in the Pres

"This book is a splendid demonstration of the many joys of and adroitly elucidates: sense, sacrifice, existence, presence, title applies to the concepts of thinking that Nancy expertly thinking about thought itself. The finitude highlighted in the

specificity much akin to poetry and art themselves. Henry Sussman, State University of New York at Buffalo

game of large, ungainly abstract pieces; it is a dance of love, the body. Nancy shows us that thinking is not a chess

A Finite Thinking

Thinking

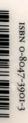
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CULTURAL MEMORY IN THE PRESENT

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JEAN-LUC



Cultural Memory
in
the
Present



Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries, Editors

A FINITE THINKING

Jean-Luc Nancy
Edited by Simon Sparks

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PART ONE

THINKING



A Finite Thinking

Does existence have a sense?—this question required several centuries even to be understood completely and in all its profundity.

Existence Nixon by The Conference of the co

-Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science

Because philosophy opens out onto the whole of man and onto what is highest in him, finitude must appear in philosophy in a completely radical way.

-Martin Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics²

Sense [sens] is already the least shared thing in the world. But the question of sense is already what we share, without any possibility of its being held in reserve or avoided. So, the question of sense, then, or perhaps we should say: rather more and rather less than a question, a concern, maybe, a task, a chance.³

Of course, by "sense" I mean sense in the singular, sense taken absolutely: the sense of life, of Man, of the world, of history, the sense of existence; the sense of the existence that is or that makes sense, the existence without which sense would not exist; equally, the sense that exists or produces existing, without which there would be no sense.

Thinking is never concerned with anything else. If there is anything like thinking, it's only because there's sense, and if there's anything like sense it's only in the sense that sense is always given and gives itself as something to be thought. But as well as thinking there's also intelligence or, worse, intellectuality: each of these are more than capable of devoting themselves to the job in hand as if, in the first instance and exclusively, it were not a matter of sense. This cowardice, or this laziness, is pretty common. Perhaps from the very moment that there is discourse—and there's

derelictions, weaknesses—in short, the century of its ultimate end? effort or inclination to think. Yet it seems that this fin de siècle has more or though it's at the limit of words, their very limit)—it's unavoidable in every always "discourse" (always a discourse of sense, never a silent ecstasis, even century of innumerable destructions of sense, innumerable deviations, its concern. Won't the century that has just come to an end have been a thetics), with a certain brusqueness, of the question of sense, its chance on precisely as if it did not remind us, if only by virtue of its symbolic value less its own form of cowardice and intellectual irresponsibility, carrying or (but also because of other circumstances, other politics, technologies, aes-

with what it wants to avoid, namely, the extremity, the radicality of thinkunreservedly thinking this polymorphous and proliferating end of sense, ing. And this is precisely what is at issue, precisely what has to be at issue: facts and certainties without which it would find itself forced to engage acts badly to the word "end"—the "end" of philosophy, the "end" of art, the "end" of history . . . , and so on—as if it feared being deprived of the sense and of thinking how sense comes to us anew. because only here can we have any chance of thinking the provenance of Ultimately, are we going to think the end? Intellectual cowardice re-

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with the completion and buckling of the West's resources of signification a mode of thinking that has been lost with the destruction of sense, that is, on the one hand, it denotes that there is, for us, a thinking that's finished, and meaning (God, History, Man, Subject, Sense itself . . .). And yet, in calling "finitude" (and this collection of essays is concerned with nothing thing raised by the title, whatever the content or the sense of what I am turn, demand an essential finitude of thinking. In fact, and this is the third could be a question of sense's essential finitude—something that would, in measure itself against the fact that "sense" could have ended and that it come our way, if I can put it in this way, a thinking that has first of all to Equally, it suggests that a thinking equal to the significance of the end has new configuration (its own, then its own undoing of itself at its own limit). behind the lines of a new high-tide mark, this thinking leaves us with a its accomplishment and withdrawal, like a crashing wave whose ebb leaves else, even though it's a long way from being a treatise on the subject), we The title "a finite thinking" puts three very simple things into play:

> we to think the fact that this limit is the limit of the whole of sense? visible—in a thinking, within the limit of one trifling study? And how are as a whole, even though it's not as if we could not do so, sense being indiown limit and its own singularity. How are we to think everything—sense ing sense, is only ever able to think to the extent that it also touches on its thinking that, without renouncing truth or universality, without renounchave to marry its form or condition, while also being a finite thinking: a can at least be sure that any attempt to think such an "object" is going to

damentally finite."4 working out of the innermost essence of finitude must itself always be fun-I've no direct answer to this, so let me simply affirm a necessity: "the

etry.) Sense is only what it is in itself, if it is, indeed, "to itself." every metaphysics of Knowledge and of the Word, of Philosophy and Podissociable. (And it's this that's the absolute of sense at the very horizon of quality of the stone or the force of force, its concept and its referent are insense, the sense of all sense: like a concept that would itself have the stony mode, this gesture of grasping or grasping itself as sense, is what produces sense implies that sense is being grasped or is grasping itself as sense. This derstand the relation of a stone or a force to its concept). The concept of and the whole of its meaning, can't simply be the concept (or the sense) of cept. We can analyze this concept as signification, understanding, meanintrinsic relation to its concept (at least in the way in which we tend to unsomething that would stay put, set within an exterior reality, without any these analyses is that the concept in question, across its entire extension ing, and so forth.5 But what is implied, articulated, and exploited in all idea or a thought) that this "thing" exists. Sense is the concept of the conmust be one and the same here, since it's as a concept (or, if you like, as an the reality of this thing "sense"? What is the concept? What is the referent? What immediately springs to mind is that the concept and the referent What is sense? What is the "sense" of the word "sense" and what is

"other" sense of the word sense is only "other" in terms of this sameness." sense: to sense is necessarily to sense that there is something like sensation ing understands nothing if it doesn't understand itself understanding. The Sensing senses nothing if it doesn't sense itself sensing, just as understand-The same goes for the other sense of the word "sense," for its sensible

any possibility of posing it. might mean "to sense sense" or "to understand sensing," we have even lost sense, or that, in this oxymoronic game, where nothing tells us what it way we have merely pushed back ad infinitum the question of the sense of senses itself producing sense. Of course, we can always object that in this cludes what it senses, and what produces sense in sense is the fact that it All of which leads to a chiasmus: what senses in sense is the fact that it in-

same, altered only-but altered in truly unlimited fashion-by the end of tioned a moment ago. The task that follows philosophy, our task, is the is no philosophy, no poetry, which hasn't claimed, in one way or another, the sensible and the intelligible. Moreover, we could easily show that there This is always going to be the most extreme point of metaphysics I mento have overcome, dissolved, or rendered dialectical this double aporia. the most powerful distinction that philosophy has to offer: that between It's doubtless no coincidence that this double aporia refers us back to

we can try to state as follows. another deployment of the same aporia (not its "solution," but rather the its own end, deconstructing its own sense—has already taught us about thought of the absence of solution as the very site of sense), a deployment that The entire work of an epoch—that of philosophy going deeper into

2

other affects this ipseity in such a way that this affection is neither reduced to nor retained in the ipse itself. On the contrary, if the affection of sense is have sense, or to make sense, to be sensed, is to be to oneself insofar as the the part of sense that resists, reinitiates it, and opens it once again. this reabsorption of sense—what it also means, however, is the question of History, Concept or Intuition. "The end of philosophy" means laying out liths, monuments and monograms of philosophy: God or Being, Nature or (at least according to our representations of it), as it can of the great monoreabsorbed, sense itself also disappears. The same can be said of the stone Sense depends on relating to itself as to another or to some other. To

these sorts of terms, as any constitution of the "self," understood as "iden-(Here, "self" denotes as much the "oneself" of sense, if we can speak in gages it, what maintains it to itself, in and by the difference of its relation. Sense is the openness of a relation to itself: what initiates it, what en-

> of having or producing sense] is that on the basis of which the world is disclosed as such."8 spacing of an opening. Again: "Significance [Bedeutsamkeit: the propriety ation, incorporation, etc.), is first and foremost the fissure, the gap, the all the values that we can give it (desire, recognition, specularity, appropritity," as "subjectivity," as "propriety," etc.) The to of the to itself, along with

sense (of being)?9 sense of being . . . , what could there be, what could be, if there were no cation of the easy generosity of a right-thinking, fashionable discourse (in rather than an ontological one. Now, it is being that should be at issue here. which "alterity," "difference," etc. also figure): a moral propriety, then, What would sense be or what would make sense, at least in the sense of the But "openness" has today become a somewhat jaded motif, the evo-

ontological radicality, therefore (whatever becomes of the "sense" of "ontology"). Basically, this is what defines, for our time, what is essential in the work of thinking. The openness of the to-the-self needs to be thought alongside this

ter of "other" or of "relation." Rather, it is a matter of a diaresis or a dissense or in terms of being -to -the self—only in this openness as such; it it is the to-itself as the appropriation of what cannot be appropriated in its or original relation between them. It is less than and more than an origin; but also via every identity of the self. In this diaresis, the other is already section of the "self" that precedes not only via every relation to the other that would happen to "relate" to itself. Thought rigorously, it is not a matity doesn't possess this "other" as a correlate or as the term of a relation is itself the open. In the same way, the self that is to-itself by and in alteropen—and this is what I'm trying to establish in terms of the being of to-being—of its sense. being-other of the self as neither "self" nor "other," nor as some founding the same, but this "being" isn't confusion, still less a fusion; no, it is the then, over and above this, marked or distinguished by openness. Being is To say that being is open isn't to say that it's first this or that and

end (such is, or appears to be, the Hegelian and philosophical Self in general, even if it somehow manages to dilute this appropriation, whether in a The self that lies at the origin of this being, appropriating its own

or in an "incessant pursuit of the question," in short, in a scattering of thought of the end, in every sense of the term. knowledge/death of God). And it is precisely this touch that produces the the insanity on which philosophy touches at its end (schematism/absolute of a game whose rules specify that the winner be given in advance. This is thought)—this self would be senseless [insensé], somewhat in the manner "regulative idea," or in every form of relativism, or in an "enigma of ends,"

is, of a "you," a "we," and even of the "it" of the world. "self," its very forgetting as well as the interweaving, in it, that it properly sibly being the transformation of the "self," the disinterestedness of the ness. Sense is the to-itself whose to determines the self to the point of possense of a surplus, but as itself the 10 of being to itself, the open of its opendoes not simply "remain" outside, either in the sense of a lack or in the -to itself: this restless refusal to come back to itself in such a way that it self, no longer comes back to itself. Only once it is this not -coming -back There is sense only once this being -to itself no longer belongs to it-

finite excesses. come back to itself, and that all thinking is the finite thinking of these inthe fact that, through it, all sense is excribed [excrit], ceaselessly refuses to call this thought "writing," that is, the inscription of this violence and of discourses or words that it violates—whose violence it is. This is why we cation, or incantation. Yet one, too, that is only present by way of those possibility of discourse, judgment, or signification as against intuition, evothought that appears to be in permanent rebellion as much against any and senses—in the same way that it thinks what lies within itself. A counter to all thinking. Yet one, too, that thinking knows—understands A simple, hard, and difficult thought, then. One that appears to run

oneness: it is (the) "single" sense (of "a single" being) because it is sense presents its unity or its oneness. This "single" sense has neither unity nor sense in its absoluteness and its singularity, is that it neither grasps nor to this sense, however, always assuming that there is an "essence," absolute back to the notion of evil, the self-suppression of sense.) What is essential conditions more or less "full" or more or less worthy of sense. (We'll come since it's clear that there cannot be several senses, hierarchies, situations, or A thought that is devoted to the thinking of a single sense, then

> all. If it were, it would be completed, reabsorbed, and senselessly insane. Infinite and insane. each time. It's not sense "in general," therefore, nor is it sense once and for

either to substance or to subject, not even to "being," unless it be to a thrown of existence. being-to, to itself, to the world as the openness, the throw or the beingundergone, justified, originated. Rather, it is being's reference to nothing, "sense." Groundlessness isn't a lack on the part of being that needs to be ground is affirmed."10 Here I transcribe groundlessness (Abgründlichkeit) as that it is determined. If it is posited as finite, it is then that its absence of essence of existing: "When being is posited as infinite, it is precisely then and only as existence that being comes into play, it designates the withoutnonreabsorption of sense or of being. In other words, if it is as existence Finitude designates the "essential" multiplicity and the "essential"

soever, makes a being "indebted" to or puts it in excess of its own exisment-of an offering that, with a single stroke, without any ground whatse, being merely the to-the presentation, tension, direction, abandonsense of the "meaning" or the "sense of being" as a content of signification, mitting to the being in question nothing other than this to of transmission, no quality or property, in such a way that it transmits itself alone, trans-"doing or founding or eating a being," but in such a way that it transmits doesn't actually exist:11 "being a being," in the same way that we talk about ing, both more and less than an origin. inappropriable character of the groundlessness that would have been its betence, having to be (existence, the self), having to appropriate itself as the but in the sense of the being-sense of being. Not, therefore, "giving" it per the being-to of sense, giving existence being as sense. Not, however, in the tive verb that language gives us, but the intransitive verb "be-ing," which desubstantialize the verb itself, destabilize grammar. And not the intransisubstance. "Being" is only being, the verb-at least insofar as we can More rigorously still: being isn't Being; it's neither substantive nor

we must defer (or abandon) the appropriation to the point of infinity, but (or whose existing) is appropriation itself. that all sense resides in the nonappropriation of "being," whose existence "Finitude" doesn't mean that the totality of sense isn't given and that

trary, it is, on each occasion and from each birth to each death, the approwould produce senseless existence like a monolith of being. On the con-What makes sense for a being isn't the appropriation of a Sense that

question of the suspension of sense, in-finite, each time replayed, realways being born and always dying (being born is dying). All of which service. It is appropriated death that is senseless. Sense is existence that is and, less still, an invitation to turn death into the mark of a mission or a neither a circle nor a tautology, still less an appeal to any morbid heroism "end," of any extremity at which the infinite circle of an insane appropriastructure of being, "up to the end"-which is always the absence of any sein, being-toward- (or to-) death, 12 isn't death but the toward or the to. what carries the whole weight of thinking, in an expression like zum Tode to, which is itself no longer to anything else. Let me put it another way: its appropriation and appropriates the inappropriable character of being death gives sense, it thinks that sense makes sense because death suspends example, what a thought of death means when, rather than thinking that priation (to itself) of there being no sense to this senseless sense. This is, for opened, exposed with a novelty so radical that it immediately fails. "end," whether as a goal or as an accomplishment, and that it's merely a doesn't take anything away from the hardness of death, from anxiety before tion might be completed. Being-to "ends up" being-to, something that's "death" merely indicating that this toward or this to is maintained, as a Rather, it simply indicates that, in finitude, there is no question of an it. Nothing that I have said brings either consolation or compensation

even, I'm already steering sense in the direction of an accomplishment. Yet already understand."13 "Look, here, thus, the sense of my existence." By saying it, testing it out, finite being describes nothing less than "what all of us, as men, always and we exist, have already "understood" the finitude of being. An ontology of finitude is a thinking of the fact that we, as beings, from the moment that that we have always already understood. Essentially, a finite thinking of the very thing that eludes it, or the eluding that sense itself is, is something The new, as the very event of sense, eludes itself. I can never say:

coming to a presence whose present has already escaped, is already missing of sense in the singular mode of its presence. Being born properly means that is, relating to some particular sense. It means being born to the element tering into (already being within) the very dimension of "understanding," "Understand" doesn't mean grasping a determinate concept but en-

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sensed because we have understood. Or, rather, we have already come into already said regarding the aporetic nexus of the sense of "sense." Other of being that comes into sense. And being, too, that comes to sense [au ence or the presence-to of existence. Of being that comes into the world; ing, of "understanding," of having already "understood" the coming-presare in sense. One opens the other—this is all that is "understood." sense because we are already in the world; we are in the world because we have already understood because we have already sensed; we have already than that, it doubles the "already" of Heidegger's "already understood." We sentir] as sense [comme au sentir]. I can't say any more here than what I've from the "coming to." But it is still a matter of coming. And, in this com-

and whence it fails, whence it reaches its failing point. How can we turn to enter into a finite thinking. them. To obey this double constraint—the very absolute of existence—is toward it. But how can we simply open our eyes? Death has already closed away from this hard, striking, obscure point? Birth has already turned us Sense is existence in this ontological priority, whence it is reached

2

there's nothing that we might think "in common," as it were. I will come ing" what is, each time, a singular existence. (All of which isn't to say that not an "ounce" of sense that could be either received or transmitted: the the end. From which it follows that it is never "giveable" as such. There's one asks: "What should we think?" (at least they will, so long as they don't doesn't mean that we have some knowledge of its accomplishment. Everythat remains for us is to think this finite character as such and without inall philosophy, however "metaphysical" it may be. Not a single thinker has cause, in truth, no one is unaware of this point, which lies at the heart of finitude of thinking is indissociable from the singularity of "understandthink is this: that thought is never given, neither at the beginning nor at prefer the injunction: "Don't think too much!"). Well, what we have to finitizing it. This task is as finite as any other. Equally, it's certain. Yet this thought, if they have thought anything at all, without thinking this. All Or, rather, it is to enter into the finite character of all thinking be-

is not a matter of having. To exist means: to lack sense. own": "outside" "me," sense lies in the multiplicity of moments, states, or even if, here or there, this multiplicity can also comprise a sense that is "my ual or common, at every level of community. "In" "me" sense is multiple, encounters and events that are as much individual as they are preindividisn't simply understood as the singularity of an individual (not simply as that it concerns each time a (finite) singularity of being. Here "singularity' to "being" in general (as if there were such a thing . . .), but in such a way need: "The privilege of existing shelters in it the necessity [and the distress: lation to the fact of its being as sense. This relation is one of lack and of own essence, which is to say that it is without essence. It is, by itself, the reder of having: an assembly of qualities. By contrast, existence is itself its production of sense is not the being-self of an essence. Essence is of the orinflexions of community (but equally, then, in what is always a singular Heidegger's "in each case mine"), but as the singularity of punctuations, of die Not] of having to need the understanding of being." Existence does not "we"). In any event, the singularity of the sense of being means that being's have what it always already and constantly has. Why? Precisely because it Existence is the sense of being. Not, however, according to a relation

sity (Not) of sense is exactly that, namely, sense. From which it follows that to lack sense is, properly speaking, to lack nothing. ally lacks. On the contrary, to lack sense, to be in the distress or the necessense, or to be lacking through sense, isn't the same as lacking a fullness, a be such14—no longer has any sense. It is simply senseless. Equally, lacking lack that would bear all the marks, the traces, the premises of what it actu-On the other hand, what is in the mode of essence—if anything can

of all that could hardly be more obvious. To lack nothing, despite every sense) is the full, satisfied condition of an essence. The negative theology thing that's lacking: this is what it means to exist. tic-nihilistic confusion. And yet, it's not as if "to lack nothing" (to be in (abyss, nonplace, mourning, absence, etc.) which, while clearly necessary for the recent history of thinking, no less clearly runs the risk of a dialec-We've certainly not managed to shake off the fascination with lack

as a being." This means having to respond to the fact that there are beings finitude." Finitude resides in the fact that existence "understands" that "be and that I "myself" am. Hence, "understanding" of being is "the essence of with a responsibility [Uberantwortung] toward beings" and "toward oneself In an entirely different register, Heidegger speaks of "being charged

> and from the there is of "being." In other words, it is a matter of responding ing" does not rest on the foundation of an essence but uniquely responds to bility of sense, and is so absolutely. Nothing else. to and from oneself as the existing of an existence. Finitude is the responsi-

singular occasion of its response-responsibility; but this also means that sharing of finitude.) tween all the singularities of existence. (From which it follows that there is sense is the lot, the share of existence, and that this share is divided beis, as such, the engagement of sense. Not of a collective sense, but of the no sense that could engage merely one being; from the outset, community That is, sense takes place on every occasion of existence alone, on every And so I would also want to add: finitude is the sharing of sense.

a sense conferred on existence (like the senseless sense of the self-constitudifferent way. 16 very being or truth of sense. Such is the case, most visibly, with Marx and to demand that freedom be seen not so much as the means to but as the another, have still expressly attempted to think "sense," not one has failed have come before us and who, at the point at which one epoch touches on istence as open to existing itself. This fact is sense.15 Indeed, it is the only Heidegger (as Sartre clearly saw). So, too, Rimbaud, albeit in an entirely fact that makes sense by itself. And this is why, amongst the thinkers who tion of a subject or freedom as an essence). Rather, it is the very fact of ex-Another name for this is "freedom." Understood thus, freedom is not

distress or the necessity (Not) of sense. dom, as finite sense or as the infinite absenting of the appropriation of discourse of the Enlightenment, of Kant and Hegel), but sense that is freestake here is sense, all sense—and that it's not "freedom" that is sense (the to the "death of God" because they show, or at least suspect, that what is at sense. "Freedom" (if we need still to hold onto this word) is the act of the These thoughts produced the rupture of the century, measuring up

sciousness, definitively unhappy though it may be. 17 Doing so, they denied duction, the heroism of the abyss and of destiny, or the mastery of conthought to close off the loop of first and last signification: man's self-prothe finitude that they had seen on their horizons. Put differently, they But, whether in sum or in part, these thoughts are over. They

definition, be exploited. We note it, and think after it. That's all. ativity. But the "death of God"—as this history has taught us—cannot, by ended up exploiting the "death of God," reconstituting or refounding an infinitely appropriated or appropriable sense, up to and including its neg-

or the task of sense). guages, systems, codes (everything that used to be called "formalism," even general: forms, procedures, fields of validity, forces, the interplay of everysenseless, simultaneously monstrous and exhausted. On the other, we have tion" of sense. On the one hand, we have the final deployment of the though its only concern was with finding new approaches to the question thing that produces or seems to produce effects of sense-logics, lanperious necessity of the themes of the condition of possibility for sense in (the absurd game of the tatters of "humanism"). Finally, we have the imthe weakened, distraught, or maudlin thought of the little -or -no sense This is why the century was broken apart, split, opened on the "ques-

ever mediating between the two.18 A finite thinking is one that rests on this very means of accessing sense, an accession that takes place not as some thing inaccessible but as an in-accession to itself, to the suspense, the end then, but to think anew and with all rigor the inaccessibility of sense as the tology, in which the senseless ends up closing off sense itself. So not this, not to do so through the insidious movement of a negative theology or on der the need to think its finitude, not to fill it or to pacify it, and certainly the limit at which it simultaneously undoes and concludes itself without This history has today provided us with the motif of sense placed un-

and exposes, too, sense as an essential lack. Hence, the sense of "freedom" is nothing other than the very finitude of sense. word, albeit provisional and uncertain, for what exposes this lack of sense space of divine necessity). No, it is because "freedom" might just be the again, because it's something like "freedom" that "fulfills" sense (and certainly not in the sense that human freedoms calmly play in the empty If our concern here ought to be with "freedom," this isn't, let me say

destruction of sense in the planned savagery of a civilization at its limit, a Our history has often been presented as the process of a collapse or a

> civilization that has itself become the civilization of the extermination of the sense not merely of "civilization" as a whole but of sense itself.

