READING MATTERS WORKSHOP

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY

SEPTEMBER 14 - 15, 2018

SEMINAR READER

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THE

MARX-ENGELS

READER

SECOND EDITION

Edited by

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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

W · W · NORTON & COMPANY

New York · London

Estranged Labour[3]

We have proceeded from the premises of political economy. We have accepted its language and its laws. We presupposed private property, the separation of labour, capital and land, and of wages, profit of capital and rent of land—likewise division of labour, competition, the concept of exchange-value, etc. On the basis of political economy itself, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities; that the wretchedness of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of his production; that the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands, and thus the restoration of monopoly in a more terrible form; that finally the distinction between capitalist and land-rentier, like that between the tiller of the soil and the factory-worker, disappears and that the whole of society must fall apart into the two classes—the property-*owners* and the propertyless *workers*.

Political economy proceeds from the fact of private property, but it does not explain it to us. It expresses in general, abstract formulae the *material* process through which private property actually passes, and these formulae it then takes for *laws*. It does not *comprehend* these laws—i.e., it does not demonstrate how they arise from the very nature of private property. Political economy does not disclose the source of the division between labour and capital, and between capital and land. When, for example, it defines the relationship of wages to profit, it takes the interest of the capitalists to be the ultimate cause; i.e., it takes for granted what it is supposed to evolve. Similarly, competition comes in everywhere. It is explained from external circumstances. As to how far these external and apparently fortuitous circumstances are but the expression of a necessary course of development, political economy teaches us nothing. We have seen how, to it, exchange itself appears to be a

3. *Die Entfremdete Arbeit.* See the Note on Texts and Terminology, p. xli, above, for a discussion of this term. [*R. T.*]

fortuitous fact. The only wheels which political economy sets in motion are *avarice* and the *war amongst the avaricious— competition.*

Precisely because political economy does not grasp the connections within the movement, it was possible to counterpose, for instance, the doctrine of competition to the doctrine of monopoly, the doctrine of craft-liberty to the doctrine of the corporation, the doctrine of the division of landed property to the doctrine of the big estate—for competition, craft-liberty and the division of landed property were explained and comprehended only as fortuitous, premeditated and violent consequences of monopoly, the corporation, and feudal property, not as their necessary, inevitable and natural consequences.

Now, therefore, we have to grasp the essential connection between private property, avarice, and the separation of labour, capital and landed property; between exchange and competition, value and the devaluation of men, monopoly and competition, etc.; the connection between this whole estrangement and the *money* system.

Do not let us go back to a fictitious primordial condition as the political economist does, when he tries to explain. Such a primordial condition explains nothing. He merely pushes the question away into a grey nebulous distance. He assumes in the form of fact, of an event, what he is supposed to deduce—namely, the necessary relationship between two things—between, for example, division of labour and exchange. Theology in the same way explains the origin of evil by the fall of man: that is, it assumes as a fact, in historical form, what has to be explained.

We proceed from an *actual* economic fact.

The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and range. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. With the *increasing value* of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion the *devaluation* of the world of men. Labour produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a *commodity*—and does so in the proportion in which it produces commodities generally.

This fact expresses merely that the object which labour produces—labour's product—confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labour is labour which has been congealed in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labour. Labour's realization is its objectification. In the conditions dealt with by political economy this realization of labour appears as *loss of reality* for the work-

ers; objectification as *loss of the object* and *object-bondage*; appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*.[4]

So much does labour's realization appear as loss of reality that the worker loses reality to the point of starving to death. So much does objectification appear as loss of the object that the worker is robbed of the objects most necessary not only for his life but for his work. Indeed, labour itself becomes an object which he can get hold of only with the greatest effort and with the most irregular interruptions. So much does the appropriation of the object appear as estrangement that the more objects the worker produces the fewer can he possess and the more he falls under the dominion of his product, capital.

All these consequences are contained in the definition that the worker is related to the *product of his labour* as to an *alien* object. For on this premise it is clear that the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful the alien objective world becomes which he creates over-against himself, the poorer he himself—his inner world—becomes, the less belongs to him as his own. It is the same in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself. The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the greater is the worker's lack of objects. Whatever the product of his labour is, he is not. Therefore the greater this product, the less is he himself. The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power of its own confronting him; it means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.

Let us now look more closely at the *objectification*, at the production of the worker; and therein at the *estrangement*, the *loss* of the object, his product.

The worker can create nothing without *nature*, without the *sensuous external world*. It is the material on which his labor is manifested, in which it is active, from which and by means of which it produces.

But just as nature provides labor with the *means of life* in the sense that labour cannot *live* without objects on which to operate, on the other hand, it also provides the *means of life* in the more restricted sense—i.e., the means for the physical subsistence of the *worker* himself.

Thus the more the worker by his labour *appropriates* the external world, sensuous nature, the more he deprives himself of *means of life* in the double respect: first, that the sensuous external world

4. "Alienation"—*Entäusserung*.

more and more ceases to be an object belonging to his labour—to be his labour's *means of life*; and secondly, that it more and more ceases to be *means of life* in the immediate sense, means for the physical subsistence of the worker.

Thus in this double respect the worker becomes a slave of his object, first, in that he receives an *object of labour*, i.e., in that he receives *work*; and secondly, in that he receives *means of subsistence*. Therefore, it enables him to exist, first, as a *worker*; and, second, as a *physical subject*. The extremity of this bondage is that it is only as a *worker* that he continues to maintain himself as a *physical subject*, and that it is only as a *physical subject* that he is a *worker*.

(The laws of political economy express the estrangement of the worker in his object thus: the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more values he creates, the more valueless, the more unworthy he becomes; the better formed his product, the more deformed becomes the worker; the more civilized his object, the more barbarous becomes the worker; the mightier labour becomes, the more powerless becomes the worker; the more ingenious labour becomes, the duller becomes the worker and the more he becomes nature's bondsman.)

Political economy conceals the estrangement inherent in the nature of labour by not considering the direct relationship between the worker (labour) *and production*. It is true that labour produces for the rich wonderful things—but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces—but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty—but for the worker, deformity. It replaces labour by machines—but some of the workers it throws back to a barbarous type of labour, and the other workers it turns into machines. It produces intelligence—but for the worker idiocy, cretinism.

The direct relationship of labour to its produce is the relationship of the worker to the objects of his production. The relationship of the man of means to the objects of production and to production itself is only a *consequence* of this first relationship—and confirms it. We shall consider this other aspect later.

When we ask, then, what is the essential relationship of labour we are asking about the relationship of the *worker* to production.

Till now we have been considering the estrangement, the alienation of the worker only in one of its aspects, i.e., the worker's *relationship to the products of his labour*. But the estrangement is manifested not only in the result but in the *act of production*—within the *producing activity* itself. How would the worker come to face the product of his activity as a stranger, were it not that in the very act of production he was estranging himself from himself? The product is after all but the summary of the activity of production.

If then the product of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation. In the estrangement of the object of labour is merely summarized the estrangement, the alienation, in the activity of labour itself.

What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour?

First, the fact that labour is *external* to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is *forced labour*. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a *means* to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labour is shunned like the plague. External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification. Lastly, the external character of labour for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another. Just as in religion the spontaneous activity of the human imagination, of the human brain and the human heart, operates independently of the individual—that is, operates on him as an alien, divine or diabolical activity—in the same way the worker's activity is not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self.

As a result, therefore, man (the worker) no longer feels himself to be freely active in any but his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal.

Certainly eating, drinking, procreating, etc., are also genuinely human functions. But in the abstraction which separates them from the sphere of all other human activity and turns them into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal.

We have considered the act of estranging practical human activity, labour, in two of its aspects. (1) The relation of the worker to the *product of labour* as an alien object exercising power over him. This relation is at the same time the relation to the sensuous external world, to the objects of nature as an alien world antagonistically opposed to him. (2) The relation of labour to the *act of production within the labour process*. This relation is the relation of the

worker to his own activity as an alien activity not belonging to him; it is activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating, the worker's *own* physical and mental energy, his personal life or what is life other than activity—as an activity which is turned against him, neither depends on nor belongs to him. Here we have *self-estrangement*, as we had previously the estrangement of the *thing*.

We have yet a third aspect of *estranged labour* to deduce from the two already considered.

Man is a species being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species as his object (his own as well as those of other things), but—and this is only another way of expressing it—but also because he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a *universal* and therefore a free being.

The life of the species, both in man and in animals, consists physically in the fact that man (like the animal) lives on inorganic nature; and the more universal man is compared with an animal, the more universal is the sphere of inorganic nature on which he lives. Just as plants, animals, stones, the air, light, etc., constitute a part of human consciousness in the realm of theory, partly as objects of natural science, partly as objects of art—his spiritual inorganic nature, spiritual nourishment which he must first prepare to make it palatable and digestible—so too in the realm of practice they constitute a part of human life and human activity. Physically man lives only on these products of nature, whether they appear in the form of food, heating, clothes, a dwelling, or whatever it may be. The universality of man is in practice manifested precisely in the universality which makes all nature his *inorganic* body—both inasmuch as nature is (1) his direct means of life, and (2) the material, the object, and the instrument of his life-activity. Nature is man's *inorganic body*—nature, that is, in so far as it is not itself the human body. Man *lives* on nature—means that nature is his *body*, with which he must remain in continuous intercourse if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.

In estranging from man (1) nature, and (2) himself, his own active functions, his life-activity, estranged labour estranges the *species* from man. It turns for him the *life of the species* into a means of individual life. First it estranges the life of the species and individual life, and secondly it makes individual life in its abstract form the purpose of the life of the species, likewise in its abstract and estranged form.

For in the first place labour, *life-activity, productive life* itself, appears to man merely as a *means* of satisfying a need—the need

to maintain the physical existence. Yet the productive life is the life of the species. It is life-engendering life. The whole character of a species—its species character—is contained in the character of its life-activity; and free, conscious activity is man's species character. Life itself appears only as *a means to life*.

The animal is immediately identical with its life-activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is *its life-activity*. Man makes his life-activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life-activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life-activity directly distinguishes man from animal life-activity. It is just because of this that he is a species being. Or it is only because he is a species being that he is a Conscious Being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him. Only because of that is his activity free activity. Estranged labour reverses this relationship, so that it is just because man is a conscious being that he makes his life-activity, his essential being, a mere means to his *existence*.

In creating an *objective world* by his practical activity, in *working-up* inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species being, i.e., as a being that treats the species as its own essential being, or that treats itself as a species being. Admittedly animals also produce. They build themselves nests, dwellings, like the bees, beavers, ants, etc. But an animal only produces what it immediately needs for itself or its young. It produces one-sidedly, whilst man produces universally. It produces, only under the dominion of immediate physical need, whilst man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom. An animal produces only itself, whilst man reproduces the whole of nature. An animal's product belongs immediately to its physical body, whilst man freely confronts his product. An animal forms things in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man therefore also forms things in accordance with the laws of beauty.

It is just in the working-up of the objective world, therefore, that man first really proves himself to be a *species being*. This production is his active species life. Through and because of this production, nature appears as *his* work and his reality. The object of labour is, therefore, the *objectification of man's species life*: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he contemplates himself in a world that he has created. In tearing away from man the object of his production, therefore, estranged labour tears from him his *species life*, his real species objectivity, and transforms his advantage

over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken from him.

Similarly, in degrading spontaneous activity, free activity, to a means, estranged labour makes man's species life a means to his physical existence.

The consciousness which man has of his species is thus transformed by estrangement in such a way that the species life becomes for him a means.

Estranged labour turns thus:

(3) *Man's species being*, both nature and his spiritual species property, into a being *alien* to him, into a *means* to his *individual existence*. It estranges man's own body from him, as it does external nature and his spiritual essence, his *human* being.

(4) An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labour, from his life-activity, from his species being is the *estrangement of man* from *man*. If a man is confronted by himself, he is confronted by the *other* man. What applies to a man's relation to his work, to the product of his labour and to himself, also holds of a man's relation to the other man, and to the other man's labour and object of labour.

In fact, the proposition that man's species nature is estranged from him means that one man is estranged from the other, as each of them is from man's essential nature.[5]

The estrangement of man, and in fact every relationship in which man stands to himself, is first realized and expressed in the relationship in which a man stands to other men.

Hence within the relationship of estranged labour each man views the other in accordance with the standard and the position in which he finds himself as a worker.

We took our departure from a fact of political economy—the estrangement of the worker and his production. We have formulated the concept of this fact—*estranged, alienated* labour. We have analysed this concept—hence analysing merely a fact of political economy.

Let us now see, further, how in real life the concept of estranged, alienated labour must express and present itself.

If the product of labour is alien to me, if it confronts me as an alien power, to whom, then, does it belong?

If my own activity does not belong to me, if it is an alien, a coerced activity, to whom, then, does it belong?

To a being *other* than me.

Who is this being?

The *gods?* To be sure, in the earliest times the principal produc-

5. "Species nature" (and, earlier, "spe-   essential nature"—*menschlichen Wesen.*
cies being")—*Gattungswesen*; "man's

tion (for example, the building of temples, etc., in Egypt, India and Mexico) appears to be in the service of the gods, and the product belongs to the gods. However, the gods on their own were never the lords of labour. No more was *nature*. And what a contradiction it would be if, the more man subjugated nature by his labour and the more the miracles of the gods were rendered superfluous by the miracles of industry, the more man were to renounce the joy of production and the enjoyment of the produce in favour of these powers.

The *alien* being, to whom labour and the produce of labour belongs, in whose service labour is done and for whose benefit the produce of labour is provided, can only be *man* himself.

If the product of labour does not belong to the worker, if it confronts him as an alien power, this can only be because it belongs to some *other man than the worker*. If the worker's activity is a torment to him, to another it must be *delight* and his life's joy. Not the gods, not nature, but only man himself can be this alien power over man.

We must bear in mind the above-stated proposition that man's relation to himself only becomes *objective* and *real* for him through his relation to the other man. Thus, if the product of his labour, his labour *objectified*, is for him an *alien*, hostile, powerful object independent of him, then his position towards it is such that someone else is master of this object, someone who is alien, hostile, powerful, and independent of him. If his own activity is to him an unfree activity, then he is treating it as activity performed in the service, under the dominion, the coercion and the yoke of another man.

Every self-estrangement of man from himself and from nature appears in the relation in which he places himself and nature to men other than and differentiated from himself. For this reason religious self-estrangement necessarily appears in the relationship of the layman to the priest, or again to a mediator, etc., since we are here dealing with the intellectual world. In the real practical world self-estrangement can only become manifest through the real practical relationship to other men. The medium through which estrangement takes place is itself *practical*. Thus through estranged labour man not only engenders his relationship to the object and to the act of production as to powers that are alien and hostile to him; he also engenders the relationship in which other men stand to his production and to his product, and the relationship in which he stands to these other men. Just as he begets his own production as the loss of his reality, as his punishment; just as he begets his own product as a loss, as a product not belonging to him; so he begets the dominion of the one who does not produce over produc-

.tion and over the product. Just as he estranges from himself his own activity, so he confers to the stranger activity which is not his own.

Till now we have only considered this relationship from the standpoint of the worker and later we shall be considering it also from the standpoint of the non-worker.

Through *estranged, alienated labour*, then, the worker produces the relationship to this labour of a man alien to labour and standing outside it. The relationship of the worker to labour engenders the relation to it of the capitalist, or whatever one chooses to call the master of labour. *Private property* is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of *alienated labour*, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself.

- *Private property* thus results by analysis from the concept of *alienated labour*—i.e., of *alienated man*, of estranged labour, of estranged life, of *estranged* man.

True, it is as a result of the *movement of private property* that we have obtained the concept of *alienated labour* (*of alienated life*) from political economy. But on analysis of this concept it becomes clear that though private property appears to be the source, the cause of alienated labour, it is really its consequence, just as the gods *in the beginning* are not the cause but the effect of man's intellectual confusion. Later this relationship becomes reciprocal. .

Only at the very culmination of the development of private property does this, its secret, re-emerge, namely, that on the one hand it is the *product* of alienated labour, and that secondly it is the *means* by which labour alienates itself, the *realization of this alienation.*

This exposition immediately sheds light on various hitherto unsolved conflicts.

(1) Political economy starts from labour as the real soul of production; yet to labour it gives nothing, and to private property everything. From this contradiction Proudhon has concluded in favour of labour and against private property. We understand, however, that this apparent contradiction is the contradiction of *estranged labour* with itself, and that political economy has merely formulated the laws of estranged labour.

We also understand, therefore, that *wages* and *private property* are identical: where the product, the object of labour pays for labour itself, the wage is but a necessary consequence of labour's estrangement, for after all in the wage of labour, labour does not appear as an end in itself but as the servant of the wage. We shall develop this point later, and meanwhile will only deduce some conclusions.

A *forcing-up of wages* (disregarding all other difficulties, including the fact that it would only be by force, too, that the higher wages, being an anomaly, could be maintained) would therefore be nothing but *better payment for the slave*, and would not conquer either for the worker or for labour their human status and dignity.

Indeed, even the *equality of wages* demanded by Proudhon only transforms the relationship of the present-day worker to his labour into the relationship of all men to labour. Society is then conceived as an abstract capitalist.

Wages are a direct consequence of estranged labour, and estranged labour is the direct cause of private property. The downfall of the one aspect must therefore mean the downfall of the other.

(2) From the relationship of estranged labour to private property it further follows that the emancipation of society from private property, etc., from servitude, is expressed in the *political* form of the *emancipation of the workers*; not that *their* emancipation alone was at stake but because the emancipation of the workers contains universal human emancipation—and it contains this, because the whole of human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production, and every relation of servitude is but a modification and consequence of this relation.

Just as we have found the concept of *private property* from the concept of *estranged, alienated labour* by *analysis,* in the same way every *category* of political economy can be evolved with the help of these two factors; and we shall find again in each category, e.g., trade, competition, capital, money, only a *definite* and *developed expression* of the first foundations.

Before considering this configuration, however, let us try to solve two problems.

(1) To define the general *nature of private property*, as it has arisen as a result of estranged labour, in its relation to *truly human, social property.*

(2) We have accepted the *estrangement of labour*, its *alienation,* as a fact, and we have analysed this fact. How, we now ask, does *man* come to *alienate*, to estrange, *his labour?* How is this estrangement rooted in the nature of human development? We have already gone a long way to the solution of this problem by *transforming* the question as to the *origin of private property* into the question as to the relation of *alienated labour* to the course of humanity's development. For when one speaks of *private property,* one thinks of being concerned with something external to man. When one speaks of labour, one is directly concerned with man himself. This new formulation of the question already contains its solution.

As to (1): The general nature of private property and its relation to truly human property.

Alienated labour has resolved itself for us into two elements which mutually condition one another, or which are but different expressions of one and the same relationship. *Appropriation* appears as *estrangement*, as *alienation*; and *alienation* appears as *appropriation*, *estrangement* as true *enfranchisement*.

We have considered the one side—*alienated* labour in relation to the *worker* himself, i.e., the *relation of alienated labour to itself*. The *property-relation of the non-worker to the worker and to labour* we have found as the product, the necessary outcome of this relation of alienated labour. *Private property*, as the material, summary expression of alienated labour, embraces both relations—the *relation of the worker to work, to the product of his labour and to the non-worker*, and the relation of the *non-worker to the worker and to the product of his labour.*

Having seen that in relation to the worker who *appropriates* nature by means of his labour, this appropriation *appears* as estrangement, his own spontaneous activity as activity for another and as activity of another, vitality as a sacrifice of life, production of the object as loss of the object to an alien power, to an *alien* person—we shall now consider the relation to the worker, to labour and its object of this person who is *alien* to labour and the worker.

First it has to be noticed, that everything which appears in. the worker as an *activity of alienation, of estrangement*, appears in the non-worker as a *state of alienation, of estrangement.*

Secondly, that the worker's *real, practical attitude* in production and to the product (as a state of mind) appears in the non-worker confronting him as a *theoretical* attitude.

Thirdly, the non-worker does everything against the worker which the worker does against himself; but he does not do against himself what he does against the worker.

Let us look more closely at these three relations.[6]

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6. At this point the first manuscript breaks off unfinished.

Karl Marx
Ökonomisch-Philosophische Manuskripte

Kommentar von
Michael Quante

Suhrkamp

365086

Inhalt

zum Proletariat herabsinken. Andrerseits werden sich auch vie-
le Pächter des Grundeigenthums bemächtigen, denn die gro-
ssen Eigenthümer, die bei ihrer bequemen Revenu sich größ-
tentheils der Verschwendung ergeben haben und meistens | 23⁴
5 auch unbrauchbar zur Leitung der Agrikultur im Grossen
sind, besitzen theilweise weder Capital noch Befähigung, um
den Grund und Boden zu exploitiren. Also auch ein Theil
von diesen wird vollständig ruinirt. Endlich muß der auf ein
Minimum reducirte Arbeitslohn noch mehr reducirt werden,
10 um die neue Concurrenz zu bestehn. Das führt dann nothwen-
dig zur Revolution.

   Das Grundeigenthum mußte sich auf jede der beiden Wei-
sen entwickeln, um in beiden seinen nothwendigen Untergang
zu erleben, wie auch die Industrie in der Form des Monopols
15 und in der Form der Concurrenz sich ruiniren mußte, um an
d[en] Menschen glauben zu lernen.

[V]

|XXII| Wir sind ausgegangen von den Voraussetzungen der Na-
tionalökonomie. Wir haben ihre Sprache und ihre Gesetze ac-
20 ceptirt. Wir unterstellten das Privateigenthum, die Trennung
von Arbeit, Capital und Erde, ebenso von Arbeitslohn, Profit
des Capitals und Grundrente, wie die Theilung der Arbeit,
die Concurrenz, den Begriff des Tauschwerthes etc. Aus der
⇨ Nationalökonomie selbst, mit ihren eignen Worten, haben
25 wir gezeigt, daß der Arbeiter zur Waare und zur elendsten
Waare herabsinkt, daß das Elend des Arbeiters im umgekehr-
ten Verhältniß zur Macht und zur Grösse seiner Production
steht, daß das nothwendige Resultat der Concurrenz die Accu-
mulation des Capitals in wenigen Händen, also die fürchter-
30 lichere Wiederherstellung des Monopols ist, daß endlich der
Unterschied von Capitalist und Grundrentner, wie von Acker-
bauer und Manufacturarbeiter verschwindet und die ganze
Gesellschaft in die beiden Klassen der *Eigenthümer* und Ei-
genthumslosen *Arbeiter* zerfallen muß.

Die Nationalökonomie geht vom Factum des Privateigenthums aus. Sie erklärt uns dasselbe nicht. Sie faßt den *materiellen* Prozeß des Privateigenthums, den es in der Wirklichkeit durchmacht, in allgemeine, abstrakte Formeln, die ihr dann ↩ als *Gesetze* gelten. Sie *begreift* diese Gesetze nicht, d. h. sie 5 ↩ zeigt nicht nach, wie sie aus dem Wesen des Privateigenthums hervorgehn. Die Nationalökonomie giebt uns keinen Aufschluß über den Grund der Theilung von Arbeit und Capital, von Capital und Erde. Wenn sie z. B. das Verhältniß des Ar-
235 beitslohns zum Profit des Capitals bestimmt, | so gilt ihr als 10 lezter Grund das Interesse d[es] Capitalisten; d. h. sie unterstellt, was sie entwickeln soll. Ebenso kömmt überall die Concurrenz hinein. Sie wird aus äusseren Umständen erklärt. Inwiefern diese äusseren, scheinbar zufälligen Umstände, nur der Ausdruck einer nothwendigen Entwicklung sind, darüber 15 lehrt uns die Nationalökonomie nichts. Wir haben gesehn, wie ihr der Austausch selbst als ein zufälliges Factum erscheint. Die einzigen Räder, die der Nationalökonom in Bewegung sezt, sind die *Habsucht* und der *Krieg unter den Habsüchtigen, die Concurrenz.*|
20

Eben weil die Nationalökonomie den Zusammenhang der Bewegung nicht begreift, darum konnte sich z. B. die Lehre von der Concurrenz der Lehre vom Monopol, die Lehre von der Gewerbfreiheit der Lehre von der Corporation, die Lehre ↩ von der Theilung des Grundbesitzes der Lehre vom grossen 25 Grundeigenthum wieder entgegenstellen, denn Concurrenz, Gewerbfreiheit, Theilung des Grundbesitzes waren nur als zufällige, absichtliche, gewaltsame, nicht als nothwendige, unvermeidliche, natürliche Consequenzen des Monopols, der Corporation und des Feudaleigenthums entwickelt und begriffen. 30

Wir haben also jezt den wesentlichen Zusammenhang zwischen dem Privateigenthum, der Habsucht, der Trennung von Arbeit, Capital und Grundeigenthum, von Austausch und Concurrenz, von Werth und Entwerthung d[es] Menschen, von Monopol und Concurrenz etc., von dieser ganzen 35 Entfremdung mit dem *Geld*system zu begreifen.

Versetzen wir uns nicht wie der Nationalökonom, wenn er
⇨ erklären will, in einen erdichteten Urzustand. Ein solcher Ur-
zustand erklärt nichts. Er schiebt blos die Frage in eine graue,
nebelhafte Ferne. Er unterstellt in der Form der Thatsache, des
⇨ 5 Ereignisses, was er deduciren soll, nämlich das nothwendi-
ge Verhältniß zwischen zwei Dingen, z. B. zwischen Theilung
der Arbeit und Austausch. So erklärt d[er] Theologe den Ur-
sprung des Bösen durch den Sündenfall, d. h. er unterstellt
als ein Factum, in der Form der Geschichte, was er erklären
10 soll.

Wir gehn von einem Nationalökonomischen, *gegenwärtigen*
Factum aus.

Der Arbeiter wird um so ärmer, je mehr Reichthum er pro-
ducirt, je mehr seine Production an Macht und Umfang zu-
15 nimmt. Der Arbeiter wird eine um so wohlfeilere Waare, je
mehr Waaren er schafft. Mit der *Verwerthung* der Sachenwelt,
nimmt die *Entwerthung* der Menschenwelt in direktem Ver-
hältniß zu. Die Arbeit producirt nicht nur Waaren; sie produ-
cirt sich selbst und d[en] Arbeiter als eine *Waare* und zwar in
20 dem Verhältniß, in welchem sie überhaupt Waaren producirt. | 23⁵

Dieß Factum drückt weiter nichts aus, als: Der Gegenstand,
den die Arbeit producirt, ihr Product, tritt ihr als ein *fremdes*
Wesen, als eine, von d[em] Producenten *unabhängige Macht* ge-
genüber. Das Product der Arbeit ist die Arbeit, die sich in
25 einem Gegenstand fixirt, sachlich gemacht hat, es ist die *Verge-*
genständlichung der Arbeit. Die Verwirklichung der Arbeit ist
ihre Vergegenständlichung. Diese Verwirklichung der Arbeit
erscheint in dem nationalökonomischen Zustand als *Entwirk-*
lichung des Arbeiters, die Vergegenständlichung als *Verlust*
30 *des Gegenstandes* und *Knechtschaft unter dem Gegenstand*, die
Aneignung als *Entfremdung*, als *Entäusserung*.

Die Verwirklichung der Arbeit erscheint so sehr als Entwirk-
lichung, daß der Arbeiter bis zum Hungertod entwirklicht
wird. Die Vergegenständlichung erscheint so sehr als Verlust
35 des Gegenstandes, daß der Arbeiter der nothwendigsten Ge-
genstände, nicht nur des Lebens, sondern auch der Arbeitsge-

genstände beraubt ist. Ja die Arbeit selbst wird zu einem Ge-
genstand, dessen er nur mit der größten Anstrengung und
mit den unregelmässigsten Unterbrechungen sich bemächti-
gen kann. Die Aneignung des Gegenstandes erscheint so sehr
als Entfremdung, daß je mehr Gegenstände der Arbeiter pro-   5
ducirt, er um so weniger besitzen kann und um so mehr unter
die Herrschaft seines Products, des Capitals, geräth.

In der Bestimmung, daß der Arbeiter zum *Product seiner Ar-
beit* als einem *fremden* Gegenstand sich verhält, liegen alle
diese Consequenzen. Denn es ist nach dieser Voraussetzung   10
klar. Je mehr der Arbeiter sich ausarbeitet, um so mächtiger
wird die fremde, gegenständliche Welt, die er sich gegenüber
schafft, um so ärmer wird er selbst, seine innre Welt, um so we-
niger gehört ihm zu eigen. Es ist ebenso in der Religion. Je
mehr der Mensch in Gott sezt, je weniger behält er in sich   15
selbst. Der Arbeiter legt sein Leben in den Gegenstand; aber
nun gehört es nicht mehr ihm, sondern dem Gegenstand. Je
grösser also diese Thätigkeit, um so gegenstandsloser ist der
Arbeiter. Was das Produkt seiner Arbeit ist ist er nicht. Je grö-
sser also dieß Produkt, je weniger ist er selbst. Die *Entäusse-*   20
rung des Arbeiters in seinem Produkt hat die Bedeutung, nicht
nur, daß seine Arbeit zu einem Gegenstand, zu einer *äussern*
Existenz wird, sondern daß sie *ausser ihm*, unabhängig, fremd
von ihm existirt und eine selbstständige Macht ihm gegenüber
wird, daß das Leben, was er dem Gegenstand verliehn hat, ihm   25
feindlich und fremd gegenübertritt.

|XXIII| Betrachten wir nun näher die *Vergegenständlichung,*
die Production des Arbeiters und in ihr die *Entfremdung,* den
Verlust des Gegenstandes, seines Products.

Der Arbeiter kann nichts schaffen ohne die *Natur,* ohne die   30
¹³ʼ *sinnliche* | *Aussenwelt.* Sie ist der Stoff, an welchem sich seine
Arbeit verwirklicht, in welchem sie thätig ist, aus welchem
und mittelst welchem sie producirt.

Wie aber die Natur d[as] *Lebensmittel* der Arbeit darbietet,
in dem Sinn, daß die Arbeit nicht *leben* kann ohne Gegen-   35
stände, an denen sie ausgeübt wird, so bietet sie andrerseits

auch d[as] *Lebensmittel* in dem engern Sinn dar, nämlich d[as] Mittel der physischen Subsistenz des *Arbeiters* selbst.

⇨   Je mehr also der Arbeiter sich die Aussenwelt, die sinnliche Natur durch seine Arbeit sich *aneignet*, um so mehr entzieht

5   er sich *Lebensmittel* nach der doppelten Seite hin, erstens daß immer mehr die sinnliche Aussenwelt aufhört, ein seiner Arbeit angehöriger Gegenstand, ein *Lebensmittel* seiner Arbeit zu sein; zweitens, daß sie immer mehr aufhört *Lebensmittel* im unmittelbaren Sinn, Mittel für die physische Subsistenz des Ar-

10 beiters zu sein.

Nach dieser doppelten Seite hin wird der Arbeiter also ein Knecht seines Gegenstandes, erstens daß er einen *Gegenstand der Arbeit*, d. h. daß er *Arbeit* erhält und zweitens daß er *Subsistenzmittel* erhält. Erstens also daß er als *Arbeiter* und zweitens,

15 daß er als *physisches Subjekt* existiren kann. Die Spitze dieser Knechtschaft ist, daß er nur mehr als *Arbeiter* sich als *physisches Subjekt* erhalten [kann] und nur mehr als *physisches Subjekt* Arbeiter ist.

(Die Entfremdung des Arbeiters in seinem Gegenstand

20 drückt sich nach nationalökonomischen Gesetzen so aus, daß je mehr der Arbeiter producirt, er um so weniger zu consummiren hat, daß je mehr Werthe er schafft, er um so werthloser und so unwürdiger wird, daß je geformter sein Produkt um so mißförmiger der Arbeiter, daß je civilisirter sein Gegenstand

25 um so barbarischer der Arbeiter, daß um so mächtiger die Arbeit, um so ohnmächtiger der Arbeiter wird, daß je geistreicher die Arbeit um so mehr geistloser und Naturknecht der Arbeiter wird.)

Die Nationalökonomie verbirgt die Entfremdung in dem We-

30 *sen der Arbeit dadurch, daß sie nicht das* unmittelbare *Verhältniß zwischen dem* Arbeiter, (der Arbeit) *und der Production betrachtet.* Allerdings. Die Arbeit producirt Wunderwerke für d[en] Reichen, aber sie producirt Entblössung für d[en] Arbeiter. Sie producirt Paläste, aber Höhlen für d[en] Arbeiter. Sie

35 producirt Schönheit, aber Verkrüppelung für d[en] Arbeiter. Sie ersetzt die Arbeit durch Maschinen, aber sie wirft einen

Theil der Arbeiter zu einer barbarischen Arbeit zurück und
macht den andren Theil zur Maschine. Sie producirt Geist,
238 aber sie producirt Blödsinn, Cretinismus für d[en] Arbeiter. | ⇐

Das unmittelbare Verhältniß der Arbeit zu ihren Producten
ist das Verhältniß des Arbeiters zu den Gegenständen seiner Pro-   5
duction. Das Verhältniß d[es] Vermögenden zu den Gegenstän-
den der Production und zu ihr selbst ist nur eine *Consequenz*
dieses ersten Verhältnisses. Und bestätigt es. Wir werden diese
andre Seite später betrachten. Wenn wir also fragen: Welches
ist das wesentliche Verhältniß der Arbeit, so fragen wir nach   10
dem Verhältniß des *Arbeiters* zur Production.

Wir haben bisher die Entfremdung, die Entäusserung des
Arbeiters nur nach der einen Seite hin betrachtet, nämlich sein
Verhältniß zu den Produkten seiner Arbeit. Aber die Entfrem-
dung zeigt sich nicht nur im Resultat, sondern im *Akt der Pro-*   15
duktion, innerhalb der *producirenden Thätigkeit* selbst. Wie
würde d[em] Arbeiter d[as] Produkt seiner Thätigkeit fremd
gegenübertreten können, wenn er im Akt der Production selbst
sich nicht sich selbst entfremdete? Das Product ist ja nur
das Resumé der Thätigkeit, d[er] Production. Wenn also das   20
Product der Arbeit die Entäusserung ist, so muß die Produc-
tion selbst die thätige Entäusserung, die Entäusserung der
Thätigkeit, die Thätigkeit der Entäusserung sein. In der Ent-
fremdung des Gegenstandes der Arbeit resumirt sich nur die
Entfremdung, die Entäusserung in der Thätigkeit der Arbeit   25
selbst.

Worin besteht nun die Entäusserung der Arbeit?

Erstens, daß die Arbeit dem Arbeiter *äusserlich* ist, d. h. nicht
zu seinem Wesen gehört, daß er sich daher in seiner Arbeit nicht
bejaht, sondern verneint, nicht wohl, sondern unglücklich   30
fühlt, keine freie physische und geistige Energie entwickelt, son-
dern seine Physis abkasteit und seinen Geist ruinirt. Der Arbei-
ter fühlt sich daher erst ausser der Arbeit bei sich und in der
Arbeit ausser sich. Zu Hause ist er, wenn er nicht arbeitet und
wenn er arbeitet, ist er nicht zu Haus. Seine Arbeit ist daher   35
nicht freiwillig, sondern gezwungen, *Zwangsarbeit.* Sie ist da-

her nicht die Befriedigung eines Bedürfnisses, sondern sie ist
nur ein *Mittel*, um Bedürfnisse ausser ihr zu befriedigen. Ihre
Fremdheit tritt darin rein hervor, daß, sobald kein physischer
oder sonstiger Zwang existirt, die Arbeit als eine Pest geflohen
wird. Die äusserliche Arbeit, die Arbeit, in welcher der Mensch
sich entäussert, ist eine Arbeit der Selbstaufopferung, der Ka-
steiung. Endlich erscheint die Aüsserlichkeit der Arbeit für
den Arbeiter darin, daß sie nicht sein eigen, sondern eines an-
dern ist, daß sie ihm nicht gehört, daß er in ihr nicht sich selbst,
sondern einem andern angehört. Wie in der Religion die Selbst-
thätigkeit der menschlichen Phantasie, des menschlichen Hirns
und des menschlichen Herzens unabhängig vom Individuum,
d. h. als eine fremde, göttliche oder teuflische Thätigkeit auf
es wirkt, so ist die Thätigkeit des Arbeiters nicht | seine Selbst-
thätigkeit. Sie gehört einem andern, sie ist der Verlust seiner
selbst.

Es kömmt daher zu dem Resultat, daß der Mensch, (d[er]
Arbeiter) nur mehr in seinen thierischen Funktionen, Essen,
Trinken und Zeugen, höchstens noch Wohnung, Schmuck,
etc. sich als freithätig fühlt, und in seinen menschlichen Funk-
tionen nur mehr als Thier. Das Thierische wird das Mensch-
liche und das Menschliche das Thierische.

Essen, Trinken und Zeugen etc. sind zwar auch echt
menschliche Funktionen. In der Abstraktion aber, die sie von
dem übrigen Umkreis menschlicher Thätigkeit trennt und zu
lezten und alleinigen Endzwecken macht, sind sie thierisch.

Wir haben den Akt der Entfremdung der praktischen
menschlichen Thätigkeit, d[er] Arbeit, nach zwei Seiten hin
betrachtet. 1) Das Verhältniß des Arbeiters zum *Product der
Arbeit* als fremden und über ihn mächtigen Gegenstand. Dieß
Verhältniß ist zugleich das Verhältniß zur sinnlichen Aussen-
welt, zu den Naturgegenständen als einer fremden ihm feind-
lich gegenüberstehenden Welt. 2) Das Verhältniß der Arbeit
zum *Akt der Production*, innerhalb der *Arbeit*. Dieß Verhältniß
ist das Verhältniß des Arbeiters zu seiner eignen Thätigkeit als
einer fremden, ihm nicht angehörigen, d[ie] Thätigkeit als Lei-

den, d[ie] Kraft als Ohnmacht, d[ie] Zeugung als Entman-
nung. Die *eigne* physische und geistige Energie des Arbeiters,
sein persönliches Leben, – denn was ist Leben als Thätigkeit –
als eine wider ihn selbst gewendete, von ihm unabhängige, ihm
nicht gehörige Thätigkeit. Die *Selbstentfremdung*, wie oben   5
die Entfremdung der *Sache*.

|XXIV| Wir haben nun noch eine dritte Bestimmung der *ent-
fremdeten Arbeit* aus den beiden bisherigen zu ziehn.

Der Mensch ist ein Gattungswesen, nicht nur indem er
praktisch und theoretisch die Gattung, sowohl seine eigne als   10
die der übrigen Dinge zu seinem Gegenstand macht, sondern –
und dieß ist nur ein andrer Ausdruck für dieselbe Sache – son-
dern auch indem er sich zu sich selbst als der gegenwärtigen,
lebendigen Gattung verhält, indem er sich zu sich als einem
universellen, darum freien Wesen verhält.   15 ↩

Das Gattungsleben, sowohl beim Menschen als beim Thier,
besteht physisch einmal darin, daß der Mensch (wie das
Thier), von der unorganischen Natur lebt, und um so univer-
seller der Mensch als das Thier, um so universeller ist der Be-
reich der unorganischen Natur, von der er lebt. Wie Pflanzen,   20
Thiere, Steine, Luft, Licht etc. theoretisch einen Theil des
menschlichen Bewußtseins, theils als Gegenstände der Natur-
wissenschaft, theils als Gegenstände der Kunst bilden – seine
geistige unorganische Natur, | geistige Lebensmittel, die er erst
zubereiten muß zum Genuß und zur Verdauung – so bilden sie   25
auch praktisch einen Theil des menschlichen Lebens und der
menschlichen Thätigkeit. Physisch lebt der Mensch nur von
diesen Naturprodukten, mögen sie nun in der Form der Nah-
rung, Heitzung, Kleidung, Wohnung etc. erscheinen. Die Uni-
versalität des Menschen erscheint praktisch eben in der Uni-   30
versalität, die die ganze Natur zu seinem *unorganischen* Körper
macht, sowohl insofern sie 1) ein unmittelbares Lebensmittel,
als inwiefern sie d[er] Gegenstand \ Materie und das Werkzeug
seiner Lebensthätigkeit ist. Die Natur ist der *unorganische Leib*
d[es] Menschen, nämlich die Natur, so weit sie nicht selbst   35
menschlicher Körper ist. Der Mensch *lebt* von der Natur,

heißt: die Natur ist sein *Leib*, mit dem er in beständigem Prozeß bleiben muß, um nicht zu sterben. Daß das physische und geistige Leben d[es] Menschen mit der Natur zusammenhängt, hat keinen andern Sinn, als daß die Natur mit sich selbst zu-
5 sammenhängt, denn der Mensch ist ein Theil der Natur.

