

# **A Critical Metaphysics Could Emerge as a Science of Apparatuses**

Tiqqun

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*“The first philosophies furnished power with its formal structure. More precisely speaking, ‘metaphysics’ designates the apparatus whose actuation requires a principle: associating words, things, and actions. At the time of the Turning Point, when presence as ultimate identity turns into presence as irreducible difference, its actuation appears to be without principle.”*

– Reiner Schürmann, “What is to be made of the end of metaphysics?”

~ This text was the document written for the foundation of the SASC, the Society for the Advancement of Criminal Science. The SASC is a non-profit dedicated to the anonymous collection, classification, and diffusion of all knowledge-powers useful to anti-imperial war machines.

~ At the beginning there was the vision, on some floor or other of one of those sinister glass beehives of the tertiary sector; an endless vision through the panopticed space, of dozens of *seated* bodies, in line, distributed according to a modular kind of logic; dozens of bodies apparently without any life to them, separated by thin glass walls, tapping away on their computers. In this vision, in turn, there was a revelation of the brutally *political* character of this forced immobilization of bodies. And the obvious but paradoxical fact of these bodies being all the more immobile as their mental functions were activated, captivated, *mobilized*, as they bustled and responded in real time to the fluctuations of the information flows crossing the screens. We went with this vision, *taking what we’d found in it*, and we spread it around at an exposition at the MoMA in New York, where enthusiastic cyberneticians, freshly converted to making artistic excuses, had resolved to present to the public all their apparatuses for neutralization and normalization by work that they’d come up with for the future. The exposition was called *Workspheres*: they were demonstrating how an iMac can transform work, which itself had become as superfluous as it was intolerable, into leisure; how a “convivial” environment can make the average Bloom more disposed towards coping with the most desolate existence and can maximize his social output; or how PEOPLE might arrange things in such a way as to ensure that said Bloom’s tendencies towards anxiety could be done away with once all the parameters of his physiology, his habits and his character had been integrated into his personalized workspace. From the concurrence of these “visions” one got the feeling that PEOPLE had finally managed to *produce* minds, and to produce bodies as waste, as inert and cumbersome masses, the condition for — but above all the *obstacle to* — the progress of *purely cerebral* processes. The chair, the desk, the computer: it could all become just part of an apparatus. A search-and-seizure of production. A methodical enterprise for attenuating all forms-of-life. Jünger spoke of a kind of “spiritualization of the world,” but in *not necessarily so flattering* a sense.

We can imagine another beginning, another genesis. This time, at the beginning, there was an inconvenience; an annoyance linked to the general spread of surveillance machinery in the shops, specifically to the anti-theft gates. There was a slight anxiety at the moment one passed through them, not knowing whether they were going to go off or not, whether we’d be picked out of the anonymous flow of consumers as “an undesirable customer,” as “thieves.” And so there was the annoyance — who knows, maybe the resentment? — of getting yelled at once in a while, and the clear foreknowledge that these apparatuses indeed had for some time now *actually been working*. That the task of surveillance, for example, was more and more exclusively confided to a mass of watchmen *who knew what to look for*, because they themselves were former thieves. Who in all their gestures were merely *walking human apparatuses*.

Now let’s imagine a really improbable kind of genesis for the sake of the most incredulous. Here the starting point would be the question of *determinity*, the fact that there is, unavoidably,

predetermination; but that this inevitability could *also* take on the sense of a formidable freedom: *playing* with the determinations. An inflationist subversion of cybernetic control.

All in all, at the beginning there was nothing. Nothing but the refusal to innocently play along with any of the games that PEOPLE had planned to manipulate us with.

And — who knows? — the FIERCE  
desire to perhaps  
dizzy a few of them.

## I.

What exactly is going on in *Bloom Theory*? It's an attempt to *historicize* presence, to acknowledge the present state of our being-in-the-world, as a start. There had been other attempts of the same nature before *Bloom Theory*, the most remarkable after Heidegger's *Fundamental Concepts in Metaphysics* certainly being De Martino's *The Magical World*. It was sixty years before *Bloom Theory* when this Italian anthropologist made his contribution to the history of presence, which until today remains unequalled. But that's where the philosophers and anthropologists *ended up*, with the observation of where we're at relative to the world, with the observation of our own collapse; and we'll grant them that, because we're *starting from there*.

A man of his times in that sense, De Martino pretended to believe in the whole modern fable of the classical subject, the objective world, etc. He then distinguished between two eras of presence, the one taking place in the "magical," primitive world, and the world of "modern man." The whole western misconception about the subject of magic and more generally about traditional societies, De Martino says in essence, has to do with the fact that we claim to understand them from outside, starting from the modern presupposition of an acquired presence, a guaranteed being-in-the-world, propped up by a clear distinction between the self and the world. In the traditional-magical universe, the frontier where the modern subject turns into a solid, stable substrate, assured of his being-there, before whom a whole world stretches out, a world stuffed with objectivity, still presents a problem. It's there to be conquered, to be fixed; and human presence there is constantly threatened, and is experienced in a state of perpetual danger. And this liability puts it at the mercy of all violent perceptions, all emotion-saturated situations, all unassimilable events. In extreme cases, known by various names in primitive civilizations, being-there is totally swallowed up by the world, by an emotion, by a perception. This is what the Malays call *latah*, what the Tungusic peoples call *olon*, or what certain Melanesians call *atai*, and which for those same Malays is linked with the *amok*. In such states, singular presence completely collapses, becomes indistinct from phenomena, and comes apart into a simple, mechanical echo of the surrounding world. And so a *latah*, a body stricken by *latah*, puts its hand into the fire, while no one can clearly make out his gesture of doing so, or, finding himself suddenly face to face with a tiger at the summit of a path, he starts to furiously imitate it, possessed as he is by this unexpected perception. We also have the case of the collective *olon*: when a Russian officer was training a Cossack regiment, the men in the regiment, instead of carrying out the colonel's orders, suddenly start just repeating them in a chorus; and the more the officer howled insults at them and got more and more irritated by their refusal to obey, the more they returned his insults to him and mimicked his anger. De Martino characterizes *latah* as follows, making use of approximative categories: "Presence tends

to remain polarized by some content or other; it doesn't manage to go beyond it, and consequently it disappears and abdicates as presence. The distinction between presence and the world making itself present falls apart."

Thus for De Martino there is an "existential drama," a "historical drama of the magical world," which is a drama of presence: and the ensemble of the magical beliefs, techniques, and institutions are there to respond to it: to save, protect, or restore the presence it had initiated. That ensemble is thus imbued with an effectiveness of its own, an objectivity inaccessible to the classical subject. One of the ways the indigenous people of Mota have to overcome the crisis of presence provoked by any kind of a lively emotional reaction was thus to associate to whoever had fallen victim to it the thing that had caused it, or something resembling it. Over the course of a ceremony, then, the thing would be declared *atai*. The Shaman would then institute a community of destiny between these two *bodies*, which from then on would be indissolubly and ritually bonded to each other, to where *atai* quite simply means *soul* in the indigenous language. "Presence that risks losing all its horizons reconquers itself by attaching its problematic unity to the problematic unity of the thing itself at hand," concludes De Martino. This banal practice, of inventing an object *alter ego*, is what the Westerns concealed with the little nickname "fetishism," refusing to understand that the "primitive" man recomposes himself and reconquers a presence for himself with the use of magic. By replaying the drama of his dissolving presence, but this time accompanied and supported by the Shaman – in a trance for instance – he plays out this dissolution in such a way as to make himself master of it again. What modern man so bitterly reproaches "primitive" man for, after all, is not so much his practice of magic as his audacity in giving himself a right that the former judges obscene: the right to *invoke* the mutability of presence, and thus render it potentially *participatory*. The "primitives" had given themselves the *means* of overcoming the kind of dereliction that we see so commonly among hipsters who've had their cell phones stolen, petty bourgeois families deprived of their TVs, car drivers whose cars have been keyed, executives with no offices, intellectuals who don't have the floor, or Young-Girls who've lost their purses.

But De Martino committed an immense error, a fundamental error, doubtless one inherent to *all anthropology*. De Martino did not fully grasp the breadth of the concept of presence; he still conceived of it *as an attribute of the human subject*, which inevitably led him to counterpose presence to the "world making itself present." The difference between the modern man and primitive man does not consist, as De Martino says, in the latter's *lacking* something relative to the former, having still not acquired the self-assurance of the former. On the contrary, it consists in the fact that the "primitive" shows a greater openness, a greater *attention* to the BECOMING PRESENT OF BEINGS, and so, consequently is more vulnerable to the fluctuations of presence. The modern man, the classical subject, is not some giant leap ahead of the primitive, he is himself but a primitive that has become indifferent to the *event* of being, who no longer knows how to observe the entry into presence of things, who is *world-poor*. In fact, an unfortunate love for the classical subject runs throughout the whole of De Martino's oeuvre. Unfortunate because De Martino, like Janet, had too intimate an understanding of the magical world and too rare a Bloom-sensibility to fail to secretly feel the effects. It's only that as a male in Italy in the 1940s, you were far better off suppressing that sensitivity and dedicating a boundless passion to the majestic and now *perfectly kitsch* plasticity of the classical subject. And so it cornered De Martino into the comic posture of denouncing the methodological error of wanting to grasp the magical world from the perspective of self-assured presence, all the while retaining that magical world as his reference

horizon. In the final analysis he takes as his own the modern utopia of an objectivity unsullied by any subjectivity and a subjectivity free of all objectivity.

