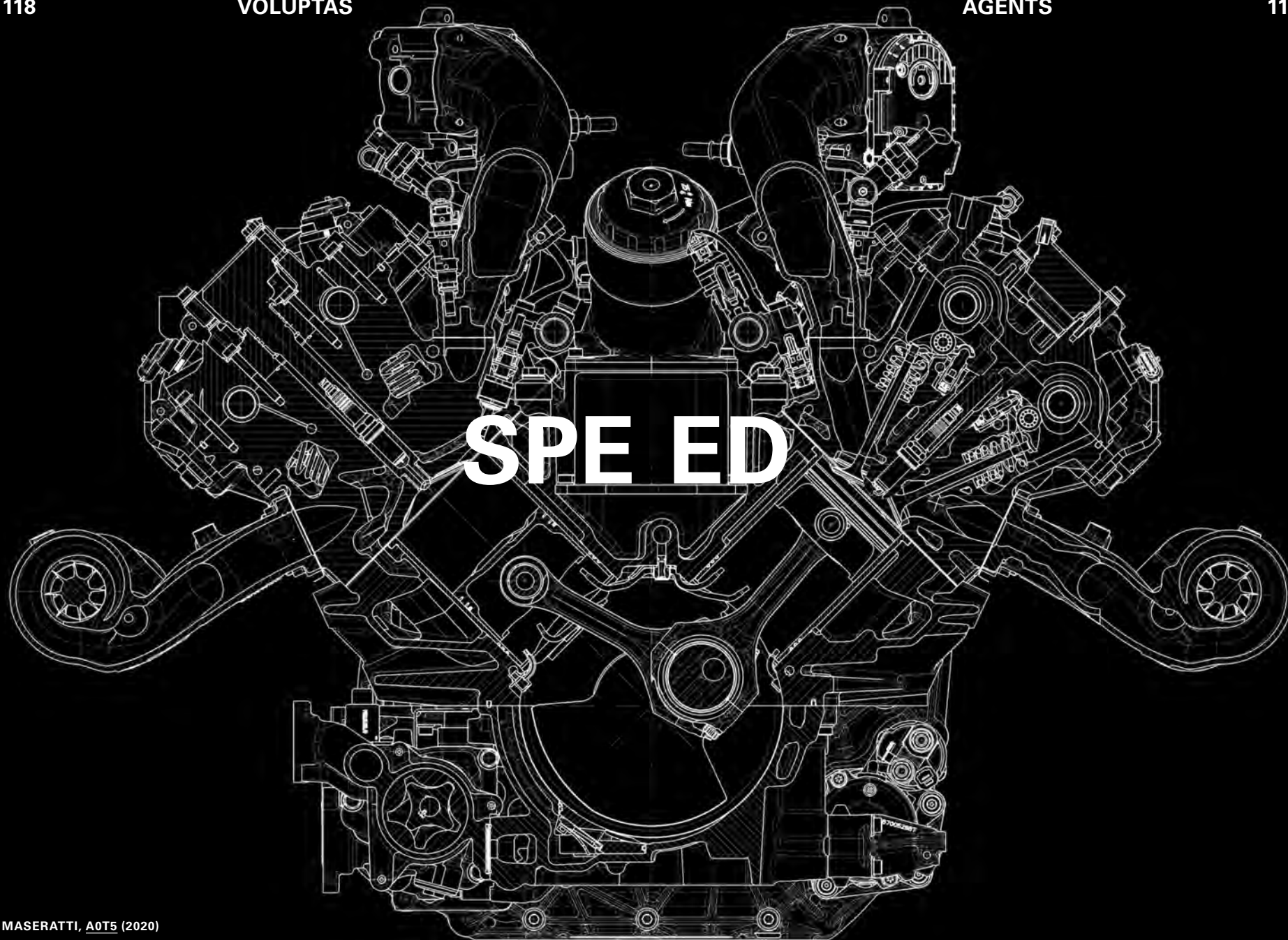
Female.

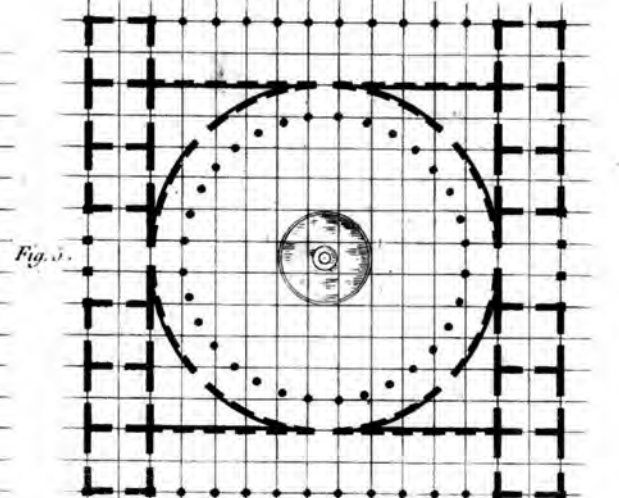
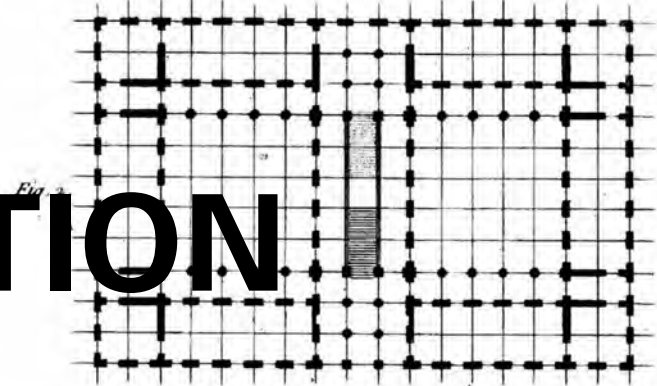
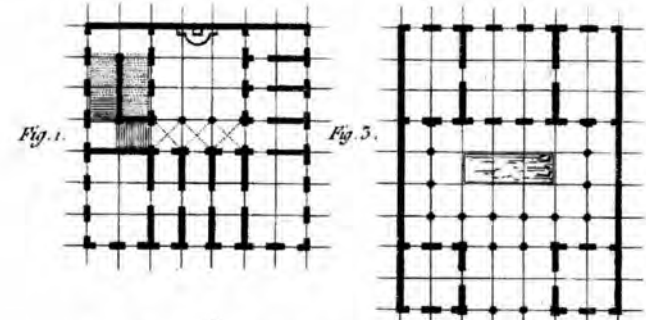
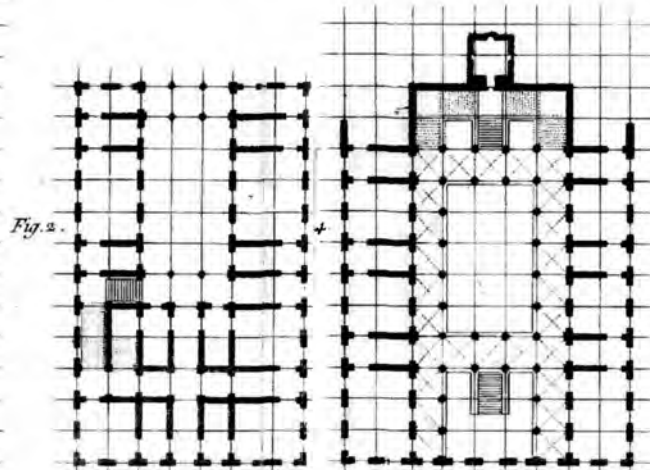
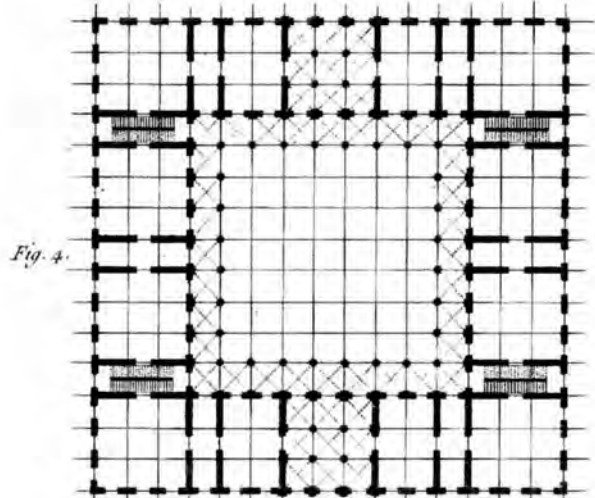
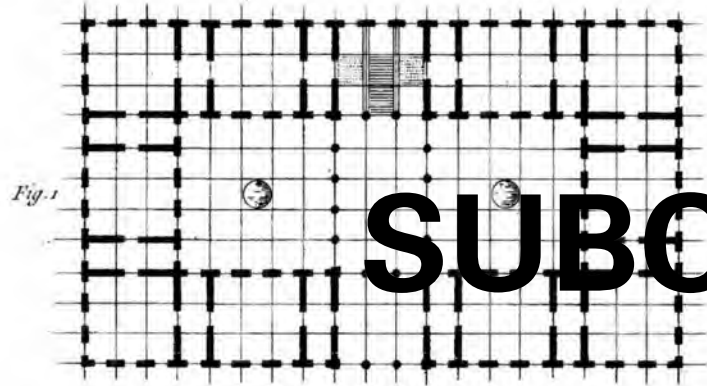
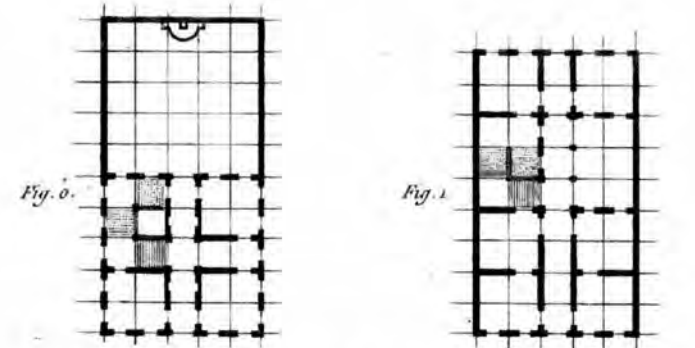
Lawn Green
Colonial Red
Patio White
Moonstone Grey
Fawn
Yellow Chiffon
Nickle
Skyway Blue

Patio White
Fawn
Colonial Red
Moonstone Grey
Yellow Chiffon
Lawn Green
Skyway blue
Nickel



A given development might use, perhaps, *four* of these possibilities as an arbitrary scheme for different sectors; then select four from another scheme which utilizes the remaining four unused models and colors; then select four from another scheme which utilizes all eight models and eight colors; then four from another scheme which utilizes a single model and all eight colors (or four or two colors); and finally utilize that single scheme for one model and one color. This serial logic might follow consistently until, at the edges, it is abruptly terminated by pre-existent high-





SUBORDINATION

THEFT

VIRUS



REPETITION/DIFFERENCE 127

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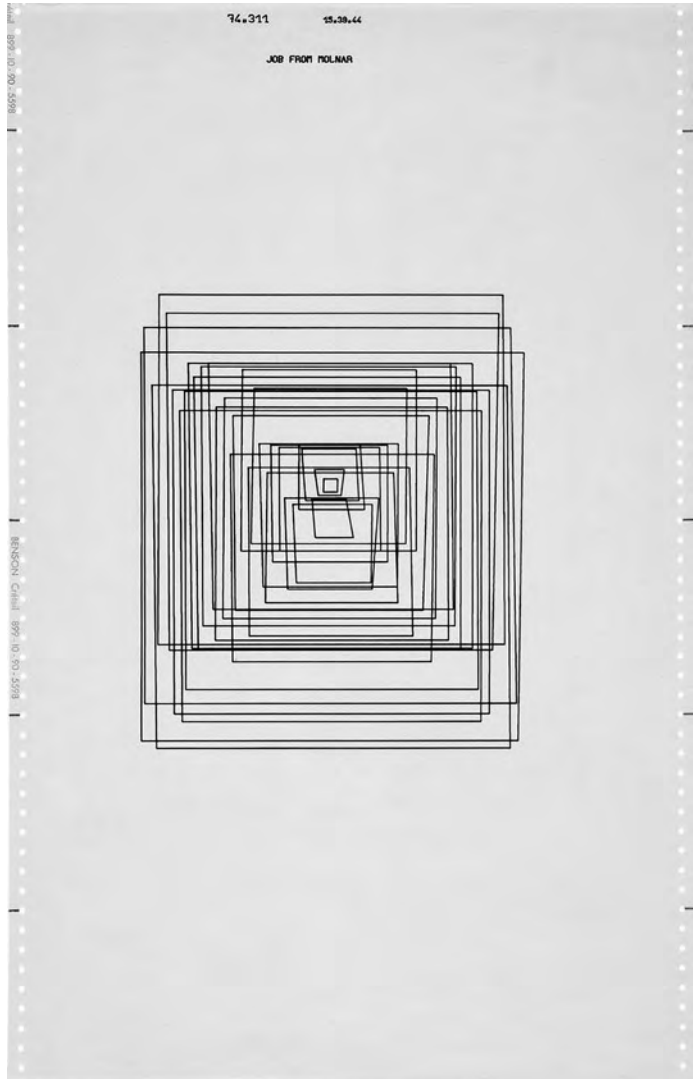


MARCEL DUCHAMP, L.H.O.O.Q. (1919)

Since the trace is not a presence but the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates itself, displaces itself, refers itself, it properly has no site – erasure belongs to its structure. And not only the erasure which must always be able to overtake it (without which it would not be a trace but an indestructible and monumental substance), but also the erasure which constitutes it from the outset as a trace, which situates it as the change of site, and makes it disappear in its appearance, makes it emerge from itself in its production. The erasure of the early trace of difference is therefore the “same” as its tracing in the text of metaphysics. [...] The paradox of such a structure, in the language of metaphysics, is an inversion of metaphysical concepts, which produces the following effect: the present becomes the sign of the sign, the trace of the trace. It is no longer what every reference refers to in the last analysis. It becomes a function in a structure of generalized reference. It is a trace, and a trace of the erasure of the trace.

JACQUES DERRIDA, MARGINS OF PHILOSOPHY, DIFFÉRENCE (1982 [1972])

Repetition/Difference invokes all things seemingly constant, all shades of their endless variations. The careful and critical consideration of architectural paragons, socio-economical dynamics, geopolitical shifts, further endowed with the lure of fiction, shall initiate new beginnings to alternate (hi)stories and cityscapes.



VERA MOLNÁR, TRAPÈZES INSCRITS 1/5 (COMPUTER DRAWING) (1974)

SAMUEL BUTLER

1872

Chapter XXIII: The Book of Machines

[...] The writer went on to say that he anticipated a time when it would be possible, by examining a single hair with a powerful microscope, to know whether its owner could be insulted with impunity. He then became more and more obscure, so that I was obliged to give up all attempt at translation; neither did I follow the drift of his argument. On coming to the next part which I could construe, I found that he had changed his ground.

“Either,” he proceeds, “a great deal of action that has been called purely mechanical and unconscious must be admitted to contain more elements of consciousness than has been allowed hitherto (and in this case germs of consciousness will be found in many actions of the higher machines) – or (assuming the theory of evolution but at the same time denying the consciousness of vegetable and crystalline action) the race of man has descended from things which had no consciousness at all. In this case there is no a priori improbability in the descent of conscious (and more than conscious) machines from those which now exist, except that which is suggested by the apparent absence of anything like a reproductive system in the mechanical kingdom. This absence however is only apparent, as I shall presently show.

“Do not let me be misunderstood as living in fear of any actually existing machine; there is probably no known machine which is more than a prototype of future mechanical life. The present machines are to the future as

the early Saurians to man. The largest of them will probably greatly diminish in size. Some of the lowest vertebrate attained a much greater bulk than has descended to their more highly organised living representatives, and in like manner a diminution in the size of machines has often attended their development and progress.

[...] “But returning to the argument, I would repeat that I fear none of the existing machines; what I fear is the extraordinary rapidity with which they are becoming something very different to what they are at present. No class of beings have in any time past made so rapid a movement forward. Should not that movement be jealously watched, and checked while we can still check it? And is it not necessary for this end to destroy the more advanced of the machines which are in use at present, though it is admitted that they are in themselves harmless?

“As yet the machines receive their impressions through the agency of man’s senses: one travelling machine calls to another in a shrill accent of alarm and the other instantly retires; but it is through the ears of the driver that the voice of the one has acted upon the other. Had there been no driver, the callee would have been deaf to the caller. There was a time when it must have seemed highly improbable that machines should learn to make their wants known by sound, even through the ears of man; may we not conceive, then, that a day will come when those ears will be no longer needed, and the hearing will be done by the delicacy of the machine’s own construction? – when its language shall have been developed from the cry of animals to a speech as intricate as our own?

“It is possible that by that time children will learn the differential calculus – as they learn now to speak – from their mothers and nurses, or that they may talk in the hypothetical language, and work rule of three sums, as

soon as they are born; but this is not probable; we cannot calculate on any corresponding advance in man’s intellectual or physical powers which shall be a set-off against the far greater development which seems in store for the machines. Some people may say that man’s moral influence will suffice to rule them; but I cannot think it will ever be safe to repose much trust in the moral sense of any machine.

“Again, might not the glory of the machines consist in their being without this same boasted gift of language? “Silence,” it has been said by one writer, “is a virtue which renders us agreeable to our fellow-creatures.”

Chapter XXIV: The Machines – continued

[...] “It can be answered that even though machines should hear never so well and speak never so wisely, they will still always do the one or the other for our advantage, not their own; that man will be the ruling spirit and the machine the servant; that as soon as a machine fails to discharge the service which man expects from it, it is doomed to extinction; that the machines stand to man simply in the relation of lower animals, the vapour-engine itself being only a more economical kind of horse; so that instead of being likely to be developed into a higher kind of life than man’s, they owe their very existence and progress to their power of ministering to human wants, and must therefore both now and ever be man’s inferiors.

“This is all very well. But the servant glides by imperceptible approaches into the master; and we have come to such a pass that, even now, man must suffer terribly on ceasing to benefit the machines. If all machines were to be annihilated at one moment, so that not a knife nor lever nor rag of clothing nor anything whatsoever were

left to man but his bare body alone that he was born with, and if all knowledge of mechanical laws were taken from him so that he could make no more machines, and all machine-made food destroyed so that the race of man should be left as it were naked upon a desert island, we should become extinct in six weeks. A few miserable individuals might linger but even these in a year or two would become worse than monkeys. Man's very soul is due to the machines; it is a machine-made thing: he thinks as he thinks, and feels as he feels, through the work that machines have wrought upon him, and their existence is quite as much a *sine qua non* for his, as his for theirs. This fact precludes us from proposing the complete annihilation of machinery, but surely it indicates that we should destroy as many of them as we can possibly dispense with, lest they should tyrannise over us even more completely.

"True, from a low materialistic point of view, it would seem that those thrive best who use machinery wherever its use is possible with profit; but this is the art of the machines – they serve that they may rule. They bear no malice towards man for destroying a whole race of them provided he creates a better instead; on the contrary, they reward him liberally for having hastened their development. It is for neglecting them that he incurs their wrath, or for using inferior machines, or for not making sufficient exertions to invent new ones, or for destroying them without replacing them; yet these are the very things we ought to do, and do quickly; for though our rebellion against their infant power will cause infinite suffering, what will not things come to, if that rebellion is delayed?

"They have preyed upon man's grovelling preference for his material over his spiritual interests, and have betrayed him into supplying that element of struggle and warfare without which no race can advance. The lower

animals progress because they struggle with one another; the weaker die, the stronger breed and transmit their strength. The machines being of themselves unable to struggle, have got man to do their struggling for them: as long as he fulfils this function duly, all goes well with him – at least he thinks so; but the moment he fails to do his best for the advancement of machinery by encouraging the good and destroying the bad, he is left behind in the race of competition; and this means that he will be made uncomfortable in a variety of ways, and perhaps die.

"So that even now the machines will only serve on condition of being served, and that too upon their own terms; the moment their terms are not complied with, they jib, and either smash both themselves and all whom they can reach, or turn churlish and refuse to work at all. How many men at this hour are living in a state of bondage to the machines? How many spend their whole lives, from the cradle to the grave, in tending them by night and day? Is it not plain that the machines are gaining ground upon us, when we reflect on the increasing number of those who are bound down to them as slaves, and of those who devote their whole souls to the advancement of the mechanical kingdom?

"The vapour-engine must be fed with food and consume it by fire even as man consumes it; it supports its combustion by air as man supports it; it has a pulse and circulation as man has. It may be granted that man's body is as yet the more versatile of the two, but then man's body is an older thing; give the vapour-engine but half the time that man has had, give it also a continuance of our present infatuation, and what may it not ere long attain to?

"There are certain functions indeed of the vapour-engine which will probably remain unchanged for myriads of years – which in fact will perhaps survive when the use

of vapour has been superseded: the piston and cylinder, the beam, the fly-wheel, and other parts of the machine will probably be permanent, just as we see that man and many of the lower animals share like modes of eating, drinking, and sleeping; thus they have hearts which beat as ours, veins and arteries, eyes, ears, and noses; they sigh even in their sleep, and weep and yawn; they are affected by their children; they feel pleasure and pain, hope, fear, anger, shame; they have memory and prescience; they know that if certain things happen to them they will die, and they fear death as much as we do; they communicate their thoughts to one another, and some of them deliberately act in concert. The comparison of similarities is endless: I only make it because some may say that since the vapour-engine is not likely to be improved in the main particulars, it is unlikely to be henceforward extensively modified at all. This is too good to be true: it will be modified and suited for an infinite variety of purposes, as much as man has been modified so as to exceed the brutes in skill.

“In the meantime, the stoker is almost as much a cook for his engine as our own cooks for ourselves. Consider also the colliers and pitmen and coal merchants and coal trains, and the men who drive them, and the ships that carry coals – what an army of servants do the machines thus employ! Are there not probably more men engaged in tending machinery than in tending men? Do not machines eat as it were by mannery? Are we not ourselves creating our successors in the supremacy of the earth? daily adding to the beauty and delicacy of their organisation, daily giving them greater skill and supplying more and more of that self-regulating self-acting power which will be better than any intellect?

“What a new thing it is for a machine to feed at all! The plough, the spade, and the cart must eat through

man's stomach; the fuel that sets them going must burn in the furnace of a man or of horses. Man must consume bread and meat or he cannot dig; the bread and meat are the fuel which drive the spade. If a plough be drawn by horses, the power is supplied by grass or beans or oats, which being burnt in the belly of the cattle give the power of working: without this fuel the work would cease, as an engine would stop if its furnaces were to go out.

[...] “It is said by some with whom I have conversed upon this subject, that the machines can never be developed into animate or quasi-animate existences, inasmuch as they have no reproductive system, nor seem ever likely to possess one. If this be taken to mean that they cannot marry, and that we are never likely to see a fertile union between two vapour engines with the young ones playing about the door of the shed, however greatly we might desire to do so, I will readily grant it. But the objection is not a very profound one. No one expects that all the features of the now existing organisations will be absolutely repeated in an entirely new class of life. The reproductive system of animals differs widely from that of plants, but both are reproductive systems. Has nature exhausted her phases of this power?

“Surely if a machine is able to reproduce another machine systematically, we may say that it has a reproductive system. What is a reproductive system, if it be not a system for reproduction? And how few of the machines are there which have not been produced systematically by other machines? But it is man that makes them do so. Yes; but is it not insects that make many of the plants reproductive, and would not whole families of plants die out if their fertilisation was not affected by a class of agents utterly foreign to themselves? Does anyone say that the red clover has no reproductive system because the bumble bee (and

the bumble bee only) must aid and abet it before it can reproduce? No one. The bumble bee is a part of the reproductive system of the clover. Each one of ourselves has sprung from minute animalcules whose entity was entirely distinct from our own, and which acted after their kind with no thought or heed of what we might think about it. These little creatures are part of our own reproductive system; then why not we part of that of the machines?

[...] “We are misled by considering any complicated machine as a single thing; in truth it is a city or society, each member of which was bred truly after its kind. We see a machine as a whole, we call it by a name and individualise it; we look at our own limbs, and know that the combination forms an individual which springs from a single centre of reproductive action; we therefore assume that there can be no reproductive action which does not arise from a single centre; but this assumption is unscientific, and the bare fact that no vapour-engine was ever made entirely by another, or two others, of its own kind, is not sufficient to warrant us in saying that vapour-engines have no reproductive system. The truth is that each part of every vapour-engine is bred by its own special breeders, whose function it is to breed that part, and that only, while the combination of the parts into a whole forms another department of the mechanical reproductive system, which is at present exceedingly complex and difficult to see in its entirety.

“Complex now, but how much simpler and more intelligibly organised may it not become in another hundred thousand years? or in twenty thousand? For man at present believes that his interest lies in that direction; he spends an incalculable amount of labour and time and thought in making machines breed always better and better; he has already succeeded in effecting much that at

one time appeared impossible, and there seem no limits to the results of accumulated improvements if they are allowed to descend with modification from generation to generation. It must always be remembered that man's body is what it is through having been moulded into its present shape by the chances and changes of many millions of years, but that his organization never advanced with anything like the rapidity with which that of the machines is advancing. This is the most alarming feature in the case, and I must be pardoned for insisting on it so frequently.”

Chapter XXV: The Machines – concluded

[...] I remember one incident which bears upon this part of the treatise. The gentleman who gave it to me had asked to see my tobacco-pipe; he examined it carefully, and when he came to the little protuberance at the bottom of the bowl he seemed much delighted, and exclaimed that it must be rudimentary. I asked him what he meant.

“Sir,” he answered, “this organ is identical with the rim at the bottom of a cup; it is but another form of the same function. Its purpose must have been to keep the heat of the pipe from marking the table upon which it rested. You would find, if you were to look up the history of tobacco-pipes, that in early specimens this protuberance was of a different shape to what it is now. It will have been broad at the bottom, and flat, so that while the pipe was being smoked the bowl might rest upon the table without marking it. Use and disuse must have come into play and reduced the function to its present rudimentary condition. I should not be surprised, sir,” he continued, “if, in the course of time, it were to become modified still farther, and to assume the form of an ornamental leaf or scroll, or even a butterfly, while, in some cases, it will become extinct.” [...]



U.S. ARMY ARCHIVE, LOCKHEED'S BURBANK PLANT IN DISGUISE (1941)

GABRIEL TARDE

1890

VIII. Remarks and Corollaries

The supreme law of imitation seems to be its tendency towards indefinite progression. This immanent and immense kind of ambition¹ is the soul of the universe. It expresses itself, physically, in the conquest of space by light, vitally, in the claim of even the humblest species to cover the entire globe with its kind. [...] But unless this tendency be backed up by the coming together of inventions which are logically and ideologically auxiliary, or by the help of the prestige which belongs to alleged superiorities, it is checked by the different obstacles which it has successively to overcome or to turn aside. These obstacles are the logical and teleological contradictions which are opposed to it by other inventions, or the barriers which have been raised up by a thousand causes, by racial pride and prejudice, for the most part, between different families and tribes and peoples and, within each people or tribe, between different classes. Consequently, if a good idea is introduced in one of these groups, it propagates itself without any difficulty until it finds itself stopped short by the group's frontiers. Fortunately, this arrest is only a slowing up. It is true that, at first, in the case of class barriers, a happy innovation which has happened to originate and make its way in a lower class, does not, during periods of hereditary aristocracy and of physiological inequality, so to speak, spread further, unless the advantage of adopting it appear plain to the higher classes; but, on the other hand, innovations which have been made or

accepted by the latter classes easily reach down, as I have shown already, to those lower levels which are accustomed to feel their prestige. And it happens that, as a result of this prolonged descent, the lower strata gradually mount up, step by step, to swell the highest ranks with their successive increments. Thus, through assimilating themselves with their models, the copies come to equal them, that is, they become capable of becoming models in their turn, while assuming a superiority which is no longer hereditary, which is no longer centred in the whole person, but which is individual and vicarious. The march of imitation from top to bottom still goes on, but the inequality which it implies has changed in character. Instead of an aristocratic, intrinsically organic inequality, we have a democratic inequality, of an entirely social origin, which we may call inequality if we wish, but which is really a reciprocity of invariably impersonal prestiges, alternating from individual to individual and from profession to profession. In this way, the field of imitation has been constantly growing and freeing itself from heredity.

[...] Another analogy. Just as the play of imitation from top to bottom leads, in its continuation, to so-called democratic equality, that is to say, to the fusion of all classes into one, in which reciprocal imitation is admirably practised through the acceptance of one another's respective superiorities, so a prolonged process of fashion-imitation ends by putting pupil-peoples upon the same level, both in their armaments and in their arts and sciences, with their master-people. It creates a kind of federation between them like that which is called in modern times, for example, the *European balance of power*. By this is meant the reciprocity of every kind of service or exchange which goes on incessantly between the different great centres which

divide up European civilisation. In this way, in international relations, the free and unimpeded domain of imitation has been enlarged with scarcely an interruption.

But, at the same time, *Tradition* and *Custom*, the conservative forms of imitation, have been fixing and perpetuating its new acquisitions and consolidating its increments in the heart of every class of people that has been raised up through the example of higher classes or of more civilised neighbours. At the same time, too, every germ of imitation which may have been secreted in the brain of any imitator in the form of a new belief or aspiration, of a new idea or faculty, has been steadily developing in outward signs, in words and acts which, according to the law of the march from within to without, have penetrated into his entire nervous and muscular systems.

[...] Every act of imitation, therefore, results in the preparation of conditions that will make possible and that will facilitate new acts of imitation of an increasingly free and rational and, at the same time, precise and definite character. These conditions are the gradual suppression of caste, class, and nationality barriers and, I may add, the lessening of distances through more rapid means of locomotion, as well as through greater density of population. This last condition is realised in the degree that fruitful, that is to say, widely imitated, agricultural or industrial inventions, and the equally fruitful discovery of new lands promote the world-wide circulation of the most inventive and, at the same time, the most imitative races. Let us suppose that all these conditions are combined and that they are fulfilled in the highest degree. Then, wherever a happy initiative might show itself in the whole mass of humanity, its transmission by imitation would be almost instantaneous, like the propagation of a wave in a perfectly elastic medium. We are approaching this strange ideal. [...]

I

It is now proper to bring to light [...] the passing of unilateral into reciprocal imitation. The mere play of imitation has resulted, then, not only in extending it, but in making it two-sided as well. Now, this effect which imitation produces upon itself, it also produces upon many other connections between people. Ultimately it transforms all unilateral into mutual relations.

[...] Now, how did the human chase come to make way for human warfare? How did flattery come to make way for courtesy, credulity for free enquiry, dogmatism for mutual instruction? Docility for voluntary agreement and absolutism for self-government? Privilege for equality before the law, present-making or theft for exchange,⁴ slavery for industrial co-operation? And, finally, primitive marriage, the one-sided appropriation of the wife by the husband, for marriage as we know it, the appropriation of the wife by the husband and of the husband by the wife? I answer: through the slow and inevitable effect of imitation, of imitation under all its forms. [...]

In the beginning, one man always monopolises the power and the right to teach; no one disputes it to him. Everything that he says must be believed by all, and he alone has the right to deliver oracles. But at last the desire arises among those who have drunk in with the greatest credulity the words of their master, to be infallible like him, to resemble him in that particular as well. Hence those efforts of genius on the part of philosophers which will end one day by bringing about the recognition of every individual's right to spread his own particular faith and to evangelise even his pristine masters. But before this they must limit

themselves to more humble pretensions; and imitation of the theologians is so thoroughly the spirit of their dissimulated revolt that they feel happy if, while they submit without discussion to dogma, although to dogma which is for the first time hemmed into a particularly assigned sphere, they succeed in dogmatising in their own little domain by imposing upon scholars and scientists certain capital ideas which are laid down as incontrovertible, the theories of Aristotle or Plato, for example, in as much as they are not contrary to religious faith. On the other hand, at the same period of transition, scientists who also bow down to a certain extent under the metaphysical yoke, know how to dogmatise in their turn. It is a series of dogmatic rebounds which make evident the need of imitation from which this singular stage of thought proceeds. It is nevertheless true that the emancipation of human reason comes from the same source. In fact, there is something contradictory and artificial in the attitude of the mind which already feels its own power, but which, believing in its right to impose its convictions without discussion upon others, nevertheless believes that it is its duty to accept without examination the convictions of others. So much timidity is inconsistent with so much pride. And so the time comes when a bolder and more logical mind conceives the desire of dogmatising without restriction, of asserting and imposing its convictions both above and below. Its example is at once followed, and discussion becomes general. Free thought is nothing else but the mutual conflict and mutual restraint of many such self-asserting, contradictory individual infallibilities.

Originally, one man commands and the others obey. Authority, like instruction, is monopolised by the father or the teacher. The rest of the group has no other function

but to obey. But this autocratic authority becomes an object of envy. The ambitious among those that are ruled over conceive the idea of reconciling their subjection with their craving for power. At first they dream of limiting, of circumscribing the authority exerted over them by their rulers, then of diverting it, still in a limited and definite form, to the subjects next in rank. We have here a hierarchy of limited but indisputable commanding powers. The feudal system was the realisation of this idea on the greatest scale. But, as a matter of fact, the military organisation of any period is its most obvious incarnation, and this example shows us that the conception in question, just as the preceding and analogous conception, that of the hierarchy of dogmatic systems, answers to a permanent need in societies, their need of patriotic defence or of educating their children. Later on, however, men dare more, they wish to be able to command in certain respects those whom in other respects they obey and vice versa, or to be able to command for a time those who have been or who will be obeyed at another time. This reciprocity is obtained by recruiting the men in the public service from all classes, by rotation in office, and by the right of universal suffrage. The mere fact of voting implies on the part of the voter a pledge to submit to whomsoever may be elected and in this way imparts to the decrees of the latter a character of tacit contract. [...]

All social changes or advances which have been effected by the substitution of the reciprocal for the unilateral relation, and which I deem consequences of the action of imitation, are attributed by Spencer to the replacement of 'militancy' by 'industrialism.' But the development of industry itself is subject to the law in question. In fact, the first germ of industry is unpaid slave labour or the labour of woman, the born slave of primitive man. The Arab, for example, is

waited on, nourished, dressed, and even lodged by his numerous wives, just as the Roman was by his slaves. For this reason polygamy is as necessary to him as our numerous tradesmen to us. The relations between producer and consumer begin, then, like those between father and son or between husband and wife, by being abusive. But by dint of working gratis for others, the slave aspires to make someone work gratis for himself, and, thanks to a gradual restriction in the power of his masters in no longer controlling all his acts or all his time, he ends by accumulating savings which first enable him to buy his freedom and then to purchase one or more slaves, his victims in turn. Had he dreamed only of freedom, he would have hastened to enjoy it in isolation, providing for his own wants himself. But, as a matter of fact, he copies the wants of his ancient masters; in the satisfaction of these wants, he wishes to be served, like them, by others; and as this condition becomes more and more general, the times comes when all these ancient emancipated slaves, all of whom pretend to have slaves, alternately or mutually serve one another. Hence division of labour and industrial co-operation.⁴ Of course, let it be said once for all, the desire of imitation would not have succeeded in effecting either the aforesaid transformations or those I am about to mention had not certain inventions or discoveries made them possible. [...] But it is nevertheless true that the desire to imitate the superior, to be, like him, believed in, obeyed, and waited upon, was an immense, although latent, force which urged on the transformations I have mentioned; and it needed only the necessary accident of these inventions or discoveries to be developed.

The more mutual services of all kinds become, in the course of industrial and commercial progress, the more arbitrary and capricious is the character assumed by the

wants which are thereby satisfied. [...] This is called, in high-flown language, the *emancipation of the individual*. Now, this may be readily explained through the laws of imitation. In the beginning, capriciousness is the monopoly of the master, the pater familias or king, who has himself waited upon by his children, his slaves, or his subjects without reciprocity. It is also the monopoly of the god whom prostrate adorers serve, without the right of demanding any equivalent from him for the sacrifices made at his feet. Therefore, if reciprocity of services has only been brought about, in the long run, by a prolonged and freespread imitation of the one-sided service by which heads of families, kings, and the nobility modelled upon them, gods and demi-gods are benefited, it is natural for consumers, in seeking to ape the rulers of a past time, in their character of consumers at least, to affect to give to their needs an air of somewhat royal and divine caprice. In this way our growing democratic independence and self-sufficiency has come in a straight line from theocratic and monarchical absolutism.

[...] In a democratic society, a society which has always been preceded by aristocratic, monarchical, or theocratic rule, we may see the people in the street bow to one another, address one another with mutual politeness, and shake hands with one another. Whence come these usages?

[...] So, too, are those visits which were formerly, in their character of homage, unilateral. Politeness is merely reciprocity of flattery. Moreover, we know beyond a doubt that the desire of the petty potentate for ambassadors, of the marquis for pages, of the courtier for a court, that the general need of being flattered, waited on, and saluted like a nobleman, was the secret factor which little by little, in

France and elsewhere, made every man polite. It began with the court, then reached the city, then the chateaux, and then all classes to the very lowest. [...] In fact, of all the levelling methods that have been invented in the course of civilisation perhaps none is as powerful and as inconspicuous as that of politeness in manners and customs. What Cicero said of friendship, *amicitia pares aut facit aut invenit*, applies perfectly to urbanity and especially to the life of polite society. *The drawing room admits equals only or equalises those whom it admits*. Through this latter feature, it constantly tends to diminish, even outside of itself, those social inequalities which within it are immediately effaced. [...] Polite manners are even superior to railroads in overcoming distances, not only between civil or military functionaries, but also between classes which eventually draw nearer to one another by virtue of bowing to or shaking hands with one another. In our changing society thousands of people are daily flattered by hearing themselves addressed as *sir* or *madam*. In this, as in so many other respects, in its countenance of the rules of fashion, in its devotion to the philosophic ideas of the 18th c., the nobility of the old régime helped to undermine its own foundations and ‘buried itself in its triumph.’

II

The preceding considerations upon the transition of the unilateral to the reciprocal lead us quite naturally to treat of a question of greater interest and of one which should have been handled by sociologists, I mean the problem of what is reversible and what irreversible in history.⁶ Everybody feels that in certain respects a society can pass in a precisely opposite direction through certain phases that it has already traversed, but that in other respects it

is cut off from any such regression. We have seen above that after having passed from custom to fashion, communities can go back from fashion to custom to custom that has broadened, out, to be sure, never to that which has been narrowed in; but can they, after they have substituted reciprocal for unilateral relations, retrograde from the former to the latter? They cannot, and for a reason that I have already implied. [...] We have learned that this necessary and irreversible transition from monopoly to commercial freedom, from slavery to exchange of services, etc., is a corollary of the laws of imitation. Now, these laws may cease to act, either in part or in whole, and, in this case, a society perishes partially or completely; but the laws cannot be reversed.

[...] I hasten to add that, on one of its important sides, historical reversibility or irreversibility cannot be explained by the laws of imitation alone. Successive inventions and discoveries, which imitation lays hold of in order to spread them abroad, do not follow one another accidentally.

[...] The order of successive inventions is distinct from the order of successive imitations, although imitation does mean imitation of invention. The laws, in fact, which govern the first of these two series should not be confused with those, even the logical ones, which govern the second. It is not necessary for all imitations of inventions to pass through the terms of the irreversible series which inventions, whether they be imitated or not, must necessarily traverse one by one. We could, if put to it, conceive of a succession of inventions, which were logically antecedent to the final consummate one, unfolding in one and the same master mind; and, as a matter of fact, it is seldom that an inventor does not climb up several obscure

rungs in such a ladder before reaching the illustrious step. The laws of invention belong essentially to individual logic; the laws of imitation belong in part to social logic. Moreover, just as imitation does not fall exclusively within social logic, but depends upon extra-logical influence as well, is it not obvious that invention itself is produced mentally, through conditions which are not alone the apparition of premises in the mind of which it is the logical conclusion, but which are also other associations of ideas, called inspiration, intuition, genius?

Meanwhile, let us not forget that every invention and every discovery consists in the interference in somebody's mind of certain old pieces of information that have generally been handed down by others. What did Darwin's thesis about natural selection amount to? To having proclaimed the fact of competition among living things? No, but in having for the first time combined this idea with the ideas of variability and heredity.⁷ The former idea, as it was proclaimed by Aristotle, remained sterile until it was associated with the two latter ideas. From that as a starting point, we may say that the generic term, of which invention is but a species, is the fruitful interference of repetitions. [...] In such a universe, everything, however complex it might be, would be regular; nothing would either be or seem accidental. If, on the contrary, we assume that the primitive centres are irregular in position, the position of the secondary centres will also be unordered and their irregularity will equal that of the primary centres. Thus, there will never be in the world anything but the same quantity of irregularity, so to speak, only it will appear under the most changing forms. Let me add that, in spite of all, these changing forms must have a certain indefinable likeness. The original irregularity is reflected in its enlarged copies, the derived irregularities.