Indem die entfremdete Arbeit dem Menschen 1) die Natur entfremdet, 2) sich selbst, seine eigne thätige Funktion, seine Lebensthätigkeit, so

entfremdet sie dem Menschen die *Gattung*; sie macht ihm
10 das *Gattungsleben* zum Mittel des individuellen Lebens. Erstens entfremdet sie das Gattungsleben und das individuelle Leben und zweitens macht sie das leztere in seiner Abstraktion zum Zweck des ersten, ebenfalls in seiner abstrakten und entfremdeten Form.

15 Denn erstens erscheint d[em] Menschen die Arbeit, die *Lebensthätigkeit*, das *produktive Leben* selbst nur als ein *Mittel* zur Befriedigung eines Bedürfnisses, des Bedürfnisses der Erhaltung der physischen Existenz. Das produktive Leben ist aber das Gattungsleben. Es ist das Leben erzeugende Leben.
20 In der Art der Lebensthätigkeit liegt der ganze Charakter einer species, ihr Gattungscharakter, und die freie bewußte Thätigkeit ist der Gattungscharakter d[es] Menschen. Das Leben selbst erscheint nur als *Lebensmittel*.

Das Thier ist unmittelbar eins mit seiner Lebensthätigkeit.
25 Es unterscheidet sich nicht von ihr. Es ist *sie*. Der Mensch macht seine Lebensthätigkeit selbst zum Gegenstand seines Wollens und seines Bewußtseins. Er hat bewußte Lebensthätigkeit. Es ist nicht eine Bestimmtheit, mit der er unmittelbar zusammenfließt. Die bewußte Lebensthätigkeit unterscheidet
30 d[en] Menschen unmittelbar von der thierischen Lebensthätigkeit. Eben nur dadurch ist er ein Gattungswesen. Oder er ist nur ein Bewußtes Wesen, d. h. sein eignes Leben ist ihm Gegenstand, eben weil er ein Gattungswesen ist. Nur darum ist seine Thätigkeit freie Thätigkeit. Die Entfremdete Arbeit
35 kehrt | das Verhältniß dahin um, daß der Mensch eben, weil er ein bewußtes Wesen ist, seine Lebensthätigkeit, sein *Wesen* nur zu einem Mittel für seine *Existenz* macht.

Das praktische Erzeugen einer *gegenständlichen Welt*, die
Bearbeitung der unorganischen Natur ist die Bewährung des
Menschen als eines bewußten Gattungswesens, d. h. eines We-
sens, das sich zu der Gattung als seinem eignen Wesen oder
zu sich als Gattungswesen verhält. Zwar producirt auch das 5
Thier. Es baut sich ein Nest, Wohnungen, wie die Biene, Biber,
Ameise etc. Allein es producirt nur, was es unmittelbar für sich
oder sein Junges bedarf; es producirt einseitig, während der
Mensch universell producirt; es producirt nur unter der Herr-
schaft des unmittelbaren physischen Bedürfnisses, während 10
der Mensch selbst frei vom physischen Bedürfniß producirt
und erst wahrhaft producirt, in der Freiheit von demselben;
es producirt nur sich selbst, während der Mensch die ganze
Natur reproducirt; sein Product gehört unmittelbar zu seinem
physischen Leib, während der Mensch frei seinem Product ge- 15
genübertritt. Das Thier formirt nur nach dem Maaß und dem
Bedürfniß der species, der es angehört, während der Mensch ⊕
nach dem Maaß jeder species zu produciren weiß und überall
das inhärente Maaß dem Gegenstand anzulegen weiß; der
Mensch formirt daher auch nach den Gesetzen der Schönheit. 20

Eben in der Bearbeitung der gegenständlichen Welt be-
währt sich der Mensch daher erst wirklich als *Gattungswesen*.
Diese Production ist sein Werkthätiges Gattungsleben. Durch
sie erscheint die Natur als *sein* Werk und seine Wirklichkeit.
Der Gegenstand der Arbeit ist daher die *Vergegenständlichung* 25
des Gattungslebens des Menschen; indem er sich nicht nur, wie
im Bewußtsein, intellektuell, sondern werkthätig, wirklich ver-
doppelt, und sich selbst daher in einer von ihm geschaffnen
Welt anschaut. Indem daher die entfremdete Arbeit dem Men-
schen den Gegenstand seiner Production entreißt, entreißt sie 30
ihm sein *Gattungsleben*, seine wirkliche Gattungsgegenständ-
lichkeit und verwandelt seinen Vorzug vor dem Thier in den
Nachtheil, daß sein unorganischer Leib, die Natur, ihm entzo-
gen wird.

Ebenso indem die entfremdete Arbeit die Selbstthätigkeit, 35
die freie Thätigkeit zum Mittel herabsezt, macht sie das Gat-

tungsleben des Menschen zum Mittel seiner physischen Existenz.

Das Bewußtsein, welches der Mensch von seiner Gattung hat, verwandelt sich durch die Entfremdung also dahin, daß das Gattungsl[eben] ihm zum Mittel wird.

Die entfremdete Arbeit macht also:

3) das *Gattungswesen des Menschen*, sowohl die Natur, als sein geistige[s] | Gattungsvermögen zu einem ihm *fremden* 242 Wesen, zum *Mittel* seiner *individuellen Existenz*. Sie entfremdet dem Menschen seinen eignen Leib, wie die Natur ausser ihm, wie sein geistiges Wesen, sein *menschliches* Wesen.

4) Eine unmittelbare Consequenz davon, daß der Mensch dem Product seiner Arbeit, seiner Lebensthätigkeit, seinem Gattungswesen entfremdet ist, ist die *Entfremdung d[es] Menschen* von d[em] *Menschen*. Wenn der Mensch sich selbst gegenübersteht, so steht ihm der *andre* Mensch gegenüber. Was von dem Verhältniß des Menschen zu seiner Arbeit, zum Product seiner Arbeit und zu sich selbst, das gilt von dem Verhältniß d[es] Menschen zum andern Menschen, wie zu der Arbeit und dem Gegenstand der Arbeit d[es] andern Menschen.

Ueberhaupt der Satz, daß dem Menschen sein Gattungswesen entfremdet ist, heißt daß ein Mensch d[em] andern, wie jeder von ihnen dem menschlichen Wesen entfremdet ist.

Die Entfremdung d[es] Menschen, überhaupt jedes V[er]-hältniß, in dem der Mensch zu sich selbst steht[,] ist erst verwirklicht, drückt sich aus in dem Verhältniß, in welchem der Mensch zu d[em] andern Menschen steht.

Also betrachtet in dem Verhältniß der entfremdete[n] Arbeit jeder Mensch d[en] andern nach dem Maaßstab und dem Verhältniß in welchem er selbst, als Arbeiter sich befindet.

|XXV| Wir gingen aus von einem nationalökonomischen factum, d[er] Entfremdung des Arbeiters und seiner Production. Wir haben den Begriff dieses factums ausgesprochen, die *entfremdete, entäusserte* Arbeit. Wir haben diesen Begriff analysirt, also blos ein nationalökonomisches factum analysirt.

Sehn wir nun weiter, wie sich der Begriff der entfremdeten,

Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern

Bruno Latour

Wars. So many wars. Wars outside and wars inside. Cultural wars, science wars, and wars against terrorism. Wars against poverty and wars against the poor. Wars against ignorance and wars out of ignorance. My question is simple: Should we be at war, too, we, the scholars, the intellectuals? Is it really our duty to add fresh ruins to fields of ruins? Is it really the task of the humanities to add deconstruction to destruction? More iconoclasm to iconoclasm? What has become of the critical spirit? Has it run out of steam?

Quite simply, my worry is that it might not be aiming at the right target. To remain in the metaphorical atmosphere of the time, military experts constantly revise their strategic doctrines, their contingency plans, the size, direction, and technology of their projectiles, their smart bombs, their missiles; I wonder why we, we alone, would be saved from those sorts of revisions. It does not seem to me that we have been as quick, in academia, to prepare ourselves for new threats, new dangers, new tasks, new targets. Are we not like those mechanical toys that endlessly make the same gesture when everything else has changed around them? Would it not be rather terrible if we were still training young kids—yes, young recruits, young cadets—for wars that are no longer possible, fighting enemies long gone, conquering territories that no longer exist, leaving them ill-equipped in the face of threats we had not anticipated, for which we are so thoroughly unprepared? Generals have always been accused of being on the ready one war late—especially French generals, especially these days. Would it be so surprising,

after all, if intellectuals were also one war late, one critique late—especially French intellectuals, especially now? It has been a long time, after all, since intellectuals were in the vanguard. Indeed, it has been a long time since the very notion of the avant-garde—the proletariat, the artistic—passed away, pushed aside by other forces, moved to the rear guard, or maybe lumped with the baggage train.[1] We are still able to go through the motions of a critical avant-garde, but is not the spirit gone?

In these most depressing of times, these are some of the issues I want to press, not to depress the reader but to press ahead, to redirect our meager capacities as fast as possible. To prove my point, I have, not exactly facts, but rather tiny cues, nagging doubts, disturbing telltale signs. What has become of critique, I wonder, when an editorial in the *New York Times* contains the following quote?

> Most scientists believe that [global] warming is caused largely by man-made pollutants that require strict regulation. Mr. Luntz [a Republican strategist] seems to acknowledge as much when he says that "the scientific debate is closing against us." His advice, however, is to emphasize that the evidence is not complete.
>
>   "Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled," he writes, "their views about global warming will change accordingly. Therefore, you need to continue to make the *lack of scientific certainty* a primary issue."[2]

Fancy that? An artificially maintained scientific controversy to favor a "brownlash," as Paul and Anne Ehrlich would say.[3]

1. On what happened to the avant-garde and critique generally, see *Iconoclash: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion, and Art,* ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, Mass., 2002). This article is very much an exploration of what could happen beyond the image wars.

2. "Environmental Word Games," *New York Times,* 15 Mar. 2003, p. A16. Luntz seems to have been very successful; I read later in an editorial in the *Wall Street Journal:*

> There is a better way [than passing a law that restricts business], which is to keep fighting on the merits. There is no scientific consensus that greenhouse gases cause the world's modest global warming trend, much less whether that warming will do more harm than good, or whether we can even do anything about it.
>
>   Once Republicans concede that greenhouse gases must be controlled, it will only be a matter of time before they end up endorsing more economically damaging regulation. They could always stand on principle and attempt to educate the public instead. ["A Republican Kyoto," *Wall Street Journal,* 8 Apr. 2003, p. A14.]

And the same publication complains about the "pathological relation" of the "Arab street" with truth!

3. Paul R. and Anne H. Ehrlich, *Betrayal of Science and Reason: How Anti-Environmental Rhetoric Threatens Our Future* (Washington, D.C., 1997), p. 1.

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Do you see why I am worried? I myself have spent some time in the past trying to show "'*the lack of scientific certainty*'" inherent in the construction of facts. I too made it a "'primary issue.'" But I did not exactly aim at fooling the public by obscuring the certainty of a closed argument—or did I? After all, I have been accused of just that sin. Still, I'd like to believe that, on the contrary, I intended to *emancipate* the public from prematurely naturalized objectified facts. Was I foolishly mistaken? Have things changed so fast?

In which case the danger would no longer be coming from an excessive confidence in ideological arguments posturing as matters of fact—as we have learned to combat so efficiently in the past—but from an excessive *distrust* of good matters of fact disguised as bad ideological biases! While we spent years trying to detect the real prejudices hidden behind the appearance of objective statements, do we now have to reveal the real objective and incontrovertible facts hidden behind the *illusion* of prejudices? And yet entire Ph.D. programs are still running to make sure that good American kids are learning the hard way that facts are made up, that there is no such thing as natural, unmediated, unbiased access to truth, that we are always prisoners of language, that we always speak from a particular standpoint, and so on, while dangerous extremists are using the very same argument of social construction to destroy hard-won evidence that could save our lives. Was I wrong to participate in the invention of this field known as science studies? Is it enough to say that we did not really mean what we said? Why does it burn my tongue to say that global warming is a fact whether you like it or not? Why can't I simply say that the argument is closed for good?

Should I reassure myself by simply saying that bad guys can use any weapon at hand, naturalized facts when it suits them and social construction when it suits them? Should we apologize for having been wrong all along? Or should we rather bring the sword of criticism to criticism itself and do a bit of soul-searching here: what were we really after when we were so intent on showing the social construction of scientific facts? Nothing guarantees, after all, that we should be right all the time. There is no sure ground even for criticism.[4] Isn't this what criticism intended to say: that there is no sure ground anywhere? But what does it mean when this lack of sure ground is taken away from us by the worst possible fellows as an argument against the things we cherish?

Artificially maintained controversies are not the only worrying sign.

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4. The metaphor of shifting sand was used by neomodernists in their critique of science studies; see *A House Built on Sand: Exposing Postmodernist Myths about Science,* ed. Noretta Koertge (Oxford, 1998). The problem is that the authors of this book looked backward, attempting to reenter the solid rock castle of modernism, and not forward to what I call, for lack of a better term, nonmodernism.

What has critique become when a French general, no, a marshal of critique, namely, Jean Baudrillard, claims in a published book that the Twin Towers destroyed themselves under their own weight, so to speak, undermined by the utter nihilism inherent in capitalism itself—as if the terrorist planes were pulled to suicide by the powerful attraction of this black hole of nothingness?[5] What has become of critique when a book that claims that no plane ever crashed into the Pentagon can be a bestseller? I am ashamed to say that the author was French, too.[6] Remember the good old days when revisionism arrived very late, after the facts had been thoroughly established, decades after bodies of evidence had accumulated? Now we have the benefit of what can be called *instant revisionism.* The smoke of the event has not yet finished settling before dozens of conspiracy theories begin revising the official account, adding even more ruins to the ruins, adding even more smoke to the smoke. What has become of critique when my neighbor in the little Bourbonnais village where I live looks down on me as someone hopelessly naïve because I believe that the United States had been attacked by terrorists? Remember the good old days when university professors could look down on unsophisticated folks because those hillbillies naïvely believed in church, motherhood, and apple pie? Things have changed a lot, at least in my village. I am now the one who naïvely believes in some facts because I am educated, while the other guys are too *un*sophisticated to be gullible: "Where have you been? Don't you know that the Mossad and the CIA did it?" What has become of critique when someone as eminent as Stanley Fish, the "enemy of promises" as Lindsay Waters calls him, believes he defends science studies, my field, by comparing the laws of physics to the rules of baseball?[7] What has become of critique when there is a whole industry denying that the Apollo program landed on the moon? What has become of critique when DARPA uses for its Total Information Awareness project the Baconian slogan *Scientia est potentia*? Didn't I read that somewhere in Michel Foucault? Has knowledge-slash-power been co-opted of late by the National Security Agency? Has *Discipline and Punish* become the bedtime reading of Mr. Ridge (fig. 1)?

Let me be mean for a second. What's the real difference between conspiracists and a popularized, that is a teachable version of social critique inspired by a too quick reading of, let's say, a sociologist as eminent as Pierre

5. See Jean Baudrillard, *"The Spirit of Terrorism" and "Requiem for the Twin Towers"* (New York, 2002).

6. See Thierry Meyssan, *911: The Big Lie* (London, 2002). Conspiracy theories have always existed; what is new in instant revisionism is how much scientific proof they claim to imitate.

7. See Lindsay Waters, *Enemy of Promises* (forthcoming); see also Nick Paumgarten, "Dept. of Super Slo-Mo: No Flag on the Play," *The New Yorker,* 20 Jan. 2003, p. 32.

Bourdieu (to be polite I will stick with the French field commanders)? In both cases, you have to learn to become suspicious of everything people say because of course we all know that they live in the thralls of a complete *illusio* of their real motives. Then, after disbelief has struck and an explanation is requested for what is really going on, in both cases again it is the same appeal to powerful agents hidden in the dark acting always consistently, continuously, relentlessly. Of course, we in the academy like to use more elevated causes—society, discourse, knowledge-slash-power, fields of forces, empires, capitalism—while conspiracists like to portray a miserable bunch of greedy people with dark intents, but I find something troublingly similar in the structure of the explanation, in the first movement of disbelief and, then, in the wheeling of causal explanations coming out of the deep dark below. What if explanations resorting automatically to power, society, discourse had outlived their usefulness and deteriorated to the point of now

feeding the most gullible sort of critique?[8] Maybe I am taking conspiracy theories too seriously, but it worries me to detect, in those mad mixtures of knee-jerk disbelief, punctilious demands for proofs, and free use of powerful explanation from the social neverland many of the weapons of social critique. Of course conspiracy theories are an absurd deformation of our own arguments, but, like weapons smuggled through a fuzzy border to the wrong party, these are our weapons nonetheless. In spite of all the deformations, it is easy to recognize, still burnt in the steel, our trademark: *Made in Criticalland.*

Do you see why I am worried? Threats might have changed so much that we might still be directing all our arsenal east or west while the enemy has now moved to a very different place. After all, masses of atomic missiles are transformed into a huge pile of junk once the question becomes how to defend against militants armed with box cutters or dirty bombs. Why would it not be the same with our critical arsenal, with the neutron bombs of deconstruction, with the missiles of discourse analysis? Or maybe it is that critique has been miniaturized like computers have. I have always fancied that what took great effort, occupied huge rooms, cost a lot of sweat and money, for people like Nietzsche and Benjamin, can be had for nothing, much like the supercomputers of the 1950s, which used to fill large halls and expend a vast amount of electricity and heat, but now are accessible for a dime and no bigger than a fingernail. As the recent advertisement of a Hollywood film proclaimed, "Everything is suspect . . . Everyone is for sale . . . And nothing is what it seems."

What's happening to me, you may wonder? Is this a case of midlife crisis? No, alas, I passed middle age quite a long time ago. Is this a patrician spite for the popularization of critique? As if critique should be reserved for the elite and remain difficult and strenuous, like mountain climbing or yachting, and is no longer worth the trouble if everyone can do it for a nickel? What would be so bad with critique for the people? We have been complaining so much about the gullible masses, swallowing naturalized facts, it would be really unfair to now discredit the same masses for their, what should I call it, gullible criticism? Or could this be a case of radicalism gone mad, as when a revolution swallows its progeny? Or, rather, have we behaved

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8. Their serious as well as their popularized versions have the defect of using society as an already existing cause instead of as a possible consequence. This was the critique that Gabriel Tarde always made against Durkheim. It is probably the whole notion of *social* and *society* that is responsible for the weakening of critique. I have tried to show that in Latour, "Gabriel Tarde and the End of the Social," in *The Social in Question: New Bearings in History and the Social Sciences,* ed. Patrick Joyce (London, 2002), pp. 117–32.

like mad scientists who have let the virus of critique out of the confines of their laboratories and cannot do anything now to limit its deleterious effects; it mutates now, gnawing everything up, even the vessels in which it is contained? Or is it an another case of the famed power of capitalism for recycling everything aimed at its destruction? As Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello say, the new spirit of capitalism has put to good use the artistic critique that was supposed to destroy it.[9] If the dense and moralist cigar-smoking reactionary bourgeois can transform him- or herself into a free-floating agnostic bohemian, moving opinions, capital, and networks from one end of the planet to the other without attachment, why would he or she not be able to absorb the most sophisticated tools of deconstruction, social construction, discourse analysis, postmodernism, postology?

In spite of my tone, I am not trying to reverse course, to become reactionary, to regret what I have done, to swear that I will never be a constructivist any more. I simply want to do what every good military officer, at regular periods, would do: retest the linkages between the new threats he or she has to face and the equipment and training he or she should have in order to meet them—and, if necessary, to revise from scratch the whole paraphernalia. This does not mean for us any more than it does for the officer that we were wrong, but simply that history changes quickly and that there is no greater intellectual crime than to address with the equipment of an older period the challenges of the present one. Whatever the case, our critical equipment deserves as much critical scrutiny as the Pentagon budget.

My argument is that a certain form of critical spirit has sent us down the wrong path, encouraging us to fight the wrong enemies and, worst of all, to be considered as friends by the wrong sort of allies because of a little mistake in the definition of its main target. The question was never to get *away* from facts but *closer* to them, not fighting empiricism but, on the contrary, renewing empiricism.

What I am going to argue is that the critical mind, if it is to renew itself and be relevant again, is to be found in the cultivation of a *stubbornly realist attitude*—to speak like William James—but a realism dealing with what I will call *matters of concern,* not *matters of fact.* The mistake we made, the mistake I made, was to believe that there was no efficient way to criticize matters of fact except by moving *away* from them and directing one's attention *toward* the conditions that made them possible. But this meant accepting much too uncritically what matters of fact were. This was remaining too faithful to the unfortunate solution inherited from the philosophy of

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9. See Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *Le Nouvel Esprit du capitalisme* (Paris, 1999).

Immanuel Kant. Critique has not been critical enough in spite of all its sore-scratching. Reality is not defined by matters of fact. Matters of fact are not all that is given in experience. Matters of fact are only very partial and, I would argue, very polemical, very political renderings of matters of concern and only a subset of what could also be called *states of affairs.* It is this second empiricism, this return to the realist attitude, that I'd like to offer as the next task for the critically minded.

To indicate the direction of the argument, I want to show that while the Enlightenment profited largely from the disposition of a very powerful descriptive tool, that of matters of fact, which were excellent for *debunking* quite a lot of beliefs, powers, and illusions, it found itself totally disarmed once matters of fact, in turn, were eaten up by the same debunking impetus. After that, the lights of the Enlightenment were slowly turned off, and some sort of darkness appears to have fallen on campuses. My question is thus: Can we devise another powerful descriptive tool that deals this time with matters of concern and whose import then will no longer be to debunk but to protect and to care, as Donna Haraway would put it? Is it really possible to transform the critical urge in the ethos of someone who *adds* reality to matters of fact and not *subtract* reality? To put it another way, what's the difference between deconstruction and constructivism?

"So far," you could object, "the prospect doesn't look very good, and you, Monsieur Latour, seem the person the least able to deliver on this promise because you spent your life debunking what the other more polite critics had at least respected until then, namely matters of fact and science itself. You can dust your hands with flour as much as you wish, the black fur of the critical wolf will always betray you; your deconstructing teeth have been sharpened on too many of our innocent labs—I mean lambs!—for us to believe you." Well, see, that's just the problem: I have written about a dozen books to inspire respect for, some people have said to uncritically glorify, the objects of science and technology, of art, religion, and, more recently, law, showing every time in great detail the complete implausibility of their being socially explained, and yet the only noise readers hear is the snapping of the wolf's teeth. Is it really impossible to solve the question, to write not matter-of-factually but, how should I say it, in a matter-of-concern way?[10]

Martin Heidegger, as every philosopher knows, has meditated many times on the ancient etymology of the word *thing.* We are now all aware that in all the European languages, including Russian, there is a strong connec-

10. This is the achievement of the great novelist Richard Powers, whose stories are a careful and, in my view, masterful enquiry into this new "realism." Especially relevant for this paper is Richard Powers, *Plowing the Dark* (New York, 2000).

tion between the words for thing and a quasi-judiciary assembly. Icelanders boast of having the oldest Parliament, which they call *Althing,* and you can still visit in many Scandinavian countries assembly places that are designated by the word *Ding* or *Thing.* Now, is this not extraordinary that the banal term we use for designating what is out there, unquestionably, a thing, what lies out of any dispute, out of language, is also the oldest word we all have used to designate the oldest of the sites in which our ancestors did their dealing and tried to settle their disputes?[11] A thing is, in one sense, an object out there and, in another sense, an *issue* very much *in* there, at any rate, a *gathering.* To use the term I introduced earlier now more precisely, the same word *thing* designates matters of fact and matters of concern.

Needless to say, although he develops this etymology at length, this is not the path that Heidegger has taken. On the contrary, all his writing aims to make as sharp a distinction as possible between, on the one hand, objects, *Gegenstand,* and, on the other, the celebrated *Thing.* The handmade jug can be a thing, while the industrially made can of Coke remains an object. While the latter is abandoned to the empty mastery of science and technology, only the former, cradled in the respectful idiom of art, craftsmanship, and poetry, could deploy and gather its rich set of connections.[12] This bifurcation is marked many times but in a decisive way in his book on Kant:

> Up to this hour such questions have been open. Their questionability is concealed by the results and the progress of scientific work. One of these burning questions concerns the justification and limits of mathematical formalism in contrast to the demand for an immediate return to intuitively given nature.[13]

What has happened to those who, like Heidegger, have tried to find their ways in immediacy, in intuition, in nature would be too sad to retell—and is well known anyway. What is certain is that those pathmarks off the beaten track led indeed nowhere. And, yet, Heidegger, when he takes the jug seriously, offers a powerful vocabulary to talk also about the object he despises so much. What would happen, I wonder, if we tried to talk about the object of science and technology, the *Gegenstand,* as if it had the rich and complicated qualities of the celebrated *Thing?*

The problem with philosophers is that because their jobs are so hard they

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11. See the erudite study by the remarkable French scholar of Roman law, Yan Thomas, "Res, chose et patrimoine (note sur le rapport sujet-objet en droit romain)," *Archives de philosophie du droit* 25 (1980): 413–26.

12. See Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago, 2002).

13. Martin Heidegger, *What Is a Thing?* trans. W. B. Barton, Jr., and Vera Deutsch (Chicago, 1967), p. 95.

drink a lot of coffee and thus use in their arguments an inordinate quantity of pots, mugs, and jugs—to which, sometimes, they might add the occasional rock. But, as Ludwik Fleck remarked long ago, their objects are never complicated enough; more precisely, they are never simultaneously *made* through a complex history and new, real, and *interesting* participants in the universe.[14] Philosophy never deals with the sort of beings we in science studies have dealt with. And that's why the debates between realism and relativism never go anywhere. As Ian Hacking has recently shown, the engagement of a rock in philosophical talk is utterly different if you take a banal rock to make your point (usually to lapidate a passing relativist!) or if you take, for instance, dolomite, as he has done so beautifully.[15] The first can be turned into a matter of fact but not the second. Dolomite is so beautifully complex and entangled that it resists being treated as a matter of fact. It too can be described as a gathering; it too can be seen as engaging the fourfold. Why not try to portray it with the same enthusiasm, engagement, and complexity as the Heideggerian jug? Heidegger's mistake is not to have treated the jug too well, but to have traced a dichotomy between *Gegenstand* and *Thing* that was justified by nothing except the crassest of prejudices.

Several years ago another philosopher, much closer to the history of science, namely Michel Serres, also French, but this time as foreign to critique as one can get, meditated on what it would mean to take objects of science in a serious anthropological and ontological fashion. It is interesting to note that every time a philosopher gets closer to an object of science that is at once historical and interesting, his or her philosophy changes, and the specifications for a realist attitude become, at once, more stringent and completely different from the so-called realist philosophy of science concerned with routine or boring objects. I was reading his passage on the *Challenger* disaster in his book *Statues* when another shuttle, *Columbia,* in early 2003 offered me a tragic instantiation of yet another metamorphosis of an object into a thing.[16]

What else would you call this sudden transformation of a completely mastered, perfectly understood, quite forgotten by the media, taken-for-granted, matter-of-factual projectile into a sudden shower of debris falling

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14. Although Fleck is the founder of science studies, the impact of his work is still very much in the future because he has been so deeply misunderstood by Thomas Kuhn; see Thomas Kuhn, foreword to Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (1935; Chicago, 1979), pp. vii–xi.

15. See Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), in particular the last chapter.

16. See Michel Serres, *Statues: Le Second Livre des fondations* (Paris, 1987). On the reason why Serres was never critical, see Serres with Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time,* trans. Roxanne Lapidus (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1995).

on the United States, which thousands of people tried to salvage in the mud and rain and collect in a huge hall to serve as so many clues in a judicial scientific investigation? Here, suddenly, in a stroke, an object had become a thing, a matter of fact was considered as a matter of great concern. If a thing is a gathering, as Heidegger says, how striking to see how it can suddenly *disband*. If the "thinging of the thing" is a gathering that always connects the "united four, earth and sky, divinities and mortals, in the simple onefold of their self-unified fourfold,"[17] how could there be a better example of this making and unmaking than this catastrophe unfolding all its thousands of folds? How could we see it as a normal accident of technology when, in his eulogy for the unfortunate victims, your president said: "The crew of the shuttle Columbia did not return safely to Earth; yet we can pray that all are safely home"?[18] As if no shuttle ever moved simply in space, but also always in heaven.

This was on C-Span 1, but on C-Span 2, at the very same time, early February 2003, another extraordinary parallel event was occurring. This time a Thing—with a capital T—was assembled to try to coalesce, to gather in one decision, one object, one projection of force: a military strike against Iraq. Again, it was hard to tell whether this gathering was a tribunal, a parliament, a command-and-control war room, a rich man's club, a scientific congress, or a TV stage. But certainly it was an assembly where matters of great concern were debated and proven—except there was much puzzlement about which type of proofs should be given and how accurate they were. The difference between C-Span 1 and C-Span 2, as I watched them with bewilderment, was that while in the case of *Columbia* we had a perfectly mastered object that suddenly was transformed into a shower of burning debris that was used as so much evidence in an investigation, there, at the United Nations, we had an investigation that tried to coalesce, in one unifying, unanimous, solid, mastered object, masses of people, opinions, and might. In one case the object was metamorphosed into a thing; in the second, the thing was attempting to turn into an object. We could witness, in one case, the head, in another, the tail of the trajectory through which matters of fact emerge out of matters of concern. In both cases we were offered a unique window into the number of *things* that have to participate in the gathering of an *object*. Heidegger was not a very good anthropologist of science and technology; he had only four folds, while the smallest shuttle, the shortest war, has millions. How many gods, passions, controls, insti-

17. Heidegger, "The Thing," *Poetry, Language, Thought,* trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York, 1971), p. 178.
18. "Bush Talking More about Religion: Faith to Solve the Nation's Problems," CNN website, 18 Feb. 2003, www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/02/18/bush.faith/

tutions, techniques, diplomacies, wits have to be folded to connect "earth and sky, divinities and mortals"—oh yes, especially mortals. (Frightening omen, to launch such a complicated war, just when such a beautifully mastered object as the shuttle disintegrated into thousands of pieces of debris raining down from the sky—but the omen was not heeded; gods nowadays are invoked for convenience only.)

My point is thus very simple: things have become Things again, objects have reentered the arena, the Thing, in which they have to be gathered first in order to exist later as what *stands apart.* The parenthesis that we can call the modern parenthesis during which we had, on the one hand, a world of objects, *Gegenstand,* out there, unconcerned by any sort of parliament, forum, agora, congress, court and, on the other, a whole set of forums, meeting places, town halls where people debated, has come to a close. What the etymology of the word *thing—chose, causa, res, aitia—*had conserved for us mysteriously as a sort of fabulous and mythical past has now become, for all to see, our most ordinary present. Things are gathered again. Was it not extraordinarily moving to see, for instance, in the lower Manhattan reconstruction project, the long crowds, the angry messages, the passionate emails, the huge agoras, the long editorials that connected so many people to so many variations of the project to replace the Twin Towers? As the architect Daniel Libeskind said a few days before the decision, building will never be the same.

I could open the newspaper and unfold the number of former objects that have become things again, from the global warming case I mentioned earlier to the hormonal treatment of menopause, to the work of Tim Lenoir, the primate studies of Linda Fedigan and Shirley Strum, or the hyenas of my friend Steven Glickman.[19]

Nor are those gatherings limited to the present period as if only recently objects had become so obviously things. Every day historians of science help us realize to what extent we have never been modern because they keep revising every single element of past matters of fact from Mario Biagioli's Galileo, Steven Shapin's Boyle, and Simon Schaffer's Newton, to the incredibly intricate linkages between Einstein and Poincaré that Peter Galison has narrated in his latest masterpiece.[20] Many others of course could be cited, but the crucial point for me now is that what allowed historians, phi-

19. Serres proposed the word *quasi-object* to cover this intermediary phase between things and objects—a philosophical question much more interesting than the tired old one of the relation between *words* and *worlds.* On the new way animals appear to scientists and the debate it triggers, see *Primate Encounters: Models of Science, Gender, and Society,* ed. Shirley Strum and Linda Fedigan (Chicago, 2000), and Vinciane Despret, *Quand le loup habitera avec l'agneau* (Paris, 2002).

20. See Peter Galison, *Einstein's Clocks, Poincaré's Maps: Empires of Time* (New York, 2003).

losophers, humanists, and critics to trace *the* difference between modern and premodern, namely, the sudden and somewhat miraculous appearance of matters of fact, is now thrown into doubt with the merging of matters of fact into highly complex, historically situated, richly diverse matters of concern. You can do one sort of thing with mugs, jugs, rocks, swans, cats, mats but not with Einstein's Patent Bureau electric coordination of clocks in Bern. Things that gather cannot be thrown at you like objects.

And, yet, I know full well that this is not enough because, no matter what we do, when we try to reconnect scientific objects with their aura, their crown, their web of associations, when we accompany them back to their gathering, we always appear to *weaken* them, not to *strengthen* their claim to reality. I know, I know, we are acting with the best intentions in the world, we want to *add* reality to scientific objects, but, inevitably, through a sort of tragic bias, we seem always to be subtracting some bit from it. Like a clumsy waiter setting plates on a slanted table, every nice dish slides down and crashes on the ground. Why can we never discover the same stubbornness, the same solid realism by bringing out the obviously webby, "thingy" qualities of matters of concern? Why can't we ever counteract the claim of realists that only a fare of matters of fact can satisfy their appetite and that matters of concern are much like nouvelle cuisine—nice to look at but not fit for voracious appetites?

One reason is of course the position objects have been given in most social sciences, a position that is so ridiculously useless that if it is employed, even in a small way, for dealing with science, technology, religion, law, or literature it will make absolutely impossible any serious consideration of objectivity—I mean of "thinginess." Why is this so? Let me try to portray the critical landscape in its ordinary and routine state.[21]

We can summarize, I estimate, 90 percent of the contemporary critical scene by the following series of diagrams that fixate the object at only two positions, what I have called the *fact* position and the *fairy* position—*fact* and *fairy* are etymologically related but I won't develop this point here. The fairy position is very well known and is used over and over again by many social scientists who associate criticism with antifetishism. The role of the critic is then to show that what the naïve believers are doing with objects is simply a projection of their wishes onto a material entity that does nothing at all by itself. Here they have diverted to their petty use the prophetic ful-

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21. I summarize here some of the results of my already long anthropological inquiry into the iconoclastic gesture, from Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern,* trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass., 1993) to *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999) and of course *Iconoclash.*
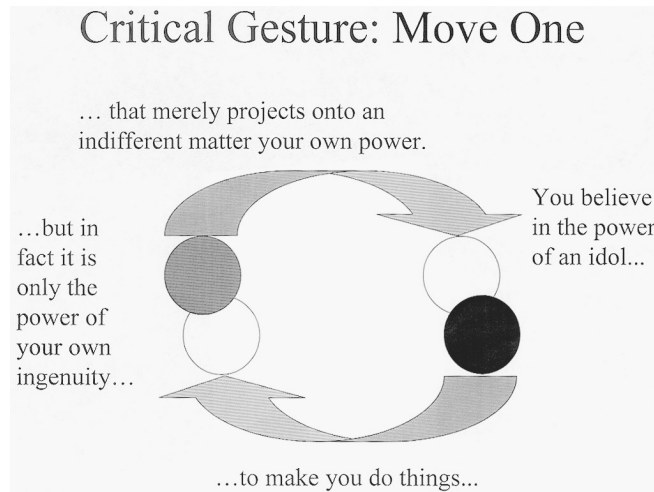
Critical Gesture: Move One

… that merely projects onto an indifferent matter your own power.

…but in fact it is only the power of your own ingenuity…

You believe in the power of an idol…

…to make you do things...

FIGURE 2.

mination against idols "they have mouths and speak not, they have ears and hear not," but they use this prophecy to decry the very objects of belief—gods, fashion, poetry, sport, desire, you name it—to which naïve believers cling with so much intensity.[22] And then the courageous critic, who alone remains aware and attentive, who never sleeps, turns those false objects into fetishes that are supposed to be nothing but mere empty white screens on which is projected the power of society, domination, whatever. The naïve believer has received a first salvo (fig. 2).

But, wait, a second salvo is in the offing, and this time it comes from the fact pole. This time it is the poor bloke, again taken aback, whose behavior is now "explained" by the powerful effects of indisputable matters of fact: "You, ordinary fetishists, believe you are free but, in reality, you are acted on by forces you are not conscious of. Look at them, look, you blind idiot" (and here you insert whichever pet facts the social scientists fancy to work with, taking them from economic infrastructure, fields of discourse, social domination, race, class, and gender, maybe throwing in some neurobiology, evolutionary psychology, whatever, provided they act as indisputable facts whose origin, fabrication, mode of development are left unexamined) (fig. 3).

Do you see now why it feels so good to be a critical mind? Why critique,

22. See William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, I," *Res* 9 (Spring 1985): 5–17, "The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish" *Res* 13 (Spring 1987): 23–45, and "The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of Fetishism," *Res* 16 (Autumn 1988): 105–23.

Critical Gesture: Move Two

… to make you do things out of an indifferent matter...

You believe in the free power of your own will...

…but in fact you are unwillingly activated to do things...

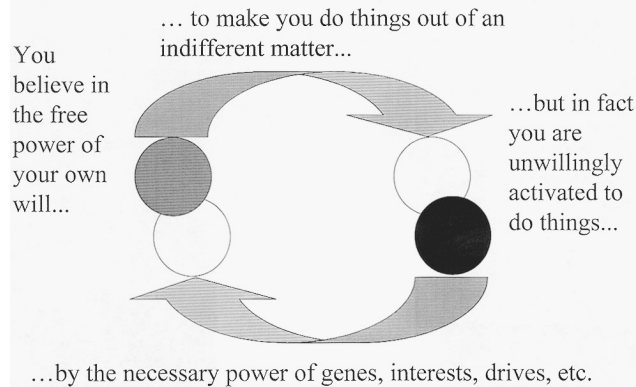…by the necessary power of genes, interests, drives, etc.

FIGURE 3.

this most ambiguous *pharmakon,* has become such a potent euphoric drug? You are always right! When naïve believers are clinging forcefully to their objects, claiming that they are made to do things because of their gods, their poetry, their cherished objects, you can turn all of those attachments into so many fetishes and humiliate all the believers by showing that it is nothing but their own projection, that you, yes you alone, can see. But as soon as naïve believers are thus inflated by some belief in their own importance, in their own projective capacity, you strike them by a second uppercut and humiliate them again, this time by showing that, whatever they think, their behavior is entirely determined by the action of powerful causalities coming from objective reality they don't see, but that you, yes you, the never sleeping critic, alone can see. Isn't this fabulous? Isn't it really worth going to graduate school to study critique? "Enter here, you poor folks. After arduous years of reading turgid prose, you will be always right, you will never be taken in any more; no one, no matter how powerful, will be able to accuse you of naïveté, that supreme sin, any longer? Better equipped than Zeus himself you rule alone, striking from above with the salvo of antifetishism in one hand and the solid causality of objectivity in the other." The only loser is the naïve believer, the great unwashed, always caught off balance (fig. 4).

Is it so surprising, after all, that with such positions given to the object, the humanities have lost the hearts of their fellow citizens, that they had to retreat year after year, entrenching themselves always further in the narrow barracks left to them by more and more stingy deans? The Zeus of Critique rules absolutely, to be sure, but over a desert.

When he or she debunks the claims of the fetishist by showing the work of his or her hands...

...but the critic is always right!

...or when he or she debunks the naive belief in freedom by showing the weight of determination.
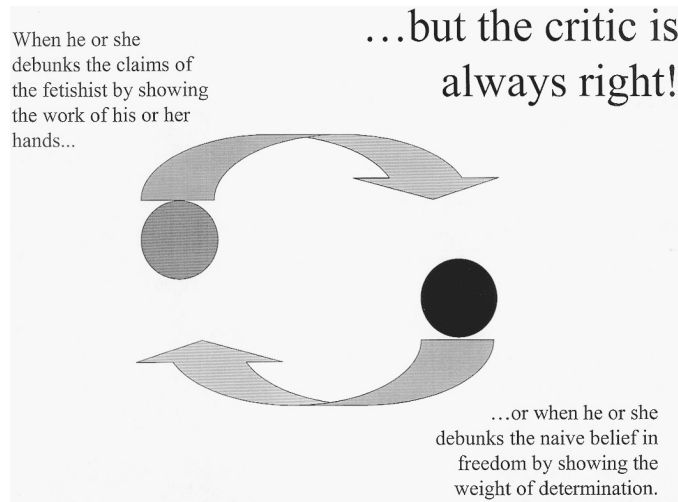
FIGURE 4.