In reality, presence is so little an attribute of the human subject that it's something *the subject gives himself*. "The phenomenon that should be focused on here is not that simple being-there, nor a mode of being present, but *entry into* presence, an always-new entry, whatever historical apparatus the given may appear in." (Reiner Schürmann, *The Principle of Anarchy*). Thus is defined the ontological ek-stasy of human being-there, its co-belonging to *each lived situation*. Presence in itself is INHUMAN. An inhumanity that triumphs in the crisis of presence, when being-there imposes itself in all its crushing insistence. The gift of presence thus can no longer be accommodated; all forms-of-life, that is, all manners of *accommodating* such a gift, dissipate. What should be historicized, thus, is not the progress of presence towards some final stability, but the different manners in which it takes place; the different *economies of presence*. And though today, in the Bloom era, there is certainly a generalized crisis of presence, it is only because of how generalized the crisis of economy has become:

THE WESTERN, MODERN, HEGEMONIC ECONOMY OF CONSTANT PRESENCE.

The economy whose nature is the negation of the very possibility of crisis by a blackmailing of the classical subject, that regent and measure of all things. Bloom historically points out the end of the social/magic effectiveness of this blackmail, this fable. The crisis of presence returns again to the horizons of human existence, but PEOPLE don't respond to it in the same way as they did in the traditional world; PEOPLE don't see it for what it is.

In the Bloom era, the crisis of presence is chronicized and objectivized in an immense accumulation of *apparatuses*. Each apparatus operates as an ek-sistential prosthesis impersonally administered to Bloom to permit him to survive through the crisis of presence without knowing it; to remain in it day after day, without however succumbing to it — a cellphone, a shrink, a lover, a sedative, or a cinema make perfectly suitable crutches, as long as you can change them out often. Considered singularly, apparatuses are merely ramparts erected to keep things from happening; considered as a whole, they are the dry ice that PEOPLE scatter over the fact that each and every thing, in their arrival to presence, carries a world with it. The objective: maintain the dominant economy, whatever the cost, by the authoritarian management everywhere of the crisis of presence, and install just *one present*, against the whole free play of arrivals to presence. In a word: THE WORLD IS TENSING UP.

Ever since Bloom-ness insinuated itself into the heart of civilization, PEOPLE have done all they can to isolate it, to neutralize it. Most often, and quite biopolitically, it is treated as a sickness: this was first called *psyschaesthesia*, by Janet, and then *schizophrenia*. Today PEOPLE prefer to speak of it as *depression*. Qualifiers change, or course, but the maneuver is always the same: to reduce any Bloom-manifestations that are too extreme to purely "subjective problems." By circumscribing it as a disease, PEOPLE can individualize it, localize it, and repress it in such a way as to *make it no longer collectively appropriable* for the most part. If we look closely, this has always been the only objective of biopolitics: to guarantee that worlds, techniques, shared dramatizations, *magics*, within which the crisis of presence can be appropriated and overcome, become a center of energy, a war machine. The rupture in the transmission of experience, the rupture in historical tradition, is there and ferociously maintained, in order to ensure that Bloom will remain forever left up to and handed over to himself in everything, to his own solitary mockery, to his crushing and mythical "freedom." *There is a whole biopolitical monopoly on the remedies for presence in crisis, which is always ready to defend itself with the utmost violence.*

The politics that defies this monopoly takes as its point of departure and center of energy the crisis of presence, that is: Bloom. We call this *ecstatic* politics. Its objective is not to abstractly bail out the sinking boat of human presence in dissolution with the use of re/presentations, but rather to elaborate participatory magicks, techniques for inhabiting not a given territory but *a world*. And it is this development, that of play among the different economies of presence, between different forms-of-life, that requires the subversion and *liquidation* of all apparatuses.

Those who still clamor for a theory of the subject, as if for one last deferment of their passivity, would do well to understand that in the Bloom era *a theory of the subject is no longer possible except as a theory of apparatuses*.

## II.

I have for a long time believed that what distinguishes theory from, say, literature, is its impatient urge to convey content, its dedication to *making* itself understood. This effectively specifies theory, theory as the only form of writing *that is not practice*. Thus infinity emerges from theory, which can say whatever it wants to without ever having any consequence; for bodies, that is. Our texts are neither theory, nor negation; they are simply *something else*.

What is the perfect apparatus, the model-apparatus which, after looking it, no misunderstanding is possible about the very notion of what we mean by an apparatus? The perfect apparatus, it seems to me, is the HIGHWAY. There, *maximum circulation coincides with maximum control*. Nothing moves there which is not simultaneously unquestionably “free” and strictly registered, identified, and individuated on an exhaustive record of registrations. Organized into a network, given its own dedicated refueling points, its own police, and its own autonomous, neutral, empty, and abstract zones, the highway system represents the territory itself, laid out in strips through the countryside; a heteropia, the cybernetic heteropia. Everything has been carefully set up so that *nothing happens ever*. And the undifferentiated passing of everyday life is only punctuated by the statistical series, expected and predictable, of *accidents* of which we are informed more than we’ll ever see them, and which thus are lived not as events, as *deaths*, but as a passing disturbance all traces of which will be erased within the hour. Anyway, PEOPLE die much less on the highways than they do on the interstate freeways, says the Highway Patrol; and from the crushed corpses of animals, mostly indicated merely by the slight movement around them that they cause in the flow of traffic, we are hardly reminded — if at all — what it means TO TRY TO LIVE WHERE OTHER PEOPLE PASS BY. Each atom of the molecularized flux, each of the impermeable monads of the apparatus, has no need at all, anyway, to be reminded that it’s in their best interest to *move on*. The highway is entirely made, with its sweeping turns, its calculated and signaled uniformity, to make all *behavior* (driving) conform to just one: zero surprises, a smooth and calm trip, ending at a destination point, with the whole distance traveled at an average and consistent speed. There’s a slight feeling of absence, all the same, from one end to the other of the trajectory; it’s as if you can’t remain within an apparatus unless you’re caught up in getting out of it, and you’re never really *there* when you’re there. In the end, the pure space of the highway expresses the abstraction of every *place* more than it does of all distance. Nowhere have PEOPLE so perfectly carried out the replacement of places by *names*; nowhere have THEY so perfectly carried out such *nominalist reduction*. Nowhere is separation so mobile, so convincing, and even armed with a language of its own, highway signage, and less susceptible to subversion. The high-

way, thus, as *concrete* utopia of the cybernetic Empire. And to think, some people really still talk about “information highways” without foreseeing the promise of total policing!

The metro, the *metropolitan* network, is another sort of mega-apparatus, underground this time. There’s no doubt, considering the police frenzy that never departed from the RATP<sup>1</sup> since the Vichy era, that a certain consciousness of this fact has insinuated itself on all its levels, even its mezzanine passageways. And so, a few years back, in the tunnel walkways of the Paris metro, one could read a long public notice from the RATP, decorated with a lion striking a royal pose. The title of the notice, written in fat, stunning letters, stipulated “THE ORGANIZERS OF PLACES ARE THEIR MASTERS.” And whoever deigned to stop and read it would be informed of the intransigence with which the Administration was dedicated to protecting its monopoly over the management of their apparatus. Since then it seems that the *Weltgeist* has made progress among the imitators at the RATP Communications department, since all the ad campaigns now are signed “RATP, the free spirit.” Oh the “free spirit.” What a fate for that phrase, which has gone from Voltaire to ads for new bank services by way of Nietzsche — *to have* a free spirit more than to *be* a free spirit: that’s what Blooms with a hankering for ever further bloomification demand. *Having a free spirit* means the apparatus takes charge of those who submit to it. There’s a certain comfort attached to that, and it comes from being able to forget, until further notice, that we are in the world.