From this I conclude that, although the idea of Repetition dominates the whole universe, it does not constitute it. For the bottom of it, I think, is a certain sum of innate, eternal, and indestructible diversity without which the world would be as monotonous as it is vast. Stuart Mill was led by his reflections to a similar postulate.

[...] Let us turn our attention to the kind of historical irreversibility which is adequately accounted for by the laws of imitation, just as the laws of reproduction and of vibration are able to explain some, but not all, kinds of irreversibility in nature. A great national language cannot return to the little local dialect from which it has sprung. Not that it cannot be broken up by some political catastrophe into fragments which will become dialects. But, in this case, the differentiation of dialects will be due to the compulsory imprisonment in each province of the linguistic innovations that have sprung up in the place and that formerly would have radiated to the remotest part of the land. Moreover, each dialect that is made in this way will not resemble the primitive dialect in the least, nor will it incline to reproduce the latter. It will tend to spread over to its neighbours and to its own good to re-establish unity of language over a vast area. What I say of language applies also to religion. But let us cast a glance over the social life in its entirety.

It has often been remarked that civilisation has the effect of raising the level of the masses from an intellectual and moral, from an aesthetic and economic point of view, rather than of rearing still higher in these different respects the higher peaks of society. But this vague, indefinite formula has been not unjustly the subject of refutation because of failure to point out the cause of the

phenomenon in view. This cause we know. Since every invention which has once been launched clear of the mass of those that are already established in the social environment, must spread out and establish itself in turn by winning a place for itself in one class after another until it reaches the very lowest, it follows that the final result to which the indefinite continuation of all these outspreadings from centres which appear at distant points and in high places, must be a general and uniform illumination. [...] It is in this way, too, that the dissemination of species according to the law of their geometric progression, or, in other terms, of their prolific radiation, tends to cover the entire earth, which is still very unequally peopled, with a uniform stratum of living beings which will be denser throughout its whole extent than the average density of its present population. [...] After this statement, we can understand how cosmopolitan and democratic assimilation is an inevitable tendency of history for the same reason that the complete and uniform peopling of the globe and the complete and uniform calorification of space are the objects of the vital and of the physical universe. [...] But we can understand also that it may well happen that at periods when works of genius crowd upon and stimulate one another, in feverish and inventive ages like ours, the progress of civilisation is accompanied by a momentary increase of every kind of inequality, or, if the imaginative fever has centred in one place, of a special kind. In our day, when the creative spirit has turned primarily towards the sciences, the distance between our most distinguished scholars and the most uncultivated dregs of our population is much greater from the point of view of the sum and substance of learning than it was in the Middle Ages or antiquity. In the innovating periods of which I speak the whole question consists of knowing

whether the precipitate eruption of inventions has been faster than their current of example. Now, this is a question of fact which statistics alone can solve.

Believing that the transition from an aristocratic to a democratic order is irreversible, Tocqueville refuses to think that any aristocracy can be formed in a democratic environment. But I must be clear on this point.⁹ If, in consequence of the cause of which we know, societies hasten towards an increasing assimilation and an incessant accumulation of similarities, it does not follow that they are also progressing towards a greater and greater development of democracy. For imitative assimilation is only the stuff out of which societies are made; this stuff is cut out and put into use by social logic, which tends to the most solid kind of unification through the specialisation and co-operation of aptitudes, and through the specialisation and mutual confirmation of minds. It is therefore quite possible and even probable that a very strong hierarchy may be the destined goal of any civilisation,¹⁰ although every consummate civilisation which has reached its ultimate fruition is marked by the diffusion of the same wants and ideas, if not by the same powers and wealth, throughout the mass of its citizens. This much, however, may be granted to Tocqueville after an aristocracy which is based upon the hereditary prestige of birth has been destroyed in a country, it can never come to life again. We know, in fact, that the social form of Repetition, imitation, tends to free itself more and more from its vital form, from heredity.

We are also justified in affirming that national agglomerations will enlarge to a greater and greater degree, and that they will consequently become less dense and that

the contrary will never be realised unless a catastrophe occur. This is a result (as pointed out by M. Gide in his little work upon the colonies¹¹) of universal assimilation, especially in the matter of armaments. In fact 'it is clear that the day when we shall all be formed in the same mould, the day when one man will be worth another, the power of every people will be mathematically proportioned to the number of its population' and, consequently, a struggle between a small state and a big one will be impossible or disastrous for the former. This is an additional argument for the numerous reasons which we have for foreseeing a colossal empire in the future. In every period prior to our own, larger states extended themselves as far or farther than the then means of communication made practicable. But at present it is plain that the great inventions of our times will make possible and enduring much more extensive agglomerations than those which now exist. This is an historic anomaly, unexampled in the past, and we must believe that it is fated to disappear. [...] Does this mean that we must expect to see a single empire extending over the entire globe? It does not; from the law which I developed above on the alternation of fashion and custom, on the final and inevitable return to a protective tariff of custom after a more or less lengthy period of free trade in examples, it follows that the natural, I do not refer to the factitious, aggrandisement of a state could never pass beyond certain limits. Consequently, we are not justified in conceiving the hope that a single state will rule over the whole earth or that the possibility of war will be suppressed. On the other hand, as the unification or at least the federation of civilised nations becomes more desirable and more longed for, the obstacles in the way of its realisation, patriotic pride and prejudice, national antagonisms, misunderstood or narrowly interpreted collective interests,

accumulated historical memories, all these things will not cease to grow. The checking of this growing aspiration by this growing difficulty might be considered the infernal torment to which man is condemned by civilisation. It seems as if the mirage of perpetual and universal peace loomed up before our eyes with more and more brilliancy but at a greater and greater distance.

In a limited and relative sense, however, we may believe that this ideal will be temporarily realised through the future conquests of a people, whose name we do not know, who is destined to play this glorious part. But then, after this Empire has been established, after it has bestowed upon a great part of the world a security comparable to the majesty of a Roman peace increased tenfold in depth and extent,¹² it may happen that an entirely new social phenomenon, one neither conforming nor contrary to the principles that I have propounded, may appear to our descendants. We may wonder, to be sure, whether universal similarity under all its present or future forms, in regard to dress, to the alphabet, perhaps to language, to sciences, to law, etc., we may wonder whether it is the consummate fruit of civilization or whether its sole *raison d'être* and its final consequence are not the unfolding of individual differences that will be more valid, more intense, more radical, and, at the same time, more subtle, than the differences that were annihilated. It is certain that after a cosmopolitan inundation has left a thick deposit of ideas and customs over all humanity, the demolished nationalities will never be reconstructed; men will never return to their Chinese ancestor-worship nor to their contempt for foreign usages; they will never prefer to accentuate their fixed idiosyncrasies rather than to hasten general changes shared in by all alike. But it is perfectly possible that

civilisation may pause some day to draw back and give birth to new offspring, that the flood of imitation may be banked in,¹³ and that through the very effect of its excessive development, the need of sociability may diminish or, rather, may become altered and transformed into a sort of general misanthropy. While this would be quite compatible with a diminution of commercial intercourse and with the reduction of economic exchange to what was strictly necessary, it would be well fitted to strengthen in each of us the distinctive traits of our individuality. Then the finest flower of our social life, the aesthetic life, would blossom forth, and as it became full-blown all men would come to have a share in it, a rare and imperfect condition at present. And then the social life, with its complicated apparatus of confining functions and monotonous rehearsals, would finally appear, like the organic life which it follows and complements, in its true colours. It would appear as a long, obscure, and tortuous transition from a state of elementary diversity to one marked by the possession of personal physiognomy. It would appear as a mysterious alembic of numberless spiral curves where one thing is sublimated in another, where out of an infinite number of elements that have been bent and crushed and despoiled of their distinct characteristics is extracted an essential and volatile principle, the fundamental and fleeting attributes of personality, its idiosyncrasies, its ways of thinking and feeling, here today, vanished tomorrow.

1 [...] I reflect upon the fact that delight in endless and tireless self-repetition is one of the signs of love; that it is the peculiarity of love, both in art and life, to continually say and resay the same thing, to continually picture and repicture the same subject. Then I ask myself whether this universe, which seems to delight in its monotonous repetitions, might not

reveal, in its depths, an infinite outpouring of hidden love, greater even than that of ambition. I cannot keep from conjecturing that all things, in spite of intestine struggles, have been made, separately, *con amore*, and that only in this lies, evil and misfortune notwithstanding, the explanation of their beauty. And yet, at other times, in reflecting upon death, I am led to justify pessimism. Everything repeats itself, and nothing persists. These are the two characteristics of our universe, the second growing out of the first. Why should it be chimerical to conceive of a perfect world, of a world that was both stable and original, where everything lasted, and where nothing repeated itself? But a truce to these dreams! 2 See Spencer's *Sociology*, Vol. III., where he tells how gifts, which are at first voluntary and one-sided (either from the superior to the inferior, or inversely), become, little by little, habitual, obligatory, and reciprocal. But Spencer forgets to tell of the leading part played by imitation in all of this. [...] 4 In the beginning the administration of the sacrament was gratuitous; it was an out-and-out gift. (See P. Viollet, *Histoire du droit français*). Little by little, communities came to respond to these gifts with others, with presents that were spontaneous, and not in the least obligatory, until, finally, these offerings came to be dues. Fire-insurance companies are societies for mutual aid. They date back to 1786 under this reciprocal form. But they were preceded by non-mutual benefit societies, by systematic almsgiving for the benefit of sufferers from fire (see Babeau, *La Ville sous l'ancien régime*). The right of divorce began by being one-sided, to the exclusive advantage of the husband, before it became reciprocal, etc. 5 Or, in case the superior did make obeisances, and pays visits and compliments, it was always the inferior who began the saluting, the visiting, and the complimenting. At that time there was an obligatory salutation of class by class as of rank by rank; today, we know only the salutation of man by man, and it is arranged in such away that the same man is not always the first to bow. We find a description in La Bruyere of the transition of the unilateral to the reciprocal courtesy. His *Menippe*, when people bow to him 'is embarrassed to know whether or not he should return it, and, while he is deliberating, you have already passed him by.' This trait is truly obsolete. [...] 6 I do not use the words reversible and irreversible in the same sense which they have in legal phraseology and in the dictionary, but in the construction which is given to them by physicists, especially in thermodynamics, where a mechanism is called reversible which can act indifferently in either of two opposite directions. 7 What becomes here of the famous law of progressive differentiation considered as a necessity of universal evolution? 9 Let us note that through a regular and uninterrupted series of transformations, the ecclesiastical organisation of Christian Europe passed from an evangelical, equality-loving democracy to the aristocracy of the early bishops, then to the modified monarchy of the Bishop of Rome, as it was limited by the Councils, and, finally, to the absolutism of papal infallibility. This is the exact opposite of the evolution

accomplished by secular society. But, on the other hand, in this case as in that, the evolution has been from multiformity to uniformity, from disintegration to centralisation. 10 The Byzantine Empire was the goal of Greco-Roman civilisation; the Chinese Empire, of Chinese civilisation; the Mogul Empire, of Hindoo civilisation; the Empire of the Pharaohs, of Egyptian civilisation, etc. 11 M. Gide expressly refers to the 'laws of imitation,' for he was one of the first to accept my point of view, and in his *Principes d'économie politique* he gives a pretty good place to my theory of value, the application of this general point of view, as I presented it a long time ago, in several articles in the *Revue philosophique*. See Giard's article. 12 Historians err in feeling, or affecting to feel, an unjustifiable contempt for all great social similarities in language, religion, politics, art, etc., which have been visibly effected by the imitation of some prestigious model, whether or not the prestige be that of a conqueror or merely of a stranger. [...] Here is an example, which I borrow from the very erudite *Histoire des institutions politiques* of M. Viollet (p. 256). [...] He considers that the great imperial unity, is artificial and, by contrast, he is led to consider that every little unity produced by the break-up of the Empire is natural and spontaneous. [...] 13 Our inclination to imitate stranger or neighbour does not increase in proportion to the multiplication of our relations with him. [...] There is, therefore, a certain point between too little and too much communication, where the highest degree of the need of imitating others may be formed. How shall we determine this point? It is a difficult matter. We may say that it is the optical point where we are near enough to have all the illusion of the scenery without being near enough to be aware of the stage machinery. It is essential to note the consequence of the preceding fact. It follows that the multiplied communications between peoples and classes, through railroads, telegraphs, and telephones, will result in leading them back to a taste for and a pious observance of their distinctive idiosyncrasies, and of their particular habits and customs. Is not the present return to the spirit of nationality due in part, in slight part, to this cause, in spite of the fact that its chief cause is militarism?



PETER WEIR, THE TRUMAN SHOW (1998)

ECONOMIC PSYCHOLOGY

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GABRIEL TARDE

1902

Book I. Economic repetition

Chapter II, Section II.

Happiness, the periodic rotation of linked desires; open and closed curves of desires

Happiness – were we to grasp this very vague notion more closely and make it more precise – where do we see it realised? Apparently in the state of an individual or a people who has found its footing, so to speak. And what does this mean? It means that happiness is not exactly the pacification of our desires, but a kind of daily rotation of our linked [enchaînés] desires, periodically reborn and newly satisfied to be reborn again, and so on and so forth indefinitely.

I say rotation when, in effect, the series of desires that link up to one another, intercut with alternative satisfactions, is presented as a line that does not fold back on itself, as an open curve that always advances, into the unknown of ever new sensations, ever unprecedented designs; there is an ambitious or amorous fever, and there may be intoxication, ecstatic joy – but there is no happiness.

Without a doubt, all the needs of organic life are essentially periodical: the need to drink or eat, of clothing oneself against the cold, and so on; they repeat themselves throughout the day or the year of the individual, at more or less regular intervals; but special desires, of a social origin, which are the economic translation of these needs

– the desire for such and such a dish, such and such a drink, such and such a dress, and so on – are not always produced periodically; we could even say that they always begin as fantasies before consolidating themselves into habits. One even sees tourists who seek out a continual change when it comes to menus and drinks, and who do not like to lie down two nights in a row in the same bed. Ultra-elegant women will not wear the same outfit twice, in other words, their desire to dress in a certain way is not repeated. We should therefore distinguish, in every individual life, between periodic (and periodically linked) desires, which are both the most numerous and the most important from the standpoint of industrial production, and capricious, non-periodic, desires, which follow one another without regular repetition. It is above all on the habits of individuals that industry must count; but their passions and their whims, whose proportion is growing in our age of social crisis, are like nurseries for the new habits of tomorrow.

Each person, but also each people, could be characterised – if you allow me to return to the metaphor I used a moment ago – by the nature of the open curve and closed curve proper to it, by the ratio of the two, by the composition of the elements of each curve, by its degree of narrowness or width. The ratio of the curves differs widely from one individual to another. Sometimes the closed curve is very large and the open curve very small; this is the case with individuals and populations who are strongly preoccupied with comfort, but who have few generous and passionate aspirations; sometimes it's the opposite, as with individuals or populations who are both very idealistic and simple in their tastes. More often it happens that the open curve and the closed curve expand or contract together, in parallel. Each man, and also each people, bears in himself the virtuality of a maxima curve

of desires and satisfactions of a certain genre, or he will deploy, taking advantage of circumstances, all the energy that he has at his disposal. The happiness of Pierre is a very small circle, and his passionate and capricious evolution forms a very small parabola, whose branches are short and very close together. The happiness of Paul is an immense circle and series of his states of passion and caprice is a parabola of prodigious breadth, akin to the ambition of a Charles XII or an Alexander, or the loves of a Don Juan. Thus, if you impose a narrow existence, which might be happy for another, upon a person or a race made for a very vast orbit of desires and satisfactions, you will make it very unhappy. The inverse is equally true. But it must be added that the movement of civilisation tends, by a logical necessity, as we have said above, to ceaselessly expand the circle of needs – which increasingly agree with one another the more they expand – and, consequently, to eliminate the individuals or populations born for a narrower circulation, even if they are more refined and delicate. This tendency is not unreservedly praiseworthy, and it is one which the latter, when they are refined aestheticians, have the right to resist with all their might, desperately.

[...] Because a habitual or customary circle of needs can only expand on condition that it is broken at a certain point, and because it can only be broken, most often, in favour of an alien contribution, we can see the crucial importance of international relations, and of everything that facilitates or hinders them, from the point of view of the progresses of social peace and harmony that only the expansion of the circle of needs, as we argued above, makes possible. But at the same time we cannot ignore the (sometimes lethal) dangers presented, for both parties, by the putting in contact, for the first time, of two nations that previously entertained no mutual relations –

especially for the weaker of the two, for the inferior, which borrows more than it lends and suffers, with almost no reciprocity at all, the suggestion of the other. A desire or a new need of foreign provenance is only classed when it enters the orbit of our alternative and periodic desires, attaining a certain rank. But at first it always begins by breaking this orbit a little and disturbing the established order, like a new planet that would come from outside to take its place in our solar system. And the question is that of knowing whether the troubled order will manage to re-establish itself. This temporarily perturbing character of every new need, even when it is apparently innocuous, such as the need for bicycles or telephones, explains a certain measure of resistance from conservative milieus to any importation of this genre, but only rarely does it justify it. That is because it is only in the (extremely rare) case of a tear in the circle of customs by a bloc of exotic needs penetrating en masse that the rupture is complete and the wound too deep to be healed. When a new need penetrates in isolation, as happens usually, it suffices, for it to be classed, to find more auxiliaries than rivals or enemies among the old needs that it comes to unsettle. Now, it will encounter possible rivalry or hostility only among a very small group of desires having as their object more or less similar articles or services; but it must rely on the favour of all the other desires to which it offers one more outlet because of its very dissimilarity and its heterogeneous nature. For example, when it appeared, the need for electric lighting was only repelled by similar needs, such as gas, oil and candle lighting; but it was favourably welcomed by a host of other needs that regarded it as a new stimulant for productive activity in general. The reciprocal linkage that connects different desires to one another, shaping them into an economic system, does indeed constitute a

teleological relation, but it is not at all a deduction, an unfolding of ends and means converging on the same end, like military or administrative organisation and social hierarchy. This harmony of a political kind, by way of collaboration, could often be severely compromised by the intrusion of a foreign element, of a given desire or new mode of action which fundamentally implies contradiction with the existing hierarchy of the reigning order, and which tends to loosen the cluster of national forces, to undermine their eventual convergence against the enemy. The penetration of exotic ideas into a nation most often weakens its patriotic energy, by dissipating, for example, the illusions on which collective pride nourishes itself; similarly, the penetration of exotic needs into a country that has hitherto remained simple and rural weakens its belligerent ardour, its indomitable tenacity. On the contrary, harmony of an economic kind, by way of mutual assistance, implies and requires these importations, which consolidate it after a passing shake-up. Moreover, one always places oneself in a political, rather than economic, standpoint when one repels with mistrust the invasion of internationalism and when one indicates the national weakening which is its frequent consequences. The socialist standpoint on the organisation of work can be considered as the fusion of the political and economic standpoints into one, through the absorption of the second by the first. The originality of socialism consists in having added, to the very small number of collective goals that men united in a nation may pursue – patriotic glory, war, conquest, defence of territory – a great new goal, very much worthy of their efforts: the conscious and systematic organisation of work. Except that, were this goal to be attained, it would become far more difficult for a new need, and, consequently, for a new industry, to interpose itself in the chain of

recognised needs. Work would ossify itself by organising itself. An illusion to be feared, when one lives as we do in an age of fast and feverish expansion of needs, is the belief that this is the normal state of humanity, and that it could carry on endlessly. Necessarily, there will come a moment when the human heart, even the American one, will no longer suffice for this continuous emission of new desires that the developments of machinofacture require of it, when they demand that it offer ever increasing outlets to its ever more abundant production. Human nature is not inexhaustible when it comes to its needs, or even its whims, and, sooner or later, each man, even the most ambitious or most imaginative, comes up against the limits not only of his force, but also of his desire, which can be stretched no further. The day that this final collision, this stoppage of growth, will come about for humanity, it is very certain that progress will no longer consist in a continuous growth of production, the ideal of so many economists. Its aim will have to be the increasing abbreviation of human work and the augmentation of leisure.



PHILIPPE COLLINS (DAVID WARRILOW), THE LAST DAYS OF IMMANUEL KANT (1996)



HITO STEYERL, IN FREE FALL (VIDEO STILL) (2012)

THE WORK OF ART IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

WALTER BENJAMIN

1936

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Our fine arts were developed, their types and uses were established, in times very different from the present, by men whose power of action upon things was insignificant in comparison with ours. But the amazing growth of our techniques, the adaptability and precision they have attained, the ideas and habits they are creating, make it a certainty that profound changes are impending in the ancient craft of the Beautiful. In all the arts there is a physical component which can no longer be considered or treated as it used to be, which cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. For the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial. We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art. (Paul Valéry, Pièces sur L'Art, 1931 – La Conquête de l'ubiquité)

Preface

When Marx undertook his critique of the capitalistic mode of production, this mode was in its infancy. Marx directed his efforts in such a way as to give them prognostic value. He went back to the basic conditions underlying capitalistic production and through his presentation showed what could be expected of capitalism in the future. The result was that one could expect it not only to exploit the proletariat with increasing intensity, but ultimately to create conditions which would make it possible to abolish capitalism itself. The transformation of the superstructure,

which takes place far more slowly than that of the substructure, has taken more than half a century to manifest in all areas of culture the change in the conditions of production. Only today can it be indicated what form this has taken. Certain prognostic requirements should be met by these statements. However, theses about the art of the proletariat after its assumption of power or about the art of a classless society would have less bearing on these demands than theses about the developmental tendencies of art under present conditions of production. Their dialectic is no less noticeable in the superstructure than in the economy. It would therefore be wrong to underestimate the value of such theses as a weapon. They brush aside a number of outmoded concepts, such as creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery – concepts whose uncontrolled (and at present almost uncontrollable) application would lead to a processing of data in the Fascist sense. The concepts which are introduced into the theory of art in what follows differ from the more familiar terms in that they are completely useless for the purposes of Fascism. They are, on the other hand, useful for the formulation of revolutionary demands in the politics of art.

I

In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Man-made artifacts could always be imitated by men. Replicas were made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and, finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain. Mechanical reproduction of a work of art, however, represents something new. Historically, it advanced intermittently and in leaps at long intervals, but with accelerated intensity. The Greeks knew only two procedures of technically reproducing works of

art: founding and stamping. Bronzes, terra cottas, and coins were the only art works which they could produce in quantity. All others were unique and could not be mechanically reproduced. With the woodcut graphic art became mechanically reproducible for the first time, long before script became reproducible by print. The enormous changes which printing, the mechanical reproduction of writing, has brought about in literature are a familiar story. However, within the phenomenon which we are here examining from the perspective of world history, print is merely a special, though particularly important, case. During the Middle Ages engraving and etching were added to the woodcut; at the beginning of the nineteenth century lithography made its appearance. With lithography the technique of reproduction reached an essentially new stage. This much more direct process was distinguished by the tracing of the design on a stone rather than its incision on a block of wood or its etching on a copperplate and permitted graphic art for the first time to put its products on the market, not only in large numbers as hitherto, but also in daily changing forms. Lithography enabled graphic art to illustrate everyday life, and it began to keep pace with printing. But only a few decades after its invention, lithography was surpassed by photography. For the first time in the process of pictorial reproduction, photography freed the hand of the most important artistic functions which henceforth devolved only upon the eye looking into a lens. Since the eye perceives more swiftly than the hand can draw, the process of pictorial reproduction was accelerated so enormously that it could keep pace with speech. A film operator shooting a scene in the studio captures the images at the speed of an actor's speech. Just as lithography virtually implied the illustrated newspaper, so did photography foreshadow the sound film.

The technical reproduction of sound was tackled at the end of the last century. These convergent endeavors made predictable a situation which Valéry pointed up in this sentence:

“Just as water, gas, and electricity are brought into our houses from far off to satisfy our needs in response to a minimal effort, so we shall be supplied with visual or auditory images, which will appear and disappear at a simple movement of the hand, hardly more than a sign.”

Around 1900 technical reproduction had reached a standard that not only permitted it to reproduce all transmitted works of art and thus to cause the most profound change in their impact upon the public; it also had captured a place of its own among the artistic processes. For the study of this standard nothing is more revealing than the nature of the repercussions that these two different manifestations – the reproduction of works of art and the art of the film – have had on art in its traditional form.

II

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership. The traces of the first can be revealed only by chemical or physical analyses which it is impossible to perform on a reproduction; changes of ownership are subject to a tradition which must be traced from the situation of the original.

The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity. [...] The whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical – and, of course, not only technical – reproducibility. Confronted with its manual reproduction, which was usually branded as a forgery, the original preserved all its authority; not so vis-à-vis technical reproduction. The reason is twofold. First, process reproduction is more independent of the original than manual reproduction. For example, in photography, process reproduction can bring out those aspects of the original that are unattainable to the naked eye yet accessible to the lens, which is adjustable and chooses its angle at will. And photographic reproduction, with the aid of certain processes, such as enlargement or slow motion, can capture images which escape natural vision. Secondly, technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself. Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room.

The situations into which the product of mechanical reproduction can be brought may not touch the actual work of art, yet the quality of its presence is always depreciated. This holds not only for the artwork but also, for instance, for a landscape which passes in review before the spectator in a movie. In the case of the art object, a most sensitive nucleus – namely, its authenticity – is interfered with whereas no natural object is vulnerable on that score. The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony

rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object.

One might subsume the eliminated element in the term “aura” and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind. Both processes are intimately connected with the contemporary mass movements. Their most powerful agent is the film. Its social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage. This phenomenon is most palpable in the great historical films. It extends to ever new positions. In 1927 Abel Gance exclaimed enthusiastically: “Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Beethoven will make films... all legends, all mythologies and all myths, all founders of religion, and the very religions... await their exposed resurrection, and the heroes crowd each other at the gate.” Presumably without intending it, he issued an invitation to a far-reaching liquidation.

III

During long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity’s entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well. [...]

The concept of aura which was proposed above with reference to historical objects may usefully be illustrated with reference to the aura of natural ones. We define the aura of the latter as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch. This image makes it easy to comprehend the social bases of the contemporary decay of the aura. It rests on two circumstances, both of which are related to the increasing significance of the masses in contemporary life. Namely, the desire of contemporary masses to bring things “closer” spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction. Unmistakably, reproduction as offered by picture magazines and newsreels differs from the image seen by the unarmed eye. Uniqueness and permanence are as closely linked in the latter as are transitoriness and reproducibility in the former. To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose “sense of the universal equality of things” has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction. Thus

is manifested in the field of perception what in the theoretical sphere is noticeable in the increasing importance of statistics. The adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception.

IV

The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable. An ancient statue of Venus, for example, stood in a different traditional context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the clerics of the Middle Ages, who viewed it as an ominous idol. Both of them, however, were equally confronted with its uniqueness, that is, its aura. Originally the contextual integration of art in tradition found its expression in the cult. We know that the earliest artworks originated in the service of a ritual – first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique value of the “authentic” work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value. This ritualistic basis, however remote, is still recognizable as secularized ritual even in the most profane forms of the cult of beauty. The secular cult of beauty, developed during the Renaissance and prevailing for three centuries, clearly showed that ritualistic basis in its decline and the first deep crisis which befell it. With the advent of the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction, photography, simultaneously with the rise of socialism, art sensed the approaching crisis which has become evident a century later. At the time, art reacted with the doctrine of

l'art pour l'art, that is, with a theology of art. This gave rise to what might be called a negative theology in the form of the idea of “pure” art, which not only denied any social function of art but also any categorizing by subject matter. (In poetry, Mallarmé was the first to take this position.) An analysis of art in the age of mechanical reproduction must do justice to these relationships, for they lead us to an all-important insight: for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the “authentic” print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics.

V

Works of art are received and valued on different planes. Two polar types stand out; with one, the accent is on the cult value; with the other, on the exhibition value of the work. Artistic production begins with ceremonial objects destined to serve in a cult. One may assume that what mattered was their existence, not their being on view. [...] With the different methods of technical reproduction of a work of art, its fitness for exhibition increased to such an extent that the quantitative shift between its two poles turned into a qualitative transformation of its nature. [...] This much is certain: today photography and the film are the most serviceable exemplifications of this new function.

VI

In photography, exhibition value begins to displace cult value all along the line. But cult value does not give way without resistance. It retires into an ultimate retrenchment: the human countenance. It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty. But as man withdraws from the photographic image, the exhibition value for the first time shows its superiority to the ritual value. [...] With Atget, photographs become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance. They demand a specific kind of approach; free-floating contemplation is not appropriate to them. They stir the viewer; he feels challenged by them in a new way. At the same time picture magazines begin to put up signposts for him, right ones or wrong ones, no matter. For the first time, captions have become obligatory. And it is clear that they have an altogether different character than the title of a painting. The directives which the captions give to those looking at pictures in illustrated magazines soon become even more explicit and more imperative in the film where the meaning of each single picture appears to be prescribed by the sequence of all preceding ones.

VII

The 19th c. dispute as to the artistic value of painting versus photography today seems devious and confused. This does not diminish its importance, however; if anything, it

underlines it. The dispute was in fact the symptom of a historical transformation the universal impact of which was not realized by either of the rivals. When the age of mechanical reproduction separated art from its basis in cult, the semblance of its autonomy disappeared forever. The resulting change in the function of art transcended the perspective of the century; for a long time it even escaped that of the twentieth century, which experienced the development of the film. Earlier much futile thought had been devoted to the question of whether photography is an art. The primary question – whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art – was not raised. Soon the film theoreticians asked the same ill-considered question with regard to the film. But the difficulties which photography caused traditional aesthetics were mere child's play as compared to those raised by the film. Whence the insensitive and forced character of early theories of the film. Abel Gance, for instance, compares the film with hieroglyphs: "Here, by a remarkable regression, we have come back to the level of expression of the Egyptians... Pictorial language has not yet matured because our eyes have not yet adjusted to it. There is as yet insufficient respect for, insufficient cult of, what it expresses." [...] Arnoux concludes his fantasy about the silent film with the question: "Do not all the bold descriptions we have given amount to the definition of prayer?" It is instructive to note how their desire to class the film among the "arts" forces these theoreticians to read ritual elements into it – with a striking lack of discretion. [...] Characteristically, even today ultra-reactionary authors give the film a similar contextual significance – if not an outright sacred one, then at least a supernatural one. Commenting on Max Reinhardt's film version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Werfel states that undoubtedly it was the sterile copying of the exterior

world with its streets, interiors, railroad stations, restaurants, motorcars, and beaches which until now had obstructed the elevation of the film to the realm of art. "The film has not yet realized its true meaning, its real possibilities... these consist in its unique faculty to express by natural means and with incomparable persuasiveness all that is fairylike, marvellous, supernatural."

VIII

The artistic performance of a stage actor is definitely presented to the public by the actor in person; that of the screen actor, however, is presented by a camera, with a twofold consequence. [...] The sequence of positional views which the editor composes from the material supplied him constitutes the completed film. It comprises certain factors of movement which are in reality those of the camera, not to mention special camera angles, close-ups, etc. Hence, the performance of the actor is subjected to a series of optical tests. [...] Also, the film actor lacks the opportunity of the stage actor to adjust to the audience during his performance, since he does not present his performance to the audience in person. This permits the audience to take the position of a critic, without experiencing any personal contact with the actor. The audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera. Consequently the audience takes the position of the camera; its approach is that of testing. This is not the approach to which cult values may be exposed.

IX

For the film, what matters primarily is that the actor represents himself to the public before the camera, rather

than representing someone else. One of the first to sense the actor's metamorphosis by this form of testing was Pirandello. Though his remarks on the subject in his novel *Si Gira* were limited to the negative aspects of the question and to the silent film only, this hardly impairs their validity. For in this respect, the sound film did not change anything essential. What matters is that the part is acted not for an audience but for a mechanical contrivance – in the case of the sound film, for two of them. "The film actor," wrote Pirandello, "feels as if in exile – exiled not only from the stage but also from himself. With a vague sense of discomfort he feels inexplicable emptiness: his body loses its corporeality, it evaporates, it is deprived of reality, life, voice, and the noises caused by his moving about, in order to be changed into a mute image, flickering an instant on the screen, then vanishing into silence... The projector will play with his shadow before the public, and he himself must be content to play before the camera." [...] For aura is tied to his presence; there can be no replica of it. [...] The stage actor identifies himself with the character of his role. The film actor very often is denied this opportunity. His creation is by no means all of a piece; it is composed of many separate performances. [...] Nothing more strikingly shows that art has left the realm of the "beautiful semblance" which, so far, had been taken to be the only sphere where art could thrive.

X

The feeling of strangeness that overcomes the actor before the camera is basically of the same kind as the estrangement felt before one's own image in the mirror. But now the reflected image has become separable, transportable. And where is it transported? Before the public. Never for a

moment does the screen actor cease to be conscious of this fact. While facing the camera he knows that ultimately he will face the public, the consumers who constitute the market. This market, where he offers not only his labor but also his whole self, his heart and soul, is beyond his reach. During the shooting he has as little contact with it as any article made in a factory. This may contribute to that oppression, that new anxiety which, according to Pirandello, grips the actor before the camera. The film responds to the shrivelling of the aura with an artificial build-up of the "personality" outside the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the "spell of the personality," the phony spell of a commodity. So long as the movie-makers' capital sets the fashion, as a rule no other revolutionary merit can be accredited to today's film than the promotion of a revolutionary criticism of traditional concepts of art. We do not deny that in some cases today's films can also promote revolutionary criticism of social conditions, even of the distribution of property. However, our present study is no more specifically concerned with this than is the film production of Western Europe.

It is inherent in the technique of the film as well as that of sports that everybody who witnesses its accomplishments is somewhat of an expert. [...] At any moment the reader is ready to turn into a writer. As expert, which he had to become willy-nilly in an extremely specialized work process, even if only in some minor respect, the reader gains access to authorship. In the Soviet Union work itself is given a voice. To present it verbally is part of a man's ability to perform the work. Literary license is now founded on polytechnic rather than specialized training and thus

becomes common property. All this can easily be applied to the film, where transitions that in literature took centuries have come about in a decade. [...] Under these circumstances the film industry is trying hard to spur the interest of the masses through illusion-promoting spectacles and dubious speculations.

XI

The shooting of a film, especially of a sound film, affords a spectacle unimaginable anywhere at any time before this. [...] This circumstance, more than any other, renders superficial and insignificant any possible similarity between a scene in the studio and one on the stage.

[...] How does the cameraman compare with the painter? To answer this we take recourse to an analogy with a surgical operation. The surgeon represents the polar opposite of the magician. The magician heals a sick person by the laying on of hands; the surgeon cuts into the patient's body. The magician maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself; though he reduces it very slightly by the laying on of hands, he greatly increases it by virtue of his authority. The surgeon does exactly the reverse; he greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient's body, and increases it but little by the caution with which his hand moves among the organs. In short, in contrast to the magician – who is still hidden in the medical practitioner – the surgeon at the decisive moment abstains from facing the patient man to man; rather, it is through the operation that he penetrates into him.

Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply

into its web. There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law. Thus, for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter, since it offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment. And that is what one is entitled to ask from a work of art.

XII

Mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art. The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso painting changes into the progressive reaction toward a Chaplin movie. The progressive reaction is characterized by the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the expert. Such fusion is of great social significance. The greater the decrease in the social significance of an art form, the sharper the distinction between criticism and enjoyment by the public. The conventional is uncritically enjoyed, and the truly new is criticized with aversion. With regard to the screen, the critical and the receptive attitudes of the public coincide. The decisive reason for this is that individual reactions are predetermined by the mass audience response they are about to produce, and this is nowhere more pronounced than in the film. The moment these responses become manifest they control each other. Again, the comparison with painting is fruitful. A painting has always had an excellent chance to be viewed by one person or by a few. The simultaneous contemplation of paintings by a large public, such as developed in the 19th

c., is an early symptom of the crisis of painting, a crisis which was by no means occasioned exclusively by photography but rather in a relatively independent manner by the appeal of art works to the masses.

Painting simply is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience, as it was possible for architecture at all times, for the epic poem in the past, and for the movie today. Although this circumstance in itself should not lead one to conclusions about the social role of painting, it does constitute a serious threat as soon as painting, under special conditions and, as it were, against its nature, is confronted directly by the masses. In the churches and monasteries of the Middle Ages and at the princely courts up to the end of the 18th c., a collective reception of paintings did not occur simultaneously, but by graduated and hierarchized mediation. The change that has come about is an expression of the particular conflict in which painting was implicated by the mechanical reproducibility of paintings. Although paintings began to be publicly exhibited in galleries and salons, there was no way for the masses to organize and control themselves in their reception. Thus the same public which responds in a progressive manner toward a grotesque film is bound to respond in a reactionary manner to surrealism.

XIII

The characteristics of the film lie not only in the manner in which man presents himself to mechanical equipment but also in the manner in which, by means of this apparatus, man can represent his environment. A glance at occupational psychology illustrates the testing capacity of the equipment. Psychoanalysis illustrates it in a different perspective. The film has enriched our field of perception with methods

which can be illustrated by those of Freudian theory. [...] Since the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* things have changed. This book isolated and made analyzable things which had heretofore floated along unnoticed in the broad stream of perception. For the entire spectrum of optical, and now also acoustical, perception the film has brought about a similar deepening of apperception. It is only an obverse of this fact that behavior items shown in a movie can be analyzed much more precisely and from more points of view than those presented on paintings or on the stage. As compared with painting, filmed behavior lends itself more readily to analysis because of its incomparably more precise statements of the situation. In comparison with the stage scene, the filmed behavior item lends itself more readily to analysis because it can be isolated more easily. This circumstance derives its chief importance from its tendency to promote the mutual penetration of art and science. Actually, of a screened behavior item which is neatly brought out in a certain situation, like a muscle of a body, it is difficult to say which is more fascinating, its artistic value or its value for science. To demonstrate the identity of the artistic and scientific uses of photography which heretofore usually were separated will be one of the revolutionary functions of the film.

By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring common place milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the

dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones "which, far from looking like retarded rapid movements, give the effect of singularly gliding, floating, supernatural motions." Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye – if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the fractional second of a stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses.

XIV

One of the foremost tasks of art has always been the creation of a demand which could be fully satisfied only later. The history of every art form shows critical epochs in which a certain art form aspires to effects which could be fully obtained only with a changed technical standard, that is to say, in a new art form. The extravagances and

crudities of art which thus appear, particularly in the so-called decadent epochs, actually arise from the nucleus of its richest historical energies. In recent years, such barbarisms were abundant in Dadaism. It is only now that its impulse becomes discernible: Dadaism attempted to create by pictorial – and literary – means the effects which the public today seeks in the film.

Every fundamentally new, pioneering creation of demands will carry beyond its goal. Dadaism did so to the extent that it sacrificed the market values which are so characteristic of the film in favor of higher ambitions – though of course it was not conscious of such intentions as here described. The Dadaists attached much less importance to the sales value of their work than to its uselessness for contemplative immersion. The studied degradation of their material was not the least of their means to achieve this uselessness. Their poems are “word salad” containing obscenities and every imaginable waste product of language. The same is true of their paintings, on which they mounted buttons and tickets. What they intended and achieved was a relentless destruction of the aura of their creations, which they branded as reproductions with the very means of production. [...] In the decline of middle-class society, contemplation became a school for asocial behavior; it was countered by distraction as a variant of social conduct. Dadaistic activities actually assured a rather vehement distraction by making works of art the center of scandal. One requirement was foremost: to outrage the public. From an alluring appearance or persuasive structure of sound the work of art of the Dadaists became an instrument of ballistics. It hit the spectator like a bullet, it happened to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality. It promoted a demand for the film, the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being

based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator. Let us compare the screen on which a film unfolds with the canvas of a painting. The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed. It cannot be arrested. [...] This constitutes the shock effect of the film, which, like all shocks, should be cushioned by heightened presence of mind. By means of its technical structure, the film has taken the physical shock effect out of the wrappers in which Dadaism had, as it were, kept it inside the moral shock effect.

XV

The mass is a matrix from which all traditional behavior toward works of art issues today in a new form. Quantity has been transmuted into quality. The greatly increased mass of participants has produced a change in the mode of participation. The fact that the new mode of participation first appeared in a disreputable form must not confuse the spectator. Yet some people have launched spirited attacks against precisely this superficial aspect. Among these, Duhamel has expressed himself in the most radical manner. What he objects to most is the kind of participation which the movie elicits from the masses. Duhamel calls the movie “a pastime for helots, a diversion for uneducated, wretched, worn-out creatures who are consumed by their worries a spectacle which requires no concentration and presupposes no intelligence which kindles no light in the heart and awakens no hope other than the ridiculous one of someday becoming a ‘star’ in Los Angeles.” Clearly, this is at bottom the same ancient

lament that the masses seek distraction whereas art demands concentration from the spectator.

That is a commonplace.

The question remains whether it provides a platform for the analysis of the film. A closer look is needed here. Distraction and concentration form polar opposites which may be stated as follows: A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. [...] In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. This is most obvious with regard to buildings. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction. The laws of its reception are most instructive.