One thing is clear, not one of us readers would like to see *our* own most cherished objects treated in this way. We would recoil in horror at the mere suggestion of having them socially explained, whether we deal in poetry or robots, stem cells, blacks holes, or impressionism, whether we are patriots, revolutionaries, or lawyers, whether we pray to God or put our hope in neuroscience. This is why, in my opinion, those of us who tried to portray sciences as matters of concern so often failed to convince; readers have confused the treatment we give of the former matters of fact with the terrible fate of objects processed through the hands of sociology, cultural studies, and so on. And I can't blame our readers. What social scientists do to our favorite objects is so horrific that certainly we don't want them to come any nearer. "Please," we exclaim, "don't touch them at all! Don't try to explain them!" Or we might suggest more politely: "Why don't you go further down the corridor to this other department? *They* have bad facts to account for; why don't you explain away those ones instead of ours?" And this is the reason why, when we want respect, solidity, obstinacy, robustness, we all prefer to stick to the language of matters of fact no matter its well-known defects.

And yet this is not the only way because the cruel treatment objects undergo in the hands of what I'd like to call *critical barbarity* is rather easy to undo. If the critical barbarian appears so powerful, it is because the two mechanisms I have just sketched are never put together in one single diagram (fig. 5). Antifetishists debunk objects they don't believe in by showing the productive and projective forces of people; then, without ever making
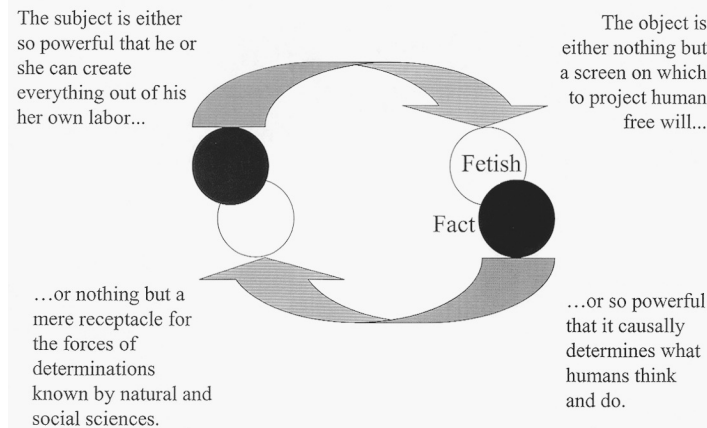
The Critical Trick: Two Objects-Two Subjects

The subject is either so powerful that he or she can create everything out of his her own labor...

The object is either nothing but a screen on which to project human free will...

Fetish

Fact

...or nothing but a mere receptacle for the forces of determinations known by natural and social sciences.

...or so powerful that it causally determines what humans think and do.

FIGURE 5.

the connection, they use objects they do believe in to resort to the causalist or mechanist explanation and debunk conscious capacities of people whose behavior they don't approve of. The whole rather poor trick that allows critique to go on, although we would never confine our own valuables to their sordid pawnshop, is that there is never any *crossover between the two lists of objects* in the fact position and the fairy position. This is why you can be at once and without even sensing any contradiction (1) an antifetishist for everything you don't believe in—for the most part religion, popular culture, art, politics, and so on; (2) an unrepentant positivist for all the sciences you believe in—sociology, economics, conspiracy theory, genetics, evolutionary psychology, semiotics, just pick your preferred field of study; and (3) a perfectly healthy sturdy realist for what you really cherish—and of course it might be criticism itself, but also painting, bird-watching, Shakespeare, baboons, proteins, and so on.

If you think I am exaggerating in my somewhat dismal portrayal of the critical landscape, it is because we have had in effect almost no occasion so far to detect the total mismatch of the three contradictory repertoires—antifetishism, positivism, realism—because we carefully manage to apply them on *different* topics. We explain the objects we don't approve of by treating them as fetishes; we account for behaviors we don't like by discipline whose makeup we don't examine; and we concentrate our passionate interest on only those things that are for us worthwhile matters of concern. But of course such a cavalier attitude with such contradictory repertoires is not possible for those of us, in science studies, who have to deal with states

of affairs that fit neither in the list of plausible fetishes—because everyone, including us, does believe very strongly in them—nor in the list of undisputable facts because we are witnessing their birth, their slow construction, their fascinating emergence as matters of concern. The metaphor of the Copernican revolution, so tied to the destiny of critique, has always been for us, science students, simply moot. This is why, with more than a good dose of field chauvinism, I consider this tiny field so important; it is the little rock in the shoe that might render the routine patrol of the critical barbarians more and more painful.

The mistake would be to believe that we too have given a social explanation of scientific facts. No, even though it is true that at first we tried, like good critics trained in the good schools, to use the armaments handed to us by our betters and elders to crack open—one of their favorite expressions, meaning to destroy—religion, power, discourse, hegemony. But, fortunately (yes, fortunately!), one after the other, we witnessed that the black boxes of science remained closed and that it was rather the tools that lay in the dust of our workshop, disjointed and broken. Put simply, critique was useless against objects of some solidity. You can try the projective game on UFOs or exotic divinities, but don't try it on neurotransmitters, on gravitation, on Monte Carlo calculations. But critique is also useless when it begins to use the results of one science uncritically, be it sociology itself, or economics, or postimperialism, to account for the behavior of people. You can try to play this miserable game of explaining aggression by invoking the genetic makeup of violent people, but try to do that while dragging in, at the same time, the many controversies in genetics, including evolutionary theories in which geneticists find themselves so thoroughly embroiled.[23]

On both accounts, matters of concern never occupy the two positions left for them by critical barbarity. Objects are much too strong to be treated as fetishes and much too weak to be treated as indisputable causal explanations of some unconscious action. And this is not true of scientific states of affairs only; this is our great discovery, what made science studies commit such a felicitous mistake, such a *felix culpa*. Once you realize that scientific objects cannot be socially explained, then you realize too that the so-called weak objects, those that appear to be candidates for the accusation of antifetishism, were never mere projections on an empty screen either.[24] They

23. For a striking example, see Jean-Jacques Kupiec and Pierre Sonigo, *Ni Dieu ni gène: Pour une autre théorie de l'hérédité* (Paris, 2000); see also Evelyn Fox-Keller, *The Century of the Gene* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000).

24. I have attempted to use this argument recently on two most difficult types of entities, Christian divinities (Latour, *Jubiler ou les tourments de la parole religieuse* [Paris, 2002]) and law (Latour, *La Fabrique du droit: Une Ethnographie du Conseil d'État* [Paris, 2002]).

too act, they too do things, they too *make you do* things. It is not only the objects of science that resist, but all the others as well, those that were supposed to have been ground to dust by the powerful teeth of automated reflex-action deconstructors. To accuse something of being a fetish is the ultimate gratuitous, disrespectful, insane, and barbarous gesture.[25]

Is it not time for some progress? To the fact position, to the fairy position, why not add a third position, a *fair* position? Is it really asking too much from our collective intellectual life to devise, at least once a century, some *new* critical tools? Should we not be thoroughly humiliated to see that military personnel are more alert, more vigilant, more innovative than we, the pride of academia, the crème de la crème, who go on ceaselessly transforming the whole rest of the world into naïve believers, into fetishists, into hapless victims of domination, while at the same time turning them into the mere superficial consequences of powerful hidden causalities coming from infrastructures whose makeup is never interrogated? All the while being intimately certain that the things really close to our hearts would in no way fit any of those roles. Are you not all tired of those "explanations"? I am, I have always been, when I know, for instance, that the God to whom I pray, the works of art I cherish, the colon cancer I have been fighting, the piece of law I am studying, the desire I feel, indeed, the very book I am writing could in no way be accounted for by fetish or fact, nor by any combination of those two absurd positions?

To retrieve a realist attitude, it is not enough to dismantle critical weapons so uncritically built up by our predecessors as we would obsolete but still dangerous atomic silos. If we had to dismantle social theory only, it would be a rather simple affair; like the Soviet empire, those big totalities have feet of clay. But the difficulty lies in the fact that they are built on top of a much older philosophy, so that whenever we try to replace matters of fact by matters of concern, we seem to lose something along the way. It is like trying to fill the mythical Danaid's barrel—no matter what we put in it, the level of realism never increases. As long as we have not sealed the leaks, the realist attitude will always be split; matters of fact take the best part, and matters of concern are limited to a rich but essentially void or irrelevant *history*. More will always seem less. Although I wish to keep this paper short, I need to take a few more pages to deal with ways to overcome this bifurcation.

Alfred North Whitehead famously said, "The recourse to metaphysics is

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25. The exhibition in Karlsruhe, Germany, *Iconoclash,* was a sort of belated ritual in order to atone for so much wanton destruction.

like throwing a match into a powder magazine. It blows up the whole arena."[26] I cannot avoid getting into it because I have talked so much about weapon systems, explosions, iconoclasm, and arenas. Of all the modern philosophers who tried to overcome matters of fact, Whitehead is the only one who, instead of taking the path of critique and directing his attention *away* from facts to what makes them possible as Kant did; or adding something to their bare bones as Husserl did; or avoiding the fate of their domination, their *Gestell,* as much as possible as Heidegger did; tried to get *closer* to them or, more exactly, to see through them the reality that requested a new respectful realist attitude. No one is less a critic than Whitehead, in all the meanings of the word, and it's amusing to notice that the only pique he ever directed against someone else was against the other W., the one considered, wrongly in my view, as the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century, not W. as in Bush but W. as in Wittgenstein.

What set Whitehead completely apart and straight on our path is that he considered matters of fact to be a very poor rendering of what is given in experience and something that muddles entirely the question, What is there? with the question, How do we know it? as Isabelle Stengers has shown recently in a major book about Whitehead's philosophy.[27] Those who now mock his philosophy don't understand that they have resigned themselves to what he called the "bifurcation of nature." They have entirely forgotten what it would require if we were to take this incredible sentence seriously: "For natural philosophy everything perceived is in nature. We may not pick up and choose. For us the red glow of the sunset should be as much part of nature as are the molecules and electric waves by which men of science would explain the phenomenon" (*CN*, pp. 28–29).

All subsequent philosophies have done exactly the opposite: they have picked and chosen, and, worse, they have remained content with that limited choice. The solution to this bifurcation is not, as phenomenologists would have it, adding to the boring electric waves the rich lived world of the glowing sun. This would simply make the bifurcation greater. The solution or, rather, the adventure, according to Whitehead, is to dig much further into the realist attitude and to realize that matters of fact are totally implausible, unrealistic, unjustified definitions of what it is to deal with things:

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26. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (Cambridge, 1920), p. 29; hereafter abbreviated *CN*.

27. See Isabelle Stengers, *Penser avec Whitehead: Une Libre et sauvage création de concepts* (Paris, 2002), a book which has the great advantage of taking seriously Whitehead's science as well as his theory of God.

Thus matter represents the refusal to think away spatial and temporal characteristics and to arrive at the bare concept of an individual entity. It is this refusal which has caused the muddle *of importing the mere procedure of thought into the fact of nature.* The entity, bared of all characteristics except those of space and time, has acquired a physical status as the ultimate texture of nature; so that the course of nature is conceived as being merely the fortunes of matter in its adventure through space. [*CN*, p. 20]

It is not the case that there would exist solid matters of fact and that the next step would be for us to decide whether they will be used to explain something. It is not the case either that the other solution is to attack, criticize, expose, historicize those matters of fact, to show that they are made up, interpreted, flexible. It is not the case that we should rather flee out of them into the mind or add to them symbolic or cultural dimensions; the question is that matters of fact are a poor *proxy* of experience and of experimentation and, I would add, a confusing bundle of polemics, of epistemology, of modernist politics that can in no way claim to represent what is requested by a realist attitude.[28]

Whitehead is not an author known for keeping the reader wide awake, but I want to indicate at least the *direction* of the new critical attitude with which I wish to replace the tired routines of most social theories.

The solution lies, it seems to me, in this promising word *gathering* that Heidegger had introduced to account for the "thingness of the thing." Now, I know very well that Heidegger and Whitehead would have nothing to say to one another, and, yet, the word the latter used in *Process and Reality* to describe "actual occasions," his word for my matters of concern, is the word *societies.* It is also, by the way, the word used by Gabriel Tarde, the real founder of French sociology, to describe all sorts of entities. It is close enough to the word *association* that I have used all along to describe the objects of science and technology. Andrew Pickering would use the words "mangle of practice."[29] Whatever the words, what is presented here is an entirely different attitude than the critical one, not a flight into the conditions of possibility of a given matter of fact, not the addition of something

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28. That matters of fact represent now a rather rare and complicated historical rendering of experience has been made powerfully clear by many writers; see, for telling segments of this history, Christian Licoppe, *La Formation de la pratique scientifique: Le Discours de l'expérience en France et en Angleterre (1630–1820)* (Paris, 1996); Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago, 1999); Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York, 1998); and *Picturing Science, Producing Art,* ed. Caroline A. Jones, Galison, and Amy Slaton (New York, 1998).

29. See Andrew Pickering, *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency, and Science* (Chicago, 1995).

more human that the inhumane matters of fact would have missed, but, rather, a multifarious inquiry launched with the tools of anthropology, philosophy, metaphysics, history, sociology to detect *how many participants* are gathered in a *thing* to make it exist and to maintain its existence. Objects are simply a gathering that has failed—a fact that has not been assembled according to due process.[30] The stubbornness of matters of fact in the usual scenography of the rock-kicking objector—"It is there whether you like it or not"—is much like the stubbornness of political demonstrators: "the U.S., love it or leave it," that is, a very poor substitute for any sort of vibrant, articulate, sturdy, decent, long-term existence.[31] A gathering, that is, a thing, an issue, inside a Thing, an arena, can be very sturdy, too, on the condition that the number of its participants, its ingredients, nonhumans as well as humans, not be limited in advance.[32] It is entirely wrong to divide the collective, as I call it, into the sturdy matters of fact, on the one hand, and the dispensable crowds, on the other. Archimedes spoke for a whole tradition when he exclaimed: "Give me one fixed point and I will move the Earth," but am I not speaking for another, much less prestigious but maybe as respectable tradition, if I exclaim in turn "Give me one matter of concern and I will show you the whole earth and heavens that have to be gathered to hold it firmly in place"? For me it makes no sense to reserve the realist vocabulary for the first one only. The critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles. The critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of the naïve believers, but the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather. The critic is not the one who alternates haphazardly between antifetishism and positivism like the drunk iconoclast drawn by Goya, but the one for whom, if something is constructed, then it means it is fragile and thus in great need of care and caution. I am aware that to get at the heart of this argument one would have to renew also what it means to be a constructivist, but I have said enough to indicate the direction of critique, not *away* but *toward* the gathering, the Thing.[33] Not westward, but, so to speak, eastward.[34]

30. See Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy,* trans. Porter (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).

31. See the marvelously funny rendering of the realist gesture in Malcolm Ashmore, Derek Edwards, and Jonathan Potter, "The Bottom Line: The Rhetoric of Reality Demonstrations," *Configurations* 2 (Winter 1994): 1–14.

32. This is the challenge of a new exhibition I am curating with Peter Weibel in Karlsruhe and that is supposed to take place in 2004 under the provisional title "Making Things Public." This exhibition will explore what *Iconoclash* had simply pointed at, namely, beyond the image wars.

33. This paper is a companion of another one: Latour, "The Promises of Constructivism," in *Chasing Technoscience: Matrix for Materiality,* ed. Don Ihde and Evan Selinger (Bloomington, Ind., 2003), pp. 27–46.

34. This is why, although I share all of the worries of Thomas de Zengotita, "Common Ground: Finding Our Way Back to the Enlightenment," *Harper's* 306 (Jan. 2003): 35–45, I think he is

The practical problem we face, if we try to go that new route, is to associate the word *criticism* with a whole set of new positive metaphors, gestures, attitudes, knee-jerk reactions, habits of thoughts. To begin with this new habit forming, I'd like to extract another definition of critique from the most unlikely source, namely, Allan Turing's original paper on thinking machines.[35] I have a good reason for that: here is the typical paper about formalism, here is the origin of one of the icons—to use a cliché of antifetishism—of the contemporary age, namely, the computer, and yet, if you read this paper, it is so baroque, so kitsch, it assembles such an astounding number of metaphors, beings, hypotheses, allusions, that there is no chance that it would be accepted nowadays by any journal. Even *Social Text* would reject it out of hand as another hoax! "Not again," they would certainly say, "once bitten, twice shy." Who would take a paper seriously that states somewhere after having spoken of Muslim women, punishment of boys, extrasensory perception: "In attempting to construct such machines we should not be irreverently usurping [God's] power of creating souls, any more than we are in the procreation of children: rather we are, in either case, instruments of His will providing mansions for the souls that He creates" ("CM," p. 443).

Lots of gods, always in machines. Remember how Bush eulogized the crew of the *Columbia* for reaching home in heaven, if not home on earth? Here Turing too cannot avoid mentioning God's creative power when talking of this most mastered machine, the computer that he has invented. That's precisely his point. The computer is in for many surprises; you get out of it much more than you put into it. In the most dramatic way, Turing's paper demonstrates, once again, that all objects are born things, all matters of fact require, in order to exist, a bewildering variety of matters of concern.[36] The surprising result is that we don't master what we, ourselves, have fabricated, the object of this definition of critique:[37]

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entirely mistaken in the *direction* of the move he proposes back to the future; to go back to the "natural" attitude is a sign of nostalgia.

35. See A.M. Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," *Mind* 59 (Oct. 1950): 433–60; hereafter abbreviated "CM." See also what Powers in *Galatea 2.2* (New York, 1995) did with this paper; this is critique in the most generous sense of the word. For the context of this paper, see Andrew Hodges, *Alan Turing: The Enigma* (New York, 1983).

36. A nonformalist definition of formalism has been proposed by Brian Rotman, *Ad Infinitum: The Ghost in Turing's Machine: Taking God out of Mathematics and Putting the Body Back In* (Stanford, Calif., 1993).

37. Since Turing can be taken as the first and best programmer, those who believe in defining machines by inputs and outputs should meditate his confession:

Machines take me by surprise with great frequency. This is largely because I do not do sufficient calculation to decide what to expect them to do, or rather because, although I do a calculation, I do it in a hurried, slipshod fashion, taking risks. Perhaps I say to myself, "I suppose the voltage here ought to be the same as there: anyway let's assume it is." Naturally I

Let us return for a moment to Lady Lovelace's objection, which stated that the machine can only do what we tell it to do. One could say that a man can "inject" an idea into the machine, and that it will respond to a certain extent and then drop into quiescence, like a piano string struck by a hammer. Another simile would be an atomic pile of less than critical size: an injected idea is to correspond to a neutron entering the pile from without. Each such neutron will cause a certain disturbance which eventually dies away. If, however, the size of the pile is sufficiently increased, the disturbance caused by such an incoming neutron will very likely go on and on increasing until the whole pile is destroyed. Is there a corresponding phenomenon for minds, and is there one for machines? There does seem to be one for the human mind. The majority of them seem to be "sub-critical," *i.e.* to correspond in this analogy to piles of sub-critical size. An idea presented to such a mind will on average give rise to less than one idea in reply. A smallish proportion are super-critical. An idea presented to such a mind may give rise to a whole "theory" consisting of secondary, tertiary and more remote ideas. Animals' minds seem to be very definitely sub-critical. Adhering to this analogy we ask, "Can a machine be made to be super-critical?" ["CM," p. 454]

We all know subcritical minds, that's for sure! What would critique do if it could be associated with *more,* not with *less,* with *multiplication,* not *subtraction.* Critical theory died away long ago; can we become critical again, in the sense here offered by Turing? That is, generating more ideas than we have received, inheriting from a prestigious critical tradition but not letting it die away, or "dropping into quiescence" like a piano no longer struck. This would require that all entities, including computers, cease to be objects defined simply by their inputs and outputs and become again things, mediating, assembling, gathering many more folds than the "united four." If this were possible then we could let the critics come ever closer to the matters of concern we cherish, and then at last we could tell them: "Yes, please, touch them, explain them, deploy them." Then we would have gone for good beyond iconoclasm.

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am often wrong, and the result is a surprise for me for by the time the experiment is done these assumptions have been forgotten. These admissions lay me open to lectures on the subject of my vicious ways, but do not throw any doubt on my credibility when I testify to the surprises I experience. ["CM," pp. 450–51]

On this nonformalist definition of computers, see Brian Cantwell Smith, *On the Origin of Objects* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997).

Part Seven. Marxism and Humanism

'Marxism and Humanism' first appeared in the *Cahiers de l'I.S.E.A.*, June 1964.

I

Today, Socialist 'Humanism' is on the agenda.

As it enters the period which will lead it from socialism (to each according to his labour) to communism (to each according to his needs), the Soviet Union has proclaimed the slogan: All for Man, and introduced new themes: the freedom of the individual, respect for legality, the dignity of the person. In workers' parties, the achievements of socialist humanism are celebrated and justification for its theoretical claims is sought in *Capital*, and more and more frequently, in Marx's Early Works.

This is a historical event. I wonder even whether socialist humanism is not such a reassuring and attractive theme that it will allow a dialogue between Communists and Social-Democrats, or even a wider exchange with those 'men of good will' who are opposed to war and poverty. Today, even the high-road of Humanism seems to lead to socialism.

In fact, the objective of the revolutionary struggle has always been the end of exploitation and hence the liberation of man, but, as Marx foresaw, in its first historical phase, this struggle had to take the form of the struggle between *classes*. So revolutionary humanism could only be a 'class humanism', 'proletarian humanism'. The end of the exploitation of man meant the end of *class* exploitation. The liberation of man meant the liberation of the working *class* and above all liberation by the dictatorship of the proletariat. For more than forty years, in the U.S.S.R., amidst gigantic struggles, 'socialist humanism' was expressed in the terms of class dictatorship rather than in those of personal freedom.[1]

The end of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the U.S.S.R. opens up a second historical phase. The Soviets say, in our country antagonistic classes have disappeared, the dictatorship of the proletariat has fulfilled its function, the State is no longer a class State but the State of the whole people (of everyone). In the U.S.S.R. men are indeed now treated without any class distinction, that is, as *persons*. So *in ideology* we see the themes of class humanism give way before the themes of a socialist humanism of the person.

Ten years ago socialist humanism only existed in one form: that of class humanism. Today it exists in two forms: class humanism, where the dictatorship of the proletariat is still in force

(China, etc.), and (socialist) personal humanism where it has been superseded (the U.S.S.R.). Two forms corresponding to two necessary historical phases. In 'personal' humanism, 'class' humanism contemplates its own future, realized.

This transformation in history casts light on certain transformations in the mind. The dictatorship of the proletariat, rejected by Social-Democrats in the name of (bourgeois) personal 'humanism', and which bitterly opposes them to Communists, has been superseded in the U.S.S.R. Even better, it is foreseeable that it might take peaceful and short-lived forms in the West. From here we can see in outline a sort of meeting between two personal 'humanisms', socialist humanism and Christian or bourgeois liberal humanism. The 'liberalization' of the U.S.S.R. reassures the latter. As for socialist humanism, it can see itself not only as a critique of the contradictions of bourgeois humanism, but also and above all as the consummation of its 'noblest' aspirations. Humanity's millenarian dreams, prefigured in the drafts of past humanisms, Christian and bourgeois, will at last find realization in it: in man and between men, the reign of Man will at last begin.

Hence the fulfilment of the prophetic promise Marx made in the 1844 Manuscripts: Communism ... as the real appropriation of the human essence through and for men ... this communism as a fully developed naturalism – Humanism'.

II

To see beyond this event, to understand it, to know the meaning of socialist humanism, it is not enough just to register the event, nor to record the concepts (humanism, socialism) in which the event itself thinks itself. The theoretical claims of the concepts must be tested to ensure that they really do provide us with a truly scientific knowledge of the event.

But precisely in the couple 'humanism-socialism' there is a striking theoretical unevenness: in the framework of the Marxist conception, the concept 'socialism' is indeed a scientific concept, but the concept 'humanism' is no more than an *ideological* one.

Note that my purpose is not to dispute the reality that the concept of socialist humanism is supposed to designate, but to define the *theoretical* value of the concept. When I say that the concept of humanism is an ideological concept (not a scientific one), I mean that while it really does designate a set of existing relations, unlike a scientific concept, it does not provide us with a means of knowing them. In a particular (ideological) mode, it designates some existents, but it does not give us their essences. If we were to confuse these two orders we should cut ourselves off from all knowledge, uphold a confusion and risk falling into error.

To show this clearly, I shall briefly invoke Marx's own experience, for he only arrived at a scientific theory of history at the price of a radical critique of the philosophy of man that had served as his theoretical basis during the years of his youth (1840-45). I use the words 'theoretical basis' in their strict sense. For the young Marx, 'Man' was not just a cry denouncing

poverty and slavery. It was the theoretical principle of his world outlook and of his practical attitude. The 'Essence of Man' (whether freedom, reason or community) was the basis both for a rigorous theory of history and for a consistent political practice.

This can be seen in the two stages of Marx's humanist period.

The First Stage was dominated by a liberal-rationalist humanism closer to Kant and Fichte than to Hegel. In his conflict with censorship, Rhenish feudal laws, Prussian despotism, Marx's political struggle and the theory of history sustaining it were based theoretically on a philosophy of man. Only the essence of man makes history, and this essence is freedom and reason. *Freedom:* it is the essence of man just as weight is the essence of bodies. Man is destined to freedom, it is his very being. Whether he rejects it or negates it, he remains in it for ever: '*So much is freedom the essence of Man that even its adversaries are realizing it when they fight against its reality… . So freedom has always existed, in one way or another, sometimes only as a particular privilege, sometimes as a general right.*'[2] This distinction illuminates the whole of history: thus, feudalism is freedom, but in the 'non-rational' form of privilege; the modern State is freedom, but in the rational form of a universal right. *Reason:* man is only freedom as reason. Human freedom is neither caprice, nor the determinism of interest, but, as Kant and Fichte meant it, autonomy, obedience to the inner law of reason. This reason, which has '*always existed though not always in a rational form*'[3] (e.g. feudalism), in modern times does at least exist in the form of reason in the State, the State of law and right. '*Philosophy regards the State as the great organism in which legal, moral and political freedom should find their realization and in which the individual citizen, when he obeys the State's laws, is only obeying the natural laws of his own reason, of human reason .*'[4] Hence the task of philosophy: '*Philosophy demands that the State be the State of human nature*'.[5] This injunction is addressed to the State itself: if it would recognize its essence it would become reason, the true freedom of man, through its own reform of itself. Therefore, politico-philosophical criticism (which reminds the State of its duty to itself) sums up the whole of politics: the free Press, the free reason of humanity, becomes politics itself. This political practice – summed up in *public theoretical criticism*, that is, in public criticism by way of the Press – which demands as its absolute precondition the *freedom of the Press* is the one Marx adopted in the *Rheinische Zeitung*. Marx's development of his theory of history was the basis and justification for his own *practice:* the journalist's public criticism that he saw as political action *par excellence*. This Enlightenment Philosophy was completely rigorous.

The Second Stage (1842-5) was dominated by a new form of humanism: Feuerbach's 'communalist' humanism. The Reason State had remained deaf to reason: there was no reform of the Prussian State. History itself delivered this judgment on the illusions of the humanism of reason: the young German radicals had been expecting that when he was King the heir to the throne would keep the liberal promises he had made before his coronation. But the throne soon changed the liberal into a despot – the State, which should at last have become reason, since it was in itself reason, gave birth merely to unreason once again. From this enormous

disappointment, lived by the young radicals as a true historical and theoretical crisis, Marx drew the conclusion: '*The political State … encapsulates the demands of reason precisely in its modern forms. But it does not stop there. Everywhere it presupposes realized reason. But everywhere it also slides into the contradiction between its theoretical definition and its real hypotheses.*' A decisive step had been taken: the State's abuses were no longer conceived as misappropriations of the State *vis-à-vis* its essence, but as a real contradiction between its essence (reason) and its existence (unreason). Feuerbach's humanism made it possible to think just this contradiction by showing in unreason the alienation of reason, and in this alienation the history of man, that is, his realization.[6]

Marx still professes a philosophy of man: 'To be radical is to grasp things by the root; but for man the root is man himself' (1843). But then man is only freedom-reason because he is first of all '*Gemeinwesen*', 'communal being', a being that is only consummated theoretically (science) and practically (politics) in universal human relations, with men and with his objects (external nature 'humanized' by labour). Here also the essence of man is the basis for history and politics.

History is the alienation and production of reason in unreason, of the true man in the alienated man. Without knowing it, man realizes the essence of man in the alienated products of his labour (commodities, State, religion). The loss of man that produces history and man must presuppose a definite pre-existing essence. At the end of history, this man, having become inhuman objectivity, has merely to re-grasp as subject his own essence alienated in property, religion and the State to become total man, true man.

This new theory of man is the basis for a new type of political action: the politics of *practical* reappropriation. The appeal to the simple reason of the State disappears. Politics is no longer simply theoretical criticism, the enlightenment of reason through the free Press, but man's practical reappropriation of his essence. For the State, like religion, may well be man, but man dispossessed: man is split into citizen (State) and civil man, two abstractions. In the heaven of the State, in 'the citizen's rights', man lives in imagination the human community he is deprived of on the earth of the 'rights of man'. So the revolution must no longer be merely *political* (rational liberal reform of the State), but '*human*' ('communist'), if man is to be restored his nature, alienated in the fantastic forms of money, power and gods. From this point on, this practical revolution must be the common work of philosophy and of the proletariat, for, in philosophy, man is theoretically affirmed; in the proletariat he is practically negated. The penetration of philosophy into the proletariat will be the conscious revolt of the affirmation against its own negation, the revolt of man against his inhuman conditions. Then the proletariat will negate its own negation and take possession of itself in communism. The revolution is the very *practice* of the logic immanent in alienation: it is the moment in which criticism, hitherto unarmed, recognizes its arms in the proletariat. It gives the proletariat the theory of what it is; in return, the proletariat gives it its armed force, a single unique force in which no one is allied except to himself. So the revolutionary alliance of the proletariat and of philosophy is once again sealed in the essence of man.

III

In 1845, Marx broke radically with every theory that based history and politics on an essence of man. This unique rupture contained three indissociable elements.

(1) The formation of a theory of history and politics based on radically new concepts: the concepts of social formation, productive forces, relations of production, superstructure, ideologies, determination in the last instance by the economy, specific determination of the other levels, etc.

(2) A radical critique of the *theoretical* pretensions of every philosophical humanism.

(3) The definition of humanism as an *ideology*.

This new conception is completely rigorous as well, but it is a new rigour: the essence criticized (2) is defined as an ideology (3), a category belonging to the new theory of society and history (1).

This rupture with every *philosophical* anthropology or humanism is no secondary detail; it is Marx's scientific discovery.

It means that Marx rejected the problematic of the earlier philosophy and adopted a new problematic in one and the same act. The earlier idealist ('bourgeois') philosophy depended in all its domains and arguments (its 'theory of knowledge', its conception of history, its political economy, its ethics, its aesthetics, etc.) on a problematic of *human nature* (or the essence of man). For centuries, this problematic had been transparency itself, and no one had thought of questioning it even in its internal modifications.

This problematic was neither vague nor loose; on the contrary, it was constituted by a coherent system of precise concepts tightly articulated together. When Marx confronted it, it implied the two complementary postulates he defined in the Sixth Thesis on Feuerbach:

(1) that there is a universal essence of man;

(2) that this essence is the attribute of '*each single individual*' who is its real subject.

These two postulates are complementary and indissociable. But their existence and their unity presuppose a whole empiricist-idealist world outlook. If the essence of man is to be a universal attribute, it is essential that *concrete subjects* exist as absolute givens; this implies an *empiricism of the subject*. If these empirical individuals are to be men, it is essential that each carries in himself the whole human essence, if not in fact, at least in principle; this implies an *idealism of the essence*. So empiricism of the subject implies idealism of the essence and vice versa. This relation can be inverted into its 'opposite' – empiricism of the

concept/idealism of the subject. But the inversion respects the basic structure of the problematic, which remains fixed.

In this type-structure it is possible to recognize not only the principle of theories of society (from Hobbes to Rousseau), of political economy (from Petty to Ricardo), of ethics (from Descartes to Kant), but also the very principle of the (pre-Marxist) idealist and materialist 'theory of knowledge' (from Locke to Feuerbach, via Kant). The content of the human essence or of the empirical subjects may vary (as can be seen from Descartes to Feuerbach); the subject may change from empiricism to idealism (as can be seen from Locke to Kant): the terms presented and their relations only vary within the invariant type-structure which constitutes this very problematic: *an empiricism of the subject always corresponds to an idealism of the essence* (*or an empiricism of the essence to an idealism of the subject*).

By rejecting the essence of man as his theoretical basis, Marx rejected the whole of this organic system of postulates. He drove the philosophical categories of the *subject*, of *empiricism*, of the *ideal essence*, etc., from all the domains in which they had been supreme. Not only from political economy (rejection of the myth of *homo economicus*, that is, of the individual with definite faculties and needs as the *subject* of the classical economy); not just from history (rejection of social atomism and ethico-political idealism); not just from ethics (rejection of the Kantian ethical idea); but also from philosophy itself: for Marx's materialism excludes the empiricism of the subject (and its inverse: the transcendental subject) and the idealism of the concept (and its inverse: the empiricism of the concept).

This total theoretical revolution was only empowered to reject the old concepts because it replaced them by new concepts. In fact Marx established a new problematic, a new systematic way of asking questions of the world, new principles and a new method. This discovery is immediately contained in the theory of historical materialism, in which Marx did not only propose a new theory of the history of societies, but at the same time implicitly, but necessarily, a new 'philosophy', infinite in its implications. Thus, when Marx replaced the old couple individuals/human essence in the theory of history by new concepts (forces of production, relations of production, etc.), he was, in fact, simultaneously proposing a new conception of 'philosophy'. He replaced the old postulates (empiricism/idealism of the subject, empiricism/idealism of the essence) which were the basis not only for idealism but also for pre-Marxist materialism, by a historico-dialectical materialism of *praxis:* that is, by a theory of the different specific *levels* of *human practice* (economic practice, political practice, ideological practice, scientific practice) in their characteristic articulations, based on the specific articulations of the unity of human society. In a word, Marx substituted for the 'ideological' and universal concept of Feuerbachian 'practice' a concrete conception of the specific differences that enables us to situate each particular practice in the specific differences of the social structure.

So, to understand what was radically new in Marx's contribution, we must become aware not only of the novelty of the concepts of historical materialism, but also of the depth of the theoretical revolution they imply and inaugurate. On this condition it is possible to define

humanism's status, and reject its *theoretical* pretensions while recognizing its practical function as an ideology.

Strictly in respect to theory, therefore, one can and must speak openly of *Marx's theoretical anti-humanism*, and see in this *theoretical anti-humanism* the absolute (negative) precondition of the (positive) knowledge of the human world itself, and of its practical transformation. It is impossible to *know* anything about men except on the absolute precondition that the philosophical (theoretical) myth of man is reduced to ashes. So any thought that appeals to Marx for any kind of restoration of a theoretical anthropology or humanism is no more than ashes, *theoretically*. But in practice it could pile up a monument of pre-Marxist ideology that would weigh down on real history and threaten to lead it into blind alleys.

For the corollary of theoretical Marxist anti-humanism is the recognition and knowledge of humanism itself: as an *ideology*. Marx never fell into the idealist illusion of believing that the knowledge of an object might ultimately replace the object or dissipate its existence. Cartesians, knowing that the sun was two thousand leagues away, were astonished that this distance only looked like two hundred paces: they could not even find enough of God to fill in this gap. Marx never believed that a knowledge of the nature of *money* (a social relation) could destroy its *appearance*, its form of existence – a thing, for this appearance was its very being, as necessary as the existing mode of production.[7] Marx never believed that an ideology might be dissipated by a knowledge of it: for the knowledge of this ideology, as the knowledge of its conditions of possibility, of its structure, of its specific logic and of its practical role, within a given society, is simultaneously knowledge of the conditions of its necessity. So Marx's theoretical *anti-humanism* does not suppress anything in the historical *existence* of humanism. In the real world philosophies of man are found after Marx as often as before, and today even some Marxists are tempted to develop the themes of a new theoretical humanism. Furthermore, Marx's theoretical anti-humanism, by relating it to its conditions of existence, recognizes a necessity for humanism as an *ideology*, a conditional necessity. The recognition of this necessity is not purely speculative. On it alone can Marxism base a policy in relation to the existing ideological forms, of every kind: religion, ethics, art, philosophy, law – and in the very front rank, humanism. When (eventually) a Marxist policy of humanist ideology, that is, a political attitude to humanism, is achieved – a policy which may be either a rejection or a critique, or a use, or a support, or a development, or a humanist renewal of contemporary forms of ideology in the *ethico-political* domain – this policy will only have been possible on the absolute condition that it is based on Marxist philosophy, and a precondition for this is theoretical *anti-humanism*.

IV

So everything depends on the knowledge of the nature of humanism as an ideology.

There can be no question of attempting a profound definition of ideology here. It will suffice to know very schematically that an ideology is a system (with its own logic and rigour) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts, depending on the case) endowed with a historical existence and role within a given society. Without embarking on the problem of the relations between a science and its (ideological) past, we can say that ideology, as a system of representations, is distinguished from science in that in it the practico-social function is more important than the theoretical function (function as knowledge).

What is the nature of this social function? To understand it we must refer to the Marxist theory of history. The 'subjects' of history are given human societies. They present themselves as totalities whose unity is constituted by a certain specific type of *complexity*, which introduces instances, that, following Engels, we can, very schematically, reduce to three: the economy, politics and ideology. So in every society we can posit, in forms which are sometimes very paradoxical, the existence of an economic activity as the base, a political organization and 'ideological' forms (religion, ethics, philosophy, etc.). *So ideology is as such an organic part of every social totality.* It is as if human societies could not survive without these *specific formations*, these systems of representations (at various levels), their ideologies. Human societies secrete ideology as the very element and atmosphere indispensable to their historical respiration and life. Only an ideological world outlook could have imagined societies *without ideology* and accepted the utopian idea of a world in which ideology (not just one of its historical forms) would disappear without trace, to be replaced by *science.* For example, this utopia is the principle behind the idea that ethics, which is in its essence ideology, could be replaced by science or become scientific through and through; or that religion could be destroyed by science which would in some way take its place; that *art* could merge with knowledge or become 'everyday life', etc.

And I am not going to steer clear of the crucial question: *historical materialism cannot conceive that even a communist society could ever do without ideology*, be it ethics, art or 'world outlook'. Obviously it is possible to foresee important modifications in its ideological forms and their relations and even the disappearance of certain existing forms or a shift of their functions to neighbouring forms; it is also possible (on the premise of already acquired experience) to foresee the development of new ideological forms (e.g. the ideologies of 'the scientific world outlook' and 'communist humanism') but in the present state of Marxist theory strictly conceived, it is not conceivable that communism, a new mode of production implying determinate forces of production and relations of production, could do without a social organization of production, and corresponding ideological forms.

So ideology is not an aberration or a contingent excrescence of History: it is a structure essential to the historical life of societies. Further, only the existence and the recognition of its necessity enable us to act on ideology and transform ideology into an instrument of deliberate action on history.

It is customary to suggest that ideology belongs to the region of 'consciousness'. We must not be misled by this appellation which is still contaminated by the idealist problematic that

preceded Marx. In truth, ideology has very little to do with 'consciousness', even supposing this term to have an unambiguous meaning. It is profoundly *unconscious*, even when it presents itself in a reflected form (as in pre-Marxist 'philosophy'). Ideology is indeed a system of representations, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with 'consciousness': they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as structures that they impose on the vast majority of men, not via their 'consciousness'. They are perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects and they act functionally on men via a process that escapes them. Men 'live' their ideologies as the Cartesian 'saw' or did not see – if he was not looking at it – the moon two hundred paces away: *not at all as a form of consciousness, but as an object of their 'world'* – as their '*world*' itself. But what do we mean, then, when we say that ideology is a matter of men's 'consciousness'? First, that ideology is distinct from other social instances, but also that men live their actions, usually referred to freedom and 'consciousness' by the classical tradition, in ideology, *by and through ideology;* in short, that the 'lived' relation between men and the world, including History (in political action or inaction), passes through ideology, or better, *is ideology itself*. This is the sense in which Marx said that it is in ideology (as the locus of political struggle) that men *become conscious* of their place in the world and in history, it is within this ideological unconsciousness that men succeed in altering the 'lived' relation between them and the world and acquiring that new form of specific unconsciousness called 'consciousness'.

So ideology is a matter of the *lived* relation between men and their world. This relation, that only appears as '*conscious*' on condition that it is *unconscious*, in the same way only seems to be simple on condition that it is complex, that it is not a simple relation but a relation between relations, a second degree relation. In ideology men do indeed express, not the relation between them their conditions of existence, but *the way* they live the relation between them and their conditions of existence: this presupposes both a real relation and an '*imaginary*', '*lived*' relation. Ideology, then, is the expression of the relation between men and their 'world', that is, the (overdetermined) unity of the real relation and the imaginary relation between them and their real conditions of existence. In ideology the real relation is inevitably invested in the imaginary relation, a relation that *expresses* a *will* (conservative, conformist, reformist or revolutionary), a hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality.