Within each apparatus, there is a prior decision hidden. The Kind Cyberneticians of the CNRS<sup>2</sup> spin it this way: “The apparatus can be defined as the concretization of an intention via the installation of landscaped environments.” (*Hermes*, no. 25) *Flow* is necessary for the maintenance of apparatuses, because behind it there’s that hidden decision. “Nothing is more fundamental to the shopping center’s survival than a regular flow of customers and products,” observed the offensive bastards from the Harvard Project on the City. But ensuring the permanence and direction of the molecularized flow, connecting the different apparatuses to one another, requires a principle of equivalence, a *dynamic* principle different from the ongoing norm in place for each apparatus. This principle of equivalence is the commodity. The commodity, that is, *money*, as that which individuates, separates all social atoms, places them alone faced with their bank accounts like christians alone before their God; money that at the same time allows us to continually enter into all apparatuses and at every entry to record a *trace* of our position, of our passage. The commodity, that is, *work*, which allows the greatest possible number of bodies to be contained within a certain number of standardized apparatuses and allows them to be forced to pass through there and to *remain* there, with everyone organizing their own trackability with their résumés — isn’t it true after all that to work today is not so much to *do* something as it is to *be* something, and above all to be *available*? The commodity, that is, *the recognition* thanks to which each person self-manages their submission to the police of qualities and maintains a magic distance from other bodies, a distance big enough to neutralize them but not to exclude them from social valorization. And so, guided along by the commodity, the flow of Blooms gently imposes upon him the necessity for the apparatus that includes him. A whole fossilized world survives in this architecture, which no longer needs to celebrate sovereign power *because it itself is now a sovereign power*: it only has to configure the space — the crisis of presence does the rest.

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<sup>1</sup> Autonomous Parisian Transit Administration

<sup>2</sup> National Scientific Research Center



In the Empire, the classical forms of capitalism still live on, but as hollow forms, as pure vehicles in the service of the maintenance of the apparatuses. Their afterglow shouldn't lure us in: they are no longer to be found within themselves; they have become a function of something else. THE POLITICAL NOW DOMINATES THE ECONOMIC. The supreme issue is no longer the extraction of surplus value, but *Control*. The levels of surplus value extraction themselves now only indicate the level of Control which is the condition for it locally. Capital is now but a *means* in the service of generalized Control. And though there is still an imperialism of the commodity, it operates above all as an imperialism of apparatuses; imperialism that responds to just one necessity: the need for a TRANSITIVE NORMALIZATION OF ALL SITUATIONS. It's about extending circulation *between* apparatuses; it's what forms the best vector of universal trackability and *orderly flows*. There as well, our Kind Cyberneticians have a knack for phrasing: "In general, the autonomous individual, seen as a carrier of his own intentionality, appears as the apparatus' central figure... We don't orient individuals anymore; the individuals orient themselves within the apparatus."

There is nothing mysterious about the reasons why Blooms submit so massively to apparatuses. Why on certain days I don't steal anything from the supermarket; either because I feel too weak or I'm lazy: to not steal is comfortable. To not steal is to absolutely melt into the apparatus, to conform to it to not have to uphold the force relations underlying it: the force relationship between a body and the aggregate of employees, the security guards, and possibly the police. Stealing forces me into presence, makes me pay attention, puts me on a level of exposedness over the physical surface of my body which some days I just don't have it in me to go for. Stealing forces me to *think through my situation*. And sometimes I don't have the energy. So I pay, I pay to be rid of the very experience of the apparatus in all its hostile reality. It is my *right to absence*, in fact, that I'm claiming.

### III.

*What can be shown cannot be said.*

– Wittgenstein

*The statement is not the said.*

– Heidegger

There is a materialist approach to language which starts with the fact that what we perceive is never separable from what we know about it. *Gestalt* long ago showed how, when faced with a confused image, the fact of our being told that it shows a man sitting on a chair or a half open can is enough to make those things appear to us. The nervous reactions of a body, and thus certainly of its metabolism, are strictly linked to, if not directly dependent on, the whole of its representations. Admitting this is necessary not so much for establishing the value of, but more the *vital significance* of each metaphysic, and its incidence in terms of forms-of-life.

Let's now imagine, after all that, a civilization where grammar would have at its center, namely in the use of the most popular word in its vocabulary, a sort of defect, a failure such that everything would be perceived not only from a falsified perspective, but in the majority of cases from a *morbid* perspective. Let's imagine then what the standard psychology of its users would be, their mental and relational pathologies, the diminished life that they'd be exposed to. Such a civilization would certainly be unlivable, and would only spread disaster and desolation everywhere it

extended itself to. And western civilization is just such a civilization, and this word is quite simply the verb *to be*. The verb *to be*, not in its auxiliary or existence related uses — “that’s” — which are relatively inoffensive, but in its attributive uses — this rose *is* red — and its identity uses — a rose *is* a flower — which authorize the purest falsifications. For example, in saying “this rose is red,” I give to the subject, “rose,” a predicate that is not its own, one that is rather a predicate of *my perception*: it’s me — I’m not colorblind, I’m “normal,” and I perceive this particular light wavelength as “red.” To say “I perceive the rose to be red” would be less objectionable. As for the statement “a rose is a flower,” it allows me to erase myself opportunely from behind the classification operation that *I* am carrying out. It would thus be more suitable to say “I class the rose as among the flowers,” which is a standard formulation in Slavic languages. It is quite evident, next, that the identity effects of *to be* have a totally different emotional scope when they allow one to say of a man with white skin “he is White,” or to say of someone with money “he is rich” or of a woman who behaves in a slightly more free manner “she is a slut.” We aren’t making some denunciation of the supposed “violence” of such statements and thus preparing the advent of a new language police of some kind, an expanded *political correctness* which would see to it that each phrase carried with it its own scientific accuracy gauge. This is about knowing what we’re doing, what PEOPLE are doing *to us*, when we speak: and knowing it *together*.

The logic underlying these uses of the verb *to be* is qualified as *aristotelian* by Korzybski; we simply call it “metaphysics” — and in fact we aren’t far from thinking, like Schürmann, that “metaphysical culture as a whole shows itself to be a universalization of the syntactic operation called predicative attribution.” What is at play in metaphysics, and notably in the social hegemony of the identifying “*is*,” is equally the negation of becoming, of the *event* of things and beings. “Am I tired?” That doesn’t mean much at first. Because my tiredness is not my own, it’s not me that’s tired. ‘There’s something tiring.’ My fatigue is part of the world in the form of an objective consistency, a dull thickness in things themselves, the sun and the road uphill, and the dust and the potholes.” (Deleuze, *Sayings and Profiles*, 1947.) In place of the event, “there’s something tiring TIE A RING,” metaphysical grammar forces us to declare a subject and then to bring its predicate back to it: “I am tired” — that’s the arrangement of a position of retreat, an ellipsis of being-in-the-situation, the erasing of the form-of-life announcing itself from behind its announcement, behind the autarchic pseudo-symmetry of the subject-predicate relationship. Naturally, the *Phenomenology of Mind*, that vault key to the western repression of determinity and forms-of-life, that basic training course for all future absence, opens with a justification for this disappearance. “To the question, *what is the now*,” writes our Bloom-in-chief, “we reply, for example: *now is nighttime*. To prove the truth of this perceptible certainty a simple experiment will suffice. We note, in writing, this truth: a truth loses nothing by being written down and just as little in being preserved. If we now return to that truth at noon, we must say that it has gone stale.” The glaring bait and switch here consists in the reducing the air of nothingness, the statement, to the said; to postulating the equivalence of the pronouncement made by a body in a situation, the said *as an event*, and the objectivized, written pronouncement, which remains, *like a footprint*, in indifference to all situations. From the one to the other, it is time, it is *presence* that falls through the trapdoor. In Wittgenstein’s last written piece, *On Certainty*, whose title sounds like a kind of response to the first chapter of the *Phenomenology of Mind*, he went deeper into the issue. Paragraph 588: “But by using the words ‘I know that it is a \_\_\_’, am I not saying that I find myself in a certain state of being, whereas the simple affirmation ‘It is a \_\_\_’ does not. And nevertheless I’m often asked, after an affirmation of this kind: ‘how do you know?’ — ‘Well, first

of all for the simple reason that the fact of my affirming it lets you know that I think I know it.' This could also be explained as follows: in a zoo, one could put up a sign saying 'this is a zebra,' but not a sign saying 'I know this is a zebra.' 'I know' only means anything when it's coming out of a person's mouth."