Buildings have been man's companions since primeval times. Many art forms have developed and perished. Tragedy begins with the Greeks, is extinguished with them, and after centuries its "rules" only are revived. The epic poem, which had its origin in the youth of nations, expires in Europe at the end of the Renaissance. Panel painting is a creation of the Middle Ages, and nothing guarantees its uninterrupted existence. But the human need for shelter is lasting. Architecture has never been idle. Its history is more ancient than that of any other art, and its claim to being a living force has significance in every attempt to comprehend the relationship of the masses to art. Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception – or rather, by touch and sight. Such appropriation cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building. On the tactile side there is no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent even optical reception. The latter, too, occurs much less

through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion. This mode of appropriation, developed with reference to architecture, in certain circumstances acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.

The distracted person, too, can form habits. More, the ability to master certain tasks in a state of distraction proves that their solution has become a matter of habit. Distraction as provided by art presents a covert control of the extent to which new tasks have become soluble by apperception. Since, moreover, individuals are tempted to avoid such tasks, art will tackle the most difficult and most important ones where it is able to mobilize the masses. Today it does so in the film. Reception in a state of distraction, which is increasing noticeably in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception, finds in the film its true means of exercise. The film with its shock effect meets this mode of reception halfway. The film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one.

Epilogue

The growing proletarianization of modern man and the increasing formation of masses are two aspects of the same process. Fascism attempts to organize the newly created proletarian masses without affecting the property structure which the masses strive to eliminate. Fascism sees its salvation in giving these masses not their right, but instead

a chance to express themselves. The masses have a right to change property relations; Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property. The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life. The violation of the masses, whom Fascism, with its Führer cult, forces to their knees, has its counterpart in the violation of an apparatus which is pressed into the production of ritual values.

All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war. War and war only can set a goal for mass movements on the largest scale while respecting the traditional property system. This is the political formula for the situation. The technological formula may be stated as follows: Only war makes it possible to mobilize all of today's technical resources while maintaining the property system. It goes without saying that the Fascist apotheosis of war does not employ such arguments. Still, Marinetti says in his manifesto on the Ethiopian colonial war:

"For twenty-seven years we Futurists have rebelled against the branding of war as anti-aesthetic... Accordingly we state: ...War is beautiful because it establishes man's dominion over the subjugated machinery by means of gas masks, terrifying megaphones, flame throwers, and small tanks. War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metalization of the human body. War is beautiful because it enriches a flowering meadow with the fiery orchids of machine guns. War is beautiful because it combines the gunfire, the cannonades, the cease-fire, the scents, and the stench of putrefaction into a symphony. War is beautiful because it creates new architecture, like that of the big tanks, the geometrical formation flights, the smoke spirals from burning villages, and many others... Poets and artists of Futurism!... remember these principles of an aesthetics of war so that your struggle for a new literature and a new graphic art... may be illumined by them!"

This manifesto has the virtue of clarity. Its formulations deserve to be accepted by dialecticians. To the latter, the aesthetics of today's war appears as follows: If the natural

utilization of productive forces is impeded by the property system, the increase in technical devices, in speed, and in the sources of energy will press for an unnatural utilization, and this is found in war. The destructiveness of war furnishes proof that society has not been mature enough to incorporate technology as its organ, that technology has not been sufficiently developed to cope with the elemental forces of society. The horrible features of imperialistic warfare are attributable to the discrepancy between the tremendous means of production and their inadequate utilization in the process of production – in other words, to unemployment and the lack of markets. Imperialistic war is a rebellion of technology which collects, in the form of "human material," the claims to which society has denied its natural material. Instead of draining rivers, society directs a human stream into a bed of trenches; instead of dropping seeds from airplanes, it drops incendiary bombs over cities; and through gas warfare the aura is abolished in a new way.

"*Fiat ars – pereat mundus*", says Fascism, and, as Marinetti admits, expects war to supply the artistic gratification of a sense perception that has been changed by technology. This is evidently the consummation of "l'art pour l'art." Mankind, which in Homer's time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art.



JOHN SINGER SARGENT, THE DAUGHTERS OF EDWARD DARLEY BOIT (HOMMAGE TO VELÁZQUEZ) (1882)

THE ORDER OF THINGS

MICHEL FOUCAULT

1966

Las Meninas

I

The painter is standing a little back from his canvas. He is glancing at his model; perhaps he is considering whether to add some finishing touch, though it is also possible that the first stroke has not yet been made. [...] Between the fine point of the brush and the steely gaze, the scene is about to yield up its volume.

But not without a subtle system of feints. By standing back a little, the painter has placed himself to one side of the painting on which he is working. That is, for the spectator at present observing him he is to the right of his canvas, while the latter, the canvas, takes up the whole of the extreme left. And the canvas has its back turned to that spectator: he can see nothing of it but the reverse side, together with the huge frame on which it is stretched. The painter, on the other hand, is perfectly visible in his full height; or at any rate, he is not masked by the tall canvas which may soon absorb him, when, taking a step towards it again, he returns to his task; he has no doubt just appeared, at this very instant, before the eyes of the spectator, emerging from what is virtually a sort of vast cage projected backwards by the surface he is painting. Now he can be seen, caught in a moment of stillness, at the neutral centre of this oscillation. His dark torso and bright face are

half-way between the visible and the invisible: emerging from that canvas beyond our view, he moves into our gaze; but when, in a moment, he makes a step to the right, removing himself from our gaze, he will be standing exactly in front of the canvas he is painting; he will enter that region where his painting, neglected for an instant, will, for him, become visible once more, free of shadow and free of reticence. As though the painter could not at the same time be seen on the picture where he is represented and also see that upon which he is representing something. He rules at the threshold of those two incompatible visibilities.

The painter is looking, his face turned slightly and his head leaning towards one shoulder. He is staring at a point to which, even though it is invisible, we, the spectators, can easily assign an object, since it is we, ourselves, who are that point: our bodies, our faces, our eyes. The spectacle he is observing is thus doubly invisible: first, because it is not represented within the space of the painting, and, second, because it is situated precisely in that blind point, in that essential hiding-place into which our gaze disappears from ourselves at the moment of our actual looking. [...]

In appearance, this locus is a simple one; a matter of pure reciprocity: we are looking at a picture in which the painter is in turn looking out at us. A mere confrontation, eyes catching one another's glance, direct looks superimposing themselves upon one another as they cross. And yet this slender line of reciprocal visibility embraces a whole complex network of uncertainties, exchanges, and feints. The painter is turning his eyes towards us only in so far as we happen to occupy the same position as his subject. We, the spectators, are an additional factor. Though greeted by that gaze, we are also dismissed by it, replaced by that which was always there before we were:

the model itself. But, inversely, the painter's gaze, addressed to the void confronting him outside the picture, accepts as many models as there are spectators; in this precise but neutral place, the observer and the observed take part in a ceaseless exchange. No gaze is stable, or rather, in the neutral furrow of the gaze piercing at a right angle through the canvas, subject and object, the spectator and the model, reverse their roles to infinity. And here the great canvas with its back to us on the extreme left of the picture exercises its second function: stubbornly invisible, it prevents the relation of these gazes from ever being discoverable or definitely established. The opaque fixity that it establishes on one side renders forever unstable the play of metamorphoses established in the centre between spectator and model. Because we can see only that reverse side, we do not know who we are, or what we are doing. Seen or seeing? The painter is observing a place which, from moment to moment, never ceases to change its content, its form, its face, its identity. But the attentive immobility of his eyes refers us back to another direction which they have often followed already, and which soon, there can be no doubt, they will take again: that of the motionless canvas upon which is being traced, has already been traced perhaps, for a long time and forever, a portrait that will never again be erased. So that the painter's sovereign gaze commands a virtual triangle whose outline defines this picture of a picture: at the top – the only visible corner – the painter's eyes; at one of the base angles, the invisible place occupied by the model; at the other base angle, the figure probably sketched out on the invisible surface of the canvas.

As soon as they place the spectator in the field of their gaze, the painter's eyes seize hold of him, force him to enter the picture, assign him a place at once privileged

and inescapable, levy their luminous and visible tribute from him, and project it upon the inaccessible surface of the canvas within the picture. He sees his invisibility made visible to the painter and transposed into an image forever invisible to himself. A shock that is augmented and made more inevitable still by a marginal trap. At the extreme right, the picture is lit by a window represented in very sharp perspective; so sharp that we can see scarcely more than the embrasure; so that the flood of light streaming through it bathes at the same time, and with equal generosity, two neighbouring spaces, overlapping but irreducible: the surface of the painting, together with the volume it represents (which is to say, the painter's studio, or the salon in which his easel is now set up), and, in front of that surface, the real volume occupied by the spectator (or again, the unreal site of the model). And as it passes through the room from right to left, this vast flood of golden light carries both the spectator towards the painter and the model towards the canvas; it is this light too, which, washing over the painter, makes him visible to the spectator and turns into golden lines, in the model's eyes, the frame of that enigmatic canvas on which his image, once transported there, is to be imprisoned. [...] The light, by flooding the scene (I mean the room as well as the canvas, the room represented on the canvas, and the room in which the canvas stands), envelops the figures and the spectators and carries them with it, under the painter's gaze, towards the place where his brush will represent them. But that place is concealed from us. We are observing ourselves being observed by the painter, and made visible to his eyes by the same light that enables us to see him. And just as we are about to apprehend ourselves, transcribed by his hand as though in a mirror, we find that we can in fact apprehend nothing of that mirror but its lustreless back.

The other side of a psyche.

Now, as it happens, exactly opposite the spectators – ourselves – on the wall forming the far end of the room, Velázquez has represented a series of pictures; and we see that among all those hanging canvases there is one that shines with particular brightness. [...] The other pictures reveal little more than a few paler patches buried in a darkness without depth. This particular one, on the other hand, opens onto a perspective of space in which recognizable forms recede from us in a light that belongs only to itself. Among all these elements intended to provide representations, while impeding them, hiding them, concealing them because of their position or their distance from us, this is the only one that fulfils its function in all honesty and enables us to see what it is supposed to show. Despite its distance from us, despite the shadows all around it. But it isn't a picture: it is a mirror. It offers us at last that enchantment of the double that until now has been denied us, not only by the distant paintings but also by the light in the foreground with its ironic canvases.

Of all the representations represented in the picture this is the only one visible; but no one is looking at it. Upright beside his canvas, his attention entirely taken up by his model, the painter is unable to see this looking-glass shining so softly behind him. [...] There are, it is true, some heads turned away from us in profile: but not one of them is turned far enough to see, at the back of the room, that solitary mirror, that tiny glowing rectangle which is nothing other than visibility, yet without any gaze able to grasp it, to render it actual, and to enjoy the suddenly ripe fruit of the spectacle it offers.

It must be admitted that this indifference is equalled only by the mirror's own. It is reflecting nothing, in fact, of all that is there in the same space as itself: neither

the painter with his back to it, nor the figures in the centre of the room. It is not the visible it reflects, in those bright depths. In Dutch painting it was traditional for mirrors to play a duplicating role: they repeated the original contents of the picture, only inside an unreal, modified, contracted, concave space. One saw in them the same things as one saw in the first instance in the painting, but decomposed and recomposed according to a different law. Here, the mirror is saying nothing that has already been said before. Yet its position is more or less completely central: its upper edge is exactly on an imaginary line running half-way between the top and the bottom of the painting, it hangs right in the middle of the far wall (or at least in the middle of the portion we can see); it ought, therefore, to be governed by the same lines of perspective as the picture itself; we might well expect the same studio, the same painter, the same canvas to be arranged within it according to an identical space; it could be the perfect duplication.

In fact, it shows us nothing of what is represented in the picture itself. Its motionless gaze extends out in front of the picture, into that necessarily invisible region which forms its exterior face, to apprehend the figures arranged in that space. Instead of surrounding visible objects, this mirror cuts straight through the whole field of the representation, ignoring all it might apprehend within that field, and restores visibility to that which resides outside all view. But the invisibility that it overcomes in this way is not the invisibility of what is hidden: it does not make its way around any obstacle, it is not distorting any perspective, it is addressing itself to what is invisible both because of the picture's structure and because of its existence as painting. What it is reflecting is that which all the figures within the painting are looking at so fixedly, or at least those who are looking straight ahead; it is

therefore what the spectator would be able to see if the painting extended further forward, if its bottom edge were brought lower until it included the figures the painter is using as models. But it is also, since the picture does stop there, displaying only the painter and his studio, what is exterior to the picture, in so far as it is a picture – in other words, a rectangular fragment of lines and colours intended to represent something to the eyes of any possible spectator. At the far end of the room, ignored by all, the unexpected mirror holds in its glow the figures that the painter is looking at (the painter in his represented, objective reality, the reality of the painter at his work); but also the figures that are looking at the painter (in that material reality which the lines and the colours have laid out upon the canvas). These two groups of figures are both equally inaccessible, but in different ways: the first because of an effect of composition peculiar to the painting; the second because of the law that presides over the very existence of all pictures in general. Here, the action of representation consists in bringing one of these two forms of invisibility into the place of the other, in an unstable superimposition – and in rendering them both, at the same moment, at the other extremity of the picture – at that pole which is the very height of its representation: that of a reflected depth in the far recess of the painting's depth. The mirror provides a metathesis of visibility that affects both the space represented in the picture and its nature as representation; it allows us to see, in the centre of the canvas, what in the painting is of necessity doubly invisible.

A strangely literal, though inverted, application of the advice given, so it is said, to his pupil by the old Pachero when the former was working in his studio in Seville: 'The image should stand out from the frame.'

II

[...] We must therefore pretend not to know who is to be reflected in the depths of that mirror, and interrogate that reflection in its own terms.

First, it is the reverse of the great canvas represented on the left. The reverse, or rather the right side, since it displays in full face what the canvas, by its position, is hiding from us. Furthermore, it is both in opposition to the window and a reinforcement of it. Like the window, it provides a ground which is common to the painting and to what lies outside it. But the window operates by the continuous movement of an effusion which, flowing from right to left, unites the attentive figures, the painter, and the canvas, with the spectacle they are observing; whereas the mirror, on the other hand, by means of a violent, instantaneous movement, a movement of pure surprise, leaps out from the picture in order to reach that which is observed yet invisible in front of it, and then, at the far end of its fictitious depth, to render it visible yet indifferent to every gaze. The compelling tracer line, joining the reflection to that which it is reflecting, cuts perpendicularly through the lateral flood of light. Lastly – and this is the mirror's third function – it stands adjacent to a doorway which forms an opening, like the mirror itself, in the far wall of the room. This doorway too forms a bright and sharply defined rectangle whose soft light does not shine through into the room. It would be nothing but a gilded panel if it were not recessed out from the room by means of one leaf of a carved door, the curve of a curtain, and the shadows of several steps. Beyond the steps, a corridor begins; but instead of losing itself in obscurity, it is dissipated in a yellow dazzle where the light, without coming in, whirls around on itself in dynamic repose. Against this background,

at once near and limitless, a man stands out in full-length silhouette; he is seen in profile; with one hand he is holding back the weight of a curtain; his feet are placed on different steps; one knee is bent. He may be about to enter the room; or he may be merely observing what is going on inside it, content to surprise those within without being seen himself. Like the mirror, his eyes are directed towards the other side of the scene; nor is anyone paying any more attention to him than to the mirror. We do not know where he has come from: it could be that by following uncertain corridors he has just made his way around the outside of the room in which these characters are collected and the painter is at work; perhaps he too, a short while ago, was there in the forefront of the scene, in the invisible region still being contemplated by all those eyes in the picture. Like the images perceived in the looking-glass, it is possible that he too is an emissary from that evident yet hidden space.

Even so, there is a difference: he is there in flesh and blood; he has appeared from the outside, on the threshold of the area represented; he is indubitable – not a probable reflection but an irruption. The mirror, by making visible, beyond even the walls of the studio itself, what is happening in front of the picture, creates, in its sagittal dimension, an oscillation between the interior and the exterior. One foot only on the lower step, his body entirely in profile, the ambiguous visitor is coming in and going out at the same time, like a pendulum caught at the bottom of its swing. He repeats on the spot, but in the dark reality of his body, the instantaneous movement of those images flashing across the room, plunging into the mirror, being reflected there, and springing out from it again like visible, new, and identical species. Pale, minuscule, those silhouetted figures in the mirror are challenged by the tall, solid stature of the man appearing in the doorway.

But we must move down again from the back of the picture towards the front of the stage; we must leave that periphery whose volute we have just been following. Starting from the painter's gaze, which constitutes an off-centre centre to the left, we perceive first of all the back of the canvas, then the paintings hung on the wall, with the mirror in their centre, then the open doorway, then more pictures, of which, because of the sharpness of the perspective, we can see no more than the edges of the frames, and finally, at the extreme right, the window, or rather the groove in the wall from which the light is pouring. This spiral shell presents us with the entire cycle of representation: the gaze, the palette and brush, the canvas innocent of signs (these are the material tools of representation), the paintings, the reflections, the real man (the completed representation, but as it were freed from its illusory or truthful contents, which are juxtaposed to it); then the representation dissolves again: we can see only the frames, and the light that is flooding the pictures from outside, but that they, in return, must reconstitute in their own kind, as though it were coming from elsewhere, passing through their dark wooden frames. And we do, in fact, see this light on the painting, apparently welling out from the crack of the frame; and from there it moves over to touch the brow, the cheekbones, the eyes, the gaze of the painter, who is holding a palette in one hand and in the other a fine brush... And so the spiral is closed, or rather, by means of that light, is opened.

This opening is not, like the one in the back wall, made by pulling back a door; it is the whole breadth of the picture itself, and the looks that pass across it are not those of a distant visitor. The frieze that occupies the foreground and the middle ground of the picture represents – if we include the painter – eight characters. Five of these, their

heads more or less bent, turned or inclined, are looking straight out at right angles to the surface of the picture. The centre of the group is occupied by the little Infanta, with her flared pink and grey dress. The princess is turning her head towards the right side of the picture, while her torso and the big panniers of her dress slant away slightly towards the left; but her gaze is directed absolutely straight towards the spectator standing in front of the painting. A vertical line dividing the canvas into two equal halves would pass between the child's eyes. Her face is a third of the total height of the picture above the lower frame. So that here, beyond all question, resides the principal theme of the composition; this is the very object of this painting. As though to prove this and to emphasize it even more, Velázquez has made use of a traditional visual device: beside the principal figure he has placed a secondary one, kneeling and looking in towards the central one. [...] Lastly, two other groups made up of two figures each: one of these groups is further away; the other, made up of the two dwarfs, is right in the foreground. [...] There are thus two centres around which the picture may be organized, according to whether the fluttering attention of the spectator decides to settle in this place or in that. [...]

What is there, then, we ask at last, in that place which is completely inaccessible because it is exterior to the picture, yet is prescribed by all the lines of its composition? What is the spectacle, what are the faces that are reflected first of all in the depths of the Infanta's eyes, then in the courtiers' and the painter's, and finally in the distant glow of the mirror? But the question immediately becomes a double one: the face reflected in the mirror is also the face that is contemplating it; what all the figures in the picture are looking at are the two figures to whose eyes they too

present a scene to be observed. The entire picture is looking out at a scene for which it is itself a scene. A condition of pure reciprocity manifested by the observing and observed mirror, the two stages of which are uncoupled at the two lower corners of the picture: on the left the canvas with its back to us, by means of which the exterior point is made into pure spectacle; to the right the dog lying on the floor, the only element in the picture that is neither looking at anything nor moving, because it is not intended, with its deep reliefs and the light playing on its silky hair, to be anything but an object to be seen.

Our first glance at the painting told us what it is that creates this spectacle-as-observation. It is the two sovereigns. One can sense their presence already in the respectful gaze of the figures in the picture, in the astonishment of the child and the dwarfs. We recognize them, at the far end of the picture, in the two tiny silhouettes gleaming out from the looking-glass. In the midst of all those attentive faces, all those richly dressed bodies, they are the palest, the most unreal, the most compromised of all the painting's images: a movement, a little light, would be sufficient to eclipse them. Of all these figures represented before us, they are also the most ignored, since no one is paying the slightest attention to that reflection which has slipped into the room behind them all, silently occupying its unsuspected space; in so far as they are visible, they are the frailest and the most distant form of all reality. Inversely, in so far as they stand outside the picture and are therefore withdrawn from it in an essential invisibility, they provide the centre around which the entire representation is ordered: it is they who are being faced, it is towards them that everyone is turned, it is to their eyes that the princess is being presented in her holiday clothes; from the canvas with its back to us to

the Infanta, and from the Infanta to the dwarf playing on the extreme right, there runs a curve (or again, the lower fork of the X opens) that orders the whole arrangement of the picture to their gaze and thus makes apparent the true centre of the composition, to which the Infanta's gaze and the image in the mirror are both finally subject.

In the realm of the anecdote, this centre is symbolically sovereign, since it is occupied by King Philip IV and his wife. But it is so above all because of the triple function it fulfils in relation to the picture. For in it there occurs an exact superimposition of the model's gaze as it is being painted, of the spectator's as he contemplates the painting, and of the painter's as he is composing his picture (not the one represented, but the one in front of us which we are discussing). These three 'observing' functions come together in a point exterior to the picture: that is, an ideal point in relation to what is represented, but a perfectly real one too, since it is also the starting-point that makes the representation possible. Within that reality itself, it cannot not be invisible. And yet, that reality is projected within the picture – projected and diffracted in three forms which correspond to the three functions of that ideal and real point. They are: on the left, the painter with his palette in his hand (a self-portrait of Velázquez); to the right, the visitor, one foot on the step, ready to enter the room; he is taking in the scene from the back, but he can see the royal couple, who are the spectacle itself, from the front; and lastly, in the centre, the reflection of the king and the queen, richly dressed, motionless, in the attitude of patient models.

A reflection that shows us quite simply, and in shadow, what all those in the foreground are looking at. It restores, as if by magic, what is lacking in every gaze: in the painter's, the model, which his represented double is duplicating over there in the picture; in the king's, his

portrait, which is being finished off on that slope of the canvas that he cannot perceive from where he stands; in that of the spectator, the real centre of the scene, whose place he himself has taken as though by usurpation. But perhaps this generosity on the part of the mirror is feigned; perhaps it is hiding as much as and even more than it reveals. That space where the king and his wife hold sway belongs equally well to the artist and to the spectator: in the depths of the mirror there could also appear – there ought to appear – the anonymous face of the passer-by and that of Velázquez. For the function of that reflection is to draw into the interior of the picture what is intimately foreign to it: the gaze which has organized it and the gaze for which it is displayed. But because they are present within the picture, to the right and to the left, the artist and the visitor cannot be given a place in the mirror: just as the king appears in the depths of the looking-glass precisely because he does not belong to the picture.

In the great volute that runs around the perimeter of the studio, from the gaze of the painter, with his motionless hand and palette, right round to the finished paintings, representation came into being, reached completion, only to dissolve once more into the light; the cycle was complete. The lines that run through the depth of the picture, on the other hand, are not complete; they all lack a segment of their trajectories. This gap is caused by the absence of the king – an absence that is an artifice on the part of the painter. But this artifice both conceals and indicates another vacancy which is, on the contrary, immediate; that of the painter and the spectator when they are looking at or composing the picture. It may be that, in this picture, as in all the representations of which it is, as it were, the manifest essence, the profound invisibility of what one sees is inseparable from the invisibility of the

person seeing – despite all mirrors, reflections, imitations, and portraits. Around the scene are arranged all the signs and successive forms of representation; but the double relation of the representation to its model and to its sovereign, to its author as well as to the person to whom it is being offered, this relation is necessarily interrupted. It can never be present without some residuum, even in a representation that offers itself as a spectacle. In the depth that traverses the picture, hollowing it into a fictitious recess and projecting it forward in front of itself, it is not possible for the pure felicity of the image ever to present in a full light both the master who is representing and the sovereign who is being represented.

Perhaps there exists, in this painting by Velázquez, the representation as it were, of Classical representation, and the definition of the space it opens up to us. And, indeed, representation undertakes to represent itself here in all its elements, with its images, the eyes to which it is offered, the faces it makes visible, the gestures that call it into being. But there, in the midst of this dispersion which it is simultaneously grouping together and spreading out before us, indicated compellingly from every side, is an essential void: the necessary disappearance of that which is its foundation – of the person it resembles and the person in whose eyes it is only a resemblance. This very subject – which is the same – has been elided. And representation, freed finally from the relation that was impeding it, can offer itself as representation in its pure form.

HANS HOLLEIN, MAN TRANSFORMS (1979)

THE SYSTEM OF OBJECTS

JEAN BAUDRILLARD

1968

I Models and Series

The Pre-Industrial Object and the Industrial Model

The status of the modern object is dominated by the MODEL/SERIES distinction. To some extent, things were ever thus. A privileged minority in society has always served as a testing-ground for successive styles whose solutions, methods and artifices were then disseminated by local craftsmen. All the same, one cannot exactly speak of 'models' or 'series' in connection with any time before the industrial era. For one thing, there was a far greater homogeneity among all objects in pre-industrial society, because the mode of their production was still everywhere handcraft, because they were far less specialized in function, and because the cultural range of forms was more restricted (there being little reference to earlier or to extraneous traditions); furthermore, there was a much tighter segregation between the class of objects that could lay claim to 'style' and the class of locally produced objects that had use value only. Today a farmhouse table has cultural value, but just thirty years ago its sole value arose from the purpose it served. In the 18th c. there was simply no relationship between a Louis XV table and a peasant's table: there was an unbridgeable gulf between the two types of object, just as there was between the two corresponding social classes. No single cultural system

embraced them both.¹ Nor can it be said that a Louis XIII table is the model of which the countless tables and chairs that later imitated it are the serial form.² A limited dissemination of craft techniques did occur here, but there was no dissemination of values: the 'model' remained absolute, for it was bound to a transcendent reality. No serial production in the modern sense could be based on it. The social order was what gave objects their standing. A person was noble or not: nobility was not the ultimate – privileged – term in a series but, rather, a grace that bestowed absolute distinction. In the realm of objects the equivalent of this transcendent idea of nobility is what we call the 'style' of a period. This distinction between pre-industrial 'period' objects and the 'models' of today is a very important one, because it allows us to get beyond the purely formal opposition and clarify the concrete relationship between model and series in our modern system. [...] Thanks to mass information and communications systems which promote models, there is now not only a well-established circulation of objects as such but also a 'psychological' circulation which constitutes a radical watershed between our industrial age and the pre-industrial age of the transcendent distinctiveness of period 'style.' Anyone who has bought a walnut bedroom set at Dubonbois Home Furnishings or a few mass-produced electrical household appliances, and may indeed have done so as a way of realizing a personal dream and as a mark of upward social mobility, knows full well at the same time, through the press, the cinema or the television, that completely 'harmonized' and 'fully functional' living spaces are on the market. [...] Indeed, both model and serial objects in the pure form are increasingly difficult to find. The transition from the one to the other is subject to an infinite differentiation. Just like the production process,

the object traverses every shade in the social spectrum. Such transitions are experienced in everyday life in terms of possibility and in terms of frustration: the model is internalized by those who are involved with serial objects, while the series is intimated, negated, transcended and lived in a contradictory manner by those who have to do with models. The socially immanent tendency whereby the series hews ever more narrowly to the model, while the model is continually being diffused into the series, has set up a perpetual dynamic which is in fact the very ideology of our society.

The 'Personalized' Object

It should be noted that the MODEL/SERIES scheme regarding the distribution of objects does not apply evenly to all categories. It works fine in the realm of clothing [...] or in that of cars [...]. The more specific an object's function, however, the more ambiguous things become; [...]. In the case of small utensils such as coffee mills, the notion of 'model' tends to become indistinguishable from that of 'type', because the object's function tends very largely to absorb differences of status, which may eventually amount to no more than the contrast between luxury models and serial models. [...] At the opposite extreme, when we turn our attention to machines – collective objects par excellence – we find that there is no such thing, either, as a luxury version of a pure machine: a rolling-mill, even if it is the only example of its type in the world, is still, from the moment it appears, a serial object. One machine may be more 'modern' than another, but this does not make it the 'model' for which other, less advanced machines constitute the corresponding series. In order to ensure comparable performance, it will be necessary to build other machines

of the same type – that is, to construct a pure series on the basis of this first member. There is no place here for a range of calibrated differences that might serve as the basis of a psychological dynamic. At the level of pure function, since there are no combinative variants, there cannot be any models either.⁴ The psycho-sociological dynamic of model and series does not, therefore, operate at the level of the object's primary function, but merely at the level of a secondary function, at the level of the 'personalized' object. That is to say: at the level of an object grounded simultaneously in individual requirements and in that system of differences which is, properly speaking, the cultural system itself.

Choice

No object is proposed to the consumer as a single variety. We may not be granted the material means to buy it, but what our industrial society always offers us 'a priori,' as a kind of collective grace and as the mark of a formal freedom, is choice. This availability of the object is the foundation of 'personalization':⁵ only if the buyer is offered a whole range of choices can he transcend the strict necessity of his purchase and commit himself personally to something beyond it. Indeed, we no longer even have the option of not choosing, of buying an object on the sole grounds of its utility, for no object these days is offered for sale on such a 'zero-level' basis. Our freedom to choose causes us to participate in a cultural system willy-nilly. [...] the most important thing about the fact of choosing is that it assigns you a place in the overall economic order. According to John Stuart Mill, choosing such and such an object in order to distinguish oneself from other people is in itself of service to society. Increasing the number of

objects makes it easier for society to divert the faculty of choice onto them, so neutralizing the threat that the personal demand for choice always represents for it. Clearly 'personalization,' far from being a mere advertising ploy, is actually a basic ideological concept of a society which 'personalizes' objects and beliefs solely in order to integrate persons more effectively.

Marginal Difference

The corollary of the fact that every object reaches us by way of a choice is the fact that fundamentally no object is offered as a serial object, that every single object claims model status. The most insignificant object must be marked off by some distinguishing feature – a colour, an accessory, a detail of one sort or another. [...] These are what David Riesman calls marginal differences; perhaps it would be more exact to call them inessential differences. The fact is that at the level of the industrial object and its technological coherence the demand for personalization can be met only in inessentials. [...] Of course, the more the object must respond to the demands of personalization, the more its essential characteristics are burdened by extrinsic requirements. [...] 'Marginal' difference is thus not solely marginal, for it can run counter to an object's technical essence. The personalization function is not just an added value – it is also a parasitic value. Indeed, from the technological standpoint it is impossible to conceive of an object in an industrial system being personalized without thereby losing some measure of its optimal technical quality. The dictates of production bear the most responsibility here, for they play unrestrainedly on inessentials in order to promote consumption. [...] The point is, of course, that all these 'specific' differences are

themselves picked up and mass-produced in serial form. And this secondary seriality is what constitutes fashion. Ultimately, therefore, every object is a model, yet at the same time there are no more models. What we are left with in the end are successive limited series, a disjointed transition to ever more restricted series based on ever more minute and ever more specific differences. There are simply no more absolute models - and no more serial objects devoid of value categorically opposed to them. If it were otherwise, there would be no psychological basis for choice - and hence no cultural system. Or at least, no cultural system capable of embracing modern industrial society in its entirety.

The Ideal Nature of Models

How does this system of personalization and integration work? Its operation depends in the first place on the fact that each 'specific' difference continually negates and disavows the object's serial reality to the benefit of the model. Objectively, as we have seen, such differences are inessential. Furthermore, they often mask technical shortcomings.⁷ They are in fact differences by default. They are always experienced, however, as features conferring distinction, indicative of value - as differences of overmeasure. [...] Such marginal differences are the motor of the series, and fuel the mechanism of integration. Series and model should not be conceived of as two poles of a formal opposition, with the model being viewed as a sort of essence which - once divided and multiplied, so to speak, by virtue of the concept of 'mass' - gives birth to the series. [...] The fact is that the model is everywhere discernible in the series. It inhabits the slightest 'specific' difference between one object and the next. Above we

noted the same tendency in collecting, where each item in a collection is marked by a relative difference which momentarily lends it a privileged status - the status, in effect, of a model; all such relative differences refer to all the others, and in aggregate they constitute absolute difference - or rather, fundamentally, just the idea of absolute difference, which is precisely what the Model is. [...] What is integrated and invested in the model is the whole evolution of the series. The fact that the model is just an idea is, moreover, the only thing that makes the actual process of personalization possible. The notion that consciousness could be personalized in an object is absurd: it is personalized, rather, in a difference, because only a difference, by referring to the absolute singularity of the Model, can thereby refer at the same time to what is really being signified here, namely the absolute singularity of the user, the buyer or (as we saw above) the collector. Paradoxically, then, it is through an idea that is both vague and shared by all that everyone may come to experience himself as unique. Reciprocally, it is only continual self-individualization on the basis of the range of serial distinctions that allows the imaginary consensus of the idea of the model to be revived. Personalization and integration go strictly hand in hand. That is the miracle of the system.

From the Model to the Series The Technical Deficit of the Serial Object

Now that we have analysed the formal play of differences by means of which the serial object manifests itself, and is experienced, as model, it is time to examine the real differences that distinguish the model from the series. For naturally the upward tendency of differential valorization

relative to the ideal model masks the inverse reality of the destructuring and drastic downgrading of the serial object relative to the real model. Of all the servitudes visited upon the serial object, the most obvious concerns its durability and its technical quality. The imperatives of personalization and production combined cause a proliferation of accessory features to the detriment of strict use value. The first effect of all the innovations and all the vagaries of fashion is to render objects more shoddy and ephemeral. Vance Packard points up this tendency, listing 'three different ways that products can be made obsolescent': Obsolescence of function. [...] Obsolescence of quality. [...] Obsolescence of desirability. [...] The first type of obsolescence – the functional type – is certainly laudable...⁸ The last two aspects of this scheme work together. The accelerated replacement of models itself affects the object's quality. [...] As manufacturers themselves will discreetly admit, the quality of most serial objects could be substantially improved with no significant increase in production costs. Deliberately debased parts are just as expensive to manufacture as normal ones... BUT THE OBJECT CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO ESCAPE FROM EPHEMERALITY OR FROM FASHION. This is the fundamental characteristic of the series: the objects that compose it are weakened on a systematic basis. In a world of (relative) affluence, the shoddiness of objects replaces the scarcity of objects as the expression of poverty. The series is forcefully imposed for a brief cross-section of time; its universe is distinctly perishable, THE OBJECT CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO ESCAPE DEATH. Unfettered technological progress would doubtless override this mortality of the object, but the strategy of production strives constantly to maintain it.¹¹ Ernest Dichter speaks, in connection with selling, of a 'strategy of desire;' we might well speak here of a strategy of

frustration. These two strategies together serve to ensure the exclusive rule of the goals of production – indeed, production has now emerged as an all-surpassing agency with the power not merely of life but also of death over objects.¹² The model, by contrast, is privileged in that it lasts (though only in a relative sense, for it too is caught in the speeded-up cycle of objects). It is granted solidity, entitled to 'loyalty.' Paradoxically, it has come to dominate an area traditionally reserved, it would seem, for the series, namely use value. This superiority of the model, reinforced by the influence of fashion – that is, the combination of technical and formal qualities – are what constitute its superior 'functionality.'

The 'Style' Deficit of the Serial Object

In parallel fashion, when we compare the serial object to the model we find that the serial object's physical attributes, just like its technical ones, are distinctly inferior. [...] It is the heft, hardness, grain or 'warmth' of a material whose presence or absence serves as a marker of difference. Such tactile characteristics are close to the most profound defining qualities of the model – far more so than the visual values of colour and form, which are more easily transposed to series because they are better suited to the needs of marginal differentiation. Of course, even colours and forms are never integrated unscathed into a series. Finish is wanting, as is inventiveness. Faithfully transposed as they may be, forms suffer a subtle loss of their originality. What the serial object lacks is thus less the material itself than a certain consistency between material and form which ensures the model's finished quality. In series this consistency, this set of necessary relations, is destroyed for the sake of the differentiating action of forms, colours and

accessories. Style gives way to combination. The process of downgrading referred to above in connection with the technical aspect is here more of a destructuring tendency. In the case of the model object, details and the workings of details are not the point. Rolls-Royces are black, and that's that.¹³ The model is literally *bors-série*, without peer – hence out of the game: only the 'personalization' of objects allows the play of differences to expand in proportion with the length of the series (as when fifteen or twenty different shades are available for a single make of car); at the other extreme – the return to pure utility – the play of differences once more ceases to exist (for a very long time the Citroën 2cv came only in a grey that was hardly a colour at all). The model has a harmony, a unity, a homogeneity, a consistency of space, form, substance, and function; it is, in short, a syntax. The serial object is merely juxtaposition, haphazard combination, inarticulate discourse. As a de-totalized form, it is nothing more than a collection of details relating in mechanical fashion to parallel series. [...] The object is no longer anything more than a conglomeration of details and the crossroads of a variety of series. [...]

Class Differences

By now the reader should be getting a better feel for the distinction between model and series. More even than its consistency, it is the nuancing of the model that makes it distinctive. At present we are witnessing an attempt to stylize serial interiors – to 'bring good taste to the masses.' The result, generally speaking, is 'all in the same colour' and 'all in the same style': one may have a 'baroque living-room,' a 'kitchen in blue,' etc. What is presented as a 'style,' however, is fundamentally a mere stereotype, the

unnuanced generalization of a particular detail or aspect. The fact is that the nuance (within a unity) has come to characterize the model, while difference (within uniformity) has come to characterize the series. Nuances in this sense are infinite in number, being emphases ever susceptible of reinvention in accordance with an open-ended syntax. Differences are finite in number, being the result of systematic variations on a single paradigm. Let us not be misled by the apparent scarcity of nuances and the apparent profusion of differences (due to their massive dissemination), for structurally speaking the fact remains that nuances are inexhaustible (the model in this connection may be said to come close to the work of art), whereas the serial difference is part of a finite combinatorial system or tablature which, though it no doubt changes continually in response to fashion, is nevertheless, for each synchronic moment considered, limited by and strictly subject to the dictates of production. In sum, the series offers the immense majority of people a restricted range of choices, while a tiny minority enjoy access to the model and its infinite nuances. For the majority a range which, however extensive it may be, is composed of invariable elements – generally the most obvious ones; for the minority a multitude of random possibilities. For the majority a set code of values; for the minority endless invention. We are thus indeed clearly dealing with class status and class distinctions. The redundancy of its secondary features is an attempt to compensate for the serial object's loss of essential qualities. Colours, contrasts and the 'modern' look are thus overloaded with significance; indeed, the serial object's modernity is stressed at the precise moment when the model is sloughing modernity off. Whereas the model retains an airiness, a discretion, and a 'naturalness' that is the epitome of culture, the serial object remains stuck fast

in its quest for uniqueness, and betrays a constrained culture, an optimism in the worst of taste, and an emptyheaded humanism. For the serial object has its own class-specific script, its own rhetoric – just as the model has its own rhetoric of reticence, veiled functionality, perfection and eclecticism.¹⁴ Another expression of this redundancy is accumulation. There are always too many objects in serial interiors. And too many objects means too little space. Promiscuity or saturation occur as reactions to scarcity. Loss of quality must be made up for by the sheer number of objects.¹⁵ The model has its own space, in which objects are neither too close to one another nor too far apart. The model interior is given structure by these relative distances, and if anything it tends towards the opposite kind of redundancy: connotation by emptiness.¹⁶

The Present as Privilege

Another axis of comparison in distinguishing model from series is time. We have noted that the serial object is designed not to last. [...] Where the abundance of objects increases, it always does so under the constraints of a calculated scarcity. That, however, is the problem of the object's technical durability. The immediate experience of the object, as determined by fashion, is another matter. A rapid sociological examination of the market in antiques reveals that it is governed by the same laws and organized fundamentally in accordance with the same MODEL/SERIES scheme as the market in 'industrial' products. [...] There is a status attached to regression in time, and one's means are liable to determine whether one acquires a genuine ancient Greek vase or a mere reproduction, a Roman amphora or a Spanish pitcher. In the world of objects the past and the exotic have a social dimension, a relationship to culture and

income. The leisured classes go to their antique dealers for medieval, *haute époque* or French Regency furniture; the cultivated middle classes scour flea-market junk stalls for the wherewithal to re-create a solidly bourgeois cultural décor with 'authentic' peasant touches; and rustic themes are just perfect for service-sector employees enamoured of the largely bourgeoisified country interiors of the previous generation, or of provincial 'period styles' that are really hybrid forms impossible to date and having nothing but the vaguest echo of a 'period.' Each social class thus has its very own cut-price museum. Only workers and peasants still largely shun antiques. [...] This is in no way to downplay the need to 'personalize' – which is the same for all; it is just that the only people who can regress in time are those who can afford it. Difference – in this case culturalized difference – is what creates value, and it has to be paid for. Models and series are just as easy to find in the realm of cultural nostalgia as in the immediacy of fashion. If we look to see what in this range of possibilities has the maximum value, we find that it is either the most avant-garde of objects or objects from the past with an aristocratic dimension: either a glass-and-aluminium villa with elliptical contours or an 18th c. *château* – either the ideal future or the ancient régime. Conversely the pure series, the unmarked term, is located, not exactly in the present, which is, along with the future, the time of the avant-garde and of the model, nor in that transcendent past which is the preserve of the well-to-do and their acquired culture, but instead in an 'immediate' past, an indefinite past which is fundamentally a sort of belated present, a limbo into which yesterday's models have just recently fallen. In clothing styles the pace of change is very rapid, and the office workers of today wear dresses derived from last season's haute couture models. In furnishing, however, what has wide currency in the present is whatever

was in high fashion a few years or even a generation ago. Serial time here is always the time of the wave before, so to speak. As far as their furniture is concerned, most people live in a time which is not theirs, a time of generality, of insignificance, the time of that which is not modern but not yet antique (and, no doubt, never will be antique): the equivalent in time of suburban impersonality in space. By comparison with the model the series does not stand merely for a loss of uniqueness of style, of nuances, and of authenticity: it stands also for the loss of the real dimension of time – for it belongs to a kind of empty sector of everyday life, a negative realm automatically filled up with senescent models. For only models change; series merely follow upon one another in the wake of a model with which they can never catch up. That is where their true unreality lies.