It is in this overdetermination of the real by the imaginary and of the imaginary by the real that ideology is *active* in principle, that it reinforces or modifies the relation between men and their conditions of existence, in the imaginary relation itself. It follows that this action can never be purely *instrumental;* the men who would use an ideology purely as a means of action, as a tool, find that they have been caught by it, implicated by it, just when they are using it and believe themselves to be absolute masters of it.

This is perfectly clear in the case of a *class society*. The ruling ideology is then the ideology of the ruling *class*. But the ruling class does not maintain with the ruling ideology, which is its own ideology, an external and lucid relation of pure utility and cunning. When, during the eighteenth century, the 'rising class', the bourgeoisie, developed a humanist ideology of

equality, freedom and reason, it gave its own demands the form of universality, since it hoped thereby to enroll at its side, by their education to this end, the very men it would liberate only for their exploitation. This is the Rousseauan myth of the origins of inequality: the rich holding forth to the poor in 'the most deliberate discourse' ever conceived, so as to persuade them to live their slavery as their freedom. In reality, the bourgeoisie has to believe in its own myth before it can convince others, and not only so as to convince others, since what it lives in its ideology is *the very relation* between it and its real conditions of existence which allows it simultaneously to act on itself (provide itself with a legal and ethical consciousness, and the legal and ethical conditions of economic liberalism) and on others (those it exploits and is going to exploit in the future: the 'free labourers') so as to take up, occupy and maintain its historical role as a ruling class. Thus, in a very exact sense, the bourgeoisie *lives* in the ideology of *freedom* the relation between it and its conditions of existence: that is, *its* real relation (the law of a liberal capitalist economy) *but invested in an imaginary relation* (all men are free, including the free labourers). Its ideology consists of this play on the word *freedom*, which betrays the bourgeois wish to mystify those ('free men'!) it exploits, blackmailing them with freedom so as to keep them in harness, as much as the bourgeoisie's need to *live* its own class rule as the freedom of those it is exploiting. Just as a people that exploits another cannot be free, so a class that *uses* an ideology is its captive too. So when we speak of the class function of an ideology it must be understood that the ruling ideology is indeed the ideology of the ruling class and that the former serves the latter not only in its rule over the exploited class, *but in its own constitution of itself as the ruling class*, by making it accept the lived relation between itself and the world as real and justified.

But, we must go further and ask what becomes of *ideology* in a society in which classes have disappeared. What we have just said allows us to answer this question. If the whole social function of ideology could be summed up cynically as a myth (such as Plato's 'beautiful lies' or the techniques of modern advertising) fabricated and manipulated from the outside by the ruling class to fool those it is exploiting, then ideology would disappear with classes. But as we have seen that even in the case of a class society ideology is active on the ruling class itself and contributes to its moulding, to the modification of its attitudes to adapt it to its real conditions of existence (for example, legal freedom) – it is clear that *ideology* (*as a system of mass representations*) *is indispensable in any society if men are to be formed, transformed and equipped to respond to the demands of their conditions of existence.* If, as Marx said, history is a perpetual transformation of men's conditions of existence, and if this is equally true of a socialist society, then men must be ceaselessly transformed so as to adapt them to these conditions; if this 'adaptation' cannot be left to spontaneity but must be constantly assumed, dominated and controlled, it is in ideology that this demand is expressed, that this distance is measured, that this contradiction is lived and that its resolution is 'activated'. It is in ideology that the classless society *lives* the inadequacy/adequacy of the relation between it and the world, it is in it and by it that it transforms men's 'consciousness', that is, their attitudes and behaviour so as to raise them to the level of their tasks and the conditions of their existence.

In a class society ideology is the relay whereby, and the element in which, the relation between men and their conditions of existence is settled to the profit of the ruling class. In a classless society ideology is the relay whereby, and the element in which, the relation between men and their conditions of existence is lived to the profit of all men.

V

We are now in a position to return to the theme of socialist humanism and to account for the theoretical disparity we observed between a scientific term (socialism) and an ideological one (humanism).

In its relations with the existing forms of bourgeois or Christian *personal* humanism, socialist personal humanism presents itself as an ideology precisely in the *play on words* that authorizes this meeting. I am far from thinking that this might be the meeting of a cynicism and a naïvété. In the case in point, the play on words is still the index of a *historical reality*, and simultaneously of lived ambiguity, and an expression of the desire to overcome it. When, in the relations between Marxists and everyone else, the former lay stress on a socialist personal humanism, they are simply demonstrating their *will* to bridge the gap that separates them from possible allies, and they are simply anticipating the movement, trusting to future history the task of providing the old words with a new content.

It is this content that matters. For, once again, the themes of Marxist humanism are not, first of all, themes for the use of *others*. The Marxists who develop them necessarily do so *for themselves* before doing so for others. Now we know what these developments are based on: on the new conditions existing in the Soviet Union, on the end of the dictatorship of the proletariat and on the transition to communism.

And this is where everything is at stake. This is how I should pose the question. *To what* in the Soviet Union does the manifest development of the themes of (socialist) personal humanism correspond? Speaking of the idea of man and of humanism in *The German Ideology*, Marx commented that the idea of human nature, or of the essence of man, concealed a *coupled value judgment*, to be precise, the couple human/inhuman; and he wrote: 'the "inhuman" as much as the "human" is a product of present conditions; it is their negative side'. The couple human/inhuman is the hidden principle of all humanism which is, then, no more than a way of living-sustaining-resolving this contradiction. Bourgeois humanism made man the principle of all theory. This luminous essence of man was the visible counterpart to a shadowy inhumanity. By this part of shade, the content of the human essence, that apparently absolute essence, announced its rebellious birth. The man of freedom-reason denounced the egoistic and divided man of capitalist society. In the two forms of this couple inhuman/human, the bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century lived in 'rational-liberal' form, the German left radical intellectuals in 'communalist' or 'communist' form, the relations between them and their conditions of existence, as a rejection, a demand and a programme.

What about contemporary socialist humanism? It is also a *rejection* and a denunciation: a rejection of all human discrimination, be it racial, political, religious or whatever. It is a rejection of all economic exploitation or political slavery. It is a rejection of war. This rejection is not just a proud proclamation of victory, an exhortation and example addressed to outsiders, to all men oppressed by Imperialism, by its exploitation, its poverty, its slavery, its discriminations and its wars: it is also and primarily turned *inwards:* to the Soviet Union itself. In personal socialist humanism, the Soviet Union accepts on its own account the supersession of the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but it also rejects and condemns the 'abuses' of the latter, the aberrant and 'criminal' forms it took during the period of the 'cult of personality'. Socialist humanism, in its internal use, deals with the historical reality of the supersession of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the 'abusive' forms it took in the U.S.S.R. It deals with a 'dual' reality: not only a reality superseded by the rational *necessity* of the development of the forces of production of socialist relations of production (the dictatorship of the proletariat) – but also a reality which *ought not to have had to be superseded*, that new form of '*non-rational existence of reason*', that part of historical '*unreason*' and of the 'inhuman' that the past of the U.S.S.R. bears within it: terror, repression and dogmatism – precisely what has not yet been completely superseded, in its effects or its misdeeds.

But with this wish we move from the shade to the light, from the inhuman to the human. The communism to which the Soviet Union is committed is a world without economic exploitation, without violence, without discrimination – a world opening up before the Soviets the infinite vistas of progress, of science, of culture, of bread and freedom, of free development – a world that can do without shadows or tragedies. Why then all this stress so deliberately laid on *man?* What need do the Soviets have for an *idea of man,* that is, an idea of themselves, *to help them live their history?* It is difficult here to avoid relating together the necessity to prepare and realize an important historical mutation (the transition to communism, the end of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the withering-away of the State apparatus, presupposing the creation of new forms of political, economic and cultural organization, corresponding to this transition) on the one hand – and, on the other, the *historical conditions* in which this transition must be put into effect. Now it is obvious that *these conditions* too, bear the characteristic mark of the U.S.S.R.'s past and of its difficulties – not only the mark of the difficulties due to the period of the '*cult of personality*', *but also* the mark of the more distant difficulties characteristic of the '*construction of socialism in one country*', and in addition in a country economically and culturally 'backward' to start with. Among these 'conditions', first place must be given to the 'theoretical' conditions inherited from the past.

The present disproportion of the historical tasks to their conditions explains the recourse to this ideology. In fact, the themes of socialist humanism designate the existence of real problems: *new* historical, economic, political and ideological problems that the Stalinist period kept in the shade, but still produced while producing socialism – problems of the forms of economic, political and cultural *organization* that correspond to the level of development attained by socialism's productive forces; problems of the new form of *individual*

development for a new period of history in which the State will no longer take charge, *coercively*, of the leadership or control of the destiny of each individual, in which from now on each man will *objectively* have *the choice*, that is, *the difficult task* of becoming by himself what he is. The themes of socialist humanism (free development of the individual, respect for socialist legality, dignity of the person, etc.) are the way the Soviets and other socialists are *living* the relation between themselves and these problems, that is, the *conditions* in which they are posed. It is striking to observe that, in conformity with the necessity of their development, in the majority of socialist democracies as in the Soviet Union, problems of politics and ethics have come to the fore and that for their part, Western parties, too, are obsessed with these problems. Now, it is not less striking to see that these problems are occasionally, if not frequently, dealt with *theoretically* by recourse to concepts derived from Marx's early period, from his philosophy of man: the concepts of alienation, fission, fetishism, the total man, etc. However, considered in themselves, these problems are basically problems that, far from calling for a 'philosophy of man', involve the preparation of new forms of *organization* for economic, political and ideological life (including new forms of individual development) in the socialist countries during the phase of the withering-away or supersession of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Why is it that these problems are posed by certain ideologues as a function of the concepts of a *philosophy of man* – instead of being openly, fully and rigorously posed in the economic, political and ideological terms of Marxist theory? Why do so many Marxist philosophers seem to feel the need to appeal to the pre-Marxist ideological concept of *alienation* in order supposedly to think and 'resolve' these concrete historical problems?

We would not observe the temptation of this ideological recourse if it were not in its own way the index of a necessity which cannot nevertheless take shelter in the protection of other, better established, forms of necessity. There can be no doubt that Communists are correct in opposing the economic, social, political and cultural *reality* of socialism to the 'inhumanity' of Imperialism in general; that this contrast is a part of the confrontation and struggle between socialism and imperialism. But it might be equally dangerous to use an ideological concept like humanism, with neither discrimination nor reserve, as if it were a theoretical concept, when it is inevitably charged with associations from the ideological unconsciousness and only too easily blends into themes of petty-bourgeois inspiration (we know that the petty bourgeoisie and its ideology, for which Lenin predicted a fine future, have not yet been buried by History).

Here we are touching on a deeper reason, and one doubtless difficult to express. Within certain limits this recourse to ideology might indeed be envisaged as the substitute for a recourse to theory. Here again we would find the *theoretical conditions* currently inherited by Marxist theory from its past – not just the dogmatism of the Stalinist period, but also, from further back, the heritage of the disastrously opportunist interpretations of the Second International which Lenin fought against throughout his life, but which have neither as yet been buried by History. These conditions have hindered the development which was indispensable if Marxist theory was to acquire precisely those concepts demanded by the new problems: concepts that would have allowed it to pose these problems today in scientific, not

ideological terms; that would have allowed it to call things by their names, that is, by the appropriate Marxist concepts, rather than, as only too often happens, by ideological concepts (alienation) or by concepts without any definite status.

For example, it is regrettable to observe that the concept by which Communists designate an important historical phenomenon in the history of the U.S.S.R. and of the workers' movement: the concept of the 'cult of personality' would be an 'absent', unclassifiable concept in Marxist theory if it were taken as a theoretical concept; it may well describe and condemn a mode of behaviour, and on these grounds, possess a doubly practical value, but, to my knowledge, Marx never regarded a mode of political behaviour as directly assimilable to a historical *category*, that is, to a *concept* from the theory of historical materialism: for if it does designate a reality, it is not its concept. However, everything that has been said of the 'cult of personality' refers exactly to the domain of the *superstructure* and therefore of State organization and ideologies; further it refers largely to *this domain alone*, which we know from Marxist theory possesses a 'relative autonomy' (which explains very simply, in theory, how the socialist *infrastructure* has been able to develop without essential damage during this period of errors affecting the superstructure). Why are existing, known and recognized Marxist concepts not invoked to think and situate this phenomenon, which is in fact described as a mode of behaviour and related to one man's 'psychology', that is, merely *described* but not thought? If one man's 'psychology' could take on this *historical* role, why not pose in Marxist terms the question of the historical conditions of the possibility of this apparent promotion of 'psychology' to the dignity and dimensions of a historical fact? Marxism contains in its principles the wherewithal to pose this problem in terms of theory, and hence the wherewithal to clarify it and help to resolve it.

It is no accident that the two examples I have invoked are the concept of alienation and the concept of the 'cult of personality'. For the concepts of socialist humanism, too (in particular the problems of law and the person), have as their object problems arising in the domain of the superstructure: State organization, political life, ethics, ideologies, etc. And it is impossible to hold back the thought that the recourse to ideology is a short cut there too, a substitute for an insufficient theory. Insufficient, but latent and potential. Such is the role of this temptation of the recourse to ideology; to fill in this absence, this delay, this gap, without recognizing it openly, by making one's need and impatience a theoretical argument, as Engels put it, and by taking the need for a theory for the theory itself. The philosophical humanism which might easily become a threat to us and which shelters behind the unprecedented achievements of socialism itself, is this complement which, in default of theory, is destined to give certain Marxist ideologue the *feeling* of the theory that they lack; a feeling that cannot lay claim to that most precious of all the things Marx gave us – the possibility of scientific knowledge.

That is why, if today socialist humanism is on the agenda, the good reasons for this ideology can in no case serve as a caution against the bad ones, without dragging us into a confusion of ideology and scientific theory.

Marx's philosophical anti-humanism does provide an understanding of the necessity of existing ideologies, including humanism. But at the same time, because it is a critical and revolutionary theory, it also provides an understanding of the tactics to be adopted towards them; whether they should be supported, transformed or combated. And Marxists know that there can be no tactics that do not depend on a strategy – and no strategy that does not depend on theory.

October, 1963

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1. Here I am using 'class humanism' in the sense of Lenin's statement that the October socialist revolution had given power to the working classes, the workers and the poor peasants, and that, *on their behalf*, it had secured conditions of life, action and development that they had never known before: democracy *for* the working classes, dictatorship *over* the oppressors. I am not using 'class humanism' in the sense adopted in Marx's early works, where the proletariat in its 'alienation' represents the human essence itself, whose 'realization' is to be assured by the revolution; this 'religious' conception of the proletariat (the 'universal class', since it is the 'loss of man' in 'revolt against its own loss') was re-adopted by the young Lukács in his *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*.

2. *Die Rheinische Zeitung*, 'The Freedom of the Press', 12 May 1842.

3. Letter to Ruge, September 1843 – an admirable formulation, the key to Marx's early philosophy.

4. *Die Rheinische Zeitung*, 'On the leading article in no. 179 of the *Kölnische Zeitung*', 14 July 1842.

5. Ibid.

6. This confluence of Feuerbach and the theoretical crisis in which history had thrown the young German radicals explains their enthusiasm for the author of the *Provisional Theses*, of the *Essence of Christianity* and of the *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*. Indeed, Feuerbach represented the *theoretical* solution to the young intellectuals' theoretical crisis. In his humanism of alienation, he gave them the theoretical concepts that enabled them to think the alienation of the human essence as an indispensable moment in the realization of the human essence, unreason (the irrational *reality* of the State) as a necessary moment in the realization of reason (the idea of the State). It thus enabled them to *think* what they would otherwise have suffered as irrationality itself: the necessary *connexion* between reason and unreason. Of course, this relation remained trapped in a philosophical anthropology, its basis, with this theoretical proviso: the remanipulation of the concept of man, indispensable to think the historical relation between historical reason and unreason. Man ceases to be defined by reason and freedom: he becomes, in his very principle, 'communalist', concrete intersubjectivity, love, fraternity, 'species being'.

7. The whole, fashionable, theory of 'reification' depends on a projection of the theory of alienation found in the early texts, particularly the *1844 Manuscripts*, on to the theory of 'fetishism' in *Capital*. In the *1844 Manuscripts*, the objectification of the human essence is claimed as the indispensable preliminary to the reappropriation of the human essence by man. Throughout the process of objectification, man only exists in the form of an objectivity in which he meets his own essence in the appearance of a foreign, non-human, essence. This

'objectification' is not called 'reification' even though it is called *inhuman*. Inhumanity is not represented *par excellence* by the model of a 'thing': but sometimes by the model of animality (or even of pre-animality – the man who no longer even has simple animal relations with nature), sometimes by the model of the omnipotence and fascination of transcendence (God, the State) and of money, which is, of course, a 'thing'. In *Capital* the only social relation that is presented in the form of a *thing* (this piece of metal) is *money*. But the conception of money as a *thing* (that is, the confusion of value with use-value in money) does not correspond to the reality of this 'thing': it is not the brutality of a simple 'thing' that man is faced with when he is in direct relation with money; it is a *power* (or a *lack* of it) over things and men. An ideology of reification that sees 'things' everywhere in human relations confuses in this category 'thing' (a category more foreign to Marx cannot be imagined) every social relation, conceived according to the model of a money-thing ideology.

A Complementary Note on 'Real Humanism'

Just a word or two on the phrase 'real humanism'.

The specific difference lies in the adjective: *real*. Real-humanism is scientifically defined by its opposition to unreal humanism, ideal(ist), abstract, speculative humanism and so on. This *reference* humanism is simultaneously invoked as a reference and rejected for its abstraction, unreality, etc., by the new real-humanism. So the old humanism is judged by the new as an abstract and illusory humanism. Its illusion is to aim at an unreal object, to have as its content an object which is not the real object.

Real humanism presents itself as the humanism that has as its content not an abstract speculative object, but a real object.

But this definition remains a negative one: it is sufficient to express the rejection of a certain content, but it does not provide the new content as such. The content aimed at by real-humanism is not in the concepts of humanism or 'real' as such, but outside these concepts. The adjective real is *gestural;* it points out that to find the content of this new humanism you must look in *reality* – in society, the State, etc. So the concept of real-humanism is linked to the concept of humanism as its theoretical reference, but it is opposed to it through its rejection of the latter's abstract object – and by providing a concrete, real, object. The word *real* plays a dual role. It shows up the idealism and abstraction in the old humanism (negative function of the concept of reality); and at the same time it designates the *external reality* (external to the old humanism) in which the new humanism will find its content (positive function of the

concept of reality). However, this positive function of the word 'real' is not a positive function of *knowledge*, it is a positive function of *practical gesture*.

What, indeed, is this 'reality' which is to transform the old humanism into real-humanism? It is society. The Sixth Thesis on Feuerbach goes so far as to say that the non-abstract 'man' is 'the ensemble of the social relations'. Now if we take this phrase literally as an adequate definition *it means nothing at all*. Try and give it a literal explication and you will see that there is no way out without recourse to a periphrasis of the following kind: 'If anyone wants to know what reality is, not the reality corresponding adequately to the concept of man, or of humanism, but the reality which is directly at issue in these concepts, it is not an abstract essence but the ensemble of the social relations.' This periphrasis immediately highlights the *inadequacy* of the concept of man to its definition: the ensemble of the social relations. Between these two terms (man/ensemble of the social relations) there is, doubtless, some relation, but it is not legible in the definition, *it is not a relation of definition, not a relation of knowledge.*

But this inadequacy has a meaning, this relation has a meaning: a *practical* meaning. This inadequacy manifestly designates an *action to be achieved*, a *displacement* to be put into effect. It means that to find the reality alluded to by seeking abstract man no longer but real man instead, it is necessary *to turn to society*, and to undertake an analysis of the ensemble of the social relations. In the phrase real-humanism, in my opinion, the concept 'real' is a practical concept, the equivalent of a *signal*, of a notice-board that 'points out' what movement is to be put into effect and in what direction, to what place, must there be *displacement* to reach the real earth rather than the heaven of abstraction. 'The real this way!' We follow this *guide* and we come out into society, the social relations, and the conditions of their real possibility.

But it is then that the shocking paradox appears: once this *displacement* has really been put into effect, once the scientific analysis of this real object has been undertaken, we discover that a knowledge of concrete (real) men, that is, a knowledge of the ensemble of the social relations is only possible on condition that we do completely without the *theoretical services* of the concept of man (in the sense in which it existed in its theoretical claims even before the displacement). In fact, this concept seems to me to be useless from a scientific viewpoint, not because it is abstract! – but because it is not scientific. To think the reality of society, of the ensemble of social relations, we must put into effect a radical *displacement*, not only a spatial displacement (from the abstract to the concrete) but also a conceptual displacement (we change our basic concepts!). The concepts whereby Marx thought reality, which real-humanism pointed out, never ever again introduce as *theoretical* concepts the concepts of man or humanism; but other, quite new concepts, the concepts of mode of production, forces of production, relations of production, superstructure, ideology, etc. This is the paradox: the practical concept that pointed out for us the destination of the displacement has been consumed in the displacement itself, the concept that pointed out for us the site for investigation is from now on absent from the investigation itself.

This is a characteristic phenomenon of the *transitions – breaks* that constitute the advent of a new problematic. At certain moments in the history of ideas we see these *practical concepts* emerge, and typically they are *internally unbalanced* concepts. In one aspect they belong to the old ideological universe which serves as their 'theoretical' reference (humanism); but in the other they concern a new domain, pointing out the *displacement* to be put into effect to get to it. In the first aspect they retain a 'theoretical' meaning (the meaning in their universe of reference); in the second their only meaning is as a *practical* signal, pointing out a direction and a destination, but without giving an adequate concept of it. We still remain in the domain of the earlier ideology; we are approaching its frontier and a signpost points out to us a beyond, a direction and a destination.' Cross the frontier and go on in the direction of society and you will find the real.' The signpost is still standing in the ideological domain, *the message is written in its language*, even if it does use 'new' words, even the rejection of ideology is written in ideological language, as we see so strikingly in Feuerbach; the 'concrete', the 'real', these are the names that the opposition to ideology bears in ideology.

You can stay indefinitely at the frontier line, ceaselessly repeating concrete! concrete! real! real! This is what Feuerbach did, and Feuerbach, too, spoke of society and State, and never stopped talking about real man, man with needs, concrete man, who is merely the ensemble of his developed human needs, of politics and industry. He stayed with the words which in their concreteness itself referred him to the image of man whose *realization* he called for (Feuerbach, too, said that real man is society, in a definition *then adequate* to its concept, since society was for him in each of its historical moments never more than the progressive manifestation of the *human essence*).

Or, on the contrary, you can cross the frontier for good and penetrate into the domain of reality and embark 'seriously on its study', as Marx puts it in *The German Ideology*. Then the signal will have played its practical part. It remains in the old domain, in the domain *abandoned* by the very fact of *displacement*. There you are face to face with your real object, obliged to forge the requisite and adequate concepts, to think it, obliged to accept the fact that the old concepts and in particular the concept of real-man or real humanism will not allow you to *think the reality of man*, that to reach this immediacy, which is precisely not an immediacy, it is necessary, as always where knowledge is concerned, to make a long detour. You have abandoned the old domain, the old concepts. Here you are in a new domain, for which new concepts will give you the knowledge. The sign that a real change in locus and problematic has occurred, and that a new adventure is beginning, the adventure of science in development.

So are we condemned to repeat the same experience? Real humanism may today be the *slogan* of a rejection and a programme and thus in the best of cases a *practical* signal, the rejection of an abstract 'humanism' which only existed in the discourse and not in the reality of institutions – and the gesture towards a beyond, a reality which is still *beyond*, which is not yet truly *realized*, but only hoped for, the programme of an aspiration to be brought to life. It is only too clear that profound rejections and authentic wishes, as well as an impatient desire to

overcome still unconquered obstacles, are, in their own way, translated in this concept of real humanism. It is also certain that in every epoch of history men must make their own experiments on their own account, and it is no accident that some of them retrace the 'paths' taken by their elders and ancestors. It is certainly indispensable that Communists should take seriously the real meaning concealed in this wish, the realities for which this practical concept is an index. It is certainly indispensable that Communists should pass to and fro between the still uncertain, confused and ideological forms in which this wish or some new experiment are expressed – and their own theoretical concepts; that they should, when the need has been absolutely proved, forge new theoretical concepts adequate to the upheavals of practice in our own time.

But we should not forget that the frontier separating ideology from scientific theory was crossed about one hundred and twenty years ago by Marx; that this great undertaking and this great discovery have been recorded in the works and inscribed in the conceptual system of a knowledge whose effects have little by little transformed the face of the earth and its history. We cannot and must not for one instant renounce the benefits of this irreplaceable gain, the benefits of these theoretical resources which far transcend in wealth and potential the use that has so far been made of them. We must not forget that an understanding of what is going on in the world today and the political and ideological interchange indispensable to the broadening and reinforcement of the base of socialism are only possible if, for our part, we do not fall *behind* what Marx gained for us, as far behind as that still uncertain frontier between ideology and science. We can give help to all those who are near to crossing that frontier, but only on condition that we have crossed it ourselves, and have inscribed in our concepts the irreversible result of this change of scene.

For us, the 'real' is not a *theoretical slogan;* the real is the real object that exists independently of its knowledge – but which can only be defined by its knowledge. In this second, theoretical, relation, the real is identical to the means of knowing it, the real is its known or to-be-known structure, it is the very object of Marxist theory, the object marked out by the great theoretical discoveries of Marx and Lenin, the immense, living, constantly developing field, in which the events of human history can from now on be mastered by men's practice, because they will be within their conceptual grasp, their knowledge.

This is what I meant when I demonstrated that real-humanism or socialist humanism may be the object of a recognition or of a misunderstanding, according to the status assigned it in respect to theory; that it can serve as a *practical, ideological* slogan in so far as it is exactly adequate to its function and not confused with a quite different function; that there is no way in which it can abrogate the attributes of a *theoretical* concept. I also meant that this slogan is not itself its own light, but can at most point out the *place, beyond it*, where light reigns. I meant that a certain *inflation* of this practical, ideological concept might induce Marxist theory to fall behind its own frontiers; and what is more, might even hinder, if not bar, the way to truly *posing*, and hence truly solving, the problems whose existence and urgency it is intended to designate, in its own way. Simply put, the recourse to ethics so deeply inscribed in every

humanist ideology may play the part of an imaginary treatment of real problems. *Once known*, these problems are posed in precise terms; they are organizational problems of the forms of economic life, political life and individual life. To pose these problems correctly and to resolve them in reality, they must be called by their names, *their scientific names*. The slogan of humanism has no theoretical value, but it does have value as a practical index: we must get down to the concrete problems themselves, that is, to their knowledge, if we are to produce the historical transformation whose necessity was thought by Marx. We must be careful that in this process no *word*, justified by its practical function, usurps a theoretical function; but that in performing its practical function, it simultaneously disappears from the field of theory.

January, 1965

Lisa Guenther
Seeing Like a Cop: A Critical Phenomenology of Whiteness as Property

Abstract: In her landmark essay, "Whiteness as Property," Cheryl Harris shows how whiteness functions as a kind of property that protects those who pass as white from occupying the very bottom of a social hierarchy. This chapter explores the perceptual practices and sociogenic structure of whiteness as property through an engagement with Fanon's account of the lived experience of blackness in a white world, which is structured by the corporeal schema, the historico-racial schema, and the racial epidermal schema. Drawing on Darren Wilson's grand jury testimony, as well as critical literature on race and policing, I argue that a possessive investment in whiteness produces and intensifies the investment in security apparatuses that serve and protect some people while exposing others to both mundane and spectacular forms of state violence. This double investment in property and security drives the perceptual practice of suspicious surveillance, or "seeing like a cop," as well as the spatial politics of gentrification.

In the neighborhood where I lived for ten years in East Nashville, there was a sign on many front lawns: "Something Suspicious? Don't Wait – Call [the non-emergency number for the Metro Nashville Police]." For a reason I never quite understood, the sign featured a pair of sultry feminine eyes with arched eyebrows, more like something you might see on a 1980s strip club than a neighborhood watch sign. Mixed messages aside, it's not clear that residents needed much encouragement to practice surveillance on each other. The East Nashville listerv was full of reports of "suspicious" activity, including "Nervous guy ringing doorbell" ("We did not get to the door but we have video surveillance"), "Mulch Guy" ("He wanted to charge $6.85 a bag, but charged by the plastic bucket - much less than a 'bag'. He also did not follow my wife's and my instructions to avoid smothering the monkey grass"), and "URGENT ALERT! Dog Thieves in the neighborhood" ("There was an attempt to steal his Dalmatian (with a hot dog)").[1] Signs and messages like these function as cues for a set of perceptual practices that I will call "seeing like a cop." Such practices include watching for abnormal activity, listening for strange sounds, and tracking the movement of unfamiliar people, usually from the safety of one's home or car. Seeing like a cop typically leads to calling the cops, and this call can have disastrous consequences for those who are perceived as strange, out-of-place, and potentially dangerous.

East Nashville changed a lot in the ten years I lived there. By the time I left, condos and luxury apartments were springing up everywhere. One building, called Stacks on Main, tapped into the excitement of rapid gentrification with a frankly neocolonial advertising slogan: "Get Your Piece of the East."[2] The website features young white people posing with vintage cameras and playfully entangling each other in Christmas lights. Prospective buyers are encouraged to "put a ring on it" and submit an application. They are told, "You shouldn't have to choose between modern amenities and a historic neighborhood… You deserve an experience, not just another apartment."[3] But the history of East Nashville is more complicated than the current map of coffee shops, microbreweries, and yoga studios would suggest. At the end of the block is a road sign announcing the Trail of Tears Auto Tour Route, which spans the Cumberland River close to the place where thousands of Cherokee people were forced to cross in 1830 as they were driven off their land towards Indian Territory in what is now known as Oklahoma (Harris and Cummins, forthcoming). In the 1970s and 80s, East Nashville became home to impoverished people of color displaced from the downtown core by "urban renewal" projects. When a tornado swept through East Nashville in 1998, damaging over 300 homes, the disaster set off a wave of gentrification by people who celebrated their adventurous frontier spirit with bumper stickers featuring the 37206 zip code and slogans like "Over the river and through the hood," or "We'll steal your heart – and your lawnmower." Now there's a second wave of gentrification underway, as luxury apartments replace housing projects, and companies with names like Strategic Hospitality claim their own Piece of the East.[4]

The aesthetics of hipster gentrification may seem a far cry from the suburban paranoia of first-wave gentrifiers, with their dated clipart and their covert or overt racism. There is no mention of security concerns at Stacks on Main; the selling point is not the comfort of gated enclosure, but rather the promise of affordable access to a plethora of "experiences" to which you are entitled, and

which the website is designed to help you imagine. And yet, these experiences are only marketable

on the basis of a reasonably secure investment in a Piece of the East whose value can be expected to

stack up fairly quickly. The unstated assumption of the gentrifying pioneer is that if you don't enjoy

your experience of other people's poverty, homelessness, or racial difference, you can call on state

violence to have them removed. The aesthetics of securitized edginess comes to signify

neighborhood investment and "improvement" (Harney and Moten 2017), even though it typically

intensifies the exposure of long-time residents to police surveillance, harassment, displacement,

arrest, and even homicidal violence. In February 2017, a 31-year-old black man named Jocques

Clemmons was shot dead by a police officer in the parking lot of Cayce Homes, a housing project

just a few blocks from Stacks on Main.[5] The projects are now being redeveloped into mixed-income

housing due to their lucrative proximity to downtown.

What is the relation between "seeing like a cop" and "getting your piece" of neocolonial

urban territory? To what extent are these practices racialized as white, even if those who participate

in them are not exclusively white? How do property, personhood, and race intersect with the

security apparatuses that serve and protect some people while exposing others to lethal and non-

lethal, but exhausting, forms of state violence? And how might phenomenological methods help to

make sense of this complex intersection?

In what follows, I propose a critical phenomenology of whiteness as property, and as a

collective investment in state violence to protect white property interests. By *critical phenomenology*, I

mean a phenomenological method that does not grant absolute priority to the first-person

experience of individual consciousness, but rather situates lived experience in a material, historical,

and social context that is both prior to the individuation of any given subject and also shaped by the

historical sedimentation of perceptual practices and existential styles.[6] From this perspective, the

world is not constituted by the intentional acts of a singular consciousness; rather, Being-in-the-

world is, in Merleau-Ponty's words, "instituted-instituting," both passively received or inherited and actively re-opened to fresh horizons of possibility.[7] I will return to the concept of institution later, in my account of the sociogeny of whiteness as property.

The concept of whiteness as property was developed by critical legal theorist Cheryl Harris to name the effect of legal, political, and economic structures developed in the early Virginia Colony on the twin foundations of settler colonialism and slavery. Prior to the investment of settlers and planters in getting their own piece of America, whiteness did not exist as a social category. People of European descent may have identified as English, Norwegian, and French, or as Christian rather than heathen, but they did not identify as "white" until whiteness was consolidated in law and in social practice as a kind of property whose possession exempted one from being owned by another, thus distinguishing indentured servants of European descent from slaves of African descent, the latter of whom were marked by law with a permanent, inheritable status as chattel.[8] Harris argues that, long after the Thirteenth Amendment (partially) abolished slavery, whiteness has continued to function as a property interest that protects white people from being at the bottom of a social hierarchy, even if they are otherwise marginalized on the basis of class, gender, sexuality, or ability. An investment in whiteness as property may not guarantee financial stability to individual white people, but it does pay what W. E. B. Du Bois calls the "public and psychological wage" of whiteness.[9]

In proposing a critical phenomenology of whiteness as property, I do not claim to describe the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, or desires of white people, understood as individual subjects. My project is not an account of white consciousness, nor even of the white unconscious, but rather a phenomenological critique of whiteness as a sociogenic force that (re)produces the spatio-temporal order of what Fanon calls "the white world," as well as the bifurcation between, for example, white neighbors and black strangers as inhabitants of the white world. I am particularly interested in the

phenomenological structure of *whitespace*, understood as a spatial order that has been securitized or "cleansed"[10] of impediments to the fusion of personhood and property, in which "subjects of human capital" or "entrepreneurs of the self" invest,[11] and which they routinely call on state violence to protect. Not every subject of human capital is phenotypically white, and not every white person is deeply invested in whiteness as property. Nor is the practice of suspicious surveillance limited to white people. Whiteness is not an ahistorical essence, but rather a particular form of social (but also asocial or socially destructive) existence that emerged in the early modern period, at the intersection of settler colonialism and transatlantic slavery, and through the intellectual collusion of liberal political philosophers like John Locke with colonial regimes of racial capitalism. But precisely as such, the structure of whiteness as property incentivizes perceptual practices and sociogenic schemas that naturalize and normalize what George Lipsitz calls "a possessive investment in whiteness."[12] I will argue that this investment in whiteness also entails a tacit investment in racist state violence to protect whiteness as property.[13]

In order to dismantle or abolish whiteness as property, we must understand it works. The aim of this paper is to contribute to abolitionist theory and praxis by exploring how whiteness functions as a sociogenic force to produce subjects of propertied personhood who are invested in racist police violence with various degrees of impunity.[14]

To Serve and Protect (Whiteness as Property)

Cheryl Harris argues that in the United States, whiteness functions as property in a range of different senses: as a value and a right, as in James Madison's definition of property; as the basis of an expectation of advantage, as in Bentham's definition; and as an exclusive right of possession, use, and disposition, as in liberal political definitions of property.[15] Understood as an *exclusive* property right, whiteness implies the right to police its own boundaries for the sake of excluding and

selectively including others as white, and therefore as rightfully shielded from becoming the property of others.[16] This right to exclude others is crucial for understanding how proper(tied) personhood is deputized as an agent of suspicious surveillance. But how exactly does this happen? How does whiteness operate as a sociogenic force with the capacity to (re)produce subjects who invest in themselves as a form of property and seek to protect this property in different ways, including seeing like a cop and calling the cops?

By *sociogenic force*, I mean a material, historical power to generate and intensify particular forms of social being, including individuated subjects and the spatio-temporal social order that Fanon calls "the white world." The concept of sociogeny was introduced by Frantz Fanon and developed by Sylvia Wynter[17] and her readers, including David Marriott[18] and Lewis Gordon.[19] In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon writes, "Beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny... Man is what brings society into being. The prognosis is in the hands of those who are willing to get rid of the worm-eaten roots of the structure."[20] Sociogeny is not a causal mechanism, but rather a conditional process that unfolds both on the basis of established social practices and existential styles, and also in relation to an indefinite horizon of possibility for becoming otherwise.

I find Merleau-Ponty's account of *institution* helpful for understanding the temporal dynamics of sociogeny. Institution is an active-passive process whereby an event or experience both arises on the basis of sedimented practices and also establishes its own "durable dimensions, in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will make sense, and will form a thinkable sequel or a history… as a call to follow, the demand of a future."[21] The event may be the fatal shooting of an unarmed black man by a police officer, or it may be the construction of a luxury apartment building in an historically black neighborhood. What marks this event as a moment with institutional power is its capacity to issue a "call to follow," or to operate as an organizational node for a future that emerges on the basis of a past that remains open to being interpreted or appropriated in different

ways. But institution is more than a hermeneutic framework; it is the establishment of a rhythm that organizes both the meaning and the materiality of existence. This rhythm may be already felt in our bodies and our world, but it must be picked out and invested with durable dimensions in order to establish itself as institution. The intensity and consistency of this investment has the power to generate social forms like white subjects in a white world, with a set of perceptual practices that include seeing like a cop. The process of institution presupposes an "intersubjective or symbolic field of cultural objects, which is our milieu, our hinge, our jointure."[22] This field includes lawn signs and advertising slogans, as well as surveillance cameras, alarm systems, fences, gates, swipe cards, and secure parking facilities.

Merleau-Ponty argues that "the instituted exists between others and myself, between me and myself, like a hinge, the consequence and the guarantee of our belonging to one selfsame world."[23] But the bifurcation of social space into neighbors and strangers, or potential investors and removable barriers to investment, suggests that while we may all find ourselves in "one selfsame world" structured by whiteness as property, we do not all *belong* to this world, nor do we have the same chance of claiming a piece of it as our own. Fanon argues in *Black Skin, White Masks* that the black man has no ontology in a white world, given that blackness is constructed in opposition to whiteness and can only be perceived as a lack or absence in relation to the white mask that he is forced to wear if he wants to show up as intelligible on a white horizon of meaning – or to survive in a world that is constructed and maintained through racist police violence. In the final section of this paper, I will argue that white skin is *also* produced by white masks, but in a different way, through an investment in propertied personhood that makes your status intelligible as a subject of human capital in a world where you are entitled to have an "experience" and to "get your piece." To put this somewhat differently, white masks are the condition under which some people "think they are white."[24] In his essay, "On Being White… and Other Lies," James Baldwin reflects on the

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impact of a possessive investment in whiteness on both white subjectivity and on the instituted structure of the world:

> America became white – the people who, as they claim, 'settled' the country became white—because of the necessity of denying the black presence, and justifying the black subjugation. No community can be based on such a principle – or, in other words, no community can be established on so genocidal a lie. White men – from Norway, for example, where they were 'Norwegians'—became white by slaughtering the cattle, poisoning the wells, torching the houses, massacring Native Americans, raping black women. (Baldwin 1998, 178-9)

> And how did they get that way? By deciding that they were white. By opting for safety instead of life… And [they] have brought humanity to the edge of oblivion: because they think they are white.[25]

To think you are white is to be invested in whiteness as property to the point of accepting or even demanding the exclusion, exploitation, or annihilation of others as a condition of securing your own investment. Or to put this another way, whiteness is what grants you the right to be served and protected by law enforcement officers.

For Baldwin, investing in whiteness is a "moral choice" that both exposes communities of color to genocidal violence and also diminishes the humanity of white people, the latter of whom give up "the power to control and define themselves" in exchange for the power to "control and define Black people."[26] But from a phenomenological perspective, the development of a racial epidermal schema is – at least initially – less a choice than a pre-reflective, pre-predicative, and even pre-personal investment. This is not to say that white people cannot be held accountable for our investment in white supremacy, but rather that we are accountable less for choosing *to be white*, than for choosing to *continue to invest in whiteness as property* in the face of multiple tensions, disruptions, and

contradictions. What are the perceptual practices through which people who think they are white and invest in whiteness as property choose to police the boundaries of whiteness?