The Power which has made itself the inheritor of all western metaphysics, Empire, draws all its strength from it, and all the immensity of its weaknesses as well. The extravagant control machinery, all the equipment for constantly stalking people that it's set up all over the planet, by the very excess of its watching betrays the excess of its blindness. With all the "intellects" it self-flatteringly thinks it has mobilized into its ranks it only confirms the obvious fact of its stupidity. It's striking to see how beings slide along among their predicates more and more from one year to the next, among all the identities PEOPLE make for them. Bloom certainly is making progress. Things are becoming indistinguishable. PEOPLE have an ever-harder time making people who think into "intellectuals," making people who work into "wage laborers," making people who kill into "murderers," making politically militant people into "militants." Formalized language – the arithmetic of norms – doesn't engage with any substantial distinctions. Bodies don't let themselves be reduced anymore to the qualities PEOPLE would like to attribute to them. They refuse to *incorporate* themselves into them anymore. They just leave, silently. Recognition, which first of all is the name for *a certain distance between bodies*, has overflowed at all points. It can no longer account for what is happening *between bodies*. Apparatuses are thus necessary; more and more apparatuses: to stabilize the relationship between the predicates and the "subjects" that obstinately escape them; to counteract the diffuse creation of asymmetrical, perverse, complex relationships with these predicates – in order to produce information and to produce the real *as information*. Obviously the deviations that the norm allows, and with the use of which bodies are individualized/distributed, are not sufficient anymore to maintain order; and moreover they have to make terror reign, the terror of *too much* deviation from the norm. There's a whole new police of qualities, a whole ruinous network of micro-surveillance, micro-surveillance at all moments and of all spaces, which have now become necessary to ensure the artificial stability of an imploding world. Obtaining self-control by everyone requires a new densification, a mass spread of ever more integrated, ever more underhanded control apparatuses. "The apparatus: an identity-crisis aid" wrote the fucks over at the CNRS. But whatever PEOPLE do to ensure the dreary linearity of the subject-predicate relationship, to subject every being to his or her representation in spite of the underlying detachment between them, in spite of *Bloom*, won't do any good. The apparatuses can try to fix and preserve expired economies of presence, make them persist beyond their happening, but they are powerless to stop the *siege of phenomena*, which will eventually drown them. For the time being, the fact that it's not a being itself that is most often the carrier of the qualities we attribute to it, but rather it's that our perception proves more and more clearly the fact that our metaphysical poverty, the poverty *of our art of perception*, makes us experience everything as quality-less, and makes us *produce the world as deprived of any qualities*. In this underlying collapse, things themselves, free from all attachments, come more and more instantly into presence.

In fact, *each detail* of a world that has become foreign to us precisely in its details now appears to us as an *apparatus*, as an *apparatus*.

## IV.

*Our reasoning is the differentiation of discourse, our history the differentiation of time, our self the differentiation of masks.*

– Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*

It's part of a hugely overarching paradigm of thought that such thought wants to *know what it's doing*, to know *what kinds of operations it's engaged in*. Not in aiming to arrive at some final, prudent, measured Reason, but on the contrary to *intensify* the dramatic enjoyment attached to the game of existence, even in its inevitabilities. It's obscene, obviously. And I must say that wherever one goes, in any milieu one moves within, all *situation-based* thinking is immediately seen and warded off as perversion. To obviate this unfortunate reflex, it's true that there is always at least one presentable way out, which is to make such thinking out as a *critique*. In France, that's something PEOPLE are avid for. By showing myself to be hostile to that which I have penetrated the functioning and determinisms of, I protect from myself exactly what I want to annihilate, make it safe from *my practice*. And it is precisely that, this innocuousness, that PEOPLE expect of me by exhorting me to declare myself to be a critic.

The freedom of play that the acquisition of a knowledge-power leads to fills people with terror on all sides. This terror, the terror of crime, is endlessly emanated by the Empire among bodies, thus ensuring its preservation of its monopoly on knowledge-powers, meaning – in the end – its monopoly on *all powers*. Domination and Critique have always formed an apparatus unavowably directed against a common *hostis*: the conspirator, he who acts *under cover*; he who makes use of everything PEOPLE give him and recognize him as *like a mask*. The conspirator is hated everywhere, but PEOPLE's hate for him can never be as great as is the *pleasure* he gets out of his game. Assuredly, a certain dose of what is commonly called "perversion" enters into the conspirator's pleasure, because what he plays on, among other things, is his opacity. But that's not the reason why PEOPLE never cease to push the conspirator to make himself a critic, to *subjectivize* himself as a critic, nor is it the reason for the hatred PEOPLE so typically have for their subject. The reason is, quite stupidly, the fact that he incarnates *danger*. Danger, for the Empire, is the war machines: for when men transform into war machines, they ORGANICALLY BIND TOGETHER THEIR TASTE FOR LIFE AND THEIR TASTE FOR DESTRUCTION.

The moralism of all critique isn't worth critiquing; it's enough for us to know how little a penchant we have for what is really happening in it: the exclusive love for sad emotions, powerlessness, contrition, a desire *to pay*, to expiate, to be punished, the passion for indictment, hatred of the world, hatred of life, gregarious impulse, expectation of martyrdom. This whole "consciousness" business has never really been understood. There is, effectively, a *need* for consciousness which is not at all a need for "self-elevation," but a need to elevate, refine, and whip up *our enjoyment*, to increase tenfold *our pleasure*. A science of apparatuses, a critical metaphysics, is thus indeed necessary, but not to depict some pretty picture of certainty behind which to erase yourself, nor even to *add* to the life of such thinking, as it speaks out. We need to think about our lives in order to dramatically *intensify them*. What do I care about any refusal that is not at the same time a precisely measured knowledge about destruction? What do I care for knowledge that doesn't increase my potential, like what PEOPLE perfidiously call "lucidity," for example?

As for the apparatuses themselves, the uncouth propensity of bodies that *do not know joy* would be to reduce the present revolutionary perspective to a perspective of their immediate destruction. Then these apparatuses would become no more than a kind of object scapegoat that

everyone could univocally have the same opinion on again. We'd just be stuck again with the oldest of modern fantasies, the romantic fantasy that *Steppenwolf* ends with: the fantasy of a war of men versus machines. Reduced to that, the revolutionary perspective would become mere frigid abstraction again. *But the revolutionary process is a process of a general growth in potential or nothing.* Its Hell is the experience and science of apparatuses, its Purgatory the division between that science and the exodus out of the apparatuses, and its Paradise insurrection, the destruction of those apparatuses. And it's up to *each person* to pass through this divine comedy, like an experimentation without any turning back.

But for the time being the petty-bourgeois terror of language still reigns uniformly. On the one hand, in the "everyday" sphere, PEOPLE tend to think things are just words, that is, that they are, supposedly, *what they are* — "a cat is a cat," "a coin is a coin," "I am I." On the other, as soon as the impersonal (PEOPLE) has been subverted and language suddenly becomes a potential agent of disorder within the clinical reality of the already-known, PEOPLE project that regularity out into all the cloudy regions of "ideology," "metaphysics," "literature," or, more commonly, "small talk." However, there have been and will be insurrectionary moments where, under the effects of a flagrant derangement of the everyday, common sense will overcome that terror. PEOPLE will then perceive that what is real about words isn't what they designate — a cat is not "a cat," a coin is — less than ever — "a coin," and I am not "myself." *What is real about language is the operation it carries out.* Describing some being as an *apparatus*, or as being produced by an apparatus, is a practice of *denaturing* the given world, an operation of *taking a step back from* what is familiar to us, or wants to be considered so. And you know it.

Distancing the given world, up to now, was always the property of critique. Only critics believed that once that was done church was over. Because at bottom it was more important to critique to put the world at a distance than to put itself outside of its reach, precisely within those cloudy regions. It intended to make PEOPLE know its hostility to the world, its innate transcendence. It wanted PEOPLE to believe it, to think that it was *out there somewhere*, in some Grand Hotel of the Abyss, or in the Republic of Letters. What we're about is the opposite. We impose a distance between ourselves and the world, not to make it understand that we are elsewhere, but to *be there in a different way*. The distance we introduce is the playing area that our gestures need; engagements and disengagements, love and overkill, sabotage and abandon. Thinking about apparatuses — critical metaphysics — prolongs the critical act that had so long been crippled, and by prolonging it *annuls it*. In particular, it annuls what for more than 70 years has been the center of energy for anything really living still contained within marxism; I'm thinking of that famous chapter in *Das Kapital* about "the fetishistic character of the commodity and its secret." Just how much Marx failed to do any thinking that went beyond that of the Enlightenment, just how much his *Critique of Political Economy* was effectively *no more than a critique*, appears nowhere as regrettably as in those few paragraphs.

In 1842 Marx discovered the concept of fetishism by reading the classic Enlightenment work, *On the Cult of the Fetish Gods*, by President De Brosses. Ever since his famous article on "wood thieves," Marx compared gold to a fetish, basing that comparison on an anecdote drawn from De Brosses' book. De Brosses was the historical inventor of the concept of fetishism, the one who extended the illuminist interpretation of the activity of certain African cults to the totality of all civilizations. For him, fetishism is the cult proper to "primitives" in general. "Many similar facts, or facts about the same race, establish with the utmost clarity that what is today the Religion of the Black Africans and other Savages was formerly that of more ancient peoples; and that in all

centuries, and all over the earth, we have seen the reign of this direct, faceless cult of animal and vegetable products.” What scandalized Enlightenment man the most about fetishism, especially Kant, was the actual African person’s way of seeing it. Bosman, for instance, in his *Voyage in Guinea* (1704), states: “we make and unmake Gods, and... we are the inventors and masters of what we make our offerings to.” Fetishes are these objects or these beings, these *things* in any case, to which the “primitive” magically bonds himself to restore the presence that some strange phenomenon or other, whether violent or just unexpected, had made vacillate. And effectively, this thing can be anything that the Savage “directly divinizes,” as the appalled writers of *Aufklärer* put it, who only see things in all this, and not the magic operation of the restoration of presence. And if they are unable to see that operation, it’s because *for them just as much as for the “primitive” — not including the sorcerer, of course — the vacillation of presence, the dissolution of the self, are not appropriable.* The difference between the modern and the primitive is merely that the former *forbids* the vacillation of presence and establishes himself *within the existential denial* of his fragility, whereas the latter accepts such vacillations and fragility as long as he can use all means available to remedy them. That’s why *Aufklärer* has such a frenzied, polemical relationship with the “magical world”; just the *possibility* of it fills them with fear. And this is also where we get the invention of “madness,” for those who cannot submit to such harsh discipline.