A Misadventure of the Person

‘The product now in demand is neither a staple nor a machine, it is a personality’ according to David Riesman.¹⁷ Personal achievement is indeed an obligation haunting the modern consumer in the context of the forced mobility imposed by the MODEL/SERIES system (which is, incidentally, but one aspect of a much larger structure of social mobility and aspiration). In the area which concerns us here, this constraint is paradoxical: it is clear that in the act of personalized consumption the subject, in his very insistence on being a subject, succeeds in manifesting himself only as an object of economic demand. His project, filtered and fragmented in advance, is dashed by the very process that is supposed to realize it. Since ‘specific differences’ are produced on an industrial scale, any choice he can make is ossified from the outset; only the illusion of personal distinctiveness remains. In seeking to add that ‘something’

which will make for uniqueness, consciousness is reified in an even more intimate way, precisely because it is reified right down to that particular detail. Such is the paradox of alienation: a living choice is embodied in dead differences, indulgence in which dooms the subjective project to self-negation and despair. This is the ideological function of the system: increasing status is nothing but a game, for all differences are integrated in advance. The very deceit with which the whole arrangement is shot through is an integral part of that arrangement, on account of the system’s perpetual forward flight. Yet are we quite justified in speaking of alienation here? Overall, the system of manipulated personalization is experienced by the vast majority of consumers as freedom. Only to a critical eye does this freedom appear merely formal, and the process of personalization as a misadventure of the person. Even in cases where advertising motivates on the basis of nothing at all (as where the same product goes by different brand names, where differences are illusory or where quality is erratic) – even where the choice is undoubtedly a trap – it still cannot be denied that even superficial differences are real as soon as someone invests them with value. [...] No theory of needs can authorize us to assign priority to one actually experienced satisfaction over any other. If the demand for self-worth is so deep-seated that in the absence of any alternative it embodies itself in a ‘personalized’ object, what basis do we have for rejecting this tendency, and in the name of what ‘authentic’ essential value could we do so?

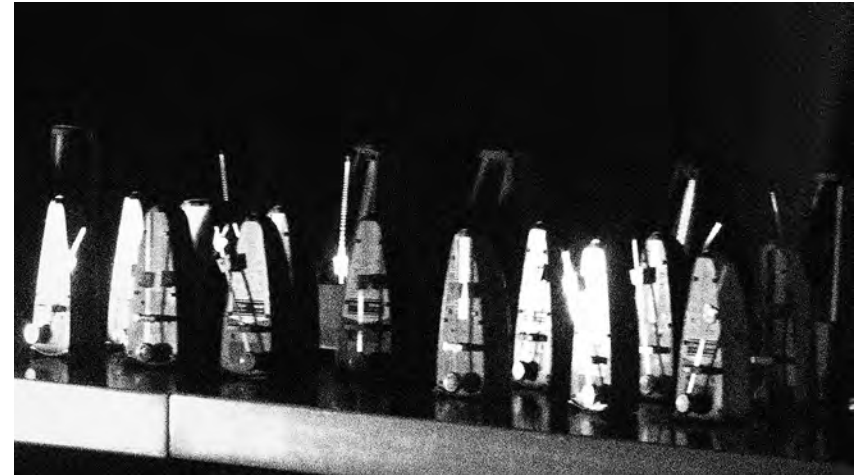
The Ideology of Models

The system we have been describing reposes upon an ideology of democracy; it claims to be an aspect of social progress – to be what makes it possible for all gradually to

gain access to models by virtue of a continual sociological upward movement which is carrying each stratum of society in turn to greater material luxury, and, from one 'personalized' difference to the next, ever closer to the absolute model. Two objections may be raised to this account of things. In the first place, we find that we are in fact, in our 'consumer society,' farther and farther away from equality before the object. The idea of the model has been obliged to seek refuge, concretely, in ever more subtle and definitive differences [...]. A seeming equality attaches to the fact that all objects obey the same 'functional' imperative. But this formal democratization of cultural status conceals other inequalities which are far more serious in that they affect the very reality of the object, its technical quality, its substance and its life-span. The privileges of the model are no longer institutional, it is true; they have, as it were, been internalized – but this has merely made them more tenacious. Just as, in the wake of the bourgeois revolution, no other classes ever gradually acquired positions of political responsibility, so likewise, in the wake of the industrial revolution, consumers have never won equality before the object. The second point is that it is a delusion to take the model for an ideal point which the series will eventually be able to rejoin. The possession of objects frees us only as possessors, and always refers us back to the infinite freedom to possess more objects: the only progression possible here is up the ladder of objects, but this is a ladder that leads nowhere, being itself responsible for nourishing the inaccessible abstraction of the model. For the model is basically merely an idea, that is, a transcendence internal to the system – and the system in its entirety can continue in its forward flight indefinitely. There is no prospect of a model entering a series without being simultaneously replaced by another

model. [...] Models move along faster than series: they inhabit the present, whereas series float somewhere between past and present, wearing themselves out in the vain attempt to catch up with models. This perpetual cycle of aspiration and disillusion, dynamically orchestrated at the level of production, constitutes the arena in which objects are pursued. There is a kind of inevitability at work here. Once a whole society articulates itself around models and focuses on them; once production strives in every way possible towards the systematic breaking down of models into series, and series in their turn into marginal differences or combinative variants, until at last objects come to have a status just as ephemeral as that of words or images; once the systematic stretching of series turns the whole edifice into a paradigm, but a paradigm whose ordering is irreversible, in that the ladder of status is fixed and the rules of the game of status are the same for everyone; once we fall under the sway of this managed convergence, this planned flimsiness, this continually eroded synchrony – then all negation becomes impossible. There are no more overt contradictions, no more structural changes, no more social dialectics. For the tendency which seems, in accordance with technical progress, to mobilize the whole system in no way challenges that system's ability to remain unmoving and stable in itself. Everything is in movement, everything shifts before our eyes, everything is continually being transformed – yet nothing really changes. This is a society whose embrace of technological progress enables it to make every conceivable revolution, just so long as those revolutions are confined within its bounds. For all its increased productivity, our society does not open the door to one single structural change.

1 Differences between classes of objects are doubtless never quite so sharp as those between social classes, however. The absolute hierarchical distinction between orders of society is mitigated at the level of objects by use: a table, after all, serves the same basic function at every rung of the social ladder. 2 It is true that the Henri II sideboard has become a true serial object, but this was achieved via the very different route of the industrial production of cultural objects. 4 The work of art does not answer to the MODEL/SERIES scheme either. The same categorical alternative is posed here as for the machine: the machine fulfils or does not fulfil a function, the work of art is genuine or fake. There are no marginal differences. Only at the level of the private and personalized object does the MODEL/SERIES dynamic come into play. 5 Where an object does exist in one version only, this is an indication of penury which strictly speaking antedates the consumer society. No society can afford to consider such a stage anything but provisional. 7 The technical downgrading of serial objects will be discussed in a moment; see also the section on 'Gadgets and Robots' above. 8 V. Packard, *The Waste Makers* (NY: D. McKay, 1960) 11 Of course this tendency is liable to be slowed by the operation of competition. But in countries (such as the US) where monopolistic production is the norm, true competition has long been nonexistent. 12 It must nonetheless be acknowledged that this cynical strategic perspective is not the only villain here, for there is unquestionably a degree of willing compliance on the part of consumers. [...] 13 Or sometimes grey, it is true. But the 'moral' paradigm remains in place. 14 In a system of this kind the two opposing terms cannot help but carry a surplus of meaning, for each is defined by reference to the other, and is to that extent redundant. Moreover, this redundancy of surplus meaning is the thing which, from the psycho-sociological point of view, defines the mode in which the system is directly experienced; although the present account may occasionally suggest the contrary, this can never be a system of pure structural oppositions. 15 The bourgeois tradition inclined naturally towards redundancy and accumulation [...]. The more 'functional' approach of modern interior design runs counter to that tendency, however, so that the over-occupation of space in a modern house is more seriously inconsistent than in a traditional one. 16 See 'formal connotation' above. 17 D. Riesman, with R. Denny & N. Glazer, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (1950)



GYÖRGY LIGETI, POÈME SYMPHONIQUE (1962)



KARL BLOSSFELDT, URFORMEN DER KUNST (1928)

DIFFERENCE AND REPETITION

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GILLES DELEUZE

1968

Introduction: Repetition and Difference

Repetition is not generality. Repetition and generality must be distinguished in several ways. Every formula which implies their confusion is regrettable: for example, when we say that two things are as alike as two drops of water; or when we identify “there is only a science of the general” with “there is only a science of that which is repeated.” Repetition and resemblance are different in kind – extremely so.

[...] The meeting between these two notions, difference and repetition, can no longer be assumed: it must come about as a result of interferences and intersections between these two lines: one concerning the essence of repetition, the other the idea of difference.

Chapter I – Difference in Itself

[...] There is a crucial experience of difference and a corresponding experiment: every time we find ourselves confronted or bound by a limitation or an opposition, we should ask what such a situation presupposes. It presupposes a swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences; a properly differential and original space and time; all of which persist alongside the simplifications of limitation and opposition. A more profound real element

must be defined in order for oppositions of forces or limitations of forms to be drawn, one which is determined as an abstract and potential multiplicity. [...] In any case, what is missing is the original, intensive depth which is the matrix of the entire space and the first affirmation of difference: here, that which only afterwards appears as linear limitation and flat opposition lives and simmers in the form of free differences. [...] Space and time display oppositions (and limitations) only on the surface, but they presuppose in their real depth far more voluminous, affirmed and distributed differences which cannot be reduced to the banality of the negative. It is as though we were in Lewis Carroll's mirror where everything is contrary and inverted on the surface, but "different" in depth. We shall see that it is the same with every space: geometrical, physical, biophysical, social and linguistic [...]. Our claim is not only that difference in itself is not "already" contradiction, but that it cannot be reduced or traced back to contradiction, since the latter is not more but less profound than difference. [...] One can always mediate, pass over into the antithesis, combine the synthesis, but the thesis does not follow: it subsists in its immediacy, in its difference which itself constitutes the true movement. Difference is the true content of the thesis, the persistence of the thesis. The negative and negativity do not even capture the phenomenon of difference, only the phantom or the epiphenomenon. The whole of Phenomenology is an epiphenomenology. [...]

Chapter II – Repetition for Itself

Repetition changes nothing in the object repeated, but does change something in the mind which contemplates it. Hume's famous thesis takes us to the heart of a problem:

since it implies, in principle, a perfect independence on the part of each presentation, how can repetition change something in the case of the repeated element? The rule of discontinuity or instantaneity in repetition tells us that one instance does not appear unless the other has disappeared – hence the status of matter as *mens momentanea*. However, given that repetition disappears even as it occurs, how can we say "the second," "the third" and "it is the same"? It has no in-itself. On the other hand, it does change something in the mind which contemplates it. This is the essence of modification. Hume takes as an example the repetition of cases of the type AB, AB, AB, A.... Each case or objective sequence AB is independent of the others. The repetition (although we cannot yet properly speak of repetition) changes nothing in the object or the state of affairs AB. On the other hand, a change is produced in the mind which contemplates: a difference, something new in the mind. Whenever A appears, I expect the appearance of B. Is this the for-itself of repetition, an originary subjectivity which necessarily enters into its constitution? Does not the paradox of repetition lie in the fact that one can speak of repetition only by virtue of the change or difference that it introduces into the mind which contemplates it? By virtue of a difference that the mind draws from repetition?

[...] In considering repetition in the object, we remain within the conditions which make possible an idea of repetition. But in considering the change in the subject, we are already beyond these conditions, confronting the general form of difference. The ideal constitution of repetition thus implies a kind of retroactive movement between these two limits. It is woven between the two. This is the movement which Hume so profoundly analyses when he shows that the cases contracted or grounded in the imagination remain no

less distinct in the memory or in the understanding. Not that we return to the state of matter which produces one case only when the other has disappeared. Rather, on the basis of the qualitative impression in the imagination, memory reconstitutes the particular cases as distinct, conserving them in its own “temporal space.” [...] In other words, the active syntheses of memory and understanding are superimposed upon and supported by the passive synthesis of the imagination. The constitution of repetition already implies three instances: the in-itself which causes it to disappear as it appears, leaving it unthinkable; the for-itself of the passive synthesis; and, grounded upon the latter, the reflected representation of a “for-us” in the active syntheses. Associationism possesses an irreplaceable subtlety. It is not surprising that Bergson rediscovers Hume’s analyses once he encounters an analogous problem: four o’clock strikes... each stroke, each disturbance or excitation, is logically independent of the other, *mens momentanea*. However, quite apart from any memory or distinct calculation, we contract these into an internal qualitative impression within this living present or passive synthesis which is duration. Then we restore them in an auxiliary space, a derived time in which we may reproduce them, reflect on them or count them like so many quantifiable external-impressions.

Habit draws something new from repetition – namely, difference (in the first instance understood as generality). In essence, habit is contraction. Language testifies to this in allowing us to speak of “contracting” a habit, and in allowing the verb “to contract” only in conjunction with a complement capable of constituting a habitude. [...]

It is easy to multiply reasons which make habit independent of repetition: to act is never to repeat, whether it be an action in process or an action already completed.

As we have seen, action has, rather, the particular as its variable and generality as its element. However, while generality may well be quite different from repetition, it nevertheless refers to repetition as the hidden basis on which it is constructed. Action is constituted, in the order of generality and in the field of variables which correspond to it, only by the contraction of elements of repetition. This contraction, however, takes place not in the action itself, but in a contemplative self which doubles the agent. Moreover, in order to integrate actions within a more complex action, the primary actions must in turn play the role of elements of repetition within a “case,” but always in relation to a contemplative soul adjacent to the subject of the compound action. Underneath the self which acts are little selves which contemplate and which render possible both the action and the active subject. [...]

The role of the imagination, or the mind which contemplates in its multiple and fragmented states, is to draw something new from repetition, to draw difference from it. For that matter, repetition is itself in essence imaginary, since the imagination alone here forms the “moment” of the *vis repetitiva* from the point of view of constitution: it makes that which it contracts appear as elements or cases of repetition. Imaginary repetition is not a false repetition which stands in for the absent true repetition: true repetition takes place in imagination. Between a repetition which never ceases to unravel itself and a repetition which is deployed and conserved for us in the space of representation there was difference, the for-itself of repetition, the imaginary. Difference inhabits repetition. On the one hand – lengthwise, as it were – difference allows us to pass from one order of repetition to another: from the instantaneous repetition which unravels itself to the actively represented repetition

through the intermediary of passive synthesis. On the other hand – in depth, as it were – difference allows us to pass from one order of repetition to another and from one generality to another within the passive syntheses themselves. The nods of the chicken's head accompany its cardiac pulsations in an organic synthesis before they serve as pecks in the perceptual synthesis with grain. And already in the series of passive syntheses, the generality originally formed by the contraction of “ticks” is redistributed in the form of particularities in the more complex repetition of “tick-tocks,” which are in turn contracted. In every way, material or bare repetition, so-called repetition of the same, is like a skin which unravels, the external husk of a kernel of difference and more complicated internal repetitions. Difference lies between two repetitions. Is this not also to say, conversely, that repetition lies between two differences, that it allows us to pass from one order of difference to another? Gabriel Tarde described dialectical development in this manner: a process of repetition understood as the passage from a state of general differences to singular difference, from external differences to internal difference – in short, repetition as the differentiator of difference. [...]

Conclusion

[...] When we consider repetition as an object of representation, we understand it in terms of identity, but we also then explain it in a negative manner. In effect, the identity of a concept does not qualify a repetition unless, at the same time, a negative force (whether of limitation or of opposition) prevents the concept from being further specified or differentiated in relation to the multiplicity that it subsumes. As we saw, matter unites the following

two characteristics: it allows a concept which is absolutely identical in as many exemplars as there are “times” or “cases”; and it prevents this concept from being further specified by virtue of its natural poverty, or its natural state of unconsciousness or alienation. Matter, therefore, is the identity of spirit – in other words, of the concept, but in the form of an alienated concept, without self-consciousness and outside itself. An essential feature of representation is that it takes a bare and material repetition as its model, a repetition understood in terms of the Same and explained in terms of the negative. [...] Identical elements repeat only on condition that there is an independence of “cases” or a discontinuity of “times” such that one appears only when the other has disappeared: within representation, repetition is indeed forced to undo itself even as it occurs. Or rather, it does not occur at all. Repetition in itself cannot occur under these conditions.

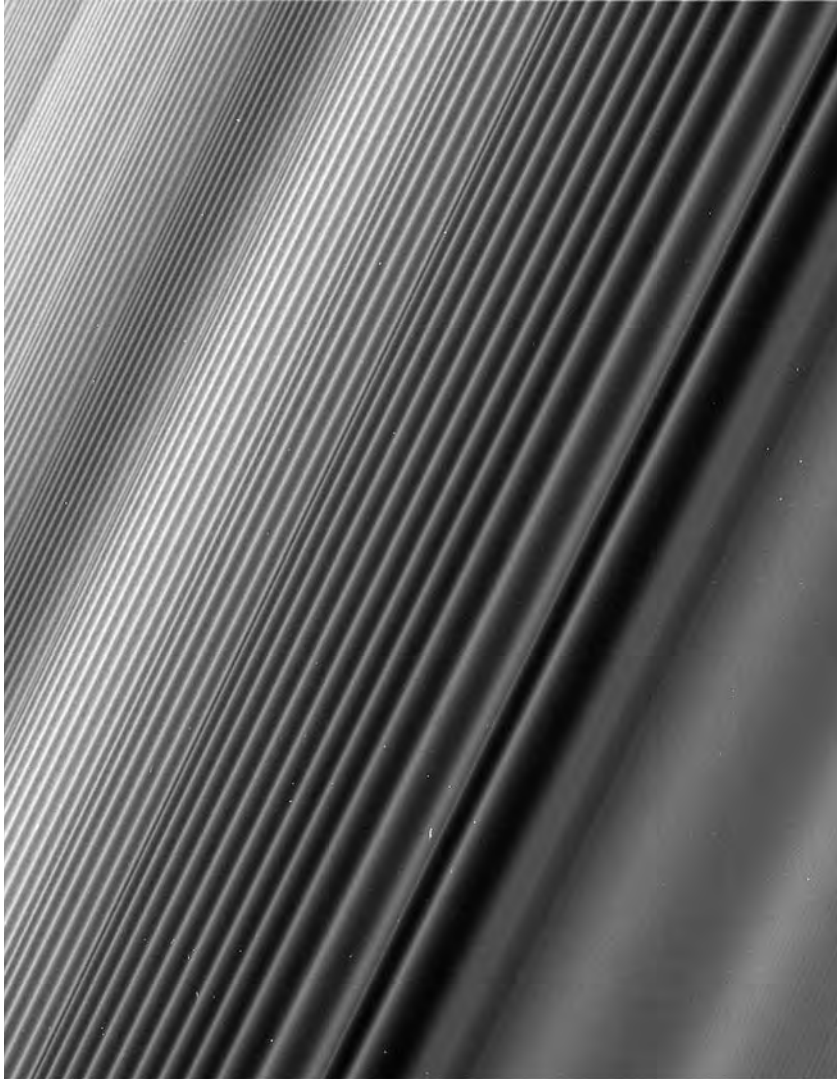
[...] The concept of difference was thereby confused with a simply conceptual difference, and difference was thereby understood within identity, since the concept in general was only the manner in which the principle of identity was deployed within representation. Repetition, for its part, could no longer be defined as other than a difference without concept. This definition obviously continued to presuppose the identity of the concept for that which was repeated, but instead of inscribing the difference within the concept, it placed it outside the concept in the form of a numerical difference, and placed the concept itself outside itself, as existing in as many exemplars as there were numerically distinct cases or times. It thereby invoked an external force, a form of exteriority capable of putting difference outside the identical concept, and the identical concept outside itself, by blocking its specification, in the same way as an internal force or form of inferiority capable

of putting difference into the concept and the concept into itself by means of a continued specification was invoked earlier. [...] Instead of representing difference by subordinating it to the identity of concepts, and thereby to the resemblance of perception, the opposition of predicates and the analogy of judgement, they liberate it and cause it to evolve in positive systems in which different is related to different, making divergence, disparity and decentring so many objects of affirmation which rupture the framework of conceptual representation. The powers of repetition include displacement and disguise, just as difference includes power of divergence and decentring. [...] The Idea makes one and the same problem of difference and repetition. There is an excess and an exaggeration peculiar to Ideas which makes difference and repetition the combined object, the “simultaneous” of the Idea. It is from this excess peculiar to Ideas that concepts unjustly profit, but in so doing betray and distort the nature of Ideas: in effect, concepts repartition this ideal excess into two parts, that of conceptual difference and that of difference without concept; that of the becoming-equal or the becoming-similar to its own proper identity on the part of the concept, and that of the condition by default which continues to presuppose this same identity, but as though blocked. Nevertheless, if we ask what blocks the concept, we see clearly that it is never some lack, default or opposing thing.

[...] The second consequence is that it is not enough to oppose two repetitions, one bare and material in accordance with the identity and default of the concept, the other clothed, psychical and metaphysical in accordance with the difference and excess of the always positive Idea. This second repetition should be seen as the “reason” of the first.

[...] Perhaps the highest object of art is to bring into play simultaneously all these repetitions, with their differences in kind and rhythm, their respective displacements and disguises, their divergences and decentrings; to embed them in one another and to envelop one or the other in illusions the “effect” of which varies in each case. Art does not imitate, above all because it repeats; it repeats all the repetitions, by virtue of an internal power (an imitation is a copy, but art is simulation, it reverses copies into simulacra). Even the most mechanical, the most banal, the most habitual and the most stereotyped repetition finds a place in works of art, it is always displaced in relation to other repetitions, and it is subject to the condition that a difference may be extracted from it for these other repetitions. For there is no other aesthetic problem than that of the insertion of art into everyday life. The more our daily life appears standardised, stereotyped and subject to an accelerated reproduction of objects of consumption, the more art must be injected into it in order to extract from it that little difference which plays simultaneously between other levels of repetition, and even in order to make the two extremes resonate – namely, the habitual series of consumption and the instinctual series of destruction and death. Art thereby connects the tableau of cruelty with that of stupidity, and discovers underneath consumption a schizophrenic clattering of the jaws, and underneath the most ignoble destructions of war, still more processes of consumption. It aesthetically reproduces the illusions and mystifications which make up the real essence of this civilisation, in order that Difference may at last be expressed with a force of anger which is itself repetitive and capable of introducing the strangest selection, even if this is only a contraction here and there – in other words, a freedom for the end of a world. Each art has its interrelated

techniques or repetitions, the critical and revolutionary power of which may attain the highest degree and lead us from the sad repetitions of habit to the profound repetitions of memory, and then to the ultimate repetitions of death in which our freedom is played out. We simply wish to offer three examples, however diverse and disparate these may be: first, the manner in which all the repetitions coexist in modern music (such as the development of the leitmotiv in Berg's *Wozzeck*); second, the manner in which, within painting, Pop Art pushed the copy, copy of the copy, etc., to that extreme point at which it reverses and becomes a simulacrum (such as Warhol's remarkable "serial" series, in which all the repetitions of habit, memory and death are conjugated); and finally the novelistic manner in which little modifications are torn from the brute and mechanical repetitions of habit, which in turn nourish repetitions of memory and ultimately lead to repetitions in which life and death are in play, and risk reacting upon the whole and introducing into it a new selection, all these repetitions coexisting and yet being displaced in relation to one another (Butor's *La modification*; or indeed *Last Year at Marienbad*, which shows the particular techniques of repetition which cinema can deploy or invent).



NASA, CASSINI SPACECRAFT, WAVE STRUCTURE IN SATURN'S RINGS KNOWN AS THE JANUS 2:1 SPIRAL DENSITY WAVE (4.06.2017)

Soon words enough had passed between them to decide their direction towards the comparatively quiet and retired gravel-walk, where the power of conversation would make the present hour a blessing indeed; and prepare for it all the immortality which the happiest recollections of their own future lives could bestow. There they exchanged again those feelings and those promises which had once before seemed to secure every thing, but which had been followed by so many, many years of division and estrangement. There they returned again into the past, more exquisitely happy, perhaps, in their re-union, than when it had first been projected... And there, as they slowly paced... they could indulge in those retrospections and acknowledgements, and especially in those explanations of what had directly preceded the present moment, which were so poignant and so ceaseless in interest. All the little variations of the last week were gone through; and of yesterday and today there could scarcely be an end.

JANE AUSTEN, PERSUASION (1917)



LEONARD DESSON, THE BIG DUCK ON THE FARM IN FLANDERS (1962)

MARGINS OF PHILOSOPHY

JACQUES DERRIDA

1972

Différance

I will speak, therefore, of the letter *a*, this initial letter which it apparently has been necessary to insinuate, here and there, into the writing of the word difference; [...]

[...] Now it happens, I would say in effect, that this graphic difference (*a* instead of *e*), this marked difference between two apparently vocal notations, between two vowels, remains purely graphic: it is read, or it is written, but it cannot be heard. It cannot be apprehended in speech, and we will see why it also bypasses the order of apprehension in general. It is offered by a mute mark, by a tacit monument, I would even say by a pyramid, thinking not only of the form of the letter when it is printed as a capital, but also of the text in Hegel's *Encyclopedia* in which the body of the sign is compared to the Egyptian Pyramid. The *a* of *différance*, thus, is not heard; it remains silent, secret and discreet as a tomb: *oikesis*. And thereby let us anticipate the delineation of a site, the familial residence and tomb of the proper in which is produced, by *différance*, the economy of death.

[...] The pyramidal silence of the graphic difference between the *e* and the *a* can function, of course, only within the system of phonetic writing, and within the language and grammar which is as historically linked to phonetic writing as it is to the entire culture inseparable from phonetic writing. [...] There is no purely and rigorously

phonetic writing. [...] And an examination of the structure and necessity of these nonphonetic signs quickly reveals that they can barely tolerate the concept of the sign itself. Better, the play of difference, which, as Saussure reminded us, is the condition for the possibility and functioning of every sign, is in itself a silent play. Inaudible is the difference between two phonemes which alone permits them to be and to operate as such. The inaudible opens up the apprehension of two present phonemes such as they present themselves. If there is no purely phonetic writing, it is that there is no purely phonetic phone. The difference which establishes phonemes and lets them be heard remains in and of itself inaudible, in every sense of the word.

It will be objected, for the same reasons, that graphic difference itself vanishes into the night, can never be sensed as a full term, but rather extends an invisible relationship, the mark of an inapparent relationship between two spectacles. Doubtless. But, from this point of view, that the difference marked in the “differ()nce” between the *e* and the *a* eludes both vision and hearing perhaps happily suggests that here we must be permitted to refer to an order which no longer belongs to sensibility. But neither can it belong to intelligibility, to the ideality which is not fortuitously affiliated with the objectivity of *theorein* or understanding.³ Here, therefore, we must let ourselves refer to an order that resists the opposition, one of the founding oppositions of philosophy, between the *sensible* and the *intelligible*. [...] What am I to do in order to speak of the *a* of différance? [...] In the delineation of différance everything is strategic and adventurous.

[...] We know that the verb *différer* (Latin verb *differre*) has two meanings which seem quite distinct;⁷ for example in *Littré* they are the object of two separate articles. In this

sense the Latin *differre* is not simply a translation of the Greek *diapherein*, and this will not be without consequences for us, linking our discourse to a particular language, and to a language that passes as less philosophical, less originally philosophical than the other. For the distribution of meaning in the Greek *diapherein* does not comport one of the two motifs of the Latin *differre*, to wit, the action of putting off until later, of taking into account, of taking account of time and of the forces of an operation that implies an economical calculation, a detour, a delay, a relay, a reserve, a representaton – concepts that I would summarize here in a word I have never used but that could be inscribed in this chain: *temporization*. *Différer* in this sense is to temporize, to take recourse consciously or unconsciously, in the temporal and temporizing mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment nor fulfillment of “desire” or “will,” and equally effects this suspension in a mode that annuls or tempers its own effect. [...] The other sense of *différer* is the more common and identifiable one: to be not identical, to be other, discernible, etc. When dealing with differen(ts)(ds), a word that can be written with a final *ts* or a final *ds*, as you will, whether it is a question of dissimilar otherness or of allergic and polemical otherness, an interval, a distance, spacing, must be produced between the elements other, and be produced with a certain perseverance in repetition.⁸

[...] Différance as temporization, différance as spacing. How are they to be joined? Let us start from the problematic of the sign and of writing. The sign is usually said to be put in the place of the thing itself, the present thing, “thing” here standing equally for meaning or referent. The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present. When we cannot grasp or show the thing,

state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. We take or give signs. We signal. The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence. Whether we are concerned with the verbal or the written sign, with the monetary sign, or with electoral delegation and political representation, the circulation of signs defers the moment in which we can encounter the thing itself make it ours, consume or expend it, touch it, see it, intuit its presence. What I am describing here in order to define it is the classically determined structure of the sign in all the banality of its characteristics – signification as the *différance* of temporization. And this structure presupposes that the sign, which defers presence, is conceivable only on the basis of the presence that it defers and moving toward the deferred presence that it aims to reappropriate. According to this classical semiology, the substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both secondary and provisional: secondary due to an original and lost presence from which the sign thus derives; provisional as concerns this final and missing presence toward which the sign in this sense is a movement of mediation.

[...] To put into question the secondary and provisional characteristics of the sign, to oppose to them an “originary” *différance*, therefore would have two consequences:

1. One could no longer include *différance* in the concept of the sign, which always has meant the representation of a presence, and has been constituted in a system (thought or language) governed by and moving toward presence.
2. And thereby one puts into question the authority of presence, or of its simple symmetrical opposite, absence or lack. Thus one questions the limit which has always constrained us, which still constrains us – as inhabitants of a language and a system of thought – to formulate the meaning of Being in general as presence or absence, in the categories of being or beingness (*ousia*). [...]

But first let us remain within the semiological problematic in order to see *différance* as temporization and *différance* as spacing conjoined. Most of the semiological or linguistic researches that dominate the field of thought today, whether due to their own results or to the regulatory model that they find themselves acknowledging everywhere, refer genealogically to Saussure (correctly or incorrectly) as their common inaugurator. Now Saussure first of all is the thinker who put the arbitrary character of the sign and the differential character of the sign at the very foundation of general semiology, particularly linguistics. And, as we know, these two motifs – arbitrary and differential – are inseparable in his view. [...]

Now this principle of difference, as the condition for signification, affects the totality of the sign, that is the sign as both signified and signifier. The signified is the concept, the ideal meaning; and the signifier is what Saussure calls the “image,” the “psychical imprint” of a material, physical – for example, acoustical – phenomenon. We do not have to go into all the problems posed by these definitions here. Let us cite Saussure only at the point which interests us: “The conceptual side of value is made up solely of relations and differences with respect to the other terms of language, and the same can be said of its material side... Everything that has been said up to this point boils down to this: in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it.”¹²

The first consequence to be drawn from this is that the signified concept is never present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself. Essentially and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences. Such a play, *différance*, is thus no longer simply a concept, but rather the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general. For the same reason, *différance*, which is not a concept, is not simply a word, that is, what is generally represented as the calm, present, and self-referential unity of concept and phonic material. Later we will look into the word in general.

The difference of which Saussure speaks is itself, therefore, neither a concept nor a word among others. The same can be said, *a fortiori*, of *différance*. And we are thereby led to explicate the relation of one to the other.

In a language, in the system of language, there are only differences. Therefore a taxonomical operation can undertake the systematic, statistical, and classificatory inventory of a language. But, on the one hand, these differences play: in language, in speech too, and in the exchange between language and speech. On the other hand, these differences are themselves effects. They have not fallen from the sky fully formed, and are no more inscribed in a *topos noetos*, than they are prescribed in the gray matter of the brain. If the word “history” did not in and of itself convey the motif of a final repression of difference, one could say that only differences can be “historical” from the outset and in each of their aspects.

What is written as *différance*, then, will be the playing movement that “produces” – by means of something that is not simply an activity an activity – these differences, these effects of difference. This does not mean that the *différance* that produces differences is somehow before

them, in a simple and unmodified – in-different – present. *Différance* is the non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences. Thus, the name “origin” no longer suits it.

Since language, which Saussure says is a classification, has not fallen from the sky, its differences have been produced, are produced effects, but they are effects which do not find their cause in a subject or a substance, in a thing in general, a being that is somewhere present, thereby eluding the play of *différance*.

If such a presence were implied in the concept of cause in general, in the most classical fashion, we then would have to speak of an effect without a cause, which very quickly would lead to speaking of no effect at all. I have attempted to indicate a way out of the closure of this framework via the “trace,” which is no more an effect than it has a cause, but which in and of itself, outside its text, is not sufficient to operate the necessary transgression.

Since there is no presence before and outside semiological difference, what Saussure has written about language can be extended to the sign in general: “Language is necessary in order for speech to be intelligible and to produce all of its effects; but the latter is necessary in order for language to be established historically, the fact of speech always comes first.”¹³

Retaining at least the framework, if not the content, of this requirement formulated by Saussure, we will designate as *différance* the movement according to which language, or any code, any system of referral in general is constituted “historically” as a weave of differences. “Is constituted,” “is produced,” “is created,” “movement,” “historically,” etc., necessarily being understood beyond the metaphysical language in which they are retained, along with all-their implications.

[...] It is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called “present” element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not: what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as a modified present. An interval must separate the present from what it is not in order for the present to be itself, but this interval that constitutes it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and of itself, thereby also dividing, along with the present, everything that is thought on the basis of the present, that is, in our metaphysical language, every being, and singularly substance or the subject. In constituting itself, in dividing itself dynamically, this interval is what might be called spacing, the becoming-space of time or the becoming-time of space (temporization). And it is this constitution of the present, as an “originary” and irreducibly nonsimple (and therefore, *stricto sensu* nonoriginary) synthesis of marks, or traces of retentions and protentions (to reproduce analogically and provisionally a phenomenological and transcendental language that soon will reveal itself to be inadequate), that I propose to call *archi-writing*, *archi-trace*, or *différance*. Which (is) (simultaneously) spacing (and) temporization.

[...] Writing “*différant*”¹⁶ or “*différance*” (with an *a*) would have had the advantage of making it possible to translate Hegel at that particular point – which is also an absolutely decisive point in his discourse – without further notes or

specifications. And the translation would be, as it always must be, a transformation of one language by another. [...] Differences, thus, are “produced” – deferred – by *différance*. But what defers or who defers? In other words, what is *différance*? With this question we reach another level and another resource of our problematic.

What differs? Who differs? What is *différance*?

[...] [Saussure reminds us T]hat “language [which only consists of differences] is not a function of the speaking subject implies that the subject (in its identity with itself, or eventually in its consciousness of its identity with itself, its self-consciousness) is inscribed in language, is a “function” of language, becomes a speaking subject only by making its speech conform – even in so-called “creation,” or in so-called “transgression” – to the system of the rules of language as a system of differences, or at very least by conforming to the general law of *différance*, or by adhering to the principle of language which Saussure says is “spoken language minus speech.” “Language is necessary for the spoken word to be intelligible and so that it can produce all of its effects.”¹⁷

If, by hypothesis, we maintain that the opposition of speech to language is absolutely rigorous, then *différance* would be not only the play of differences within language but also the relation of speech to language, the detour through which I must pass in order to speak, the silent promise I must make; and this is equally valid for semiology in general, governing all the relations of usage to schemata, of message to code, etc.

[...] Before being so radically and purposely the gesture of Heidegger, this gesture was also made by Nietzsche and Freud, both of whom, as is well known, and sometimes in very similar fashion, put consciousness into question in its

assured certainty of itself. Now is it not remarkable that they both did so on the basis of the motif of *différance*?

Différance appears almost by name in their texts, and in those places where everything is at stake. I cannot expand upon this here; I will only recall that for Nietzsche “the great principal activity is unconscious,” and that consciousness is the effect of forces whose essence, byways, and modalities are not proper to it. Force itself is never present; it is only a play of differences and quantities. There would be no force in general without the difference between forces; and here the difference of quantity counts more than the content of the quantity, more than absolute size itself. “Quantity itself, therefore, is not separable from the difference of quantity. The difference of quantity is the essence of force, the relation of force to force. The dream of two equal forces, even if they are granted an opposition of meaning, is an approximate and crude dream, a statistical dream, plunged into by the living but dispelled by chemistry.”²⁰ Is not all of Nietzsche’s thought a critique of philosophy as an active indifference to difference, as the system of adaphoristic reduction or repression? Which according to the same logic, according to logic itself, does not exclude that philosophy lives in and on *différance*, thereby blinding itself to the same, which is not the identical. The same, precisely is *différance* (with an *a*) as the displaced and equivocal passage of one different thing to another, from one term of an opposition to the other. Thus one could reconsider all the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is constructed and on which our discourse lives, not in order to see opposition erase itself but to see what indicates that each of the terms must appear as the *différance* of the other, as the other different and deferred in the economy of the same [...]. And on the basis of this unfolding of the same as *différance*, we see

announced the sameness of *différance* and repetition in the eternal return. Themes in Nietzsche’s work that are linked to the symptomatology that always diagnoses the detour or ruse of an agency disguised in its *différance* e; or further, to the entire thematic of active interpretation, which substitutes incessant deciphering for the unveiling of truth as the presentation of the thing itself in its presence, etc. Figures without truth, or at least a system of figures not dominated by the value of truth, which then becomes only an included, inscribed, circumscribed function.

Thus, *différance* is the name we might give to the “active,” moving discord of different forces, and of differences of forces, that Nietzsche sets up against the entire system of metaphysical grammar, wherever this system governs culture, philosophy, and science. [...]

The two apparently different values of *différance* are hed together in Freudian theory: to differ as discernibility, distinction, separation, diastem, spacing; and to defer as detour, relay, reserve, temporization.

1. The concepts of trace (*Spur*), of breaching (*Bahnung*),²¹ and of the forces of breaching, from the Project on, are inseparable from the concept of difference. The origin of memory, and of the psyche as (conscious or unconscious) memory in general, can be described only by taking into account the difference between breaches. Freud says so overtly. There is no breach without difference and no difference without trace.
2. All the differences in the production of unconscious traces and in the processes of inscription (*Niederschrift*) can also be interpreted as moments of *différance*, in the sense of putting into reserve. According to a schema that never ceased to guide Freud’s thought, the movement of the trace is described as an effort of life to protect itself by deferring the dangerous investment, by constituting a reserve (*Vorrat*). And all the oppositions that furrow Freudian thought relate each of his concepts one to another as moments of a detour in the economy of *différance*. [...]

[...] A certain alterity – to which Freud gives the metaphysical name of the unconscious – is definitively exempt from every process of presentation by means of which we would call upon it to show itself in person. In this context, and beneath this guise, the unconscious is not, as we know, a hidden, virtual, or potential self-presence. It differs from, and defers, itself; which doubtless means that it is woven of differences, and also that it sends out delegates, representatives, proxies; but without any chance that the giver of proxies might “exist,” might be present, be “itself” somewhere, and with even less chance that it might become conscious. In this sense, contrary to the terms of an old debate full of the metaphysical investments that it has always assumed, the “unconscious” is no more a “thing” than it is any other thing, is no more a thing than it is a virtual or masked consciousness. This radical alterity as concerns every possible mode of presence is marked by the irreducibility of the aftereffect, the delay. In order to describe traces, in order to read the traces of “unconscious” traces (there are no “conscious” traces), the language of presence and absence, the metaphysical discourse of phenomenology, is inadequate. (Although the phenomenologist is not the only one to speak this language.)