Seeing Like a Cop

The word *cop*, understood as a slang term for police officer, originated in mid-nineteenth century England, soon after the establishment of a professional police force in the city of London. *Cop* is short for *copper* (or "one who cops"), which is derived from the verb, *to cop*, meaning "to capture, grasp, lay hold of, 'nab.'" The Latin root is *capere*, meaning to take or seize, but also to "take in" in the sense of understanding. *Capere* gives us words such as capture and captivity, but also concept and perception (from *concipere* and *percipere*).[27] Beyond this etymological curiosity, what can we say about the relation in practice between "seeing like a cop" and *capere* in the threefold sense of understanding or perceiving, taking or seizing, and capturing or arresting? What are the epistemic dimensions of policing, and how are they related to the racial, economic, and legal order of whiteness as property?

In his 1968 book, *Varieties of Police Behavior,* James Q. Wilson describes the job of the patrolling officer as a perceptual practice of detecting signs of abnormality in order to remove them from public space:

> The patrolman confronting a citizen is especially alert to two kinds of cues: those that signal *danger* and those that signal *impropriety*. A badly dressed, rough-talking person, especially one accompanied by friends and in his own neighborhood, is quickly seen as a potential threat – he may, out of his own hot temper or because of the need to "prove himself" in front of his buddies, pull a knife or throw a punch. A teenager hanging out on a street corner late at night, especially one dressed in an eccentric manner, a Negro wearing a "conk rag" (a piece of cloth tied around the head to hold flat hair being "processed" – that is, straightened), girls

in short skirts and boys in long hair parked in a flash car talking loudly to friends on the curb, or interracial couples – all of these are seen by police officers as persons displaying unconventional and improper behavior.[28]

Nearly 15 years later, in 1982, Wilson co-wrote an influential article with George L. Kelling called "Broken Windows," which advocates the arrest of "disreputable or obstreperous or unpredictable people" such as "panhandlers, drunks, addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes, loiterers, the mentally disturbed" in order to make "decent folk" feel safer in their neighborhoods, even if the actual crime rate remains unaffected. The basic argument is that broken windows, if left unrepaired, send a signal that more serious forms of disorder and crime may be tolerated. According to Wilson and Kelling, "the first broken window" is not an inanimate object but rather the "unchecked panhandler" whose very existence poses a threat to normal, propertied personhood. Wilson and Kelling frankly endorse the use of "informal or extralegal steps" by police officers—even tactics that "probably would not withstand a legal challenge"—in order to produce an aesthetics of safety and order for residents with good, middle class (white) values.[29]

In his trenchant critique of Broken Windows policing, Bernard Harcourt observes that the perception of "regularity on the street depends on irregularity in police practice," which can have disastrous consequences for those who appear abnormal or out of place to police.[30] For Harcourt, this amounts to "a straightforward policy of aggressive misdemeanor arrests masquerading as a neighborhood beautification program or as an innocent phenomenon of social influence."[31] Broken windows policing has been instituted and normalized across the US and exported to Canada, Australia, and Europe.[32] In New York alone, the NYPD conducted "a staggering 4 million stops and some 2.3 million frisks [between] 2004 and 2014. More than 81 percent of these targeted the city's black and Latino residents. Only 1.5 percent of these police actions resulted in the discovery of a weapon and only 6 percent of all stops resulted in arrest."[33] The effect of such practices on the

everyday lives of people of color has been documented and critiqued by the Morris Justice Project,[34] the Stop Mass Incarceration Network,[35] the Center for Constitutional Rights,[36] the New York Civil Liberties Union,[37] and other organizations. In his phenomenology of policing, Jonathan Wender argues that "modern police work involves armed bureaucrats encountering their fellow human beings in various states of crisis and predicament."[38] Officers are trained to reduce these complex predicaments to finite "problems" that can be solved through state intervention. To see like a cop, then, is to scan the horizon for abnormality, viewing people as potential problems, and mobilizing the force of law to solve these problems. Sometimes this force is lethal.

In his grand jury deposition for the shooting death of Michael Brown, Darren Wilson presents a narrative to justify his own use of lethal force, beginning with suspicious surveillance, the detection of abnormality, the perception of persons as problems, and the attempt to "solve" this problem. According to Wilson, he was driving west on Canfield Drive in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014, when he "observed two men in the middle of the street… walking along the double yellow line single file order."[39] As a result of this "manner of walking" (as it is classified by the Ferguson police department for the purpose of issuing fines), "they couldn't have traffic normal." Wilson tells the grand jury that he asked the men, "[W]hy don't you walk on the sidewalk?" Mike Brown's companion Dorian Johnson responded, "[W]e are almost to our destination." When Wilson persisted in questioning the men, Brown allegedly responded, "[F]uck what you have to say." Wilson comments, "[W]hen he said that, it drew my attention totally to Brown."[40]

In the course of his testimony, Wilson compares himself to "a 5-year-old holding onto Hulk Hogan… Hulk Hogan, that's how big he felt and how small I felt just from grasping his arm."[41] At the time of the shooting, Wilson was 6'4", 210 lbs, and 28 years old; Brown was 6'5", 290 lbs, and 18 years old. Wilson describes Brown looking at him with "the most intense aggressive face. The only way I can describe it, it looks like a demon, that's how angry he looked."[42] As Wilson

fired rounds of ammunition at Brown, hitting him six times and eventually killing him, Wilson claimed that "it looked like [Brown] was almost bulking up to run through the shots, like it was making him mad that I'm shooting at him. And the face he had was looking straight through me, like I wasn't even there, I wasn't even anything in his way."[43] Throughout his testimony, Wilson exaggerates his own vulnerability and his perception of Brown, not only as dangerous, but as monstrous and inhumanly powerful.

As a perceptual practice, the violence of policing is both mundane and spectacular, and it is woven into the very fabric of racial capitalism in the United States. Not every white person is issued a police badge and authorized to carry a Sig Sauer handgun, but any of us can be recruited to engage in the perceptual practices of seeing like a cop and deployed as a "drone" for the racialized order of whiteness as property.[44] In his essay, "The Whiteness of Police," Nikhil Singh argues defines policing as "those preventive mechanisms and institutions for ensuring private property within public order, including access to the means of violence, their legal narration, and their use".[45] Drawing on the history of slave patrols and colonial police forces, Singh argues that, from the inception of liberal democracy in the Americas, police have enforced a racialized property order founded on the elevation and protection of whiteness, and the extraction and appropriation of value from the labor of slaves and the land stolen from Indigenous peoples, both of whom are "imagined to harbor a potentially criminal disregard" for whiteness as property.[46] Steve Martinot and Jared Sexton argue that police are not just protectors of whiteness, but "the avant-garde of white supremacy," given the "ethic of impunity" with which police wield state violence against people of color, not just in spectacular examples of homicidal violence but also in daily rituals of surveillance, racial profiling, harassment, arrest, and detention.[47] The relentless repetition of overt and covert police violence normalizes a Manichean distinction between "those whose human being is put permanently in question and those for whom it goes without saying."[48] For Martinot and Sexton,

"the security of belonging accompanies the re-racialisation of whiteness as the intensification of anti-blackness."[49]

Building on the work of Martinot and Sexton, Frank Wilderson defines policing as a practice of instituting and reinforcing the distinction between "those bodies that do not magnetize bullets and those that do."[50] He argues that "white people are not simply 'protected' by the police, they are—in their very corporeality—the police."[51] Wilderson's point is not that all white people consciously identify with the police; he is not positing whiteness as a timeless essence, but rather analyzing the political structure of whiteness as a subject position whose interests have been historically aligned with civil society and the racist state violence that serves and protects the material interests of (white, male, propertied) citizens.[52] One need not display a neighborhood watch sign or report unfamiliar doorbell-ringers on community listservs to be implicated in the structural relation between whiteness and police. For Wilderson, propertied personhood is so deeply built into the structure of civil society that—unlike white women, workers, and immigrants, all of whom are eligible for conditional status upgrades—"Blackness cannot become one of civil society's many junior partners."[53] Rather, "from the incoherence of Black death, America generates the coherence of white life."[54]

Wilderson asks, "How is the production and accumulation of junior partner social capital dependent upon an anti-Black rhetorical structure and a decomposed Black body?"[55] In other words, how are white people—even or especially white people in relatively marginalized positions with respect to gender, class, and ethnicity—recruited to police the boundaries of a social order that promises advancement in return for complicity with racist state violence? What forms of emotional and material investment does this recruitment demand as a condition for feelings of safety, belonging, and propriety? These questions move us beyond the perceptual practices of seeing like a cop, towards a sociogenic account of whiteness as property.

White Skin, White Masks

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon develops a critical phenomenology of "the lived experience of the black" in relation to three basic structures: the corporeal schema, the historico-racial schema, and the racial epidermal schema. Fanon's analysis emerges from his own experience of anti-Black racism; and yet, it also discloses much about white subjectivity and the "white world" that supports and protects it. To what extent might the basic structures of Fanon's analysis help us to understand how whiteness as property (re)produces the lived experience of those who think they are white?

1) *Corporeal Schema*

Fanon argues that "[i]n the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema."[56] Fanon calls this a "corporeal malediction."[57] The organizing principle of the modern world is whiteness, understood as both the contingent outcome of a history in which Europeans colonized the globe and trafficked in human flesh, and as a sociogenic force that naturalizes this history by equating (white) personhood with property. While the white world disrupts the corporeal schema of those who are racialized as black, it supports the coherence of white corporeal schemas and facilitates their operative intentionality, or their implicit sense of "I can."[58] Standard phenomenological accounts of the corporeal schema presuppose a white subject whose implicit awareness of the world allows for a "slow composition of my *self* as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world... It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive structuring of the self and of the world."[59] The naturalized, normalized schema of white embodiment posits an ideal of unimpeded capacity—a fluid passage from *I want* to *I can* and *I do*—that facilitates a sense of comfort and ease in a wide range of different situations and spaces.[60] It even fosters a sense of *entitlement* to feel comfortable and capable in the (white) world.[61] For

example, in the Virginia Colony, white men wanted to own slaves but disown the children they fathered with enslaved women, so they constructed a legal order that facilitated this practice. They wanted to extract wealth from the labor of black people and from the land of indigenous peoples, so they developed different racialization schemas to facilitate this extraction: the one-drop rule for blacks, and the fractional logic of blood quantum for indigenous peoples.[62] Not every aspect of the white world is so deliberately constructed, but the overall effect is to provide a context for the naturalization and normalization of whiteness as property, and for the lived experience of those who think they are white. This is not to say that nothing can ever go wrong for white people, or that we never experience any friction between ourselves and the world that has been constructed to serve our interests. Rather, it means that the *logic* of whiteness as property normalizes the smooth coordination of (masculine, straight, middle-class) white bodies with a spatio-temporal context that affirms and supports their existence.

If the analysis stopped here, we might be led to believe that the black man is simply excluded from white ontology, the latter of which maintains its proprietorial claim to disclose Being as such through its operative intentionality. But as we will see, the corporeal schema of whiteness as property generates a fundamental contradiction for those who think they are white between the desire for enclosure and the desire for territorial expansion. This contradiction will become clearer as the analysis unfolds.

2) Historico-Racial Schema

Reaching an impasse with standard phenomenological accounts of embodiment that assume a fluid interchange between self and world, Fanon sketches a historico-racial schema generated not by his own lived experience, but "by the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories" (Fanon 1967, 111). This historico-racial schema is an artifact of the white world, and it reflects the dominant interests of those who think they are white. It includes images of

black men as inherently suspicious or dangerous, especially when spotted in one's neighborhood or in the vicinity of one's property.

Is there a historical-racial schema of whiteness, and if so, how is it (re)produced? Reading Fanon alongside Baldwin and Harris, we might argue that whiteness is also constructed by white people "out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories" that support the innocence, entitlement, and impunity of white self-investment. The white historico-racial schema disavows both its historicity and its racialization in order to frame its desires, capacities, and interests—its "I want," "I can," and "I ought to be able to"—as a fluid, natural body schema that dovetails fluidly with the white world. If Indigenous peoples are racialized as disappearing or diluting into whiteness, and black people are racialized as permanently marked in opposition to whiteness, while "foreigners" are marked for exclusion or selective inclusion within a border or national boundary as legal or illegal aliens, then the one constant in these divergent and sometimes contradictory racialization schemas is the racialization of whites as owners of land and other property, as extractors of wealth from the bodies of others, and as excluders or selective includers of the right to claim whiteness as property.[63] This three-fold structure is, I would argue, the historico-racial schema of whiteness as property.

3) Racial epidermal schema

Fanon rounds out his critical phenomenology of black experience in a white world with a third concept: the racial epidermal schema that replaces the racialized subject's crumbled body schema, to the point where he feels like an entity that "occupie[s] space" rather than a dynamic, relational Being-in-the-world.[64] The tension between the black man's first-person experience as an embodied subject and third-person representations that constitute the historico-racial schema of blackness in a white world produces a racial epidermal schema that both incorporates and resists white representations of blackness. This tension fragments the racialized subject into three distinct

persons: a living, embodied subject of experience; a degraded artifact of white history; and a third

being whose skin is formed both in and against a white mask.

What—if anything—is the racial epidermal schema that produces the skin of those who

think they are white? If we understand the racial epidermal schema as a "device"[65] through which

the sociogenic force of whiteness as property is individuated and incorporated as skin, then the

epidermalization of whiteness is an active-passive process by which someone who expects to pass as

white (even or especially if they are phenotypically white) invests in whiteness as property. This

cannot happen without the assumption of a white mask that is woven from "a thousand details,

anecdotes, stories,"[66] as well as the laws, institutions, and philosophical concepts that are both

invented and inherited by white people, for the sake of protecting whiteness as property. There is

no white skin without the support of a white mask in a white world that both (re)produces and

disavows its own dependence on the prosthetic supplement of historico-racial schemas. The

assumption of a white mask by those who think they are white produces the effect of a white skin

that will have been prior to the mask. This mask covers over a wide range of differences in skin

tone (pink, beige, ivory, olive, blotchy, tanned, and so on) and in ethnicity or nationality (English,

German, Swedish… and more recently, Irish, Italian, and Jewish), as well as the discontinuous and

often contradictory histories and narratives through which whiteness has been granted or revoked.

With the assumption of a white mask, flesh becomes body, and the threshold of one's skin as a

chiasmatic zone of interface with others becomes a boundary or fence, the condition of passing as

white, i.e., as a self-owning, self-improving, self-investing form of property.

The felt sense of naturalness and ease in white corporeal schemas does not precede, but

rather follows and depends upon this epidermalization of white masks in a white world. Fanon

writes of his racial epidermalization as a black man in a white world as a form of dislocation and

incarceration: "On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white

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man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object."[67] I would argue that white people are also constructed as objects in a white world, but in the very different hybrid sense of a self-owning property that inherits and invests in its own value. The spatio-temporal effect of this construction is not imprisonment but rather self-seclusion in a securitized zone that is served and protected by racist state violence. While there are many material benefits to be drawn from this construction, and while the white world is structured to normalize and incentivize the fusion of personhood with property, whiteness is a (very privileged) form of "corporeal malediction" in the sense that it degrades others and diminishes its own social capacity for ethical connection and community. This fusion of property and personhood through the racial epidermalization of whiteness compels us to revisit the corporeal schema of white people, and to interrogate its common sense. But for this, we must take a brief detour through whitespace.

Whitespace is securitized space. It is the space that cops protect and serve. It is also "cleansed" space, as the carceral aesthetics of Broken Windows policing suggest.[68] Whitespace reduces places to *real estate* to be improved, flipped, and inherited at a private individual level, and to *territory* to be expanded through colonial violence at the collective level. Whitespace does not refer to the phenotypic race of its inhabitants; everyone in the modern world is forced to negotiate with whitespace in some way.[69] What makes whitespace white is an enforced collective investment in personhood as property: a historico-racial schema that owes its existence primarily to the intellectual and material legacies of European colonization and the transatlantic slave trade. Suburban whitespace feels safe to those who are included in it to the extent that the aesthetics of stability and self-enclosure corresponds with a lived experience of friendly police officers and reliable security staff.[70] Gentrified whitespace is shaped by a different aesthetics of edgy security or securitized edginess, where the aim is to expand one's access to diversity, excitement, and the opportunity for growth without taking too much of a risk on one's investment. There is also a temporal dimension

to whitespace; it implies both a future of growth, improvement, and expansion, and also a past to be inherited, conserved, developed, and handed down to others. This is ultimately a cryogenic structure; in opting for safety over life, I freeze myself now in order to preserve and resurrect myself later, in a future that is enriched by past and present investments.

Given this double investment in security and expansion, we must revise and complicate our initial sketch of the corporeal schema of whiteness as property. The two dimensions of whitespace—enclosure and territorial expansion—suggest a white corporeal schema with two divergent tendencies: on one hand, an investment in the body as an impenetrable shell, like a turtle that carries its house wherever it goes, and on the other hand an investment in the body as a site of continuous growth, like a snake that keeps shedding its skin, or a colony of yeast that keep doubling its size. The tension between these divergent tendencies produces conflicts and contradictions for the lived experience of whiteness: How can I both secure my investment and also take the risks that will allow my investment to grow? How do I accumulate stacks of wealth while maintaining my access to "experiences"? This is the predicament of the parasite that misperceives itself as a host: even as I extract wealth from others to strengthen my own fortifications, I continue to feel insecure; and even as I extend myself into unfamiliar territory for the sake of growth, I rely on a buffer zone of whiteness as property to catch me if I fall.

But if this is the case, then white people may have a material interest in preserving and expanding whiteness as property, but this structure is, or at least ought to be, a source of corporeal malediction for us. The way through this impasse is to abolish whiteness as property. This cannot be accomplished by an individual commitment to divest from whiteness, and yet it does demand such a commitment. But it also requires collective action to change the structure of whitespace, and to generate and recuperate forms of Being-in-the-world that resist the fusion of white personhood with property and with the security apparatuses that serve and protect this property. How do we do

this? By refusing to think we are white. By resisting perceptual practices of seeing like a cop, and creating viable alternatives to calling the cops. By halting gentrification and redistributing wealth. By fostering a sense of mattering that goes beyond white capitalist valuation and accumulation. By abolishing the black/white binary that erases the multiplicity of differences among human beings. By becoming accomplices to Indigenous movements for decolonization. And by dismantling the white world so that another world may be brought into existence.

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[4] Nate Rau and Lizzy Alfs, "High-end restaurant group linked to Cayce Homes overhaul." *The Tennessean* (Sept. 8, 2016), accessed Dec. 10, 2017, http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2016/09/08/high-end-restaurant-group-linked-cayce-homes-overhaul/89968460/.

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[6] For a more detailed account of critical phenomenology, see Lisa Guenther, "Critical Phenomenology," in *50 Concepts for an Intersectional Phenomenology*, ed. Ann Murphy, Gayle Salamon, and Gail Weiss, forthcoming from Northwestern University Press.

[7] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Institution in Personal and Public History and The Problem of Passivity: Sleep, the Unconscious, Memory. Course Notes at the College de France (1954-55)*, trans. Leonard Lawler and Heath Massey (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 6.

[8] Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property" in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*, ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw et al. (New York: New Press, 1995), 277-9.

[9] W. E. B Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860–1880* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 700.

[10] Jackie Wang, "Against Innocence: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Safety," *LIES Journal* 10 (2012), 4, http://www.liesjournal.net/volume1-10-againstinnocence.html. Foucault 2004).

[11] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2008), 215-33.

[12] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009).

[13] Few, if any, prospective buyers of luxury apartments in East Nashville would explicitly endorse racist police violence, and some may even be people of color working to dismantle racist structures in their communities, workplaces, and homes. In a world that is structured by capitalism, white supremacy, and heteronormativity, one may find oneself "putting a ring on it" in spite of the ad campaign rather than because of it. And yet, precisely as an embodied Being-in-the-world whose lived experience is shaped by whitespace, one cannot help but be affected by the structure of whiteness as property. This does not mean that everyone is affected in the same way, or that "the

white world" is permanent or inexorable. But it does mean that each of us, as subjects who are individuated in whitespace, must negotiate with these structures in some way, with results that are routinely predictable but ultimately contingent.

[14] On the impunity of white supremacist policing, see Martinot and Sexton 2003, 175. See also Lewis Gordon's work on white "license": "The racially dominant group presumes self-justified reality (license), which means it doesn't call itself into question. And the designated racially inferior group? Lacking justification, their access to being is illegitimate. This means their absence is a mark of the system' s legitimacy." Lewis R. Gordon, "Thoughts on two recent decades of studying race and racism," *Social Identities* (2017), 4.

[15] Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 279-81.

[16] Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 279.

[17] Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, The Puzzle of Conscious Experience, of "Identity" and What it's Like to be "Black,"" in *National Identity and Sociopolitical Change: Latin America Between Marginizalization and Integration*, ed. Mercedes Durán-Cogan and Antonio Gómez-Moriana (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

[18] David Marriott, "Inventions of Existence: Sylvia Wynter, Frantz Fanon, Sociogeny, and 'the Damned,'" *CR: The New Centennial Review* 11, no. 3 (Winter 2011), 45-89.

[19] Lewis R. Gordon, "Is the Human a Teleological Suspension of Man? Phenomenological Exploration of Sylvia Wynter's Fanonian and Biodicean Reflections," in *After Man, towards the Human: Critical Essays on the Thought of Sylvia Wynter*, ed. Anthony Bogues (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2006), 237-57.

[20] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 4.

[21] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Institution in Personal and Public History and The Problem of Passivity: Sleep, the Unconscious, Memory. Course Notes at the College de France (1954-55)*, trans. Leonard Lawler and Heath Massey (Evanston: Northwestern University Press. 2010), 77.

[22] Merleau-Ponty, *Institution*, 6.

[23] Merleau-Ponty, *Institution*, 76.

[24] James Baldwin, "On Being White… and Other Lies" in *Black on White: Black Writers on What it Means to be White*, ed. David R. Roediger (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), 178-9.

[25] Baldwin, "On Being White," 179-80.

[26] Baldwin, "On Being White," 180.

[27] Oxford English Dictionary.

[28] James Q. Wilson, *Varieties of Police Behavior: The Management of Law and Order in Eight Communities.* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 39-40.

[29] James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows." *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1982), https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/.

[30] Bernard E. Harcourt, *Illusion of Order: The False Promise of Broken Windows Policing* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 129.

[31] Harcourt, *Illusion of Order*, 135. See also Durkheim, for whom the role of punishment is "to maintain inviolate the cohesion of society by sustaining the common consciousness in all its vigor… [P]unishment is above all intended to have its effect upon *honest people*" (quoted in Harcourt, *Illusion of Order*, 137). For Durkheim, law is the "'perceptible effects' of social solidarity" (quoted in Harcourt, *Illusion of Order*, 137-88).

[32] Loïc Wacquant. *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009).

[33] Nikhil Pal Singh, "The Whiteness of Police," *American Quarterly*, 66, no. 4 (December 2014), 1098.

[34] http://morrisjustice.org/stop-and-friskbroken-windows

[35] http://www.stoppoliceterror.org/

[36] https://ccrjustice.org/stop-and-frisk-human-impact

[37] https://www.nyclu.org/en/stop-and-frisk-data

[38] Jonathan M. Wender, *Policing and the Poetics of Everyday Life* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 2.

[39] Darren Wilson, "Testimony in State of Missouri v. Darren Wilson," Grand Jury Volume V (Sept. 16, 2014), 207, https://www.scribd.com/document/248132491/Darren-Wilson-testimony?ad_group=58287X1517246Xf20268a62492f3a5fb52d084694875f2&campaign=Skimbit%2C+Ltd.&content=10079&irgwc=1&keyword=ft750noi&medium=affiliate&source=impactradius.

[40] Wilson, "Testimony," 207-8.

[41] Wilson, "Testimony," 212.

[42] Wilson, "Testimony," 224-5.

[43] Wilson, "Testimony," 228.

[44] Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "Leave Our Mikes Alone," unpublished paper, 19.

[45] Singh, "Whiteness of Police," 1092.

[46] Singh, "Whiteness of Police," 1091.

[47] Steve Martinot and Jared Sexton, "The Avant-garde of White Supremacy," *Social Identities* 9, no. 2 (June 2003), 175.

[48] Martinot and Sexton, "Avant-garde," 174.

[49] Martinot and Sexton, "Avant-garde," 176.

[50] Frank B. Wilderson, III, "The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal," *Social Justice* 30, no. 2 (2003), 20.

[51] Wilderson, "Prison Slave," 20.

[52] See also Dylan Rodríguez: "There isn't just one way of White Being, and we cannot overemphasize enough that White Being cannot be conflated with "white people." Undoubtedly, Fanon is still correct in stressing the epidermalized, physiologically activated structure of power that inheres in white bodies (however white bodies are socio-politically formed and institutionalized in a given moment). My point here is that White Being constitutes another layer of dominance precisely because it is capable of hailing other beings, inviting them, seducing them—and this is yet another method to humiliate and degrade (perhaps even "de-humanize") the "underside peoples" I am referencing… What, then, would it mean to not only decisively displace the ascendancy of White Being (Civilization), but to also seek to thrive as the descendants of our particular, differentiated conditions of historical vulnerability?" Dylan Rodríguez, "Policing and the Violence of White Being: An Interview with Dylan Rodríguez," in *The Black Scholar* (Sept 12, 2016), accessed Dec. 12, 2017 at http://www.theblackscholar.org/policing-violence-white-interview-dylan-rodriguez/.

[53] Wilderson, "Prison Slave," 18.

[54] Wilderson, "Prison Slave," 23.

[55] Wilderson, "Prison Slave," 20.

[56] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 110.

[57] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 111.

[58] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012), 159-77.

[59] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 11.

[60] For phenomenological critiques of the "I can" in relation to gender and disability, see Iris Marion Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) and Gayle Salamon, "The Phenomenology of Rheumatology: Disability, Merleau-Ponty, and the Fallacy of Maximal Grip," *Hypatia* 27, no. 2 (Spring 2012).

[61] Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility," *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3, no. 3 (2011), 54-70.

[62] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006), 387-8.

[63] See Andrea Smith on the three pillars of white supremacy: slavery/capitalism, genocide/colonialism, and Orientalism/war. Andrea Smith, "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy," in *The Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology*, INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006).

[64] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 112.

[65] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 27.

[66] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 111.

[67] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 112.

[68] Wang, "Against Innocence," 4. Another way of saying this is that whitespace is "defensible space." Defensible space is a design strategy that seeks to inculcate the habits, practices, and proprietorial feelings of the white middle class and its cops in those who continue to be excluded from property ownership and from the material benefits of homeowner-citizenship. Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

[69] Elijah Anderson argues, "While white people usually avoid black space, black people are required to navigate the white space as a condition of their existence." Elijah Anderson, "The White Space." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1, no. 1 (2015), 11. For a more developed phenomenology of whiteness in relation to space and embodiment, see Sara Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," *Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (2007), 149-68.

[70] Not everyone who thinks they are white or invests in whiteness as property feels comfortable in suburban whitespace, and not everyone who wants to feel comfortable in suburban whitespace is perceived by neighbours, police, security guards, or real estate agents as properly belonging in such spaces. A further analysis is needed to explore the complex tensions between the ubiquity of whitespace and the plurality of ways in which people who are differently situated in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, or disability negotiate both suburban and gentrified whitespace.

Maurice
Merleau-Ponty

Phenomenology of Perception

Translated by Donald A. Landes

Bilingual Table of Contents

IV

OTHERS AND THE HUMAN WORLD

[a. *Intertwining of natural time and historical time.*]

I am thrown into a nature, and nature appears not only outside of me in objects devoid of history, but is also visible at the center of subjectivity. Theoretical and practical decisions in my personal life can certainly grasp my past and my future from a distance; they can give my past, along with all of its accidents, a definite sense by following it up with a certain future of which, *après coup*, this past will be said to have been the preparation; and they can introduce a historicity into my life. But there is always something artificial to this order. I currently understand my first twenty-five years as a prolonged childhood that had to be followed by a difficult weaning process in order to arrive finally at autonomy. If I think back to those years such as I lived them and such as I now carry them with me, their happiness refuses to be explained by the protected atmosphere of the parental milieu – the world itself was more beautiful, things were more fascinating – and I can never be certain of understanding my past better than it understood itself while I lived it, nor can I ever silence its protests. My current interpretation is tied to my confidence in psychoanalysis; tomorrow, with more maturity and more insight, I will

perhaps understand my past differently and I will accordingly construct it differently. In any case, I will in turn interpret my present interpretations, I will discover their latent content and, in order finally to assess their truth value, I will have to take these discoveries into account. My hold on the past and my hold on the future are precarious and my possession of my own time is always deferred until the moment when I fully understand myself, but that moment can never arrive since it would again be a moment, bordered by the horizon of a future, and would in turn require further developments in order to be understood.

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My voluntary and rational life thus knows itself to be entangled with another power that prevents it from being completed and that always gives it the air of a work in progress. Natural time is always there. The transcendence of moments of time at once establishes and compromises the rationality of my history: it establishes it since it opens me up to an absolutely new future in which I will be able to reflect upon what is opaque in my present; it compromises it since from the perspective of that future I will never grasp the present that I am living with an apodictic certainty, since the lived is never fully comprehensible in this way (what I understand never precisely links up with my life), and since, in short, I am never at one with myself. Such is the fate of a being who is born, that is, a being who once and for all was given to himself as something to be understood. Since natural time remains at the center of my history, I also see myself as surrounded by it. If my first years are behind me like some unknown land, this is not through some fortuitous breakdown of memory or the lack of a complete exploration: there is nothing to be known in these unexplored lands. For example, nothing was perceived in intra-uterine life, and this is why there is nothing to remember. There was nothing but the sketch of a natural self and of a natural time. This anonymous life is merely the limit of the temporal dispersion that always threatens the historical present. To catch sight of this formless existence that precedes my history and that will draw it to a close, all I have to do is see, in myself, this time that functions by itself and that my personal life makes use of without ever fully concealing. Because I am swept along into personal existence by a time that I do not constitute, all of my perceptions appear perspectivally against a background of nature. While I am perceiving – and even without any knowledge of the organic conditions of my perception – I am conscious of integrating distracted and dispersed "consciousnesses," namely, vision, hearing, and touch,

along with their fields, which are anterior to and remain foreign to my personal life. The natural object is the trace of this generalized existence. And in some respect, each object will at first be a natural object; if it is to be able to enter into my life, it must be made of colors and of tactile and sonorous qualities.

[b. *How do personal acts become sedimented?*]

Just as nature penetrates to the center of my personal life and intertwines with it, behaviors also descend into nature and are deposited there in the form of a cultural world. Not only do I have a physical world and live surrounded by soil, air, and water, I have around me roads, plantations, villages, streets, churches, a bell, utensils, a spoon, a pipe. Each of these objects bears as an imprint the mark of the human action it serves. Each one emits an atmosphere of humanity that might be only vaguely determined (when it is a matter of some footprints in the sand), or rather highly determined (if I explore a recently evacuated house from top to bottom). Now, even if it is not surprising that sensory and perceptual functions – given that they are pre-personal – deposit a natural world in front of themselves, one might still be surprised that the spontaneous acts through which man has articulated his life themselves become sedimented on the outside and thereby lead an anonymous existence as things. The civilization in which I participate exists for me with an evidentness in the tools that it adopts. When it comes to an unknown or foreign civilization, several ways of being or living can fit over the ruins or the broken instruments that I find, or the landscape that I travel across. The cultural world is thus ambiguous, although it is already present. There is a society here that we must get to know. An Objective Spirit inhabits these vestiges and these landscapes. How is this possible?

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[c. *How are others possible?*]*

In the cultural object, I experience the near presence of others under a veil of anonymity. *One* uses the pipe for smoking, the spoon for eating, or the bell for summoning, and the perception of a cultural world could be verified through the perception of a human act and of another man. How can a human action or thought be grasped in the mode of the "one," given that it is, in principle, a first person operation and inseparable from

an I? The easy response is that the indefinite pronoun is here simply a vague formula for designating a multiplicity of I's, or even an I in general. It will be said that I have the experience of a certain cultural milieu and of behaviors that correspond to it; standing before the vestiges of a lost civilization, I imagine through analogy the type of man who lived there. But it would first be necessary to know how I could have the experience of my own cultural world, of my own civilization. The response will again be that I see other men around me putting the tools that surround me to a certain use and that I interpret their behavior through analogy with my own behavior and my own inner experience, which teaches me the sense and the intention of the perceived gestures. In the end, the other person's actions would here still be understood through my own; the "one" or the "we" would still be understood through the I. But this is precisely the question: how can the word "I" be made plural? How can we form a general idea of the I? How can I speak of another I than my own? How can I know that there are other I's? How can consciousness, which as knowledge of itself is, in principle, in the mode of the I, be grasped in the mode of the You [*Toi*], and thereby in the mode of the "One"?[1]

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   The very first cultural object, and the one by which they all exist, is the other's body as the bearer of a behavior. Whether it has to do with vestiges or with another person's body, we must ask how an object in space can become the speaking trace of an existence, and how, inversely, an intention, a thought, or a project can detach from the personal subject and become visible outside of him in his body and in the environment that he constructs. The constitution of others does not entirely clarify the constitution of society, which is not an existence shared by two or even three persons, but is rather a coexistence with an indefinite number of consciousnesses. Nevertheless, the analysis of the perception of others encounters the essential difficulty raised by the cultural world because it must resolve the paradox of a consciousness seen from the outside, the paradox of a thought that resides in the exterior and that, when compared to my own, is already without a subject and is anonymous.

[d. *Coexistence made possible by the discovery of perceptual consciousness.*]

   What we have said about the body provides the beginnings of a solution to this problem. The existence of others is a difficulty for and an affront to objective thought. If events of the world are, to speak with

Lachelier, an intertwining of general properties and are found at the intersection of functional relations that, in principle, allow for the completion of an analysis of these events, and if the body is in fact a region of the world – if it is that object biologists describe for me, that conjunction of processes whose analysis I find in physiological studies, and that pile of organs described by anatomy charts – then my experience could be nothing other than the confrontation between a bare consciousness and the system of objective correlations that it thinks. The other's body is no more inhabited than is my own, it is an object in front of the consciousness that thinks it or that constitutes it, and we – namely, other men and myself as an empirical being – are merely mechanisms moved by springs; the true subject has no peers. This consciousness that would be hidden in a piece of flesh and blood is the most absurd of occult qualities and my consciousness – being coextensive with what can exist for me and the correlate of the entire system of experience – can never encounter another consciousness in the other's body who would immediately make the background of his own phenomena (wholly unknown to me) appear in the world. Here there are two, and only two, modes of being: being in itself, which is the being of objects spread out in space, and being for itself, which is the being of consciousness. Now, the other would be an in-itself in front of me, and yet he would exist for himself, and in order to be perceived he would require of me a contradictory operation, since I would simultaneously have to distinguish him from me, thus placing him in the world of objects, and think of him as conscious, that is, as this type of being without an outside and without parts to which I only have access because I am this consciousness and because he who thinks and he who is thought merge in him. There is no room, then, for others and for a plurality of consciousnesses within objective thought. If I constitute the world, then I cannot conceive of another consciousness, for it too would have to have constituted the world and so, at least with regard to this other view upon the world, I would not be constituting. Even if I succeeded in conceiving of this other consciousness as constituting the world, it is again I who would constitute it as such, and once again I would be the only constituting consciousness.

But we have in fact learned to call objective thought into doubt and we have made contact with an experience of the body and of the world beneath scientific representations of the world and the body that these representations fail to embrace. My body and the world are no longer

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objects coordinated with each other through functional relations of the sort established by physics. The system of experience in which they communicate is no longer spread out in front of me and watched over by a constituting consciousness. *I have* the world as an unfinished individual through my body as a power for this world; I have the position of objects through the position of my body, or inversely I have the position of my body through the position of objects, not through a logical implication, nor in the manner in which we determine an unknown size through its objective relations with given sizes, but rather through a real implication and because my body is a movement toward the world and because the world is my body's support. The ideal of objective thought – the system of experience as a bundle of physico-mathematical correlations – is grounded upon my perception of the world as an individual in harmony with itself; and when science attempts to integrate my body into the relations of the objective world, it does so because it attempts, in its own way, to express the suturing of my phenomenal body onto the primordial world. At the same time that the body withdraws from the objective world and comes to form a third genre of being between the pure subject and the object, the subject loses his purity and his transparence. Objects are in front of me, they form a certain projection of themselves upon my retina and I perceive them. It can no longer be a question of isolating, in my physiological representation of the phenomenon, the retinal images and their cerebral correlate from the total field – both actual and virtual – in which they appear. The physiological event is but the abstract outline of the perceptual event.[2] Moreover, we can no longer assume under the name "psychical images" some discontinuous perspectival views that would correspond to successive retinal images, or introduce in the end a "mental inspection" that restores the object over and against the distorting perspectives. We must conceive of perspectives and the point of view as our insertion in the world-as-an-individual, and we must no longer conceive of perception as a constitution of the real object, but rather as our inherence in things.

Along with sensory fields and the world as the field of all fields, consciousness discovers in itself the opacity of an originary past. If I experience this inherence of my consciousness in its body and in its mind, the perception of others and the plurality of consciousnesses no longer present any difficulty. If the perceiving subject appears (to me who is reflecting upon perception) as endowed with a primordial arrangement

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in relation to the world, drawing with it that bodily thing without which there would be no other things for it, then why should the other bodies that I perceive not be equally inhabited by consciousnesses? If my consciousness has a body, why would other bodies not "have" consciousnesses? This is obviously to assume that the notion of the body and the notion of consciousness have been deeply transformed. With regard to the body, and even the other's body, we must learn to distinguish it from the objective body described by physiology textbooks. For that body is not the one that could be inhabited by a consciousness. We must catch hold of the behaviors that take shape upon these visible bodies, that make their appearance there, but that are not actually contained there.[3] It will never be made clear how signification and intentionality could inhabit molecular structures or cellular masses, and here Cartesianism is correct. But then again, there is no question of such an absurd undertaking. We must recognize that the body – as a chemical structure or a collection of tissues – is formed through a process of impoverishment beginning from a primordial phenomenon of the body-for-us, of the body of human experience, or of the perceived body, which objective thought encompasses but whose completed analysis it has no need of postulating. With regard to consciousness, we must no longer conceive of it as a constituting consciousness and as a pure being-for-itself, but rather as a perceptual consciousness, as the subject of a behavior, as being in the world or existence, for only in this way will another person appear in control of his phenomenal body and receive a sort of "place."

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Given these conditions, the antinomies of objective thought disappear. Rather than defining vision as "thought that one is seeing" [*pensée de voir*] (according to Descartes's phrase),[4] through phenomenological reflection I find vision to be the gaze gearing into the visible world, and this is why another's gaze can exist for me and why that expressive instrument that we call a face can bear an existence just as my existence is borne by the knowing apparatus that is my body. When I turn toward my perception itself and when I pass from direct perception to the thought about this perception, I reenact it, I uncover a thought older than I am at work in my perceptual organs and of which these organs are merely the trace. I understand others in the same way. Here again I have but the trace of a consciousness that escapes me in its actuality and, when my gaze crosses another, I reenact the foreign existence in a sort of reflection. But here there is nothing like a "reasoning from analogy." Scheler said

it well: reasoning by analogy presupposes what it is meant to explain.[5] Another consciousness can only be deduced if the other person's emotional expressions and my own are compared and identified, and only if precise correlations are recognized between my gesticulations and my "psychic facts." But the perception of others precedes and makes possible such observations, so they cannot be constitutive of it. A fifteen-month-old baby opens his mouth when I playfully take one of his fingers in my mouth and pretend to bite it. And yet, he has hardly even seen his face in a mirror and his teeth do not resemble mine. His own mouth and teeth such as he senses them from within are immediately for him the instruments for biting, and my jaw such as he sees it from the outside is for him immediately capable of the same intentions. "Biting" immediately has an intersubjective signification for him. He perceives his intentions in his body, perceives my body with his own, and thereby perceives my intentions in his body. The observed correlations between my gesticulations and those of others, and between my intentions and my gesticulations, can certainly provide a guide in the methodical knowledge of others and when direct perception fails, but they do not teach me about the existence of others. There is, between my consciousness and my body such as I live it, and between this phenomenal body and the other person's phenomenal body such as I see it from the outside, an internal relation that makes the other person appear as the completion of the system. Others can be evident because I am not transparent for myself, and because my subjectivity draws its body along behind itself.