Marx’s position in this first chapter of *Capital* is no different than President de Brosses’ position; it is the standard gesture of *Aufklärer* and critique itself. “Commodities have a secret; I unmask it. You’ll see, they won’t keep their secret much longer!” Neither Marx nor marxism ever moved on from the metaphysics of subjectivity; that’s why feminism, or even cybernetics, had no trouble at all undoing them. Because he historicized everything *except human presence*, because he studied all economies *except economies of presence*, Marx saw exchange value like Charles de Brosses saw fetish cults among “primitives” back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He did not want to understand *what is at play* in fetishism. He did not see by what *apparatuses* PEOPLE make commodities exist *as commodities*, how, materially — by the accumulation of *stockpiles* in the factory; by the special, individualizing placement of *best-sellers* in shops, behind a storefront window, or on an ad; by the devastation of any possibility of immediate use and of all intimacy with places — PEOPLE produce objects *as objects*, and commodities *as commodities*. He acts *as if* none of this, nothing having to do with perceptible experience, had to do at all with the famous “fetishistic character”; as if the plane of phenomenality which makes commodities exist *as commodities* was not itself *materially produced*. And Marx counterposes his classical-subject-assured-of-his-presence incomprehension, which sees “commodities as material, that is, as use values,” to the effectively mysterious general blindness of the exploited. Even if he did understand that the exploited had to be immobilized one way or another as spectators on the circulation of things in order that their relations amongst themselves could appear as relations among things, he did not see the *apparatus* character of the capitalist mode of production. He did not want to see what was happening from the point of view of a being-in-the-world, between these “men” and these “things”; he who wanted so badly to explain the need for everything did not understand the need for this “mystical illusion,” and how it is anchored in the vacillation of presence, and *in the repression of presence*. He could only dismiss that fact by writing it off as obscurantism, as a theological and religious backwardness of some kind, as “metaphysics.” “In general, the religious reflection of the real world will only disappear when the conditions of labor and of practical life finally present to man a kind of transparent and rational relation with his peers and with nature.” Here we see the ABCs of the Enlightenment catechism; that is, what it supposes to be programmatic

for the world *as it has been built since then*. Since people can't recall their own relationship to presence, the singular modality of their being-in-the-world, nor even what they're engaged in *here and now*, they inevitably call upon the same worn out crap as their ancestors: entrusting to a teleology as implacable as it is cast-off the execution of even the very sentences they are speaking. The failure of marxism, as well as its historical successes, are absolutely tied to the *classical* posture of withdrawal that it authorizes, to the fact — in sum — that it's still suckling at the bosom of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity. Even the most cursory discussion with a marxist is enough to demonstrate the real reasons for his beliefs: marxism operates as an existential crutch for a lot of people who are frightened that they can no longer take their world for granted. On the pretext of materialism, it allows the smuggling through of the most *vulgar* metaphysics draped in the costume of the haughtiest dogmatism. It is certain that without the practical, *vital* contribution of blanquism, marxism would never have been able to accomplish its October "revolution."

What's at issue for a science of apparatuses is thus not to denounce the fact that these apparatuses *possess us*, or that there's *something magical about them*. We know well that at the wheel of a car it's quite rare for us not to behave like automobile drivers, and we don't need anyone to explain to us how a television, a playstation, or a "planned environment" condition us. *A science of apparatuses, a critical metaphysics, acknowledges the crisis of presence; and it's getting ready to vie with capitalism on the terrain of magic.*

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

## V.

A science of apparatuses can only be *local*. It can only consist in the regional, circumstantial, and detailed reading of how one or many such apparatuses operate. And no new additions can come about without its cartographers knowing, since its unity doesn't reside in an extorted systematicity, but in the question that each of its advancements gives rise to, the question "*how does that work?*"

The science of apparatuses puts itself in a relation of direct rivalry with the imperial monopoly on knowledge-powers. That's why its sharing and communication, the circulation of its discoveries, is essentially *illegal*. In this sense it is different from *DIY*. The *DIY*-er, as he who accumulates knowledge about apparatuses so as to better arrange them, so as to make a niche for himself in them, who — thus — accumulates whatever knowledge *that is not power* that he can about the apparatuses. From the dominant perspective, what we call a science of apparatuses or critical metaphysics is in the end nothing but the science of crime. And there as elsewhere, there's no initiation that isn't immediately experimentation and practice. **NOBODY GETS INITIATED INTO AN APPARATUS, ONLY TO ITS OPERATION.** The three stages on the path of this singular science are, successively: crime, opacity, and insurrection. Crime corresponds to the necessarily dividual moment when you learn how an apparatus operates. Opacity is the condition for the sharing, communization, and circulation of the knowledge-powers acquired in that study. In the Empire, zones of opacity where that kind of communication can come about are naturally going to be uprooted and forbidden as much as possible. This second stage thus requires an increased coordination. All the activity of the SASC is part of this opaque phase. The third stage

is insurrection, the moment when the circulation of knowledge-powers and cooperation among forms-of-life in view of the destruction-enjoyment of imperial apparatuses can take place freely, out in the open. In light of this perspective, this text can only have a purely preliminary character, somewhere between silence and tautology.

The need for a science of apparatuses is felt at the moment when men, human *bodies*, complete their integration into a world that is entirely produced. Few among those who find fault with the expensive poverty that PEOPLE would like to impose on us have still not grasped what living in a world that is *entirely produced* really means. First of all it means that even what had appeared “authentic” at first glance reveals itself upon contact to be no more than a product: its very non-production is a valorizable modality within production in general. What the Empire carries out, both from its Biopower and Spectacle angles — and this brings to mind an altercation I had once with a Negriist from *Chimeras*, an old sorceress with a rather nice Goth style, who upheld as if it were an unquestionable fact of feminism and of her own materialist radicalness the idea that she had not *raised* her two children but that she had *produced* them — is indeed the metaphysical interpretation of Being as either being *produced* or nothing at all, “produced” meaning having been brought into being in such a way that its creation and its active self-manifestation were one and the same thing. Being “produced” always means having been *at the same time* created and made visible. Entering into presence, in western metaphysics, was never distinct from entering into visibility. It is thus inevitable that the Empire, which is propped up on production-hysteria, is also propped on transparency-hysteria. The surest method to prevent the free arrival into presence of things is still to provoke it at all moments, tyrannically.

Our ally, in this world delivered over to the most ferocious, constant search-and-seizure, delivered over *to apparatuses*, in this world that revolves fanatically around a management of everything visible that aims to be a total management of Being, is none other than Time. *Time* is on our side. The time of our experience, the time that guides and shreds our intensities, time which smashes, rots, destroys, breaks, deforms; time that is surrender, the very element of surrender, time that condenses and thickens into a bundle of *moments* where all unification is defied, ruined, truncated, and scratched all over its surface *by bodies themselves*. WE HAVE TIME. And where we don’t have it, we can still take our time. Taking the time to do it; that’s the condition for any communizable study of apparatuses. Locating the regularities, the sequences, the dissonances. Each apparatus has a little music of its own, and it’s a matter of slightly detuning it, distorting it in passing, making it enter into decadence, perdition; pulling it off its hinges. This music is never noticed by those who *rush along* within the apparatus; their pace is too obedient to the cadence to hear it distinctly. To really hear it you have to start from a different temporality, a rhythmicity of your own, so as to become attentive to the *ambient norm* while passing through the apparatus. This is what thieves, what criminals learn — to make their exterior and internal reasoning differ from their behavior; to unfold and page through their consciousness, to be at the same time mobile and stopped, to be on the lookout while deceptively appearing distracted. Accepting the dissolution of presence as a simultaneous, asynchronous gearing-down of its modalities. Hijacking the imposed schizophrenia of self-control and making it into an offensive instrument of conspiracy.

BECOMING A SORCERER.

“To stop the dissolution, there is one path: going deliberately to the limit of your own presence, and taking that limit as the coming object of a specific *praxis*; placing yourself in the heart of limitation and becoming its master; identifying, representing, calling up ‘spirits,’ acquiring the



power to call upon them at will and make use of their work for the benefit of a professional practice. The sorcerer follows precisely that path: he transforms critical moments of being-in-the-world into moments of courageous and dramatic decision, the decision to situate himself within the world. Considered as a *given*, his being-in-the-world risks dissolving: it is still not really given. With the beginning of the vocation — with his initiation — the magician unmakes this given in order to *remake* it in a second birth; he goes back down to the limit of his presence so as to reconstruct himself in a new and well-delimited form: the techniques proper to favoring the mutability of presence, like trance itself and similar states, express precisely this being-*there* that unmakes itself to remake itself, which goes back down to its *there* so as to rediscover itself in a dramatically sustained and guaranteed presence. Moreover, the mastery that he has attained to allows the magician to plunge not only into his own mutability, but equally into that of others. The magician is he who knows how to *go beyond himself*, not in the ideal sense, but in the truly existential sense. He for whom being-in-the-world constitutes itself as a problem, and who has the power to procure his own presence for himself, is not just a presence among others but a being-in-the-world that can make itself present among all others, decode their existential drama and influence its course.” This is the starting point for the communist program.