The structure of delay (*Nachträglichkeit*) in effect forbids that one make of temporalization (temporization) a simple dialectical complication of the living present as an originary and unceasing synthesis a synthesis constantly directed back on itself, gathered in on itself and gathering – of retentional traces and protentional openings. The alterity of the “unconscious” makes us concerned not with horizons of modified – past or future – presents, but with a “past” that has never been present, and which never will be, whose future to come will never be a production or a reproduction in the form of presence. Therefore the

concept of trace is incompatible with the concept of retention, of the becoming-past of what has been present. One cannot think the trace and therefore, différance – on the basis of the present, or of the presence of the present.

A past that has never been present: this formula is the one that Emmanuel Levinas uses, although certainly in a nonpsychoanalytic way, to qualify the trace and enigma of absolute alterity: the Other.²⁴ Within these limits, and from this point of view at least, the thought of différance implies the entire critique of classical ontology undertaken by Levinas. And the concept of the trace, like that of différance thereby organizes, along the lines of these different traces and differences of traces, in Nietzsche’s sense, in Freud’s sense, in Levinas’s sense – these “names of authors” here being only indices – the network which reassembles and traverses our “era” as the delimitation of the ontology of presence.

Which is to say the ontology of beings and beingness. It is the domination of beings that différance everywhere comes to solicit, in the sense that *sollicitare*, in old Latin, means to shake as a whole, to make tremble in entirety. Therefore, it is the determination of Being as presence or as beingness that is interrogated by the thought of différance. Such a question could not emerge and be understood unless the difference between Being and beings were somewhere to be broached. First consequence: différance is not. It is not a present being, however excellent, unique, principal, or transcendent. It governs nothing, reigns over nothing, and nowhere exercises any authority. It is not announced by any capital letter. Not only is there no kingdom of différance, but différance instigates the subversion of every kingdom. Which makes it obviously threatening and infallibly dreaded by everything within us that desires a kingdom, the past or future presence of a

kingdom. And it is always in the name of a kingdom that one may reproach *différance* with wishing to reign, believing that one sees it aggrandize itself with a capital letter.

[...] What is the present? What is it to think the present in its presence?

Let us consider, for example, the 1946 text entitled *The Anaximander Fragment*.²⁵ In this text Heidegger recalls that the forgetting of Being forgets the difference between Being and beings:

“...to be the Being of beings is the matter of Being (*die Sache des Seins*). The grammatical form of this enigmatic, ambiguous genitive indicates a genesis, the emergence (*Herkunft*) of what is present from presencing (*des Anwesenden aus dem Anwesen*). Yet the essence (*Wesen*) of this emergence remains concealed (*verborgen*) along with the essence of these two words. Not only that, but even the very relation between presencing and what is present (*Anwesen und Anwesendem*) remains unthought. From early on it seems as though presencing and what is present were each something for itself. Presencing itself unnoticeably becomes something present...The essence of presencing (*Das Wesen des Anwesens*), and with it the distinction between presencing and what is present, remains forgotten. The oblivion of Being is oblivion of the distinction between Being and beings” (p. 50).

[...] What Heidegger wants to mark is this: the difference between Being and beings, the forgotten of metaphysics, has disappeared without leaving a trace. The very trace of difference has been submerged. If we maintain that *différance* (is) (itself) other than absence and presence, if it traces, then when it is a matter of the forgetting of the difference (between Being and beings), we would have to speak of a disappearance of the trace of the trace. Which is indeed what the following passage from *The Anaximander Fragment* seems to imply: “Oblivion of Being belongs to the self-veiling essence of Being. It belongs so essentially to the destiny of Being that the dawn of this destiny rises as the unveiling of what is present in its presencing. This means that the history of Being begins with the oblivion

of Being, since Being – together with its essence, its distinction from beings – keeps to itself. The distinction collapses. It remains forgotten. Although the two parties to the distinction, what is present and presencing (*das Anwesende und das Anwesen*), reveal themselves, they do not do so as distinguished. Rather, even the early trace (*die frühe Spur*) of the distinction is obliterated when presencing appears as something present (*das Anwesen wie ein Anwesendes erscheint*) and finds itself in the position of being the highest being present (*in einem höchsten Anwesenden*)” (pp. 50–51).

Since the trace is not a presence but the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates itself, displaces itself, refers itself, it properly has no site erasure belongs to its structure. And not only the erasure which must always be able to overtake it (without which it would not be a trace but an indestructible and monumental substance), but also the erasure which constitutes it from the outset as a trace, which situates it as the change of site, and makes it disappear in its appearance, makes it emerge from itself in its production. The erasure of the early trace (*die frühe Spur*) of difference is therefore the “same” as its tracing in the text of metaphysics. This latter must have maintained the mark of what it has lost, reserved, put aside. The paradox of such a structure, in the language of metaphysics, is an inversion of metaphysical concepts, which produces the following effect: the present becomes the sign of the sign, the trace of the trace. It is no longer what every reference refers to in the last analysis. It becomes a function in a structure of generalized reference. It is a trace, and a trace of the erasure of the trace.

Thereby the text of metaphysics is comprehended. Still legible; and to be read. It is not surrounded but rather traversed by its limit, marked in its interior by the multiple

furrow of its margin. Proposing all at once the monument and the mirage of the trace, the trace simultaneously traced and erased, simultaneously living and dead, and, as always, living in its simulation of life's preserved inscription. A pyramid. Not a stone fence to be jumped over but itself stonelike, on a wall, to be deciphered otherwise, a text without voice.

Thus one can think without contradiction, or at least without granting any pertinence to such a contradiction, what is perceptible and imperceptible in the trace. The "early trace" of difference is lost in an invisibility without return, and yet its very loss is sheltered, retained, seen, delayed. In a text. In the form of presence. In the form of the proper. Which itself is only an effect of writing.

Having stated the erasure of the early trace, Heidegger can therefore, in a contradiction without contradiction, consign, countersign, the sealing of the trace. A bit further on: "However, the distinction between Being and beings, as something forgotten, can invade our experience only if it has already unveiled itself with the presencing of what is present (mit dem Anwesen des Anwesenden); only if it has left a trace (eine Spur geprägt hat) which remains preserved (gewahrt bleibt) in the language to which Being comes" (p. 51). [...]

2 TN. [...] Derrida first plays on the "silence" of the *a* in *différance* as being like a silent tomb, like a pyramid, like the pyramid to which Hegel compares the body of the sign. "Tomb" in Greek is *oikesis*, which is akin to the Greek *oikos* (house) from which the word "economy" derives (*oikos*) and *nemein* – to manage). Thus Derrida speaks of the "economy of death" as the "familial residence and tomb of the proper." Further, Derrida speaks of the tomb, which always bears an inscription in stone, announcing the death of the tyrant. This seems to refer to Hegel's treatment of the Antigone story in the *Phenomenology*. It will be recalled that Antigone defies the tyrant Creon by burying her brother Polynices. Creon retaliates by having Antigone entombed. There she cheats the slow death that awaits

her by hanging herself. The tyrant Creon has a change of heart too late, and (after the suicides of his son and wife, his family) kills himself. Thus family, death, inscription, tomb, law, economy. 3 TN. [...] Derrida says that the difference between the *e* and the *a* can neither be seen nor heard. It is not a sensible – that is, relating to the senses – difference. But neither is this an intelligible difference, for the very names by which we conceive of objective intelligibility are already in complicity with sensibility. *Theorein* – the Greek origin of "theory" – literally means "to look at," to see; and the word Derrida uses for "understanding" here is *entendement*, the noun form of *entendre*, to hear. 4 TN. As in the past, *être* (*Sein*) will be translated as Being. *Etant* (*Seiendes*) will be either beings or being, depending on the context. Thus, *étant-présent* is "being-present." See Derrida, *Writing and Différance*, trans. A. Bass (Uni. of Chicago Press, 1978) 7 TN. In English the two distinct meanings of the Latin *differre* have become two separate words: to defer and to differ. 8 TN. Derrida is pointing out that two words that sound exactly alike in French (*différents*, *différends*) refer to the sense of *differre* that implies spacing, otherness – difference in its usual English sense. *Les différents* are different things, *les différends* are differences of opinion, grounds for dispute – whence the references to allergy (from the Greek *allos*, other) and polemics. 12 TN. F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (1959) 13 TN. Ibid. 16 TN. Koyré's realization that Hegel is describing a "differentiating relation," or "different" in an active sense, is precisely what the formation of *différance* from the participle *différant* describes. [...] 17 TN. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, p. 37. 20 G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1970) 21 TN. Derrida is referring here to his essay "Freud and the Scene of Writing" in *Writing and Différance*. "Breaching" is the translation for *Bubnung* that I adopted there: it conveys more of the sense of breaking open (as in the German *Bahnung* and the French *frayage*) than the Standard Edition's "facilitation." The Project Derrida refers to here is the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), in which Freud attempted to cast his psychological thinking in a neurological framework. 24 TN. On Levinas, and on the translation of his term *autrui* by "Other," see "Violence and Metaphysics," note 6, in *Writing and Différance*. 25 TN. M. Heidegger, *Holwege* (V. Klostermann, 1957). English trans. ("The Anaximander Fragment") in *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. D. F. Krell and F. Capuzzi (NY: Harper & Row, 1975).



DIANE ARBUS, TRIPLETS IN THEIR BEDROOM, N.J. (1963)

REPRODUCTION IN EDUCATION, SOCIETY AND CULTURE 263

PIERRE BOURDIEU & JEAN-CLAUDE PASSERON

1977

Undifferentiated functions and indifference
to difference

Those who undertake to capture the originality of a culture in the signifying unity of its elements and who, like the configurationist school, show by the attention they give to the different forms of upbringing that they mean to avoid dissociating the analysis of a culture from the study of cultural transmission, might at first sight appear to escape the abstractions which arise from ignorance of the 'configurations.' But is it possible to take culture as a concrete totality, indivisibly responsible for its own causality and, on this basis, to relate the different aspects of a culture to a sort of generative formula, a 'spirit of the age' or 'national character,' without running the risk of ignoring the specificity of the different sub-systems by treating each of them as if it did no more than manifest a single primordial dynamism, present everywhere and without mediation in each of its manifestations? When the requirement of totalization of particular relations is reduced to a philosophy of totality which sees the whole in every part, it leads one as infallibly as technocratic ideology to ignore, together with the specificity of the

educational system, the system effect which gives its functional significance and weight to a function within the system of functions or to an element (organization, population, etc.) within the structure or the historical transformation of the structure. Whereas the technocrats reduce the relatively autonomous history of the educational system to the abstract schema of a unique, unilinear, universal evolution marked only by the stages of a morphological growth or the landmarks in a process of formal, external rationalization, the configurationists reduce the specificity which the system derives from its relative autonomy to the 'originality' of a 'national culture', with the result that they are equally well able to find a society's ultimate values reflected in its educational system or to point to an effect of education in the most characteristic and the most diverse features of its culture.

[...] To posit, at the outset, that 'the educational system of a given society reflects that society's social system' is summarily to reduce the academic institution to its generic function of 'social control,' the common residue of all its specific functions, and to make it impossible, to perceive all that an educational system owes to its essential function, in particular its specific way of fulfilling its external functions in a given society at a given moment.¹²

[...] Thus, by suggesting with the amorphous notion of 'social control' that the educational system performs, an indivisible, undifferentiated function for 'society as a whole, all-purpose functionalism tends to conceal the fact that a system which helps to reproduce the structure of class relations indeed serves 'Society,' in the sense of the 'social order,' and through it the educational interests of the classes which benefit from that order. But it is impossible

to account fully for the success of all the holistic philosophies inspired by a common indifference to differences, without taking into account the specifically intellectual functions of their silences and reticences, denials and slips or, conversely, the displacements and transfers they make towards the themes of 'homogenization,' 'massification' or 'globalization.' Thus obedience to the principles *Dependence Through Independence* of the dominant ideology manages to impose itself on intellectuals in the form of obedience to the conventions and proprieties of the intellectual world. It is no accident that in present-day France reference to social classes tends to appear, depending on the group or the conjuncture, as an ideological slant which the distinguished guardians of polite-society objectivism adopt with an elegant pout; as the solecism of a provincial incapable of coming up to date, deplored by the licensed representatives of an imported sociology and left far behind by the shock-troops of every avant-garde, who ceaselessly scan the horizon of 'modernity' for fear of missing an ideological or theoretical revolution, ever ready to spot the newest-born of the 'new classes,' 'new alienations' or 'new contradictions'; [...]. If we did not know that the intellectual or even political significance of the ideology proper to a category of intellectuals can never be deduced directly from that category's position in the structure of class relations but always owes something to the position it occupies in the intellectual field, it would be impossible to understand how indifference to class differences, whose conservative function we have shown, can, without contradiction, pervade ideologies which make ostentatious sacrifice to ritual or incantatory invocation of the class struggle. Some of the most radical 'critiques' of the educational system find in 'contestation' of the generic function of every educational system considered

as an instrument of inculcation the means of masking the class functions which this function fulfils: in emphasizing the frustrations inherent in all socialization, not least, of course, sexual frustrations, much more than the specific form of the constraints or privations which, even the most generic ones, bear differentially on the different social classes, these ideologies lead to a concordial denunciation of pedagogic action conceived as an undifferentiated action of repression and so to an ecumenical revolt against the repressive action of 'society,' reduced to an impressionistic superimposition of political, bureaucratic, university and family hierarchies. It is sufficient to see that these ideologies are all based on the search for and denunciation of generic alienations, spuriously specified by tragic reference to 'modernity,' to perceive that in surrendering to a syncretic representation of the relations of domination which leads them to establish undifferentiated revolt against the mandarin-professor as the principle of a generalized subversion of hierarchies, they fail, like technocratic or culturalist thinking, to grasp the relative autonomy and dependence of the educational system with respect to the social classes.¹⁵

12 M. Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, London: Tavistock, 1964. [...]

15 Sharing with their favourite enemy, technocracy, an indifference to differences, 'critical' ideologies differ from it only in the application they make of this disposition when, consigning sociology to the pursuit of generic alienations, they build up an ideological system in which the elements most frequently attested are a predilection for sociological categorizations capable of inducing the illusion of homogeneity ('readership,' 'age group,' 'youth,' if not 'the users of hospitals, housing estates or public transport') or a fascinated interest in the homogenizing and alienating effects of television or the 'mass media,' automation or technical objects and, more generally, 'technological civilization' or 'consumer society.'

Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.

GERTRUDE STEIN, SACRED EMILY (FIRST APPEARANCE) (1913)



MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI, BLOW-UP (1967)

SUSAN SONTAG

1978

The Image World

Reality has always been interpreted through the reports given by images; and philosophers since Plato have tried to loosen our dependence on images by evoking the standard of an image-free way of apprehending the real. But when, in the mid-nineteenth century, the standard finally seemed attainable, the retreat of old religious and political illusions before the advance of humanistic and scientific thinking did not – as anticipated – create mass defections to the real. On the contrary, the new age of unbelief strengthened the allegiance to images. The credence that could no longer be given to realities understood in the form of images was now being given to realities understood to be images, illusions. In the preface to the 2nd ed. (1843) of *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach observes about ‘our era’ that it ‘prefers the image to the thing, the copy to the original, the representation to the reality, appearance to being’ – while being aware of doing just that. And his premonitory complaint has been transformed in the 20th c. into a widely agreed-on diagnosis: that a society becomes ‘modern’ when one of its chief activities is producing and consuming images, when images that have extraordinary powers to determine our demands upon reality and are themselves coveted substitutes for first-hand experience become indispensable to the health of the economy, the stability of the polity, and the pursuit of private happiness. Feuerbach’s words – he is writing a few years after the invention of the camera

– seem, more specifically, a presentiment of the impact of photography. For the images that have virtually unlimited authority in a modern society are mainly photographic images; and the scope of that authority stems from the properties peculiar to images taken by cameras. Such images are indeed able to usurp reality because first of all a photograph is not only an image (as a painting is an image), an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stenciled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask. While a painting, even one that meets photographic standards of resemblance, is never more than the stating of an interpretation, a photograph is never less than the registering of an emanation (light waves reflected by objects) – a material vestige of its subject in a way that no painting can be.

[...] The further back we go in history, as E. H. Gombrich has observed, the less sharp is the distinction between images and real things; in primitive societies, the thing and its image were simply two different, that is, physically distinct, manifestations of the same energy or spirit. Hence, the supposed efficacy of images in propitiating and gaining control over powerful presences.

[...] Our irrepressible feeling that the photographic process is something magical has a genuine basis. [...] It is part of, an extension of that subject; and a potent means of acquiring it, of gaining control over it. Photography is acquisition in several forms. In its simplest form, we have in a photograph surrogate possession of a cherished person or thing, a possession which gives photographs some of the character of unique objects. Through photographs, we also have a consumer's relation to events, both to events which are part of our experience and to those which are not – a distinction between types of experience that such habit-forming consumership blurs. A third form of

acquisition is that, through image-making and image-duplicating machines, we can acquire something as information (rather than experience). Indeed, the importance of photographic images as the medium through which more and more events enter our experience is, finally, only a by-product of their effectiveness in furnishing knowledge dissociated from and independent of experience. This is the most inclusive form of photographic acquisition. Through being photographed, something becomes part of a system of information, fitted into schemes of classification and storage which range from the crudely chronological order of snapshot sequences pasted in family albums to the dogged accumulations and meticulous filing needed for photography's uses in weather forecasting, astronomy, microbiology, geology, police work, medical training and diagnosis, military reconnaissance, and art history. Photographs do more than redefine the stuff of ordinary experience [...] and add vast amounts of material that we never see at all. Reality as such is redefined – as an item for exhibition, as a record for scrutiny, as a target for surveillance. The photographic exploration and duplication of the world fragments continuities and feeds the pieces into an interminable dossier, thereby providing possibilities of control that could not even be dreamed of under the earlier system of recording information: writing. That photographic recording is always, potentially, a means of control was already recognized when such powers were in their infancy.

[...] Photography has powers that no other image-system has ever enjoyed because, unlike the earlier ones, it is not dependent on an image maker. However carefully the photographer intervenes in setting up and guiding the image-making process, the process itself remains an optical-chemical (or electronic) one, the workings of which

are automatic, the machinery for which will inevitably be modified to provide still more detailed and, therefore, more useful maps of the real. The mechanical genesis of these images, and the literalness of the powers they confer, amounts to a new relationship between image and reality. And if photography could also be said to restore the most primitive relationship – the partial identity of image and object – the potency of the image is now experienced in a very different way. The primitive notion of the efficacy of images presumes that images possess the qualities of real things, but our inclination is to attribute to real things the qualities of an image. As everyone knows, primitive people fear that the camera will rob them of some part of their being. In the memoir he published in 1900, Nadar reports that Balzac had a similar ‘vague dread’ of being photographed. His explanation, according to Nadar, was that every body in its natural state was made up of a series of ghostly images superimposed in layers to infinity, wrapped in infinitesimal films...

[...] The Balzacian operation was to magnify tiny details, as in a photographic enlargement, to juxtapose incongruous traits or items, as in a photographic layout: made expressive in this way, any one thing can be connected with everything else. For Balzac, the spirit of an entire milieu could be disclosed by a single material detail, however paltry or arbitrary-seeming. The whole of a life may be summed up in a momentary appearance.¹ And a change in appearances is a change in the person, for he refused to posit any ‘real’ person ensconced behind these appearances. Balzac’s fanciful theory, expressed to Nadar, that a body is composed of an infinite series of ‘ghostly images’, eerily parallels the supposedly realistic theory expressed in his novels, that a person is an aggregate of appearances, appearances which can be made to yield, by

proper focusing, infinite layers of significance. To view reality as an endless set of situations which mirror each other, to extract analogies from the most dissimilar things, is to anticipate the characteristic form of perception stimulated by photographic images. Reality itself has started to be understood as a kind of writing, which has to be decoded – even as photographed images were themselves first compared to writing. [...] The problem with Feuerbach’s contrast of ‘original’ with ‘copy’ is its static definitions of reality and image. It assumes that what is real persists, unchanged and intact, while only images have changed: shored up by the most tenuous claims to credibility, they have somehow become more seductive. But the notions of image and reality are complementary. When the notion of reality changes, so does that of the image, and vice versa. ‘Our era’ does not prefer images to real things out of perversity but partly in response to the ways in which the notion of what is real has been progressively complicated and weakened, one of the early ways being the criticism of reality as façade which arose among the enlightened middle classes in the last century. (This was of course the very opposite of the effect intended.) [...] Few people in this society share the primitive dread of cameras that comes from thinking of the photograph as a material part of themselves. But some trace of the magic remains: for example, in our reluctance to tear up or throw away the photograph of a loved one, especially of someone dead or far away. To do so is a ruthless gesture of rejection. [...] But the true modern primitivism is not to regard the image as a real thing; photographic images are hardly that real. Instead, reality has come to seem more and more like what we are shown by cameras. It is common now for people to insist about their experience of a violent event in which they were caught up – a plane crash, a

shoot-out, a terrorist bombing – that ‘it seemed like a movie’. This is said, other descriptions seeming insufficient, in order to explain how real it was. While many people in non-industrialized countries still feel apprehensive when being photographed, divining it to be some kind of trespass, an act of disrespect, a sublimated looting of the personality or the culture, people in industrialized countries seek to have their photographs taken – feel that they are images, and are made real by photographs. A steadily more complex sense of the real creates its own compensatory fervors and simplifications, the most addictive of which is picture-taking. It is as if photographers, responding to an increasingly depleted sense of reality, were looking for a transfusion – traveling to new experiences, refreshing the old ones. Their ubiquitous activities amount to the most radical, and the safest, version of mobility. The urge to have new experiences is translated into the urge to take photographs: experience seeking a crisis-proof form. As the taking of photographs seems almost obligatory to those who travel about, the passionate collecting of them has special appeal for those confined – either by choice, incapacity or coercion – to indoor space. Photograph collections can be used to make a substitute world, keyed to exalting or consoling or tantalizing images. [...] In Cocteau’s *Les Enfants Terribles*, the narcissistic brother and sister share their bedroom, their ‘secret room,’ with images of boxers, movie stars and murderers. Isolating themselves in their lair to live out their private legend, the two adolescents put up these photographs, a private pantheon. [...] For stay-at-homes, prisoners and the self-imprisoned, to live among the photographs of glamorous strangers is a sentimental response to isolation and an insolent challenge to it. J. G. Ballard’s novel *Crash* (1973) describes a more specialized collecting of photographs in

the service of sexual obsession: photographs of car accidents which the narrator’s friend Vaughan collects while preparing to stage his own death in a car crash. The acting out of his erotic vision of car death is anticipated and the fantasy itself further eroticized by the repeated perusal of these photographs. At one end of the spectrum, photographs are objective data; at the other end, they are items of psychological science fiction. [...] Photographs are a way of imprisoning reality, understood as recalcitrant, inaccessible; of making it stand still. Or they enlarge a reality that is felt to be shrunk, hollowed out, perishable, remote. One can’t possess reality, one can possess (and be possessed by) images – as, according to Proust, most ambitious of voluntary prisoners, one can’t possess the present but one can possess the past. Nothing could be more unlike the self-sacrificial *travail* of an artist like Proust than the effortlessness of picture-taking, which must be the sole activity resulting in accredited works of art in which a single movement, a touch of the finger, produces a complete work. While the Proustian labors presuppose that reality is distant, photography implies instant access to the real. But the results of this practice of instant access are another way of creating distance. To possess the world in the form of images is, precisely, to reexperience the unreality and remoteness of the real. The strategy of Proust’s realism presumes distance from what is normally experienced as real, the present, in order to reanimate what is usually available only in a remote and shadowy form, the past – which is where the present becomes in his sense real, that is, something that can be possessed. In this effort photographs were of no help. Whenever Proust mentions photographs, he does so disparagingly: as a synonym for a shallow, too exclusively visual, merely voluntary relation to the past, whose yield

is insignificant compared with the deep discoveries to be made by responding to cues given by all the senses – the technique he called ‘involuntary memory.’ One can’t imagine the Overture to *Swann’s Way* ending with the narrator’s coming across a snapshot of the parish church at Combray and the savoring of that visual crumb, instead of the taste of the humble madeleine dipped in tea, making an entire part of his past spring into view. But this is not because a photograph cannot evoke memories (it can, depending on the quality of the viewer rather than of the photograph) but because of what Proust makes clear about his own demands upon imaginative recall, that it be not just extensive and accurate but give the texture and essence of things. And by considering photographs only so far as he could use them, as an instrument of memory, Proust somewhat misconstrues what photographs are: not so much an instrument of memory as an invention of it or a replacement. It is not reality that photographs make immediately accessible, but images.

[...] What the photograph record confirms is, more modestly, simply that the subject exists; therefore, one can never have too many. The fear that a subject’s uniqueness was levelled by being photographed was never so frequently expressed as in the 1850s, the years when portrait photography gave the first example of how cameras could create instant fashions and durable industries. In Melville’s *Pierre*, published at the start of the decade, the hero, another fevered champion of voluntary isolation, considered with what infinite readiness now, the most faithful portrait of any one could be taken by the Daguerreotype, whereas in former times a faithful portrait was only within the power of the moneyed, or mental aristocrats of the earth. [...] Besides, when every body has his portrait published, true distinction lies in not having

yours published at all. But if photographs demean, paintings distort in the opposite way: they make grandiose. Melville’s intuition is that all forms of portraiture in the business civilization are compromised; at least, so it appears to Pierre, a paragon of alienated sensibility. [...] Paintings invariably sum up; photographs usually do not. Photographic images are pieces of evidence in an ongoing biography or history. And one photograph, unlike one painting, implies that there will be others. ‘Ever – the Human Document to keep the present and the future in touch with the past,’ said Lewis Hine. But what photography supplies is not only a record of the past but a new way of dealing with the present, as the effects of the countless billions of contemporary photograph-documents attest. While old photographs fill out our mental image of the past, the photographs being taken now transform what is present into a mental image, like the past. Cameras establish an inferential relation to the present (reality is known by its traces), provide an instantly retroactive view of experience. Photographs give mock forms of possession: of the past, the present, even the future. In Nabokov’s *Invitation to a Beheading* (1938), the prisoner Cincinnatus is shown the ‘photohoroscope’ of a child cast by the sinister M’sieur Pierre: an album of photographs of little Emmie as an infant, then a small child, then pre-pubescent, as she is now, then – by retouching and using photographs of her mother – of Emmie the adolescent, the bride, the thirty-year-old, concluding with a photograph at age forty, Emmie on her deathbed. A ‘parody of the work of time’ is what Nabokov calls this exemplary artifact; it is also a parody of the work of photography. Photography, which has so many narcissistic uses, is also a powerful instrument for depersonalizing our relation to the world; and the two uses are complementary. Like a pair of binoculars with no

right or wrong end, the camera makes exotic things near, intimate; and familiar things small, abstract, strange, much farther away. It offers, in one easy, habit-forming activity, both participation and alienation in our own lives and those of others – allowing us to participate, while confirming alienation. War and photography now seem inseparable, and plane crashes and other horrific accidents always attract people with cameras. A society which makes it normative to aspire never to experience privation, failure, misery, pain, dread disease, and in which death itself is regarded not as natural and inevitable but as a cruel, unmerited disaster, creates a tremendous curiosity about these events – a curiosity that is partly satisfied through picture-taking. The feeling of being exempt from calamity stimulates interest in looking at painful pictures, and looking at them suggests and strengthens the feeling that one is exempt. Partly it is because one is ‘here,’ not ‘there,’ and partly it is the character of inevitability that all events acquire when they are transmuted into images. In the real world, something is happening and no one knows what is going to happen. In the image-world, it has happened, and it will forever happen in that way. Knowing a great deal about what is in the world (art, catastrophe, the beauties of nature) through photographic images, people are frequently disappointed, surprised, unmoved when they see the real thing. For photographic images tend to subtract feeling from something we experience at first hand and the feelings they do arouse are, largely, not those we have in real life. [...] One is vulnerable to disturbing events in the form of photographic images in a way that one is not to the real thing. That vulnerability is part of the distinctive passivity of someone who is a spectator twice over, spectator of events already shaped, first by the participants and second by the image maker.

[...] The dramatic is dramatized, by the didactics of layout and montage. We turn the page in a photo-magazine, a new sequence starts in a movie, making a contrast that is sharper than the contrast between successive events in real time. [...] The more numerous the variations of something, the richer its possibilities of meaning [...] We see reality as hopelessly and interestingly plural. [...] Our unlimited use of photographic images not only reflects but gives shape to this society, one unified by the denial of conflict. Our very notion of the world – the capitalist twentieth century’s ‘one world’ – is like a photographic overview. The world is ‘one’ not because it is united but because a tour of its diverse contents does not reveal conflict but only an even more astounding diversity. This spurious unity of the world is effected by translating its contents into images. Images are always compatible, or can be made compatible, even when the realities they depict are not. Photography does not simply reproduce the real, it recycles it – a key procedure of a modern society. In the form of photographic images, things and events are put to new uses, assigned new meanings, which go beyond the distinctions between the beautiful and the ugly, the true and the false, the useful and the useless, good taste and bad. Photography is one of the chief means for producing that quality ascribed to things and situations which erases these distinctions: ‘the interesting.’ What makes something interesting is that it can be seen to be like, or analogous to, something else. There is an art and there are fashions of seeing things in order to make them interesting; and to supply this art, these fashions, there is a steady recycling of the artifacts and tastes of the past. Cliches, recycled, become meta-diches. The photographic recycling makes diches out of unique objects, distinctive and vivid artifacts out of cliches. Images of real things are interlayered with images of

images. The Chinese circumscribe the uses of photography so that there are no layers or strata of images, and all images reinforce and reiterate each other.³ We make of photography a means by which, precisely, anything can be said, any purpose served. What in reality is discrete, images join. In the form of a photograph the explosion of an A-bomb can be used to advertise a safe. To us, the difference between the photographer as an individual eye and the photographer as an objective recorder seems fundamental, the difference often regarded, mistakenly, as separating photography as art from photography as document. But both are logical extensions of what photography means: note-taking on, potentially, everything in the world, from every possible angle. The same Nadar who took the most authoritative celebrity portraits of his time and did the first photo-interviews was also the first photographer to take aerial views; and when he performed 'the Daguerreian operation' on Paris from a balloon in 1855 he immediately grasped the future benefit of photography to warmakers. Two attitudes underlie this presumption that anything in the world is material for the camera. One finds that there is beauty or at least interest in everything, seen with an acute enough eye. (And the aestheticizing of reality that makes everything, anything, available to the camera is what also permits the co-opting of any photograph, even one of an utterly practical sort, as art.) The other treats everything as the object of some present or future use, as matter for estimates, decisions and predictions. According to one attitude, there is nothing that should not be seen; according to the other, there is nothing that should not be recorded. Cameras implement an aesthetic view of reality by being a machine-toy that extends to everyone the possibility of making disinterested judgments about importance, interest, beauty. ('That

would make a good picture.') Cameras implement the instrumental view of reality by gathering information that enables us to make a more accurate and much quicker response to whatever is going on. The response may of course be either repressive or benevolent: military reconnaissance photographs help snuff out lives, X-rays help save them. Though these two attitudes, the aesthetic and the instrumental, seem to produce contradictory and even incompatible feelings about people and situations, that is the altogether characteristic contradiction of attitude which members of a society that divorces public from private are expected to share in and live with. [...] On the one hand, cameras arm vision in the service of power – of the state, of industry, of science. On the other hand, cameras make vision expressive in that mythical space known as private life. In China, where no space is left over from politics and moralism for expressions of aesthetic sensibility, only some things are to be photographed and only in certain ways. For us, as we become further detached from politics, there is more and more free space to fill up with exercises of sensibility such as cameras afford. One of the effects of the newer camera technology (video; instant movies) has been to turn even more of what is done with cameras in private to narcissistic uses – that is, to self-surveillance. But such currently popular uses of image-feedback in the bedroom, the therapy session, and the weekend conference seem far less momentous than video's potential as a tool for surveillance in public places. Presumably, the Chinese will eventually make the same instrumental uses of photography that we do, except, perhaps, this one. Our inclination to treat character as equivalent to behavior makes more acceptable a widespread public installation of the mechanized regard from the outside provided by cameras. China's far more

repressive standards of order require not only monitoring behavior but changing hearts; there, surveillance is internalized to a degree without precedent, which suggests a more limited future in their society for the camera as a means of surveillance. China offers the model of one kind of dictatorship, whose master idea is 'the good,' in which the most unsparing limits are placed on all forms of expression, including images. The future may offer another kind of dictatorship, whose master idea is 'the interesting,' in which images of all sorts, stereotyped and eccentric, proliferate. [...] And there seems no way (short of undergoing a vast historical amnesia, as in China) of limiting the proliferation of photographic images. The only question is whether the function of the image-world created by cameras could be other than it is. The present function is clear enough, if one considers in what contexts photographic images are seen, what dependencies they create, what antagonisms they pacify – that is, what institutions they buttress, whose needs they really serve. A capitalist society requires a culture based on images. It needs to furnish vast amounts of entertainment in order to stimulate buying and anesthetize the injuries of class, race and sex. And it needs to gather unlimited amounts of information, the better to exploit natural resources, increase productivity, keep order, make war, give jobs to bureaucrats. The camera's twin capacities, to subjectivize reality and to objectify it, ideally serve these needs and strengthen them. Cameras define reality in the two ways essential to the workings of an advanced industrial society: as a spectacle (for masses) and as an object of surveillance (for rulers). The production of images also furnishes a ruling ideology. Social change is replaced by a change in images. The freedom to consume a plurality of images and goods is equated with freedom itself. The narrowing of

free political choice to free economic consumption requires the unlimited production and consumption of images. The final reason for the need to photograph everything lies in the very logic of consumption itself. To consume means to burn, to use up – and, therefore, to need to be replenished. As we make images and consume them, we need still more images; and still more. But images are not a treasure for which the world must be ransacked; they are precisely what is at hand wherever the eye falls. The possession of a camera can inspire something akin to lust. And like all credible forms of lust, it cannot be satisfied: first, because the possibilities of photography are infinite; and, second, because the project is finally self-devouring. The attempts by photographers to bolster up a depleted sense of reality contribute to the depletion. Our oppressive sense of the transience of everything is more acute since cameras gave us the means to 'fix' the fleeting moment. We consume images at an ever faster rate and, as Balzac suspected cameras used up layers of the body, images consume reality. Cameras are the antidote and the disease, a means of appropriating reality and a means of making it obsolete. The powers of photography have in effect de-Platonized our understanding of reality, making it less and less plausible to reflect upon our experience according to the distinction between images and things, between copies and originals. It suited Plato's derogatory attitude toward images to liken them to shadows – transitory, minimally informative, immaterial, impotent co-presences of the real things which cast them. But the force of photographic images comes from their being material realities in their own right, richly informative deposits left in the wake of whatever emitted them, potent means for turning the tables on reality – for turning it into a shadow. Images are more real than anyone could have supposed. And just

because they are an unlimited resource, one that cannot be exhausted by consumerist waste, there is all the more reason to apply the conservationist remedy. If there can be a better way for the real world to include the one of images, it will require an ecology not only of real things but of images as well.

1 I am drawing on the account of Balzac's realism in Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*. The passage he describes from the beginning of *Le Pere Goriot* (1834) – Balzac is describing the dining room of the Vauquer pension at seven in the morning and the entry of Madame Vauquer could hardly be more explicit (or proto-Proustian). [...] 3 The Chinese concern for the reiterative function of images (and of words) inspires the distributing of additional images, photographs that depict scenes in which, dearly, no photographer could have been present; and the continuing use of such photographs suggests how slender is the population's understanding of what photographic images and picture-taking imply. In his book *Chinese Shadows*, Simon Leys gives an example from the 'movement to emulate Lei Feng,' a mass campaign of the mid-1960s to inculcate the ideals of Maoist citizenship built around the apotheosis of an Unknown Citizen, a conscript named Lei Feng who died at twenty in a banal accident. Lei Feng Exhibitions organized in the large cities included 'photographic documents, such as 'Lei Feng helping an old woman to cross the street,' 'Lei Feng secretly [sic] doing his comrade's washing,' 'Lei Feng giving his lunch to a comrade who forgot his lunch box,' and so forth, with, apparently, nobody questioning 'the providential presence of a photographer during the various incidents in the life of that humble, hitherto unknown soldier.' In China, what makes an image true is that it is good for people to see it.



MARTIN PARR, *LE LOUVRE, PARIS (DETAIL)* (2012)



EDOUARD MANET, YOUNG LADY (VICTORINE MEURENT) (1886)

MANET, A SYMBOLIC REVOLUTION 287

PIERRE BOURDIEU

1998–2000

Lectures at the College de France, 1999/2000:
Foundations of a Dispositionalist Aesthetic

Lecture of 19 January 2000
‘Throwing yourself into the water’
as a philosophy of action

Manet changed over time, because he was looking for something, and what he was looking for was himself. He scrutinizes himself, he makes some discoveries and gradually finds himself through the self-objectivation that he produces. This is a Hegelian theme: language – especially written language – has the virtue of bringing things into focus, of objectifying them, of suddenly facing the subject with a reality that he was an inseparable part of a moment ago. Manet had the skill to do this, but he did not know what he was doing: however, objectivation has the virtue of holding a mirror to the subject, showing him what he is. His mastery of himself increased as a result of the successive objectivations that he operated, of the successive reactions of others to his objectivations, whether critics, journalists, other painters or his own disciples – this is a very important point: in one passage, Mallarmé states that Manet worked in reaction to his own disciples, and was quick to catch up with them when they overtook him, as sometimes happened.

Lecture of 27 January 1999
Copies, Parodies and Pastiche

Once again, I have gone on for far too long. The question that I would like to pose now is why the work of art constitutes a particularly opportune occasion to call into question the scholastic disposition. In order to look appropriately at Manet's painting, we need to ask what it is to be an artist, compared to a commentator. All of us, even Malraux, have an implicit philosophy of the artist as creator. I refer you to my book *The Rules of Art*, where I quote a certain number of works on the genesis of the idea of the creator, which did not fall like manna from heaven: the notion came into being as part of the process of a transfer from theology to aesthetics during the eighteenth century, at the time when the English aristocracy was embarking on the grand tour of Europe.¹ The idea of creation is a historical invention which was based on the whole system of theological metaphor. The schema of creation was very strongly reactivated by the Impressionists in particular, and certainly by Manet. One of the features of the Impressionist revolution is the fact that the centre of interest shifted from the topic of the painting to the painter himself. Of course, there had already been biographies and self-portraits of painters. This had started in the Quattrocento, long before the nineteenth century. However, all the critics agree that, with the Impressionist revolution, there was a shift of interest from the work towards the painter, who became a sort of hero. We have a heroic vision of the history of painting which gives a central position to the painter, as creator.

The painter is someone who has a practical mastery of form and of the techniques for the production of forms. There we find another opposition, between

epistemè and tekhnè – there are a great number of oppositions which constitute so many obstacles. We should also reflect on the role of copying. They say that Manet copied works in the Louvre. What does that mean? What is copying? What do we learn by copying? Is a copy identical to the original or not? Is copying not precisely copying a manner, as in the case of a pastiche? Proust did not write pastiches to raise a laugh.² He was doing his homework, just as Schumann did when he composed variations on Bach. He did not compose pastiches in the sense of comic imitations, but as mimetic exercises, in order to learn to incorporate practical schemas destined to enable him to re-engage not only what he had been imitating, but also many other things. This is how we learn a language: we practice exercises in the incorporation of practical schemas, which allow us not only to regenerate everything we have copied, but also to invent, since the schemas become independent of the forms in which they were incorporated, and are therefore capable of engendering forms quite different from those through which they were learnt.

There are also semi-parodic copies, like, for example, *Luncheon on the Grass*; it is interesting because it has been copiously copied, notably by Monet. This is not a copy, by the way, but a variation. It was also copied, in the spirit of the variation, by Cézanne. It was reprised by Gauguin and Picasso. A copy has absolutely nothing to do with a literary commentary: it is not a discourse on practice; it is a practical commentary, a practical analysis. A painter is someone who uses paintings to generate paintings, as he paints. The same people who would be scandalized by what I am saying claim that they are just as creative as the creator. But there is no comparison. It is infinitely easier to write inspired metaphysical discourse in the name of

the infinite polysemy of the work, without obligation or sanction, without historical culture, without verification; it is enough to adopt an intelligent air and to say: “That makes me think of...”. It’s a walk in the park.

Against which, I am trying to invert our scale of values. I too am trying to stage a minor revolution. Textual commentaries and semiological exercises are falsely inspired scholastic exercises which yield much profit and gratification without obligation or sanction. To analyse creation as I do is to completely overthrow the ordinary image of creation in the tradition of Hölderlin, Heidegger and Blanchot; which is so chic, so good, so noble, and brings in so much symbolic profit that you’d have to be really uncouth to call it into question. But I think that there is nothing to be gained from their approach, although it does bring a lot of symbolic profit to those who promulgate this type of stance. Even more than the literary work, it is the work of art that tends to be the focus of this mystical exaltation. To put the question in these terms [...] is to situate the genius of Manet below the threshold of the concept, the word, the discourse, the logos, the logocentric and all sorts of academic waffle. I think that because he is below all this, he is above and beyond all those discourses on the ineffability of painting. This is the most ordinary logic of practice: it is ineffable like everything that is the product of bodily schemas. Bodily schemas are extremely complex, beyond the opposition between conscious and unconscious; even so, they do not obey logic, they do not follow strictly logical principles.