umphs, is not necessary for each epoch—as if the West had given itself this law or program. commensurable distress, inscribed behind the great events and the trican actually take such a measure and so long as the representation of an inhaps the greatest distress and the greatest necessity of sense—so long as we alleviated, still pertains to sense. Indeed, in the West's own terms, it is per-This distress or this disarray, which, until this moment, nothing has

ing delivered it. extended to another future, to another demand for sense, one that not even would have been nonfinite. Rather, we find ourselves at the inflection of an as the distress and necessity of our present history—of this "time" of our the thinking of "finite sense" will be able to think through, even after havend whose very finitude is the opening, the possible—the only—welcome "moderns" or "postmoderns." We're neither before nor after a Sense that finite sense. In this regard, it doesn't really matter whether we call ourselves being born to sense—must be understood as the distress and necessity of We might now be able to say that this distress and necessity, as ours,

and once more responsible for a singular sense. selves) is not the senselessness of a reabsorbed and annulled signification. nor errancy. But we do exist and we "understand" that this existence (ourcomplishment" nor the "overcoming" of "metaphysics," neither process whose sense, in any case, is never simply given. We are neither the "acman, nor Christian, nor a settled combination of any of these-words seek to appropriate our origins: we are neither Greek, nor Jewish, nor Rosenseless process.¹⁹ And this is also why, in our own time, it's pointless to produces events and sense across what is represented as the infinity of a prised by its own freedom and by its own history, the finite history that to see ahead or to plan. Rather, a finite thinking is one that is always suris unable to think what comes to it. Of course, it isn't a matter of refusing In distress and necessity we "understand" that this "we," here, now, is still A finite thinking is one that, on each occasion, thinks the fact that it

courses on our time that do other than deplore it? Distress itself has bethat deplores our time draws on these four motifs. (Are there any distermination, expropriation, simulation, technicization. Every discourse come an object of intellectual consumption, from refined little nostalgias Now, our distress manifests itself under four different headings: ex-

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truth of distress lies elsewhere.) to punk nihilism. Which shows us, as if we needed to be shown, that the

countancy. The extermination of persons, of peoples, of cultures, of the selves off, in order to do away with the end that was proper to them. technological network, as if sense, or existence, were ready to finish themand polymorphous manhunt, articulated in an enormous economic and about crime, or about massive destruction. But here is a kind of general the end, to liquidate sense. In the history of humanity, there's nothing new with" ("final solution"), and here that means to abolish the very access to portations and drugs of every kind. "To exterminate" means "to finish tions, of one part of the South by another, of one identity by another, de-South by the North, of ghettos and shanty towns by immense conurbareading the daily newspaper becomes an exercise in endurance and acmisery, by racial, national, and tribal hatred, and by ideological rage. Just Extermination: in camps, by force of arms, by labor, by hunger or

overcome by the community. Terror and pity are responses to the curse of destruction of life. This is why evil is borne, recognized, lamented, and existence in its opening to or as sense, regardless of whether this entails the modern, even though their actual manifestations were far more complex els for this conversion (crudely, we could call them the ancient and the converting or transforming its negativity.20 There were two possible mod against a horizon of sense that ended up (without ever really ending) by freedom as such. It comes from the gods or from destiny and it confirms dystychia. Evil in this sense is given or destined [envoyé] to existence and to than this). First, there is the model of misfortune, of unhappy fate or tragic The question of evil has always been posed—and "resolved"—

as in Descartes, or in universal exchange, as in Leibniz). and death is by right absorbed or resolved (by the progress of knowledge classical universe, evil does not exist at all, except as a surface appearance der of existence, if one that's not actually null and void. Ultimately, in the cident (and, in principle, can always be mended) and belongs to a lesser ortivity of the norm in the very act of rupturing it. Evil in this sense is an ac-Then, second, there is the model of sickness. It confirms the norma-

The evil of extermination is quite another thing: it is evildoing (or

negation of the "eachness" of sense, of being-toward-self. totally; it exterminates "distress" itself. After all, the two go hand in hand: to the need for sense. Extermination doesn't just exterminate en masse or ity of each instance of "distress" and each "necessity" of sense; it is the the immensity of the murder bringing about the negation of the singularthe senseless insanity that closes off the aspect of existence that opens onto as the essence and hence as the destruction of existence and, moreover, as seems—and this is a new thought—that existence can grasp its own being self and affirms its (metaphysical, political, or technological) right. It than being; rather, existence is unleashed against itself. Here, evil affirms itwickedness).21 It does not come from outside and it is not something less

ity becomes indiscernible from the sense that is lacking.) ward-sense resists, and resists absolutely (and if it didn't, who would be left ought also to ask: has this ultimately taken place? If it has, wouldn't everyto have the "sense" of "evil"?), it resists at that very real point where insanbe: hasn't everything already been destroyed? And if it is not, if being-tosanity is indistinguishable from the sense that is lacking. (No doubt we it absents itself, up to the point where, for a single, decisive moment, inopening of this possibility in which sense self-destructs. Finitude is sense as thing already have been destroyed? But then our question would have to haps even revolting, thought: finitude is so radical that it is equally the So from now on, we have to stay with the following implacable, per-

being deprived of truth. with nothing to hand, to be sure, but with that part of (the being of) existence that we already have in our grasp. To be deprived of rules, without boils down to. To discern senselessness without the help of Sense, 22 not To discern within this indiscernible: that is what freedom ultimately

of a "kingdom of ends." Instead, it obligates freedom; or, more accurately, since this being is to-be. But "duty" doesn't point to the infinite realization istence as existence. Here, "having-to-be" is the form taken by "being," real sense is not a "value" that we could promise to the infinity of a good but because it is the being of existence, it is and has to be presented in exwill. Precisely because this access can never be appropriated as a "good," the norm or value of some "good" or other; the access of existence to its means is that we can't fall back on an ethics of "misfortune" or an ethics of It has to be a matter of an ethics of evil as wickedness. This doesn't require "sickness," whose use can, for us, only ever be analogical and provisional. It is in this sense alone, then, that an ethics is possible. What this

out delay, as its own *end*, in both senses of the word. Freedom obligates itself *insofar as it does not appropriate its sense for itself* and, too, insofar as it open to the senseless. We might say, then, that being (the being of existence) *is* duty; but duty indicates the finitude of being, its missing sense.

We're not proposing a morality, but a tendency to conserve and to augment the access of existence to its own inappropriable and groundless sense. ²³ An ethics is not only possible, but certain to emerge, carried along by what we already know about being. This doesn't mean that all practical decisions can be considered, negotiated, and taken swiftly and simply. Rather, it means that if the call for an ethics is today a constant testimony to our distress, distress already knows what ethics amounts to: the restoration of existence to existence. Clearly a "humanism" isn't going to be enough here, since it would obscure the very need for this restoration. (And does it need to be said that every human life has an absolute and immediate right to what, in a civilization such as ours is supposed to be, is called "living"?)

5

Expropriation: there is a big difference, actually an opposition, between treating the inappropriability of sense as what is most proper to finitude and expropriating from beings their conditions of existence. In other words, thinking about the lack of sense does not entail abandoning the critique of what, following Marx, used to be called "alienation." Nor, moreover, is it a question of regarding the material, economic, and social condition of men as a negligible happenstance, external to the domain in which a thought of finite sense would operate.

The "material" condition of existence is, on the contrary, each time what makes up the "each time." A place, a body, flesh, a gesture, a job, a line of force, an ache, ease or misery, having time or into time: these define the finite each time of any access to finite sense. They don't "determine" it in the sense of a causal instance; rather, they are it—and even when the entire dualistic arrangement of our vocabulary and our discourse (even when it tries to be "monistic") tends to obscure it, a thinking of finite sense is essentially a "material" thinking about the "materiality" of the access to sense. Because sense is finite, there is no reaching outside of this world. Because there is no "outside," it can't be reached.

The "philosopher" who talks about "sense" is, along with his thought, nothing other than a material singularity (a packet of "sense," a place, a time, a point in history, a play of forces), who cannot, after all, guarantee that we are any nearer to the "sense" that is in question. The thinking of finitude is itself a *finite* thinking because it has no means of access to what it thinks, not even through thinking that it has no such access. There is no privileged "speculative" or "spiritual" order in the experience of sense. Yet existence alone, insofar as it is, hic et nunc, is this experience. And the latter, always and each time, is an absolute "privilege," which, as such, misidentifies itself qua "privilege" and qua "absolute." There's nothing to say about when or how such an existence exists. ("To write"—and I will come back to this—is to say this not-saying.)

But there still has to be something or some "one" who can exist. Some being must be, hic et nunc. Existing is a here and now of being, it is to be a here and now of being. There are conditions in which this is not possible—and even if existence, undoubtedly, always and without end, resists, even though it resists to the very end and beyond, and even though we can never simply say "this life has no meaning," there are still circumstances in which beings are not only abandoned, but in which they are, as it were, stripped of the conditions of existence. When this happens, beings are the pure instrument or object of a production, of a history, process, or system, always deported in advance from the here and now, always and only in the elsewhere and in the afterward of hunger, fear, and survival, or of wages, savings, and accumulation.

All the same, not being expropriated by the *bic et nunc* doesn't mean that we appropriate it for ourselves. There's no symmetry. *Hic et nunc* means merely to exist; it is finite existing "itself." Granted, we can never say that "this life" or "this moment of life" "makes no sense." But precisely because we can't decide with respect to sense, we can't decide—we can least of all decide—that all conditions are the same. Yes, every existence is *in* sense; but no one can consequently decide that the condition of possibility for certain existences is and has to be a *sacrifice* of life (of all forms of "life"). Since the here-and-now *is* finitude, the inappropriability of sense, every appropriation of the "here" by an "elsewhere," and of the "now" by an "afterward" (or by a "beforehand") is and does *evil*.

How are we to decide what makes a "here and now" possible and to decide what does not "alienate"? Nothing and no one can decide this. Each time, however, a here and now, an existing, must be able to decide to be,

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and abandoned to its finitude. and to be open to sense. Each time, being has to be allowed to be, delivered

finitude as such must be indicated. now of existence. On the other, there is this: in letting the finite being be havoc) whose empirical basis is also the "transcendental" of the here and one hand, there are basic conditions (on which civilization wreaks constant choice" of a "subject," actually already "alienated" by this horizon. On the would already be decided and within which would be exercised the "free "visions of the world" and of "man," one in which an essence and a sense their very finitude. That is to say, the gesture doesn't refer to a horizon of so in that this "leaving," this "abandonment," is presented to beings as guarantees? In a sense, it is not—today, at least, and for us. But it must be exercise of basic freedoms, which presuppose life itself and a few other Is this any different from the reputedly "normal" conditions for the

lation" of capital. uncompromising as that of Marx when faced with the "primitive accumupropriation" (or indeed of "exploitation"). Altogether different, yet just as This demands an altogether different thinking of "alienation" or "ex-

struggle are going to change if that struggle must now be thought with refwe carry it on, in what name we desire the continued existence of beings of this sort (and today, above all, of the South by the North, even though and is part of extermination as we've just described it, and that "capital" or space-time of their singularity. Equally, it's true that this is still happening expropriated: their strength, labor, body, senses, and perhaps even the have seen, that beings can have their condition or conditions of existence contributed, in large part, to the disappearance of alienation as a figure for of this notion of an original propriety, an authentic plenitude or reserve. original authenticity which ought to be preserved or restored. The critique erence to finitude and its singularities. Access to finite sense does not preeral and generic concept of this "man." Undoubtedly the conditions of (original and final) self-production of man and, at the same time, by a gention, therefore, of giving up the struggle, but of determining in what name we know that this isn't the only expropriation of its kind). It isn't a ques the "global market" only endures and prospers by a massive expropriation This is also what finitude means. Nevertheless, it remains the case, as we istence is not self-productive, even if it isn't the product of something else the loss or theft of man's original and ownmost self-production. In fact, ex-Up until now, the struggle has been guided by the regulative idea of the "Alienation" has often been represented as the dispossession of an

> and that includes "culture," means inanity with respect to sense). It implies, in other words, the space-time of the here and now: concrete fini-"empty time," "recovery time," and also "leisure time" (where "leisure," be grasped in forms other than those subordinated to process, such as ductive operations: the finite here -and now. And it implies that the latter "ecstasis" is also undoubtedly too pressed or hurried.) But access implies, on and always pressed up against its own "after." (The Heideggerian time of and procedure: that is, a linear, continuous time, without space (of time), poses the reign of process and the linking of time to the logic of process suppose auto-production and its reproduction, it "desupposes" it. It dethe contrary, the opening up of time, its spacing, the de-coupling of pro-

now, does not come back to itself. that of appropriation, but of a sense (in all the senses) which, here and -and now. Let us say this: as enjoyment—if the notion of enjoyment is not ble to say such a thing—as the inappropriable singular materiality of a here to what is "finite" in sense, spaces the time of general reproduction. Access produces nothing, and is not producible. But it takes place—if it is possi-Birth and death space, definitively, a singular time. All access to sense,

a reality represented as entirely given over to the simulation of its true nature, and of social, political, and, ultimately, human reality.26 tique of social and cultural appearances emerged a general denunciation of ternational), of seeming or simulation. From the Marxist heritage of a crithe society of the "spectacle" (this was the word used by the Situationist Instruggle that do not conform to the syndicalist-political model. This is not the place to discuss these. On the other hand, '68 unleashed the critique of involves the emergence of new and previously unheard of forms of social developmental crisis of a slightly backward society). On the one hand, it try to twist or obscure,25 is twofold (provided one looks for it beyond the Simulation: the truth of '68, which the opinion makers stubbornly

creativity it harbors, blocking the desire to create which constitutes the real of the "market-spectacular society" and prevents it from tapping into the eral simulation alienates life by tying it to the reproduction of the functions once again, of "alienation" (again, this was the word used by the SI). Gen-This critique was made—and achieved posterity—under the sign,

and original authenticity which this account presupposes. No doubt the man. There is no point in repeating the critique of the duality of alienation man. The great theme of simulation, which still proliferates today, is not which is still that of auto-production or the subject, of the generic subject-"life," "creativity," and "imagination" invoked here belong to a metaphysics free of Platonism.

subject acceding, infinitely, to his own sense. And that is why the model has not production, not so much because it operates on the basis of nothing aestheticism). This discrepancy can be formulated as follows: "creation" is care was taken, the artistic model notwithstanding, not to fall back into ance, more Nietzschean than Marxist, was an "artistic" one. (In fact, that remained, up to now, essentially linguistic, verbal, and poetic. however, it is still a question—in a sense, more than ever a question—of a but because it operates for nothing, for no purpose other than to leave the tendency is not entirely absent in Marx). This version subtly altered the "creator" surpassed, surprised, ravished by his or her own creation. Finally, themes or schemes of a critique of inauthentic appearance (especially when All the same, the soixante-huitarde version of the critique of appear-

in the form of a God or a work, and belongs to this lack. give way: essentially (for which read: existentially), existence lacks a sense, sistent and insidious, of simulation? Here all theologico-aesthetic schemes How, then, should a thinking of finite sense handle the theme, so in-

is consumption of "cultural goods." And the critique of production is it is crucial to recall what emerged in '68), the critique of the "spectacle" us, in '68, from coming to grips with this lack. However (and this is why excessive, and also as lacking, as it could possibly be. Thus, without a cess to existence, which is not presence, access as exiguous, fugitive, and tellectual movement may be pushed farther than that movement was able worthless if it does not include the critique of what could pass itself off as form, image, or game, no "spectacle" even, is worth much if the sense of exbut rather a matter of what does not pertain to representation at all question of simulated or simulating (and dissimulating) representations, doubt, the critique of general simulation is mistaken about itself: it is not a to think) that what is at stake is not the representation of a presence but acthe production of sense itself. Which means (if the interpretation of an inistence is not implied in it in some way, is not touched by it. Everything else undoubtedly revolved, albeit obscurely, around something like this: no The more or less confused suggestiveness of "authenticity" prevented

> it opens up the question of what "art" could mean. as the representation of the absolute, the Idea, or Truth.²⁷ But in this way enigmatic nudity as image. Art, for example, has long drawn the rigorous ulacrum," most often understood as a sort of "image," merely presents its at the same time as it undoes itself, ultimately spinning in a void—rather consequences—often in impoverished fashion, it is true—of the end of art blunted, because the simulacrum can no longer mask anything. The "simto destroy simulation and accede to the authentic, the real, or "life" is like a television set that no one is watching. Thus any critique which seeks has spread out to such an extent that it presents and takes pleasure in itself Today, in a certain way, "simulation" just proliferates. Moreover, it

a great life, it is always the indication of a secret nonpresence. mental or fragmented, surrealist or Situationist, expressed in great art or in unpresentable"—if, in the final analysis, the "unpresentable" can only be conceived of as infinite. Whether this infinite is "good" or "bad," monuform, in the modern and postmodern tradition of a "presentation of the sense is exhausted. This presupposition is still lodged, if only in a negative void once the presupposition of complete presence and of a closed circle of It is thus the realm of representation in its entirety which spins in the

finitude itself, insofar as it is a coming to presence without presence (and of what could not be completed, neither Nature nor Idea, which is to say sentation, but of a presentation of that which does not have to be presented changes completely if mimesis 28 becomes the concept, not of any repreon an axis so fine that we can barely make it out. The issue of "simulation" any problematic of representation (of all seemings and all signs also) turns call by another name, this is what we are dealing with. Which implies that not a secret), comes to presence—and in art, or in what we should now ing that existing lacks, this zero of sense which makes sense (but which is representation nor the presentation of something unpresentable. The notheverything is presented in it, but in a finite presentation which is neither Now, if all there is is the finite—if the there is [il y a] is finite—then

It is a question of what coming or birth to presence means. To exist: the commeans that "truth" is no longer sought for in the regime of representation.) ing of this double concept also supplants all simulation. (This does not mean that there is truth in every image and in every spectacle. Kather, it tion for a subject, nor the reproduction of an initial presence. The banish-Thus it is no longer a question of (re)presentation: neither presenta-

that one hears in the prefix the sense of spacing, of distance." "Presentaing of all presence and any present. It is a question, furthermore, of a ing to presence of absent sense, sense coming to its absence, to the absenttion" as the spacing of sense. mimesis that one could try calling mimesis of appresentation, on condition

about it). Already, the unqualified use of the term obscures the fact that cinema, of a single, gigantic, universal computer presupposes the resolusolute nexus of all technologies. The representation, in comics or in the gotten about. Undoubtedly, the interdependences, interfaces, and interacof vast machinic or combinatorial apparatus embracing technologies, has tion or other (be it chimney-sweeping or the recording of the images capthere is no technology that is not technology of some determinate operaformed concepts in current discourse (which only leads to more chatter sponse is there, and was available before the computer and the giant solutely) is the technology of. But if one wishes to ask this question, the retechnology remains transport technology, fertilization technology remains tions between technologies never cease to multiply. Nevertheless, transport tured by a space telescope). The vague idea of a general technology, a sort other than the "technique" of compensating for the nonimmanence of expuppet show of universal robotization. Technology "as such" is nothing tion, in this computer, of the question of what technology (taken abfertilization technology. One would be hard pressed to identify the aband stands in for being. is the "essential" technicity of existence insofar as technology has no essence of anything else, nor is technology "as such" the technology of existence: it technological through and through. Existence is not itself the technology self. Insofar as its being is not, but is the opening of its finitude, existing is deed vegetable, "technologies." The "nexus" of technologies is existing itimagines to demarcate it clearly and distinctly from all animal, if not inimmanence. It begins with the first tool, for it would not be as easy as one istence in the given. Its operation is the existing of that which is not pure Technicization: "Technology" is without a doubt one of the most ill-

the absence of nothing, it fills in for and supplements nothing. Or again: that is also the irreducible multiplicity of technologies—compensates for "Technology"-understood this time as the "essential" technicity

> nology "as such," merely a multiplicity of technologies. ther immanence nor transcendence. And this is also why there is no technique.) So much so, in fact, that it ultimately designates that there is neisome Grand Artifice. Rather, it is the "artifice" (and the "art") of the fact over "nature." But nature represented as pure immanence would be that that there is no nature. (Law, for example, is also a technology or technence" of the world. Technology doesn't reform a Nature or a Being in this exteriority as existence, a "transcendence" not opposed to the "immatechnology transcends—nothing. Or else "nature" designates an exteriorwhich does not pertain to sense, and which does not exist.29 In which case, given along with ends, and vice versa. It is, in this sense, transcendence of what is represented as a "natural" order of things, in which means are ity of places, moments, and forces: technology is the putting into play of technology compensates for a nonimmanence, that is to say, for an absence

15 the finite sense of being as the final sending (outward) of the West. To which means, as existence and sense themselves. Thus dispatch or sending the "sending of being," as being sending itself as its ultimate message: to formulate at least the demand that "technology" itself be understood as always forget how Heidegger (in a smaller number of texts, it is true) tried the "technological" age. But, second and more remarkable still, we almost nunciation of "technology" is the most banal, and the most vain, gesture of same could be said of some aspects of his treatment of poetry.) The deanywhere else in his work. (With a symmetry that is not accidental, the put forth this discourse (and he did), he was less original there than almost aims deprived of any existential guarding of being. Insofar as Heidegger conquest," total and leveling, of the earth, for the sake of autonomized tribution of this thinking appears to lie in a denunciation of the "ruthless verbal demon, one that is a false concept. It is quite remarkable that Heiour terror is not baseless. But we will gain nothing from exorcising a purely habiting and welcoming the finitude of sense. "inhabit" technology, or to "welcome" it, would be nothing other than inhis thought. This happened for two reasons. First, the most important condegger's theses on "technology" have become the most "popular" part of acter of our "mastery," which no longer knows either end or completion. standing of finitude and our terror at the precipitate and unbridled char-Undoubtedly our incomprehension demands a new sort of thinking, and "Technology" is a fetish-word that covers over our lack of under-

I don't want to take Heidegger's thinking any further than this, any

tude is limitless, and that humanity can destroy itself in the implosion of incomprehension and terror are not groundless. This is also to say that finiwant simply to situate it, in the knowledge, as I have already said, that our more than I want to claim to have "solved" the "question of technology." I

constantly multiplying and transforming themselves, weaving a network cization is accelerating and proliferating, and that in it technologies are we know that a well-thought-out ecologism determines new technological velopment" were quickly extinguished by their own insignificance. Today, of that which is compensated (an immanence) ever coming to being? It is rightfully or in essence, to a gesture of compensation—with no prospect growth and proliferation, to the point of panic, may not actually belong, that was laid down with the very first technology or, more exactly, whether nicization—the development of technologies—may not actually be a law that is ever more dense. How, though, can we avoid asking whether techno accident that the comforting dreams of a return to a "degree zero of de-It is entirely legitimate to say that the current movement of techni-

are put. Nor is it a question of employing technology "beneficently" in the in adopting a moral discourse about the "evil uses" to which technologies bolical entity, because no such entity exists. 30 Moreover, there is no point no sense in imputing these to "technology," as if it were some sort of diasense of "technology" as the sense of existence. name of some pre-existing "good." Rather, it is a matter of getting at the technologies in extermination, expropriation, and simulation. But there's By contrast, we could quite legitimately point to the role played by

and of expropriation.) What if this "end," which can no longer be repreof a "work," in such a way that technicization could, in all rigor, be called way, undoubtedly, as it disconcerts and displaces, endlessly, the completion disassembles and disorients the infinite sealing off of a Sense. In the same hardship and trouble) to the finitude of sense? The "reign of technology" technicization, also exposes its finite sense? What if it also exposes us (in as total implosion), what if this end, which is in effect only in an indefinite sented as the reign of robots, or even of computers (but only, at the limit, having no other end than itself. (I'm leaving aside the ends of the market "un-worked," or without work [dès-œuvrée].31 What manifests itself as irresistible global technicization is accused of