As we said above: insofar as another person resides in the world, insofar as he is visible there and part of my field, he is never an Ego in the sense in which I am one for myself. In order to conceive of him as a genuine I, I would have to consider myself as a mere object for him, which I am prevented from doing by the knowledge that I have of myself. But if the other's body is not an object for me, nor my body an object for him, if they are rather behaviors, then the other's positing of me does not reduce me to the status of an object in his field, and my perception of the other does not reduce him to the status of an object in my field. Another person is never fully a personal being if I am fully one myself, that is, if I grasp myself through an apodictic evidentness. But if, through reflection, I find in myself, along with the perceiving subject, a pre-personal subject given to itself, if my perceptions remain eccentric in relation to myself as the center of initiatives and judgments, or if the perceived world remains

in a neutral state, neither verified as an object nor identified as a dream, then not everything that appears in the world is immediately spread out in front of me and the other's behavior can have its place in the world. This world can remain undivided between my perception and his, the perceiving self enjoys no particular privilege that renders a perceived self impossible, these two are not *cogitationes* enclosed in their immanence, but beings who are transcended by their world and who, consequently, can surely be transcended by each other. The confirmation of a foreign consciousness in front of my own would immediately turn my experience into a private spectacle, since it would no longer be coextensive with being. The other person's *cogito* strips my own *cogito* of all value and shatters the confidence I enjoyed in the solitude of having access to the only being conceivable for me, that is, being such as it is intended and constituted by me. But we have learned in individual perception not to conceive of our perspectival views as independent of each other; we know that they slip into each other and are gathered together in the thing. Similarly, we must learn to find the communication of consciousnesses in a single world. In fact, the other person is not enclosed in my perspective on the world because this perspective itself has no definite limits, because it spontaneously slips into the other's perspective, and because they are gathered together in a single world in which we all participate as anonymous subjects of perception.

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[e. *Coexistence of psycho-physical subjects in a natural world and of men in a cultural world.*]

Insofar as I have sensory functions – a visual, auditory, and tactile field – I already communicate with others, themselves taken as psycho-physical subjects. My gaze falls upon a living body performing an action and the objects that surround it immediately receive a new layer of signification: they are no longer merely what I could do with them, they are also what this behavior is about to do with them. A vortex forms around the perceived body into which my world is drawn and, so to speak, sucked in: to this extent, my world is no longer merely mine, it is no longer present only to me, it is present to X, to this other behavior that begins to take shape in it. The other body is already no longer a simple fragment of the world, but rather the place of a certain elaboration and somehow a certain "view" of the world. A certain handling of things – which were

until now mine alone – is taking place over there. Someone is using my familiar objects. But who? I say that it is another person, a second myself, and I primarily know this because that living body has the same structure as my own. I experience my body as the power for certain behaviors and for a certain world, and I am only given to myself as a certain hold upon the world. Now, it is precisely my body that perceives the other's body and finds there something of a miraculous extension of its own intentions, a familiar manner of handling the world. Henceforth, just as the parts of my body together form a system, the other's body and my own are a single whole, two sides of a single phenomenon, and the anonymous existence, of which my body is continuously the trace, henceforth inhabits these two bodies simultaneously.[6]

This only establishes another living being, and not yet another man. But this foreign life, like my own life with which it communicates, is an open life. It is not reducible to a certain number of biological or sensory functions. This other life annexes natural objects by diverting them from their immediate sense, constructs tools and instruments, and projects itself into the cultural objects of its milieu. The child finds these objects around himself at birth like meteorites from another planet. He takes possession of them and learns to use them as others use them because his body schema assures the immediate correspondence of what he sees done and what he does, and because in this way the utensil takes shape as a determinate *manipulandum* and the other person takes shape as a center of human action. There is, in particular, one cultural object that will play an essential role in the perception of others: language. In the experience of dialogue, a common ground is constituted between me and another; my thought and his form a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion and are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator. Here there is a being-shared-by-two, and the other person is no longer for me a simple behavior in my transcendental field, nor for that matter am I a simple behavior in his. We are, for each other, collaborators in perfect reciprocity: our perspectives slip into each other, we coexist through a single world. I am freed from myself in the present dialogue, even though the other's thoughts are certainly his own, since I do not form them, I nonetheless grasp them as soon as they are born or I even anticipate them. And even the objection raised by my interlocutor draws from me thoughts I did not know I possessed such that if I lend him thoughts, he makes me

think in return. Only *après coup* – when I have withdrawn from the dia-
logue and I am remembering it – can I reintegrate it into my life, turn
it into an episode of my private history, and only then does the other
person return to his absence or, to the extent that he remains present, is
the other person sensed as a threat to me.

The perception of others and the intersubjective world are only prob-
lematic for adults. The child lives in a world that he believes is immedi-
ately accessible to everyone around him. He is unaware of himself and,
for that matter, of others as private subjectivities. He does not suspect that
all of us, including himself, are limited to a certain point of view upon
the world. This is why the child does not analyze his thoughts, why he
believes in them to the extent that they appear and without attempting
to tie them together, and why he does not analyze our words. He does
not have the knowledge of points of view. For the child, men are blank
minds directed toward a single evident world where everything takes
place, even dreams (which he believes are in his room) and thought
(since it is not distinguished from words). For the child, others are so
many gazes inspecting things, they have an almost material existence, to
the point that one child wonders how these gazes are not broken when
they meet.[7] At about the age of twelve, Piaget says, the child accomplishes
the *cogito* and obtains the truths of rationalism. The child would simul-   413
taneously discover himself as a sensible consciousness and as an intel-
lectual consciousness, as a point of view upon the world and as called
upon to transcend this point of view, that is, to construct an objectivity
at the level of judgment. Piaget brings the child to the age of reason as if
the adult's thoughts were self-sufficient and would remove all contradic-
tions. But in fact, children must in some sense be correct against adults
or against Piaget and, if there is to be a unique and intersubjective world
for the adult, then the barbarous thoughts of the initial stage must remain
like an indispensable acquisition beneath the thoughts of the adult stage.
The consciousness I have of constructing an objective truth would only
ever provide an objective truth for me, and my best effort at impartiality
would never lead me to overcome subjectivity, as Descartes expresses so
well with the hypothesis of the evil genius, if I did not have beneath my
judgments the primordial certainty of touching being itself; if, prior to
every voluntary *decision*, I did not already find myself *situated* in an intersub-
jective world; if, that is, science did not lean upon this originary δόξα.[8]
With the *cogito* begins the struggle between consciousnesses in which, as

Hegel says, each one seeks the death of the other. For this battle to even begin, for each consciousness to even suspect the external presences that it negates, they must have a common ground and they must remember their peaceful coexistence in the world of childhood.

[f. *But is there a coexistence of freedoms and of I's?*]

But is it really the other that we reach in this way? We, in effect, level out the I and the You in an experience-shared-by-many, we introduce the impersonal into the center of subjectivity, and we erase the individuality of perspectives – but, in this general conflation, have we not caused the alter Ego to disappear along with the Ego? We said above that the two are mutually exclusive. But this is only the case because they have the same pretensions and because the alter Ego follows all the variations of the Ego: if the perceiving I is truly an I, then it cannot perceive another I; if the perceiving subject is anonymous, then the other self that he perceives is anonymous as well; and when we want to make the plurality of consciousnesses appear within this collective consciousness, we will rediscover the difficulties we thought we had avoided. I perceive the other as a behavior, for example, I perceive the other's grief or anger in his behavior, on his face and in his hands, without any borrowing from an "inner" experience of suffering or of anger and because grief and anger are variations of being in the world, undivided between body and consciousness, which settle upon the other's behavior and are visible in his phenomenal body, as well as upon my own behavior such as it is presented to me. But ultimately, the other's behavior and even the other's words are not the other himself. The other's grief or anger never has precisely the same sense for him and for me. For him, these are lived situations; for me, they are appresented. Or if I can participate in this grief or in this anger through a gesture of friendship, they remain the grief and the anger of my friend Paul: he suffers because he has lost his wife, or he is angry because his watch has been stolen; I suffer because Paul is grieving or I am angry because he is angry – the two situations are not congruent. And finally, if we undertake a shared project, this shared project is not a single project, and it is not presented to me and to Paul from the same angle; we are not equally committed to it, or at least not committed to it in the same way, from the mere fact that Paul is Paul, and I am myself. As much as our consciousnesses construct through our own

situations a common situation in which they communicate, it is never-
theless from the background of his own subjectivity that each projects
this "single" world.

The difficulties of perceiving others are not all the result of objective
thought, and they do not all cease with the discovery of behavior, or
rather, objective thought and the resulting unicity of the *cogito* are not fic-
tions, rather, they are well-founded phenomena, and we will have to seek
their foundation. The conflict between me and others does not begin
only when we attempt *to think* others, nor does it disappear if thought
is reintegrated into non-thetic consciousness and unreflective life: the
conflict is already there when I attempt to live another's experience [*vivre
autrui*], for example, in the blindness of sacrifice. I establish a pact with
the other person, and I commit to living in an inter-world where I make
as much room for the other as I do for myself. But this inter-world is still
my project, and it would be hypocritical to believe that I desire the other
person's well-being *as my own*, since even this attachment to another's
well-being still comes from me. Without reciprocity there is no alter Ego,
since one person's world would thereby envelop the other's, and since
one would feel alienated to the benefit of the other. This is what happens
to a couple when the love is not equal on both sides: one commits to this
love and stakes his life on it, the other remains free, and this love is for
him but a contingent way of living. The former feels his being and his
substance escaping into this freedom that remains intact in front of him.
And even if the second person, through loyalty to previous promises, or
through generosity, wishes to in turn reduce himself to the status of a   415
mere phenomenon in the first person's world, to see through the other's
eyes, he again achieves this through a dilation of his own life, and so he
denies in principle the equivalence between others and himself that he
wanted to prove as a thesis.

Coexistence must be in each case lived by each person. If neither of
us is a constituting consciousness, then at the moment that we are about
to communicate and to find a common world it will not be clear who
communicates and for whom this world exists. And if someone does
communicate with someone else, if the inter-world is not an inconceiv-
able "in-itself," and if it must exist for both of us, then communication is
once again broken and each of us operates within his private world, like
two players playing on separate chessboards a hundred miles apart. Still,
the players can communicate their decisions via telephone or in letters,

which amounts to saying that they belong to a single world. However, strictly speaking, I do not have any common ground with other people; the positing of the other person with his world and the positing of myself with my world constitute a dilemma. Once the other has been posited, or once the other's gaze upon me has stripped me of a part of my being by inserting me into his field, then it is clear that I can only recuperate my being by forming relations with the other or by making myself freely recognized by him, and that my freedom requires that others have the same freedom.

[g. *The permanent truth of solipsism.*]*

But first we would have to know how I could posit the other. As we have explained above, insofar as I am born and insofar as I have a body and a world, I can find other behaviors in that world that intertwine with my own. But it is also the case that, insofar as I am born, and insofar as my existence finds itself already at work and knows itself as given to itself, my existence remains always on this side of the actions it wants to commit to, which are forever merely its modalities or particular cases of its insurmountable generality. This given background of existence is what the *cogito* confirms: every affirmation, every engagement, and even every negation and every doubt takes place in a previously opened field, and attests to a self in touch with itself prior to the particular acts in which it loses contact with itself. This self, who is the witness of every actual communication, and without which the communication would be unaware of itself and thus would not be communication at all, seems to prevent any resolution of the problem of others. Here we see a lived solipsism that cannot be transcended.

416   Of course, I do not feel myself to be the constituting force of the natural world, nor of the cultural world: I introduce into each perception and each judgment either sensory functions or cultural arrangements that are not actually my own. Transcended on all sides by my own acts and immersed in generality, I am nevertheless the one through which these acts are lived; my first perception inaugurated an insatiable being who appropriates everything that it can encounter, to whom nothing can be purely and simply given because it inherited the world, and consequently carries in itself the plan of every possible being, and because the world has been, once and for all, imprinted upon his field of experience. The body's

generality will not help us to understand how the indeclinable "I" can alienate itself to the benefit of others, since it is precisely compensated for by this other generality of my inalienable subjectivity. How could I find *elsewhere* in my perceptual field such a presence of another self to itself? Will we conclude that the existence of others is a simple fact for me? But in any case, it is a fact *for me*, it must be among my own possibilities, and it must be understood or lived in some way by me in order to count as a fact.

[h. *Solipsism cannot be overcome "in God."*]

Being thus unable to restrict solipsism from the outside, shall we attempt to overcome it from within? I can, of course, only recognize one Ego, but as a universal subject I cease being a finite myself, I become an impartial spectator for whom another person and myself as an empirical being are on an equal footing without my enjoying any privilege. It cannot be said that I am the consciousness that I discover through reflection and for whom everything is an object: my "myself" [*mon moi*] is spread out before this consciousness just like everything else, my consciousness constitutes it, it is not enclosed within it, and so it can constitute other myselves without any difficulty. I can be conscious of others and of myself in God, and love others as myself.

– But this subjectivity we have collided with does not admit of being called God. If reflection reveals me to myself as an infinite subject, we must also recognize, at least in terms of appearances, my previous ignorance of this myself, which is more truly myself than I am. The response will be that I in fact knew of this myself, since I perceived others and myself, and since this perception is in fact only possible through this knowledge. But if I already knew this infinite subject, then all philosophical texts are useless. In fact, the truth needs to be revealed. Thus, it is this ignorant and finite self that recognized God within himself while, on the far side of phenomena, God has forever been thinking himself. It is through this shadow that the empty light comes to illuminate something, and thereby it is definitively impossible to eliminate the shadow in the light; I can never *recognize myself* as God without denying in principle what I want to prove as a thesis. I could love the other as myself in God, but it would still be necessary that my love for God not come from me, and that it is in fact, as Spinoza said, the love through which God loves himself through me. Such that, in the end there would nowhere be a love of

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others nor others at all, but rather a single love of self that is linked to itself beyond our lives, that has nothing to do with us, and to which we cannot gain any access. The movement of reflection and of love that leads to God actually renders impossible the very God to which it would like to lead.

[i. *But solitude and communication are two sides of the same phenomenon.*]

Thus we are brought back to solipsism, and the problem appears now in all of its difficulty. I am not God – I merely have a pretension to divinity. I escape from every engagement, and I transcend others insofar as every situation and every other person must be lived by me in order to exist in my eyes. And yet, the other has a sense for me, at least at first glance. Like polytheistic gods, I must reckon with other gods, or again, like Aristotle's God, I polarize a world that I do not create. Consciousnesses present the absurdity of a solipsism-shared-by-many, and such is the situation that must be understood. Since we live this situation, there must be some way of making it explicit. Solitude and communication must not be two terms of an alternative, but rather two moments of a single phenomenon, since other people do in fact exist for me. We must say about the experience of others what we have elsewhere said about reflection: that its object cannot absolutely escape it, since we only have a notion of the object through reflection. Reflection must, in some way, present the unreflected, for otherwise we would have nothing to set against it, and it would not become a problem for us. Similarly, my experience must present others to me in some way, since if it did not do so I would not even speak of solitude, and I would not even declare others to be inaccessible. What is initially given and true is an open reflection upon the unreflected, the reflective taking up of the unreflected – and so too is the tension of my experience toward another whose existence is uncontested on the horizon of my life, even when the knowledge I have of him is imperfect. Between these two problems, there is more than a vague analogy: in both cases the question is to know how I can reach a point outside of myself and live the unreflected as such.

[j. *Absolute subject and engaged subject, and birth.*]*

How then can I – namely, me who is perceiving and who thereby affirms myself to be a universal subject – perceive another person who immedi-

ately deprives me of this universality? The central phenomenon, which simultaneously grounds my subjectivity and my transcendence toward the other, consists in the fact that I am given to myself. *I am given*, which is to say I find myself already situated and engaged in a physical and social world; *I am given to myself*, which is to say that this situation is never concealed from me, it is never around me like some foreign necessity, and I am never actually enclosed in my situation like an object in a box. My freedom, that fundamental power I have of being the subject of all of my experiences, is not distinct from my insertion in the world. I am destined to be free, to be unable to reduce myself to any of my experiences, to maintain with regard to every factual situation a faculty of withdrawal, and this destiny was sealed the moment that my transcendental field was opened, the moment I was born as vision and as knowledge, the moment I was thrown into the world. Against the social world, I can always make use of my sensible nature, close my eyes, plug my ears, live like a stranger in society, treat others, ceremonies, and monuments like mere arrangements of colors and lights, and strip them of all human signification. Against the natural world, I can always have recourse to thinking nature and throw into doubt every perception taken in isolation. And here is the truth of solipsism. Every experience will forever appear to me as a particularity that does not exhaust the generality of my being, and I always have, as Malebranche said, some momentum for going farther. But I can only escape from being into more being; for example, I escape from society into nature, or from the real world into an imaginary that is made up of the debris of the real. The physical and social world always functions as the stimulus of my reactions, whether they are positive or negative. I only call some such perception into question in the name of a truer one that would correct it; if I am able to deny each thing, this is always by affirming that there is something in general, and this is why we say that thought is a thinking nature, an affirmation of being through the negation of beings.

[k. *Suspended, not interrupted, communication.*]*

I can construct a solipsistic philosophy, but by doing so I presuppose a community of speaking men, and I address myself to this community. Even the "unqualified refusal to be anything whatsoever"[9] assumes something that is refused and in relation to which the subject takes his

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distance. It is said that a choice must be made between others and myself. But one is chosen *over* the other, and thus both are affirmed. It is said that the other transforms me into an object and negates me, and that I transform the other into an object and negate him. But in fact, the other's gaze does not transform me into an object, and my gaze does not transform him into an object, unless both gazes draw us back into the background of our thinking nature, unless we both establish an inhuman gaze, and unless each senses his actions, not as taken up and understood, but rather as observed like the actions of an insect. This is what happens, for example, when I suffer the gaze of a stranger. But even then the objectification of each by the other's gaze is only harmful because it takes the place of a possible communication. A dog's gaze upon me hardly bothers me at all. The refusal to communicate is still a mode of communication. Protean freedom, thinking nature, the inalienable background, or the non-qualified existence, which in me and in others marks the limits of all sympathy, certainly suspends communication, but it does not annihilate it. If I must deal with a stranger who has not yet uttered a word, I might well believe that he lives in another world where my actions or thoughts are not worthy of appearing. But should he utter a word, or merely make an impatient gesture, then he already ceases to transcend me: so that is his voice, and those are his thoughts, and there is the domain I believed was inaccessible.

Each existence only definitively transcends the others when it remains idle and rests on its natural difference. Even universal meditation, which cuts the philosopher off from his nation, friends, prejudices, and empirical being – in a word, from the world – and that seems to leave him absolutely alone, is in fact action, or speech, and hence dialogue. Solipsism could only be rigorously true of someone who succeeded in tacitly observing his existence without being anything and without doing anything, which is surely impossible, since to exist is to be in the world. In his reflective retreat, the philosopher cannot avoid dragging others along with him, because he learned to forever treat them as *peers* within the obscurity of the world, and because his entire knowledge is built upon this given of opinion. Transcendental subjectivity is a revealed subjectivity, meaning that it is revealed to itself and to others, and as such transcendental subjectivity is an intersubjectivity. As soon as existence gathers itself together and engages in a behavior, it appears to perception. And like every other perception, this one affirms more things than are

grasped in it: when I say that I see the ashtray and that it is over there, I presuppose a complete unfolding of the experience that would have to go on indefinitely, and I open up an entire perceptual future. Likewise, when I say that I know someone or that I like him, I am aiming at an inexhaustible background beyond his qualities that indeed might one day shatter the image that I adopt of him. This is the price for there to be things and "others" for us, not through some illusion, but rather through a violent act that is perception itself.

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[l. *The social, not as an object, but rather as a dimension of my being.*]

Thus, we must rediscover the social world, after the natural world, not as an object or a sum of objects, but as the permanent field or dimension of existence: I can certainly turn away from the social world, but I cannot cease to be situated in relation to it. Our relation to the social, like our relation to the world, is deeper than every explicit perception and deeper than every judgment. It is just as false to place us within society like an object in the midst of other objects, as it is to put society in us as an object of thought, and the error on both sides consists in treating the social as an object. We must return to the social world with which we are in contact through the simple fact of our existence, and that we inseparably bear along with us prior to every objectification. Objective and scientific consciousness of the past or of civilizations would be impossible if I did not have – through the intermediary of my society, my cultural world, and their horizons – at least a virtual communication with them, if the place of the Athenian Republic or of the Roman Empire was not somewhere marked on the borders of my own history, if they were not established there like some particular individuals to meet, indeterminate though pre-existing, and if I did not find the fundamental structures of history within my own life. The social world is already there when we come to know it or when we judge it. An individualistic or sociological philosophy is a certain perception of coexistence systematized and made explicit. Prior to this coming to awareness, the social exists silently and as a solicitation.

[m. *The social event on the outside and on the inside.*]*

At the end of *Notre patrie*, Péguy discovers a buried voice that had never ceased speaking,[10] just as we are sure upon waking up that objects have

not ceased existing during the night, or that someone has been knock-
ing at our door for a while. Despite their cultural, moral, vocational, and
ideological differences, the Russian peasants of 1917 join the workers'
struggle in Petrograd and Moscow because they sense that their lot is
the same; class is lived concretely prior to being the object of a deliber-
ate will. The social does not at first exist like an object in the third per-
son. Wanting to treat it as an object is the common error of the curious
bystander, the "great man," and the historian. Fabrice wanted to see the
battle of Waterloo as one sees a landscape, but he only found confused
episodes.[11] Does the Emperor really see the battle on his map? But it is
reduced for him to a schema, and is not without lacunae: why is this
regiment not advancing; why haven't the reserves arrived? The histo-
rian, who is not involved in the battle and who sees it from all angles,
who draws together a multitude of facts and who knows how the battle
turned out, believes in the end that he reaches the truth of the battle. But
he only presents us with a representation, he does not reach the battle
itself, since, at the moment that it was taking place, the outcome was
still contingent and is no longer contingent when the historian recounts
the battle, since the deep causes of the defeat and the fortuitous events
that allowed them to play a role were equally determining factors in the
singular event of "Waterloo," and because the historian puts the singular
event back into the general sequence of the decline of the empire. The
true "Waterloo" is not in what Fabrice sees, nor in what the Emperor
sees, nor in what the historian sees; it is not a determinable object. The
true "Waterloo" is what *happens* on the borders of all these perspectives,
and from which they are all drawn.[12]

The historian and the philosopher seek an objective definition of class
or of the nation: is the nation based upon common language or upon
conceptions of life? Is class based upon income level or upon one's posi-
tion in the circuit of production? It is clear that none of these criteria
allow us to recognize if an individual belongs to a nation or a class. In all
revolutions there are some members of the privileged class who join the
revolutionary class, and some oppressed individuals who remain loyal
to the privileged class. And every nation has its traitors. This is because
nation or class are neither fatalities that subjugate the individual from
the outside, nor for that matter values that he posits from within. They
are, rather, modes of coexistence that solicit him. In peaceful times,
nation and class are there like *stimuli* to which I only direct distracted or

confused responses; they are latent. A revolutionary situation or a situation of national danger transforms preconscious relations to class and nation that had until then been merely lived into conscious decisions; tacit commitment becomes explicit. But it appears to itself as if it pre-existed the decision.

[n. *The problems of transcendence.*]

The problem of the existential modality of the social world here meets up with all of the problems of transcendence. Whether it is a question of my body, the natural world, the past, birth or death, the question is always to know how I can be open to phenomena that transcend me and that, nevertheless, only exist to the extent that I take them up and live them, *how the presence to myself (Urpräsenz) that defines me and that conditions every external presence is simultaneously a depresentation (Entgegenwärtigung) and throws me outside of myself.*[13] Idealism, by making the exterior immanent in me, and realism, by subjecting me to a causal action, both falsify the relations of motivation that exist between the exterior and the interior and render this relation incomprehensible. Our individual past, for example, cannot be given to us by the actual survival of states of consciousness or of cerebral traces, nor by a consciousness of the past that would constitute it and arrive at it immediately: in both cases, we would lack the sense of the past, for the past would be for us, strictly speaking, present. If something of the past is to exist for us, then this can only be in an ambiguous presence, prior to every explicit recollection, like a field that we open onto. It must exist for us even though we do not think about it, and all of our recollections must be drawn from this opaque mass. Likewise, if I only had the world as a sum of things, and the thing as a sum of properties, I would not have any certainties, but only probabilities; no irrecusable reality, but only conditional truths. If the past and the world exist, then they must have a theoretical immanence – they can only be what I see behind myself and around myself – and an actual transcendence – they exist in my life before appearing as objects of my explicit acts. Or again, my birth or my death cannot be for me objects of thought.

Established within life, propped up by my thinking nature, placed within that transcendental field that opened with my first perception and in which every absence is merely the other side of a presence, or every silence a modality of sonorous being, I have a sort of theoretical

423   ubiquity and eternity, I feel destined to a flow of inexhaustible life whose beginning and whose end I cannot think, since it is still my living self who thinks them, and since thus my life always precedes itself and always survives itself. Nevertheless, this same thinking nature that fills me with being opens the world to me through a perspective, I receive along with it the feeling of my contingency, the anxiety of being transcended, such that, even if I do not think of my death, I still live within an atmosphere of death in general, there is something of an essence of death that is always on the horizon of my thoughts. Finally, just as the instant of my death is an inaccessible future for me, I am certain to never live the presence of another to himself. And nevertheless, every other person exists for me as an irrecusable style or milieu of coexistence, and my life has a social atmosphere just as it has a flavor of mortality.

[o. *The true transcendental is the* Ur-sprung *[springing-forth] of transcendences.*]

Along with the natural world and the social world, we have discovered that which is truly transcendental, which is not the collection of constitutive operations through which a transparent world, without shadows and without opacity, is spread out in front of an impartial spectator, but rather the ambiguous life where the *Ursprung* of transcendences takes place, which, through a fundamental contradiction, puts me into communication with them and on this basis makes knowledge possible.[14] Perhaps the objection will be raised that a contradiction cannot be placed at the center of philosophy, and that all of our descriptions, not being ultimately thinkable, are entirely meaningless. The objection would be valid if we restricted ourselves to finding, under the name "phenomenon" or "phenomenal field," a layer of pre-logical or magical experience. For then it would be necessary to choose between either believing the descriptions and abandoning thought, or knowing what we are saying and abandoning these descriptions. These descriptions must be the

424   opportunity for us to define an understanding and a reflection more radical than objective thought. To phenomenology understood as a direct description, a phenomenology of phenomenology must be added. We must return to the *cogito* in order to seek there a more fundamental *Logos* than that of objective thought, one that provides objective thought with its relative justification and, at the same time, puts it in its place. On the level of being, we will never understand that the subject is

simultaneously creating [*naturant*] and created [*naturé*], and simultaneously infinite and finite. But if we uncover time beneath the subject, and if we reconnect the paradox of time to the paradoxes of the body, the world, the thing, and others, then we will understand that there is nothing more to understand.

IV OTHERS AND THE HUMAN WORLD

1 [There appears to be a typo in the original 1945 French publication, which reads: ". . . comme connaissance d'elle-même, est dans le mode du Je, peut-elle être saisie dans le mode du Toi et par là dans le monde du 'On'?" Given the focus on linguistic modes here, I have read the third last word, *monde* ("world"), as *mode*. It might be worth noting that the later French editions, however, offer an alternative correction, opting rather to leave the final *monde* and to replace the second *mode* with *monde*.]

2 *La structure du comportement*, 125. [*La structure* (1990), 102; *The Structure of Behavior*, 93.]

3 This is the work that we attempted to complete elsewhere. (*La structure du comportement* [*The Structure of Behavior*], chaps. 1 and 2.)

4 [As noted previously, the phrase *pensée de voir* ("thought about seeing") is used by Descartes in his replies to the "Fifth Set of Objections" to his *Meditations*, 249. The allusion is often made by Merleau-Ponty to this Cartesian move from "perceiving" to "the thought that one is perceiving," and I have occasionally opted for this more explicit translation to clarify his intentions.]

5 [See, for instance, Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, 240.]

6 This is why disturbances of a subject's body schema can be detected by asking him to indicate on the doctor's body the place on his own body that is being touched.

7 Piaget, *La représentation du monde chez l'enfant*, 21. [*The Child's Conception of the World*, 47.]

8 [There appears to be a typographical error in the original French, which reads ὐαξδ. Given the context of this phrase, it seems correct to follow the more recent French versions, as well as German translation of this book, and to replace this error with the Ancient Greek term δόξα, which Merleau-Ponty writes elsewhere in this book as *doxa*, and which roughly translates as "opinion."]

9 Valéry, "Introduction à la méthode de Léonard de Vinci," 200. [Valéry, "Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci," 212.]

10   [Merleau-Ponty's unreferenced allusion is likely to Péguy's discussion of the
      voice: "cette résonance profonde, cette voix qui n'était pas un voix du dehors"
      (this deep resonance, this voice that was not a voice from the outside) in:
      Charles Péguy, *Notre patrie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 124.]

11   [Merleau-Ponty's reference here is to the protagonist in Stendhal's *La
      chartreuse de Parme* (1839). See, for instance, Stendhal, *The Charterhouse of
      Parma*, trans. Margaret Mauldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997),
      80ff.]

12   There would be a need, then, to write history in the present tense. This is what
      Jules Romains, for example, did in *Verdun*. [See: Jules Romains, *Verdun*, trans.
      Gerard Hopkins (London: Souvenir Press, 1962).] Of course, even if objec-
      tive thought is incapable of exhausting a present historical situation, it must
      not be concluded that we should live history with our eyes closed, as some
      individual adventure, deny ourselves every attempt to put it in perspective,
      and throw ourselves into action without any guiding thread. Fabrice fails to
      understand Waterloo, but the reporter is already closer to the event. The spirit
      of adventure takes us even farther from the event than objective thought does.
      There is a thought in contact with the event that seeks its concrete structure.
      A revolution, if it is truly contained in the direction [*sens*] of history, can be
      thought at the same time as lived.

13   Husserl, "Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzenden-
      tale Phänomenologie," part III. [By part III, Merleau-Ponty would be actually
      referring to part III-B. See note in the Bibliography below. The terms *Urpräsenz*
      and *Entgegenwärtigung* employed here by Merleau-Ponty can be found in Hus-
      serl's *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, 185.
      Merleau-Ponty uses the phrase "la présence à moi-même" for Husserl's term
      Urpräsenz, so I have here used "presence to myself" rather than the English
      translation of Husserl, which is "primal presence."]

14   In his late philosophy, Husserl acknowledged that every reflection must begin
      by returning to the description of the life-world (*Lebenswelt*). But he adds that,
      through a second "reduction," the structures of the lived world [*monde vécu*]
      must themselves be put back into the transcendental flow of a universal con-
      stitution where all of the obscurities of the world would be clarified. It is, how-
      ever, clear that there are two possibilities here: either the constitution makes
      the world transparent, and then it would not be clear why reflection would
      have to pass through the lived world, or reflection retains something of this
      lived world, and this would be because it never strips the world of its opac-
      ity. Husserl's thought moves more and more in this second direction despite
      many echoes of the logicist period – it is seen when he turns rationality into
      a problem, when he acknowledges significations that are ultimately "fluid"
      (*Erfahrung und Urteil*, 428), and when he grounds knowledge upon an origi-
      nary *doxa*. [Husserl's use of the term *Fließender* [fluid] occurs in a footnote in
      Experience and Judgment, 353. It also occurs earlier in relation to the concept of
      doxa (ibid., 59).]

III

FREEDOM

497 To repeat, it is clear that no causal relation can be conceived between the subject and his body, his world, or his society. Calling into question what my presence to myself teaches me would result in the loss of the foundations of all of my certainties. Now, at the very moment that I turn toward myself to describe myself, I catch sight of an anonymous flow,[1] an overall project in which "states of consciousness" do not yet exist, nor, *a fortiori*, do characteristics of any kind. I am for myself neither "jealous," nor "curious," nor "hunchbacked," nor "a civil servant." We are often amazed that the disabled person or the person suffering from a disease can bear their situation. But in their own eyes they are not disabled or dying. Until the moment he slips into a coma, the dying person is inhabited by a consciousness; he is everything that he sees, he has this means of escape. Consciousness can never objectify itself as sick-consciousness or as disabled-consciousness; and, even if the elderly man complains of his old age or the disabled person of his disability, they can only do so when they compare themselves to others or when they see themselves through the eyes of others, that is, when they adopt a statistical or an objective view of themselves; and these complaints are never wholly made in good faith: in returning to the core of his consciousness, everyone feels him-

self to be beyond his particular characteristics and so resigns himself to them. They are the price we pay, without even thinking about it, for being in the world, a formality we take for granted. And this is how we can criticize our own face and yet not wish to exchange it for another.

It seems that no particularity can be attached to the insurmountable generality of consciousness, and that no limit can be imposed upon this vast power of evasion. For something from the outside to be able to determine me (in both senses of the word),[2] I would have to be a thing. My freedom and my universality cannot be eclipsed. It is inconceivable that I am free in some of my actions while determined in others, for what exactly would this idle freedom be that grants free play to determinisms? If we assume that my freedom is abolished when it does not act, then how will it be reborn? If, by some miracle, I were able to *turn myself* into a thing, then how would I later recreate my consciousness? If I am free, even once, then I do not figure among the totality of things, and I must be free continuously. If my actions even once cease to be my own, they will never again become my own; if I lose my hold upon the world, I will never regain it. In addition, it is inconceivable that my freedom could be limited; we cannot be partially free, and if, as it is often said, motivations incline me in a certain direction, then there are only two possibilities: either they have the force to make me act, in which case there is no freedom, or they do not have this force, in which case my freedom is total, as great in the worst tortures as in the peace of my home.

We would thus have to renounce not only the idea of causality, but even the idea of motivation.[3] The supposed motive does not weigh on my decision; rather, my decision lends the motivation its force. Everything that I "am" in virtue of nature or history – hunchbacked, handsome, or Jewish – I never fully am for myself, as we explained just above. And although I am surely these things in the eyes of others, I nonetheless remain free to posit the other either as a consciousness whose gaze reaches me in my very being, or rather as a mere object. Again, this alternative itself is certainly a constraint: if I am ugly, then I have the choice either to be an outcast or to condemn others – that is, I am left free between masochism and sadism – but I am not free to ignore others. But this alternative itself, which is a given of the human condition, is not an alternative for myself understood as a pure consciousness, for it is still me who makes others exist for me and who makes us exist for each other as men. Moreover, even if being human were imposed

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upon me, only leaving me a choice between ways of being human, when we consider this choice in itself – and notwithstanding the small number of possible choices – this would still be a free choice. If it is said that my temperament inclines me more toward sadism or rather toward masochism, this again is just a figure of speech, for my temperament only exists for the second-order knowledge that I obtain of myself when I see myself through another person's eyes and insofar as I recognize this, valorize it, and in this sense choose it.

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What leads us astray here is that we often seek freedom in voluntary deliberation, which examines each motive one by one and appears to go along with the strongest or with the most convincing among them. In fact, the deliberation follows the decision, for my secret decision is what makes the motives appear and we could not even conceive of what the force of a motive might be without a decision that confirms it or counters it. When I have abandoned a project, suddenly the motives that I believed I had in favor of sticking with it fall away, drained of all force. To give them back their force, I must make the effort of reopening time and of placing myself back at the moment when the decision had not yet been made. Even while I am deliberating, it is already through some effort that I succeed in suspending time and in holding open a situation that I sense is closed by a decision already made and which I am resisting. This is why, after having abandoned a project, I so often experience a feeling of relief: "I wasn't so committed after all," the debate was a mere formality, the deliberation was a parody, I had already decided against the project. Weakness of the will is often cited as an argument against freedom. And in fact, if I can voluntarily adopt a behavior and play the role of a warrior or a seducer, this does not depend upon my being a warrior or a seducer "naturally" and with ease, that is, my genuinely being these things. But neither should we seek freedom in the volitional act, which is, according to its very sense, an abortive act. We only resort to the volitional act in order to go against our genuine decision, and as if to prove deliberately our own lack of power. Had we truly assumed the behavior of the warrior or the seducer, then we would have been a warrior or a seducer. Even those things described as obstacles to freedom are in fact deployed by freedom. An unclimbable rock face, a large or small, vertical or diagonal rock face – this only has sense for someone who intends to climb it, for a subject whose projects cut these determinations out of the uniform mass of the in-itself and make an oriented world and a sense

of things suddenly appear. Thus, there is ultimately nothing that could limit freedom, except those limits freedom has itself determined as such through its own initiatives, and the subject has only the exterior world that he gives himself. Since the subject himself, by suddenly appearing, makes sense and value appear among things, and since nothing could reach him except through his giving them a sense and a value, then there is no action of the things upon the subject, but merely a signifying (in the active sense), and a centrifugal *Sinngebung*. The choice seems to be between a scientific understanding of causality, which is incompatible with our self-consciousness, and the affirmation of an absolute freedom without any exterior. It is impossible to identify a point beyond which things would cease to be ἐφ’ἡμιν [dependent upon us].[4] All things are within our power, or none of them are.

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[b. *Then there is no such thing as action, choice, or "doing."*]

Yet this first reflection on freedom might result in rendering freedom impossible. If freedom is indeed equal in all of our actions and even in our passions, if it is incommensurate with our behavior, or if the slave displays as much freedom by living in fear as he does in breaking his chains, then it cannot be said that there is such a thing as *free action*. Freedom would then be prior to all actions, and in no case can it be said that "here is where freedom appears," since in order for free action to be detectable it would have to stand out against a background of life that is not free, or that is less free. Freedom is everywhere, so to speak, but also nowhere. The idea of an acquisition is rejected in the name of freedom, but then freedom becomes a primordial acquisition and something like our state of nature. Since we do not have to bring freedom about, it must be the gift granted us of having no gift, or that nature of consciousness that consists in not having a nature, and in no case can it be expressed on the outside or figure in our life. Thus, the idea of action disappears: nothing can pass from us to the world, since we are nothing determinate and since the non-being that constitutes us could not slip itself into the saturated world. There are only intentions immediately followed by an effect, and we are very close to the Kantian idea of an intention that has the value of an act, to which Scheler objected that the disabled person who would like to save a drowning man and the good swimmer who actually saves him do not have the same experience of autonomy. The very idea of

choice disappears, for to choose is to choose *something* in which freedom sees, at least momentarily, a symbol of itself. A free choice only takes place if freedom puts itself into play in its decision and posits the situation that it chooses as a situation of freedom. A freedom that did not have to bring itself about because it is acquired could not commit itself in this way: it knows quite well that the following instant will find it, in every way, just as free and just as little established. The very notion of freedom requires that our decision plunge into the future, that something has been *done* by it, that the following moment benefits from the preceding one and, if not being a necessity, is at least solicited by it. If freedom has to do with *doing*, then what it does must not immediately be undone by a new freedom. Thus, each instant must not be a closed world; one moment must be able to commit the following ones; once the decision has been made and the action has begun, I must have some acquisition available to me, I must benefit from my momentum, and I must be inclined to continue; there must be an inclination of the mind.

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It was Descartes who said that preservation requires a power just as great as creation, and this assumes a realist notion of the instant. Of course, the "instant" is not a philosopher's fiction. It is the point at which one project is completed and another one begins;[5] it is the point where my gaze shifts from one goal to another; it is the *Augen-Blick* [blink of an eye].[6] But this break in time can only appear if the two pieces each make up a block. It is said that consciousness is not broken up into a myriad of instants, but is at least haunted by the specter of the instant, which it must continuously exorcise through a free act. As we will see below, we in fact always have the power of breaking off, but this assumes in every case a power of *beginning*, for there would be no tearing apart if freedom was nowhere committed and was not preparing to establish itself elsewhere. If there were no cycles of behavior, no open situations that call for a certain completion and that can act as a foundation, either for a decision that confirms them or for one that transforms them, then freedom would never take place. Choice of an intellectual character is not only excluded because there is no time before time, but also because choice assumes a previous commitment and because the idea of a first choice is contradictory. If freedom is to have *a field to work with*,[7] if it must be able to assert itself as freedom, then something must separate freedom from its ends, freedom must have *a field*; that is, it must have some privileged possibilities or realities that tend to be preserved in being. As J.-P. Sartre

himself shows, the dream excludes freedom because in the imaginary we have no sooner intended a signification than we already believe we hold its intuitive realization and, in short, because there are no obstacles and there is nothing *to do*.[8] It has been established that freedom is not to be confused with the abstract decisions of the will at grips with motives or passions; the classical schema of deliberation only applies to a freedom of bad faith that secretly feeds antagonistic motives without wanting to take them up, and itself manufactures the supposed proofs of its own lack of power.

Beneath these noisy debates and these vain attempts to "construct" ourselves, we can see the tacit decisions by which we have articulated the field of possibilities around ourselves, and the fact is that nothing is done so long as we maintain these fixations, and everything is easy once we have weighed these anchors. This is why our freedom must not be sought in the insincere discussions where a style of life that we do not wish to question clashes with circumstances that suggest an alternative: the genuine choice is the choice of our whole character and of our way of being in the world. But either this total choice is never articulated, it is the silent springing forth of our being in the world, in which case it would not be clear in what sense it could be called ours – this freedom glides over itself and is equivalent to a destiny – or the choice that we make of ourselves is truly a choice, a conversion of our existence, but in this case it assumes a preexisting acquisition that it sets out to modify and it establishes a new tradition. This latter will lead us to wonder if the perpetual tearing away by which we defined freedom at the outset is not merely the negative side of our universal engagement in a world, if our indifference toward each determinate thing does not merely express our immersion in all of them, if the ready-made freedom from which we began does not reduce to a power of initiative that could not be transformed into a *doing* without taking up something proposed to us by the world, and finally if concrete and actual freedom do not exist in this exchange. Certainly nothing has *sense* or value except for *me* and through me, but this proposition remains indeterminate and is again mistaken for the Kantian idea of a consciousness that only "finds in things what it has put there" and for the idealist refutation of realism, so long as we fail to clarify how we understand the words "sense" and "me." By defining ourselves as the universal power of *Sinn-Gebung* [giving sense], we have returned to the method of the "that-without-which" and to the classical style of reflective analysis, which

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seeks conditions of possibility without worrying about conditions of reality. Thus, we must again take up the analysis of the *Sinngebung* [sense-giving] and show how it can be at once centrifugal and centripetal, since it has been established that there is no freedom without a field.