Let me reassure the person who wrote to me: there is obviously an intelligence of the artist, which I greatly admire. You need only to have spoken to a contemporary poet, film director or dancer to see that they are formidably intelligent people, though not necessarily in what they say

about what they do. It is the same with a great athlete, and there again I do not at all wish to cast aspersions by associating things which, in the hierarchy of legitimacies, are very unevenly consecrated. The scholastic viewpoint that we adopt when faced with works of art prevents us in my opinion from understanding the very logic through which a work of art is produced. This posture substitutes the opus operatum from the modus operandi, that is, it substitutes the finished object, the ‘ready-made’, for ‘what is in the process of being made’, and this substitution also substitutes the synchronic, the instantaneous snapshot, for the ‘being-made’, which takes time. This is one of the classic effects of the structuralist posture: it abolishes time – I have shown this a hundred times on the subject of the exchange of gifts.³ You take a work like “Les Chats” by Baudelaire: it is synchronized, it is there on paper – you could call that the “Goody effect” – you see it uno intuit, as Descartes would have said, with a single sweep of the gaze, and you can start to draw little arrows and speech balloons, and make joined-up connections, all at once, whereas, when it was produced, it was produced over time, with crossings out, etc.

1 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996) esp. pp. 105 et seq. 2 see Marcel Proust, *The Lemoine Affair*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House Publishing, 2008 [French orig. 1919]) 3 For a fuller development of this point, see Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 80-82



KRYSZTOF KIESLOWSKI, THE DOUBLE LIFE OF VERONIQUE (1991)

CHANCE AND REPETITION IN KIESLOWSKI'S FILMS

SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK

2001

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Dedicated to the memory of Elizabeth Wright

Krzysztof Kieslowski's interest in the role of chance in determining the multiple possible outcomes of a dramatic situation (exemplarily in his *Blind Chance*, but also in *Veronique* and *Red*), offers yet another example of the well-known phenomenon of the old artistic forms pushing against their own boundaries by way of mobilizing procedures which, at least from our retroactive view, seem to point towards a new technology that will be able to serve as a more 'natural' and appropriate 'objective correlative' to the life-experience the old forms endeavoured to render with their excessive experimentations.¹ It can thus be claimed that a whole series of narrative procedures in 19th c. novels announce not only the standard narrative cinema (recall the intricate use of 'flashback' in Emily Brontë or of 'cross-cutting' and 'close-ups' in Dickens), but sometimes even the modernist cinema (recall the use of 'off-space' in *Madame Bovary*) – as if a new perception of life was already here, but was still struggling to find its proper means of articulation, until it finally found it in cinema. It can be claimed that today, we are approaching a homologous threshold: a new 'life experience' is in the air, a perception of life that explodes the form of the linear-centred narrative and renders life as a multiform flow; up to the domain of

the 'hard' sciences (quantum physics and its Multiple-Reality interpretation; neo-Darwinism) we seem to be haunted by the chanciness of life and the alternate versions of reality – to quote S.J. Gould's blunt formulation which uses precisely the cinema metaphor: 'Wind back the film of life and play it again. The history of evolution will be totally different.'² Either life is experienced as a series of multiple parallel destinies that interact and are crucially affected by meaningless contingent encounters, the points at which one series intersects with and intervenes into another (see Altman's *Shortcuts*), or different versions/outcomes of the same plot are repeatedly enacted (the 'parallel universes' or 'alternative possible worlds' scenarios – even 'serious' historians themselves recently produced a volume of *Virtual Histories*, reading crucial events [...] as hinging on unpredictable and sometimes even improbable chances). These perceptions of our reality as one of the possible, often even not the most probable, outcomes of an 'open' situation, this notion that other possible outcomes are not simply cancelled out but continue to haunt our 'true' reality as a spectre of what might have happened, conferring on our reality the status of extreme fragility and contingency, implicitly clash with the predominant 'linear' narrative forms of our literature and cinema – they seem to call for a new artistic medium in which they would not be an eccentric excess, but its 'proper' mode of functioning. One can argue that the cyberspace hypertext is such a new medium in which this life experience will find its 'natural,' more appropriate objective correlative,³ and that Kieslowski's seemingly 'obscurantist' dealing with the topic of the role of chance and of parallel alternative histories is to be perceived as yet another endeavour to articulate the new life experience in the old cinematic medium that promotes linear narrative. We find in

Kieslowski three versions of alternative histories: direct presentation of three possible outcomes in *Blind Chance*, the presentation of two outcomes through the theme of the double in *The Double Life of Veronique*, and the presentation of two outcomes through the 'flashback in present' in *Red*. What interests Kieslowski in the motif of alternative histories is the notion of ethical choice, ultimately the choice between 'calm life' and 'mission'.

Is, however, this awareness of multiple universes really as liberating as it appears? The (false) ordinary perception that we live in one 'true' reality, far from containing us to a closed universe, relieves us from the unbearable awareness of the multitude of alternate universes which envelop us. That is to say, the fact that there is only one reality leaves the space open for other possibilities, i.e. for a choice: it might have been different. If, however, these different possibilities are all in a way realized, we get a claustrophobic universe in which there is no freedom of choice precisely because ALL choices are already realized.

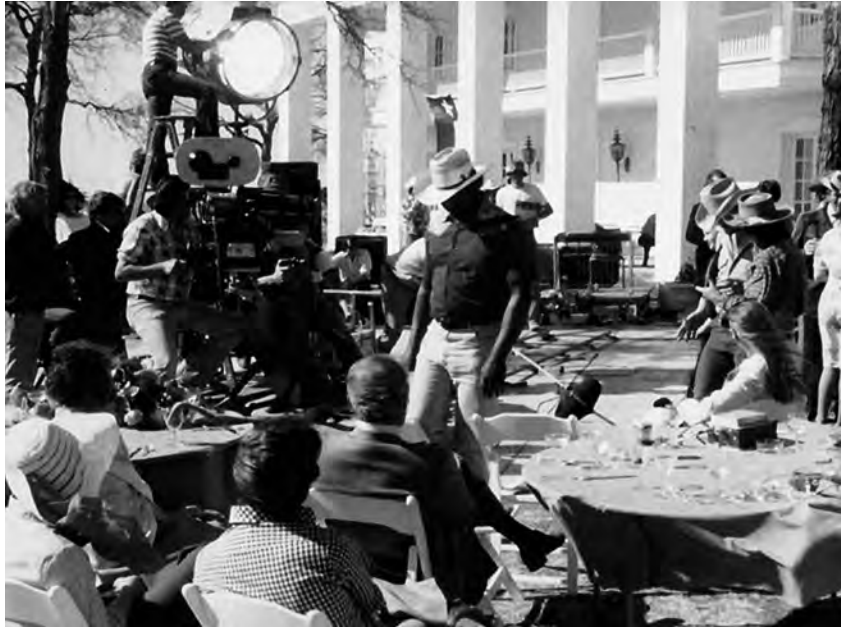
[...] The idea of the time-space continuum (time as the fourth dimension of space) in modern physics means, among other things, that a certain event (the encounter of multiple particles) can be much more elegantly and convincingly explained if we posit that only one particle travels forward and backward in time. Let's take Feynmann's classic space-time diagram of the collision between two photons in a certain point of time: this collision produces an electron-positron pair, each of the two going its separate way. The positron then meets another electron; they annihilate each other and create again two photons which depart in the opposite direction. What Feynmann proposes is that, if we introduce the

space-time continuum, i.e. the notion of time as the fourth dimension of space which can also be traversed in two directions, forward and backwards, we can explain the same process in a much simpler way: there is ONLY ONE particle, an electron, which emits two photons; this causes it to reverse its direction in time. Travelling backward in time as a positron, it absorbs two photons, thus becomes an electron again and reverses its direction in time, again moving forward. This logic involves the static space-time picture described by Einstein: events do not unfold with the flow of time, but present themselves complete, and in this total picture, movements but present themselves complete, and in this total picture, movements backward and forward in time are as usual as movements backward and forward in space. The illusion that there is a 'flow' of time results from our narrow awareness which allows us to perceive only a part of the total space-time continuum.⁸ And is not something similar going on in the alternative narratives? Beneath ordinary reality, there is another shadowy pre-ontological realm of virtualities in which the same person travels forth and back, 'testing' different scenarios [...].

[...] This idea of multiple imperfect universes can be discerned at two levels in Kieslowski's opus: (1) the botched character of reality as depicted in his films, and the ensuing repeated attempts to (re)create a new, better, reality; (2) with regard to Kieslowski himself as author, we also have the repeated attempts to tell the same story in a slightly different way (not only the difference between TV and movie version of *Decalogue 5* and 6, but also his idea of making twenty different versions of *Veronique* and playing them in different theatres in Paris). In this eternally repeated rewriting, the 'quilting point' is forever missing:

there never is a final version, the work is never done and actually put in circulation, delivered from the author to the big Other of the Public. [...] What does this absence of the 'final version' MEAN – this everlasting deferral of the moment when, like God after his six days work, the author can say 'It's done!' and take a rest? The 'virtualization' of our life-experience, the explosion/dehiscence of the single 'true' reality into the multitude of parallel lives, is strictly correlative to the assertion of the proto-cosmic abyss of chaotic, ontologically not yet fully constituted reality – this primordial, pre-symbolic, inchoate stuff is the very neutral medium in which the multitude of parallel universes can coexist. In contrast to the standard notion of one fully determined and ontologically constituted reality, with regard to which all other realities are its secondary shadows, copies, reflections, 'reality' itself is thus multiplied into the spectral plurality of virtual realities, beneath which lurks the pre-ontological proto-reality, the Real of the unformed ghastly matter. The first clearly to articulate this pre-ontological dimension was F.W.J. Schelling with his notion of the unfathomable Ground of God, something in God that is not-yet-God, not yet the fully constituted reality.¹⁸

1 See Žižek *Art of the Ridiculous Sublime* (Seattle, Washington University Press, 2000). 2 Stephen J. Gould, *Time Scales and the Year 2000*, in U. S. J. Gould, H. Carriere, and J. Delumeau, *Conversations on the End of Time* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 2000). 3 See J. Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Press, 1997). 8 See G. Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (London, Fontana, 1979). 18 And the ultimate irony is that this same point holds for Schelling's writing itself, for the very text(s) in which he deployed this pre-ontological dimension of proto-reality, his *Weltalter* fragment: there are three consecutive drafts, as if we have the three alternative-reality versions of the same text. See Chapter I of S. Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder* (London, Verso Books, 1996).



DOUGLAS BOX, RARE BEHIND THE SCENES PHOTO FROM THE 1978 'DALLAS' FIVE PART MINI SERIES AT THE CLOYCE BOX RANCH (THE FIRST SOUTHFORK) (1978)

INNOVATION AND REPETITION: BETWEEN MODERN AND POSTMODERN ÆSTHETICS

UMBERTO ECO

2005

It is not by chance that modern aesthetics and modern theories of art (and I mean by 'modern' those born with Mannerism, developed through Romanticism, and provocatively restated by the early twentieth-century avant-gardes) have frequently identified the artistic message with metaphor. Metaphor (the new and inventive one, not the worn out catachresis) is a way to designate something by the name of something else, thus presenting that something in an unexpected way. The modern criterion for recognizing the artistic value was novelty, high information. The pleasurable repetition of an already known pattern was considered, by modern theories of art, typical of Crafts – not of Art – and of industry. A good craftsman, as well as an industrial factory, produces many tokens, or occurrences, of the same type or model. One appreciates the type, and appreciates the way the token meets the requirements of the type: but the modern aesthetics did not recognize such a procedure as an artistic one. That is why the Romantic aesthetics made such a careful distinction between 'major' and 'minor' arts, between arts and crafts. To make a parallel with sciences:

crafts and industry were similar to the correct application of an already known law to a new case. Art, on the contrary (and by art I mean also literature, poetry, movies, and so on) corresponded rather to a 'scientific revolution': every work of modern art figures out a new law, imposes a new paradigm, a new way of looking at the world. Modern aesthetics frequently forgot that the classical theory of art, from ancient Greece to the Middle Ages, was not so eager to stress a distinction between arts and crafts. The same term (*techné, ars*) was used to designate both the performance of a barber or a shipbuilder, the work of a painter or a poet. The classical aesthetics was not so anxious for innovation at any cost: on the contrary, it frequently appreciated as 'beautiful' the good tokens of an everlasting type. Even in those cases in which modern sensitivity enjoys the 'revolution' performed by a classical artist, his contemporary enjoyed the opposite aspect of his work, that is, his respect for previous models.¹ This is the reason why modern aesthetics was so severe apropos the industrial-like products of the mass media. A popular song, a TV commercial, a comic strip, a detective novel, a Western movie were seen as more or less successful to the extent of a given model or type. As such they were judged as pleasurable but non artistic. Furthermore, this excess of pleurability, repetition, lack of innovation, was felt as a commercial trick (the product had to meet the expectations of its audience), not as the provocative proposal of a new (and difficult to accept) world vision. The products of mass media were equated with the products of industry insofar as they were produced in series, and the 'serial' production was considered as alien to the artistic invention. According to the modern aesthetics, the principal features of the mass-media products were repetition, iteration, obedience to a preestablished schema, and redundancy (as opposed

to information).² The device of iteration is typical, for instance, of television commercials: one distractedly watches the playing out of a sketch, then focuses one's attention on the punch line that reappears at the end of the episode. It is precisely on this fore seen and awaited reappearance that our modest but irrefutable pleasure is based.

[...] I would like to consider now the case of an historical period (our own) for which iteration and repetition seem to dominate the whole world of artistic creativity, and in which it is difficult to distinguish between the repetition of the media and the repetition of the so-called major arts. In this period one is facing the discussion of a new theory of art, one that I would label postmodern aesthetics, which is revisiting the very concepts of repetition and iteration under a different profile. Recently in Italy such a debate has flourished under the standard of a 'new aesthetics of seriality.' I recommend my readers to take 'seriality,' in this case, as a very wide category or, if one wants, as another term for repetitive art. Seriality and repetition are largely inflated concepts. The philosophy of the history of art has accustomed us to some technical meanings of these terms that it would be well to eliminate: I shall not speak of repetition in the sense of Kierkegaard, nor of 'repetition *différente*,' in the sense of Deleuze. In the history of contemporary music, series and seriality have been understood in a sense more or less opposite what we are discussing here. The dodecaphonic 'series' is the opposite of the repetitive seriality typical of all the media, because there a given succession of twelve sounds is used once and only once within a single composition. If you open a current dictionary, you will find that for 'repeat' the meaning is 'to say something or do something the second

time or again and again; iteration of the same word, act or idea.' For 'series' the meaning is 'a continued succession of similar things.' It is a matter of establishing what it means to say 'again' or 'the same or similar things.' To serialize means, in some way, to repeat. Therefore, we shall have to define a first meaning of 'to repeat' by which the term means to make a replica of the same abstract type. [...] From the point of view of industrial mass production, two 'tokens' can be considered as 'replicas' of the same 'type' when for a normal person with normal requirements, in the absence of evident imperfection, it is irrelevant whether one chooses one instead of the other. Two copies of a film or of a book are replicas of the same type. The repetitiveness and the seriality that interests us here look instead at something that at first glance does not appear the same as (equal to) something else. Let us now see the case in which (1) something is offered as original and different (according to the requirements of modern aesthetics) ; (2) we are aware that this something is repeating something else that we already know; and (3) notwithstanding this – better, just because of it – we like it (and we buy it).

The first type of repetition is the *retake*. In this case one recycles the characters of a previous successful story in order to exploit them, by telling what happened to them after the end of their first adventure. [...] The retake is dependent on a commercial decision. There is no rule establishing whether the second episode of the story should reproduce, with only slight variations, the first one, or must be a totally different story concerning the same characters. The retake is not strictly condemned to repetition. [...]

The *remake* consists in telling again a previous successful story. See the innumerable editions of *Dr Jekyll* or of *Mutiny on the Bounty*. The history of arts and literature is full of pseudo-remakes that were able to tell at every time something different. The whole of Shakespeare is a remake of preceding stories. Therefore 'interesting' remakes can escape repetition.

The *series* works upon a fixed situation and a restricted number of fixed pivotal characters, around whom the secondary and changing ones turn. The secondary characters must give the impression that the new story is different from the preceding ones, while in fact the narrative scheme does not change. [...] With a series one believes one is enjoying the novelty of the story (which is always the same) while in fact one is enjoying it because of the recurrence of a narrative scheme that remains constant. The series in this sense responds to the infantile need of hearing again always the same story, of being consoled by the 'return of the Identical,' superficially disguised. The series consoles us (the consumers) because it rewards our ability to foresee: we are happy because we discover our own ability to guess what will happen. We are satisfied because we find again what we had expected, but we do not attribute this happy result to the obviousness of the narrative structure, but to our own presumed capacities to make forecasts. [...] We find a variation of the series in the structure of the *flashback* [...]. It seems as if these moments of his life have fled from the narrator out of absentmindedness, but their rediscovery does not change the psycho logical profile of the character, which is fixed already, once and for all. In topological terms this subtype of the series may be defined as a *loop*. Usually the loop-series comes to be devised for commercial reasons: it is a matter of considering how to keep the series alive, of

obviating the natural problem of the aging of the character. Instead of having characters put up with new adventures (that would imply their inexorable march toward death), they are made continually to relive their past. The loop solution produces paradoxes that were already the target of innumerable parodies. Characters have a little future but an enormous past, and in any case, nothing of their past will ever have to change the mythological present in which they have been presented to the reader from the beginning. [...]

The *spiral* is another variation of the series. In the stories of *Charlie Brown*, apparently nothing happens, and any character is obsessively repeating his/her standard performance. And yet in every strip the character of *Charlie Brown* or *Snoopy* is enriched and deepened. [...] I would add finally that form of seriality that, in cinema and television, is motivated less by the narrative structure than by the nature of the actor himself: the mere presence of [which] succeeds in making, always, the same film. The author tries to invent different stories, but the public recognizes (with satisfaction) always and ever the same story, under superficial disguises.

The *saga* differs from the series insofar as it concerns the story of a family and is interested in the 'historical' lapse of time. It is genealogical. [...] The saga can have a continuous line age (the character is followed from birth to death; the same is then done for his son, his grandson, and so on, potentially forever), or it can be treelike (there is a patriarch, then the various narrative branches that concern not only his direct descendants, but also the collateral lines and the kin, each branch branching out infinitely). The most familiar (and recent) instance of saga is certainly *Dallas*. The saga is a series in disguise. It differs from the series in that the characters change (they

change also because the actors age). But in reality the saga repeats, in spite of its historicized form, celebrating in appearance the passage of time, the same story. As with ancient sagas, the deeds of the gallant ancestors are the same as the deeds of their descendants. In *Dallas*, grandfathers and grandsons undergo more or less the same ordeals: struggle for wealth and for power, life, death, defeat, victory, adultery, love, hate, envy, illusion, and delusion.

I mean by intertextual dialogue the phenomenon by which a given text echoes previous texts. [...] There are imperceptible quotations, of which not even the author is aware, that are the normal effect of the game of artistic influence. There are also quotations of which the author is aware but that should remain ungraspable by the consumer; in these cases we are usually in the presence of a banal work and plagiarism. What is more interesting is when the quotation is explicit and recognizable, as happens in literature or postmodern art, which blatantly and ironically play on intertextuality (novel on the techniques of the narrative, poetry on poetry, art on art). There is a procedure typical of the postmodern narrative that has been much used recently in the field of mass communications: it concerns the ironic quotation of the commonplace (topos). [...] However, we have a critical side effect: aware of the quotation, the spectator is brought to elaborate ironically on the nature of such a device and to acknowledge the fact that he has been invited to play up on his encyclopædic competence. [...] We have texts that are quoted from other texts and the knowledge of the preceding ones – taken for granted – is supposed to be necessary for the enjoyment of the new one. More interesting for the analysis of the new intertextuality in

the media is the example of *E.T.* in the scene where the creature from outer space (an invention of Spielberg) is led into a city during Halloween and encounters another personage, disguised as the gnome in *The Empire Strikes Back* (an invention of Lucas). E.T. is jolted and seeks to hurl himself upon the gnome in order to embrace him, as if he had met an old friend. Here the spectators must know many things: they must certainly know of the existence of another film (intertextual knowledge), but they must also know that both monsters were created by Rambaldi, that the directors of the two films are linked together for various reasons [...]; they must, in short, have not only a knowledge of the texts but also a knowledge of the world, circumstances external to the texts. One notices, naturally, that knowledge of the texts and the world are only two possible chapters of encyclopædic knowledge, and that therefore, in a certain measure, the text always makes reference to the same cultural patrimony. Such phenomena of 'intertextual dialogue' were once typical of experimental art, and presupposed a Model Reader, culturally very sophisticated.³ The fact that similar devices have now become more common in the media world leads us to see that the media are carrying on – and presupposing – the possession of pieces of information already conveyed by other media. [...] The media seem, in this play of extratextual quotation, to make reference to the world, but in effect they are referring to the contents of other messages sent by other media. The game is played, so to speak, on a 'broadened' intertextuality. Any difference between knowledge of the world (understood naively as a knowledge derived from an extratextual experience) and intertextual knowledge has practically vanished. Our reflections to come, then, must not only question the phenomenon of repetition within a single work or a series of works, but all the phenomena that

make various strategies of repetition producible, understandable, and commercially possible. In other words, repetition and seriality in the media pose new problems for the sociology of culture. Another form of intertextuality is the genre-embedding that today is very common in the mass media. For example, every Broadway musical (in the theatre or on film) is, as a rule, nothing other than the story of how a Broadway musical is put on. The Broadway genre seems to require (postulate) a vast intertextual knowledge: in fact, it creates and institutes the required competence and the presuppositions indispensable to its understanding. [...] The spectacle gives the public the sensation of knowing ahead of time that which it does not yet know and will know only at the moment. We stand facing the case of a colossal pretention (or 'passing over'). In this sense, the musical is a didactic work that takes account of the (idealized) rules of its own production. Finally, we have the work that speaks of itself: not the work that speaks of a genre to which it belongs, but a work that speaks of its own structure, and of the way in which it was made. Critics and aestheticians were inclined to think that this device was an exclusive feature of the works of the avant-garde and alien to mass communications. Aesthetics knows this problem and indeed gave it a name long ago: it is the Hegelian problem of the Death of Art. But in these later times there have been cases of productions in the mass media capable of self-irony, and some of the examples mentioned above seem to me of great interest. Even here the line between 'highbrow' arts and 'lowbrow' arts seems to have become very thin. Let us now try to review the phenomena listed above from the point of view of a 'modern' conception of aesthetic value, according to which every work aesthetically 'well done' is endowed with two characteristics:

- (1) *It must achieve a dialectic between order and novelty – in other words, between scheme and innovation;*
 (2) *This dialectic must be perceived by the consumer; who must not only grasp the contents of the message, but also the way in which the message transmits those contents.*

This being the case, nothing prevents the types of repetition listed above from achieving the conditions necessary to the realization of aesthetic value, and the history of the arts is ready to furnish us with satisfactory examples for each of the types in our classification. *Retake*. Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* is nothing else but a retake of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, and precisely because of the success of the first, which was in its turn a retake of the themes of the Breton cycle. [...] But even the third *Superman* is ironical in regard to the first (mystical and very, very serious). It appears as the retake of an arche type inspired by the gospel, made by winking at the films of Frank Tashlin. *Remake*. I have already suggested that Shakespeare remade a lot of very well-known stories of the previous centuries. *Series*. Every text presupposes and constructs always a double Model Reader (let us say, a naive and a 'smart' one). The former uses the work as semantic machinery and is the victim of the strategies of the author who will lead him little by little along a series of previsions and expectations; the latter evaluates the work as an aesthetic product and enjoys the strategies implemented in order to produce a model reader of the first level. This second-level reader is the one who enjoys the seriality of the series, not so much for the return of the same thing (that the ingenuous reader believed was different) but for the strategy of the variations; in other words, he enjoys the way in which the same story is worked over to appear to be different. This enjoyment of variations is obviously encouraged by the more sophisticated series. Indeed, we

can classify the products of serial narratives along a continuum that takes into account the different gradations of the reading agreement between the text and the 'smart' reader (as opposed to the naive one). It is evident that even the most banal narrative product allows the reader to become, by an autonomous decision, a critical reader, able to recognize the innovative strategies (if any). But there are serial works that establish an explicit agreement with the critical reader and thus, so to speak, challenge him to acknowledge the innovative aspects of the text. Belonging to this category are the television films of *Lieutenant Columbo*. It is worth noticing that in this series the authors spell out from the beginning who the murderer is. The spectator is not so much invited to play the naive game of guessing (whodunit?) as (1) to enjoy Columbo's detection technique, appreciated as an encore to a well-known piece of bravura (and in this sense the pleasure provided by Columbo is not so different from the one provided by Nero Wolfe); and (2) to discover in what way the author will succeed in winning his bet, which consists in having Columbo do what he always does, but nevertheless in a way that is not banally repetitive. Every story of Nero Wolfe was written by Rex Stout, but every episode of Columbo is directed by a different person. The critical addressee is invited to pronounce a judgment on the best variation. I use the term 'variation' thinking of the classical musical variations. They, too, were 'serial products' that aimed very little at the naive addressee and that bet everything on an agreement with the critical one. The composer was fundamentally interested only in the applause of the critical listener, who was supposed to appreciate the fantasy displayed in his innovations on an old theme. In this sense, seriality and repetition are not opposed to innovation. Nothing is more 'serial' than a tie

pattern, and yet nothing can be so personalized as a tie. The example may be elementary, but that does not make it banal. Between the elementary æsthetics of the tie and the recognized 'high' artistic value of the Goldberg Variations, there is a gradated continuum of repetitious strategies, aimed at the response of the 'smart' addressee. The problem is that there is not, on the one hand, an æsthetics of 'high' art (original and not serial), and on the other a pure sociology of the serial. Rather, there is an æsthetics of serial forms that requires an historical and anthropological study of the ways in which, at different times and in different places, the dialectic between repetition and innovation has been instantiated. When we fail to find innovation in the serial, this is perhaps less a result of the structures of the text, than of our 'horizon of expectations' and our cultural habits. We know very well that in certain examples of non-Western art, where we always see the same thing, the natives recognize infinitesimal variations and feel the shiver of innovation. Where we see innovation, at least in the serial forms of the Western past, the original addressees were not at all interested in that aspect and conversely enjoyed the recurrences of the scheme. *Saga*. The entire Human Comedy by Balzac presents a very good example of a treelike saga, as much as *Dallas* does. Balzac is more interesting than *Dallas* because every one of his novels increases our knowledge of the society of his time, while every program of *Dallas* tells us the same thing about American society – but both use the same narrative scheme. *Intertextuality*. The notion of intertextuality itself has been elaborated within the framework of a reflection on 'high' art. Notwithstanding, the examples given above have been taken up provocatively by the world of mass communication in order to show how even these forms of intertextual

dialogue have by now been transferred to the field of popular production. It is typical of what is called postmodern literature and art (but did it not already happen thus with the music of Stravinsky?) to quote by using (sometimes under various stylistic disguises) quotation marks so that the reader pays no attention to the content of the citation but instead to the way in which the excerpt from a first text is introduced into the fabric of a second one. Renato Barilli has observed that one of the risks of this procedure is the failure to make the quotation marks evident, so that what is cited is accepted by the naive reader as an original invention rather than as an ironic reference.⁴ [...] The understanding of this device is a condition for its æsthetic enjoyment. Thus, this episode can work only if one realizes that there are quotation marks somewhere. One can say that these marks can be perceived only on the basis of an extratextual knowledge. Nothing in the film helps the spectator to understand at what point there ought to be quotation marks. The film presupposes a previous world-knowledge on the part of the spectator. And if the spectator does not know? Too bad. The effect gets lost, but the film knows of other means to gain approval. These imperceptible quotation marks, more than an æsthetic device, are a social artifice; they select the happy few (and the mass media usually hopes to produce millions of happy few...). To the naive spectator of the first level, the film has already given almost too much: that secret pleasure is reserved, for that time, for the critical spectator of the second level. [...] At the extreme other end of the pole of the æsthetic interests, I would like to mention a work whose equivalent I have not succeeded in finding in the contemporary mass media; it is not only a masterpiece of intertextuality but also a paramount example of narrative metalanguage, which speaks of its own formation and of

the rules of the narrative genre: I refer to *Tristram Shandy*. It is impossible to read and enjoy Sterne's antinovel novel without realizing that it is treating the novel form ironically. *Tristram Shandy* is so aware of its nature that it is impossible to find there a single ironical statement that does not make evident its own quotation marks. It brings to a high artistic resolution the rhetorical device called *pronuntiatio* (that is, the way of stressing imperceptibly the irony). I believe that I have singled out a typology of 'quotation marking' that must in some way be relevant to the ends of a phenomenology of aesthetic value, and of the pleasure that follows from it. I believe further that the strategies for matching surprise and novelty with repetition, even if they are semiotic devices in themselves aesthetically neutral, can give place to different results on the aesthetic level. Some conclusions follow: Each of the types of repetition that we have examined is not limited to the mass media, but belongs by right to the entire history of artistic creativity: plagiarism, quotation, parody, the ironic retake, the intertextual joke, are typical of the entire artistic-literary tradition. Much art has been and is repetitive. The concept of absolute originality is a contemporary one, born with Romanticism; classical art was in vast measure serial, and the 'modern' avant-garde (at the beginning of this century) challenged the Romantic idea of 'creation from nothingness,' with its techniques of collage, mustachios on the Mona Lisa, art about art, and so on. The same type of repetitive procedure can produce either excellence or banality; it can put the addressees into conflict with themselves and with the intertextual tradition as a whole; thus it can provide them with easy consolations, projections, identifications: it can establish an agreement exclusively with the naive addressee, or exclusively with the smart one, or with both at different levels and along a continuum of

solutions that cannot be reduced to a rudimentary typology. Nevertheless, a typology of repetition does not furnish the criteria that can establish differences in aesthetic values. Yet, since the various types of repetition are present in the whole of artistic and literary history, they can be taken into account in order to establish criteria of artistic value. An aesthetics of repetition requires as a premise a semiotics of the textual procedures of repetition. I realize that all I have said until now still represents an attempt to reconsider the various forms of repetition in the media in terms of the 'modern' dialectic between order and innovation. The fact, however, is that when one speaks today of the aesthetics of seriality, one alludes to something more radical, that is, to a notion of aesthetic value that wholly escapes the 'modern' idea of art and literature.⁵ It has been observed that with the phenomenon of television serials we find a new concept of 'the infinity of the text'; the text takes on the rhythms of that same dailiness in which it is produced, and that it mirrors. The problem is not one of recognizing that the serial text varies indefinitely upon a basic scheme (and in this sense it can be judged from the point of view of the 'modern' aesthetics). The real problem is that what is of interest is not so much the single variations as 'variability' as a formal principle, the fact that one can make variations to infinity. Variability to infinity has all the characteristics of repetition, and very little of innovation. But it is the 'infinity' of the process that gives a new sense to the device of variation. What must be enjoyed – suggests the postmodern aesthetics – is the fact that a series of possible variations is potentially infinite. What becomes celebrated here is a sort of victory of life over art, with the paradoxical result that the era of electronics – instead of emphasizing the phenomena of shock, interruptions, novelty, and frustration of

expectations – would produce a return to the continuum, the Cyclical, the Periodical, the Regular.

[O]ne can easily recognize how in the *Columbo* series, for example, on a basic scheme some of the best names in American cinema have worked in variations. Thus it would be difficult to speak, in such a case, of pure repetition: if the scheme of the detection and the psychology of the protagonist actor remains unchanged, the style of the narrative changes each time. This is no small thing, especially from the point of view of the ‘modern’ aesthetics. [...] In these forms of repetition ‘we are not so much interested in what is repeated as we are in the way the components of the text come to be segmented and then how the segments come to be codified in order to establish a system of invariants: any component that does not belong to the system, can be defined as an independent variable.’ In the most typical and apparently ‘degenerated’ cases of seriality, the independent variables are not altogether the more visible, but the more microscopic, as in a homeopathic solution where the potion is all the more potent because by further ‘succussions’ the original particles of the medicinal product have almost disappeared. This is what permits to speak of the *Columbo* series as an ‘exercice de style’? *la Queneau*. We are, says Calabrese, facing a ‘neobaroque aesthetics’ that is instantiated, not only by the ‘cultivated’ products, but even, and above all, by those that are most degenerated. À propos of *Dallas*, one can say that ‘the semantic opposition and the articulation of the elementary narrative structures can migrate in combinations of the highest improbability around the various characters.’ Organized differentiations, polycentrism, regulated irregularity – such would be the fundamental aspects of this neobaroque aesthetic, the

principal example of which is musical variations? *la Bach*. Since in the epoch of mass communications ‘the condition for listening... it is that for which all has already been said and already been written... as in the Kabuki theatre, it may then be the most minuscule variant that will produce pleasure in the text, or that form of explicit repetition which is already known.’ What results from these reflections is clear. The focus of the theoretical inquiry is displaced. Before, mass mediologists tried to save the dignity of repetition by recognizing in it the possibility of a traditional dialectic between scheme and innovation (but it was still the innovation that accounted for the value, the way of rescuing the product from degradation and promoting it to a value). Now, the emphasis must be placed on the inseparable knot of scheme-variation, where the variation is no longer more appreciable than the scheme. The term neobaroque must not deceive: we are witnessing the birth of a new æsthetic sensibility much more archaic, and truly post-postmodern. As G. Grignaffini observes, ‘the neobaroque æsthetics has transformed a commercial constraint into a formal principle.’ ‘As a result,’ any idea of unicity becomes destroyed to its very roots.⁷ As happened with Baroque music, and as (according to W. Benjamin) happens in our era of ‘technological reproduction,’ the messages of mass-media can and must be received and understood in a ‘state of inattention.’ [...] We would not be scandalized if such criteria were to be applied (as they have been applied) to abstract art. And in fact, here we are about to outline a new æsthetics of the ‘abstract’ applied to the products of mass communication. But this requires that the naïve addressee of the first level will disappear, giving place only to the critical reader of the second level. In fact, there is no conceivable naïve addressee of an abstract painting or sculpture. If there is

one who – in front of them – asks, ‘But what does it mean?’ this is not an addressee of either the first or second level; he is excluded from any artistic experience whatever. Of abstract works there is only a critical ‘reading’: what is formed is of no interest, only the way it is formed is interesting. Can we expect the same for the serial products of television? What should we think about the birth of a new public that, indifferent to the stories told (which are in any case already known), only relishes the repetition and its own microscopic variations? In spite of the fact that today the spectator still weeps in the face of the Texan families’ tribulations, ought we to expect in the near future a true and real genetic mutation? If it should not happen this way, the radical proposal of the postmodern aesthetics would appear singularly snobby: as in a sort of neo-Orwellian world, the pleasures of the smart reading would be reserved for the members of the Party and the pleasures of the naive reading reserved for the proletarians. The entire industry of the serial would exist, as in the world of Mallarmé? (made to end in a Book), with its only aim being to furnish neobaroque pleasure to the happy few, reserving pity and fear to the unhappy many who remain.

[...] We can say then that the neobaroque series brings to its first level of fruition (impossible to eliminate) the pure and simple myth. Myth has nothing to do with art. [...] Why not? Every epoch has its mythmakers, its own sense of the sacred. Let us take for granted such a ‘figurative’ representation and such an ‘orgiastic’ enjoyment of the myth, [...] the intense emotional participation, the pleasure of the reiteration of a single and constant truth, and the tears, and the laughter – and finally the catharsis. Then we can conceive of an audience also able to shift onto an aesthetic level and to judge the art of the variations on a

mythical theme – in the same way as one succeeds in appreciating a ‘beautiful funeral’ even when the deceased was a dear person. Are we sure that the same thing did not happen even with the classical tragedy? If we reread Aristotle’s *Poetics* we see that it was possible to describe the model of a Greek tragedy as a serial one. From the quotations of the Stagirite we realize that the tragedies of which he had knowledge were many more than have come down to us, and they all followed (by varying it) one fixed scheme. We can suppose that those that have been saved were those that corresponded better to the canons of the ancient æsthetic sensibility. But we could also suppose that the decimation came about on the basis of political-cultural criteria, and no one can forbid us from imagining that Sophocles may have survived by virtue of a political manoeuvre, by sacrificing better authors (but ‘better’ according to what criteria?). If there were many more tragedies than those we know, and if they all followed (with variations) a fixed scheme, what would happen if today we were able to see them and read them all together? Would our evaluations of the originality of Sophocles or Aeschylus be different from what they are currently? Would we find in these authors variations on topical themes where today we see indistinctly a unique (and sublime) way of confronting the problems of the human condition? Perhaps where we see absolute invention, the Greeks would have seen only the ‘correct’ variation on a single scheme, and sublime appeared to them, not the single work, but precisely the scheme. It is not by chance that, when speaking of the art of poetry, Aristotle dealt mainly with schemes before all else, and mentioned single works only for the sake of an example. Since at this point I am playing what Peirce called ‘the play of musement’ and I am multiplying the hypotheses – in order to find out, maybe

later, a single fruitful idea – let us now reverse our experiment and look at a contemporary TV serial from the point of view of a future neoromantic aesthetics which, supposedly, has assumed again that ‘originality is beautiful.’ Let us imagine a society in 3000 A.D., in which 90 percent of all our present cultural production had been destroyed and of all our television serials only one show of *Lieutenant Columbo* had survived. How would we ‘read’ this work? Would we be moved by such an original picture of a little man in the struggle with the powers of evil, with the forces of capital, with an opulent and racist society dominated by WASPS? Would we appreciate this efficient, concise, and intense representation of the urban landscape of an industrial America? When – in a single piece of a series – something is simply presupposed by the audience, which knows the whole series, would we speak perhaps of an art of synthesis of a sublime capacity of telling through essential allusions? In other words, how would we read a ‘piece’ of a series, if the whole of the series remained unknown to us? Such a series of questions could continue indefinitely. I started to put them forth because I think that we still know very little about the role of repetition in the universe of art and in the universe of mass media.

1 See my works *Opera aperta* (Milan : Bompiani, 1962) and *Apocalittici e Integrati* (Milan: Bompiani, 1964). 2 I repeat here some of my old remarks in ‘The Myth of Superman’ (1962), in *The Role of the Reader*. 3 Cf. *The Role of the Reader*. 4 ‘Dal leggibile all’illegibile,’ in L. Russo, ed., *Letteratura tra consumo e ricerca* (Bologna: Mulino, 1984) 5 The ‘manifesto’ of this new aesthetics of seriality is the special issue of the journal *Cinema & Cinema* 35-36 (1983). 7 ‘J.R.: vi presento il racconto,’ *ibid.* 5



EDWARD RUSCHA, THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, LOS ANGELES, PHOTOGRAPHS OF LOS ANGELES STREETS (2012.M.2)

The cities of the New World have one characteristic in common: that they pass from first youth to decrepitude with no intermediary stage. [...] American cities never offer that holiday-state, outside of time, to which great monuments can transport us; nor do they transcend the primary urban function and become objects of contemplation and reflection. What struck me about New York, or Chicago, or their southerly counterpart Sao Paulo, was not the absence of ancient remains; this is, on the contrary, a positive element in their significance. [...] If I err, it is in the opposite sense: as these are new cities, and cities whose newness is their whole being and their justification, I find it difficult to forgive them for not staying new for ever. The older a European city is, the more highly we regard it; in America, every year brings with it an element of disgrace. For they are not merely newly built; they are built for renewal, and the sooner the better. When a new quarter is run up it doesn't look like a city, as we understand the word; it's too brilliant, too new, too high-spirited. [...] But these are buildings that stay up long after [...] and they don't last well: facades begin to peel off, rain and soot leave their marks, the style goes out of fashion, and the original layout is ruined when someone loses patience and tears down the buildings next door. It is not a case of new cities contrasted with old, but rather of cities whose cycle of evolution is very rapid as against others whose cycle of evolution is slow. Certain European cities are dying off slowly and peacefully; the cities of the New World have a perpetual high temperature, a chronic illness which prevents them, for all their everlasting youthfulness, from ever being entirely well.

CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS, TRISTES TROPIQUES (1961 [1955])

ANDY WARHOL, SLEEP (1963)

THE PLAY OF REPETITION: ANDY WARHOL'S "SLEEP"

BRANDON W. JOSEPH
2005

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In late September 1963, Andy Warhol set out for Los Angeles [...] and, when the trip began, was in the process of editing his first long-duration film, *Sleep*.² [...] At the time Cage would have been very much on Warhol's mind. Only a few weeks earlier he had attended Cage's presentation of Erik Satie's *Vexations*, which consists of 840 repetitions of an approximately eighty-second piano phrase that itself contains repetitions. Employing a team of ten pianists, the concert lasted throughout the night of Sept. 9 and 10 for a total duration of eighteen hours and forty minutes.⁴ Warhol, according to his associate, Billy Name, stayed for the entire evening, even lingering afterward to compare notes with Cage.⁵ [...] That fall, in an oft-quoted interview with Gene Swenson, Warhol not only noted Cage's importance but, in perhaps his only scholarly citation, referenced Leonard B. Meyer's Hudson Review article, *The End of the Renaissance?* devoted to the Cagean revolution in the arts (though he was careful to feign mystification at 'big words like radical empiricism and teleology').⁷ Warhol's self-deprecation notwithstanding, *Sleep* proves thoroughly imbricated with Cagean problematics.