Instead of returning nostalgically to pious images (or essences) of the

and undecidabilities which subtend the decisions that have to be taken manipulation. each day, by the technicians of biological, ecological, energetic, and urbar tude. Nothing, perhaps, better bears this out than the questions, demands tains an implicit knowledge of sense as finitude, and of the sense of finiabove the technology that it is, and in being the technology that it is, conwould be a matter of thinking the following: that all technology, over and artisan and life in the fields (an old refrain, as old as our history), this

Each one of these tasks requires a finite thinking.

completion or achievement. ing of absolute finitude: absolutely detached from all infinite and senseless Not a thinking of relativity, which implies the Absolute, but a think-

tence arises, and to which it is exposed. beyond, but a thinking of the limit as that on which, infinitely finite, exis-Not a thinking of limitation, which implies the unlimitedness of a

hausts all its substance and all its possibility. un-grounding of being: of this "being," the only one, whose existence ex-Not a thinking of the abyss and of nothingness, but a thinking of the

cation of singular bursts of sense resting on no unity or substance. And the that there is no ultimate sense, only a finite sense, finite senses, a multipliof the existent. This presence is not essence, but-epekeina tes ousiasfoundation of sense, only a coming, and comings-to-be of sense. fact, too, that there is no established sense, no establishment, institution or birth to presence: birth and death to the infinite presentation of the fact A thinking of the absence of sense as the only token of the presence

one could say is emblematic of finitude, inscribes or exscribes the division cannot be deduced or grounded.³² The division of the five senses, which tude: the "a priori" irreducibility of spacing. Equally, though, this thinklocation of our senses, our five senses, whose organic and rational unity ing demands the material transcendental aesthetic of the disparity and disnowever, being time pressed up against its continuum or its esctasis. Finispace-time in the finite here and now, which is never present, without, This thinking demands a new "transcendental aesthetic": that of

As for the "transcendental analytic," it should present the disparity

and dislocation of the five senses and the sixth, that of the concept. A which no secret is any longer to be awaited. schematism which does not return to the homogeneous. A "hidden art" for

ment, revelation, or secret) the arc of finitude. sublime, has insisted, up until now, on extending to infinity (imprisonthetic in the sense in which every thought of the beautiful, and even of the However, a finite thinking cannot be an aestheticizing thinking, nor aessenses, of their absolute difference and of the very sense of what it displays. (if it is a "consciousness") of the splitting and sharing of sense and the No doubt, an "art" (a "technique") is always the clear consciousness

without end": the being that we are. Thinking, here, is coextensive with exsimply takes up the challenge of that which "we understand already and that it is—in order, simply, to be. It means that existence must be thought, and thought existence, in order tion of sense cannot be its own truth, which is to be the sense of this fact. which is to be the fact of a sense—and that the concept and the significaisting. It means, rather, that the fact of existence cannot be its own truth, thinking (in the banal sense of forming representations) is sufficient for exturn back on itself. This doesn't mean that it would be enough to "exist" isting, and consists in thinking this thought: that being-for-itself does not (to be there, in the most banal sense of the term) in order to think, or that thinking does not add to existence the seal or confirmation of its sense. It A finite thinking follows this outline: only to retrace it. A finite

of voices, writing, its exscription. between languages, double articulation, the differance of sense, the sharing which language does not complete itself (nor initiate itself): the difference his essence. But sense is the sharing and splitting of language thanks to presentation of a "thing in itself." And man is not the auto-production of way, there is no concept as the auto-conception of the concept, nor as the is no longer "sense" as the meeting-point of all these meanings. In the same guage is no longer just language. It touches its limit, and displays it. There fication is being exhausted here. Here, words are no longer just words, laning of each of these words evaporates. In truth, though, meaning or signi-We bump up against an empty circularity here, in which the mean-

conter the sense that it endlessly promises. A finite thinking inhabits ent), but because language itself, in "essence," is not what it is, does not language. Not because it is "something else" (something fuller, more pres-Yet here we discover that thought, which is language, is, however, not

> could say, then, that a finite thinking makes itself adequate to the existence missing sense, or its inappropriation, obtains. it thinks. But this adequation is itself finite, and it is there that access to the writes (in) the finitude that language is, which it displays or exposes. We

a single invention alone is possible, all discourse being suspended it does not and cannot know, and what it must invent for itself each time sense [remise au pas-de-sens] as its ownmost object, be written? This is what How can and must this thought, given over as it is to what is not

our history, bears the name "finitude"—or the name the absolute of exisand, consequently, also, as I have continually been trying to show here, the that would allow us to think that whose index, held out at the very limit of meaning of "finitude." There is no sense of the words "end" and "finite" sense. A responsibility of thinking taken to the limit of all our meanings sense that affects all sense, before what has to be and has to constitute our or a new question. It is, as I've already said, a responsibility before the notof "doctrine." The more we repeat "finite thinking," the more we risk contence. There can be no doctrine or system here. Only rigor. that have saturated us and worn us out. No, "finitude" isn't a new response the "answer to all questions." But it's precisely "answers to all questions" juring up the specter of a "system." Or, more simply, the pitiful shadow of Very quickly, we are threatened by the unbearable preposterousness

of thinking). Once again, as happens with every great rupture of sense, of language and writing (often called "rhetoric" or "affectation" by those which is sense." How do we write that? nite sense?" but simply, "The finitude of being suspends the sense of that terms of some non-sense. Hence, it's not even a question. Not "What is ficould be articulated in terms of sense, even as we can't disarticulate it in carry the proposition that a "question" of finite sense isn't a question that stable words carry the entire weight of a question of sense, and most of al who are oblivious to the epoch and don't feel the heaviness and difficulty French singularity—has done its thinking with a formidable mobilization philosophy no longer writes in the same way. Nor does poetry. Perhaps philosophy" or "poetry" will no longer be written as such. These illim-It's no accident that contemporary philosophy—especially in its

Rimbaud: How to act, O stolen heart?

expectation, and there's waiting and expectation because there is, already thinking is hard. But the disappointment comes from waiting and from There is real disappointment here, and suffering: and this is why

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promised to existence. Hence disappointment itself is sense. sense. This isn't a promise that might or might not be kept. Nothing is

makes or constitutes existence (as well as community, history, and freecause each time it starts all over again. And what is this "each time" of exready said too much, thought too much. Yet we've never said enough, beand take down; that's what sense is; that's all, end of story. We've always althat is left over is only vestigial and fragmentary. There is nothing to record thinking can take the measure of this extremity. The part of finite sense dom). But thinking it through brings thought to an end: only a finite strict abeyance, unsublated, above the abyss. thinking of which is the ontological ethics of this "neither . . . nor," held in ity of a substance nor the discrete rarity of an exception. It is being, the munity? The event of sense, insofar as it is lacking, is neither the continu-And how many times in a community? And what is the "one" in a comto presence? How many times does this take place in a life? In a history? istence? A "here and now"? What is a birth, or a death, a singular coming This is what has to be thought, therefore. And it is not absurd. It

scatters it. Thought has to think itself as what loses itself in thinking—necand so, as thought, opens it and drains once again as it both gathers and able, but the finite sense of existing. Thinking burrows back to its source very being, as what is, in itself, neither thought, unthought, nor unthinkappropriations of nothing. essarily, if the sense that it thinks is the sense of innumerable finitudes and Here, thinking burrows back to its source. It knows this source, its

a finite thinking is already working, or un-working, already prior and alpated an essence of finite thinking, with its form, if not its norm. But no, tiple and each time singular—what is a "time" or "occasion" of thinking? ready posterior to what we can say about it, here or elsewhere. It's written think our own times." As if, in such an injunction, we knew and anticilight of day, if it doesn't find its voice in writing, then we will have failed to still fugitive, a finite thinking. Just one. what is a thought?—hard, entrenched, as material as this line of ink, but must, with all its resources, expose itself to what is finite about sense. Multhinking that can no longer impose itself, nor even propose itself, but that Already for yesterday and tomorrow making and carrying sense away—a here, but before and after this "here," finishing it off already, and not yet We might be tempted to write: "If a finite thinking never sees the

Jonathan Derbyshire, and Simon Sparks Translated by Edward Bullard,

Concealed Thinking

measure and one that can contain no conciliatory horizon. say, gives us our measure as human beings, a properly uncompleteable possible but also the manner in which this exposure measures us; that is to "war," injustice") lays bare and accentuates not just our exposure to the imwe have become aware of how the eternal return of the same dead ends and the same distress (to give just a few one-word examples: "values," "right," Perhaps more than ever—assuming such a formula can be allowed—

and even the responsibility of not ending. of accomplishment [un inachèvement durable], the impossibility of ending believing, and thinking, and the necessity of confronting the lasting failure distress, but it was in Bataille's and Sartre's time that the boil was first whose unbearable insistence follows us. We say that we are in crisis or in of how, staggered and broken, history comes down to us; a memory, then, the future like a voiceless souvenir of Western history, at least a memorial ory because it's not just the memory of a past, but one that reaches toward still remember (and of which they are a part), though it is a painful memvulsion. An era of revulsion. An era of nausea and exasperation, which we of them already knew about this exposure. They knew about it because of lanced: the terrifying insufficiency of all the various assurances of knowing. having lived through an era not just of crisis but of contraction and con-Here, I want to engage Sartre and Bataille, knowing as I do that both

Both Sartre and Bataille realized this, but not in the same way.

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than it says and says that it does so, hounding itself to the infinite extremness is itself the condition of the designation, not because of some linguissomewhat clumsily, of the proper fullness of the proper. (Still, this clumsitionally. In short, it is not even a question of a failure of achievement, mension of its propriety or as its very propriety, absolutely and uncondiing. What is properly unachievable has a failure of achievement as a dinor does it hold out for its achievement like an inexhaustible act of mourna regulative idea, like an ideal receding into the heavens of Ideas or values. is properly unachievable doesn't hold its achievement at arm's length, like like "properly unachievable." Such words need to be heard literally. What ity of its saying.) tic defect but because language always says too much, always says more therefore; it is a matter not of a negative nor a privative propriety but, but What they realized ultimately lies beyond what is evoked by words

to bring language—and hence thinking—into the ambit of this extremity. Ultimately, everything is going to turn on this point: whether or not

of experience itself. of the world today: that is, the apprehension of a vertiginous dissociation ences that perhaps always divide up, between all of us, the apprehension way in which each wants to escape the whole idea of "conception"), but two different "conceptions" (and we could, if we wanted, compare the take that draws a definitive line, not between the two men or between between two incompatible experiences or relations to experience, experiis entirely understandable and that Bataille himself makes possible) a misrates Sartre and Bataille. And on this point Sartre commits (in a way that No doubt it is this extremity, more than anything else, that sepa-

one else, to something that he not opposes to, but conceals from Sartre. slaved in a cowardly sort of way, but ultimately still enslaved to the horiservility that characterizes the work of knowing and of thinking, not ensome of us at least and in certain aspects, away from the needy and formal "philosopher" in all this, and Bataille knew better than simply to bid And that also means from philosophy. Of course, Sartre isn't just the zons of science and sense—then we owe this to Bataille more than to anylanguage and style of philosophy—if it's true that there's been a shift, for If it's true that there has, for us today, been a noticeable shift in the

> of Heidegger. going to sketch out here, we can see a division in or a tearing of the figure end of philosophy and the task of thinking." In the details of what I am ercise of thinking, which also means, as the division between two different the thinker who suggested that the experience of our time be termed "the relations to Heidegger, between two proximities to and two distances from played out as the division between two different ways of relating to the exquence to it. All the same, the contrast between them can certainly be farewell to philosophy in a way that would ultimately be of little conse-

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cannot think or without which it thinks precisely nothing, an extremity sponsibility for a necessary, insistent motif that had already been adof its being for no one." Still, in an almost paradoxical manner, Sartre sponding to the gift of a being whose "existence is a lost generosity by dint that puts into play the very thinking that philosophy is in the business of the basis of itself, carries an intimation of the extremity without which it necessary that may be, but of an address to such a use, an address that, on reaching its peak in Bataille: the motif not of a philosophical use, however posed by Kierkegaard and Marx, Nietzsche and Heidegger, before vanced and intensified through the very different ways of thinking profails to recognize—particularly in Bataille's thinking—and fails to take repropriate, since this extremity can't be given but is itself merely a gift rethinking that no work or project of signification is going to be able to ap-Granted, Sartre is almost always concerned with an extreme limit of

as the modern tradition of the liberation of humanity. ing able to take place on the level of what we share with Sartre and Bataille as from renunciation—and, consequently, the condition for thinking's benecessary condition if thinking is to protect itself as much from sufficiency tress; that is, without being a thinking that is not put into play as such, the of crisis or distress without being itself a thinking that is in crisis or in dis-What is at stake, then, is what stops thinking from being a thinking

consume them, going beyond any sense that they might have had so as to With its propositions without indicating the excess that has to overflow and the search for "positive propositions," as we say, can no longer be satisfied What is at stake is that which, without renouncing either critique or

articulation of sense, that doesn't have something of the uncompleteable give them a sense of the necessary effort and audacity of thinking itself. For very act of thinking "in order," if you'll allow me to risk the phrase, to be ble obligation, logical as much as ethical, to conceal itself as thinking in the about it, that doesn't exceed sense, like an intimation, a binding, implacathinking secured by nothing outside its own freedom (neither "God" nor or of heroism; rather, it envisages directly the primitive and final fact of a all that, however, this thinking does not sink into the pathos of skepticism any hint of a finality). talking about "risk," it's simply in order to avoid the risk of introducing thinking ("in order to make sense" and "in order to free itself"—and if I'm "total man," nothing, then, if we can say that . . .); there is no thinking, no

seeks to master the sense and liberation of a humanity, yes, defined by this but the movement of this displacement. With a single gesture, he situates discourse that is virtually infinite and capable of inspecting, not the limit, concealing and withholding itself ever more emphatically, give rise to a Sartre, by contrast, continues to believe that although the extremity the order of thinking), but better understanding a stake that is essentially here isn't the awarding of a victory (always a pretty questionable move in moment in the face of what holds them closely together: what's crucial this reserve that we must oppose Sartre to Bataille. But let me pause for a that marks the extremity of an active infinite. And it is precisely because of nuity of the movement in some way effaces the shattering of interruption very freedom, but defined according to an ambiguity in which the contitwo faces of a single work of infinite or indefinite pursuit, a work that himself on the side of history and language, these being represented as the (which he certainly wants to acknowledge) can't be relinquished, it can, by Bataille wants to consider thinking in terms of this intimation alone

name for this end), and thus of a world experienced as this divestiture; divested of origin or end (regardless of whether it's the divine or the human manity defined by its liberation—a humanity for the sake of this alone. truth—even, if you prefer, the praxis of subjects of sense and of truth. taken as experience, however, this is no less the praxis of a sense and of a Both think only of the possibility of articulating the experience of a world In a certain way, it is Bataille as much as Sartre who wants to see hu-

> lived and done."2 of us, therefore, in our world. In Sartre's own words, it is a matter of thinkto affirm truth here and now, to be capable of a truth of the here and now, showed itself to reside neither in the heavens nor in the morrow, namely, ing the fact that "truth is action, my free act. Truth is not true if it is not become necessary—what has become necessity itself—ever since truth ism thought as final liberation, both Sartre and Bataille are after what has In the wake of the same era and the same difficulty inherent in Marx-

clear-cut differences between thoughts concerned with the same objects in ways going to be words (vocabulary, style, and tone) that measure the most wanted to indicate between Sartre's and Bataille's aims or concerns. Indeed, the point, I have already compromised, ruined, even, the proximity that I the same era. this really does need to be said, since, in the final analysis, it's perhaps al-I should immediately add: by using Sartre's own words to illustrate

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have been quite so heated, and perhaps wouldn't have taken place at all tion—a proximity without which, moreover, the confrontation wouldn't or the sharing, however approximate it may be, of a single preoccupa-Once again, we need to stop a moment under the axiom of the proximity Still, it's not as if I'm rushing headlong into this necessary indication

nor a loss but the point at which truth arises as this very cessation that both Sartre and Bataille (and they're not alone in this) are anxious that is also, once again, our own. Let us say, then, shifting terms somewhat, simply in order to penetrate further, as it were, into the concealed intimacy Bataille, a proximity whose limit, whose dissolution, even, I want to show [dans l'angoisse], experiencing the cessation of a sense that is neither a lack As such, I want to maintain this proximity between Sartre and

cisely what truth is it that arises here? Sartre says: It is an act, a lived expedepth. But we don't need to dwell on this. Rather, we need to address the and one that appeals, moreover, to a somewhat dubious, sentimental Tience [un vécu] and a doing. "Lived experience" is a fairly murky category, All we need to do, therefore, is consider the following question: Pre-

could; here, I'm not really interested in philology.) What he means by this, "lived experience." (I'm not about to follow the texts, even though one concept of an insurmountable contradiction. false and if, moreover, the "deadening of experience" weren't precisely the perience" [un mouru], if this didn't introduce a tonality that is undeniably name "lived experience"—we might be tempted to say: a "deadening of exthough, is the "lived experience" of a cessation of what goes under the fact that, so far as truth is concerned, Bataille doesn't disavow the term

of thinking. Indeed, since Kant, a not-knowing lies at the very heart of of "not-knowing" and so of nothing less than the entire modern experience A thinking that thinks that it does not know is still a thinking."3 Yet he also says the following, a remark cited by Bataille in his response to visages not-knowing literally (and this, too, could be shown in the texts). Sartre and Bataille, the site of not-knowing is called "freedom." Sartre enthinking. And already in Kant, as in Hegel and Heidegger and so also in Sartre: "Bataille refuses to see that not-knowing is immanent to thinking So let us say the same thing in a slightly different way. It is a matter

is one of knowing (or of not-knowing . . .) how to think a thinking that is still a thinking even when its content is not-knowing. Bataille doesn't challenge Sartre on this point. But the question here

meticulously traces the contour of not-knowing. Sartre or Bataille realized, at an extremity where the movement of knowing thinking," if it is true that we are, even more immediately than either Perhaps there's nothing more important than thinking this "still

sizes). In fact, though, we do so only at the cost of seeing not-knowing itnal ground for things is established. ing itself). Hence, somewhere, a truth subsists, at least virtually, and a fiered somewhere as the appropriated knowledge of some subject (albeit beknowing is possible, the totality of being will ultimately need to be gathjure possible (future knowing or divine knowing, for example). If a final or a powerlessness beyond which the position of knowing still remains de question: if not-knowing is the negative side of knowing, it marks a limit lack or its impossibility. Now this is precisely what needs to be called into self as an object, one that is identical to knowing: its negative identity, its identity of thinking, of its subject (and this is what Sartre actually emphaing, we can also and before anything else understand by this a sustained Hence, when we say that the thinking of not-knowing is still a think-

Now, this is not what Bataille means when he speaks about non-

a knowing. To know all this, that is, to not-know, understood this time in that there is no knowing beyond our knowing, that "knowing" designates is a word that continually appears in Bataille). in thinking itself: it is thinking concealing itself from itself (and "conceal" shape, or form. The thinking conceived thus is "still a thinking," then, but and the opacity of what is no longer a matter of knowing in any way, ing until a later date or to a higher register, but to enter into the obscurity its verbal rather than in its substantive sense, isn't to postpone final knowin Kant's vast wake), and that the totality of being cannot be addressed by merely the knowledge of an object (essentially, then, we are still swimming knowing. For him, "not-knowing" designates, on the contrary, knowing in a sense hitherto unknown. It introduces a change in level and a rupture

that demands our attention.) concerned here with the texts. Rather, it is the movement of a thinking as much as knowing or willing). The thinking of not-knowing is thus a calculation), while still remaining thinking: that is to say, an act that, beasleep, dead thinking) than it is maintained, self-identical thinking. It is Bataille knew this and showed as much. As I have said, though, I'm not merely self-presence without content. (In a sense, we could show how it is thinking that has nothing that it might think as an appropriable content, happening within myself," says Descartes—and hence sensation or feeling fore anything else, is present to itself ("everything of which I am aware as knowing (in the modes of intuition or the concept, of representation or thinking that conceals itself from the anticipations and the demands of Descartes's cogito that is being taken to its limit by Kant and Hegel. Concealed thinking is no more annihilated thinking (unconscious,

Privation of sight [vue]. or an abyss into which thinking slides, but the night, as Bataille likes to put Or, if it does, the emptiness in question is a substantial emptiness: not a pit It, the night into which we advance and sink by seeing obscurity, itself the The fact that thinking has no content doesn't mean that it is empty.

nothing other than its penetration into the night. But what it sees as the It is the sight of nothing, at any rate, of no object or content. Its sight is Its representation as the sight of nothing rather than a nothingness of sight. If thinking is generally represented as sight, what is involved here is

and so neither sight itself nor a contortion of the subject in the object, but concealed sight, sight subtracted but not suppressed, abducted, stolen, or night stands before it and presents it with sight that doesn't see anything destroyed, diversified and presented as such. There's nothing to be seen, it sees nothing, it sees the faculty or the power of seeing reduced to itself. night into which it penetrates is also itself: seeing nothing, and seeing that the power of seeing stretched to its limit, stimulated by being concealed but merely sees. Neither self-presence in itself nor self-objectification, but Not, however, in the sense that it would be turned back on itself; the

anticipate not-knowing. Yet if knowing holds rigorously to what moves then it steps outside itself and into not-knowing. ing but, in doing so, also conceals thinking from itself. Knowing doesn't won't have anticipated what is concealed, what conceals itself from thinkit—to its ultimate ground, to truth and the sense or meaning of being— "To be concealed" is to take by surprise, unexpectedly. Thinking

and the element of invisibility. Night thus gives itself as the truth of a thing mate ground or to its sovereign sense. that is no longer the object of a knowing but the thing restored to its ulticontours, its breath, its rustling. Rather, it is the night itself, the condition other words—isn't something in the night that might be divined from its what it touches upon surreptitiously, what not-knowing not-knows, in What concealed thinking thinks—what it thinks, what it sees, and

and proximity, through the relation of cause and effect, principle and end, power of sense, a power that isn't simply "in" us or "outside" us, a power make sense, we give it and we even think it. But what is the sense of this from all these senses that refer back and forth between themselves. We to one another, right up to the nonsignifying point of the flight of sense and so on). And it's thus that language makes sense: it relates all meanings is no longer taken up in the return to an "other thing" (through difference its emergence and its ground or foundation: the thing itself, the thing that carries the thing to the nocturnal incandescence of its absolute presence, of by concealing itself. In concealing itself, and in concealing itself alone, it that is perhaps in us only insofar as it is outside us? This sense is the concealment of sense. That is to say, it makes sense

the strange communication of laughter, it's not the chaotic din of an abin anxiety and in the solitude and horror that accompany it, but equally in The sense of sense is one of self-concealment. In the night, then, as