Crime, contrary to what Justice insinuates, is never an act, a deed, but a *condition of existence*, a modality of presence common to all the agents of the Imaginary Party. To prove it, just think of the experience of theft or fraud, the most elementary and standard forms of crime – TODAY, EVERYBODY STEALS. The experience of theft is phenomenologically something *totally different* than the so-called motives that are reputed to “drive” us to it, and which we ourselves put forth. Theft is not a transgression except from the perspective of representation: it is *an operation on presence*, a reappropriation, an *individual* re-conquest of presence, a re-conquering of the self *as a body within space*. The *how* of “theft” has nothing to do with its apparent act relative to law. This *how* is the *physical* consciousness of space and the environment, of the *apparatus*, that I am cornered into by theft. It is the extreme attention I give to bodies when cheating my subway fare, alert to the slightest sign that could indicate a ticket-inspectors’ patrol. It’s the almost scientific knowledge of the conditions I’ll be operating in that is required for the preparation of any sizable crime. There’s a certain incandescence of the body contained in crime, a transformation of the body into an ultra-sensitive impact surface, that’s the real experience of crime. When I steal, I split myself in two, into an apparent, evanescent presence without thickness, absolutely ordinary – and a second one, a whole, intensive, and internal presence, where every detail of the apparatus surrounding me comes to life, with its cameras, its security guards, the *gaze* of its guards, the axes of vision, the other customers, the *gait* of the other customers. Theft, crime, and fraud are the conditions for a solitary existence at war against bloomification, against bloomification *by the apparatuses*. It is the non-submission proper to the isolated body; the resolution to escape, by playing a pro-active kind of game – even all alone and in a precarious manner – from a certain state of shock, a half-sleep, from the absence from the self which is the basis for all “life” within the apparatuses. The question, starting from that *necessary* experience, is how to move forward into conspiracy, and start organizing a real circulation of illegal knowledge, a criminal science. The purpose of the SASC is to facilitate that passage into the collective dimension.

## VI.

Power speaks of “apparatuses”: the vigipirate (national security alert system) apparatus, the RMI (minimum guaranteed income) apparatus, the educational apparatus, the surveillance apparatuses... And that lets it give its incursions an air of reassuring precariousness. Then, as time makes the novelty of what it’s introduced begin to fade, the apparatus enters into the “order of things,” and it becomes the precariousness of those whose lives take place in them that’s remarkable. The sell-outs that write for the magazine *Hermes*, particularly those that wrote issue number 25, did not expect it would be them that would be asked, in order to contain and spread thin the general social implosion, to start the simultaneously discreet and massive work of legitimating domination. “Society,” they say, “is seeking new modes of regulation in order to be able to face these difficulties. Apparatuses appear to be one of these attempts at a response. They allow adaptation to these fluctuations while at the same time tagging and signposting them... They are the product of a new proposition for articulation between the individual and the collective, ensuring that minimal interdependence will be maintained, based on a generalized fragmentation.”

When confronted with any apparatus, for example a entry gate on the Paris subway, the wrong question to ask is “what’s that for?” and, in that case, the wrong answer is: “it’s for preventing fraud.” The correct question to ask is the materialist question, the *critical-metaphysical* question, which on the contrary is: “what act, what *operation* does this apparatus carry out?” And the answer then would be “this apparatus singularizes and extracts illegal bodies from the indistinct mass of ‘users’ by forcing them to make some kind of easily spotted movement (jumping over the turnstile, or slipping past just behind a ‘legal user’). Thus the apparatus *brings into existence* the predicate ‘fare-cheater,’ that is, it brings a particular body into existence *as a fare-cheater.*” The essential thing is that “*as.*” Or, more precisely: the manner in which the apparatus *naturalizes* and *hides* that “*as.*” Because the apparatus has a way of making itself forgotten, of *erasing* itself behind the flow of bodies passing through it, its permanence is based on the continual updating of the submission of bodies to its operation – to its existence – which is *posed* every day and definitively. The apparatus installed thus configures space in such a way that this configuration itself remains out of the picture, like a pure given. From its manner of being taken for granted arises the fact that what it brings into existence does not appear as having been materialized by it. Thus the “anti-fraud gate” *realizes* the predicate “fare-cheater,” more than it actually keeps people from getting out of paying their train fare.

AN APPARATUS PRODUCES A GIVEN BODY, QUITE MATERIALLY, AS *THE SUBJECT OF THE INTENDED PREDICATE.*

The fact that each being is now produced by apparatuses as a *specific kind* of being defines a new power-paradigm. In *The Abnormals*, Foucault says that the historical model for this new kind of power, the *productive* power of apparatuses, can be found in the city in times of plague. It is thus at the very heart of administrative monarchies that the form of power that was to supplant them was first experienced. It’s a form of power that no longer operates by exclusion, but by inclusion; no longer by public executions, but by therapeutic punishments; no longer by arbitrary removal, but by vital maximization; not by personal sovereignty, but by the impersonal application of faceless norms. The emblem of this mutation of power, according to Foucault, is the *management* of the plague carriers, as opposed to the *banishment* of the lepers. The plague carriers, in effect, were not excluded from the cities and relegated to somewhere outside them like the lepers were. On the contrary; they took the plague as an opportunity to deploy a whole

ensemble of interlocking equipment; to spread out a whole gigantic architecture of surveillance, identification, and selection apparatuses. The city, says Foucault, “was divided into districts; the districts were divided into neighborhoods, and then in those neighborhoods the streets were separated out. The streets had watchmen assigned to them, the neighborhoods had inspectors, each district had district managers, and the city itself had either a governor named for these purposes, or had aldermen who, at the moment the plague was first seen, had received an expansion of their powers. It was an analysis of the territory even to its smallest elements, and the organization, over the whole of the territory thus analyzed, of an uninterrupted power... a kind of power that was also contained in its exercise, and not just in its hierarchical pyramid, since surveillance had to be exercised in a continual manner. The sentinels had to always be present at the ends of the streets, and the neighborhood inspectors had to carry out inspections twice a day every day to ensure that nothing that was happening in the city would escape their notice. And everything that was thus observed had to be recorded in a permanent manner, both in that space of visual examination, and also in the transcribing of all the information on large ledgers. When the quarantine process began, all the citizens that were present in the city had to give their names. Their names were written on a series of ledgers... And every day the inspectors had to drop by every house, stop there, and call out. Each individual had a window to appear at, and when their names were called they had to present themselves at that window. If they did not appear there, that was taken to mean that they were in bed; if they were in bed they must be sick; and if they were sick they were dangerous – and, consequently, action would have to be taken.” What Foucault is describing here is the operation of a paleo-apparatus: the anti-plague apparatus, whose nature, far beyond fighting the plague, was to produce bodies *as plague-stricken*. With apparatuses, thus, there is an evolution “from a technology of power that hunts down, excludes, banishes, marginalizes and represses people to a positive power, a power that fabricates, observes, knows; a power that multiplies itself on the basis of its own effects... A kind of power that does not act by separation on large confused masses, but by distribution according to differentiated individualities.”

For a long time now western dualism has consisted in positing two opposing entities: the divine and the worldly, the subject and the object, reason and madness, soul and flesh, good and evil, inside and outside, life and death, being and nothingness, etc. Having posed things that way, civilization built itself up as the struggle between the one and the other. It was an excessively costly logic. The Empire, obviously, goes about things differently. It still moves within these dualities, *but it no longer believes in them*. In fact, it is content to merely *make use* of each of these couplets from classical metaphysics for the purpose of maintaining order, that is: as a binary machine. An “apparatus,” thus, means a space polarized by a false contradiction in such a way as to make everything that happens within it and passes through it *reducible* to one of two terms. The most gigantic apparatus of this kind ever created was obviously the geo-strategic “East vs. West” macro-apparatus, where the “socialist bloc” was directly opposed to the “capitalist bloc.” All rebellion, all otherness that manifested itself *anywhere at all* thus had to be in allegiance to one of the identities proposed, or find itself lumped in with the pole that was officially the enemy of the power structure it was fighting against. In comparison to the residual power of the Stalinist rhetoric, “you’re just playing the \_\_\_ game,” – Le Pen, the right wing, globalization, whatever – which is but a reflex transposition of the old “class against class” logic, consider the violence of the currents that pass through all apparatuses, and the incredible noxiousness of western metaphysics in its putrefaction. A commonplace thing among geo-politicians is to scoff at those ex-guerrilla Marxist-Leninists of the “Third World” who, after the collapse of the East-

West macro-apparatus, became simply mafias, or adopted an ideology considered demented just because these Political Science academics don't understand their language. In fact, what we're seeing here is the rather unsustainable effect of reduction, obstruction, formatting, and disciplining that all apparatuses exercise on the *savage anomaly* of phenomena. *A posteriori*, national liberation struggles appear less like ruses set up by the USSR, that conventional costume, than they do the ruse of *something else*, defying the system of representation and refusing to take a place in it.