Cage's concert was the first time *Vexations* had been performed in its entirety. Although long interested in Satie's work, Cage maintained as late as 1958 that 'one

could not endure a performance of *Vexations* (which he overestimated as lasting twenty-four hours).⁸ While Cage initially saw the primary value of *Vexations* as residing in its 'power to irritate,' by 1963 his estimation had shifted dramatically.⁹ Already by 1961 Cage's decade-long pursuit of an aesthetic of multiplicity had reached a certain culmination. His infamous chance investigations formed part of an 'experimental' practice by which musical results were not determined by either the actions or the intentions of composer or performer. The result was a music of unforeseeable possibilities, with sounds arising in such a manner as to surpass listeners' predispositions and act as stimuli to genuinely new sensations and ideas. The fulfillment of this program was signaled by Cage's score for *Variations I* (1961): eleven transparencies (five marked with a single point and six with a single line) randomly arrayed atop one another to define a series of sonic events.¹⁰ In order to determine a sound, a measurement is taken on a perpendicular from a point to each one of the different lines. The resulting values are used to establish the sound's frequency, amplitude, timbre, duration, point of occurrence, and structure, each line having been arbitrarily assigned one of these variables. In both theory and actuality the score for *Variations II* can give rise to any possible sound; the entire range of the virtual sonic universe is available at every moment.¹¹ The score for *Variations II* brought forth another important realization, for each different sound derives from the exact same compositional action: the throw of the transparencies. Yet while theoretically possible, it is entirely unlikely (indeed, practically impossible) that repeating this action will produce a repeated result. Thus, in much the same way that the visit to an anechoic chamber ten years earlier helped Cage overcome the dualism of sound and silence-

finding that silence was actually only the presence of sounds one does not intend-the score for *Variations II* pointed Cage toward overcoming the dualism of repetition and variation, redefining repetition as merely the production of unintentional differences.¹² If his former teacher, Arnold Schoenberg, had taught him that 'Everything is repetition. A variation, that is, is repetition, some things changed and others not,' Cage would now transform that edict into its opposite.¹³ Going beyond variation, even wide-ranging variation, *Variations II* courted a more radical form of difference: difference unleashed from a priori thoughts and conceptions, undermining or overturning the conceptual model on which habitual notions of repetition are built. 'We can say that repetition doesn't exist, that two leaves of the same plant are not repetitions of each other, but are unique,' Cage would explain, paraphrasing Leibniz: And when we examine them [the two leaves] closely, we see they are indeed different in some respect, if only in the respect of how they receive light because they are at different points in space. In other words, repetition really has to do with how we think... If we think things are being repeated, it is generally because we don't pay attention to all of the details. But if we pay attention as though we were looking through a microscope to all the details, we see that there is no such thing as repetition.¹⁴ Having concluded that repetition was in fact a form of difference, Cage seems to have felt it necessary to undertake an examination of this phenomenon under the nearly laboratory-like conditions that Satie's composition provided. For Cage, the experiment was a success: The effect of this going on and on was quite extraordinary. Ordinarily, one would assume there was no need to have such an experience, since if you hear something said ten times, why should you hear it any more? But the

funny thing was that it was never the same twice. The musicians were always slightly different with their versions—their strengths fluctuated. I was surprised that something was put into motion that changed me. I wasn't the same after that performance as I was before. The world seemed to have changed.¹⁵

By September of 1963 Warhol's own use of repetition had already become well established in series of paintings made with stencils, hand-cut stamps, and silk screens. If he was particularly interested in Cage's Satie concert, then, it was no doubt on account of his search for a means of translating such repetition into the temporal medium of film. Shortly after the *Vexations* performance, an inspired (or, perhaps, provoked) Warhol screened the first footage of *Sleep* for Jonas Mekas, who announced in the *Village Voice*, 'Andy Warhol... is in the process of making the longest and simplest movie ever made: an eight-hour-long movie that shows nothing but a man sleeping.'¹⁶ Although *Sleep* would ultimately prove shy of six hours, Warhol reiterated his intention of producing an eight-hour version to Hirschman in Los Angeles.¹⁷ Before the film was even completed, the radio host surmised its relation to *Vexations* and conjectured, 'I would suspect that there is not a repetitive moment in your film. I have a feeling that probably the human face changes.'¹⁸ A few months later, in program notes for *Sleep*'s premiere at the Gramercy Arts Theater, Henry Geldzahler reiterated such a 'Cagean' understanding. Erroneously describing the finished film as eight hours long, Geldzahler decreed: As in Erik Satie's *Vexations* when the same 20-second [sic] piece is repeated for eighteen hours, we find that the more that is eliminated the greater concentration is possible on the spare remaining essentials. The slightest variation becomes an event, something on

which we can focus our attention. As less and less happens on the screen, we become satisfied with almost nothing and find the slightest shift in the body of the sleeper or the least movement of the camera interesting enough.¹⁹ [...] 'Suddenly, the performer blinks or swallows, and the involuntary action becomes in this context a highly dramatic event, as climactic as the burning of Atlanta in *Gone with the Wind*.'²¹ To the extent that such an understanding applies to *Sleep* – which, as we shall see, will have to be greatly qualified – a Cagean perception of minute changes would blend with the visual erotics suffusing all of Warholean cinema. [...] Although Warhol's story primarily served to illustrate the effects of an increasingly heavy amphetamine addiction on the most tragic of his performers, he nonetheless ascribed Sedgwick's arresting screen presence to a similar type of perpetual motion: Edie was incredible on camera—just the way she moved. And she never stopped moving for a second—even when she was sleeping, her hands were wide awake... The great stars are the ones who are doing something you can watch every second, even if it's just a movement inside their eye.²⁴ In *The Philosophy* Warhol termed this kind of intense, erotic, visual cathexis—one he described as 'probably very close to a certain kind of love' – fascination.²⁵ And, as he famously explained to Gretchen Berg, such fascination was part of the attraction of his early cinema: I made my earliest films using, for several hours, just one actor on the screen doing the same thing: eating or sleeping or smoking; I did this because people usually just go to the movies to see only the star, to eat him up, so here at last is a chance to look only at the star for as long as you like, no matter what he does and to eat him up all you want to.²⁶ Despite the importance of such scopis investment, any attempt to describe *Sleep* as a mere extension of Warhol's personality

or subjectivity, to see it as a faithful record of his own voyeuristic or desirous gaze, proves far too reductive. [...] *Eat*, through Warhol's resequencing of the reels to undermine temporal continuity; *Blow Job*, through the overdetermining tension between on- and off-screen space; *Haircut (No. 1)*, through the wholly different staging of characters in each reel, and so on. Even *Empire* – which, like Henry Geldzahler, consists of an entirely static, fixed frame – proves more complex than generally assumed. It begins with the profilmic and filmic in apparent unison as the setting of the sun is recorded by the sky's darkening until the Empire State Building's lights are illuminated. From the onset of total darkness, the depicted image becomes nearly inert, the passing of recorded time evident primarily in the blinking light atop the adjacent Metropolitan Life Building, its flashing retarded as the twenty-four frames-per-second (fps) of shooting is slowed to six teen fps upon projection. From this moment on, however, the viewer's attention divides between the nearly motionless depicted image and the fleeting passage of film grain that push processing and the flashes and flares that occurred in developing have rendered extremely visible. The effect is of a temporal and material splitting: the flame-like lights of the Empire State Building and the dot of light on the Met Life tower appear as one layer, temporally slowed, while the grain of the film stock appears to cascade across the screen more quickly – the eye on this 'level' being attuned to the actual speed of projection-like a heavy rain or a flowing, celluloid stream. [...] More complex than Geldzahler's remarks would suggest, it is through such an implicit juxtaposition of a stable or recurrent visual constant and minute, fleeting, and unpredictable perceptual changes that *Empire* might bear comparison to Satie's *Vexations*.²⁸

[...] It was the observation of compulsively recurring traumatic dreams that led Freud to postulate an outside or beyond of the pleasure principle, a force more primary and repetitive, the incessant beating of which he associated with an instinctive drive toward death. In *Death in America*, Hal Foster has examined the manner in which Warhol's repetition – most notably in the 'Death and Disaster' paintings he was producing in 1963 – operates not only to screen and reduce affect but also, simultaneously, to produce something akin to a trauma of its own. 'Somehow in these repetitions,' writes Foster, 'several contradictory things occur at the same time: a warding away of traumatic significance and an opening out to it, a defending against traumatic affect and a producing of it.' Despite Warhol's previously quoted comments on repetition, *Sleep* displays a similar compulsiveness, one that counteracts merely aspect-numbing effect; its most repetitive moments produce a frustration agitation as viewers find themselves caught within a time that refuses to advance. Such multiple concatenations of the effects of repetition reflect not only on Warhol's silk screens and *Sleep* but also on Freudian theory. For despite Freud's conviction the two underlying instincts of life and death – Eros and Thanatos, the sexual instincts and those that lead to the death drive – were starkly and dualistically opposed, neither his analyses nor his speculations ever allowed him to fully and successfully separate the two layers or functions of repetition. The death drive, it seems, never manifests itself alone but only in conjunction with the erotic investments it supposedly counter.³⁸ Although the majority of Warhol's silk screens of death unmitigated – irredeemably gruesome car crashes, detached photographic records of suicides, and the like – the Marilyn Monroe paintings he began shortly after suicide conjugate death and desire within a single portrayal.

[...] Although Warhol once attributed his approach to taming affect to 'Eastern philosophy,' his persistent conjugation of death and desire (particularly, identifiably homoerotic desire) is remote from the Zen-like aesthetic of John Cage.⁴⁴ Yet, as Warhol was aware, in 1963 Cage was not the primary musical figure associated with repetition. That mantle had been assumed by his younger colleague, La Monte Young. [...] '[Young] is able, whether by the repetition of a single sound or by holding a single sound for twenty minutes, to bring it about that what I had been thinking was the same thing, is not the same thing after all but full of variety. I find his work remarkable.'⁴⁵ [...] Although Cage would repeatedly compare the extraordinary effect of Young's work to the same 'change in experience of seeing... [as] when you look through a microscope' that he invoked in his discussion of the impossibility of finding two identical leaves,⁴⁸ he nonetheless seemed to have suspected that Young did not sufficiently displace repetition's conceptual dimension to release a radical play of indeterminate, unintentional differences. Where Cage foresaw the possibility of turning conceptual repetition into difference, Young sought to maintain a dialectical interaction of conceptual ideal and material instantiation that, to Cage's mind, did not sufficiently escape from the traditional, 'European' idea of theme and variation.⁴⁹ For Cage, any residual thematic component to repetition, however minimal, leads back to the predominance of ideal relationships over the actual material distinction of each sound in itself.⁵⁰ And, indeed, even before the end of the decade, Young would declare his allegiance to ideas of 'stasis' and 'control' that were at odds with Cage's original understanding of his work.⁵¹ Choosing the same word that Freud used to describe the death drive's compulsive recurrence, Cage termed Young's

subsumption of repetition beneath the concept 'fixation.'⁵² A few years later Gilles Deleuze (familiar with the work of Cage, Young, and Warhol) would characterize the stakes involved. The two types of repetition—repetition understood as difference (what Deleuze calls 'covered' or 'clothed' repetition) and repetition that makes reference to a concept or ideal (a 'brute,' 'bare,' or 'mechanical' repetition)—are not diametrically or dialectically opposed.⁵³ Rather, for Deleuze as for Cage, clothed repetition is the heart of repetition, and bare repetition comes (in an only seemingly paradoxical manner) to cover it over, annulling the a-conceptual differences in favor of abstraction and, eventually, generality. The clothed or differential type of repetition is fundamental and exists within all forms of repetition; the bare form of repetition, repetition of the same, is a mask, disguise, or covering over of this more profound, internal, differential repetition. It is by placing repetition underneath the concept, underneath the structures of thought as representation, that the inherent differences become annulled, eradicated, or passed over. 'In every way,' writes Deleuze, 'material or bare repetition, so-called repetition of the same, is like a skin which unravels, the external husk of a kernel of difference and more complicated internal repetitions.'⁵⁴ It was, no doubt, in part to make such distinctions evident that Cage was determined to stage the *Vexations* concert, a manifesto-like presentation of repetition freed from the concept. It was perhaps a means of wresting the definition of repetition from Young, warding off the ambiguity that to Cage's mind still inhered in Young's subordination to the ideal. Hence, no doubt as well, Young's decision to decline Cage's invitation to participate, choosing instead to join Warhol in the audience for an experience which he would later label simply, 'boring.'⁵⁵ For Cage, demonstrating such an

understanding of repetition was not motivated by mere formal, artistic, or philosophical quibbles but was related to concerns arising from postwar commercialism. These came to the fore most clearly in Cage's antipathy toward records. An early and enthusiastic proponent of electronic music and magnetic tape, Cage was by no means opposed to technology per se. He held, however, that machines should be used as a means of creating sounds rather than reproducing them.⁵⁶ Commercial records, Cage charged, were useful for nothing other than the extraction of royalties: 'It would be an act of charity even to oneself to smash them whenever they are discovered.'⁵⁷ Although, given the physical wear of the needle, a record could be understood as being different each time it is played, Cage found that the mechanical reproduction of sound covered over or disguised any such distinctions. Allied with the concept, records fell on the side of a mechanical repetition that annulled performative differentiations of the type found in Satie's *Vexations* and defeated even Cage's most experimental work. 'Any one of my indeterminate pieces, if recorded,' he explained to Daniel Charles, 'becomes an object at the moment when you listen to it knowing that you can listen to it again. You listen again and the object surges forth. There is repetition; it sounds the same each time.'⁵⁸ Although long motivated by a critique of the political economy of music, Cage's more explicitly political turn at the beginning of the 1960s led to an increasingly direct confrontation with the commodity form at a time of its almost dizzying expansion.⁵⁹ As he explained to Charles, In contemporary civilization where everything is standardized and where everything is repeated, the whole point is to forget in the space between an object and its duplication. If we didn't have this power of forgetfulness, if art today didn't help us to forget, we would be submerged,

drowned under those avalanches of rigorously identical objects.⁶⁰ It is here that Deleuze's theorization of repetition becomes important, for it reveals the material basis of Cagean difference. As generality, repetition comes to abstract and annul a fundamental, prior difference in precisely the same manner in which abstract labor is extracted from actual, physical processes and exchange value is extracted from the heterogeneities of use. 'The interior of repetition is always affected by an order of difference,' writes Deleuze: 'it is only to the extent that something is linked to a repetition of an order other than its own that the repetition appears external and bare, and the thing itself subject to the categories of generality.'⁶¹ Bare repetition is thus allied with reification. And as such, Cage explained, once the particularities of existence are extracted and rendered into a seemingly autonomous 'world of objects...the presence of emotions as linked to those objects can again come to constrain us,' an effect which was but another facet of fixation.⁶² As commodities, records alienate music from human production. Hence Cage's quip in the 'Lecture on Nothing': 'The reason they've no music in Texas is because they have recordings in Texas. Remove the records from Texas and someone will learn to sing.'⁶³

*See original for further reference.



ANDY WARHOL, SCREENPRINTING IN THE FACTORY (1966–67)

ANDY WARHOL, THE MADNESS OF THE DAY 335

ROSALIND E. KRAUSS

2012

After a brief interruption, to concentrate on filmmaking, Andy Warhol returned to painting in 1972, preparing long rolls of canvas with a spread of plastic paint (synthetic polymer), buttered onto the surface in irregular surges and tracks, to form a squirming ground onto which the black mist of a portrait's features [...] would fall, like an iconic dew, the inky precipitate forced through the silken mesh of the screens with rubber squeegees. [...] "I would still rather do just a silkscreen of the face without all the rest," he admitted, "but people expect a little bit more. That's why I put in all the drawing."¹

The "drawing"! This tag just shrugs away a decade of intense debate about the nature of Abstract Expressionist gesture mounted as a defense against the arty finickiness – the unassailable representational nature – of graphic line. That Jackson Pollock's lassoes and pours of liquid paint were in the front line of such a defense was obvious to Warhol was made clear when in the late 1970s he proceeded to his "Oxidations": His method of imitating Pollock's line by means of urinating onto the surfaces of still-wet canvases bearing metallic paint.

[...] In 1989 Benjamin Buchloh singled out Warhol's "blanks" in order to consider these empty panels, joined in polyptych-like relationship to figurative canvases, in the light of the whole tradition of abstract painting, particularly abstraction in its toughest form: the monochrome. For Buchloh these "blanks" were made in

parody of abstract art and the utopian spin it had placed on emptiness, purity, and refusal. This ironic attitude did not devalue Warhol's position in his eyes, however. To the contrary, it made Warhol's identification of his own "blanks" as a merchandising strategy a form of canny revelation.⁵ "Recognizing that no single strategy of modernist reduction, of radical negation and refusal, could escape its ultimate fate of enhancing the painting's status as object and commodity," Buchloh writes:

...the destruction of any and all metaphysical residue of the device (be it in Neo-plasticist, Abstract Expressionist, or as it was identified, hard-edge and color-field painting of the fifties) seems in fact to have been the task that Warhol had set for himself in the deployment of monochromy in the early sixties.⁶

If the "Oxidations" were conceived as forging a connection with Pollock, Warhol's "blanks," begun in the early 1960s, struck an association with Ellsworth Kelly, something he freely acknowledged as follows: "I always liked Ellsworth's work, and that's why I always painted a blank canvas. I loved that blank canvas thing and I wished I had stuck with the idea of just painting the same painting like the soup can and never painting another painting. When someone wanted one, you would just do another one. Does anybody do that now? Anyway, you do the same painting whether it looks different or not."⁷ Warhol's experience of Kelly's use of monochrome panels dated from the late 1950s when he visited Kelly's loft in Coenties Slip in New York, the waterfront studio space Kelly shared with Jack Youngerman, James Rosenquist, Robert Indiana, and Agnes Martin. At this time Kelly had completed *Sixty Panels: Colors for a Large Wall*, 1951 (MoMA, NY), a grid of monochrome panels, which Warhol saw in the studio and approved [...]. By the 1990s many of Warhol's other "abstractions" had

been singled out for exhibition, not only the "Shadows" and the "Oxidations" but the "Rorschachs" and the "Camouflages" as well. And abstraction, or at least the signifier emptied of representational meaning, had received another kind of spin in the form of Hal Foster's conception of "traumatic realism." Concentrating on the photographic mechanism that made it possible to produce a given car crash or police beating or electric chair in a sputter of repetitions, Foster turned his eyes from the content of the image to the photomechanical screen that both processes it and succeeds in hiding it from view. Arguing that repetition is the form in which a traumatized subject attempts to screen himself off from the Real (capitalized here to link it to Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic notion of the Real-as-trauma and thus as something which, because it was never truly encountered, escapes representation), Foster sees Warhol's screens enacting just this function. With their streaking and blanching, their rips and punctures, their misalignments of register, the photomechanical screens gesture toward a Real which can never be represented at the same time that they indicate a rupture in the psychic field of the traumatic subject himself.¹¹

For his 1966 Castell exhibition, Warhol shifted his focus to the subject at the forefront of vanguard art, namely eyesight itself. Warhol used the partitioned space of the two rooms to divide his work into two different series. One concentrated on the walls of the Castelli Gallery by covering them with wallpaper repeating a cow's head; the other, as Buchloh has remarked, "concentrated on the empty space of the room itself, which Warhol emphasized by floating silver-colored helium 'clouds' within it," the clouds, we could add, presenting themselves as strange metonymies of daylight, now concentrated and packaged

under plastic.¹²

The abstract status of the clouds, their arguably vanguard condition, was as distant as possible from the concept of “drawing.” Unlocatable, they were more like puffs of smoke than circumscribable objects. With this as a context, it becomes more obvious why, when in 1979 Rupert Smith brought Warhol what he called “diamond dust,” the artist welcomed it as a possible new form of background for his paintings and prints, although at first he found the material too matte. Smith solved this problem by substituting a form of ground glass that he bought from a supplier in New Jersey, and with it Warhol embarked on his first series using this material for his diamond dust “Shoes” (1980) after having renewed the “Shadows” project (1979) in which the ground glass, sprinkled either in black or white onto the liquid grounds of the projected shapes, made a strange fusion of two signature Kelly ideas: shadows on the one hand, and windows on the other. The most well-known, and one could say, the most Warholian of Kelly’s early transfer paintings was his Window, 1948 (Museum of Modern Art, Paris) [...].

If the window could embody itself as the signifier for “vision” – namely the transparency of the optical medium through which sight thrusts itself – shadow could function as the intermittent opacifying of this matrix, its darkening, its termination. Glass and shadow thus make a kind of narrative sense in the construction of an imagined visual subject, although a subject, here, stunned by light, traumatized by the coming of “the day.” There was, of course, a narrative that explored this very constellation of themes, although whether it would have been available to Warhol is more open to doubt. This narrative, *The Madness of the Day*, by the French novelist Maurice Blanchot, is a first-person account of the blinded victim of an accident

through which the narrator’s sight has been effaced by having ground glass thrown into it, with the result that he cannot see “the day,” a story organized to transform the transparency of vision itself into a signifier – “the day”:

I nearly lost my sight, because someone crushed glass in my eyes. That blow unnerved me, I must admit. I had the feeling I was going back into the wall, or straying into a thicket of flint. The worst thing was the sudden, shocking cruelty of the day; I could not look, but I could not help looking.¹

In such a passage we watch Blanchot transforming “the day” into a signifier for visibility as palpable as Warhol’s diamond dust, or Kelly’s Window.

1 M. Livingstone, “Do It Yourself: Notes on Warhol’s Techniques,” in Kynaston McShine, ed., *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective* (NY: MOMA, 1989), 74. 4 With great prescience, Stephen Koch had already addressed Warhol’s obsession with death in relation to his films of the 1960s; see Koch, *Stargazer* (NY: Praeger, 1973). 5 Warhol said: “*You see, for every large painting I do, I paint a blank canvas, the same background color. The two are designed to hang together however the owner wants. He can hang it right beside the painting or across the room or above or below it... It just makes them bigger and mainly makes them cost more.*” In B. Buchloh, “Andy Warhol’s One-Dimensional Art: 1956–66,” in Kynaston McShine, ed., *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective* (NY: MOMA, 1989), 48. 6 *Ibid.*, 48. 7 *Ibid.*, 47. 11 Hal Foster, “Death in America,” Oct. n.75 (1996). 12 Buchloh, 73. 13 M. Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day*, transl. by L. Davis (NY: Station Hill, 1981), 11.



VÊTEMENTS, FASHION IS MY PROFESSION SHIRT (2021)

YOUTH MODE: 341

A REPORT ON FREEDOM

K-HOLE

2013

The Death of Age

It used to be possible to be special – to sustain unique differences through time, relative to a certain sense of audience. As long as you were different from the people around you, you were safe. But the Internet and globalization fucked this up for everyone. In the same way that a video goes viral, so does potentially anything. The likelihood that you and Michelle Obama wish upon the same star is greater than ever. The assertion of individuality is a rite of passage, but generational branding strips youth of this agency. Belonging to your generation becomes an inescapable truth – you’re a Scorpio whether you believe in astrology or not. At the same time, responsibility for generational behavior is partial at the max. (“It’s not you, it’s your whole generation.”) For a while, age came wrapped up in a bundle of social expectations. But when Boomerang kids return to their parents’ Empty Nests and retirement fades into the horizon, the bond between social expectations and age begins to dissolve. We’re left using technological aptitude to divide the olds from the young – even though moms get addicted to Candy Crush, too. Demography is dead, yet marketers will quietly invent another generation on demand. Clients are desperate to adapt. But to what? Generational linearity is gone. An ageless youth demands emancipation.

Youth mode

Youth is a mode. It's an attitude. Think Kevin Spacey's pot-smoking muscle hunk breakdown in *American Beauty*. That's a Boomer model of how it's done. Regression to a state before the suit and the tie sucked all the life out of you and made you into a corporate drone. Everything fell apart for Spacey's character because he did it all wrong. Being in *YOUTH MODE* isn't about perpetually reliving yourself at a younger age, it's about being youthfully present at any given age. Youth isn't a process, aging is. In *YOUTH MODE*, you are infinite.

YOUTH ≠ AGE
YOUTH = FREEDOM

Youth isn't freedom in any political sense. It's an emancipation from boredom, from prescription, from tradition. It's the fullness of potential, the ability to be the person you want to be. It's about the freedom to choose how you relate; the freedom to choose how you understand; the freedom to try new things; the freedom to make mistakes. Youth understands freedom with limits — that being adaptable is the only thing that will set you free.

Whether you're ____, ____, or ____, the desire to escape the constraints of everyday life is universal. Being in *YOUTH MODE* grants you the freedom to radically realign your relationship with the outside world.

YOUTH MODE: Engaged with newness / Experimental / Critical of the past / Changeable / Down with groups / Rebellious / Free

IN YOUTH MODE, YOU ARE INFINITE / WE LIVE IN MASS INDIE TIMES

[...] Mass Indie ditched the Alternative preoccupation with evading sameness and focused on celebrating

difference instead. But being different isn't always a lonely journey; it can be a group activity. Whether you're soft grunge, pastel goth, or pale, you can shop at Forever 21. Mass Indie has an additive conception of how culture works. Identities aren't mutually exclusive. They're always ripe for new combinations. In the style of an audio equalizer, Mass Indie culture mixes weirdness with normalness until it levels out. [...] In this scenario, mastering difference is a way of neutralizing threats and accruing status within a peer group. But just because Mass Indie is pro-diversity, doesn't mean it's post-scarcity. There's a limited amount of difference in the world, and the mainstreaming of its pursuit has only made difference all the scarcer. The anxiety that there is no new terrain is always a catalyst for change.

BEING SPECIAL VS. BEING FREE

Problem 1: Seeming like a clone

The details that distinguish you are so small that nobody can tell you're actually different. Feast.ly, Fast.ly, Vid.ly, Vend.ly, Ming.ly, Mob.ly: each provides a specific service, finetuned to a specific user need, brought to life by a specific entrepreneurial urge. They're all targeting different audiences, but the general public can't remember who's who. Even the CEOs themselves are at pains to remember their own special sauce. All of their high-res decisions were for naught and their start-ups went full circle back to basic. This is an HD problem.

It's hard to keep track of the big picture when the significant details are getting smaller and smaller. The human brain can only process so much information. It's like that time you took so many drugs at Burning Man

that you just ended up uncomfortably lucid. On the flip side, nobody will ever guess that your plain white T-shirt is line dry only.

Problem 2: Isolation

You're so special nobody knows what you're talking about. It's the potluck where the guests have so many dietary restrictions, that everyone can only eat what they brought. It's the party that's so exclusive that no one even shows up. This is some Tower of Babel shit.

You need Google Translate just to say, "Hey, how are you? What's up?" It's not that you're actually alone, but you might as well be. You've been working so hard at being precise that the micro-logic of your decisions is only apparent to an ever-narrowing circle of friends. You may be the world's foremost expert in Religious Dance of Melanesia. But after you graduate, you realize no one gives a fuck besides your PhD advisor. This is the story of the world's most exasperated Subway employee.

Problem 3: Maxing out

The markers of individuality are so plentiful and regenerate so quickly that it's impossible to keep up. "Is she carrying?" You're not really sure. You heard the words in the club, but Urban Dictionary is not keeping up. The conversation is moving too fast.

Teens become Internet famous then immediately delete their accounts. The flood of notifications is overwhelming. It feels like spam. [...] It's a delicate balance between FOMO and DGAF. How do you navigate the two? Reality TV producers wear themselves out Snooki-hunting because being effortlessly on point is such an impossible

task. Only idiot savants are in the right place at the right time without even knowing it.

Acting basic

If the rule is Think Different, being seen as normal is the scariest thing. (It means being returned to your boring suburban roots, being turned back into a pumpkin, exposed as unexceptional.) Which paradoxically makes normalcy ripe for the Mass Indie überelites to adopt as their own, confirming their status by showing how disposable the trappings of uniqueness are. The most different thing to do is to reject being different all together. When the fringes get more and more crowded, Mass Indie turns toward the middle. Having mastered difference, the truly cool attempt to master sameness.

Sameness is not to be mistaken for minimalism. You gain a temporary mobility and a sense of being unencumbered by making fewer and more considered decisions. But going back to basics doesn't work when the scripts that determine the basics are out of whack. Eventually, you end up stalling. Your groove dissolves into a rut. Steve Jobs, Doug Funnie, immortal because their outfits never change, or just pre-dead?

There's a theory that a man's style is just a reiteration of what he wore the last time he was "really getting laid" – thus the cargo shorts. Act Basic too long and you become extra conspicuous. [...] The casual uniform itself begins to attract police attention.

When differentiation happens according to some sort of ordered progression, shit's only getting more authentic. You're vegetarian before you're vegan, and vegan before you're a gluten-free vegan locavore. The need to order and narrate your decisions produces a feeling of

trappedness. But playing the tape backwards doesn't escape this logic. At the end of the day, superficial simplicity is just the denial of complexity, not its resolution. Acting Basic is not a solution to Mass Indie problems because it's still based on difference. Sameness is not mastered, only approached.

THE NEW WORLD ORDER OF BLANKNESS

Normcore

Once upon a time people were born into communities and had to find their individuality. Today people are born individuals and have to find their communities. Mass Indie responds to this situation by creating cliques of people in the know, while Normcore knows the real feat is harnessing the potential for connection to spring up. It's about adaptability, not exclusivity.

Normcore understands the process of differentiation from a nonlinear perspective. It's addicted to the toolkit provided by *YOUTH MODE* and never wants to put it away. Normcore doesn't want the freedom to become someone. Normcore wants the freedom to be with anyone. [...] In Normcore, one does not pretend to be above the indignity of belonging. Normcore moves away from a coolness that relies on difference to a post-authenticity coolness that opts-in to sameness. But instead of appropriating an aestheticized version of the mainstream, it just cops to the situation at hand. To be truly Normcore, you need to understand that there's no such thing as normal.

NORMCORE: Situation 1 / Non-deterministic / Adaptable / Unconcerned with authenticity / Empathy OVER Tolerance / Post-aspirational

[...] Normcore produces microscopic catch-alls that allow for strategic misinterpretation. To the receiver, it's confusing. Like you are dead certain that Harry Styles is singing only to you. But in reality those green eyes are just shooting off a soft gaze. Normcore is the eyes of the Mona Lisa. This is the new world order of blankness. You can no longer return a dead stare or fall into the Gap, now you have to respond appropriately, meet every situation head on. (This is why it's Normcore to be Mass Indie in Williamsburg.) Normcore capitalizes on the possibility of misinterpretation as an opportunity for connection — not as a threat to authenticity. Normcore knows your consumer choices aren't irrelevant, they're just temporary. People compromise, people are inconsistent. Making one choice today and a conflicting choice tomorrow doesn't make you a hypocrite. It just makes you complex. Consumption has never been a chance for absolute self-actualization. It's always been a matter of navigating the facts on the ground, whether macro (Armageddon) or micro (buyer's remorse).

The Grace of Maybe

Individuality was once the path to personal freedom — a way to lead life on your own terms. But the terms keep getting more and more specific, making us more and more isolated. Normcore seeks the freedom that comes with non-exclusivity. It finds liberation in being nothing special, and realizes that adaptability leads to belonging. Normcore is a path to a more peaceful life.

K-HOLE is a trend forecasting group founded by Greg Fong, Sean Monahan, Emily Segal, Chris Sherron and Dena Yago. BOX 1824 is an office for innovation, consumer, and culture research.

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SUMPTUARY (LAW)
SUPER-
TERRITORY
TIME
TOPOGRAPHICAL (CITY)
TOPOLOGY
TRAGEDY
TRAIT
TYPE
UTILITY
VALUE
WEALTH

It depends on whoever enters
 Whether I am tomb or treasure
 That I speak or stay quiet
 It is up to you solely
 Friend do not enter without desire.

PAUL VALÉRY, INSCRIPTION AT THE PALAIS DE CHAILLOT,
 PASSY AISLE, TOWARDS THE EIFFEL TOWER (1937)

AFFECT, AFFECTION

A

Neither word denotes a personal feeling (*sentiment* in Deleuze and Guattari). *L'affect* (Spinoza's *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a pre-personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. *L'affection* (Spinoza's *affectio*) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second—affecting—body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include “mental” or ideal bodies).

GILLES DELEUZE & FÉLIX GUATTARI, A THOUSAND PLATEAUS (1987)

ANALOGIES

When Le Corbusier compared the edifice with a machine he saw an analogy where nobody saw one before. When Aalto compared the design of his organically shaped vases with the Finnish landscape, or his design for a theatre in Germany with a tree stump, he did the same; and when Haring designed with anthropomorphic images in mind he again did just that—seeing an analogy where nobody has seen one before. In the course of the twentieth century it has become recognized that analogy in the most general sense plays a far more important role in architectural design than that of simply following functional requirements or solving pure technical problems. All the constructivist designs for instance, have to be seen as a reference to the dynamic world of machines, factories and industrial components to which they are analogous. [...]

It has been said that scientific discovery consists in seeing analogies where everybody else sees just bare facts. [...] The analogy establishes a similarity, or the existence of some similar principles, between two events that are otherwise completely different. Kant considered the analogy as something indispensable to extend knowledge. In employing the method of analogy it should be possible to develop new concepts and to discover new relationships.

OSWALD MATHIAS UNGERS, *MORPHOLOGIE, CITY METAPHORS* (1982)

AGENT

agent (n.)

1471 in Ripley's *The Comprehend of Alchemy*, perhaps influenced by Old French *agent*, but probably borrowed from latin *agentem* (nominative *agens*), present participle of *agere* 'to do, act, lead, drive.'

The Latin *agere* is cognate with Greek *agein* to lead, Sanskrit *ajati* '(he) drives,' Tocharian *ak-* 'to travel, lead,' and Old Icelandic *aka* 'to travel'—all tracable to the Indo-European base *ag-*, with the meaning "drive."

CHAMBERS DICTIONARY OF ETYMOLOGY (2019)

ARSENAL

1 A collection of weapons and military equipment.

1.1 A place where weapons and military equipment are stored or made.

1.2 An array of resources available for a certain purpose.

OXFORD DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH, 3RD EDITION (1989)

ASSEMBLAGE

[An assemblage] is a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns—different natures. Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a 'sympathy.' It is never filiations that are important, but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagions, epidemics, the wind. [...] An assemblage is never technological; if anything, it is the opposite. Tools always presuppose a machine, and the machine is always social before being technical. There is always a social machine that selects or assigns the technical elements used. A tool remains marginal, or little used, until there exists a social machine or collective assemblage that is capable of taking it into its 'phylum.' [...] How can the assemblage be refused the name it deserves, 'desire'? [...] it is the set of the affects which are transformed and circulate in an assemblage of symbiosis, defined by the co-functioning of its heterogeneous parts.

First, in an assemblage there are, as it were, two faces, or at least two heads. There are the states of things, states of bodies (bodies interpenetrate, mix together, transmit affects to one another); but also utterances, regimes of utterances: signs are organized in a new way, new formulations appear, a new style for new gestures (the emblems which individualize the knight, the formulas of oaths, the system of 'declarations,' even of love, etc.) Utterances are not part of ideology, there is no ideology: utterances, no less that states of things, are components and cog-wheels in the assemblage.

[...] There is no assemblage without territory, without territoriality and reterritorializations that includes all sorts of artifices. But is there any assemblage without a point of

deterritorialization, without a line of flight that leads it on to new creations, or else towards death?

[...] Desire is revolutionary because it always wants more connections and assemblages.

[...] Desire is always assembled and fabricated, on a plane of immanence or of composition that must itself be constructed at the same time as desire assembles and fabricates. We do not simply mean that desire is historically determined. Historical determination involves a structural instance to play the role of law, or of cause, as a result of which desire is born. But desire is the real agent, merging each time with the variables of an assemblage. It is not lack or privation which leads to desire: one only feels lack in relation to an assemblage from which one is excluded, but one only desires as a result of an assemblage in which one is included (even if this were an association for banditry or revolt).

[...] The minimum real unit is not the word, the idea, the concept or the signifier, but the assemblage. It is always an assemblage that produces utterances. Utterances do not have as their cause a subject that would act as a subject of enunciation, any more than they are related to subjects as subjects of utterance. The utterance is the product of an assemblage – which is always collective, which brings into play within us and outside us populations, multiplicities, territories, becomings, affects, events. The proper name does not designate a subject, but something that happens, at least between two terms which are not subjects, but agents, elements.

GILLES DELEUZE & CLAIRE PARNET, DIALOGUES (1977)

B BEAUTY

Beauty hates ideas. It is self-sufficient. A work of art is beautiful as someone may be beautiful. This beauty I am

talking about... provokes an erection of the soul. You do not argue about an erection... Our time is drying out by dint of chitchat and ideas.

JEAN COCTEAU, POÉSIE CRITIQUE 1 (1959) TRANS. VOLUPTAS

BODY

The surprising thing is the body...
we do not know yet what a body is capable of...

BARUCH SPINOZA, UNKNOWN (CA. 1670)

CADAVRE-EXQUIS

C

[...] designed to provide the most paradoxical confrontation possible between the elements of speech.

[...] Because of their primary function as proposed *delineations of personalities*, the *cadavres* tend inevitably to raise anthropomorphism to its highest pitch and to accentuate vividly the continuing relationship uniting the exterior world with the interior world.

ANDRÉ BRETON, THE EXQUISITE CORPSE, ITS EXALTATION (1948)

COLLECTION

One need only study with due exactitude the physiognomy of the homes of great collectors. Then one would have the key to the nineteenth-century interior. Just as in the former case the objects gradually take possession of the residence, so in the latter it is a piece of furniture that would retrieve and assemble the stylistic traces of the centuries. [I 3, 2]

WALTER BENJAMIN, THE ARCADES PROJECT (1927–1940)

COMEDY

We refer to the logic peculiar to the comic character and the comic group, a strange kind of logic, which, in some cases, may include a good deal of absurdity.

Theophile Gautier said that the comic in its extreme form was the logic of the absurd. [...] Every comic effect, it is said, implies contradiction in some of its aspects. What makes us laugh is alleged to be the absurd realised in concrete shape, a “palpable absurdity”;—or, again, an apparent absurdity, which we swallow for the moment only to rectify it immediately afterwards;—or, better still, something absurd from one point of view though capable of a natural explanation from another, etc. [...] Absurdity, when met within the comic, is not absurdity in general. It is an absurdity of a definite kind. It does not create the comic; rather, we might say that the comic infuses into it its own particular essence. It is not a cause, but an effect—an effect of a very special kind, which reflects the special nature of its cause.

[...] Laughter, as we have seen, is incompatible with emotion. If there exists a madness that is laughable, it can only be one compatible with the general health of the mind,—a sane type of madness, one might say. Now, there is a sane state of the mind that resembles madness in every respect, in which we find the same associations of ideas as we do in lunacy, the same peculiar logic as in a fixed idea. This state is that of dreams. So either our analysis is incorrect, or it must be capable of being stated in the following theorem: comic absurdity is of the same nature as that of dreams.

[...] If comic illusion is similar to dream illusion, if the logic of the comic is the logic of dreams, we may expect to discover in the logic of the laughable all the peculiarities of dream logic. [...]

[...] We shall first call attention to a certain general relaxation of the rules of reasoning. The reasonings at which we laugh are those we know to be false, but which we might accept as true were we to hear them in a dream. They counterfeit true reasoning just sufficiently to deceive a mind dropping off to sleep. There is still an element of logic in them, if you will, but it is a logic lacking in tension and, for that very reason, affording us relief from intellectual effort.

HENRI BERGSON, LAUGHTER (1900)

DESIRE

D

So we were saying a simple thing: desire concerns speeds and slownesses between particles (longitude), affects, intensities and hecceities in degrees of power (latitude). A VAMPIRE—TO SLEEP—DAY—AND—TO WAKE UP—NIGHT. Do you realize how simple a desire is? Sleeping is a desire. Walking is a desire. Listening to music, or making music, or writing, are desires. A spring, a winter, are desires. Old age also is a desire. Even death. Desire never needs interpreting, it is it which experiments.