> surdity that is triumphant. Rather, it is sense itself or the truth of sense, sense freed up in its naked power: sense sensing, therefore, a remark that is involves the very play of sense, that which opens it and puts it into play: its session shows itself to be outside of itself. its extremity as the eye touches on the night in which it is lost. Self-posfor itself, but in the sense that it senses itself concealing itself. It touches on body. It senses. It senses, not in the sense that it appropriates a signification far, far removed from anything like a play on words but, quite the contrary,

ing—that what gives reasons, what gives grounds, is the concealment of sons. It knows, then—that is, it un-knows and it senses, sensing nothdoesn't give up, that doesn't give in, since it carries on trying to give reamore than it is some sort of "excess of reason." Rather, it is a reason than dom is mad."4 This madness, however, is not the absence of reason, any This sense, we could say, is mad. Bataille himself claims that "free-

But what does this concealment involve?

plenty of texts that deal with what is thus laid bare. A thinking that conphrase "I think in the same way that a woman undresses," and there are in the first instance, be a garment seized by a thief). We all know Bataille's same origin (as English "rob" or German rauben suggest, the robe would yet this is but one aspect of the term, since "robe" and "disrobe" have the ing itself, more specifically, as a naked woman: as truth. ceals itself, therefore, is also one that undresses itself, that disrobes, expos-To conceal, dérober, to dis-guise, if you like, is also to disrobe. And

enter into me. nakedness. Hence, I cannot see nakedness except by placing it at a distance It is to show that there's nothing beyond nakedness except still more everything but, at the same time, to show that there is nothing more to see covering that could present or signify a state or a function. It is to reveal Phic . . .) object. I see nakedness only by entering into it, or by letting it from the object, by situating it in terms of the (medical, anthropomor-To be naked is, first and foremost, to be undressed, to be without any

already an other to myself, an other with myself. By its very essence, a on the other. There is no solitary nakedness. If I am naked and alone, I am that it is itself an opening. And this, in turn, means that nakedness touches see, to enter into the night of nakedness. It touches it and opens it by nakedness touches on another nakedness: it wants to touch, no longer to What this means is that nakedness can only be opened or, rather,

still opens. tion, all it opens is its closure; it leads onto the night. But it still leads; it opening itself to it. And yet, essentially obscure and devoid of all founda-

tween-us" that conceals itself). ures of himself and Bataille lies the formidable modern worry over the "bethe "hell of other people" as Sartre has it, and between the contrasting figof suffocation (whether the signification is that of the mystical body, comupon which we might confer a signification without the immediate threat vate language. And yet, between us, there is nothing, certainly nothing ally the same thing, language is what it is only between us. There is no prisuch, it is devoid of any sense of appropriation. Likewise, and this is actusage, sense is concealed from the "one" as much as it is from "the other." As munal race, etc., or the mutual surveillance of all too clear-sighted looks, fact that sense only gives itself by passing from one to another. In this pas-"it begins with conversations, shared laughter, friendship, eroticism"). Night or nakedness, insofar as they give nothing to be seen, give this: the from one to another" (and Bataille offers a little clarification of the point: Nakedness discloses the fact that "truth takes place only in passing

sage in every sense of the term: transmission and transgression, the step once. The between-us is, very precisely, the place of the sense of sense, pasthis happens—we are naked us to be between us; rather, it means that when we are between us—when the between of nakednesses. This doesn't mean that only nakedness allows This is why, moreover, the between-us, whenever it takes place, is always from one to the other as well as the step from the other beyond the one. fused with directional sense, and directional sense heads in all directions at other. Hence, the sense of passage is the sense in which signification is conus; this, however, can only be the sense of the passage from one to the In short, what we need to do is to give some sense to this between-

guage," and "thinking." When, as the saying goes, I am "truly" thinking, all I can actually do is reach out into the night, toward an other that I do worthy of the name "love" as it is of "death," "tears," or "laughter," "lancould render us visible, knowable, identifiable. Here, we are more likely to be identified with the movement that conceals us, a movement that is as Denuded, we are immediately concealed, since there is nothing that

> here, in this passage alone, that there is such a thing as sense. nal lesson, in a belief). Essentially, each of them hands over to me [me passe stant (so long as I don't look to fix it in an imaginary response, in a doctrisense, a ground, or a reason for no more than an unstable and tenable into me in any way whatsoever, that each one of them provides me with a cartes or Rimbaud, I'm always reading the fact that they're not responding counts, of giving grounds or reasons). When I read Bataille or Hegel, Desanything, despite its being the very movement of responding (of giving accealed: unaccomplishing, unable to stop, unable to communicate anything not see, offering the nakedness of a thinking that knows that it is conle relais] or, as we say, passes me the baton [le témoin] of sense. And it is but still communicating this: the fact that thinking no longer responds to

iety, is the agitation and anxiety of thinking in the night that conceals it. and surprise, but it also has the sense of an anxious, feverish anticipation has to come as a surprise if it is to surprise chance. This agitation, this anxthat has to know that it cannot simultaneously wait and desire, since seizing is a nakedness,6 "it waits for us to undress it."7 This has the sense of seizure the other. But this is the truth of sense. To seize is to seize a chance. Chance sense only in this incessant passing into the other—in me outside of me to Equally, though, the passage is a concealment, since it maintains its

cessity of chance ing is the not-knowing of the freedom of sense—that is to say, of the ne the absence of such a necessity that turns away from knowing. Not-knowof the totalization, however tendentious it may be, of a history. Rather, it is ther of a transcendental law nor of the willing of a principle or an end nor nifies that the passage doesn't obey an external necessity. It is the effect nei-What is at stake here, however, is nothing more than this: chance sig-

of intention, of project, of end. Both Sartre and Bataille experienced the nothing except our being in the world—and this "except" is itself devoid Deyond all intention, for nothing, nothing except our being between us, thinking that appeals to its passage to the other alone, without intention, the world" means. To think this nothing is to think naked thinking: a there is no reason why we are in the world—indeed, this is what "being in here, the fact that there is no reason why the world is here, the fact that Concealed thinking thinks the fact that there is no reason for us to be

each of them, in quite different ways, failed to find in Heidegger or Freud, ever withdrawing it from a difficult and perilous generosity. (This is what concerns a supposed knowing; generosity exposes to not-knowing. hoping to find it instead in an overhauled version of Marxism.) Finality ing thinking from the urgency of communication or community, without necessity of undoing the hegemonic ties of finality without ever withdraw-

tated, thought outside itself. implosion as well as a pit of anguish or a jerk of laughter. A cogito ex-cogiown disappearance, a cogito whose cogitatio this disappearance is, a silent and their operations, but of any form of self-certainty, the certainty of its that is relinquished; it grasps what is left for thinking when there's nothing deed, it grasps itself in the relinquishment of any object or project, of any self, but not in the intentional act constitutive of an object or a project; inleft to think. It sees itself naked, exposed, deprived not only of its objects intention and so, too, of any consciousness. It grasps itself as something As such, it is "still thinking." Like all thinking (apperception), it grasps it-Hence, concealed thinking only thinks what conceals it from itself.

trom within philosophy itself. and theoretical postulation—an overcoming and a subversion that arise recognition, the history of an overcoming and subversion of philosophy not quite so modern, extending as it does right back to the noesis noescience, thinking beyond philosophy, "originary thinking" beyond thinkson, the transformation of the world beyond its interpretation, art beyond yond sensible intuition, reason beyond understanding, faith beyond reaseos...) of a necessary overcoming of the thinking of knowledge and in a peculiar and powerful chain: the modern history (although perhaps ing itself . . . ,8 madness, silence, not-knowing, these are a few of the links ing from knowing. Thinking beyond knowing, intellectual intuition betutive movement in the modern experience of thinking. It begins with Kant, for whom the entire operation consists precisely in detaching think-The division of a thinking outside thinking is a constant and consti-

sion. He still holds to the irrefutable and necessary right of "accounting a thinking, actually confirms a continuity in this overcoming and subverfor." Bataille, however, represents neither a renunciation nor a prophecy, On this account, though, Sartre, who insists that non-knowing is still

> thinking; but it is one that confronts the excess of this "still." ing for an extremity that can no longer be accounted for. Yes, it is still a but the same insistence followed right to the end: to the point of account-

the other, in excess of sense, the "flip side of all thinking."9 to finish off—or to begin completely anew—every conceivable sense of been absorbed by this other sense that gives it the other, but that also works cealment, thinking having already passed into the other, having already concealment, the extremity at which we can think along the lines of consense of a "moreover," to the still other or the still further-is the point of ing over from the "still" in the sense of "in the same way" to a "still" in the shock, surprise, the point of thinking's passage to still thinking, the cross-The point of such an excess—the point of the leap, of the throw, of

night as an "illumination." All this, though, is only the night's illuminadoesn't exist at all, either positively or negatively, and yet it insists in the a way that it no longer exists either as a thinking of loss (a philosophy of tion of itself. thinking (delirium, orgiastic delight, the paralysis of consciousness). It non-sense, of grinding doubt, of nostalgia or cruel irony) or as a loss of ing loses itself and still thinks this loss, yet it still loses this thinking in such also means that it exposes itself to its absolute outside: the twisting and tearing that define thinking itself, the double still of thinking. This think-In the intimacy of this excess, thinking turns back on itself, which

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anxious, less confident—even less tragic—than Bataille the man and the close to a sort of mysticism; this needs to be pointed out, since it is the cen-Moreover, Sartre the man, if not Sartre the theoretician, is clearly more the time indicates a troubling proximity that might warrant consideration. don't want to go back over the texts. What strikes me as rather more imcentral to Sartre's contempt for Bataille's way of thinking. (Once again, I tral term in the dispute between Sartre and Bataille, the term that will be Portant is to address the question of whether or not Sartre's vehemence at Of course, the motif of nocturnal illumination brings us dangerously

around an excess of vision [une sur-vision], an exquisite excess of sensibiling happens. And yet the illumination stressed by mystics is played out The night's "illumination" doesn't produce a vision; in a sense, noth-

doesn't calculate its arrival time, even simply in order to abandon it. concealed insofar as it doesn't wish for what doesn't await it, insofar as it the calculation) of a method, a desired approach. Yet thinking can only be the mystical as a way of getting a result, getting there by virtue (and/or by transported, carried away, uplifted. Bataille always ends up understanding ity, one that is unsustainable, yes, but also ecstatic, and that is also to say:

sive slippage between what is still a matter of vision and what is still a look, between vision and look. still blind. If we're going to think what is brought into play here, we're gothinking, sliding outside itself, a slippage, therefore, the minute and decipenetrable night. Here, there is only the imperceptible exhaustion of matter of seeing, therefore, but of looking of the eye opening onto the imin no way offer its own concealment as the event of being, which, in fact, cealment of all resemblance and thus of all identification. The arrival can bles it only by way of a concealed resemblance. It is, moreover, the conand as a whole. It runs alongside being and the event of being, but resempas]. It is "what doesn't happen," identical in this regard to being, simply ing to have to elaborate the intimate difference, minute but also absolute, There's no vision here, then—merely the disappearance of vision. It's not a lies outside or on the other side of the point at which it conceals itself. This happens by not happening [cette venue vient comme ne venant

knowing is identical to truth of thinking and the thing that is being thought. Put differently again: nottical to the exact coincidence of thinking and its flip side. Put differently: ing in which thinking slides outside itself—in itself outside itself—is idenhere means and ends, method and knowing, are confused: the not-knowstruments and productions, principles and consequences. It can't, since tem of this rigor does not construct itself in terms of means and end, innounced the demand of thinking, of thinking rigorously. And yet the systo give it its chance. Yet the only thinking that is able to think it is one that has made the initial resolve to surrender to it but that has in no way re-No doubt we will have to be attentive to this slippage if we are going

retical intentionality nor practical will), and so I look without seeing [j'en-I cannot enter as the subject of my intention and its objects (neither theodeath or I enter into the other, it's all the same. I enter at the point at which refer back to me and of which I see simply the nocturnal void. I enter into communication to the other from out of an opening of sense that doesn't As has already been said, this truth lies in the other. It takes place as

> look, not of a representation, concept, signification, or figuration. tre en regardant sans voir]. The "subject," if there is one, is a subject of this

nated—and its fire is a nocturnal one. Sense in the other is for me both the changed (whether they are transformed, lost, misunderstood, well transcontact with the openings of sense. Without this contact, signification up against signification, slips alongside it, next to it, prying itself from it ing other than this. truth and the night of sense. Birth and death, love and hate, signal nothlated), with this contact it is the very possibility of sense that is illumiwouldn't signify. Yet whatever happens to the significations being exthe movement of significations; rather, it brings such significations into Bataille, truth is its communication to the other. 12) Communication isn't through a minute difference: its communication. (And for Sartre, as for volves initiation). It's a matter here not of signification but of what, right ing beyond to which I would end up being initiated (mysticism always inscribed and signified sense, this doesn't mean that it lies in a supra-signify-If the end is thus beyond both object and subject, beyond circum-

itself in the truth of sense. one more operation for thinking; it is thinking itself insofar as it conceals ready standing against my eyes. "To pass from one to the other" isn't just this "sense in the other" already resonating "in me," without its night al-I cannot speak—and that also means that I cannot think—without

night of not-knowing. cealed thinking is identical to communication, and this identity is itself the that, rather than uniting us, divides us: an infinite agitation of sense. Conmight be reconstituted, but into the renewed concealment of not-knowing other is, not only for me but for itself as well. Leading, then, not into a and what conceals itself: leading into the space that the intimacy of the no longer beneath, strictly speaking, but exposed, nudity is what conceals night of a clear eroticism. Beneath the removed or raised garment, and so mystical union in which a knowledge of one in and through the other work—not in the manner of an aroused voyeurism but in the sense of the Such are the stakes of the cracked nudity that haunts Bataille's

if it is accomplished neither as ecstasy nor as knowing, if it is essentially If concealed thinking is neither mystical nor philosophical, therefore,

noted by the names "Sartre" and "Bataille," then how is this thinking to thinking that our thinking already is and has been since the period deif this is the thinking that our thinking ought to be, if this, truly, is the concealed-thereby, and thereby alone, being the thinking that it is-and be addressed?

manity whose sense is naked and exposed? now that we have passed beyond this configuration, now that we know al than ever now that we have done with religion, science, and philosophy, can be neither religion nor science nor philosophy and that we need more this—without ever knowing what it is that we are becoming, if not a hu-How, indeed, can we address that which, so far as we are concerned

laid bare and exposed, we members of a concealed humanity . . . is so problematic for our identity, for us, for we members of a humanity doesn't indicate an identical object; rather, it indicates the "sameness" that knows in some obscure way—knowing through a concealed knowing doubtless incompleteable) confrontation between someone who is still atthat they are thinking the same thing. Here, though, "the same thing" looking into the night (into the other side of thinking), each one of whom tempting to discern a history (a thinking) and someone who is already Furthermore, their confrontation gives it its sense: this incomplete (and Both Sartre and Bataille laid bare and exposed the sense of this sense

so long as concealed thinking hasn't yet become our way of thinking. signification. In a way, we have all been and still are "Sartre and Bataille," and represent accordingly a type of shared exhaustion of the assurances of another rather well, perhaps too well to avoid colliding with one another, ophy. And yet this concealment is our being in common. In the same way, painful to the touch. The signs that we exchange are unending; they do not out ever capturing or reducing to something that has been caught—the Sartre and Bataille, by failing to understand one another, understand one refer to a shared signification—whether that of science, religion, or philoschance of being in the world and the chance, too, of our exchanging signs there, this chance that is almost impalpable and, more often than not, In short, it would be a matter of thinking how we can grasp—with-

other than existence itself," describing this understanding, in order to disfrom 1960, Sartre doesn't actually risk a belated and furtive homage to tinguish it from "knowing," as "the dimension of rational not-knowing at the heart of knowing."13 We will always be able to ask whether, in this text Sartre speaks of a "perpetually active understanding [that] is none

> everyday or in what is truly exceptional. we ultimately know and share as our very nudity, humbly get gladly, in the a sign of community. However this may be, what is important here isn't his obliquely and from a distance, as it were, Sartre approaches the necessity of ing" with something more "rational" (a correction or modulation that intention per se, nor is it, as elsewhere, his attempt to correct "non-knowthinking concealed thinking: the sense of this naked absence of sense that Bataille doesn't simply repudiate). No, what is important here is that, Bataille (who would die two years later), perhaps even more than homage

subject of sense in itself: a sense that is nothing other than its communicaing is its praxis: thinking that undoes its objects in order to become the tion—and, by the same token, its concealment. The concealment of thinkmeans with a view to an end, praxis is the endless transformation of the thinking that it is: we, with one another and with the world. agent rather than its object or its matter. Far from being the mastery of a "In a sense" this is what we call praxis, that is, action that transforms its exchange (the exchange itself as sense, even) of our existence in common. that which is neither science nor religion nor philosophy—that which, far from providing a sense that might be exchanged, is itself the sense of the From this point on, it falls to us to approach from a new perspective

Translated by James Gilbert-Walsh

EXISTING

The Unsacrificeable

the first to inscribe a right-angled triangle, whereupon he sacrificed an ox. Pamphile says that, having learnt geometry from the Egyptians, Thales was -Diogenes Laertius

carried out in our own century, at the edge of the West or in some of its fice to Lascaux Man at the very latest. Thus we need to address about two hundred centuries of sacrifice, then the millions of sacrificial rites already It is, no doubt, reasonable enough to attribute the practice of sacri-

expression in a way that wouldn't be nihilistic? That is the question that I also announces that there is no more sacrifice. Is it possible to take up this Want to address in this essay. way. Every time nihilism declares that "there is no more community," it Priests. As a result, all those things for which sacrifice is prescribed—parthe matter. More often than not, however, there are neither altars nor offerings of every conceivable sort laid upon them. Equally, this spectacle imagine it was prescribed, are no longer preserved, at least not in the same ticipation, communion, community—or, rather, those things for which we sort of sacrifice. I will come back to this, since it goes to the very heart of would need to allow us to gauge the peculiar absence of sacrifice in us, for there are still altars, priests tell us that it's no longer a matter of the same us. Either its absence or its ambiguous and indistinct presence. Wherever merable altars or consecrated places, the fumes rising from them, the blood flowing over them, the wine or waters spilt upon them, the fruits, breads, Any such account would need to conjure up the spectacle of innuis at stake deep within it. grasping the reasons for this (apparent) "humanization" of sacrifice (which molation and the search for "less harrowing religious attitudes." Instead of not enough, as Bataille, for example, pointed out on numerous occasions, alectical assumption or subsumption of sacrifice. Bearing in mind the limand in Christianity. Unless we ought to say that it completes itself as phisublated, transfigured, or withdrawn. This happens with the prophets of Issentation here: the image of the past ten centuries, during which sacrifice, something that we might call "sacrifice." But the West rests on another is easily confused with the very origin of the West), we need to grasp what to say that an evolution is taking place, driven by a growing horror of im-Everything happens as if the West began where sacrifice ends. It is certainly mediately presents sacrifice in a weakened, displaced, if not diluted form. its of history proper, it should be said that the Indo-European period imperhaps, marks out the West more distinctly (albeit obscurely) than this dilosophy and as Christianity or, if you prefer, as onto-theology. Nothing, rael, with Zoroaster, Confucius, the Buddha, and, finally, with philosophy first at the edge then at the heart of Western foundations, is shaken loose, sublated in a singular way. (Is this the same as saying that it is itself sacrifoundation, one in which sacrifice is exceeded, surmounted, sublimated, or ficed? I will come back to that.) We would need to evoke another repre-All of humanity, or near enough to make no difference, has practiced

can no longer understand Thales' gesture; we do not even know whether, as little more than an empty vessel, nothing but a strategic position in creasingly attracted, if not fascinated to the point of hallucination, by this or how, he himself understood it—and yet it seems that we are still inthis object is ill constructed and artificial, "a category of bygone thinking." ences take sacrifice as their object; finally, however, all they tell us is that his military choices to be dictated by the daily sacrifice.)3 Today, other sciand disapproval, tells us that Xenophon, at the head of his army, allowed the origin of geometry stood precisely within the dissolution of this amalwhich distrust or fascination, the refusal of the other, is set in place."4 We They might even go so far as to say: "In our system, sacrifice exists at most gam. (In analogous fashion, Hegel, with a mixture of interested curiosity celebrated by sacrifice, a time when, as we know, or as we think we know, Thales takes us back to the time of a strange amalgam, when science was This is what my epigraph is meant to indicate. The little story about

> this question here.) tire lexicon of the "sacred" takes part in this sacrifice. But I can't dwell on obscure sacrifice of words within the word "sacrifice." Undoubtedly, the ening that might abolish or sublimate those earlier terms. There would be an recover the meanings of other, earlier words and to establish a new meanunique to it), what's notable is that the new word simultaneously claims to In the case of the word "sacrifice," however (although perhaps this isn't this argument aside by saying that ultimately the same goes for everything. senses of the word—is a Western development. We can doubtless brush inaugurates a meaning. In the final analysis, "sacrifice"—in all possible says something that no other word can say. It does not translate: rather, it that the very word we use is of our own making. This Christian/Latin word ourselves. Now in the case of sacrifice (as in other things), it so happens ally know what "eating," "kissing," or "commanding" mean outside of the impropriety, indeed, from impropriety in general. In a sense, we don't reidea of sacrifice is doubtless not entirely distinct from many other sorts of with non-Western practices of sacrifice, the inappropriate character of our West, and so we don't really know anything that we haven't already told (All the same, something else needs to be added here: confronted

three distinctive traits that give his thinking its exemplary character. rifice. I will discuss this thinking later. For the moment, I want to draw out Bataille's thinking cannot but haunt contemporary reflection on sac-

concerns of a much wider community. There is something like a critical, or of a necessary "surpassing" of sacrifice all testify to the contemporaneous importance conferred upon the object, and the tendency toward the idea whom he nevertheless cites (and whom he knew personally). Yet beyond in captivity."5 His perspective is entirely different from that of Bataille, ing this would be to refer, for example, to Georges Gusdorf's book L'Exa philosophical, theological, and psychoanalytic one. One way of confirmthe symptomatic case of these two authors, the network of references, the Périence humaine du sacrifice, published in 1948 after having been "written ctological, ethnological, and anthropological context, and, on the other, to whim of an individual but is firmly tied, on the one hand, to an entire so-1. This thinking doesn't come about purely by chance or through the

crucial point of contemporary thought in the question of sacrifice. We will perhaps find out later what causes it, and in what way it concerns us.