What must be understood is that all apparatuses operate on the basis of *couples*. Conversely, experience shows that a couple that *functions* is a couple that *forms an apparatus*. And it's couples, and not pairs or doubles, since all couples are asymmetrical and have a major and minor part. The major and minor are not just nominally distinct — two “contrary” terms can work perfectly to designate the same property. Indeed, in one sense this is what happens most commonly: they designate two *different modalities of the aggregation of phenomena*. The major part of the apparatus is the norm. The apparatus incorporates what is compatible with the norm by the simple act of *not distinguishing it*, leaving it immersed in the anonymous mass bearing the attribution “normal.” And so, in a movie theater, whoever doesn't scream, doesn't sing, doesn't undress, who doesn't whatever, will remain indistinct, incorporated into the hospitable mass of spectators, *significant as insignificant*, and unrecognizable. The minor part in the apparatus is thus *the abnormal*. That's what the apparatus brings into existence, singularizes, isolates, recognizes, distinguishes, and then reincorporates, *but as unincorporated, as separate, as differentiated from the rest of the phenomena*. Here we have the minor part, comprised of this ensemble of what the apparatus individuates, predicates, and thus disintegrates, spectralizes, suspends; and PEOPLE have to secure that ensemble to ensure that it will never condense, *discover itself*, and eventually begin to conspire. It's at this point that the elementary mechanics of Biopower connect directly to the logic of representation such as it dominates in western metaphysics.

The logic of representation is to *reduce* all otherness, to make what is *there* disappear; it comes into presence in pure haecceity, and *provides you with things to think about*. All otherness, all radical differences in the logic of representation, is grasped as the negation of the Sameness that the latter began by positing. Anything that sharply differs from and comes to have nothing in common with that Sameness, is thus pushed back to or projected onto a common plane that *does not exist*, into which a *contradiction* has now been introduced that it is one of the terms of. In apparatuses, what is *not* the norm is thus determined to be its negation, the *abnormal*. What is merely *other* is reintegrated as the *other of the norm*, as its *opposite*. The healthcare-system apparatus thus brings the “sick” into existence as whoever *is unhealthy*. The school apparatus the “dunce” as whoever *is not obedient*. The legal apparatus “crime” as whatever *is not legal*. In biopolitics, what is not normal will thus be handled as pathological, when we know from experience that pathology itself, for the sick organism, is *a norm of life*, and that health is not a particular norm of life but a state of *high normativity*, to a capacity to confront and create *other* norms of life. The essence of all apparatuses is thus to impose an authoritarian division of the perceptible where everything that enters into presence confronts the blackmail of its binarity.

The horrifying aspect of all *apparatuses* is that they are based on the primordial structure of human presence: that we are called, *asked for* by the world. All our “qualities,” our “own being,” are established in our interplay with beings that we would not be primarily *disposed towards* playing with. For all that, it often happens that, within the most banal apparatuses, like on a Saturday evening drinking among petty-bourgeois couples in a suburban house, you get a sense

not of invitation, but of *possession*, and even of the extreme *possessiveness* that all apparatuses have about them. And it's in the superfluous discussions that punctuate that pitiful get-together that you get that sense. One of the Blooms "present" will begin with a tirade against these civil-servants-always-going-on-strike; that having been posited, and the role being well-known, a counter-polarization of the social-democrat type will then appear from another of the Blooms, who will play his part more or less happily, etc., etc. Here it's not bodies that are speaking, *it's an apparatus that's functioning*. Each of the protagonists activates in series the various little ready-to-use signifier-machines that are always already registered in the *standard* language; in grammar, in metaphysics, in the impersonal "what PEOPLE think." The only satisfaction that we could draw from such

an *exercise* is to have performed brilliantly within the apparatus. *Virtuosity is the only pathetic "freedom" offered by submission to signifier determinisms.*

Whoever speaks, acts, "lives" in an apparatus is in some way *authorized* by it. He is made the author of his acts, his words, his behavior. The apparatus ensures the integration and conversion *into identities* of heterogeneous groups of discourses, gestures, attitudes: of haecceities. It is through the reversion of all events to identities that apparatuses impose a tyrannical local order on the global chaos of the Empire. The production of differences, of subjectivities, also obeys a binary imperative: imperial pacification rests entirely on the staging of so many false antinomies, of so many simulated conflicts: "For or against Milosevic," "for or against Saddam," "for or against violence." ... Their invocation, as we know, has quite a bloomifying effect, and in the end obtains from us the omnilateral indifference that is the basis for the full-tilt intrusion of the imperial police. It's the same feeling we get when watching any kind of televised debate, however rarely the actors have any kind of talent: pure amazement while watching the game be so impeccably played; such autonomous life; such artistic mechanics of apparatuses and signifiers. So, the "anti-globalization" people will oppose their predictable arguments against the "neo-liberals." The "unions" will endlessly replay 1936, faced with an eternal Comité des Forges.<sup>3</sup> The police will combat the hoodlums. The "fanatics" will confront the "democrats." The cult of illness will believe itself to defy the cult of health. And all this binary agitation will be the best guarantee of the global sleep. Thus, day after day, PEOPLE will carefully save us the tiresome task of existing.

Janet, who studied all the precursors of Bloom a century ago, devoted a volume to what he called "psychological automatism." In it he discussed all the positive forms of the crisis of presence: suggestion, somnambulism, obsessions, hypnosis, mediumism, automatic writing, mental breakdown, hallucinations, possession, etc. He saw the cause, or rather the *condition* for all these heterogeneous manifestations in what he called "psychological poverty." By "psychological poverty," he meant a general weakness of being, inseparably physical and metaphysical, which corresponds completely to what we call *Bloom*. This state of weakness, he remarks, is also the terrain of healing, notably healing through hypnosis. The more bloomified the subject is, the more suggestible he is, and the more likely it is that he can be cured this way. And the more he conceals his health, the less this medicine is operative, and the less suggestible he will be. Bloom is thus the condition for the operation of apparatuses, and our own vulnerability to them. But, contrary to suggestion, apparatuses never aim to obtain any kind of return to health, but rather to integrate themselves into us as a prosthesis indispensable to our presence, as a *natural* crutch.

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<sup>3</sup> A major steel & armaments industry group

Apparatuses only quench the thirst for apparatuses in order to make that thirst all the worse. To quote the corpse-chewers over at the CNRS, apparatuses “*encourage the expression of individual differences.*”

We have to learn to erase ourselves, to pass unnoticed through the grey areas in each apparatus, to *camouflage* ourselves behind their majority part. Even in spite of the fact that our first spontaneous impulse would be to counterpose a taste for the abnormal to the desire for conformity, we must learn the art of becoming perfectly anonymous, of offering an appearance of pure conformity. We must acquire the pure art of surfaces, *in order to carry out our operations*. This comes back down to dismissing the pseudo-transgressions of the — no less “pseudo” — social conventions, and giving up playing the part of revolutionary “sincerity,” “truth,” and “scandal” to the benefit of a tyrannical politeness, with which we can keep the apparatus and those possessed of it at a distance. Transgression, monstrosity, abnormality, when *demande*d, form the most devious trap that apparatuses set for us. Our desire for *being* — that is, our wanting to be singular — within an apparatus is our *primary weakness*, by which it holds us fast and enmeshes us within it. Conversely, the desire *to be controlled*, which is so common among our contemporaries, expresses above all the *desire for being*. For us, this desire is rather a desire to be insane, or monstrous, or criminal. But this desire is itself how PEOPLE take control over us and neutralize us. Devereux showed that each culture furnishes those who would like to escape it with a *model negation*, a signposted exit route, with which that culture can channel the driving energy in all transgression into the service of a greater stabilization. Among the Malays it’s *amok*, and in the West, it’s schizophrenia. The Malay is “pre-conditioned by his culture, perhaps even without his knowledge, but certainly in a nearly automatic manner, to react to almost any kind of violent tension, whether internal or external, with an amok crisis. In the same sense, modern western man is conditioned by his culture to react to all kinds of states of stress with a behavior that in appearance is quite schizophrenic... Schizophrenia is the ‘respectable’ way of going mad in our society.” (*Schizophrenia, an ethnic psychosis; or, schizophrenia without tears*).

RULE No. 1: All apparatuses produce singularity as monstrosity. That’s how they reinforce themselves.

RULE No. 2: You can never free yourself from an apparatus by getting engaged within its minor part.

RULE No. 3: When PEOPLE apply predicates to you, subjectivize you, assign you, never react to it and never refuse it. The counter-subjectivation that PEOPLE would extract from you then will *always* be the hardest prison to escape from.