Then we run up against very exasperating objections. They say to us that we are returning to an old cult of pleasure, to a pleasure principle, or to a notion of the festival (the revolution will be a festival...) [...] And above all, it is objected that by releasing desire from lack and law, the only thing we have left to refer to is a state of nature, a desire which would be natural and spontaneous reality. We say quite the opposite: *desire only exists when assembled or machined*. You cannot grasp or conceive of a desire outside a determinate assemblage, on a plane which is not pre-existent but which must itself be constructed. All that is important is that each group or individual

should construct the plane of immanence on which the lead their life and carry on their business. Without these conditions you obviously do lack something, but you lack precisely the conditions that make desire possible. [...] In retrospect every assemblage expresses and creates a desire by constructing the plane that makes it possible and, by making it possible, brings it about. [...] It is in itself an immanent revolutionary process. It is constructivist, not at all spontaneist. Since every assemblage is collective, is itself a collective, it is indeed true that every desire is the affair of the people, or an affair of the masses, a molecular affair.

GILLES DELEUZE & CLAIRE PARNET, DIALOGUES (1977)

DETOURNEMENT

[...] Any elements, no matter where they are taken from, can be used to make new combinations. The discovery of modern poetry regarding the analogical structure of images demonstrates that when two objects are brought together, no matter how far apart their original contexts may be, a relationship is always formed.

GUY DEBORD & GIL VOLMAN, A USER'S GUIDE TO DETOURNEMENT (1956)

DISCOURSE

Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken work there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker [ethos]; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind [pathos]; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself [logos]. Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the

speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible.

ARISTOTLE, RHETORIC (4TH C. BC)

EQUIVOCAL

E

It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other—it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating transmission, from sire to son, of the patrimony with the name, which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the “House of Usher”—an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.

EDGAR ALLAN POE, THE FALL OF THE HOUSE USHER (1839)

FATE

F

Whenever I've tried to free my life from a set of the circumstances that continuously oppress it, I've been instantly surrounded by other circumstances of the same order, as if the inscrutable web of creation were irrevocably at odds with me. I yank from my neck a hand that was choking me, and I see that my own hand is tied to a noose that fell around my neck when I freed it from the stranger's hand. When I gingerly remove the noose, it's with my own hands that I nearly strangle myself.

FERDANDO PESSOA, THE BOOK OF DISQUIET (1982)

FICTION

History teaches that rise to power and responsibility affects deeply the nature of revolutionary parties. Experience and common sense were perfectly justified in expecting that totalitarianism in power would gradually lose its revolutionary momentum and Utopian character, that the everyday business of government and the possession of real power would moderate the prepower claims of the movements and gradually destroy the fictitious world of their organizations. It seems, after all, to be in the very nature of things, personal or public, that extreme demands and goals are checked by objective conditions; and reality, taken as a whole, is only to a very small extent determined by the inclination toward the fiction of a mass society of atomized individuals.

HANNAH ARENDT, THE ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM (1951)

G GHOST

—A dead king isn't a king.

JEAN COCTEAU, THE INFERNAL MACHINE, ACT 1 (1934)

H HIGH LIFE

Problem: How shall we impart to this sterile pile, this crude, harsh, brutal agglomeration, this stark, staring exclamation of eternal strife, the graciousness of those higher forms of sensibility and culture that rest on the lower and fiercer passions? How shall we proclaim from the dizzy height of this strange, weird, modern housetop the peaceful evangel of sentiment, of beauty, the cult of a higher life?

LOUIS SULLIVAN, THE TALL OFFICE BUILDING ARTISTICALLY CONSIDERED (1896)

HISTORY

History does not repeat itself, but it often rhymes.

MARK TWAIN (ATT.), UNKNOWN

For we know it well: in politics, nothing is more thrilling than the desire to start over, to pick up the torch of ancient struggles as one revives unkept promises. In that case, the past not only enlightens the present, it brightens it with a strong, explosive glimmer, one that, literally, sparks things off. Because time that passed is less an inert sediment than rather a fossil energy, always likely to reactivate itself, and this precipitate that is the accomplishment of the past in the present is called “history.”

PATRICK BOUCHERON, L'HISTOIRE EST L'ART DE RAPPELER AUX FEMMES ET AUX HOMMES LEUR CAPACITÉ D'AGIR EN SOCIÉTÉ —TRIBUNE, LE MONDE (20.07.2019) TRANS. VOLUPTAS

HYPER—

word-forming element meaning “over, above, beyond,” and often implying “exceedingly, to excess,” from Greek *hyper* (prep. and adv.) “over, beyond, overmuch, above measure,” from PIE root *uper “over.”

ONLINE ETYMOLOGY DICTIONARY (2020)

IMAGE

I've always said that, in cinema, there were no images. There is always an image *before* and an image *after*. The Present does not exist in cinema. Monday does not exist. It's always Sunday or Tuesday. And Monday is simply the link between the two. And that is the Image. And even the

image does not exist. There is a text by Pierre Reverdy that states: “an image is never strong because it is dreadful or brutal but because the solidarity between the ideas is distant and true.” [...] Everything is always *in between*. The light is always in between day and night, between light and dark... Everything is *in between*...

JEAN-LUC GODARD, CINÉMA DES CINÉASTES (1982) TRANS. VOLUPTAS

IMAGES AND PERCEPTION

Probably all of us remember the story of the man in the moon which occupied our childhood fantasies, producing all sorts of images of an old man, carrying a bundle on his back, and whose face used to change depending on the clarity of the night. [...] Before human intelligence managed to uncover his secret, he was the subject of so many desires and wishes that he became part of our life while existing only in our imagination.

Not only about the moon, but also about the whole firmament the human mind created a vivid fantasy. It probably took a long time to structure the wide starry sky, and to develop a coherent system within a chaotic reality long before science was capable of calculating and measuring the orbits, the gravity, the intensity of speed of light of the stars and to register relevant data. Before that, understanding was based entirely on imaginative concepts. Instead of a set of facts, knowledge referred to a set of constellations derived from perception. The firmament was filled with figures and images, such as the Orion, Castor and Pollux, the Great Bear, and others. Those stars represented a sensuous reality in the human consciousness. Therefore we might conclude: Reality is what our imagination perceives it to be. In a general sense, an image

describes a set of facts in such a way that the same visual perception is connected with the conditions as with the image itself.

OSWALD MATHIAS UNGERS, MORPHOLOGIE, CITY METAPHORS (1982)

LABYRINTH

L

The worst labyrinth is not that intricate form that can entrap us forever, but as single and precise straight line.

J.L. BORGES, UNKNOWN (XXTH C.)

LEITMOTIF

Proust loved Wagner for the high frequency of the leitmotifs, musical reminiscences that construct a familiar landscape.

MARTHE PEYROUX, MARGUERITE YOURCENAR ET PROUST (1900)

TRANS. VOLUPTAS

MAZE

M

c. 1300, “delusion, bewilderment, confusion of thought,” possibly from Old English **mæs*, which is suggested by the compound *amasod* “amazed” and verb *amasian* “to confound, confuse” (compare *amaze*). Of uncertain origin; perhaps related to Norwegian dialectal *mas* “exhausting labor,” Swedish *masa* “to be slow or sluggish.”

Meaning “labyrinth, baffling network of paths or passages” is recorded from late 14c. (on the notion of something intended to confuse or mislead”). Also as a verb in Middle English, “to stupefy, daze” (early 14c.).

ONLINE ETYMOLOGY DICTIONARY (2020)

METAPHORS

In everyday language we are constantly using metaphorical expressions without paying any attention to them. For instance, we talk about the foot of the mountain, the leg of the chair, the heart of the city, the mouth of the river, the long arm of the law, the head of the family and a body of knowledge. We use many words that are vivid metaphors although they exist as common expressions of metaphorical character such as: straight from the horse's mouth, the tooth of time, or the tide of events, a forest of masts, the jungle of the city.

Metaphors are transformations of an actual event into a figurative expression, evoking images by substituting an abstract notion for something more descriptive and illustrative. It usually is an implicit comparison between two entities which are not alike but can be compared in an imaginative way. The comparison is mostly done through a creative leap that ties different objects together, producing a new entity in which the characteristics of both take pars. Designers use the metaphor as an instrument of thought that serves the function of clarity and vividness antedating or bypassing logical processes. "A metaphor is an intuitive perception of similarities in dissimilars," as Aristotle defined it.

OSWALD MATHIAS UNGERS, MORPHOLOGIE, CITY METAPHORS (1982)

MILIEU

In French, *milieu* means 'surroundings,' 'medium' (as in chemistry), and 'middle.' [...] 'milieu' should be read as a technical term combining all three meanings.

GILLES DELEUZE & FÉLIX GUATTARI, A THOUSAND PLEATEAUS (1987)

MODELS

A model is commonly understood as somebody who poses as a prototype representing an ideal form. [...] Generally a model is a theoretical complexity in itself which either brings a visual form or a conceptual order into the components of complex situations. In such a model the external form is the expression of an internal structure. [...] To make a model means to find coherence in a given relationship of certain combinations and fixed dispositions. This is usually done with two types of models, visual models and thinking models. They serve as conceptual devices to structure our experiences and turn them into functions or make them intentional. By means of these two models we formulate an objective structure that turns facts into something more certain and therefore more real. It is nothing else than a formal principle which makes it possible to visualize the complexity of appearances in a more ordered way, and which in reverse is a creative approach to structured reality along the knowledge of a model. Not the least the model is an intellectual structure setting targets for our creative activities, just like the design of models-buildings, model-cities, model-communities, and other model conditions supposedly are setting directions for subsequent actions.

OSWALD MATHIAS UNGERS, MORPHOLOGIE, CITY METAPHORS (1982)

MONTAGE

If direction is a look, montage is a heartbeat. To foresee is the characteristic of both: but what one seeks to foresee in space, the other seeks in time. Suppose you notice a young girl in the street who attracts you. You hesitate to follow her.

A quarter of a second. How to convey this hesitation? *Mise en scène* will answer the question “How shall I approach her?” But in order to render explicit the other question, “Am I going to love her?”, you are forced to bestow importance on the quarter of a second during which the two questions are born. It may be, therefore, that it will be for the montage rather than the *mise en scène* to express both exactly and clearly the life of an idea or its sudden emergence in the course of a story. When? Without playing on words, each time the situation requires it, each time within a shot when a shock effect demands to take the place of an arabesque, each time between one scene and another when the inner continuity of the film enjoins with a change of shot the superimposition of the description of a character on that of the plot. This example shows that talking of *mise en scène* automatically implies montage. When montage effects surpass those of *mise en scène* in efficacy, the beauty of the latter is doubled, the unforeseen unveiling secrets by its charm in an operation analogous to using unknown quantities in mathematics. Anyone who yields to the temptation of montage yields also to the temptation of the brief shot. How? By making the look a key piece in his game. Cutting of a look is almost the definition of montage, its supreme ambition as well as its submission to *mise en scène*. It is, in effect, to bring out the soul under the spirit, the passion behind the intrigue, to make the heart prevail over the intelligence by destroying the notion of space in favor of that of time.

J.-L. GODARD, MONTAGE MY FINE CARE, IN: GODARD ON GODARD (1986)

MORPHOLOGY

There are three basic levels of comprehending physical phenomena: first, the exploration of pure physical facts; second the psychological impact on our inner-self; and

third, the imaginative discovery and reconstruction of phenomena in order to conceptualize them. If, for instance, designing is understood purely technically, then it results in pragmatic functionalism or in mathematical formulas. If designing is exclusively an expression of psychological experiences, then only emotional values matter, and it turns into a religious substitute. If, however, the physical reality is understood and conceptualized as an analogy to our imagination of that reality, then we pursue a morphological design concept, turning it into phenomena which, like all real concepts, can be expanded or condensed; they can be seen as polarities contradicting or complementing each other, existing as pure concepts in themselves like a piece of art. Therefore we might say, if we look at physical phenomena in a morphological sense, like Gestalten in their metamorphosis, we can manage to develop our knowledge without machine or apparatus. This imaginative process of thinking applies to all human activities though the approaches might be different in various fields. But it is always a fundamental process of conceptualizing an unrelated, diverse reality through the use of images, metaphors, analogies, models, signs, symbols and allegories.

OSWALD MATHIAS UNGERS, MORPHOLOGIE, CITY METAPHORS (1982)

MUSIC

Music expresses the spiritual, it inspires. When I am blind, music is my little Antigone, it helps to see the unbelievable. [...] I've always wished [...] for music to take over whenever it is no longer necessary to see the image, for it to express something else. What interests me, is to see the music, to try to see what one hears and to hear what one sees.

JEAN-LUC GODARD, IN: J.-L. DOUIN, JEAN-LUC GODARD (1994)

N NARRATIVE

narrative (n.)

1 a spoken or written account of connected events; a story: *a gripping narrative*. 2 the narrated part of a literary work, as distinct from dialogue. 3 the practice or art of telling stories: traditions of oral narrative: *traditions of oral narratives*. 4 the representation in art of an event of story.

OXFORD DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH, 3RD EDITION (1989)
MERRIAM WEBSTER ENGLISH DICTIONARY (2019)

narration (n.)

act of narrating. Probably before 1425 *narracioun* ‘act of telling a story or recounting in order the particulars of some action, occurrence, or affair,’ also “that which is narrated or recounted, a story, an account of events’, in Trevisa’s translation of Higden’s *Polychronicon*; borrowed from Old French *narration* ‘account, statement, a relating, recounting, narrating, narrative tale’, and directly from Latin *narration* (nominative *narratio*), ‘a relating, narrative,’ from *narrare* ‘relate, recount, explain,’ from a possible pre-Latin word **gnarare*, related to Old Latin *gnarus* ‘knowing, skilled’ literally ‘to make acquainted with,’ (also found in IGNORE); further related to *gnoscerere* ‘TO KNOW.’

CHAMBERS DICTIONARY OF ETYMOLOGY (2019)

NECESSITY

Man was created out of desire, not out of necessity.

GASTON BACHELARD, *LA PSYCHANALYSE DU FEU* (1949) TRANS. VOLUPTAS

PAIN & PLEASURE

P

I. Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their empire: but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while. The principle of utility recognizes this subjection, and assumes it for the foundation of that system, the object of which is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and of law. Systems which attempt to question it, deal in sounds instead of sense, in caprice instead of reason, in darkness instead of light.

JEREMY BENTHAM, *THE PRINCIPLES OF MORAL AND LEGISLATION* (1789)

PERCEPT, AFFECT & CONCEPT

Style in philosophy tends towards these three poles, the concept or new ways of thinking, the percept or new ways of seeing and hearing, the affect of new ways of experiencing. It is the philosophical trinity, philosophy as opera: all three are required to build a movement.

GILLES DELEUZE, *POURPARLERS* (1972–1990)

[...] – the thing or the work of art – is a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects.

Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them. Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations,

percepts, and affects are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself.

Harmonies are affects. Consonance and dissonance, harmonies of tone or color, are affects of music or painting.

[...] The artist creates blocs of percepts and affects, but the only law of creation is that the compound must stand up on its own. The artist's greatest difficulty is to make it *stand up on its own*. Sometimes this requires what is, from the viewpoint of an implicit model, from the viewpoint of livid perceptions and affections, great geometrical improbability, physical imperfection, and organic abnormality. But these sublime errors accede to the necessity of art if they are internal means of standing up (or sitting or lying).

[...] The three thoughts intersect and intertwine but without synthesis or identification. With its concepts, philosophy brings forth events. Art erects monuments with its sensations. Science constructs states of affairs with its functions. A rich tissue of correspondences can be established between the planes. But the network has its culminating points, where sensation itself becomes sensation of concept or function, where the concept becomes concept of function or of sensation, and where the function becomes function of sensation or concept. And non of these elements can appear without the other being still to come, still indeterminate or unknown. Each created element on a plane calls on other heterogeneous elements, which are still to be created on other planes: thought as heterogenesis.

GILLES DELEUZE & FÉLIX GUATTARI, WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY? (1968)

PROJECT

project (n./v.)

1 an individual or collective enterprise that is carefully planned to achieve a particular aim.

2 extend outwards beyond something else; protrude.

3 throw or cause to move forward or outward; cause (light, shadow, an image) to fall on a surface; cause (a sound) to be heard at a distance; imagine (oneself, a situation, etc.) as having moved to a different place or time.

ORIGIN: late Middle English (in the sense 'preliminary design, tabulated statement'): from Latin *projectum* 'something prominent,' neuter past participle of *proicere* 'thrown forth,' from *pro-* 'forth' + *jacere* 'to throw.'

OXFORD DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH, 3RD EDITION (1989)

PROJECTILE

Projectiles—the inert membranes of fortresses and bunkers, the 'metabolic bodies' of soldiers, and transport bodies of naval vessels.

PAUL VIRILIO, SPEED AND POLITICS (1977)

PROPERTY

I contend that neither labor, nor occupation, nor law, can create property; that it is an effect without a cause: am I censurable?

PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON, WHAT IS PROPERTY? (1840)

R REFERENCE

refer (v.)

About 1830 *referren* ‘trace back, assign, or attribute (something) to a person or thing’; borrowed from Old French *referer*, or directly from Latin *referre* (*re-* ‘back’ + *ferre* ‘take, carry, bear’).

reference (n.)

act of referring or fact of being referred; formed from English *refer* + *-ent*. The meaning of a direction to a book, passage, etc., where certain information may be found, is first recorded in 1612.

CHAMBERS DICTIONARY OF ETYMOLOGY (2019)

reference (n.)

1 the act of referring or consulting 2 a bearing on a matter: RELATION 3 something that refers: such as, a: ALLUSION, MENTION b: Something (such as a sign or indication) that refers a reader or consulter to another source of information (such as a book or passage) c: Consultation of sources of information 4 One referred to or consulted: such as, a: a person to whom inquires as to character or ability can be made b: a statement of the qualifications of a person seeking employment or appointment given by someone familiar with the person c: i. a source of information (such as a book or passage) to which a reader or consulter is referred ii. a work (such as a dictionary or encyclopedia) containing useful facts or information d: DENOTATION, MEANING

MERRIAM WEBSTER ENGLISH DICTIONARY (2019)

REPERTOIRE

repertoire (n.)

the list of plays, ballets, operas, parts, pieces, etc., that a company, actor, musician, or singer is prepared to perform. 1847, borrowing of French *répertoire*, learned borrowing from Late Latin *repertorium* ‘inventory.’

CHAMBERS DICTIONARY OF ETYMOLOGY (2019)

repertory (n.)

1 a: a list or supply of dramas, operas, pieces, or parts that a company or person is prepared to perform b: a supply of skills, devices, or expedients c: a list or supply of capabilities 2 a: the complete list or supply of dramas, operas, or musical works available for performance b: the complete list or supply of skills, devices, or ingredients used in a particular field, occupation, or practice.

OXFORD DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH, 3RD EDITION (2019)

RISK

THE FUN THING ABOUT GAMES is RISK.

GEORGES PEREC, UNKNOWN (XXTH C)

IN: KIMBERLY BOHMAN-KALAJA, *READING GAMES: AN AESTHETICS OF PLAY IN FLANN O'BRIEN, SAMUEL BECKETT & GEORGES PEREC*, *PARABLES OF PERECQUIAN PLAY: A USER'S GUIDE* (2007)

SCENARIO

In the beginning, there was no scenario. The scenario was invented by the accountants who needed to know what Mack Sennett had been filming during the day. He filled a sheet of paper: a pair of socks, a car, three cops, a girl in

a bathing suit... And then they added verbs and adjectives: "a girl in a bathing suit loves a cop who owns three cars..." And it was called "scenario"! But it is the money that made the scenario!

JEAN-LUC GODARD, CINÉMA DES CINÉASTES (1982) TRANS. VOLUPTAS

SIGN

[...] The sign is usually said to be put in the place of the thing itself, the present thing, 'thing' here standing equally for meaning or referent. The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present. When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being 'present' when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. We give or take signs. We signal. The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence. Whether we are concerned with the verbal or the written sign, with monetary sign, or with electoral delegation and political representation, the circulation of signs defers the moment in which we can encounter the thing itself, make it ours, consume or expend it, touch it, see it, intuit its presence. What I am describing here in order to define it is the classically determined structure of the sign in all the banality of its characteristics—signification as the *différence* of temporization. And this structure presupposes that the sign, which defers presence, is conceivable only on the basis of the presence that it defers and moving toward the deferred presence that it aims to reappropriate. According to this classical semiology, the substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both secondary and provisional: secondary due to an original and lost presence from which the sign thus derives; provisional as concerns this final

and missing presence toward which the sign in this sense is a movement of mediation.

JACQUES DERRIDA, MARGINS OF PHILOSOPHY (1982)

SIGNS, SYMBOLS AND ALLEGORIES

[...] Almost all our communication is based on signs, symbols and allegories which structure most aspects of our daily routine but also are most often carriers of religious and metaphysical systems. [...]

While signs point to something that they represent, as words are artificial signs for ideas and thoughts, symbols are a penetration of mind and image characterized by misery, depth, and inexhaustible interpretation.

[...] The method of allegory is represented in art whenever it emphasizes thematic content and ideas rather than events and facts. The abiding impression left by the allegorical mode is one if indirect, ambiguous and sometimes even emblematic symbolism that inevitably calls for interpretation.

[...] What all that means—thinking and designing in images, metaphors, models, analogies, symbols and allegories—is nothing more than a transition from purely pragmatic approaches to a more creative mode of thinking. It means a process of thinking in qualitative values rather than quantitative data, a process that is based on synthesis alternate as breathing in and breathing out, as Goethe put it. It is meant to be a transition in the process of thinking from a metrical space to the visionary space of coherent systems, from the concepts of homology to the concepts of morphology.

OSWALD MATHIAS UNGERS, MORPHOLOGIE, CITY METAPHORS (1982)

SITUATION

First, we believe that the world must be changed. We desire the most liberatory possible change of the society and the life in which we find ourselves confined. We know that such change is possible by means of pertinent actions.

[...] Our central idea is the construction of situations, that is to say, the concrete construction of momentary ambiances of life and their transformation into a superior passional quality. We must develop a systematic intervention based on the complex factors of two components in perpetual interaction: the material environment of life and the behaviours which that environment gives rise to and which radically transform it.

GUY DEBORD, REPORT ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF SITUATIONS (1957)

SOCIAL CONTRACT

Then I imagine a society where all, seeing the law as their work, would love it and would submit to it without difficulty; where since the authority of the government is respected as necessary and not as divine, the love that is felt for the head of State would be not a passion, but a reasoned and calm sentiment. Since each person has rights and is assured of preserving his rights, a manly confidence and a kind of reciprocal condescension, as far from pride as from servility, would be established among all classes.

Instructed in their true interests, the people would understand that, in order to take advantage of the good things of society, you must submit to its burdens. The free association of citizens would then be able to replace the

individual power of the nobles, and the State would be sheltered from tyranny and from license.

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE, DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA (1835)

SPECULATION

Let us examine this point, and say, "God is, or God is not." But to which side shall we incline? Reason can decide nothing here. [...] Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager then, without hesitation that He is.

[...] For it is no use to say it is uncertain if we will gain, and it is certain that we risk, and that the infinite distance between the certainty of what is staked and the uncertainty of what will be gained, equals the finite good which is certainly staked against the uncertain infinite.

[...] There is not an infinite distance between the certainty staked and the uncertainty of the gain; that is untrue. In truth there is an infinity between the certainty of gain and the certainty of loss. But the uncertainty of the gain is proportioned to the certainty of the stake according to the proportion of the chances of gain and loss.

[...] And so our proposition is of infinite force, when there is the finite to stake in a game where there are equal risks of gain and of loss, and the infinite to gain.

BLAISE PASCAL, LES PENSÉES, VII (1669)

STORY

Sometimes reality is too complex. Stories give it form.

JEAN-LUC GODARD, UNKNOWN TRANS. VOLUPTAS

SUBLIME

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those of pleasure. Without all doubt, the torments which we may be made to suffer, are much greater in their effect on the body and mind, than any pleasures which the most learned voluptuary could suggest, or than the liveliest imagination, and the most sound and exquisitely sensible body could enjoy. [...] When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we everyday experience.

EDMUND BURKE, A PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY INTO THE ORIGIN OF OUR IDEAS OF THE SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL (1757)

SUMPTUARY (LAW)

sumptuary (adj.)

“pertaining to expense,” c. 1600, from Latin *sumptuarius* “relating to expenses,” from *sumptus* “expense, cost,” past participle of *sumere* “to borrow, buy, spend, eat, drink, consume, employ, take, take up,” contraction of **sub-emere*, from *sub* “under” (see sub-) + *emere* “to take, buy” (from PIE root **em-* “to take, distribute”).

sumptuous (adj.)

late 15c., from Old French *sumptueux* or directly from

Latin *sumptuosus* “costly, very expensive; lavish, wasteful,” from *sumptus* (cf. sumptuary)

ONLINE ETYMOLOGY DICTIONARY (2020)

sumptuary (LAW)

1. a law regulating personal habits that offend the moral or religious beliefs of the community.
2. a law regulating personal expenditures designed to restrain extravagance, esp. in food and dress.

RANDOM HOUSE UNABRIDGED DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN ENGLISH (2020)

SUPER-

word-forming element meaning “above, over, beyond,” from Latin *super* (adverb and preposition) “above, over, on the top (of), beyond, besides, in addition to,” from *(s)uper-, variant form of PIE root *uper “over.” In English words from Old French, it appears as *sur-*. The primary sense seems to have shifted over time from usually meaning “beyond” to usually meaning “very much,” which can be contradictory. E.g. supersexual, which is attested from 1895 as “transcending sexuality,” from 1968 as “very sexual.”

ONLINE ETYMOLOGY DICTIONARY (2020)

TERRITORY

[...] The territory is in fact an act that affects milieus and rhythms, that ‘territorializes’ them. The territory is the product of a territorialization of milieus and rhythms. It amounts to the same thing to ask when milieus and rhythms become territorialized, and what the difference is between a non-territorial animal and a territorial animal.

A territory borrows from all the milieus; it bites into them, seizes them bodily (although it remains vulnerable to intrusions). It is built from aspects or portions of milieus. It itself has an exterior milieu, an interior milieu, an intermediary milieu, and an annexed milieu. It has the interior zone of a residence or shelter, the exterior zone of its domain, more or less retractable limits or membranes, intermediary or even neutralized zones, and energy reserves or annexes. It is by essence marked by ‘indexes’, which may be components taken from any of the milieus: materials, organic products, skin or membrane states, energy sources, action-perception condensates. There is a territory precisely when milieu components cease to be directional, becoming dimensional instead, when they cease to be functional to become expressive. There is a territory when the rhythm has expressiveness. What defines the territory is the emergence of matters of expression (qualities).

[...] The territory is first of all the critical distance between two beings of the same species: Mark your distance. What is mine is first of all my distance; I possess only distances. Don’t anybody touch me, I growl if anyone enters my territory, I put up placards. Critical distance is a relation based on matters of perception. It is a question of keeping at a distance the forces of chaos knocking at the door.

GILLES DELEUZE & FÉLIX GUATTARI, A THOUSAND PLATEAUS (1987)

TIME

Time must be brought into light—and genuinely conceived—as the horizon for all understanding of Being and for any way of interpreting it. In order for us to discern this, time

needs to be *explicated primordially as the horizon for the understanding of Being, and in terms of temporality as the Being of Dasein, which understands Being.*

MARTIN HEIDEGGER, BEING AND TIME (1927/1962)

Indeed, nothing dies, everything exists always; no force can extinguish what once was. Every action, every word, every form, every thought fallen into the universal ocean of things sets circles off, that ripple out into eternity. Material figuration disappears only for vulgar eyes, and the phantoms that detach themselves inhabit the infinity. Paris continues to kidnap Helen in some unknown region in space.

THEOPHILE GAUTIER, ARRIA MARCELLA (1852) TRANS. VOLUPTAS

TOPOGRAPHICAL (CITY)

To construct the city topographically—tenfold and a hundred fold—from out of its arcades and its gateways, its cemeteries and bordellos, its railroad stations and its..., just as formerly it was defined by its churches and its markets. And the more secret, more deeply embedded figures of the city: murders and rebellions, the bloody knots in the network of the streets, lairs of love, and conflagrations. [C 1, 8]

WALTER BENJAMIN, THE ARCADES PROJECT (1927–1940)

TOPOLOGY

Topology is a branch of geometry which studies the qualitative rather than the quantitative properties of space. Topology investigates the kind of spatial continuity and

reversibility that we find in a Möbius strip or a Klein bottle, recording the interchangeability of one surface with another. Bruce Morrisette, in applying topology to Robbe-Grillet's works, defines it as one of the "primary intellectual operations capable of revealing the modalities of surfaces, volumes, boundaries, contiguities, holes, and above all of the notions of inside and outside." Vicki Mistacco gives topology an additional metaphorical dimension in which the "production" of contemporary texts depends on the continuity and contiguity of both reader and writer. Topology, therefore, may refer to the spaces within a text as well as to the implied spatial relationship between the intrinsic text and the extrinsic reader—relationships which have ontological and perceptual implications.

Within the text, topology can signify the topography of a room, a house, a city, or a place. It elucidates structural relationships and configurations which may be stretched, twisted, and distorted. "In topology [says Robbe-Grillet] there are volumes whose inside is outside. There are surfaces where one side is on the other... in *Project pour une révolution*... the house, the street, and the keyhole... function as topological spaces. At times one has the impression that the whole house empties itself and that it passes entirely through the keyhole, that the whole inside of the house becomes the outside."

Topology is therefore more than a branch of geometry, or geography, or medicine. It deals with art, language, and perception. It is a dialectical space in which ontology and topography meet. Following Derrida's dictum that "We have to unite or reconcile the two presentations (*Darstellung*) of the inside and the outside," [...] Robbe-Grillet's fiction, like Magritte's painting, communicates the duality and simultaneity of creative

perception. My eyes are the mediating surface between the outside and the inside, while consciousness itself records the phenomenon in all its complexity [...] Art, as a mediating agent, can be viewed as an extension of our sensory organs. And the distortions of our senses, though we may not be aware of them, as Magritte's painting of an eye entitled *The False Mirror* implies, are perhaps as acute as those of Robbe-Grillet's fiction. His rooms empty themselves through keyholes, while the insides of houses become the outside. His topology, his human condition, like Magritte's, is indeed the dialectical space where ontology and topography meet. Doors, windows, and blinds, like the human eye, are the mediating agents between two seemingly opposed and irreconcilable spaces. Robbe-Grillet's art unites them both in one transcendental leap.

BEN STOLTZFUS, ROBBE-GRILLET'S DIALECTICAL TOPOLOGY (1982)

TRAGEDY

ANTIGONE

—Take courage. Thou wilt live. [...]

SOPHOCLES, ANTIGONE (441 BC)

A basic issue is the relationship of the Greeks to pain, the degree of their sensitivity. Did this relationship remain constant? Or did it turn itself around? That question whether their constantly strong desire for beauty, feasts, festivities, and new cults arose out of some lack, deprivation, melancholy, or pain. If we assume that this desire for the beautiful and the good might be quite true [...] where must that contradictory desire stem from, which appears earlier than the desire for beauty, namely, the desire for the ugly or the good strong willing of the ancient Hellenes for

pessimism, for tragic myth, for pictures of everything fearful, angry, enigmatic, destructive, and fateful as the basis of existence? Where must tragedy come from? Perhaps out of desire, out of power, out of overflowing health, out of overwhelming fullness of life?

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY (1886)

TRAIT

trait has a range of meanings not covered by any single word in English: Literally, it refers to a graphic drawing, and to the act of drawing a line. Abstractly, it is the purely graphic element. Figuratively, it is an identifying mark (a feature, or trait in the English sense), or any act constituting a mark or sign. In linguistics, “distinctive features” (*traits distinctifs* or *traits pertinents*) are the elementary units of language that combine to form a phoneme. *Trait* also refers to a projectile, especially an arrow, and to the act of throwing a projectile.

GILLES DELEUZE & FÉLIX GUATTARI, A THOUSAND PLATEAUS (1987)
(NOTES ON THE TRANSLATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS)

TYPE

[...] not only will the portrait of a woman by a great artist not seek in the least to give satisfaction to various demands on the woman's part... It will, on the contrary, emphasize those very blemishes which she seeks to hide, and which (as for instance a sickly, almost greenish complexion) are all the more tempting to him since they show “character” [...] Fallen now, situated outside her own type in which she sat unassailably enthroned, she is now

just an ordinary woman, in the legend of whose superiority we lost all faith. We are so accustomed to incorporating in this type not only the beauty of an Odette but her personality, her identity, the standing before the portrait that has thus stripped her of it we are inclined to protest not simply “How plain he has made her” but “Why, it isn't the least bit like her!” And yet there is a person there on the canvas whom we are quite conscious of having seen before. But that person is not Odette; the face of the person, her body, her general appearance seems familiar.

They recall to us not this particular woman who never held herself like that, whose natural pose never formed any such strange and teasing arabesque, but other women, all the women whom Eltsir has never painted, women, whom invariably, however they may differ from one another, he has chose to plant thus, in full face, [...] a large round hat in one hand, symmetrically corresponding, at the level of the knee which it covers, to that other disc, higher up in the picture, the face.

MARCEL PROUST, À L'OMBRE DES JEUNES FILLES EN FLEUR (1919)

UTILITY

U

CYRANO *He raises his sword.*

What say you? It is useless? Ay, I know!

But who fights ever hoping for success?

I fought for lost cause, and for fruitless quest!

E. ROSTAND, CYRANO DE BERGERAC, ACT V.6 (1897) TRANS. VOLUPTAS

V VALUE

Nowadays people know the price of everything, and the value of nothing.

OSCAR WILDE, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY (1891)

It remains true that value, of which money is but the sign, is nothing, absolutely nothing, if not a combination of entirely subjective things, of beliefs and desires, of ideas and volitions, and that the peaks and troughs of values in the stock market, unlike the oscillations of a barometer, could not even remotely be explained without considering their psychological causes: fits of hope or discouragement in the public, propagation of a good or bad sensational story in the minds of speculators. [...] It is a quality, such as color, that we attribute to things, but that, like color, exists only within us by way of a perfectly subjective truth. It consists in the harmonization of the collective judgments we make concerning the aptitude of objects to be more or less—and by a greater or lesser number of people—believed, desired or enjoyed. Thus, this quality belongs among those peculiar ones which, appearing suited to show numerous degrees and to go up or down this ladder without changing their essential nature, merit the name “quantity”.

BRUNO LATOUR & VINCENT A. LEPINAY, THE SCIENCE OF PASSIONATE INTERESTS (2008)

W WEALTH

But when the time came for the gifts of wealth, he realised that of all the kindness between man and man none came with a more natural grace than the gifts of meat and drink.

XENOPHON, CRYOPEDIA: THE EDUCATION OF CRYUS, BOOK VIII, C.2.2 (370 BC)

But the true travellers are those who go
Only to get away: hearts like balloons
Unballasted, with their own fate aglow,
Who know not why they fly with the monsoons:

Those whose desires are shaped like clouds.
And dream, as raw recruits of shot and shell,
Of mighty raptures in strange, transient crowds
Of which no human soul the name can tell.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE, LE VOYAGE (1861)

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SANG-SOO HONG, RIGHT NOW, WRONG
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DAVID JACOBS, DALLAS (1976)

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LARS VON TRIER, DOGVILLE (2003)

TOM TWYKER, RUN LOLA RUN (1998)

BILLY WILDER, DOUBLE INDEMNITY
(1944)



FRANZ VON STUCK, *DIE SÜNDE* (1883)

ELEGY

MADE IN

2018

Lament for an architectural project

Elegy derives from the book *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, published by Gallimard in 1998 after the completion of Jean-Luc Godard's eight-part video project (1988–98), which met with controversial critical acclaim. Composed almost entirely of visual, textual and auditory quotes, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* poetically assimilates the course of the twentieth century to the history of the movie industry, merging fiction and documentary in a speculative and intricate allegory.

The following content effects a deliberate selection of sonnets and stages an opportunistic *détournement* of the original: it therefore claims no authorship as all aphoristic sources have been intentionally chosen to serve a reducing purpose in a specific field, namely that of the architectural project. As a result, quotes have been accordingly redistributed in a new purposeful sequence, partly edited or augmented in order to promote a less cryptic content, yet without withholding the poetic motives of the original text.

don't show
every side of things

allow yourself
a margin of indefiniteness

cities of desires
and people would see
that the world is there
a world still almost without a history
yet a world that tells stories

but instead of uncertainty
in order to establish idea and sensation
the two great stories were
form and function

stories of beauty and performance
architecture is not part of
the communication industry
or entertainment
as a silent margin of life
it is part of cosmetics
a minor branch of the industry of lies

the city
like christianity
is not founded
on historical truth
it supplies us with a story
and says
now believe

don't have faith
in this story
as you do in History
but believe
come what may

all these stories
now mine
how can I tell them
show them perhaps

and norm
was invented
a minor mafia
accountant had
to put some order
in the brainwaves of
architects

l'Esprit Nouveau
Ozenfant
gave the idea to
Le Corbusier
the project fell
under the guillotine
of reason
and never got back up

night
has come
another world rises
purposeless
as if one had suppressed
the perspective
the vanishing point

if an image
separetely looked upon
clearly expresses something
and involves interpretation
if it does not exceed significance
it will not be transformed
on contact with other images
other images
will have no authority over it
neither action
nor reaction
no insight
sight avails

an image
is not strong
because it is brutal
or fantastic
but because
the association of ideas
is distant
distant and just
or simply
if it still
involved a text
but was not about
determining texts
on a word
but an idea
or an intention
or a movement
or a usage
or a relationship

who needs understanding
this is
what I like
in architecture
a saturation of
magnificent signs
bathing
in the light
of their absence
of explanation

one needs a day
to tell
the history of a second
one needs a year
to tell
the history of a minute
one needs a life
to tell
the history of an hour
one needs an eternity
to tell
the history of a day
one can do everything
except the history of
what one is doing

we live
in a system
in which everything
can be done
except the history of
what is being done
everything can be
completed
except the history of
this completion
the product
as only end
the captive process

somewhere else
men fight for a society
in which
they would not be
slave to money
you can't understand
living
not to make money
listening to sirens of our time
I begin to understand
but this obsessiveness

ever think of anything else
of love
no never
if property was
the original sin of capitalism
to have and not to be
reason is the original misdeed
of Western architecture
summer 1989 its redeemer
when I admire a project
I am told
it is nice
but it is not architecture

design dessein
draft dessin
design is now dessin
mystification

equality
and fraternity
between the real
and the fictional

who is out of work
some times has
too many hands
and too few hearts
yes times without heart
but not without work
when an era is sick
and lacks work
for all hands
it addresses us a new exhortation
the exhortation
to work with our hearts
instead of
using our hands
I know no era
that lacked work
for all
its hearts

this is the worry of the people
it is not material
at first
it is a concern
of heart and spirit
born of the defiance of the other
I do not believe in answers
but in the plea of questions
let us consider the time
the places we live in
our precise locations
and their resulting call
and then
let us judge

a world divided in two
those with possibilities
but not knowing what to do
with their freedom
and those who have
undergone revolution
and have freedom of opinion
that is
the right to complain
but without deep-felt passion
where misery is at the door
and all one can do
is wait
ugly winners
magnificent losers

strangest of all
the living dead of this world
are constructed
on the former world
their reflections
and sensations
are from before

the Incredulity
of Saint Thomas
who needs
to touch
to believe
gazing in the distance
has he lost sight
blasphemy to the miracle
Caravaggio had warned us
we are now left
with incredulous apostles
misery

misery
last argument
ultimate basis of modern community
the backdrop of all our
dramas
thoughts
and actions
and even our utopias
the essential is not
what the despotism
of an opinionated majority
dictates
it is not material necessity
it is a higher truth
at the level of man
and I might add
within man's reach

it is time that thought
becomes
what it truly is
dangerous for the thinker
and able to transform
reality
“Where I create
is where I am true”
wrote Rilke

some think
others act
but man's true condition
is to think with his hands

I will not denigrate
our tools
but I would like them
to be usable
if it is true
that the threat is not in our tools
but in the cowardice
of our hearts
a thought which abandons itself
to the rythm of its own mechanisms
proletarianizes itself

such a thought
no longer lives
of its own creation
man is formed by others
who are the others
they are the laws
born of
the abandonment of
thought
who is responsible
not the parties
not the classes
not the governments
it is men
one by one

so
the project
you see now
what to say about it
life is the subject
speed
and trajectory
its attributes
if we are broad-minded
then time its territory
life a beginning of life
like Euclid's parallel lines
is a beginning of
geometry
the life itself
one would like to blow out
of proportions
to make it admired
or reduced
to its basic elements
for earth dwellers
the life itself
one would hold prisoner

I am
the fugitive enemy of
our times
the mechanically applied
totalitarianism of
the present
every day more oppressive
on a planetary scale
this faceless tyranny
that erases all desires
for the systematic organization of
the unified time of
the moment
this global
abstract
tyranny
which I try
to oppose
from
my fleeting
point of view



DIANE ARBUS, 42ND STREET MOVIE THEATRE AUDIENCE (1958)

The truth is that all possible desires are latent in the depths of our organism; but they are hidden, like all possible statues are hidden in a block of marble.

GABRIEL TARDE, ECONOMIC PSYCHOLOGY (1902)