nally, thought itself. community or communication, art in its ability to communicate and, firifice in Bataille involves the sacrificial gesture itself, the establishment of nothing less than "being the same as the magnificence of the Universe."7 necessary sacrifice of thought. With the same movement, the motif of sac-Thus Bataille could write: "The question of sacrifice should be called the limit of death, which fascinates like light."6 With sacrifice, it's a matter of await this derangement of the order that stifles us . . . the negation of this of sacrifice" is a response to the fact that "from childhood onward, we itself. At the very least, he never stopped presenting his own thought as a he wanted to think according to sacrifice. and he actually wanted sacrifice last question."8 We also know that Bataille didn't just want to think sacrifice; terest in sacrifice: it is obsessed and fascinated by it. For Bataille, "the lure 2. Bataille's thinking, as we know, displays more than a particular in-

ways tragile and ambiguous, never ends. don the idea of making it his goal. But this abandonment, doubtless alled Bataille to denounce the comedy of sacrifice and, eventually, to aban-3. Yet we also know that a steady displacement, a lengthy diversion,

solely to Bataille, originate in his experience of thinking and what it exem-The questions that I want to ask here, without restricting myself

of real sacrifice and the closure of its fantasy? Isn't it time that we conever trap us in the revolving door of this very revelation? movement) of the revelation of a nonsacrificial religion, which can only am thinking here of René Girard, and an entire contemporary Christian longer owe anything to sacrifice? One that would no longer be a product (1 cerned ourselves with a participation and a communication that would no the closure of the West? Isn't it about time that we acknowledged the end in a sense, determined there? And, as a result, doesn't this relation tie us to from? To what does it commit us? To what is it committed? What is it that actually constitutes our relation to sacrifice? Is not the whole of the West, What is it about the fascination with sacrifice? Where does it come

precisely, upon what kind of relation to the sacrifices of the rest of human-What is the nature of the West's initial relation to sacrifice? More

> genuinely answers to the name "sacrifice")? speak, its own "sacrifice" (perhaps, if it needs repeating, the only one that ity (or the representations of these sacrifices) does the West map out, so to

augurate it. constructed on the basis of transfigured sacrifice. Yet this new sacrifice or natural generation: the gesture of a "mimetic rupture" is necessary to indoesn't derive from its brutish prototypes by way of a simple transmission we can say about "early sacrifice" except that all representations of it are schema, but reproduced in such a way as to uncover within it a completely mimesis: early sacrifice is, up to a certain point, reproduced in its form or forth bring about. Basically, though, there is perhaps precisely nothing that previous imitation, a crude image of what transfigured sacrifice will hence-In the same way, early sacrifice is represented as having constituted only a new content, a truth previously buried or unrecognized, if not perverted metamorphosis or transgression. Above all, therefore, it is a matter of a and decisively distance themselves from sacrifice and point toward its tion. Both figures (the double figure of onto-theology) quite deliberately both cases, it is a matter of a simultaneously distanced and repetitive rela-Socrates and Christ show it to be a decisive and founding relation. In

means anything, of the thing itself. I shall come back to this.) dissolution of every value associated with the word and so, if the term still cally displaced. Finally, though, this displacement perhaps accounts for the in any such formulation the value of the word is continually and dialectisacrifice to sacrifice through the sacrifice of sacrifice, therefore. Of course, nally dedicate (or sacrifice) ourselves to the revealed truth of sacrifice? A rifice has to be sacrificed—immolated, abandoned—so that we might figesture made in relation to sacrifice? That is, upon a gesture in which saction"? To what extent might these interpretations be dependent upon the what we call, amongst other names, "the killing of the father" or "revoluwhether there is, in a general sense, any "rupture" that would not be "mimetic." Isn't this principle applicable to the dominant interpretations of (Let me ask in passing, without wanting to hold up our inquiry,

teristics is absent from early sacrifices—as far as it is possible to track down of characteristics. This doesn't simply mean that all trace of these characern sacrifice . . .) suggests a new sacrifice, one distinguished by a number the truth of these "early" sacrifices (this is the whole problem, of course). The mimetic rupture of Western sacrifice (or, if you prefer, to West-

onto-theology of sacrifice: Four characteristics, though, are clearly required and presented by the

ject, in the fullest sense of the word and fullest duality of the genitive. being, by their life and thought and message. It is the sacrifice of the subsented as a sacrifice sought, intended, and demanded by the victims' entire tray as a sacrifice. Yet the final outcome of this condemnation is still repreiniquitous condemnation that neither the victims nor the executioners por-1. It is a self-sacrifice. Both Socrates and Christ are condemned by an

moval from this world to the next may be prosperous."10 will drain the hemlock without hesitation, asking of the gods "that my reand so forth.9 A few moments after having uttered these words, Socrates selves sufficiently by philosophy live thereafter altogether without bodies," situation by the subject Socrates: he is in prison, he is going to die there; all liberation, but as its genuine operation: "Those who have purified themself through death. Philosophy appears thus not simply as knowledge of this earthly life is designated as a prison, one from which he plans to free him-The Phaedo suggests nothing other than the reappropriation of the

turning to himself and his glory the life and love that he has lavished humbled himself,"11 becoming man even unto death. God, lord and master over the death of all creatures, inflicts this death upon himself, reenough: the gesture by which Christ, "being in the form of God . . . In the case of Christ, the Pauline doctrine of kenosis is familiar

rifice—testifies to this sort of life: different vein, Nietzsche, too—who elsewhere distrusts the morality of sac-Hegel calls the life of Spirit—is the life that lives by sacrificing itself. In a are this entire sacrifice of which he speaks."12 The life of the subject—what us to make our bodies a living, holy host, suitable for God . . . we ourselves nothing other than sacrifice. Augustine writes: "When the Apostle exhorts "life of sacrifice." Rather. it is a matter of a life that, in and for itself, is through. With the West, it is no longer a matter of life sustained by sacrithe process and the truth of a life that is itself sacrificial through and such terms), the actual putting to death, merely punctuates and lays open fices nor even, in keeping with a very Christian expression, a matter of a In both cases, the event of sacrifice proper (if we can still speak in

many have sacrificed their lives-or even worse, their health!-for a pretty many things: emotions need to be satisfied, individually and all together. . . . How "To give one's life for something"—great effect. But people give their lives for

> of immorality, if one is virtuous. . . . We are always sacrificing. 13 gerous: the adventure of speculation, for example, if one is a philosopher; or one woman! When one has the temperament, one instinctively chooses what is dan-

such a noble leader."15 fers up himself for us through his passion, so that we became the body of supreme pontiff in one universal sacrifice. In the form of a servant, he ofthe redeemed, the entire assembly of saints, is offered to God by the cisely still, within it all are gathered, offered, and consecrated. Let me cite fected forever them that are sanctified."14 Or Augustine: "The whole city of ter he had offered one sacrifice for sins . . . , by one offering he hath perfering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, af-Paul again: "And every priest standeth daily, oftentimes ministering and of-2. This sacrifice is unique, and it is consummated for all. More pre-

ular existence."16 the inner disposition that this power implies—of his natural and particthe preservation of universal substance by the sacrifice—at work within and in natural life are experienced as nothing; the power which promotes of individuals and their absorption in the external existence of possession substance of the State is the power by which the particular independence is sacrificed. At the end of this process, of course, we find Hegel: "The of the life and of the substance in which—or to which—every singularity sacrifice, in a general sense, the example of examples?), to the uniqueness plarity (this is, above all, Socrates' sacrifice, and we might also ask, Isn't from a position of exemplary uniqueness, whose value lies in its exem-The uniqueness of sacrifice is thus transferred—or dialecticized—

communication devoid of limit. cism."18 Western sacrifice upholds the secret of a participation or ence of "total" war: "The vast sum of consented sacrifices forms an entire holosuggest any straightforward affiliation), Jünger describes thus the expericaust that unites us all"—a phrase cited by Bataille as a salute to "mysti-Long after Plato, and long after Hegel himself (not that I would want to It is the role of state sacrifice to ensure the smooth running of the city. if the impious do offer such private sacrifices, the whole city will suffer as a result. So there is a communication, or contagion, of sacrificial effects, and and sacrifices increasingly performed, anywhere and at any time, by this dialectic: Plato's Laws establishes the prohibition of private sanctuaries women in general" and anxious people. 17 As Plato makes clear, moreover, In a way, Socrates' disciple furnishes the moment of exteriority in

truth of every sacrifice, or of sacrifice in general. It is not simply unique, essence of sacrifice. therefore, but, by virtue of its uniqueness, elevated to the principle or the 3. This sacrifice is inseparable from the fact that it is the revealed

much more of the truth."20 spirit, it is to truth itself that true sacrifice is offered up, in truth and as truth that it is accomplished. In the central section of the dialogue, deditruth in which the subject sacrifices itself, in spirit, to spirit. Through you, if you will take my advice, you will think very little of Socrates, and cated to the truth of the immortality of the soul, Socrates warns: "As for mimesis: early sacrifice is an external and, by itself, futile figure of this the philosophical purification is at that very moment performing within with some irony, a sacrifice that is empty when compared to the one that dying words: "Crito, we ought to offer a cock to Asclepius. See to it, and other hand, Socrates, already half-paralyzed by the poison, utters his final, seus's victory over the Minotaur, that is, until the end of the sacrifice to him. Either way, the truth of sacrifice is brought to light in terms of its don't forget."19 Any interpretation here—and this is precisely what the text which the Athenians were honor bound. At the end of the dialogue, on the were forbidden during the annual voyage to Delos that celebrated Thehealing, or he is bequeathing, with a degree of remoteness and perhaps the health of the soul by sacrificing his body, is giving thanks to the god of intends—is doomed to a pointed ambiguity: either Socrates, who recovers ter the judgment, Socrates' death had to be deferred because executions I have called "early" sacrifice. At the start of the dialogue we learn that, af-Remarkably enough, the Phaedo is framed by two references to what

flesh that does not perish."21 cumcision of the heart, true fast, true sacrifice, true temple: the prophets showed that all this must be spiritual. Not the flesh that perishes, but the After Paul, Augustine, and the entire tradition, Pascal writes: "Cir-

self as sacrifice in order to attain its truth hnite moment of sacrifice itself and because, logically, it has to sacrifice itsacrifice, universal sacrifice, and reveals the spiritual truth of all sacrifice. infinite overcoming. Western sacrifice is already infinite in that it is selfishes," the sacrificial moment of sacrifice itself. And this is precisely why Equally, though, it is—indeed, has to be—infinite because it absorbs the Western sacrifice is basically an overcoming of sacrifice, its dialectical and 4. Hence the truth of sacrifice sublates, along with "the flesh that per-

> charist, consummated in the finite character of sensible beings, to the inner cult of reformed spirit. And how we need to understand its speculative This is how we need to understand the shift from the Catholic Eu-

spiritual religion, and what is there called sacrifice can only be so in a figurative possession and natural existence. In this sense, sacrifice is no longer found in a necessary depth. . . . Rather, the subject . . . is only to surrender an immediate not manifest itself through an inner process, because feeling does not yet have the not to be my own and that I do not want to keep it as such. Here, negativity cander of an immediate finitude, in the sense of my testifying that this finitude ought what is generally called sacrifice. The immediate context of sacrifice is the surren-The negation of the finite can only take place in a finite way; with this we come to

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of the Self in its own negativity; and if this sacrificial gesture has been rhythm of the Universe."24 sense, sacrifice is a free activity. A kind of mimeticism. Man takes up the mimesis of genuine sacrifice. Bataille writes, for example: "In a certain clearly the infinite sacrificial structure of this appropriation of the Subject. abandoned to the finite world, it is simply in order to draw out all the more essence can communicate with itself. "Sacrifice" means: the appropriation death. It is through this negativity—and even as this negativity—that nothing less than its passage through absolute negativity and through With this, the external mimesis of early sacrifice becomes the inner and true mode of sacrificial logic alone. Indeed, the reconciliation of essence demands Mimesis, but repetition: sacrifice is overcome in the name of a higher, truer sense. In truth, it is "the reconciliation of the absolute essence with itself."23 Mimesis, then: spiritual sacrifice will be sacrifice only in a figurative

self-presence. This transgression occurs in pain, in horror, even. For ment remains, in spite of everything, a transgression of the law, the law of Hegel, for example, it is the somber, bloody, yet incluctable face of hisment of the negative, in which the finite has to be negated, and this moprocess. In another sense, this process only matters because of the mofinitude. In a sense, there is no longer any sacrifice: instead, there is through the transgression of the finite, of the infinite truth of this very We might call this mimesis "transappropriation"—an appropriation,

becomes restored and glorified. tory. Yet this is how Spirit completes its infinite self-presence and the law

dismemberment and pain. power. All this presupposes the Maenads, the orgiastic, a point of infinite fied; it is the power of dismemberment against the dismemberment of poses it only by remaining sacrifice, just as Dionysus opposes the Crucion new law-tables, and sacrifice the future to themselves."26 And yet it opneighbor are included."25 Such a sacrifice is opposed to one performed by eral feeling of human power through this sacrifice—in which we and our "the good" who, says Zarathustra, "crucify the one who writes new values sacrificing entire generations so as "to strengthen and raise higher the gen-Nietzsche, too, sometimes sees history in terms of the necessity of

essary, and unbearable consciousness—the eye of Bataille, for instance. sche there is an eye fixed upon this secret, with the feeling of a clear, necan infinite efficacy of transgression and its cruelty. After Hegel and Nietzthis secret. Western spiritualization/dialecticization invented the secret of beat; or, more seriously, it is the dialectical gesture itself that inaugurates dialectic: in truth, in spite of Hegel, it is this secret that makes this heart an obscure light over the central point of sublation, over the heart of the torn flesh of a beautiful body, and the secret of this horror continues to cast point, to which we will return. The "flesh that does not perish" remains the world of modern war and modern technology—at least up to a certain perhaps, in parallel with the extension and exhibition of suffering in the of their sufferings.")27 Although sublating sacrifice, the West constitutes a value of warlike sacrifice. (And what does Marx say of the proletariat? Hegel who abandons religious sacrifice also reclaims for the state the full the cruel moment of sacrifice as such. We have already seen that the very of its finite functions and its exteriority, yet a fascinated gaze is still fixed on fascination with and for the cruel moment of its economy. And does so, Those who "possess a character of universality because of that universality Such is the consequence of mimetic rupture: sacrifice is the sublation

sacrificial cruelty—or it sees that it sees nothing. that it can only see because of an unbearable, intolerable vision—that of But what does this eye actually see? It sees its own sacrifice. It sees

mimetic rupture has made us lose sight of the ancient truth of this sacrithat lies at the heart of modern sacrifice, we need to acknowledge that the fice. Or, as I have already suggested, the rupture is set up by the represen-Indeed, if it is always going to be a question of the ancient sacrifice

> truth of the victim, the sacrifice itself. cial rites—leads directly to the representation of a truth of loss: here, the discourse, the representation of a loss of truth-here, the truth of sacrifithose ancient rites. As is the case at other decisive points in our Western tation of the "loss" of a "sacrificial truth"—and by the fascination for the "truth" of the moment of cruelty, the only so-called truth preserved from

orization, the spiritualization, and the dialecticization of sacrifice (or sacriedly holds for the three different modes of sacrifice: the martyr, austerity, tions that Thomas Aquinas identifies in sacrifice (and the same undoubtof glory in the history of theology, to limit ourselves to just the three funcsuch as the remission of sins, the preservation of grace, and the acquisition low the complicated (and doubtless barely unified) destiny of functions oughly heterogeneous sacrificial functions. It would be useful here to folsacrifice has always been entirely clear about its own resumption of thorcial notion, so it's not certain whether the spiritualizing consciousness of the works of justice and the cult).28 In reality, one thing is clear: the interirites into a unity. Just as specialists today tell us that "sacrifice" is an artifipresented so clearly. It can be difficult to resolve the diversity of ancient Nonetheless, this truth of loss, of sacrificial destruction, isn't always

yond itself, while remaining true sacrifice. refuse it: it demands the "spiritual" unity wherein sacrifice should go besublation assigns a unity to the ancient rites (one of exchange) in order to through Christianity, Hegel, Bataille, and Girard. As such, the Western demnation of the "economism" of sacrifice runs through Plato as it does derstanding of it): "Here is the butter, where are the offerings?"29 The conlowing formulation from Brahminic ritual (or at least to our meager unbrought to light as "early" sacrifice is, in fact, a pure economy of exchange between man and the divine powers. Everything can be reduced to the fol-Yet this clarity is itself somewhat obscure. What spiritualization

Over a priori all early sacrifice, with the intention of proceeding to a general "sublation" of this economism. Spiritualization has undoubtedly rendered forms the general framework of representation in which the West takes munal rivalry, it is still a matter of a general economics. In fact, economism Parts or forces of the Universe, or as an expulsion of menace from comeven when it is depicted as a means of access to the cohesion of the various is hotly disputed. The do ut des is seen as inadequate to explain sacrifice. Ye This first—simplistic and mercantile—version of sacrificial economy

equally similar fashion, we would need to ask whether Girard knew what similar fashion, Freud had no idea what "identification" meant, and in was meant by the contagion of mimetic violence).30 "sublates" what it is that we know precisely nothing about . . . (in broadly though, is that communion implies a sacrificial negativity, one that thus nothing about a noncommunal mimesis/methexis, what we do know munion." What we would need to say, then, is this: we know precisely already invested in this idea. And this all boils down to the word "comresent as the bonds or communication of sacrifice stems from what we have round in circles. Yet one thing, and one thing alone, is clear: what we reptity and a communion whose secret lies precisely in sacrifice. Hence we go sult in self-sacrifice. At most, we might follow Lévy-Bruhl's guess that actually is in this context, which is a way of answering another accusation ticipation" means—except to say that, for us, it means a confusion of idenmimesis back to the question of economy). But we have no idea what "parmimesis is methexis, participation (which, moreover, refers the question of leveled at early sacrifice—that it is only a simulacrum, since it doesn't resays to his gods "Here is the butter, where are the offerings?" is really saythe various parts of the Universe. Similarly, we do not know what mimesis We also know nothing about the cohesion and communication between his gods or about the community of sacrifice that existed between them. ing because we know nothing about the community in which he lived with context of early sacrifice. We have absolutely no idea what the one who us incapable from the outset of understanding the proper significance and

erly ought to be, transappropriation would be unable to break through it. is always a mimetic law: if negativity was indeed the negation that it propthe participation that is the fruit of transgression. only reappropriate or transappropriate itself infinitely. The law of dialectic really mime the passage through negativity, in which, symmetrically, it can stitution of the absolute economy of absolute subjectivity, which can only Transgression is thus always mimetic. As is, as a result, communication or tion) a generalized "economism" and "mimeticism." Sacrifice as self-sacridoesn't prevent us from locating within its dialectic (or in its spiritualizaconfused, actually denounces itself. In fact, and this is undoubtedly what dialecticization of sacrifice, Bataille's included. This denunciation, already fice, universal sacrifice, the truth and sublation of sacrifice, is the very inwe need to acknowledge in Bataille's work, the fascination with sacrifice The denunciation of economism and simulation runs through every

> efficacy of dialectical negativity and the bloody heart of sacrifice. tion simultaneously combines, in an onerous ambiguity, the infinite fice is installed at the heart of the process. At its center, this double operacial destruction that it makes such a show of abandoning to "early" sacri-"sacred" or "sacralizing" label "sacrifice." In this way, however, the sacrifithe form of an infinite process of negativity, which it passes off under the claims to know but actually constructs for its own ends and itself ratifies in denial. It denies itself under the figure of an "early" sacrifice, one that it cization of sacrifice could proceed only by way of a tremendous act of self-Ultimately, everything happens as if the spiritualization or dialecti-

sume this without the subject of this gaze having already appropriated the Without letting fascination form itself into the dialectical mastery and dialectic of the distraught and the ecstatic? How are we to assume it, then, sume this if the eye that watches, and not the eye that is here being sublates, in ecstasy, the horror that tears him apart. But how are we to astruth of sacrifice. Hence we would have to assume that the tortured man knowledge of sacrifice? watched, does not know what it sees, nor even if it sees? How are we to asrepetition of sacrifice, would, in this very movement, be the sublation and logic, which is presented simultaneously as the rupture and as the mimetic ribly lacerated corpse and the gaze—distraught or ecstatic?—of a tortured a comedy, Bataille wants the blood to flow. He wants to weigh up the hororrhage from it. In order to prevent the dialectical process from remaining away the blood, or whether blood must, on the contrary, inevitably hemtion and mimesis (or methexis), and hence sacrifice, really are.31 Even this repetitive and mimetic character because of its inability to know what repetithe sublation of sacrifice, a logic that would tear sacrifice away from its young Chinese. But in so doing, Bataille brings to completion the logic of taneity; it is to be obliged to wonder whether dialectical negativity washes To broach this denial or this manipulation is to touch on this simul

a matter of knowing whether horror should simply be left, so to speak, as norror, something that suggests that transgressive appropriation (that of Wanting to be sublimated in sovereign fashion into what devastates it. It is accurately, of knowing whether sensibility can have good grounds for Rather, it is perhaps a matter of knowing what sensibility means or, more cannot be tolerated. This isn't a matter of sensitivity or squeamishness. This is why, in the final analysis, this perhaps inevitable fascination

the death of the subject and of the subject of death) is no more than an in-

something about sacrifice, is always lacking. assuaged in these lines, whose syntax works to keep it alive: on the one as they deceive those whom they tempt."32 The ambiguity is not entirely fault, its temptations illusory. The fact remains, therefore, that sacrifice, or however, this world is itself "lacking," this time in the sense that it is at given immediately and without recourse to nostalgia; on the other hand, hand, the contemporary world "is lacking" truly sacred "temptations," lacks the offer of temptations so heinous that they are useful only in so far what the contemporary world is lacking is the offer of temptation.—Or it that nostalgia for the sacred necessarily comes to nothing, it is misleading: Bataille concludes somewhat abruptly: "It is time to acknowledge

of such knowledge. guity: if the inanity of sacrifice is recognized by the West, itself the inventinually renews itself. Bataille knew this, and utterly despaired in the face idea of a sacrifice of this sacrifice. In this way, however, the dialectic contor of this very sacrifice, it is perhaps only ever recognized in terms of the Out of all of this, I want to hold onto the following yawning ambi-

intolerable to the spirit of Western sacrifice . . in its supposed history; on the other, the noncomedy of bloody horror is ruthlessly drawn or torn by the impossibility of renouncing sacrifice. On was simultaneously upheld and impossible to satisfy. At its limit, therefore, it is lacking insofar as it seemed to him that, for us, the sacrificial demand the one hand, indeed, spiritual sacrifice renews the comedy that he exposes Bataille's thinking is perhaps less a thinking of sacrifice than a thinking more than there is for the appearance of the West). Thirdly, he knew that ity between that world and our own (in other words, he knew that there is knew that it is also lacking insofar as there is no comprehensible continulacking. He knew that it is lacking as the practice of a vanished world. He basically no convincing reason for the disappearance of ancient rites, any Bataille knew that sacrifice is irredeemably and comprehensively

was speaking, apropos the idea of art, of the putting [in]to [the] work of in art in general, an answer to this lack. (Contemporaneously, Heidegger Here, too, Bataille will have gone only so far, finding in literature, or