RULE No. 4: The superior freedom is not in the absence of predicates, in anonymity *by default*. The superior freedom results on the contrary from *saturation* by predicates, from their anarchic proliferation. Super-predication annuls itself automatically in a definitive unpredictability.

“When we have no more secrets, we have nothing left to hide. We ourselves have become the secret, and it’s us that are hidden.” (Deleuze-Parnet, *Dialogues*)

RULE No. 5: Counter-attacks are never really a response; they’re just a new hand being dealt.

## VII.

“*The possible implies the corresponding reality plus something joined to it, because the possible is the combined effect of a reality once it’s appeared and an apparatus that pushes it back.*”

– Bergson, *Thought and Motion*

Apparatuses and Bloom imply one another like the two cooperating poles of the suspended animation of our times.

Nothing ever happens in an apparatus. Nothing ever happens – that is, EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS WITHIN AN APPARATUS EXISTS IN THE MODE OF POSSIBILITY. Apparatuses even have the power of dissolving into its possibility an event that has already effectively taken place, what PEOPLE call “catastrophes,” for instance. That an defective airliner explodes in mid-flight and PEOPLE immediately deploy a whole showy abundance of apparatuses, setting in motion masses of facts, timelines, declarations, and statistics to reduce an event where hundreds of persons have died to a mere *accident*. In no time at all, THEY will have dissipated the obvious fact that the invention of railway lines was thus necessarily also the invention of railway catastrophes; and that the invention of the Concorde was also the invention of its explosion in mid-air. In this way PEOPLE will separate out, in every instance of “progress,” what is part of its *essence*, and what just has to do with an *accident*. And thus PEOPLE will remove the fact of that unity from it. After a few weeks, PEOPLE will have reduced the event of the crash to its *possibility* again, to a statistical contingency. And from then on it wasn’t any more that a crash actually took place, IT WAS MERELY THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF A CRASH, NATURALLY REMOTE, WAS ACTUALIZED. In a word, nothing happened; the essence of technological progress is safe. The monument – significant, colossal, and composite – that PEOPLE will have built for the occasion thus accomplishes the aim of all apparatuses: *the maintenance of the phenomenological order*. Because such is the intent of all apparatuses within the Empire: *managing and controlling a certain plane of phenomenality, ensuring the persistence of a particular economy of presence*, keeping the suspended animation of our times within its assigned space. That’s where the character of absence, of lethargy, which is so striking about existence within the apparatuses comes from, that bloomish feeling of being carried away by the comfortable flow of phenomena.

We say that the mode of being for everything within the apparatuses is *possibility*. The possibility is on the one hand different from the act, and on the other from the potential. The potential – in the activity involved in writing this text, for instance – is language, as the generic ability to signify ideas and communicate. The possibility is langue, that is, the ensemble of declarations considered correct according to English syntax, grammar, and vocabulary as they are at present. The act is speech, enunciation, the production *here and now* of a particular proclamation. Unlike potential, possibility is always the possibility *of* something. Saying that *within the apparatus, everything exists in the mode of possibility* means that everything that happens in the apparatus takes place only *as the actualization of a possibility that preceded it*, which is thus MORE REAL than it is. All acts, all events, are thus reduced to their possibility, and appear as the predictable consequence, the pure contingency of the latter. What happens becomes just as real as awareness of it is. Thus apparatuses exclude events, and they exclude them *by how they include them*, for example by declaring them possible after the fact.

What apparatuses materialize is but the most notorious of western metaphysics’ impostures, the imposture contained in the saying “essence precedes existence.” For metaphysics, existence is but a predicate of essence; according to it, all existing things merely actualize an essence which preceded it. According to this aberrant doctrine, the possibility, that is, the *idea* of things always precedes them; each reality is merely a possibility that *moreover* has *come into existence*. When we flip thinking back onto its feet, we see that this is the fully developed reality of a thing positing its own possibility *in the past*. It is necessary, properly speaking, that an event come about in the

totality of its determinations in order to isolate some of them, and extract from that event the representation that will then paint it as *having been possible*. “The possible,” says Bergson, “is but the real plus an act of the mind that projects its image into the past once it’s already happened.” “To the extent,” Deleuze adds, “that the possible offers its ‘realization,’ it itself is already conceived of as the image of the real, and the real as the resemblance of the possible. This is why people so rarely understand what existence adds to concepts, as they couple the similar with the similar. Such is the defect of the possible, a defect that shows it to be produced after the fact, fabricated retroactively in the image of what resembles it.”

Everything that exists, within an apparatus, is either just the norm or an accident. As long as the apparatus holds, nothing can take place within it. Events, *those acts that keep their own potential about them*, can only take place outside them, as what pulverizes exactly what was supposed to ward them off. When noise music burst onto the scene, PEOPLE said: “that’s not music.” When ’68 erupted, PEOPLE said: “that’s not politics.” When ’77 brought Italy to its knees, PEOPLE said: “that’s not communism.” Confronted with old man Artaud, PEOPLE said: “that’s not literature.” And then, once they’d been around for a long while, PEOPLE said: “well, I’ll be damned, it was possible, it’s *a possibility* for music, politics, communism, literature.” And finally, after the first moment shocked by the inexorable *labor of potential*, the apparatus re-forms itself: PEOPLE then include, defuse, and reterritorialize the event. THEY assign it to a possibility, to a *local* possibility, the possibility of the literary apparatus for example. The assholes at the CNRS, who wield words with such Jesuitical discretion, conclude quietly: “Though the apparatus organizes things and renders them possible, it does not however guarantee that they will actually happen. They merely bring a particular space into existence where such ‘things’ could possibly come about.” THEY couldn’t have made themselves any clearer.

If the imperial perspective had a slogan it would be “ALL POWER TO THE APPARATUSES!” And true enough, in the coming insurrection it will be most often enough merely to liquidate the apparatuses, which, instead of having to slaughter them as before, now tolerate their enemies in order to better break them. And this slogan is not so much about cybernetic utopianism as it is imperial pragmatism: the fictions of metaphysics, those grandiose desert-like constructions that no longer force faith nor admiration, can now no longer unify the debris from the universal breakdown. In the Empire, the old Institutions deteriorate one by one into cascades of apparatuses. What’s happening – and this is the task of the Empire – is a concerted dismantling of each Institution into a multiplicity of apparatuses, an arborescence of relative and ever-changing norms. School, for instance, no longer even makes any effort to present itself as a coherent order. It’s no more than an aggregate of classes, schedules, subjects, buildings, courses of study, programs, and projects, which are no more than apparatuses intended to immobilize bodies. Thus, what corresponds to the imperial extinction of all events is the planetary, administrative dissemination of apparatuses. A number of voices have bemoaned these detestable times. Some denounce a “loss of meaning” which has now become visible everywhere, while others, the optimists, swear every morning that they’ll “give meaning” to whatever misery or other, and invariably fail. All of them, in fact, are in agreement; they *want meaning without wanting anything to happen*. They pretend that they can’t see that apparatuses are by their very nature hostile to meaning, which they are indeed only in place to manage the absence of. *Anyone who talks of “meaning” without taking up the means to destroy the apparatuses are our direct enemies*. Taking up the means sometimes means no more than merely giving up the comfort of bloomish isolation. The majority of apparatuses are vulnerable to just about any kind of collective resistance, having not learned



how to resist it. A few years back, it was enough to merely have around a dozen determined people in a Social Welfare Fund office or a Social Aid Office to extort from them the benefit of a thousand francs per person right then and there. And even today you don't really need many more than that to carry out a DIY price reduction in a supermarket. The separation of bodies, the atomization of forms-of-life: such are the conditions for the survival of most of the imperial apparatuses. "Wanting meaning" today immediately implies the three stages that we discussed above, and necessarily implies insurrection. Outside of zones of opacity and the insurrection, all that spreads out before us is the reign of apparatuses, devices, the sorry empire of *meaning machines; machines that assign meaning* to everything that happens within them, according to whatever system of representations is in force locally.

Certain people, who consider themselves quite clever – the same ones who had to ask a century and a half ago what communism *would be like* – ask us today what our famous "finding each other, beyond our importance" looks like. Have so many bodies in these times never known abandon, the drunkenness of sharing, the familiar contact of other bodies, perfect repose in the self, that such questions can still be asked with such a knowing air? And indeed, what interest can there be in events, in moving beyond importances, in breaking the systematic correlations, for those who have never known the ek-static retraining of attention? What can 'let it be' mean, what can the destruction of what builds screens between us and things mean, for those who have never perceived the world's *invitation*? What can those who are incapable of living without reasons why understand about the reasonless existence of the world? Will we be strong enough, and numerous enough, in the insurrection, to elaborate rhythms that will prohibit the apparatuses to re-form, and re-absorb all awareness of what's to happen? Will we be full enough of silence to find the point of scansion, the point of application that will guarantee a true POGO effect? Will we be able to bring our acts into harmony with the pulsations of potential, the fluidity of phenomena?

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

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