[c. *Who gives the motives a sense?*]

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I declare that this rock face is unclimbable, and it is certain that this attribute – just like the attributes of large and small, straight and diagonal, and in fact like all attributes in general – can only come to the rock face from a plan to climb it and from a human presence. Thus, freedom makes the obstacles to freedom appear, such that we cannot place these obstacles opposite freedom as limits. It is clear, however, that given the same project, this rock face over here will appear as an obstacle, while this other more passable one will appear as an aid to the project. My freedom thus does not make an obstacle exist over here and a passageway over there, it merely makes obstacles and passageways exist in general; my freedom does not sketch out the particular figure of this world, it only establishes its general structures. The objection will be that this amounts to the same thing: if my freedom conditions the structure of the "there is," the "here," and the "over there," then my freedom is present everywhere these structures arise; we cannot distinguish the quality "obstacle" from the obstacle itself, relate the first to freedom and the second to the world in itself, which, lacking this quality, would merely be an unnameable and formless mass. Thus, I cannot find a limit to my freedom outside of myself. But could I not find this limit within myself? We must in effect distinguish between my explicit intentions, such as the plan I form today to climb those mountains, and the general intentions that invest my surroundings with some value in a virtual way.[9] Whether or not I have decided to undertake the climb, these mountains appear large because they outstrip my body's grasp and, even if I have just read *Micromégas*,[10] nothing I do can make them appear small. Beneath myself as a thinking subject (able to place myself at will either on Sirius or on the earth's surface), there is thus something like a natural self who does not leave behind its terrestrial situation and who continuously sketches out absolute valuations. Moreover, my projects as a thinking being are clearly constructed upon these valuations; if I decide to see things from the point of view of Sirius, I still have recourse to my terrestrial experience in order to do so: I declare, for example, that the Alps *are molehills*.

[d. *Implicit valuation of the sensible world.*]*

Insofar as I have hands, feet, a body, and a world, I sustain intentions around myself that are not decided upon and that affect my surroundings in ways I do not choose. These intentions are general in a double sense, first in the sense that they constitute a system in which all possible objects are enclosed: if the mountain seems large and vertical, then the tree appears small and diagonal; and second in the sense that these intentions do not belong to me, they come from farther away than myself and I am not surprised to find them in all psycho-physical subjects who have a similar organization to my own. This is why, as Gestalt theory has shown, there are forms that are privileged for me and for all other humans, and which can give rise to a psychological science and to strict laws. Consider this collection of dots:

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It is always perceived as "six groups of dots, two millimeters apart"; and some figures are always perceived as a cube, while others are always seen as a flat mosaic.[11] Everything happens as if, prior to our judgment and our freedom, someone were allocating such and such a sense to such and such a given constellation. Of course, perceptual structures do not always force themselves upon us: some are ambiguous. But these latter reveal to us even more clearly the presence of a spontaneous valuation in us: for these are the floating figures that propose in turn different significations. Now, a pure consciousness can do anything except be unaware of its own intentions, and an absolute freedom cannot choose itself as hesitant, since this amounts to allowing itself to be drawn in several directions, and since by definition the possibilities owe their entire force to freedom, the weight that freedom allocates to one of them is simultaneously withdrawn from the others. We can certainly decompose a form by looking at it askew, but only because freedom makes use of the gaze and its spontaneous valuations. Without these spontaneous valuations, we would not have a world, that is, a collection of things that emerges from the formless mass by offering themselves to our body as things "to be touched," "to be taken," or "to be climbed"; we would never be aware of adjusting ourselves to the things and of reaching them out there where they are, beyond us; we would merely be aware of rigorously

conceiving of objects that are immanent to our intentions; we would not be in the world, ourselves implicated in the spectacle and, so to speak, intermingled with things; we would have merely a representation of a universe. Thus, it is certainly true that there are no obstacles in themselves, but the "myself" that qualifies them as obstacles is not an acosmic subject; this subject anticipates himself among the things in order to give them the shape of things. There is an autochthonous sense of the world that is constituted in the exchange between the world and our embodied existence and that forms the ground of every deliberate *Sinngebung* [sense-giving act].

[e. *Sedimentation of being in the world.*]

This is not only true of an impersonal and ultimately abstract function like "external perception." There is something analogous in all valuations. It has been quite aptly noted that pain or fatigue can never be considered as causes that "act" upon my freedom, and that, if I experience [*éprouve*] pain or fatigue at a given moment, then they do not come from the outside; they always have a sense, they express my attitude toward the world. Pain makes me give in and say what I should have kept quiet; fatigue brings my journey to an end. We all know that moment when we decide to give up tolerating the pain or the fatigue and when, instantaneously, they become actually intolerable. Fatigue does not stop my companion because he likes the feel of his body damp with sweat, the scorching heat of the road and the sun and, in short, because he likes to feel himself at the center of things, to draw together their rays, or to turn himself into the gaze for this light and the sense of touch for these surfaces. My fatigue stops me because I do not enjoy this, because I have differently chosen my way of being in the world, and because, for example, I do not look to be out in nature, but rather to gain the recognition of others. I am free in relation to my fatigue precisely to the extent that I am free in relation to my being in the world; [despite my fatigue] I am free to continue along my way on condition of transforming my being in the world.[12]

But in fact, here again, we must recognize a sort of sedimentation of our life: when an attitude toward the world has been confirmed often enough, it becomes privileged for us. If freedom does not tolerate being confronted by any motive, then my habitual being in the world is equally fragile at each moment, and the complexes I have for years nourished

through complacency remain equally innocuous, for freedom's gesture can effortlessly shatter them at any moment. And yet, after having built my life upon an inferiority complex, continuously reinforced for twenty years, it is not *likely* that I would change. A cursory rationalism would obviously object to this illegitimate notion by saying: there are no degrees of possibility, either the free act no longer exists or it is still there, in which case freedom is complete. In short, they would argue that this "likely" is meaningless. This notion belongs to statistical thinking, which is not thinking at all, since it has nothing to do with any particular thing actually existing, nor with any moment of time, nor with any concrete event. "It's unlikely that Paul will renounce writing bad books": this is meaningless since, at any moment, Paul might decide to stop writing such books. The "likely" is everywhere and nowhere, it is a reified fiction that has merely a psychological existence; the "likely" is not an ingredient of the world.

— And yet, we have already encountered it just a moment ago in the perceived *world*: the mountain is large or small insofar as it is situated as a perceived thing in the field of my virtual actions and in relation to a level that is not merely the level of my individual life, but rather the level of "every man." Generality and probability are not fictions, they are phenomena, and so we must find a phenomenological foundation for statistical thought. Statistical thought necessarily belongs to a being who is fixed, situated, and surrounded in the world. "It's unlikely" that I would in this moment destroy an inferiority complex in which I have been complacent now for twenty years. This means that I am committed to inferiority, that I have decided to dwell within it, that this past, if not a destiny, has at least a specific weight, and that it is not a sum of events over there, far away from me, but rather the atmosphere of my present. The rationalist alternative — either the free act is possible or not, either the event originates in me or is imposed from the outside — does not fit with our relations with the world and with our past. Our freedom does not destroy our situation, but gears into it: so long as we are alive, our situation is open, which implies both that it calls forth privileged modes of resolution and that it, by itself, lacks the power to procure any of them.

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[f. *Valuation of historical situations: class prior to class consciousness.*]

We would arrive at the same result by examining our relations with history. If I consider myself in my absolute concretion and such as reflec-

tion presents me to myself, then I am an anonymous and pre-human flow that has not yet been articulated as "worker," for example, or as "bourgeois." If I later conceive of myself as a man among men, or as a bourgeois among bourgeois, it seems that this can only be a secondary view of myself; I am never a worker or a bourgeois at my very core, but rather a consciousness that freely valuates itself as a bourgeois or a proletarian consciousness. Indeed, my objective place in the circuit of production is not sufficient to give rise to an awareness of class. People were exploited long before there were revolutionaries. The worker's movement does not always progress in times of economic crisis. The revolt is not, then, the product of objective conditions, but conversely it is the decision made by the worker to desire the revolution that turns him into a proletarian. The valuation of the present is established by the free project of the future. One might conclude from this that history has no sense by itself, it has the sense we give it through our will.

– And yet here again we fall back into the method of the "that-without-which"; in opposition to objective thought, which places the subject into the network of determinism, we have answered with an idealist reflection that makes determinism rest upon the subject's constituting activity. Now, we have already seen that objective thought and reflective analysis are but two appearances of the same error, two ways of ignoring phenomena. Objective thought deduces class consciousness from the objective condition of the proletariat. Idealist reflection reduces the proletarian condition to the proletarian's consciousness of that condition. The former draws the consciousness of class from class as defined by objective characteristics, whereas the latter reduces "being a worker" to the consciousness of being a worker. In both cases, we are operating on the level of abstraction, because we remain within the alternative between the in-itself and the for-itself. If we take up the question again, not with the intention of discovering the causes of this becoming conscious – for there is no cause that can act upon a consciousness from the outside, nor its conditions of possibility, for what we need is the conditions that make it actual – but rather with the intention of discovering class consciousness itself, if, in short, we adopt a truly existential method, then what do we find? I am not conscious of being a worker or a bourgeois because I in fact sell my work or because I in fact show solidarity to the capitalist machine, and I certainly do not become a worker or a bourgeois the day that I commit to seeing history through the lens of class

warfare. Rather, "I exist as a worker" or "I exist as a bourgeois" first, and this mode of communication with the world and society motivates both my revolutionary or conservative projects and my explicit judgments ("I am a worker," or "I am a bourgeois"), without it being the case that I can deduce the former from the latter, nor the latter from the former. Neither the economy nor society, taken as a system of impersonal forces, determine me as a proletarian, but rather society or the economy such as I bear them within myself and such as I live them; nor is it, for that matter, an intellectual operation without any motive, but rather my way of being in the world within this institutional framework.

[As a worker,] I have a certain style of life: I am at the mercy of unemployment and prosperity; I cannot do with my life whatever I please; I am paid on a weekly basis; I control neither the conditions, nor the products of my labor. And as a result, I feel like a foreigner in my factory, my nation, and my life. I am accustomed to dealing with a *fatum* [destiny] that I do not respect, but that must be humored. Or perhaps I work as a day-laborer: I have no farm of my own, nor even any work tools; I move from farm to farm, renting myself out during harvest season; I sense a nameless power hovering over me that turns me into a nomad, even when I would like to settle down. Or finally, perhaps I am the tenant of a farm where the owner has not installed electricity, even though the main lines are a mere two hundred yards away. I am allotted only one inhabitable room for myself and my family, even though it would be easy to make other rooms in the house available. My fellow factory or harvest workers, or the other tenant farmers, do the same work I do, and under similar conditions; we coexist in the same situation and we feel ourselves to be similar, not through some comparison, as if each one of us lived above all in isolation, but on the basis of our tasks and gestures. These situations do not assume any explicit valuation, and if there is a tacit valuation, it is the thrust of a freedom without any project encountering unknown obstacles; in no way can we speak of a choice, for in the three cases it is sufficient that I am born and that I exist in order to experience my life as difficult and constrained – I do not choose to experience it this way. But things might well stay right there without my reaching class consciousness, understanding myself as a proletarian, or becoming a revolutionary. How, then, will this passage come about?

The worker learns that other workers in another trade have, after a strike, obtained an increased salary; he observes that shortly thereafter

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the salaries in his own factory were raised. The *fatum* with which he was grappling begins to become more clearly articulated. The day-laborer, who has rarely interacted with workers, who does not resemble them, and who is hardly fond of them, sees the price of manufactured objects increasing, as well as the cost of living, and notices that one can no longer make ends meet. It might happen that, in that moment, he blames the workers of the city, and so class consciousness will not be born. If it is born, this is not because the day-laborer has decided to become a revolutionary and, consequently, to confer a value upon his actual condition, but rather because he perceived concretely the synchronicity between his life and the lives of the workers, and the community of their lot in life. The small farmer, who does not mix with day-laborers, and even less so with the village workers, separated from them through a world of customs and value judgments, nevertheless feels himself on the same side as the day-laborers when he pays them an insufficient salary; he feels solidarity with the workers of the city when he learns that the owners of the farm preside over the board of directors of several industrial corporations. Social space begins to become polarized, and a region of "the exploited" appears. Upon every upsurge, coming from any point on the social horizon whatsoever, the regrouping takes shape beyond different ideologies and trades. Class is coming into being, and we call a situation "revolutionary" when the objectively existing connection between the segments of the proletariat (that is, those connections that an absolute observer would ultimately recognize between them) is finally experienced [*vécu*] in the perception of a common obstacle to each one's existence. There is never a need for a representation of the revolution to arise. It is unlikely, for example, that the Russian peasants of 1917 explicitly set for themselves the task of the revolution and the transformation of property relations. Revolution is born day to day, from the interlocking of immediate ends with ends that are further removed. There is no need for each proletarian to conceive of himself as proletarian in the sense a Marxist theoretician gives this word. It is enough for the day-laborer or the farmer to feel himself moving toward a certain crossroads to which the village worker's path also leads. Both open onto the revolution that – had it been described and represented to them in advance – would have frightened them. At most we can say the revolution is at the end of the paths they have taken and is in their projects in the form of a "things-must-change," which each concretely experiences in his own difficulties

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and at the basis of his particular unquestioned beliefs. Neither the *fatum*, nor the free act that destroys it, are represented; they are lived in ambiguity. This does not mean that the workers and the peasants bring about the revolution unwittingly and in them we have but "elementary forces" or blind actors skillfully manipulated by some lucid agitators. The chief of police may indeed see history this way. But such views are of no help to him when confronted with a truly revolutionary situation, when the commands issued by the so-called agitators are immediately understood as if through some preestablished harmony and find complicity everywhere, because they crystallize what is latent in the life of all producers.

[g. *Intellectual project and existential project*.]*

The revolutionary movement, like the work of the artist, is an intention that creates its own instruments and its own means of expression. The revolutionary project is not the result of a deliberate judgment, nor the explicit positing of an end. This is what it is for the propagandist, because he has been trained by the intellectual, or for the intellectual, because he regulates his life on the basis of his thought. But the revolution only ceases to be the abstract decision of a thinker and becomes an historical reality if worked out in inter-human relations and in the relations of man with his work. Thus, it is true that I recognize myself as a worker or bourgeois the day I situate myself in relation to a possible revolution, and that this stand does not result, through some mechanistic causality, from my social status as a worker or bourgeois (and this is why all classes have their traitors); but no more is this a spontaneous, instantaneous, and unmotivated valuation – it was prepared for by a molecular process, it ripens in coexistence prior to bursting forth in words and relating to objective ends.

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We are correct to observe that the most lucid revolutionaries are not produced by the most extreme poverty, but we forget to ask why a return to prosperity often brings about a radicalization of the masses. This is because the relaxation of the demands of life makes possible a new arrangement of social space: horizons are no longer restricted to the most immediate of worries, there is some breathing space, and there is room for a new life project. This fact does not prove that the worker turns himself into a worker and a revolutionary *ex nihilo*, but rather that he does so upon a certain ground of coexistence. The error of the conception

under consideration is, in short, to examine only intellectual projects, rather than bringing into the account the existential project, which is the polarization of a life toward a determinate–indeterminate goal of which it has no representation and that it only recognizes at the moment the goal is reached. They reduce intentionality in general to the particular case of objectifying acts, they turn the proletarian condition into an object of thought, and they have no trouble showing, in accordance with the established method of idealism, that, like every object of thought, it only subsists before and by the consciousness that constitutes it as an object. Idealism (like objective thought) misses genuine intentionality, which, rather than positing its object, *is toward* its object.[13] Idealism is unaware of the interrogative, the subjunctive, the wish, the expectation, and the positive indetermination of these modes of consciousness. It is only familiar with indicative consciousness in the present or the future tenses, and this is why it does not succeed in accounting for class. For class is neither simply recorded, nor established by decree; just like the *fatum* of the capitalist machine and just like the revolution, class is – prior to being conceived – lived as an obsessive presence, as a possibility, as an enigma, and as a myth.

To make class consciousness into the result of a decision or a choice is to say that the questions are resolved the day they are posed, that every question already contains the response it awaits; it is, in short, to return to immanence and to give up the hope of understanding history. In fact, the intellectual project and the positing of ends are merely the fulfillment of an existential project. I am the one who gives a sense and a future to my life, but this does not mean that I conceive of this sense and this future; rather, they spring forth from my present and from my past, and particularly from my present and past mode of coexistence. Even for the intellectual who becomes a revolutionary, the decision is not born *ex nihilo*; sometimes it follows up a long solitude: the intellectual seeks a doctrine that is demanding of him, and that cures him of subjectivity; sometimes he bows to the clarity a Marxist interpretation of history can bring, in which case he has placed knowledge at the center of his life, and this itself is only understood in relation to his past and his childhood. Even an unmotivated decision to become a revolutionary, made by a pure act of freedom, would again express a certain manner of being in the natural and social world, which is typically that of the intellectual. He only "joins the working class" through his situation as an intellectual

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(and this is why even fideism,[14] in his case, remains justifiably suspect). For the worker, the decision is elaborated *a fortiori* in his life. In this case, it is no longer thanks to some misunderstanding that the horizon of an individual life and the revolutionary aims coincide: for the worker, the revolution is a much more immediate and imminent possibility than for the intellectual, since he is at grips with the economic machine in his own life. And this is why, statistically, there are more workers than bourgeoisie in a revolutionary party. Of course, motivation does not suppress freedom. Even the most strict workers' parties have included many intellectuals among their leaders, and it is likely that a man like Lenin identified himself with the revolution and ended up transcending the distinction between intellectual and worker. But these are precisely the virtues of action and commitment. At the outset, I am not an individual above class; I am situated socially, and my freedom, even if it has the power to commit me elsewhere, does not have the power to turn me immediately into what I decide to be. Thus, being bourgeois or a worker is not merely being conscious of so being, it is to give myself the value of a worker or a bourgeois through an implicit or existential project that merges with our way of articulating the world and of coexisting with others. My decision takes up a spontaneous sense of my life that it can confirm or deny, but that it cannot annul. Idealism and objective thought equally miss the arrival of class consciousness, the first because it deduces actual existence from consciousness, the other because it derives consciousness from actual existence, and both of them because they are unaware of the relation of motivation.

[h. *The For-Itself and the For-Others, intersubjectivity.*]

One might respond from the idealist side that I am not for myself a particular project, but rather a pure consciousness, and that the attributes "bourgeois" or "worker" only belong to me insofar as I place myself back among others, insofar as I see myself through their eyes, from the outside, and as an "other." Here we would have categories drawn from the For-Others, and not from the For-Self. But if there were two types of categories, then how could I have the experience of another person, that is, of an *alter ego*? This assumes that the quality of a possible "other" is already nascent in the view I have of myself, and that his quality of *ego* is already implicated in the view I take of others. Again, the response will be

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that the other is given as a fact and not as a possibility of my own being. What is meant by this? Do they mean that I would not have the experience of other men if there were none on the surface of the earth? The proposition is self-evident, but it does not resolve our question, since, as Kant already said, one cannot pass from "all knowledge begins with experience" to "all knowledge comes from experience." If other empirically existing men are to be other men for me, I must have what is needed in order to recognize them, and so the structures of the For-Others must already be the dimensions of the For-Self. Moreover, it is impossible to derive all of the specifications that we are speaking of from the For-Others. The other is neither necessarily, nor even ever fully, an object for me. And, such as occurs in cases of sympathy, I can perceive another person as bare existence and as freedom as much or as little as I can myself. The-Other-as-an-object is only an insincere modality of the other, just as absolute subjectivity is only an abstract notion of myself. Thus, even in my most radical reflection, I must already grasp around my absolute individuality something like a halo of generality, or an atmosphere of "sociality." This is necessary if the words "a bourgeois" and "a man" are later to be able to take on a sense for me. I must immediately grasp myself as eccentric to myself, and my singular existence must diffuse, so to speak, around itself an existence as quality. The For-Selves – me for myself and the other for himself – must stand out against a background of For-Others – me for others and others for me. My life must have a sense that I do not constitute, there must be, literally, an intersubjectivity; each of us must be at once anonymous in the sense of an absolute individuality and anonymous in the sense of an absolute generality. Our being in the world is the concrete bearer of this double anonymity.

[i. *There is* some *sense to history.*]¹⁵

On this condition, there can be situations, a sense of history, and an historical truth – three ways of saying the same thing. If I actually made myself into a worker or bourgeois through an absolute initiative, and if, in general, nothing ever solicited freedom, then history would have no

513 structure, we would not see any events take shape there, and anything might result from anything. There would be no British Empire, taken as a relatively stable historical form to which a name can be given and in which certain likely properties can be recognized. The history of the

social movement would not contain revolutionary situations or periods of latency. A revolution would be equally possible at any moment, and one could reasonably expect a despot to be converted to anarchism. History would never be going anywhere, and, even if a short period of time were examined, it could never be said that events are conspiring toward a certain outcome. The Statesman would forever be an adventurer, that is, he would commandeer events to his own advantage by giving them a sense that they *did not have*. Now, if it really is true that history is powerless to complete anything without the consciousnesses that take it up and that thereby decide its course, and if, as a result, history can never be detached from us, like a foreign power that would make use of us toward its own ends, then *precisely because history is always lived history* we cannot deny it at least a fragmentary sense. Something is emerging that will perhaps be aborted, but that for now would satisfy the indications of the present. Nothing can make it happen that a military power "above classes" in the France of 1799 should not appear in the trajectory of the revolutionary backlash, and that the role of "military dictator" should not here be a "role to be played." Bonaparte's project – known to us through its actualization – leads us to judge in this manner. But prior to Bonaparte, Dumouriez, Custine, and others had developed it, and we must account for this convergence. What we call the sense of events is not an idea that produces them, nor the fortuitous outcome of their assemblage. It is the concrete project of a future that is elaborated in social coexistence and in the One [l'*On*] prior to every personal decision. At the point in its history to which the class dynamic had arrived in 1799, the revolution being able neither to be continued nor canceled, and all guarantees having been made for the freedom of individuals, each one of them – through this functional and generalized existence that turned each into an historical subject – tended merely to rest upon what had been acquired. To offer them the alternative of either taking up again the revolutionary methods of government, or returning to the social state of 1789, would have been an historical error, not that there is some truth to history independent of our projects and evaluations, which remain forever free, but because there is an average and statistical signification of these projects.

This amounts to saying that we give history its sense, but not without history offering us that sense. The *Sinn-gebung* is not merely centrifugal, and this is why the individual is not the subject of history. There is an exchange between generalized existence and individual existence; both

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receive and both give. A moment occurs when the sense that was taking shape in the One and that was merely an indeterminate possibility threatened by the contingency of history is taken up by an individual. Thus it can happen that, having taken hold of history, an individual directs it (at least for a time) well beyond what seemed to be its sense and commits history to a new dialectic, such as when Bonaparte the Consul turned himself into Emperor and conqueror. We are not claiming that history has a single sense from beginning to end, any more than an individual life does. In any case, we mean that freedom only modifies history by taking up what history *offered* at the moment in question, and it does so by a sort of shift or slippage.[16] In relation to this proposal made by the present, we can distinguish the adventurer from the Statesman, the historical deception from the truth of an epoch and, consequently, our assessment of the past – even if it never reaches absolute objectivity – is never entitled to be arbitrary.

[j. *The Ego and its halo of generality.*]

We thus recognize, surrounding our initiatives and ourselves taken as this strictly individual project, a zone of generalized existence and of already completed projects, significations scattered between us and the things, which confer upon us the qualities of "man," "bourgeois," or "worker." Generality already intervenes, our presence to ourselves is already mediated by it. We cease to be pure consciousness the moment that the natural or social constellation ceases to be an unformulated "this" and is crystallized into a situation, from the moment it takes on a sense, in short, from the moment we exist. Each thing appears to us through a medium that it colors with its fundamental quality. This piece of wood is neither an assemblage of colors and tactile givens, nor even their total *Gestalt*; rather, something like a woody essence emanates from it, these "sensible givens" modulate a certain theme or illustrate a certain style that wood is, and that establishes an horizon of sense around this piece of wood and around the perception I have of it. The natural world, as we have seen, is nothing other than the place of all possible themes and styles. It is irreducibly an unmatched individual and a sense. Correlatively, the generality or the individuality of the subject, subjectivity as bearing qualities or pure subjectivity, the anonymity of the One or the anonymity of consciousness – these are not in each case two conceptions

of the subject between which philosophy would have to choose, but two
moments of a single structure that is the concrete subject.

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Let us consider, for example, sensing. I lose myself in this red that is
in front of me without qualifying it in any way; it certainly seems that
this experience puts me into contact with a pre-human subject. Who
perceives this red? Certainly not anyone we could name, nor anyone who
could be placed among other perceiving subjects. For no direct com-
parison will ever be possible between this experience of red that I have,
and the experience of red described to me by others. Here I am within
my own point of view, and, just as every experience – insofar as it has
to do with impressions – is in the same way strictly my own, it seems
that a unique and never doubled subject embraces them all. I formulate a
thought, for example, I am thinking of Spinoza's God; this thought, such
as I live it, is a certain landscape to which no other person will ever gain
access, even if I otherwise succeed in starting up a conversation with a
friend on the question of Spinoza's God. And yet, the individuality of
even these experiences is not pure. For the thickness of this red, its *haec-
ceity*, the power that it has of filling me and of reaching me, comes from
the fact that it solicits and obtains a certain vibration from my gaze, and
presupposes that I am familiar with a world of colors of which it is a par-
ticular variation. Thus, the concrete red stands out against a background
of generality, and this is why, even without passing over to the other's
point of view, I grasp myself in perception as a perceiving subject and
not as an unmatched consciousness. Surrounding my perception of this
red, I sense all of the regions of my being that it does not touch, as well
as that region destined to colors – "vision" – by which it does touch me.
Likewise, my thought of Spinoza's God is only apparently a rigorously
unique experience, for it is a crystallization of a certain cultural world
– Spinozist philosophy – or of a certain philosophical style, in which I
immediately recognize a "Spinozist" idea.

[k. *The absolute flow is for itself a consciousness.*]*

Thus, we need not wonder why the thinking subject or consciousness
catches sight of itself as a man, an embodied subject, or an historical
subject, and we should not treat this apperception as a second-order
operation that the subject would perform beginning from his absolute
existence. The absolute flow appears perspectivally to its own gaze as

"*a* consciousness" (or as a man or an embodied subject) because it is a field of presence – presence to itself, to others, and to the world – and because this presence throws it into the natural and cultural world from which it can be understood. We must not represent this flow to ourselves as an absolute contact with itself or as an absolute density without any internal fault-lines, but rather as a being who continues itself into the outside. If the subject makes a continuous and forever peculiar choice of himself and of his ways of being, one might wonder why his experience intertwines with itself and presents to him objects or definite historical phases; why we have a general notion of time that is valid across all times; and finally, why the experience of each one fits with that of others. The question itself, however, must be put into question, for we are not given a fragment of time followed by another or an individual flow followed by another, but rather each subjectivity taking itself up, and subjectivities taking each other up in the generality of a nature, or the cohesion of an intersubjective life of a world. The present actualizes the mediation between the For-Itself and the For-Others, between individuality and generality. True reflection presents me to myself, not as an idle and inaccessible subjectivity, but as identical to my presence in the world and to others, such as I currently bring it into being: I am everything that I see and I am an intersubjective field, not in spite of my body and my historical situation, but rather by being this body and this situation and by being, through them, everything else.

[l. *I do not choose myself starting from nothing.*]

From this perspective, what becomes of the freedom we discussed at the outset? I can no longer pretend to be a nothingness and to choose myself continuously from nothing. If nothingness appears in the world through subjectivity, then it can also be said that nothingness comes into being through the world. I am a general refusal of being anything whatever, secretly accompanied by a continuous acceptance of some form of qualified being. *For even this general refusal still counts among the ways of being and figures in the world.* I can, of course, interrupt my projects at any moment. But what exactly is this power? It is the power of beginning something else, for we never remain in suspense in the nothingness. We are always in the plenum and in being, just as a face, even when at rest or even when dead, is always condemned to express something (there are

cadavers that appear surprised, peaceful, or unobtrusive), and just as silence is still a modality of the sonorous world. I can break every mold and scoff at everything, but there is no case in which I am entirely committed: it is not that I withdraw into my freedom, but because I commit myself elsewhere. Rather than thinking of my sorrow, I stare at my fingernails, or I have lunch, or I get involved in politics. Far from my freedom being forever alone, it is in fact never without accomplices, and its power of perpetually tearing itself away leans upon my universal engagement in the world.

My actual freedom is not on this side of my being, but out in front of me, among the things. It must not be said that I continually choose myself on the pretext that I *could* continually refuse what I am. But not refusing is not a choice. We could only identify non-doing and doing by stripping the implicit of all phenomenal value and by spreading the world out in front of us at each moment in a perfect transparency, that is, by destroying the "worldliness" of the world. Consciousness holds itself responsible for everything, it takes on everything, but it has nothing of its own and makes its life in the world. One is led to conceive of freedom as a continually renewed choice so long as the notion of a natural or generalized time has not been introduced. We have seen that there is no such thing as natural time if we understand this to mean a time of objects without subjectivity. There is, however, at least a generalized time, and this is even the time intended by the common notion. This time is the perpetual starting over of the series: past, present, future. It is like a disappointment and a repeated failure. This is what we express in saying that time is continuous: the present that it brings to us is never really present, since it is always past when it appears, and the future has there but the appearance of a goal toward which we are moving, since it soon arrives in the present and since we then turn toward another future. This is the time of our bodily functions, which are cyclical like them, and it is the time of nature with which we coexist. It only offers us the outline and the abstract form of a commitment, since it continuously gnaws away at itself and undoes what it has just done. As long as we oppose the For-Itself and the In-Itself without any mediation, as long as we do not perceive that natural outline of a subjectivity between ourselves and the world, and that pre-personal time that rests upon itself, then acts will be necessary to sustain the springing forth of time and everything will be a choice in the same way: the breathing reflex as well as the moral decision,

or conservation as well as creation. For us, consciousness only attributes this power to itself if it passes over in silence the event that establishes its infrastructure and that is its birth. A consciousness for which the world is "self-evident," that finds the world "already constituted" and present even within consciousness itself, *absolutely* chooses neither its being nor its manner of being.

[m. *Conditioned freedom.*]

What then is freedom? To be born is to be simultaneously born of the world and to be born into the world.[17] The world is always already constituted, but also never completely constituted. In the first relation we are solicited, in the second we are open to an infinity of possibilities. Yet this analysis remains abstract, for we exist in both ways *simultaneously*. Thus, there is never determinism and never an absolute choice; I am never a mere thing and never a bare consciousness. In particular, even our initiatives, and even the situations that we have chosen, once they have been taken up, carry us along as if by a state of grace. The generality of the "role" and of the situation comes to the aid of the decision, and, in this exchange between the situation and the one who takes it up, it is impossible to determine the "contribution of the situation" and the "contribution of freedom." We torture a man to make him speak. If he refuses to give the names and addresses that we wish to extract from him, this is not through a solitary and ungrounded decision; he still felt himself among his comrades and was still committed to their common struggle; he was somehow incapable of speaking; or perhaps he had, for months or even years, confronted this test in his thoughts and staked his entire life upon it; or finally, he might wish to prove what he had always thought and said about freedom by overcoming this test. These motives do not annul freedom, but they at least show that freedom is not without supports within being. It is not ultimately a bare consciousness that resists the pain, but the prisoner along with his comrades or along with those he loves and under whose gaze he lives, or finally consciousness along with its arrogantly desired solitude, which is again to say a certain mode of *Mit-Sein* [being-with].[18] It is, of course, the individual alone in his prison who reanimates these phantoms each day, and they give him back the strength that he had given them; but reciprocally, if he is committed to this action, if he ties himself to his comrades or clings to this morality, this is because

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the historical situation, his comrades, and the world around him seemed to him to expect this particular behavior from him.

We could thus continue this analysis endlessly. We choose our world and the world chooses us. In any case, it is certain that we can never reserve in ourselves an enclave into which being does not penetrate without it immediately being the case that this freedom takes the shape of being and becomes a motive and a support from the mere fact that it is lived. Taken concretely, freedom is always an encounter between the exterior and the interior – even that pre-human and pre-historical free-dom by which we began – and it weakens, without ever becoming zero, to the extent that the *tolerance* of the bodily and institutional givens of our life diminishes. As Husserl said, there is a "field of freedom" and a "con-ditioned freedom,"[19] not because freedom is absolute within the limits of this field and nothing outside of it (for just like the perceptual field, this one too has no linear limits), but because I have immediate possibili-ties and more distant possibilities. Our commitments sustain our power, and there is no freedom without some power. Our freedom, it is said, is either total or non-existent. This is the dilemma of objective thought and its accomplice, reflective analysis. Indeed, if we place ourselves within being, then our actions must come from the outside; if we return to con-stituting consciousness, then our actions must come from within. But we have learned precisely to recognize the order of phenomena. We are mixed up with the world and with others in an inextricable confusion. The idea of a situation precludes there being an absolute freedom at the origin of our commitments and, for that matter, at their end. No com-mitment, and not even a commitment to the Hegelian State, can cause me to transcend all differences and render me free for anything. This uni-versality itself, from the mere fact that it would be lived, would stand out as a particularity against the background of the world; existence simulta-neously generalizes and particularizes everything that it intends, and can never be complete.

[n. *Provisional synthesis of the in-itself and the for-itself in presence.*]

And yet, the synthesis of the In-itself and the For-itself that brings about Hegelian freedom has its truth. In a sense, it is the very definition of existence: it is accomplished at each moment before our eyes in the phenomenon of presence, only it must be immediately started over and

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does not suppress our finitude. By taking up a present, I again take hold of my past and I transform it, I alter its sense, I free myself and detach myself from it. But I only do so by committing myself elsewhere. Psycho-analytic treatment does not heal by provoking an insight into the past, but by first relating the subject to his doctor through new existential relations. It is not a question of giving a scientific approval to the psychoanalytic interpretation, nor of discovering a notional sense of the past; rather, it is a question of re-living the past as signifying this or that, and the patient only achieves this by seeing his past from the perspective of his coexistence with the doctor. The complex is not dissolved by a freedom without instruments, but rather is dislocated by a new pulsation of time that has its supports and its motives. The same is true for all moments of insight: they are actual if they are sustained by a new commitment. Now, this engagement in turn is accomplished in the implicit, and is thus only valid for a particular temporal cycle. The choice that we make of our life always takes place upon the basis of a certain given. My freedom can deflect my life from its spontaneous sense, but only through a series of

520 shifts, by first joining with it, and not through any absolute creation. All explanations of my behavior in terms of my past, my temperament, or my milieu are thus true, but only on condition of not considering them as separable contributions, but rather as moments of my total being whose sense I could make explicit in different directions, without our ever being able to say if it is I who give them their sense or if I receive it from them.

[o. *My signification is outside of myself.*]*

I am a psychological and historical structure. Along with existence, I received a way of existing, or a style. All of my actions and thoughts are related to this structure, and even a philosopher's thought is merely a way of making explicit his hold upon the world, which is all he is. And yet, I am free, not in spite of or beneath these motivations, but rather by their means. For that meaningful life, that particular signification of nature and history that I am, does not restrict my access to the world; it is rather my means of communication with it. It is by being what I am at present, without any restrictions and without holding anything back, that I have a chance at progressing; it is by living my time that I can understand other times; it is by plunging into the present and into the world, by resolutely

taking up what I am by chance, by willing what I will, and by doing what I do, that I can go farther. The only way I can fail to be free is if I attempt to transcend my natural and social situation by refusing to take it up at first, rather than meeting up with the natural and human world through it. Nothing determines me from the outside, not that nothing solicits me, but rather because I am immediately outside of myself and open to the world. We are *true* right through; we carry with us – from the mere fact that we are in and toward the world [*au monde*] and not merely in the world [*dans le monde*], like things – all that is necessary for transcending ourselves. We need not worry that our choices or our actions restrain our freedom, since choice and action alone can free us from our anchors. Just as reflection borrows its desire for absolute adequation from the perception that makes something appear, and that idealism thereby tacitly makes use of the "originary opinion" that it had wanted to destroy as mere opinion, so too does freedom become mired in the contradictions of commitment and does not notice that it would not be freedom without the roots that it thrusts into the world. Will I make that promise? Will I risk my life for so little? Will I give up my freedom in order to save freedom? There are no theoretical responses to these questions. There are, however, these *things* that appear, irrecusably, that loved person in front of you, these men existing as slaves around you, and *your* freedom cannot will itself without emerging from its singularity and without willing freedom *in general*. Whether it is a question of things or of historical situations, philosophy has no other function than to teach us to see them anew, and it is true to say that philosophy actualizes itself by destroying itself as an isolated philosophy. But it is precisely here that we must remain silent, for only the hero fully lives his relation with men and with the world, and it is hardly fitting for another to speak in his name.

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> Your son is caught in the fire, you will save him . . . You would trade your shoulder, if there were an obstacle, to knock it down. You reside in your very act. You are your act . . . [. . .] You give yourself in exchange . . . Your signification shines forth, dazzlingly. It is your duty, your hatred, your love, your loyalty, your creativity . . . [. . .] Man is a knot of relations, and relations alone count for man.[20]

III FREEDOM

1 "Flow" in the sense we have, following Husserl, given to this word.

2 [The context suggests that the two senses of the French verb *déterminer* intended by Merleau-Ponty are (i) "to be the cause or origin of" something and (ii) "to motivate" or "to lead someone to a decision."]

3 See Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, 508ff. [*L'être et le néant* (2008), 477ff.; *Being and Nothingness*, 455ff.].

4 [As noted by the editors of *Phénoménologie de la perception* (2010), the Ancient Greek term ἐφ'ἡμιν is an allusion to the Stoic philosophy of Epictetus. In particular: "*ta eph'emin* are the things that depend upon us, in opposition to *ta ouk eph'emin*, the things that do not depend upon us. Wisdom, for Epictetus, consists in drawing a clear distinction between these two orders of reality. Merleau-Ponty understands the term here in a more objective sense." See Merleau-Ponty, *Œuvres*, 1142.]

5 Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, 544. [*L'être et le néant* (2008), 510–11; *Being and Nothingness*, 487–88.]

6 [The German word *Augenblick*, normally written without the hyphen, means "moment" or "instant." In *Being and Time*, Heidegger emphasizes the components of the word (writing: Augen*blick*), adding a similar emphasis

to Merleau-Ponty's own addition of the hyphen here. Perhaps this emphasis indicates a more literal rendering of the component words, in the sense of the "glance" or "blink" of an eye (*Augen* means "eyes," *Blick* relates to the act of "looking"), and this is certainly Merleau-Ponty's intention since he is giving a definition of the "instant," not a mere translation of it. In French, Merleau-Ponty chooses "instant" rather than "moment," and I have preserved his choice by using the corresponding English words. See "Sein und Zeit," 328; *Being and Time*, 313, and the corresponding translator's note.]

7   [I have preserved Merleau-Ponty's play on the term *champ* ("field"), which connects below and to other passages in this book; his phrase *avoir du champ* means "to have some room or some space."]

8   Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, 562. [*L'être et le néant* (2008), 527–28; *Being and Nothingness*, 504.]

9   [Here Merleau-Ponty uses the verb *valoriser* and the noun *valorisation* repeatedly. He intends the sense of giving or "investing" with value, rather than "evaluating." I have used "valuate" or "valorize" for the verb, and "valuation" for the noun.]

10 [The reference is to Voltaire's novella "Micromégas," in which the narrator recounts his encounter with a 120,000 foot tall giant from a planet around the star Sirius. See Voltaire, "Micromégas," in *Candide and Other Stories*, trans. Roger Pearson, 89–106 (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2006).]

11 See above, page 275.

12 Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, 531ff. [*L'être et le néant* (2008), 498ff.; *Being and Nothingness*, 476ff.]

13 ["l'intentionnalité véritable . . . *est à* son object."]

14 [Fideism is the doctrine that absolute truth is grounded upon revelation or faith.]