> suggestions., to the clearing of being. 33 Here, though, I can't deal any further with these necessary to include "offerings and sacrifice" in the heart of beings open truth, naming "essential sacrifice" as one of the ways in which this putting [in]to [the] work happens within art; yet in the same essay, he found it

words introduce between men and things. But we tear them from these reare the victims. . . . We cannot . . . do without the efficacious relations that among savage peoples."35 And, moving quickly over this in order to come lations in a delirium."36 back to Bataille, who writes: "Poetry . . . is . . . the sacrifice in which words von Ofterdingen: "Dissolution of a poet in his song—he shall be sacrificed The entire program of poetry is given in this note by Novalis to Heinrich but consequently comes to feel a liking that amounts to an emotion."34 lime unfolds in a "sacrifice" of the imagination that "sinks back into itself himself to be appropriated, a dominant theme of art? The Kantian subpresentation of a subject, who thereby appropriates himself and allows tween "confession," literature, and art in general? Isn't the transgressive that concerns "confession." But is there finally any real distinction bename"—and, in so doing, paves the way for everything in our literature hand of my tongue, which you formed and exhorted to confess your ample, begins: "Accept the sacrifice of my confessions, presented by the the spiritualization of sacrifice. Book 5 of Augustine's Confessions, for exlar, unarguably runs throughout—or doubles—the Western process of A link between sacrifice and art, and no doubt literature in particu-

rupted" because it brings with it the intense restlessness of emotion that tion—a way of recognizing a new form of simulacrum. But it is "uninterrapture to the extent that art keeps us "suspended" on the verge of extincthere."38 This "uninterrupted rapture" is still a dialectical formula. There is upon the path of a total extinction, and leaving us temporarily suspended moment of art, which offers man an uninterrupted rapture by throwing us ues, "it is precisely this double impasse that results in the meaning of the early sacrifice and the postulation of self-sacrifice. "But," Bataille continand nothingness, which is also to say that between the representation of thing is eliminated."37 The alternative, then, is that between simulacrum stroyed, the ambiguity is resolved, but resolved in the void where everyis not truly destroyed, everything remains in ambiguity. And if it is desacrifice. This impasse stems from the following alternative: "If the subject More precisely, art supplements, takes over, or sublates the impasse of

writes a little further on: possible only in the approach to the bloody heart of extinction. Bataille approaches extinction. This emotion is not strictly one proper to art: it is

is bound up with massacre, torture, and horror."39 opacity of the world with apparently cruel flashes of lightning, in which seduction be too interested in those moments of mass intoxication that shoot through the ised to whomever leaps into the uncertainty of the instant. This is why we cannot "The endless festivity of works of art is there to tell us that a triumph . . . is prom-

contrast, writes that "pure suffering can never be an object of art.")40 only sacrifice sacrifice by continuing to sacrifice it to sacrifice. (Schelling, by while, then, only if it still refers to the sacrifice that it supplements. It can artistic mimesis, as mimesis and, paradoxically, despite its avowedly mimetic ticipation in what is revealed by the horror of the emotion. Art is worthcharacter, ought to open the way to a genuine mathexis, to a genuine paractual exercise of actual cruelty, at least in terms of its emotion. And yet elty." Whatever turns it takes and however short it may be, its concern is the only means something (if we still have to speak in these terms), only has any in fact singularly ambiguous. Simultaneously restricted to simulacra and force, if it is not simulated. The article is entitled "Art, an Exercise in Cruholding for this cruelty alone, this horror that it brings to light and that Art itself displaces the gaze once again: the "appearance" of cruelty is

horror, with the pleasure of a momentary appropriation of death actual methexis. Through a still quite real transgression, art communes with sis reveals (and Bataille does indeed speak in terms of revelation . . .) an could we miss it?—something about mimesis is annulled or, rather, mimewithin it an opening to everything possible."43 In this reciprocity—how on a par with the worst and, reciprocally, the depiction of horror reveals emotion."42 And further on: "The movement [of art] effortlessly places it rapture, these moments . . . bear within themselves the whole truth of the And yet he cannot but shift position once again and slip a restriction into his refusal (and not, in this context, a denial): "But . . . in the moment of in no way an apology for horrific events. It is not a call for their return."41 ing of the sacrificial events evoked throughout the text, he writes: "This is Bataille sees the difficulty and immediately changes direction. Speak-

gesting the real emotion of real horror. and only-mimes the spilling of blood, or it answers it all too well, sug-As such, art either falls well short of what is asked of it: it still just—

> sult, nothing sacrificeable? are supposed to derive. But what if there were no such place and, as a resign of sacrifice is the sign of the repetitive and mimetic possibility of a means of access to the obscure place from which repetition and mimesis its "opening to everything possible," is appropriated. And this because the ment that it is placed under the sign of sacrifice, the very chasm of horror, appropriating or transappropriating this means of access. From the mosion to a moment of disappropriation. But sacrificial thought does not stop tire Western tradition), the only question is that of an inaccessible accesmodeled on the logic of and the desire for an infinite "transappropriation." of access to actual sacrifice but that, on the other, thought itself is still worst," what we see is that, on the one hand, we no longer have any means by replacing it with a rapturous horror, albeit one "on a par with the For Bataille, however (and perhaps, perhaps even undoubtedly, for the en-By dismissing the wearisome horror and pale glamor of spilt blood

again, if "sovereignty is NOTHING," 45 as Bataille tired himself out saying, is altar, leading onto itself alone and not into a "sovereign moment." Once matter of sacrifice and the horror of death, whether on a real or a depicted such misguided zeal cannot be absent. Put differently, it should not be a ment is maintained within art, with its emotion "on a par with the worst," there anything that could be sacrified for it? sacrifice. In fact, in this very passage Bataille inserts one of his most severe (and sacrifice is fundamentally misguided)." As long as the sacrificial mocondemnations of sacrifice: "This is not what we usually mean by death sacrifice. But this could only ever be at the cost of a genuine suppression of opposite: in the eyes of the butcher a horse is already dead (meat, an object)."44 On this reckoning, it is easier to grasp the substitution of art for this is not what we usually mean by death . . . ; it is, in a sense, quite the to excessive intensity is the destruction of the object as such. Of course, sensibility, the passage from the sphere of intelligible (and useful) objects himself, what is finally at stake in sacrifice is not death: "The awakening of ceals itself from the truth of the moment of dispropriation. For Bataille Equally, we could say: it is by appropriating death that sacrifice con-

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low Bataille one step further. I want to follow his reflections on the Nazi Before putting this question to the test in more detail, I want to fol-

which, however, he wrote very little), "Reflections on the Executioner and camps through the most developed of his texts on this subject (about the Victim," a text that deals with David Rousset's The Days of Our

bility of Auschwitz, to a possibility of stench and of irreparable fury"? upon a world of abstract possibilities? If it did not first awake to the possiity of "awakening": "But what would awakening be if it shed light only thing that secures no definitive victory, merely the higher human possibilreason to be capable of "calling itself unreservedly into question," someself is." (We should recall that, for Bataille, the Jews at Auschwitz were "the seeks "to ruin the refuge that, in the founding of civilized order, reason ittruth supposes that, "in some way," "abjection and pain reveal themselves spite of everything, to the position of a subject. Undoubtedly, as Bataille of the executioner." If it isn't a matter of self-sacrifice, it at least appeals, in Within the realization of this possibility comes, then, a necessity. this possibility is "ours." For reason to know this possibility as such is for from humanity alone, and not even from a special brand of humanity incarnation of reason.") And yet civilized reason is only ever a "refuge, demand it." This resolve on the part of the executioners is a resolve that most clearly in "the depths of horror" that "lie in the resolve of those who fully to man." Such a possibility was given by the camps. We can see this ity, having no limit other than death." Yet the "fascinated" approach to goes on to say, "horror is evidently not truth: it is only an infinite possibilcinates." Yet in order to know the "depths of horror," we "must pay the suring the abyss, its absence of limits and this truth that obsesses and fassuffering, of baseness and stench, we still have the luxury [le loisir] of mealimited and fragile. The "rage of the torturer" that rises up against it comes refuse it would be "a negation of humanity hardly less degrading than that this horror as a human possibility. This will has to be that of the victim. very existence of the camps; second, it consists in a will that agrees to face price." This price, if I understand Bataille correctly, is double: it consists, camps display the very thing that is at stake in sacrifice: "In a universe of ("parties or races which, we might suppose, are in no way human"). No, first, in the conditions necessary for "a senseless experience" and thus in the however, is present the components of a sacrificial logic. First of all, the (Bataille finds it in the "exaltation" and "humor" present in Rousset.) To This text makes no mention of the word "sacrifice." What it does'do,

For Bataille, this necessity clearly derives from the fact of the camps'

"poetry" is destined, however much it may be "on a par with the worst"). draw the same conclusion and if the camps remain for him beyond sacrifice only awakening is an awakening to horror, in which the instant of truth form of "awakening" (although we know now to what sacrificial return the possibility, broached at the very end of the text, of seeing "poetry" as a falls silently outside any sacrificial sense, outside any possibility of sense? shines through. The two statements are a long way from being conflated. only extreme horror keeps reason awake. The logic of sacrifice says: the sacrifice (so long as we can isolate such a "clarity"...). This logic states: Bataille can't bring himself to say this and, despite everything, preserves (this, at least, is what he says), then isn't this because the horror of sacrifice But the latter can always harbor the truth of the former. If Bataille does not lowing: the logic being pursued here is the dark reverse of a clear logic of on Bataille's part. No, I believe simply that we need to consider the folment do I want to suggest the slightest complicity, however unconscious, they have shown. This isn't situated as an a priori demand. Not for a moexistence and from the will to face up, without any moral refuge, to what

tion itself. of access, no appropriation, save that of this infinite or indefinite revelaalso its culmination: a revelation of horror with no accompanying means Here, sacrifice would silently fall headlong into an antithesis that is

Propriates the abyss of its own subjecthood. tor a certain process of Reason. As Heidegger might have put it: reason apan unleashing governed by reason."47 And it wouldn't be surprising were a can now, to be sure, equate with Western sacrifice as a whole-accounts Certain rationality to culminate in self-sacrifice, if self-sacrifice—which we "The unleashing of passions that was rife in Buchenwald or Auschwitz was ics of extermination has constantly emphasized. Bataille writes elsewhere: executioner, as the analysis of the state-controlled and engineered mechanrifice, since the victim of the camps, reason itself, is also on the side of the even necessary, but only if we're prepared to invert it into its antithesis means of access. In a sense, though, it could be called a model of self-sac-(from Holocaust into Shoah). Such a sacrifice leads nowhere, provides no A sacrificial interpretation of the camps is thus undoubtedly possible

cant that the description of the privileges of the Aryan race in Mein Kampf sion between sacrifice and the absence of sacrifice. And it is fairly signifirepresent an absence of sacrifice. They bring into play an unexpected ten-At the same time, however, and without contradiction, the camps

what is not himself, what is not living sacrifice. Of course, there's nothing to be sacrificed here; he has only to eliminate one who sacrifices himself but is, in essence, sacrifice itself, sacrifice as such one who gives his blood for the greater Aryan Blood. He is thus not merely sically one who sacrifices himself for the community, for the race; that is, selves, but attains it insofar as he is ready to put all his capacities at the those heroes who renounced their own happiness."49 Thus the Aryan is baity torgets those men who only served their own interests, and celebrates tive and, when it is required, he will even sacrifice it."48 Or again: "Posterservice of the community. In him the instinct of preservation has reached does not attain his full greatness through his spiritual properties in themculminates in the possession of an absolute sense of sacrifice: "The Aryan its noblest form, for he voluntarily subordinates his own self to the collec-

simple instinct of individual preservation."50 So there is a double reason self to a severe duty. one hand, nothing from him should be appropriated, the only requirement why the Jew is not sacrificed, and why he ought not to be sacrificed: on the race as such. It is the Aryan who, by exterminating the Jew, sacrifices himthe other, sacrifice is fully present, invested and completed with the Aryan being the defensive and hygenic one of ridding oneself of his vermin; on "In the Jewish people, the will to sacrifice does not go beyond the pure and scription of another race, one dominated by the instinct of preservation: Immediately after this description of the Aryan race comes the de-

We had the moral right, we had the duty towards our people to annihilate this people who wanted to annihilate us. . . . We can say that we have fulfilled the most difficult duty out of love for our people. . . . You have to know what it is like has hardened us. This is a glorious page of our history, never written and never to have kept control and, at the same time . . . to have remained decent, that is what to see one hundred bodies side by side, or even five hundred or one thousand. To

matter of the most silent, inner sacrifice. matter of what is intolerable, while on the side of the executioners, it is a Himmler simultaneously declares that, on the side of the victims, it is a sacrifices any memorial to the glorious sacrifice that it is. In this way, führer in 1943: the sacrifice that not only defies human strength but even This was how Himmler presented this sacrifice of duty to his Gruppen-

honor the victims far too much, would allow them to claim too great a part True, Himmler doesn't use the word "sacrifice." Indeed, that would

> cost by which the victim escapes debasement, by which the victim is deified."52 Without rites, all that's left is debasement. already is no longer, or what is no longer is more than what was. This is the such rites). Bataille notes that "the rite has the virtue of fixing 'sensory atthey can, that is only by way of certain misdirected, perverted aspects of Moreover, it's not as if the camps can be described in terms of rites (or, if them. At precisely this point, it seems to me, sacrifice itself disappears. in this account of the executioners' glory, something that must be refused tention' on the burning moment of passage: for sensibility, either what is

brutal interruption: in place of immolation there is no more immolation. easily the disastrous secret of his own appropriation, of the regeneration of Aryan presents devastation, night and fog: yet Nacht und Nebel is just as rifice even the possibility of examining the simulacrum vanishes. The naked horror alone, a parody of immolation and of fumes rising toward very being, the sacrificial secret itself. Confronted by him, we are left with place, and this time it is the rupture of sacrifice itself. Or, rather, it is its plus le sacrifice occidental, c'est l'occident du sacrifice]. A second rupture takes his Blood. This is no longer Western sacrifice, but the eclipse of it [c'est ne the sky, a parody that no longer has even the right to this name. With sachimself the power and fruit of the sacrifice, of its secret; he is already, in his Hence it is the S.S. man or the Aryan who draws or absorbs into

it must now wrench itself from fascination: sacrifice. It is no longer an art fascinated by horror, but an art that knows temptation to sacrifice the Aeneid, Broch offers a picture of this decline of gil. In the part entitled "Fire-Descent," in which Virgil undergoes the In 1945, while in exile, Hermann Broch published The Death of Vir-

to shift their trance onto him, razing their neighbour's house and setting it in cay on the fields reeking of blood; and the godless-godseeking lust of sacrifice mence and evil rejoicing—immolation, slaughter, brand, demolition.53 flames in order to lure the god into their own; they stormed about in evil vehesacrifice, men mad with sacrifice raged all about, slaying the next in turn in order raged everywhere, sham-oblation after sham-oblation was heaped up in a frenzy of their walls crumbled, their flag-stones cracked and burst asunder, the fumes of de-On every side the cities of the globe were burning in a landscape devoid of scenery,

only proves to be entirely possible thanks to technological means, but also production of the mass grave. As such, the decomposition of sacrifice not name of "executioner" is hardly fitting) as a pure instrument in the mass ates nothing. Or, rather, appropriating nothing more than the this: the vicsacrifice has forfeited all right and all dignity. Transgression transappropritim as cadaver, the expanse of the mass grave, and the other (for whom the tween them. Immolation has itself been put to death. "Godless," "sham" ... immolation, slaughter ... "We can no longer distinguish be

terminate the nonsacrificial. This is why the camps present not just horror is sacrifice, and, rather than using technology for sacrifice, he uses it to excamps is certainly one of the possibilities of sacrifice, but it is its technosacrificial possibility. Inversely, the immolation that took place in the the technology of the camps is one of technology's possibilities, but it is its we would need to engage with Heidegger in a very intense way.)55 Granted. as such and the question of its equally finite appropriation. (Here, though "one dimensionality" (if, for a moment, I might venture this term in a but a lie. They are a sham—a fact borne out, moreover, by the coded vological possibility, one that contradicts sacrifice. Why? Because the Aryan nonreductive sense), it opens up once more the question of finite existence ing every possible mode of appropriation back on itself and on its own more appropriate to think about technology itself in a way that, by turnthen, rather than appealing to an "essence" of technology, wouldn't it be being able to analyze or justify it here, I will say that "technology" is Ereigto think as Ereignis? Stretching this interpretation somewhat, and without of sacrificial transappropriation, but that of what Heidegger himself tried age of a completely different mode of appropriation: no longer the mode nis, that is, the appropriating event of finite existence as such. In a sense, the age of the end of transappropriation? Or, to put it another way, as the understood as the age of the end of sacrifice? Shouldn't it be understood as tion that needs to be raised is this: Shouldn't the age of technology be fice, even though sacrifice decomposed within it. Rather, then, the quesput it this way, hideous in exemplary fashion) is that "technology" is preogy." Quite the opposite. What is hideously exemplary here (that is, if I can declares itself an exemplary, hideously exemplary, figure of technology.54 sented as the operation of a kind of sacrifice, or of the last secret of sacri-This doesn't necessarily involve a condemnation of that "technol-

> as such.) camps almost inevitable: a silence, perhaps, about a "sacrifice" that-like Bataille?—he believed should be thought, without ever daring to name it "danger," 56 seem to make his subsequent shameful silence about the the contrary, his references to technology, to the "sending" of being, to lution." (Heidegger, it seems, had no idea about this particular lie. On cabulary of their administration, beginning with the expression "final so-

priates it. reject, even if the object is the subject proper—which actually transapproless self-presence. This demands sacrifice, the production of the object as of the desire of this Other, whom I have called the obscure God, in the oburation. Perhaps this is what Lacan means when, talking about the camps, still be playing the same, subtle role when Bataille calls it "unemployable its, thus constituting me as the absolute propriety of the Self and its limitject of our desires."57 An obscure other desire consecrates my own desire as he says that "sacrifice signifies that we try to find evidence of the presence negativity.") Fascination with sacrifice expresses the desire for this transfigmemberment, and who returns sovereign. (Indeed, this negativity might penetrates into negativity, who keeps himself there, enduring his own dis-Sacrificial transappropriation is the appropriation of the Subject who

tance from sacrifice. simply aligns itself with its own finitude, then we need to think it at a dismore than the very obscurity of desire faced with its own truth, if existence If sovereignty is nothing, though, if "the obscure God" is nothing

Possible for us to say, "Here are lives, where are the others?" anything in the way of communion). Still, we know that it's absolutely imour representations of them actually show; perhaps the simulacrum here exchange, and that mimesis and methexis here have nothing to do with what doesn't actually simulate; perhaps participation here doesn't actually achieve and meaning to countless individual and collective existences; equally, we need to admit that we have no way of knowing what underlay this gesture we think of as a mercantile exchange ("Here is the butter . . .") gave support (all we can do is guess, very vaguely, that this exchange itself went beyond know precisely nothing about early sacrifice. We need to admit that what been at stake since the beginning of the Western sublation of sacrifice: we On the one hand, we need to acknowledge once and for all what has

economy of Western sacrifice is finished, that it ends in the decomposition From this it follows that we need to concede once and for all that the

of the sacrificial operation itself, this bloody transgression that overcame and infinitely appropriated the "moment of the finite."

its Ereignis, "finitude" means that existence can't be sacrificed. a burst that destroys its finitude. It's not just that it doesn't have to do it but, in a sense, it simply can't do it; thought rigorously and in accordance with an economy. Finite existence doesn't have to give rise to its meaning with On the other hand, though, finitude isn't a "moment" in a process or

more different. much so, perhaps, that we'd hardly notice the difference. Yet nothing is the world. There is some resemblance between the two, of course; so It can't be sacrificed because it's already, not sacrificed, but offered to

ily follows from it: existence, in its essence, is sacrifice. we'd have to add another form, the pinnacle of our morals, which necessarpeat one form of the basic expression of Western sacrifice. To it, though We might say: existence, in essence, is sacrificed. This would be to re-

the existence that it is. is because a being that exists has no essence. It cannot be referred back to the transappropriation of an essence. Rather, it is offered or presented to exists [l'existant]. If its essence (in quotation marks) lies in its existence, this eignty is NOTHING. Finitude corresponds simply to the matrix-formula of ereignty. Finitude expresses what Bataille means when he says that soverincision, offering a means of access to the restored integrity of being or sovof existence. Finitude isn't a negativity cut out of being and, through this 'essence' of Dasein lies in its existence."58 "Dasein" is a being, a being that thought of the sense of being as finitude of sense. And this formula? "The the thought of existence, the thought of the finitude of being or even the rificed by no one and to nothing. "Existence is offered" means the finitude underline the fact that if we have to say that existence is sacrificed, it is sacbe the same word: Opfer, Aufopferung). But this is simply in order to try to vocabulary of sacrifice (if we were speaking in German, it would actually To say that existence is offered is, it's true, to employ a word from the

trary, this negation confirms "inappropriation" as its most appropriate This negativity, however, doesn't operate dialectically so as to allow this bemode of appropriation, as, in fact, the only mode of all appropriation. ing to be or, finally, to allow it to be a transappropriated Self. On the conessence and, as a consequence, devoid of all "being": the being that is not. 59 Equally, the negative mode of this utterance—"being is not"—doesn't A being that exists exposes the being of its essence devoid of all

> Ereignis means (and, in a different context, it is also what "freedom" bring a negation into play, but an ontological affirmation. This is what

of the "Outside" of finitude, however obscure and groundless this "outsire to commune with this outside. side" may be. "Fascination" already indicates something of this obscure desome mimesis and through some "sublation" of mimesis, methexis with the Outside or the Other . . . Western sacrifice corresponds to an obsessive fear tied the better to be restored. In this way, the subject is promised, through solute Other or toward an absolute Outside, into which the subject is empways connected to the fascination with an ecstasy turned toward an abthe slightest drift to sacrifice. This drift toward or through sacrifice is alsacrificed, since nothing, no being, no subject, precedes its being-thrown. is offered. And yet, it is not offered by anyone or to anyone. Nor is it selfrelentlessly corrected. Corrected: that is to say, led even further away from ing. And it's on precisely this point that Bataille and Heidegger need to be Other, in whose abyss it could still impossibly enjoy its own impossibility of be-In fact, it isn't even offered or sacrificed to a Nothingness, to a Nothing or to an this taking place is merely a being-thrown into the world. In this throw it A being that exists happens. It takes place. And this happening or

own subjectivity, so to speak). This is the appropriation of an Outside that, is the fact that there is nothing but this secret: the infinite sacrificial secret. sis." Ultimately, no secret is actually revealed. Or, rather, all that's revealed by being appropriated, abolishes the very idea of a "methexis," and of a "mimean infinite, trans-appropriating methexis (the Subject's participation in its Western sacrifice seems to reveal the secret of mimesis as the secret of

affirms finitude and this "nothing" immediately leads existence back to it-Dut "nothing." "Nothing" isn't an abyss open onto an outside. "Nothing" to its bloody heart. And yet there is nothing that can be granted, nothing cluation is already proof that something has been granted to obscurity and 1ty of an open space in which an open eye can no longer be fascinated. Fasdivine epiphany, what "technology" presents to us might well simply be, if scurity that could be God. In this sense, since there is no longer any clear 1 Can put it this way, clarity without God. This clarity, though, is the clarmeans that there is nothing else. There is no "obscure God." There is no obthat there is no "outside." The event of existence, the fact that there is, sition that lies at the very limit of the disintegration of sacrifice, might be Yet the exact opposite of this revelation without revelation, an oppo-

vent. This sense of existence, its sense proper, is unsacrificeable. self and to nothing else. It de-subjectifies it, removing from it any possibility of its being appropriated by anything other than its own event, its ad-

penetrable heart, but because it is nothing other than the limit of finitude. death . . . We don't enter into this between, which is also the stage of call "transcendence" would signify instead that appropriation is immanent. leaps, leaping over itself. And this limit, if we're not going to confuse it with a "finiteness, mimesis and methexis. Not because it would be an abyss, an altar, or an imin the separation or the "between" that constitutes it: between life and Such "immanence," however, is not a vague coagulation; it is nothing more words, it would not be sacrifice in any sense of the word. What we used to Hegelian, for example, is a limit that leaps over nothing. Existence alone than its own horizon. The horizon holds existence at a distance from itself immanence, however, would neither lose nor lack transcendence. In other is, and there's no getting away from it, the closure of an immanence. This nology" is understood as the regime of finitude and its "unworking"). That "technology" might well constitute just such a horizon (so long as "techneeds to be made of the infinite absence of appropriable sense. Again, zonality" itself. Or, rather, finitude. Or, better still, it is the fact that sense nor the fall, the orient nor the occident of sacrifice. It is, so to speak, "horisomething is constantly rising and setting. And yet this is neither the rise transgress. In another way, though, horizon is all there is. On the horizon In a way, it's true, there is no horizon; that is, there is no limit to

or bloody gesture for crossing it. that leads to it. There is no threshold, any more than there is any sublime rule out joy (or pleasure), nor is it the dialectical or sublimating threshold ery, though, is certainly a real one, perhaps the most real of all. It does not misery that no longer sacrifices and that we no longer sacrifice. This missomething for the sake of some transappropriation. No, it is a matter of a death. Still less is it a matter, were this possible, of throwing ourselves into ried away, fascinated by sacrifice. It's not a matter of denying misery or mediocre and limited life. And it's this very life that can suddenly be carited life? The suspicion that such is the case can only have come from a Is it simply a matter of shaking ourselves out of a mediocre and lim-

is why it has always tended to say that true sacrifice was sacrifice no longer. most always been prepared to say—that it was sacrificing to nothing. This After all, Western sacrifice has almost always known—and has al-

> unsacrificeable. fice, that real existence is unsacrificeable, that the truth of existence is to be In the future, though, it will fall to us to say that there is no "true" sacri-

of the Other.61 are on the verge of another community, another methexis, one in which the duced to what came before it, or that Western sacrifice could be reduced to mimesis of sharing would efface the sacrificial mimicry of an appropriation the rites that it was supposed to have spiritualized. Rather, it means that we the effacement of the West: this doesn't mean that the West could be reunsacrificeable. The effacement of sacrifice, the effacement of communion, the very thing that it shares: both the limit of finitude and respect for the offered up to be shared: methexis is henceforth offered as the sharing out of destroyed or shared. This is the unsacrificeable and finite existence that is Existence isn't to be sacrificed, and can't be sacrificed. It can only be

Translated by Richard Stamp and Simon Sparks

4

The Indestructible

would oppose destruction while avoiding any return to either construction upon the movement of the West, leaving us anxiously awaiting a motif that tion. The latter began long ago; it has henceforth left a definitive mark but simply, as the term indicates, a testimony to the onslaught of destruc-"Reconstruction," a postwar motif, wasn't the renewal of something prior struction rests upon ruins or provides shelter from the powers of ruination. motifs—the builder's grand gesture of power and domination. Yet all con-From cathedrals to skyscrapers, construction had been one of our great upon its limit; at the very least, though, we'd need to say that destruction task, or a destiny. Perhaps this history is itself in the process of touching on—a litany that's both unbearable and entirely necessary), but also a oil fires that characterize modern warfare, the gassing of the Kurds, and so grand-scale operation, systematic in its object and methods (the genocides, come not only, as is always the case, an action perpetrated, and not only a has ended up becoming just such an index, if not the index, of our culture "value" or the distorted reflection of a value, the index, even, of a duty, a Nagasaki, the Stalinist deportation, the shelling, napalm, defoliation, and the camps, the Armenian catastrophe, the Jewish Shoah, Hiroshima and Destruction has become a fact of culture or of civilization. It has be

Until recently, *destroy*¹ was the name of a mode, a genre, an ethical and aesthetic demand. If the word is no longer much in fashion, the thing itself still haunts our manner of existence and thinking. It is important

however, to recall how a comparable demand, though made in a different tone, could be heard as early as 1909, when Marinetti wrote, in the "Futurist Manifesto": "We will glorify war—the world's only hygiene—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for women. . . . We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind."²

We would need to go back to the ambivalence of the romanticism of ruins, or back to Nietzsche ("We must be destroyers!"), to Mallarmé ("Destruction was my Beatrice"), to move from these to Freud's Destruktionstrieb or to the Nietzschean echoes in Benjamin's "destructive character." It goes without saying, perhaps, that these figures are all quite different—if not actually opposed. Yet the fact remains that a major theme of necessary or desirable destruction runs through the thinking and the action of our modern age.

There is a sense in which this destruction, despite having caused millions of deaths, has taken the place of death. Death as such, even the death inflicted by the assassin, can only destroy because, in the same instant—and only for this instant—it affirms the identity or the singularity that it permanently erases. The two events go hand in hand, this affirmation and this death, even if there's no mediation between them.

Yet destruction has a far more remote origin and a far more remote destination. Destruction doesn't always attack a life; sometimes we destroy more by allowing what we would destroy to stay alive. (And it should be said that this is, for example, a problem that lies at the heart of the repudiation of the death penalty—which isn't to say that this repudiation needs to be challenged, since the death penalty has also become a sign of destruction.)

Destruction, as the term itself implies, attacks what is "constructed" (or "instructed"). It defeats, breaks, devastates, pillages, and renders an edifice, a composition, a structure unrecognizable, unidentifiable. It uproots or dissolves what binds, joins, and gives rise to the whole. Destruction attacks the bond and the joint as such. (In Greek, we could say that it attacks the system. Which raises the question: Has destruction been the result of our various systems?)

Destruction attacks *sense* rather than life. Destruction is hatred of or despair at sense; or, what amounts to much the same thing, it abandons the relentless demand for a single sense, the demand for a single and sovereign sense—the demand, that is, for the single *self* in place of sense.

And yet how could there ever be a sense that wasn't single and sovereign? It's the inability either to avoid or to respond to this question that leads to destruction as sense: sense busy dismantling sense.

Doubtless the destructive assault first targets the sense of the other or the other of sense. But it also strikes the sense of the proper. Dismanting an other sense isn't possible without dislocating sense in general. The principle of destruction would harbor a general renunciation of sense, therefore, including the very sense of the act that we name thus: destroy. Again: this act is the final flare of sense extinguishing itself—its final scorched imprint. (Death would be something quite different, a flare of sense that eternalizes itself.)

To destroy would be not to support sense or to despair of it. Once we're left with broken structures, dislocated joints, displaced pieces, there is no longer any sense. There is no longer any worry over sense.

Cultures other than the modern one have all been familiar with intentional destruction. They have always known what it was to raze a village, to exterminate a tribe: to remove them from the various crucibles of sense, from the points at which a sense is either emitted or concentrated.

Successful destruction has always tended to efface even the memory of the existence that has been destroyed, and even the possibility of posterity (salt on the ruins of Carthage), offering only the assurance that this—or that, this one here, that one there—never existed and would never exist. Destruction strives not simply to annihilate a being, but to shatter the very structure that renders it possible, reaching into its origin and its end, tearing from it its very birth and death.

And yet the culture of destruction, driven by a will in pursuit of a single and unalterable sense, releases an infinite sense or a nonsensical infinity. A plan for the world, for humanity, for history, the horizon of economy and right, the generalized and circular contract-form: a hateful and desperate contempt for sense in general. Dostoyevsky's "anything goes." When anything goes, it is destruction, first and foremost, exclusively, even, that goes—including self-destruction.

The desire to destroy resents connection, interplay, assembly and its complexity: it resents the fold (it resents not the completed structure, but that which structures; not the assembled, but its assembly; not the folded, but the fold). And in order to destroy, we fold to the extreme, we squeeze, we break. The infant destroys because there's no question of considering or exploring the assembly of the object, of the machine. The infantile man

destroys because he can't tolerate the obstacle of complexity, the subtlety of the mechanism, the detours, the delays of the process. Equally, though, he can't support the simplicity or the delicacy of the various points of contact, the spacings of interplay. As such, the culture of destruction is a culture that renders itself and other cultures opaque, dissembling the arrangement of their systems or of their sense. A culture of the opacity of sense.

Which is also to say, culture of an excessive demand for sense

Excessive because it makes demands.

What is it that opposes destruction? Pity and compassion (Rousseau).

(Here, we'd need patiently to analyze the gesture by which Rousseau, in the Preface to the *Confessions*, pleads with us to refrain from destroying the portrait that he's painting: "I beg you, in the name of compassion and the whole human race, not to annihilate a useful and singular work.")

But neither pity nor the supposed communion with the other nor the projection of the self onto the other leave the horizon of the self. We need to understand this differently, as a compassion that places the self outside itself. The gap may be infinitely narrow, but it is so infinitely.

Love looks more like pity than it does destruction. Or perhaps it looks as much like one as it does the other. But this is why love is always both invoked as the principle of the social bond *and* pushed back to its periphery, to the uncertainty of its outer fringes. Love neither opposes nor supports destruction. It is merely the name of the problem, of our problem.

But what if there were a *curiosity* for the other and for the other in "itself"? Not a curiosity about the surface but a curiosity about the origin, about existing for the sake of existing? A curiosity without pathos, therefore; not a cold interest, but not a sentimental one, either. What if the other as such were simply *interesting*?

Not to destroy the other involves more and is more difficult than respect or even love for the other. It involves being sensitive to the necessary secret, to the elusiveness of the sense of both the other and oneself. It involves being sensitive to play without childishness; it involves being sensitive to separation.

We can be certain that what we destroy will no longer escape, will no longer conceal itself, will no longer make strange signals from afar. What we destroy we have in our hands, then in our fist, then under our feet—and then nowhere. What we don't destroy subsists somewhere. This is the

and that is why they stand in stark contrast to the "mass grave." discrete grandeur of tombs; they are not monuments but distinct places,

what might have been is petrified, made present as stillborn. tion is an annulled time, stretched out and empty: instead of the future, undifferentiated, deserted, chaotic. In the same way, the time of destrucsense. The space of destruction is a dislocated space, a space without place, places. The destroyer dislikes places—the interplay of presences, their The destroyer wants to suppress this "somewhere," this plurality of

our culture: under the guise of mystery, this is actually the incarnation; unof the structure, this doubtless gives us one of the most emphatic motifs for ing, the madness of systems or structures. der the guise of melancholy, incorporation; under the guise of finite know turing destruction. Whether the destruction is of the heart or the stomach body, the reopening of a sense. Cannibalism—which has occupied our reposite of the tomb; it would be the stomach in which flesh, having been ligions, Dionysian and Christian figures, for so long—would be the strucdevoured, digests itself. In this instance, the mass grave would become the Put differently, the space-time of destruction would be the very op-

gation, the two as one (moving toward two forms of perpetuation—but cidental nor secondary—of being itself, or that culture has pointed out a or his destructive "instinct." Rather, we need to consider the possibility try to understand why. Clearly it's not enough to evoke the "evil" in man not toward existence). "destructive drive," originally involved in the drive toward life and propathat our culture has seized upon evil as an intrinsic possibility—neither ac-If it's true that we have produced a culture of destruction, we need to

even. It was a long time before this culminated in the self-destruction of with doubts concerning its validity, its "Catholicism," its very "humanity," the rage for conquest and gold as their culture began to gnaw away at itself cultures; so, too, were thousands of Europeans, destroying themselves in of the Americas—the moment when the West, by revealing a new aptitude struction. Millions of Native Americans were destroyed, along with their barbarians, Arabs, and Turks, or to the Crusades), initiated its own self-defor destruction (unrelated, in this sense, to the conquests of the Romans, this is precisely what it undertakes to do. We can date—from the conquest gardless of whether this means that this culture should itself be destroyed So our culture shelters within itself the possibility of destruction. Re-

> we are here; and this is history, the very construction of our history. Europe in a "total" war whose very invention astounded itself. But, finally,

structive in its turn, spirals, indeterminate, out of control. struction of places and of histories, by the control of this destruction—always more than destruction, always more than control, a control that, detechnology variously employed by war, by the control of war, by the de-And we've caused this thing to spread to the globalizing rhythm of a

pulse of existence. us short. Rather, it is a matter of a fundamentally destructive suicide that ateven Stoic suicide, in which we run up against an objective limit that cuts tacks the self, the proper as structure and as interplay, an assault on the very Levi, to so many others. I'm not talking here about Japanese suicide nor tinguished place, from Socrates to Werther, to Stefan Zweig, to Primo Self-destruction: the mark of a culture in which suicide holds a dis-

subject, for example. The ego is both structure (the appropriation of the appropriation of the self-in the autonomy and self-foundation of the free singular and Narcissus, or the partner and the monad. self) and destruction (the concentration in the self), just as it is both the ever, is there any interpretation of the "good" that doesn't situate it in the cal as such (including its earliest projection into a Lucifer). No more, howinterpretation of evil that doesn't end up imputing the ego or the egologiself or the ego, it discovers the principle of evil. There's surely no Western its appropriation, its concentration-in-itself. And insofar as it involves the ticulates itself from within culture. This culture is the culture of the self, of Self-destruction indicates the stakes here: the self, the system that ar-

that pursues itself from generation to generation. dominance of the theme of filiation, indicates the blind process of an ego lation that leads back to Oedipus's gouged eyes. And filiation itself, the fers from a structural lack (or is the structural lack) of the self, a line of fil-Kant's "transcendental I" is an empty point. The ego of psychoanalysis sufture programs what cannot take place: the infinite appropriation of the self by itself. The certainty of the cogito is, as we know, constitutionally blind. ture—as its joints and its fissures—precisely to the extent that the struc-Everything happens as if destruction were inscribed upon the struc-

entropy of the ego itself. a departure from the self). The ego is posed as the frustration or, rather, the ing understood as submission to the law of lack (rather than to the law of This is why the ego qualifies itself essentially as desire, desire itself be-

The horizon of destruction: the suppression of exteriority more than the suppression of time or space, more than the suppression of the body or of everything contained within it; the absolute concentration in itself, as much in the destroyer as in the destroyed. The sovereignty of the destroyer, destruction reduces the other to a null and void concentration in itself, but also testifies to the destroyer's own concentration, to the absolute character of the destroyer's own gathering-in-itself, beyond which there is no other power or decision.

What the destroyer fails to see, however, is the connection between the two concentrations. The following propositions, as much as the preceding ones, are true: the self's own sovereignty is null, and the annihilation of the other reveals in this other an unattainable sovereignty. Because absolute presence-to-self is without space and time, it is, in its detachment and entrenchment, its own cancellation.

It isn't a "strong me" that destroys; it is a me that lacks a self.

As such, it constitutes itself as the subject of technology, that is, of an operation of infinite mastery in which infinity takes the place of sovereignty. Technology has made possible the modern apocalypse—the modern revelation—of destruction. Not, however, as tends to be thought, because it has furnished the means for this. On the contrary, it has furnished the end, doing so under the auspices of the in(de)finite appropriation that characterizes technology (characterizes what is without work, what exceeds work [le sans-œuvre, l'au-delà de l'œuvre]). By itself, technology provides no end; on the contrary, it is the resolute infinitization, the incessant displacement of ends. At the same time, however, it is in the infinite displacement of the end that the Western subject has ended up recognizing itself and wanting to appropriate itself. Our problem is not technology but the desubjectivization of technology.

Technology isn't destructive, since what is un-working isn't devastation. Yet destruction is technology; that is, it is endless, like the appropriation of which it functions as inversion or despair (Schelling's "inverted God"). It is endless because it is normalized by the absolute End, the endless Finitization, the null point of the Ego in its imploded identification.

As for technology, it is endless because it is infinitely finite. Across all its works, its un-working isn't regulated by any particular End. Or, somewhat better (and I am indebted to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe on this point), it has from this point on the singular figure of a finitization—itself infinite, unfinishable—of destruction: the figure of nuclear menace/deter-

rent. (It wasn't a coincidence that nuclear weapons were—in fact or as a pretext—at the heart of the Gulf War; destruction presented in such a way as to maintain control over final destruction. The same sort of control is at work in the transformation of the ex–Soviet Union and in a certain segment of North-South relations—which have thus become simply North-North relations more than anything else.)

So infinite nuclear finitization finishes—or completely finishes off—humanity, indeed, all living things; it is, if you like, the destruction of destruction. No doubt it'll be neither of these things. But the alternative indicates the magnitude of the stakes. In terms of the ego, the two things are identical: there is no longer anyone—or, more accurately, there are no longer any distinct *ones*—who is confronted, but a mass or an idyllic vision.

In each case, something indestructible is left behind: destruction itself or the world. Ultimately, though, it is the world that is left, because destruction takes place in the world and not vice versa. (That in which or that through which the world takes place is neither nothing nor destruction nor construction.) The world, then—at least if it makes any sense to think of a "world" without a subject.

Yet this regulating fiction touches on the very limit of what is at stake: the pure being of a world or of "something" in general. The pure there is as the indestructible, the gift that cannot be refused (since it has no one to give it), of a space without a subject to arrange it, to distribute it, to give it sense. A there is that would be neither for us nor because of us. Either that or the "sensible" world outside the "sense" given to it by a sentient subject: the very thing that philosophy has never been able to think, still less to touch, even though it has doubtless always been obsessed with or haunted by it.

All potential destruction runs up against this limit. We can't destroy the world any more than we can destroy what has to be called *being*: the *fact* that "there is" something, without this being either for us or because of us. Something in general, and us, too, therefore. Something that neither has its origin nor its end in man, and certainly not in the ego.

Granted, it's little comfort knowing that being is indestructible if this knowledge is only gained on the verge of our destruction, if there is no one to know it. In truth, though, we already know this, here and now. "Being" or the "there is" or "existence" is, in us, what happens before us and ahead of us, arising from the very step beyond us. It is the incommensurable that

tion or justifies it; rather, it marks its absolute limit. their impotence. Existence resists. None of which either prevents destrucmeasures us. The indestructible measures each one of our destructions,

also resists us. confronts us when we are confronted with nothing, that is, with the absence of is reality itself. Destruction, then, is unreal or nonrealizing. Reality is wha rather, it is nothing; the res, the thing itself, is nothing, no actual thing; it eignty, however, is precisely nothing (indiscernible, in fact, from the fold or fronted by this absence insofar as it has all the stability and all the resistance o possibilities of appropriation, of identification, of signification. Yet we are conthe interplay of the structure, from the spacing that articulates it). Ot the worldly "there is," something that not only resists in "us" but perhaps In this sense, then, existence is indestructible, sovereign. This sover-

the intimate exhaustion by which we are in the world, and the sense of this this oblivion, however, still indicate the destructive "nothing" of reality rebellion—those who are forgotten are remembered. This awakening and lages, peoples, and countries continually awaken our terror, our pity, ou The peculiar stability and resistance of all these ruined edifices, vil

disaster. We don't stop with what resists us, or with what resists that. make off with destruction, to carry it away to the point of overcoming or its somber, melancholy version. In each case, though, we try to conceal and whirling universe. Each of these modes has its brilliant, joyous version and alypse—or both, one in the other—as well as the baroque mode of thinking that engendered destruction in the numerous shards of a shimmering torico-romantic mode of thinking that promises an apotheosis or an apoc to stop justifying it. That is to say, we need to take our leave of the his justifies it. On the contrary, we need to learn to stop dreaming of the end Again, this doesn't deliver us from destruction; it neither ends no

is upon the earth as a whole. And yet, as Plutarch writes, "the world is a erners, no longer have any temples; perhaps the time of the end of temples tive gaze supported by this space, open to its spacing. We, we other Westthe soothsayer's staff.) The temple is the site of con-templation, the attenthis world. (The templum was originally the space carved into the sky by places to the totality of the world by cutting the space of this union into struction is the "temple." The temple is the structure that connects human The symbol and the paradigm of everything that is dedicated to de-

> a sanctuary, a sanctuary has to be destroyed." Indeed, on the one hand, it spond to what Nietzsche believed still needed to be said: "In order to build the spacing of its there is. world; rather, one arrives there, dwells in it, departs from it. Instead, therethough, it is no longer a matter of "building," since one doesn't build a ter of bringing the templum to the spacing of being. On the other hand, something in order to make room for something else; instead, it is a matin the vocabulary of nuclear war) and so no longer a matter of destroying is no longer a matter of sanctuary (the word itself has become rather passé physical nor metaphoric? A sense that is our own? Either way, it cannot refore, it would be a matter of allowing ourselves to contemplate the world Today, however, can this phrase have a sense that is neither meta-

space of the Champs de Mars was the sole "monument" to the revolution). olution; it is permanent revolution, the possibility, at every moment, of opening space (and I'm thinking here of Michelet's remark that the open tory, allowing places to "take place," as it were. But this isn't simply a revexistence; revolution as having suddenly arisen, here and now, opening hisdestruction. Revolution as resistance, as the necessity and impatience of to mean "revolutionary destruction," it's also a matter of revolution against worldly places as places of existing. Far from being a matter of restoration, this is revolution, properly speaking. And yet, insofar as revolution is taken Not the restoration of a temple, therefore, but the consideration of

The history of the West has revolved around four figures of the

- and thus what is doomed both to ruinous destruction and to artistic metamorphosis. 1. The Greek temple, the source of the nascent West's contemplation
- destruction, as the meaning of its own destruction and of the diaspora of those united by no determinate sense. 2. The Jewish temple—twice destroyed, then taken up in terms of its
- tery of the spire and the dome, where technology contemplates itself. 3. The Christian temple, the temple of infinite construction, the mas-
- from a reserved space, an impenetrable, indestructible thing. 4. The Islamic temple, whose heart, the black rock of Kaaba, is, far
- sense and indestructible nothing. lack—is the fourfold knowledge of art and technology, of disseminated The sort of knowledge that we need—the sort of knowledge that we

This fourfold knowledge would be a structural one—a knowledge of

this entire fourfold structure and of the way in which it arranges a fourfold space: the Mediterranean, Europe, the West, the Earth, and a fourfold time: the "Pre-history" of the East, History itself, Decline, and the Present. This knowledge happens, though, as not-knowing, which is neither ignorance nor confusion, but is certainly no longer mastery. It is sovereign knowledge—that is, nothing, knowledge as existence.

"The world is a temple": in fact, the world is the only temple there is if there are no longer any temples, if structure has itself deconstructed temples. The world is the only carved space that remains. And what allows it to be contemplated as such is nothing—nothing but its existence, our existence, the fact that it is, appearing, disappearing.

None of this, though, is accessible to the ego. Indeed, it is always from out of this that the ego emerges in order to contemplate blindly the desert of what it has destroyed. Whoever would contemplate the world would, in truth, contemplate the effacement of the ego.

Let me echo the ancient words of a Muslim reviled for having wanted to unite, from East to West, the separate modes of contemplation: "There is, between you and I, a 'this is me' that torments me. Ah! Take away the 'this is me' that separates us!"³

These words and the voice that utters them bespeak the dimension of the world. But there is no one voice, since any such voice would no longer be singular. Nor can the ego and destruction be effaced in a communal invocation. What we need are voices that are singular, distinct, and that do not properly understand one another, voices that call to one another, that provoke one another.