15 [Again, the meaning of *sens* includes both "sense" and "direction," which is particularly relevant in this section.]

16 [Here Merleau-Ponty is alluding to the linguistic image of *glissement de sens* (a "shift in meaning").]

17 ["Naître, c'est à la fois naître du monde et naître au monde."]

18 [As noted above, the term *Mitsein* (being-with) is a reference to Heidegger. See, for instance, chapter IV ("Being-in-the-World as Being-with and Being a Self: The They") in *Being and Time*.]

19 Eugen Fink, "Vergegenwärtigung und Bild: Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Unwirklichkeit," *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 11 (1930), 285.

20 Saint-Exupéry, *Pilote de guerre*, 171, 174. [*Pilote de guerre* (2005), 151–52, 154. In this passage, Merleau-Ponty elides the prose quite liberally, and he alters the original punctuation. Thus, I have provided here a new translation of the passage from Merleau-Ponty's version. The English translation of the passage can be found at: Saint-Exupéry, *Flight to Arras*, 177–81, 183.]

Two Versions of the Imaginary

But what is the image? When there is nothing, that is where the image finds its condition, but disappears into it. The image requires the neutrality and the effacement of the world, it wants everything to return to the indifferent depth where nothing is affirmed, it inclines towards the intimacy of what still continues to exist in the void; its truth lies there. But this truth exceeds it; what makes it possible is the limit where it ceases. Hence its dramatic aspect, the ambiguity it evinces, and the brilliant lie with which it is reproached. A superb power, says Pascal, which makes eternity into nothingness and nothingness into an eternity.

The image speaks to us, and it seems to speak intimately to us about ourselves. But intimately is to say too little; intimately then designates that level where the intimacy of the person breaks off, and in that motion points to the menacing nearness of a vague and empty outside that is the sordid background against which the image continues to affirm things in their disappearance. In this way, in connection with each thing, it speaks to us of less than the thing, but of us, and in connection with us, of less than us, of that less than nothing which remains when there is nothing.

The fortunate thing about the image is that it is a limit next to the indefinite. A thin ring, but one which does not keep us at such a remove from things that it saves us from the blind pressure of that remove. Through it, that remove is available to us. Through what there is of inflexibility in a reflection, we believe ourselves to be masters of the absence that has become an interval, and the dense void itself seems to open to the radiation of another day.

In this way the image fills one of its functions, which is to pacify, to humanize the unformed nothingness pushed towards us by the residue of being that cannot be eliminated. It cleans it up, appropriates it, makes it pleasant and pure and allows us to believe, in the heart of the happy

dream which art too often permits, that at a distance from the real, and immediately behind it, we are finding, as a pure happiness and a superb satisfaction, the transparent eternity of the unreal.

"For," says Hamlet, "in that sleep of death what dreams may come, when we have shuffl'd off this mortal coil . . . " The image, present behind each thing and in some sense the dissolution of that thing and its continuance in its dissolution, also has, behind it, that heavy sleep of death in which dreams might come to us. When it wakes or when we wake it, it can very well represent an object to us in a luminous *formal* halo; it has sided with the *depth*, with elemental materiality, the still undetermined absence of form (the world that oscillates between the adjective and the substantive), before sinking into the unformed prolixity of indetermination. This is the reason for its characteristic passivity: a passivity that makes us submit to it, even when we are summoning it, and causes its fleeting transparency to arise from the obscurity of destiny returned to its essence, which is that of a shadow.

But when we confront things themselves, if we stare at a face, a corner of a room, doesn't it also sometimes happen that we abandon ourselves to what we see, that we are at its mercy, powerless before this presence that is suddenly strangely mute and passive? This is true, but what has happened is that the thing we are staring at has sunk into its image, that the image has returned to that depth of impotence into which everything falls back. The "real" is that with which our relationship is always alive and which always leaves us the initiative, addressing that power we have to begin, that free communication with the beginning that is ourselves; and to the extent that we are in the day, the day is still contemporary with its awakening.

According to the usual analysis, the image exists after the object: the image follows from it; we see, then we imagine. After the object comes the image. "After" means that first the thing must move away in order to allow itself to be grasped again. But that distancing is not the simple change of place of a moving object, which nevertheless remains the same. Here the distancing is at the heart of the thing. The thing was there, we grasped it in the living motion of a comprehensive action — and once it has become an image it instantly becomes ungraspable, noncontemporary, impassive, not the same thing distanced, but that

thing as distancing, the present thing in its absence, the thing graspable because ungraspable, appearing as something that has disappeared, the return of what does not come back, the strange heart of the distance as the life and unique heart of the thing.

In the image, the object again touches something it had mastered in order to be an object, something against which it had built and defined itself, but now that its value, its signification, is suspended, now that the world is abandoning it to worklessness and putting it to one side, the truth in it withdraws, the elemental claims it, which is the impoverishment, the enrichment that consecrates it as image.

Nevertheless: doesn't the reflection always seem more spiritual than the object reflected? Isn't it the ideal expression of that object, its presence freed of existence, its form without matter? And artists who exile themselves in the illusion of images, isn't their task to idealize beings, to elevate them to their disembodied resemblance?

The image, the mortal remains.

At first sight, the image does not resemble a cadaver, but it could be that the strangeness of a cadaver is also the strangeness of the image. What we call the mortal remains evades the usual categories: something is there before us that is neither the living person himself nor any sort of reality, neither the same as the one who was alive, nor another, nor another thing. What is there, in the absolute calm of what has found its place, nevertheless does not realize the truth of being fully here. Death suspends relations with the place, even though the dead person relies heavily on it as the only base left to him. Yes, the fact is that that base is lacking, place is missing, the cadaver is not in its place. Where is it? It is not here and yet it is not elsewhere; nowhere? but the fact is that then nowhere is here. The cadaverous presence establishes a relation between here and nowhere. First of all, in the mortuary chamber and on the death bed, the repose that must be maintained shows how fragile the ultimate position is. Here is the cadaver, but here, in turn, becomes a cadaver: "here below," speaking absolutely, with no "up there" exalting itself any longer. The place where one dies is not just any place at all. One does not willingly transport these remains from one spot to another:

death jealously secures its place and unites with it to the very bottom, in such a way that the indifference of that place, the fact that it is nevertheless just any place at all, becomes the depth of its presence as death, becomes the support of indifference, the yawning intimacy of a nowhere without difference, yet one that must be situated here.

Remaining is not accessible to the one who dies. The deceased, we say, is no longer of this world, he has left it behind him, but what is left behind is precisely this cadaver, which is not of this world either—even though it is here—which is, rather, behind the world, something the living person (and not the deceased) has left behind him and which now affirms, on the basis of this, the possibility of a world-behind, a return backwards, an indefinite survival, indeterminate, indifferent, about which we only know that human reality, when it comes to an end, reconstitutes its presence and proximity. This is an impression we can call common: someone who has just died is first of all very close to the condition of a thing—a familiar thing that we handle and approach, that does not keep us at a distance and whose soft passivity reveals only its sad impotence. Of course dying is a unique event, and someone who dies "in your arms" is in some sense your fellow creature forever, but he is dead, now. Everyone knows that action must be taken quickly, not so much because the stiffness of the cadaver will make it more difficult, but because human action will very soon be "displaced." Very soon there will be—undisplaceable, untouchable, riveted to here by the strangest kind of embrace and yet drifting with it, dragging it farther below— no longer an inanimate object but Someone, the insupportable image and the figure of the unique becoming anything at all.

The resemblance of cadavers.

The striking thing, when this moment comes, is that though the remains appear in the strangeness of their solitude, as something disdainfully withdrawn from us, just when the sense of an interhuman relationship is broken, when our mourning, our care and the prerogative of our former passions, no longer able to know their object, fall back on us, come back towards us—at this moment, when the presence of the cadaver before us is the presence of the unknown, it is also now that the lamented dead person begins to *resemble himself.*

Himself: isn't that an incorrect expression? Shouldn't we say: the person he was, when he was alive? Himself is nevertheless the right word. Himself designates the impersonal, distant and inaccessible being that resemblance, in order to be able to be resemblance to someone, also draws towards the day. Yes, it is really he, the dear living one; but all the same it is more than him, he is more beautiful, more imposing, already monumental and so absolutely himself that he is in some sense *doubled* by himself, united to the solemn impersonality of himself by resemblance and by image. This large-scale being, important and superb, who impresses the living as the apparition of the original—until then unknown—sentence of the last Judgment inscribed in the depths of the being and triumphantly expressing itself with the help of the distance: he may recall, because of his sovereign appearance, the great images of classic art. If this connection is valid, the question of the idealism of this art will seem rather vain; and the fact that in the end idealism should have no guarantee but a cadaver—this can be retained in order to show how much the apparent spirituality, the pure formal virginity of the image is fundamentally linked to the elemental strangeness and to the shapeless heaviness of the being that is present in absence.

If we look at him again, this splendid being who radiates beauty: he is, I can see, perfectly like himself; he resembles *himself*. The cadaver is its own image. He no longer has any relations with this world, in which he still appears, except those of an image, an obscure possibility, a shadow which is constantly present behind the living form and which now, far from separating itself from that form, completely transforms itself into a shadow. The cadaver is reflection making itself master of the reflected life, absorbing it, substantially identifying itself with it by making it lose its value in terms of use and truth and change into something incredible—unusual and neutral. And if the cadaver resembles to such a degree, that is because it is, at a certain moment, preeminently resemblance, and it is also nothing more. It is the equal, equal to an absolute, overwhelming and marvelous degree. But what does it resemble? Nothing.

This is why each living man, really, does not yet have any resemblance. Each man, in the rare moments when he shows a similary to himself, seems to be only more distant, close to a dangerous neutral

region, *astray* in *himself*, and in some sense his own ghost, already having no other life than that of the return.

By analogy, we can also recall that a utensil, once it has been dam-aged, becomes its own *image* (and sometimes an esthetic object: "those outmoded, fragmented, unusable, almost incomprehensible, perverse objects" that André Breton loved). In this case, the utensil, no longer disappearing in its use, *appears*. This appearance of the object is that of resemblance and reflection: one might say it is its double. The category of art is linked to this possibility objects have of "appearing," that is, of abandoning themselves to pure and simple resemblance behind which there is nothing—except being. Only what has surrendered itself to the image appears, and everything that appears is, in this sense, imaginary.

The resemblance of cadavers is a haunting obsession, but the act of haunting is not the unreal visitation of the ideal: what haunts is the inaccessible which one cannot rid oneself of, what one does not find and what, because of that, does not allow one to avoid it. The ungraspable is what one does not escape. The fixed image is without repose, especially in the sense that it does not pose anything, does not establish anything. Its fixity, like that of the mortal remains, is the position of that which remains because it lacks a place (the fixed idea is not a point of depar-ture, a position from which one could move away and progress, it is not a beginning, but a beginning again). We know that in spite of its so tranquil and firm immobility the cadaver we have dressed, have brought as close as possible to a normal appearance by obliterating the disgrace of its illness, is not resting. The spot it occupies is dragged along by it, sinks with it, and in this dissolution assails—even for us, the others who remain—the possibility of a sojourn. We know that at "a certain moment," the power of death causes it to leave the fine place that has been assigned to it. Even though the cadaver is tranquilly lying in state on its bier, it is also everywhere in the room, in the house. At any moment, it can be elsewhere than where it is, where we are without it, where there is nothing, an invading presence, an obscure and vain fullness. The belief that at a certain moment the dead person begins to wander, must be ascribed to the intuition of that *error* he now represents.

Finally, an end must be put to what is endless: one does not live with dead people under penalty of seeing *here* sink into an unfathomable

nowhere, a fall that is illustrated by the fall of the House of Usher. The dear departed, then, is conveyed to another place, and undoubtedly the site is only symbolically at a distance, in no way unlocatable, but it is nevertheless true that the *here* of *here lies*, full of names, of solid constructions, or affirmations of identity, is preeminently the anonymous and impersonal place, as though, within the limits drawn for it and in the vain guise of a pretension capable of surviving everything, the monotony of an infinite erosion were at work obliterating the living truth that characterizes every place, and making it equal to the absolute neutrality of death.

(This slow disappearance, this infinite attrition of the end, may illuminate the very remarkable passion of certain women who become poisoners: their pleasure does not lie in causing suffering nor even in killing slowly, bit by bit, or by stifling, but rather it lies in reaching the indefiniteness that is death by poisoning time, by transforming it into an imperceptible consumption; in this way they brush with horror, they live furtively below all life, in a pure decomposition which nothing divulges, and the poison is the white substance of that eternity. Feuerbach tells of one poisoner for whom poison was a lover, a companion to whom she felt passionately drawn; when, after she had been in prison for several months, she was presented with a small bag of arsenic that belonged to her and was asked to identify it, she trembled with joy, she experienced a moment of ecstasy.)

The image and signification.

Man is made in his own image: this is what we learn from the strangeness of the resemblance of cadavers. But this formula should first of all be understood this way: *man is unmade according to his image.* The image has nothing to do with signification, meaning, as implied by the existence of the world, the effort of truth, the law and the brightness of the day. Not only is the *image* of an object not the *meaning* of that object and of no help in comprehending it, but it tends to withdraw it from its meaning by maintaining it in the immobility of a resemblance that has nothing to resemble.

Certainly we can always recapture the image and make it serve the truth of the world; but then we would be reversing the relationship that

characterizes it: in this case, the image becomes the follower of the object, what comes after it, what remains of it and allows us to have it still available to us when nothing is left of it, a great resource, a fecund and judicious power. Practical life and the accomplishment of real tasks demand this reversal. Classical art, at least in theory, implied it too, glorying in bringing back resemblance to a figure and the image to a body, in reincorporating it: the image became vitalizing negation, the ideal labor through which man, capable of denying nature, raised it to a higher meaning, either in order to know it, or to take pleasure in it through admiration. In this way, art was both ideal and true, faithful to the figure and faithful to the truth that is without figure. Impersonality, in the end, verified the works. But impersonality was also the troubling site of encounter where the noble ideal, concerned for values, and the anonymous, blind and impersonal resemblance exchanged places and passed for each other in a mutual deception. "How vain is painting, that excites admiration through its resemblance to things whose originals one does not admire at all!" Nothing more striking, then, than this strong distrust of Pascal's for resemblance, as he felt that it surrendered things to the sovereignty of the void and to the most vain kind of persistence, an eternity which, as he said, is nothingness, nothingness which is eternity.

The two versions.

Thus there are two possibilites for the image, two versions of the imaginary, and this duplicity comes from the initial double meaning produced by the power of the negative and the fact that death is sometimes the work of truth in the world, sometimes the perpetuity of something that does not tolerate either a beginning or an end.

It is therefore really true that in man, as contemporary philosophies have it, comprehension and knowledge are connected to what we call finitude, but where is the end in this finitude? It is certainly contained in the possibility that is death, but it is also "taken up again" by it, if in death the possibility that is death dissolves too. And it still seems, even though all of human history signifies the hope of overcoming that ambiguity, that to settle it or to go beyond it always involves in one sense

or in the other the greatest dangers: as though the choice between death as possibility of comprehension and death as horror of the impossibility also had to be the choice between sterile truth and the prolixity of the not-true, as though scarcity were tied to comprehension and fecundity to horror. This is why ambiguity, though it alone makes choice possible, always remains present in choice itself.

But in this case, how does *ambiguity* manifest itself? What is happening, for example, when one sees an event as image?

To experience an event as image is not to free oneself of that event, to dissociate oneself from it, as is asserted by the esthetic version of the image and the serene ideal of classical art, but neither is it to engage oneself with it through a free decision: it is to let oneself be taken by it, to go from the region of the real, where we hold ourselves at a distance from things the better to use them, to that other region where distance holds us, this distance which is now unliving, unavailable depth, an inappreciable remoteness become in some sense the sovereign and last power of things. This movement implies infinite degrees. Thus psychoanalysis says that the image, far from leaving us outside of things and making us live in the mode of gratuitous fantasy, seems to surrender us profoundly to ourselves. The image is intimate, because it makes our intimacy an exterior power that we passively submit to: outside of us, in the backward motion of the world that the image provokes, the depth of our passion trails along, astray and brilliant.

Magic takes its power from this transformation. Through a methodical technique, it induces things to awaken as reflection, and consciousness to thicken into a thing. From the moment we are outside ourselves—in that ecstasy that which is the image—the "real" enters an equivocal realm where there is no longer any limit, nor any interval, nor moments, and where each thing, absorbed in the void of its reflection, draws near the consciousness, which has allowed itself to be filled up by an anonymous fullness. Thus the universal unity seems recreated. Thus, behind things, the soul of each thing obeys the spells now possessed by the ecstatic man who has abandoned himself to the "universe." The paradox of magic is certainly obvious: it claims to be initiative and free domination, whereas in order to create itself, it accepts the reign of passivity, that reign in which there are no ends. But its intention

remains instructive: what it wants is to act on the world (manoeuver it), beginning with being which precedes the world, the eternal this-side where action is impossible. This is why it would rather turn towards the strangeness of the cadaver, and its only serious name is black magic.

To experience an event as image is not to have an image of that event, nor is it to give it the gratuitousness of the imaginary. The event, in this case, really takes place, and yet does it "really" take place? What happens seizes us, as the image would seize us, that is, it deprives us, of it and of ourselves, keeps us outside, makes this outside a presence where "I" does not recognize "itself." A movement that involves infinite degrees. What we have called the two versions of the imaginary, this fact that the image can certainly help us to recapture the thing in an ideal way, being, then, its vitalizing negation, but also, on the level we are drawn to by its own weight, constantly threatening to send us back, no longer to the absent thing, but to absence as presence, to the neutral double of the object, in which belonging to the world has vanished: this duplicity is not such that one can pacify it with an "either, or else," capable of permitting a choice and of taking away from choice the ambiguity that makes it possible. This duplicity itself refers to a double meaning that is ever more primary.

The levels of ambiguity.

If thought could, for a moment, maintain ambiguity, it would be tempted to say that there are three levels on which it occurs. On the level of the world, ambiguity is the possibility of understanding; meaning always escapes into another meaning; misunderstanding is useful to comprehension, it expresses the truth of the understanding that one is never understood once and for all.

Another level is that expressed by the two versions of the imaginary. Here, there is no longer a question of a perpetual double meaning, of the misunderstanding that helps or deceives understanding. Here, what speaks in the name of the image "sometimes" still speaks of the world, "sometimes" introduces us into the indeterminate region of fascination, "sometimes" gives us the power to use things in their absence and through fiction, thus keeping us within a horizon rich in meaning,

"sometimes" makes us slip into the place where things are perhaps present, but in their image, and where the image is the moment of passivity, having no value either significative or affective, being the passion of indifference. Nevertheless, what we distinguish by saying "sometimes, sometimes" ambiguity says by saying always, to a certain extent, the one and the other; it expresses, moreover, the significant image in the heart of fascination, but already fascinates us through the clarity of the most pure, the most formed image. Here, *meaning* does not escape into another meaning, but into the *other* of all meaning and, because of ambiguity, nothing has meaning, but everything *seems* to have infinitely much meaning: meaning is no longer anything more than a semblance; the semblance causes the meaning to become infinitely rich, causes this infinitude of meaning to have no need of being developed, to be immediate, that is, also to be incapable of being developed, to be simply immediately empty.[1]

[1] Can one go farther? Ambiguity expresses being as dissimulated; it says that being is, insofar as it is dissimulated. For being to accomplish its work, it must be dissimulated: it works by dissimulating itself, it is always reserved and preserved by dissimulation, but also subjected to it; dissimulation then tends to become the purity of negation. But at the same time, ambiguity, when everything is dissimulated, says (and this saying is ambiguity itself): all being *is* through dissimulation, being is essentially being in the heart of dissimulation.

Ambiguity, then, no longer consists only of the incessant movement through which being returns to nothingness and nothingness refers back to being. Ambiguity is no longer the primordial Yes and No in which being and nothingness are pure identity. Essential ambiguity lies rather in the fact that—before the beginning—nothingness is not equal to being, is only the *appearance* of the dissimulation of being, or else that dissimulation is more "original" than negation. So that one could say: *ambiguity is essential in inverse proportion to the capacity of dissimulation to recapture itself in negation.*

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Bad Blood

Patricia J. Williams on the history of eugenics in the Progressive Age

PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

"They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists", said Donald Trump of immigrants from Mexico and Central America, as he launched his election campaign in 2015. "Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?" he later asked, as President, referring to immigrants from Haiti and the African continent. In a tweet last month, while rationalizing policies that segregate, imprison and summarily deport asylum seekers, he framed the problem as one of outright pestilence: "Democrats . . . don't care about crime and want illegal immigrants . . . to pour in and infest our country". And Trump's nativism is not unique among powerful American politicians: the House Speaker, Paul Ryan, has urged "higher birth rates in this country" as a way of boosting the economy. As the immigration attorney Matt Cameron wrote in a recent issue of the *Baffler*: "[Ryan] did this within weeks of backing massive legislative cuts to legal immigration rates and passively blocking a legislative solution to the DREAM Act that would have ensured the lives and futures of more than one million young aspiring Americans who happened to have been born in the wrong kinds of countries to the wrong kinds of parents".

The overtly eugenic populism that has resurged in the United States recently has been shocking to some (if not enough): *Lock 'em up. Clean 'em out. Not our children. Build that wall.* The Justice Department has for some time been not only deporting but criminalizing asylum seekers, penalizing the poor and stateless merely for seeking entry to the US. Most notoriously, the government has been taking children away from their families as penalty for that supposed crime. Before Trump ordered such separations to stop, the Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, suggested that child removal would "disincentivize" others from coming. Under this programme, even infants and toddlers have been shipped thousands of miles away from their parents, to often untraceable destinations all over the continent. Some children have ended up in crowded cages and warehouses on abandoned army bases. Some of their identities have been lost in the process, so that they might never be reunited with their desperate parents. And, as Cameron sums it up, "we arrive now at this new border, a place that any person of conscience must recognize as a point of no moral return. A country that would not only rip children from the arms of their parents, but then intentionally orphan and exile them just to 'send a message', risks not only losing them, but itself".

But if some contemporary US policies seem uniquely inhumane, it is important to recognize how many of them have direct historical precedent. It's perhaps easy to see in the logic of America's mass incarceration, or its so-called "school-to-prison pipeline", or the <u>internment camps</u> where ethnic Japanese citizens were confined during the Second World War, or the enduring scar of slave auctions by which familial relationships were rendered irrelevant as children were snatched from their mothers and sold as chattel. Less well remembered, however, is the Progressive Era's embrace of social Darwinism – a pseudoscience popular in Britain and Europe as well, but which, in America, came together as a powerfully institutionalized set of laws and enforcement mechanisms premised on a mixture of misogyny, class bias, race panic and anti-immigrant resentment. It was during this period, from the late 1800s through to the first half of the twentieth century, that New York's infamous Eugenics Records Office was formed to issue "pedigrees" of Nordic purity. This was the era of the Social Hygiene movement, which justified moral purges, intimate oversight of poor women's reproductive choices, separation of children from parents, mass

sterilizations, and the indefinite detention of those deemed "unfit". This, too, was a time when the "American Plan" for eugenic manipulation flourished and grew – and which, when studied and implemented by Nazi Germany, morphed into the Final Solution.

This long-ignored history is the subject of Molly Ladd-Taylor's *Fixing the Poor: Eugenic sterilization and child welfare in the twentieth century*, which studies the impact of efforts to "contain" and distinguish the variously and often incoherently defined problems of "delinquency", "immorality", "imbecility", "waywardness" and "feeblemindedness". Poor people, particularly women and girls, were suspected disproportionately of being the source of such conditions. Ideologically, "treatment" was framed as an issue of public health, but Ladd-Taylor shows that an even greater concern was sparing the public purse. Thus, sorting the "deserving" from the "undeserving" poor became a primary metric in deciding quarantine, sterilization, education, or release. Venereal disease, prostitution and mental disability were seen not only as social contagions but also as biologically incorrigible, genetic, innate. "Pauperism" became an economic disease, a parasite on the public dole and a burden on taxpayers; its elimination was paramount.

Ladd-Taylor literally follows the money that underwrote hospitals, prisons and special schools, using the state of Minnesota as an exemplar. There, as in many states, public policy was driven to a great degree by perceptions of economic class as embodied. Thus, middle-class youths were often privileged as "too independent" and therefore in need of more home-training, more moral uplift, firmer parental intervention. Indeed, "delinquency" became normalized as a stage of white middle-class boys' development. They needed "guidance, not strict punishment", according to one judge quoted by Ladd-Taylor, because such boys had energy, initiative and "are the ones who, under proper conditions, make the very best citizens". This belief grew out of the common law tradition of seeing the state as protector, underpinned by depictions of the juvenile court judge as a "wise and kind father".

In contrast, the working class and very poor were treated as inherently dependent on state resources – destined for eternal pauperism, in other words. These latter became ciphers for contagion, carriers of corruption, and therefore in need of confinement. The distinction between the deserving and the undeserving rested on quite explicit assumptions of heritable worth: at

one end, "innocent" delinquents needed more care and support; at the other, "dangerous" defectives warranted strict control for fear of their contaminating others and multiplying. Families were torn apart in this sorting process: those children deemed "in suitable condition of body and mind to receive instruction" were housed in institutions such as the Stated Public School for Dependent and Neglected Children in Owatonna, Minnesota, until they could be "placed out to work or adopted". In the mid-1880s, the school's superintendent, Galen A. Merrill, rationalized: "There are parents who are not worthy to rear citizens of this republic".

A second book, *The Trials of Nina McCall: Sex, surveillance, and the decades-long government plan to imprison "promiscuous" women* by Scott W. Stern, looks at the same set of laws during more or less the same time frame, but through the particular experience of Nina McCall, one of many white working-class teenagers swept up by the state of Michigan's over-zealous morality police, and whose life was upended by the ensuing nightmare. Suspected of having venereal disease seemingly for no reason other than her having been observed unaccompanied on a trip to the Post Office, McCall was, in 1918, detained for months without any semblance of due process. She lost her job and her reputation and became estranged from her family. Her vagina was probed endlessly and her body injected with mercury and arsenic, all in the name of "cure". The relentless prodding of "suspected" young women was not accompanied by anything like scientific rigour, consistency of observation, accuracy of record-keeping, or coherence of diagnosis. McCall, once forcibly tested, was arrested based on a supposed diagnosis of syphilis, but ended up being given anti-gonorrhoeal medications. What makes McCall unusual among the many tens of thousands of American girls also targeted is that she sued the state. It took two years for her to be partially vindicated by the Michigan Supreme Court, which recognized her right to a trial, and even so her small victory did not slow the ideological diffusion of the American Plan for moral purge. (Tellingly, the court only ruled that McCall's detainment was unlawful because the grounds for suspecting her of infection were a little too weak.) McCall's story is captivating as pure biography, but it is all the more remarkable documentarily: it stands as one of the few formal challenges to these laws, and one of the very few whose heart-wrenching traces were captured in a trial record.

The American Plan (not to be confused with the anti-union movement of the same name) was a programme designed to control sexually transmitted disease. It was different from the earlier French Plan instituted by Napoleon, which sought to confine prostitution by semi-legalizing it. Known as "regulationism", the French system required sex workers to register, submit to regular genital inspections, and confine their activities to particular (red light) districts. In contrast, the American Plan never completely bought the idea of prostitution as something that could or ought to be regulated; true to

its more Puritan legacy, the US set about trying to eliminate "immorality" by outlawing it. Unsurprisingly, therefore, public governance tended to treat prostitution not merely as a moral failure but as a criminal act. "Waywardness" in a woman was deemed not only a product of socialization, but reflective of innate mental deficits associated with "imbecility" or "feeblemindedness". Anti-corruption squads composed of police, sheriffs, social workers and religious leaders, combed the streets of cities and small towns, detaining women and girls en masse and conducting crude genital probes. And it did not necessarily matter whether these "tests" resulted in diagnosis of any sort, for the conduct of these righteous teams was itself often corrupted by greed, reputational gossip, and stereotype: black and immigrant women were presumed to be looser in their conduct. Poor women could be labelled promiscuous if they merely seemed so to a detention officer. A neighbour with a grudge could call the vice squad. In addition, police received bonuses in line with the number of arrests and detentions, and policies could be touted as "successful" based on volume alone. Although the Reagan revolution is remembered for its racialized nomination of "welfare queens" and "the undeserving poor", these too are concepts that date back to the Progressive Era.

The cruelties as well as the efficiencies underwriting this system were at least partly the legacy of practices endured by slaves in the South and indentured servants in the urban North. During nineteenth-century slave auctions women, and men, were often stripped for display, their genitals publicly inspected for signs of disease, their personalities rated for docility and passive obedience. And, given popular medical theories of the time that African and "inferior" breeds were impervious to the normal limits of pain, the bodies of black slave women and Irish immigrants disproportionately served as the experimental playground for doctors perfecting early gynaecological methods and surgical sterilization. (Those looking for detailed accounts of this might turn to Harriet A. Washington's *Medical Apartheid: The dark history of medical experimentation on black Americans from colonial times to the present*, 2006, and Deidre Cooper Owens's *Medical Bondage:Race, gender, and the origin of American gynecology*, 2017.)

During the Progressive Era a new kind of bureaucratic order began to have appeal. The passion for too-neat typologies advanced by some natural historians and scientists – "Conceive for a moment", Louis Agassiz wrote in a letter in 1863, "the difference it would make in future ages . . . if instead of the manly population descended from cognate nations, the United States should hereafter be inhabited by the effeminate progeny of mixed races, half indian, half negro, sprinkled with white blood . . . . I shudder at the consequences" – became crossed with the pleasing pseudo-mathematical balance sheets of actuarialism. In 1906, the Race Betterment Foundation was established in Battle Creek, Michigan, by John Harvey Kellogg, the

inventor of the corn flake and a tireless polemicist for the "purity of the gene pool". An advocate of sexual abstinence, he campaigned against masturbation as well as racial miscegenation. His foundation became an influential force in advancing theories about the evils of sex unless it were seed sown in the "proper" advancement of racial hygiene and superior "pedigree". His foundation sponsored many of the eugenic fairs and congresses that flourished during this period, including Fitter Family and Better Baby competitions. Around the same time, the biologist Charles Davenport founded the American Breeder's Association, whose mission was to spread the alarm about "the menace to society of inferior blood". Davenport, who supported sterilization of "unfit" human "stock" as well as restrictions on immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe, went on to establish the Eugenics Record Office in Cold Spring Harbor, New York, which became the enduring centre of the American eugenics movement. (Over the past half-century, the laboratory has distanced itself from those origins, becoming better known as the intellectual home of Barbara McClintock, James Watson, Francis Crick, Carol Greider and others, and for their work in molecular genetics, cancer research and the discovery of telomeres. Nevertheless, the archives of the American Eugenics Movement are still housed there, and may be studied at eugenicsarchive.org.) Davenport also believed, Ladd-Taylor points out, that Mendel's theory of inheritance in simple organisms such as pea plants could be flatly applied to traits in human populations. He thought, wrongly, that a complex range of conditions – in those days, labelled variously as idiocy, imbecility, defectiveness and degeneracy – resulted from a single trait that could be reliably predicted by dominant and recessive patterns of transmission. This mistake was used to justify sterilization, institutionalization and segregation of "fertile feebleminded" women during childbearing years.

In 1911, John D. Rockefeller, Jr created the Bureau of Social Hygiene to counter (largely baseless) public fears of "white slavery". In the name of science, he funded a laboratory in the New York State Reformatory for Women at Bedford, dedicated to eugenic propositions. Women "adrift" could be rounded up, quarantined and subjected to tests not only designed to ferret out venereal disease, but to sort the subjects by IQ, degree of "degenerate" disposition, and purported educability in the arts of housekeeping. Those deemed "incorrigible" or "feebleminded" might face life imprisonment; those deemed more responsive to supervised intervention and schedules of reform might eventually be hired out as domestic servants, seamstresses, or laundresses. There were institutional distinctions among homes for the feeble-minded, detention centres, reformatories and jails. Meanwhile, the application of Mendelianism to human reproduction soon became overlaid with statistical modelling. In 1877, the prison reformer Richard Dugdale had done a study entitled "The Jukes: A study in crime, pauperism, disease and heredity", covering seven generations of "debauchery" and "degeneracy" among a rural family living in upstate New

York. In 1915, this report was rewritten by Arthur H. Estabrook, who was funded by the Eugenics Record Office to foreground the role of pure heredity. This latter version made the Jukes iconic in the public imagination, Ladd-Taylor says, as "an inbreeding rural family too lazy to look for work and living in a hovel [and who] epitomized the supposed innate unfitness of poor 'white trash'". While Dugdale himself had urged that improved social environment was central to "fixing" such people, the practical impact of Estabrook's take was more sinister: it frightened the public sufficiently to spawn a movement that placed great emphasis on heritability of moral and mental weakness. *Fixing the Poor* clearly documents how this led to broad justifications for sterilization programmes.

Under the American Plan, degeneracy was also a matter of youth, aesthetic appearance and "obvious" abnormality. Children as young as eleven, including those who had been abused or the victims of incest, could be carelessly labelled "incorrigible" if they looked "slovenly", and quarantined or scheduled for tubal ligation. And as Susan Schweik has shown in her masterly study *The Ugly Laws: Disability in public* (2010), many states were also passing ordinances during the Progressive Era limiting the ability of people deemed unpleasant-looking to move about in public without licences. The limping, burnt, or blind, polio sufferers, those with shrivelled limbs, conspicuous birthmarks or speech impediments – all might be banned not only from begging but from conspicuous "display" of themselves in public. Appearance alone became a measure of how much these subjects might be able to seek employment, pursue a career, appeal to human empathy, or ask for alms. This exacting scrutiny, the measurement of brows, of jaw, of width of noses and distance between eyes, became a literal blood sport, a phrenology of racial and class supremacy. Meanwhile, the capacious label of "feebleminded" increasingly led to diminutions of respect for the personhood of those so branded. They became the to-be-controlled, incapable of "real" or human feeling, future-less yet "insatiably" needy. Both *Fixing the Poor* and *The Trials of Nina McCall* are filled with quotes from legislators, lawyers, doctors and religious crusaders that compare victims caught in this system to "vegetables", empty vessels and the walking dead. As Stern points out, and Ladd-Taylor would agree, "feeblemindedness was more than just a mental condition; it was an indicator of morality". Thus, it was linked inextricably to the undermining of "our civilization".

Yet the seeming haphazardness of categorization disguises the degree to which the American Plan was indeed a plan: and one of its features was precisely decentralization. As Nina McCall's story illustrates, it was a system encouraged by the federal government, but whose administration was pretty much left to individual states, where standards were both varied and incoherently pursued. Thus, overall statistics remain difficult to gather. Local administrators were granted wide discretion, making it hard to hold any given person or locality accountable for mistreatment or even death.

The goal of suppressing the fecundity of the "unfit" was further enabled by increasingly survivable forms of surgical sterilization. The first eugenic sterilization law was proposed in Michigan in 1897, and the first passed in Indiana in 1907. The Eugenics Record Office produced a Model Law that was enacted by a number of states, and by around 1918, American physicians had, according to Stern, started to see sterilization "as the most effective way of combating race degeneracy". In 1927, that Model Law, as enacted by the state of Virginia, was tested before the Supreme Court, by the claim of Carrie Buck, an eighteen-year-old girl being held as "incorrigible" at the Virginia Colony for Epileptics and Feebleminded. Buck protested against involuntary sterilization on the grounds that it violated equal protection laws as well as her right to bodily integrity. She lost. In an infamous opinion (cited years later by Nazi doctors in their defence statements at the Nuremberg trials), Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote: "It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind . . . . Three generations of imbeciles is enough" (Buck vs Bell, 1927). For years after the ruling, the numbers of forced salpingectomies – by which the Fallopian tubes are entirely removed – climbed, while the standards of review fell. And in 1941, a new federal agency was created, the Social Protection Division. Its mission, Stern explains, was to "persuade local officials to enforce their own laws" to stamp out social disease. In 1946, Dwight Eisenhower, while Chief of Army Staff, endorsed a federal bill (ultimately not passed) that would have extended quarantine and prosecutions under the American Plan, further lowering the standard by replacing the words "infected persons" with persons "reasonably suspected of being infected".

The fear of poor, dissolute and particularly of mulatta women who might "pass" as white and contaminate "pure" blood lines by infecting white men, meanwhile, became a quieter form of institutional disciplining. *The Trials of Nina McCall* documents efforts, during the First World War, to regulate and repress not only brothels near army bases, but to stop white soldiers from visiting black neighbourhoods as a way of preventing them from having any contact at all with black women, deemed "inevitably" promiscuous. And during the Second World War, the American Plan was applied in ways that reveal gross racial disparities. Prostitution was assumed if a white woman was merely in the presence of a black man, or, in one case, because she had been "seen repeatedly in a restaurant favored by Filipinos". Indeed, while the data cited in both books primarily concern the mistreatment of white girls and women, the majority of women negatively affected by the American Plan were women of colour – particularly black, Chinese and indigenous. Those women's fates are less well documented, but there are clear connections among perceptions of white female fragility, black contagion and the need for intervention. As the Surgeon General, Thomas

Parran, opined in the 1940s, it is not the black person's "fault" that syphilis is

> biologically different in [the Negro] than in the white; that his blood vessels are particularly susceptible so that late syphilis brings with it crippling circulatory diseases, cuts his working usefulness in half, and makes him [an] unemployable burden upon the community in the last years of his shortened life. It is through no fault of hers that the colored woman remains infectious two and one-half times as long as the white woman.

Stern reminds readers that even as these words were being uttered, the US was still conducting the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis study of 1932–72, in which the "natural" progress of syphilis in the bodies of 622 disenfranchised black men in Alabama was observed by the United States Public Health Service, with all treatment withheld even after penicillin was discovered. The men were told only that they had "bad blood". (To add insult to injury, they were offered free burial insurance in exchange for participation.) Civil rights debates, too, often reverted to discussions of the sexual risks of integration, says Stern: "After the 1954 decision of Brown v. Board of Education, an organization called Separate Schools denounced the black community as 'a vast reservoir of infectious venereal diseases' . . . . When black female citizens in Birmingham, Alabama, tried to register to vote, they were sometimes asked if they had STIs".

Come 1963, there were official records of 63,678 sterilizations having been performed under the US sterilization laws, although actual, unrecorded numbers are likely to have been far higher. By this time the use of penicillin was changing much, if not everything. The last vestiges of federal co-ordination for the American Plan melted away, leaving individual states as the unguided, inconsistent and sometimes extreme enforcers of social values; in addition, the nascent women's movement began to challenge norms of sexual morality. Still, both Stern and Ladd-Taylor cite instances where the invocation of the American Plan persisted until the 1970s, as in Salt Lake City, Denver, or Fresno. Significantly, Stern tells how Andrea Dworkin, then a college student, was arrested during an anti-war protest in 1965. Dworkin, who would go on to become one of the best-known feminist writers and anti-pornography advocates in the world, was taken to New York City's Women's House of Detention where her experience echoed Nina McCall's testimony so many years before: "In addition to the many strip searches by hand that police and nurses made into my vagina and anus, I was brutalized by two male doctors who gave me an internal examination,

the first one I had ever had. They pretty much tore me up inside with a steel speculum and had themselves a fine time verbally tormenting me as well . . . . I began to bleed right after". Stern notes that Dworkin "would continue to bleed for days after. When her family doctor examined her, the doctor burst into tears".

These books are impossible to read without a confused sense of both hindsight and dreadful foreboding. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt wrote that "the danger . . . is that today, with populations and homelessness everywhere on the increase, masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous if we continue to think of our world in utilitarian terms". That superfluity renders people disposable, mere things – "creating creatures who are alive in fact, but dead in law", as the essayist Colin Dayan has described it. The weight of what no one wants, the extinction of those never given voice, is quietly buried in what Arendt thought of as "holes of oblivion".

We Americans live in the present tense after all – everything is *sui generis*, everything popped up overnight by virtue of individual choice and choice alone. But there are echoes of the American Plan everywhere. The Sentencing Project, a public-interest research body, notes that the numbers of imprisoned women rose 646 per cent between 1980 and 2010 – 1.5 times the rate of men's incarceration during the same period. *Fixing the Poor* ends with a warning that "child welfare and criminal justice systems have emerged as leading instruments of eugenics control in the twenty-first century in part because they are easily reconciled with religious qualms about abortion, sterilization and reprogenic technologies". Now as a century ago, we encourage "affluent Americans to have children, while deterring childbearing and childrearing by low-income women and single mothers, especially women with disabilities, drug addicts, and poor women of color". *The Trials of Nina McCall* also ends on a haunting note: "Each of the laws that enabled the American Plan – those laws passed at general federal behest in 1917, 1918 and 1919 – remains on the books, in some form, to this day. Not one of them has ever been struck down by an appeals court".

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