Translated by James Gilbert-Walsh

PART THREE

DIFFERENCE

Elliptical Sense

For Kant, a pleasure that we no longer perceive is at the origin of thought. This is why thought is "originally impassioned," as Derrida puts it in "Ellipsis." The trace of this pleasure might be found in all philosophy. It is the pleasure of the origin itself: the satisfaction or joy of discovering the source, getting to the center or ground. More exactly: the satisfaction or joy which the origin experiences in finding and touching itself, the joy of originating from itself in itself.

This is also, properly speaking, the act of thought that Kant calls transcendental: reason discovering itself, making itself available as the principle of its own possibilities. We shall have more to say about the transcendental. But for the moment let us say that "Ellipsis," in writing on the origin and on writing as the "passion of the origin," adopts a transcendental standpoint. Or at least it seems to adopt such a standpoint.

From this position is derived the condition of possibility which is not itself the origin (and this ellipsis or eclipse of the origin in the Kantian "condition of possibility" is undoubtedly what sets off the whole of modern thought), but which forms, on the contrary, the condition of possibility of the origin itself. This is our history since Kant: the origin is no longer given—likewise, its pleasure is no longer given—but becomes instead that toward which reason regresses, or that toward which it advances, up to the very limits of its possibilities. The origin enters what Derrida will call its

its ellipsis, all sense. The slightest text of thought can expose no less.) the word "sense" in Derrida's text. In one fell swoop, for the entire text and itself, "all sense," as is written in "Ellipsis." (This is the only occurrence of sense, itself being the very sense and site of sense. Nothing less than sense contains within itself (and/or differing) the sense of the origin, its own The origin, or sense, if the origin is by definition the origin of sense,

"writing." But this experience attests precisely to its non-self-identity. Ir and one transcendental. There is a single "transcendental experience" once the book has been closed, there are not two writings, one empirica not that of the book which this text concludes and closes (which is entitle and the logic of a certain discourse on the origin, sense, and writing (a ing" doesn't refer to Derrida's writing, which communicates to us the sense condition of possibility, but the condition of its transmission. Here, "write other words, it is the experience of what cannot be experienced. Writing itself, and this book itself: there is no other, there is nothing more to rea least insofar as this sense and this logic are communicable). This writing Writing isn't the vehicle or medium of sense; were this so, it wouldn't be in Writing and Difference). Or rather, the writing of the origin is this writin The condition of possibility of the origin (of sense) is called writing

matter of something having or making sense (the world, existence, or this the body of sense. To incorporate sense. Scratching, cutting, branding of sense, even if it were to be senseless—that's Derrida's passion. To touch senses itself making sense. (To sense the sense or to touch the being-sens phy.) What makes sense about sense, what makes it originate, is that I writing in its relation to philosophy, in the sense of its relation to philoso was the crux and the passion of the aesthetic in general, and hence also of sense—the sense of being—is also the sense of sensibility. For Hegel, this which makes sense, all sense. All sense is always passion, in all the senses of origin is a passion, the passion of the self in its difference, and it is that grasps itself as sense. discourse of Derrida's). It's rather the fact that sense apprehends itself Putting to the test of sense. I shall write about nothing else.) Sense isn't the word "sense." (Hegel, building on Kant, was well aware of this passion does not arise at the origin: it is and makes the origin itself. Th Thus writing is said to be the "passion of and for the origin." Thi

> nates (that of which it is the origin and the fact that it originates). gin and the relation that is opened, in the origin, between the origin and of a book," but by opening in itself (as itself) the possibility of relating to stated or given twice in identical fashion, as is the case with the "reissuing the end, and the pleasure, for the origin, of enjoying that which it origisense is recognized or grasped as sense. Sense is the duplication of the oriitself in the "referral of one sign to another." It is in just such a referral that This means that sense, essentially, has to repeat itself: not by being

meaning, singular and plural. Ellipsis: the other in the return to the self, the geometral of the pas of something missing from the start. And "all sense is altered or exhausted by it comes down to the same thing. All poetry, and all of Derrida's philoso-"in essence elliptical," because it does not come back full circle to the same. this lack." Writing is the outline of this alteration. Hence, this outline is phy, meets this demand. Consequently there is something missing in sense, renewed and modified without end. Sense calls for more sense, just as, for Valery, "it is the sense which calls for more form" in poetry. And, in effect, self, seduce itself as sense. Writing is nothing other than this demand, mands on itself, call to itself, ask itself, implore itself, want itself, desire itthing begins; the origin is not the new, but the "anew"); it must make depresence of sense, neither demanded nor capable of being demanded.) dental" and not, of course, the transcendent, which would be the pure is the demand that it be given. (This implies a giving of the demand, but of this word, it must make repeated demands on itself. Sense is not given; it be or to make sense, has to repeat itself, which is to say, in the original sense Sense must interrogate itself anew (though it is in this "anew" that everythat is precisely what, in Kantian terms, ought to be termed the "transcen-Such is the passion, the whole passion of writing: sense, in order to

eludes it, and passes it by in silence. Ellipsis: the step/pas of sense passing rida's passion for language; in the word alteré as he employs it here, an elthirsts after itself and its own lack; that is its passion. (And it is also Derall, that sense is thirsty [altéré as the opposite of désaltéré, "refreshed"]. It stitution. "All sense is altered [tout le sens est altéré]." Which means, first of thirsts after its own ellipsis, for its originary trope, for that which hides it, lipsis of sense makes sense, the alteration and the excess of sense.) Sense doomed to lament its infinite loss or painfully to await its infinite reconfirst sense that would then be diverted and disturbed by a second writing, Strictly speaking, however, nothing is altered. It's not as if there's a

enjoy in a lesser degree than absolute enjoyment. Thus this text pronounces ately, than in thinking everything, all at once. No pleasure of thinking can of this writing. No thinking thinks more economically, and less passionof the origin. ("Here" is its first word, and later on we read "we now every philosophical text (every text in general?), this text says everything about the origin, says the whole origin, and presents itself as the knowledge sense. But there is nothing negative in this, nor, in truth, anything silent beneath sense. What is passed over in silence, in all sense, is the sense of tem in which the origin itself "is only a function and a locus." itself, or the orbit that carries it, to be nothing less than a "system," the sysknow.") Everything is said here and now, all sense is offered on the surface For nothing is lost, nor anything silenced. Everything is said, and, like

and on the book; this book of Derrida's which he writes to us and gives us and reads for us. Jabès, who writes nothing but a continuation of the book stake"-not in the closed book, but in the open book "between the two the book, or its life. The life of the book is played out—is "in play" and "at sensing). The adjoining or conjoining of writing is the "binding joint" of the living being, its life or Life itself (this life which, according to Hegel, is the conjunction that holds articulated parts together. More strictly, in the to read and to hold in the ellipse of our hands. hands which hold the book," this book by Jabès that Derrida holds open most profoundly characterized by sense, insofar as it senses and senses itself philosophical tradition, it is the juncture, the conjoining of the organs of Writing is the passion of this system. Broadly speaking, a system is

within which the origin is inscribed merely as a "place." "The differance in the now of writing" is itself the "system" of writing book in hand is a system whose systematicity differs from and defers itself beyond the adjoining of a living being that reads. It prolongs and exceeds being uttered, but the uttering and articulation of a we. This juncture goes it and making it plural. These are "our hands": it is no longer an I that is puts itself in play in the mains tenant, the hands holding the book. Thes (And the book itself is neither alive nor dead.) What now holds or takes the mains tenant multiply the now (the maintenant), dividing presence, elidin him. It is not someone living who reads, even if it is not someone dead The maintenant, the now, of sense articulates itself, repeats itself and

itself. Rather, différance is the access of sense to sense in its own demand which consists neither in its duplication nor in its infinite distancing from Differance is nothing other than the infinite re-petition of sense

> that "God is dead," there is nothing to think. an access that does not accede, this exposed finitude beyond which, now

tive, the supplication, the jubilation of writing. Différance is passion. demand, the call, the request, the seduction, the imprecation, the imperabook that has never been opened. But the book is open, in our hands. Difsense than water within water, stone within stone, or the closed book in a did not demand sense (if it demanded nothing), sense would have no more ferance can never be conceptualized, but it can be written. Differance is the If sense were simply given, if access to it were not deferred, if sense

upon which the joint articulates itself. The book between our hands and beating, and the essence of essence consists in the withdrawal of its own the folding in of the book upon itself. The heart of the heart is always a heart, its essence, and its passion. It is the exact and infinitely discrete limit vides; what adjoins is divided. Brisure is not the other of juncture, it is its ready been broken in itself, as such and in sum by itself. What joins dijoint: in repetition "nothing has budged." Or else, the joint has always altem itself, suspended at the point of its systasis. Brisure does not break the system, but a system of brisure. This is not the negation of system, but sysorigin itself—"the joint is a brisure ["hinge"]." The system then really is a With a blow-because it is a blow, struck by the origin against the

itself. The circle which at once closes itself off and fails to do so: an ellipsis. what, in order to be itself and to be present to itself, does not come back to It is this limit that passion demands, this that it craves. The limit of

and its truth. Returning to itself, to this passion. differing from itself, appealing again and again to its limit as to its essence sense, does not close off its own sense, or closes it off only by repeating and Sense which does not come back to itself is elliptical. Sense which, as

It is "finite." Rather, it is, not "finished," but the end, or finitude itself. though this does not mean that it is an infinite space, any more than that space that is the limit itself. This space has no limits, and is thus infinite, tion which takes place at the limit, the abandonment to this space without What cannot be appropriated. It is to demand nothing, an infinite exposito lay claim to boundaries or borders, for when borders are appropriated, there is no longer any limit. Yet to demand the limit as such is to demand To appeal to the limit is not to set out to conquer a territory. It is not

Initiates a cut into the origin itself: writing. Thought of the origin: of the end: of the end of origin. An end that

origin, the author, the subject of this text. a fragment, a pronouncement that precedes it: "Reb Dérissa." All the ausite of the ellipsis, after the hic et nunc of the beginning-which is what the It will have been the thirst or the passion for putting into play the I, the thority, if not all the sense, of the text will have been altered by this move the final words of a quotation from Jabès. It is a signature, the signature on "Ellipsis" closes itself off in différance and its own circularity, and in the book, the text, never stops demanding, calling for, soliciting. The ellipsis of play of a recognition which never returns. In the last line Derrida inscribes Such is the last page of the book, the last line of the text-the other

ness asks for it all over again. Derrida is a drunken rabbi. who has drunk the entire text, the whole of writing, and whose drunken of the text. An exorbitant thirst, the thirst of one who has already drun tered. Singularity is doubled and thirsts after itself insofar as it is the origin repetition, the demand for the singular. Derrida asks for himself, and is a owes its "sense" entirely to its repetition; it has no signification. Its sense in two. Derrida signs and de-signates himself; his signature is repeatable. I event, the propriety of their advent, their origin or sign of origin, or origin itself as a singular sign, which no longer signals anything, which cuts sen tion, almost signature. The signature marks the limit of signs. It is the Closing of the text: quotation of the other text, ellipsis. This quota

says of a book that insinuates itself "into the dangerous hole" of the center of Dasein, or existence. Dérissa—slim, razor-sharp, derisory—touches the "Derrida." An elsewhere in the guise of a here, a fictitious being in the guise brilliant, slippery motion, in the manner of a serpent or a fish," as the text limits of a name and a body "with an animal-like, quick, silent, smooth that "disseminating letter," Derrida writes later—for the "d" in the "da" of that Jabès's rabbis are "imaginary"). The double substitutes a double "s" name on a double (itself unreal; the text has not neglected to remind us The mastermind that ordains the system of the text bestows his own

ellipsis opened like a mouth around its paired foci: Derrida, Dérissa never anything but explosive; it never closes up again—the laughter of an ter—and several times the text has evoked a certain "joy" of writing ing out. The origin laughs. There is such a thing as transcendental laugh-Mocking laughter. But mocks or mimics what? Nothing; merely its break Estos de risa: this makes us laugh. Here laughter breaks out—laughter 1 Fills it to bursting with pleasure: because it's a game, yes, it's a laugh

> exposition. The origin exposes itself: to not being the origin. sublime. I prefer to say, in a less aesthetic language, that this is the place of where pain and pleasure share the joy [of their encounter], is the site of the in other words, that such a limit—a limit of this type, Derrida might say the limit at which these significations, as such, are exposed. We could say, more than the limit of each of these terms, the limit of their significations, where these oppositions meet, the limit they share, a limit that is itself no sorrow. Rissa, rrida: it is beyond any opposition between the serious and dérrissally. This is not to say that it isn't serious, nor that it is untouched by surd. It laughs to be the explosion of its own laughter. It laughs derridaly, nothing, for nothing, for a nothing. It signifies nothing, but it is not abat the limit of the serious—of sense. It is the knowledge of a condition of of the significance or value ascribed to seriousness and necessarily dethe nonserious, between pain and pleasure. Or rather, it is at the juncture nonsense nor irony. This laughter doesn't laugh at anything. It laughs at possibility which doesn't tell us anything. This isn't exactly comedy: neither manded by thinking. This laughter doesn't laugh at seriousness, but laughs What would a transcendental laughter be? Certainly not an inversion

weighed, this play inscribed in language itself, speaks thinking as measuring and as test. Here the book, its juncture, is measured, put to the test. book as such." This play on pensée, what is thought, and pesée, what is the identical" which "weighs nothing in itself," but "thinks and weighs the recognizes or feels itself to be the extreme lightness of a "departure from comiques significatifs ("modes of the comic as meaning," to adopt Baudehaps mixes all these significations together. But it is also the ellipsis of these this serenity, knowledge relieves itself of the weight of knowing, and sense laire's phrase), evoking the "strange serenity" the text has named. In and by losophy. It is neither comedy, irony, grotesque, nor humor, though it per-There is a joy, a gaiety even, that has always been at the limit of phi-

^{sense}. No theory of comedy or of the joke has been able to master it. Here which laughs at nothing, one must reiterate, but which is the lightening of weighed, and weight will not let itself be thought, by it. If there is anything or means nothing. It appropriates nothing of the etymon, it doesn't approit through the meaningful game of a slippage of the etymon, says nothing rida/Dérissa" lays claim to any kinship. Thought will not let itself be priate an originary propriety of sense. No more than the ellipsis "Dernere at all, it is the lightness of laughter, this gossamer, infinite lightness But precisely this, this which indeed says something, and which says

once violent and light, a laughter of the origin and of writing. theory laughs at itself. Derrida will always have laughed, with a laughter at

source and having the infinity of its own finitude for its sense. lightening (which is not a relieving), means having its own limit as a resense, with all the intensity of its appeal and repeated demand for sense. Its burden or debauch itself. Sense lightens itself and laughs, insofar as it is In lightening itself, sense does not cast off its ballast, does not un-

guage is alone, and this is just what the word "writing" means. It is what re could bring to presence. Things are infinitely lighter and more serious: lan of or in language, no origin of words before words, that "living speech sublates the dialectic itself in a play on the word "sublate." There is no spiri to "sublate" these plays on and in language in the manner of Hegel, who living yet silent voice from which it will never depart. mains of language when it has unburdened itself of sense, confided it to the meaningless surface noises. However, one would be equally wrong to see lated into "wordplay," into an acrobatics or linguistic mischief, in sum, into self to be totalized (but in being totally exposed) is always too hastily trans. its own alteration, this totality whose being-total consists in not allowing it-This sense, this sense of "all sense," this totality of sense made up of

it, and marks it as its own limit. istence is the sense of being, the being of sense, then language alone marks an existence, nor is it existence. But it is its truth. Which is to say that if exsay, which does not name for them—a ready-sliced "life" and "sense" of the prisoned in language" all thinking which does not offer them—that is to "concrete." On the contrary, "language is alone" means that language is not and imperturbably believed by those who denounce as "philosophies im "Language is alone" doesn't means that only this exists, as is naivel

anything whatsoever there is only language, and singularly so for the "there scendence. This "there is" is presence itself, experience just at itself, right in defies and deconstructs the metaphysical pairing of immanence and tranof being, existence, the immanence of transcendence—or finitude as what is" of any "there is" that transports us, delights us, fills us with anguish, for our hands and as of now. But the there of "there is" can't be put "there" of the "there is" that is "there, but out there, beyond." That is to say, the truth "beyond," or anywhere else, for that matter, nor in the nearness of some inlanguage bursts into flames, laughs, and dies away. But for the "there is**" o** [qu'il y a]—here is the origin and the sense, and in these words "there is Existence is the "there is [il y a]" of something. The fact that it is

> of a presence to come. (Derrida will say, will write, "Come!" as the imperwhich I fail to write, at this point where we read: the passion of writing is all sense come and be altered, here, now, at the point at which I write, at come from the there and in the there. And that is why "the beyond of the says: "the future is not a future present." This is because it is to come, to ative, imperious, yet impoverished, ellipsis of an entire ontology.) The text sign, save for the repetition of the demand, from sign to sign, along all of ward dimension. "There" "signals" the place where there is no longer any impassioned by nothing other than this. tion says: "let everything come here." That everything should come here, that closure of the book is not something to wait for." It is "there, but over presence that is no longer present to itself but is repetition and supplication the ellipsis of every cycle, the slender limit of writing. Here we touch on nitely light, it is juncture and brisure, the lightening of every system and meaning, toward the limit where existence is exposed. The there is infimoned at the limit. The appeal, the repeated demand, the joyous supplicathere, or beyond," and it is thus to be called for, here and now, to be sum-

knows itself (and judges itself) as a demand. in a subjectivity which does not apprehend itself as substance, but which this experience. Being offers itself and holds itself back in these conditions, tions of possible experience for a knowledge of being that would subtend transcendental denotes the substitution of a knowledge of the mere condience, being is at stake, as is the sense or meaning of being. In its two ma-Being offers itself and holds itself back in this multiplicity. For Kant, the in reserve, a withdrawal or a retreat of being. For Aristotle, being is what jor philosophical forms, the transcendental has designated something put (predicaments or transcendentals) through which it is said in "multiply." keeps itself in reserve over and above the multiplicity of the categories In the "there is" of existence and in that which "comes there" to pres-

essence and as the sense of being. Being: that which is no part of all that is, was, with Heidegger, in order to interrogate this withdrawal itself as the to transcend it and thus penetrate the reserve of its withdrawal. Rather it but which is at stake in existence. Such is the "ontico-ontological differ-Phy, or at its limit, it was not in order to break through the transcendental, When the question of the sense of being was reinscribed in philoso-

ing of being (in and as its finitude). ence." The difference between being and everything that exists is precisely that which exposes existence as the putting-at-stake of the sense or mean-

erly is: the nonpresentable. This propriety is nothing other than absolute inappropriable propriety (Ereignis, perhaps). solute of finitude—its separateness from all gathering, from all sublation propriety itself and the propriety of the absolute. The absolute as the ab self qua being, exposed as a trace or as a tracing, withdrawing presence, but scendental; or, perhaps, nothing of the sort, but an ellipsis of the two. Neianother kind of ontology altogether, or else a completely different tranin an Infinite—gives itself in the event of the trace, the appropriation of retracing this withdrawal, presenting the withdrawal as what it most propther the retirement of being nor its givenness, but presence itself, being itthe transcendental (as the withdrawal of the origin) and the ontological (as the resource at the origin) loses all pertinence. What becomes necessary is In these circumstances, the opposition or complementarity between

we should add that decisively, and despite what might be said, philosophy sense to an elliptical sense: How can we think and live that? At this point with the Idea, Spirit, History, and Man, is dead. And, indeed, even before other than the question of the "sense of existence" now that God, along of this turning, of this torsion of the absolute? The question is nothing afresh, in the quest for the sense of existence.) the age, will have beaten the path, a path that must always be beaten has not failed. Derrida, and others with him, in the anxiety and collapse of this question, the whole passion of the sense of existence. From a circular (Need I emphasize the historical, ethical, and political ramifications

peat, writing "on" him, but also writing on "us. sponse" comes in the very movement of writing, which we are bound to rewhen we discern at the origin, as "Ellipsis" does, a "being-written" and a ished making, transforming his own response. And undoubtedly the "re-What "happens" there has not finished happening, Derrida has not fin-"being-inscribed"? There is no question of giving a complete answer here. being and the letter. What happens with this reinscription? What happens initiation of sense) reinscribes the question of the sense of being. Ellipsis of than of the sense of the letter: the end of hermeneutics, the opening and The thought of writing (the thought of the letter of sense, rather

being and the letter, in the differance of the sense of being, being no longer What we can perhaps say here, however, is this: that in the ellipsis of

> side" of a difference that has no interiority (it is the withdrawal of the inductility. This signifies the ductus of difference, in difference and as the "ineach of the lines used to trace a single letter, suggested to me by Ginevra ontico-ontological difference, everything is not to be thought in one stroke."2 could say. Later, Derrida will write that "within the decisive concept of the move it, and it is altogether yet to come, more so than any annunciation still calls itself forth. It is withdrawn further than any assignation to a "difestablished in its own difference, it can do so no longer. Difference (of beever constituted a system centered on the juncture of Being, and of a Being simply withdraws into its difference from what exists, or into the gap of heritance of being to what exists). An inside which arrives to the outside the effacing of the trait: less than a single trait, its dissolution in its own trait, its fracturing at its juncture and also, as the condition of these events, Bompiani): this means at once the multiplication and the ductility of the More than one trait or ductus (to adopt a paleographic term designating ference of being" (or in a "different being," or in any Other) could ever reing) is itself differant. It withdraws still further from itself, and from there central (but was it in Heidegger himself? and if so, to what extent?), if it that difference. If the ontico-ontological difference was once taken to be

but out there, or beyond." withdrawal that it traces and effaces at one and the same time. It is "there, book to writing. The only difference is in a coming equal to the infinite in our hands, as we hold it. The fold multiplies the traits and opens the outside of or before its "own" folding of existence: the folding of the book appropriate its inappropriable, its incommensurability. Being is nothing to arrive, an sich ereignen [to emerge in the proper-ness of its event], still to difference, nor in its being such and such, but in the fact that it is to come, The sense of the ontico-ontological difference lies not in its being this

yond." Elliptical sense, existence surpassing its sense, withdrawing and ex-As altered sense, existence demands, calls for, intimates there its "be-

That's what writing is, he says.

edge without an external side. This is no longer a limit, therefore, or it is limit is a limit with no outside, a frontier without a foreign country, an being (and its fold), and that this marks an absolute limit. But an absolute the limit of nothing. Such a limit would also be an expansion without lim-Perhaps we should also say that, by definition, there's nothing beyond

Such is the infinity proper to finitude. This expansion is a hollowing-ou its, but the expansion of nothing into nothing, if being itself is nothing excavate itself," as the quotation from Jean Catesson in "Ellipsis" puts it without limits, and this excavation is writing, "a void which continues to

self there, à corps perdu. limit of being that no one can stomach. Writing perseveres and exhausts it through a genuine simulacrum of disemboweling and parturition, thi hysteria of writing lies in bringing to light (a light unbearable yet simple) void. The machine carries out an evisceration that is itself hysterical. The marked J. D., excavates to the center and the belly. The belly is the altered chine, a mechanical passion, mechanical and machinated. This machine caterpillar for tearing up the whole field: a terrain, a passion for the ma ing excavates a cavern deeper than any philosophical cave; a bulldozer and Thus the void nullifies itself in itself and brings itself to light. Write

difference to come, and which always comes there, there where the bebeyond itself, from being's passion for being nothing, nothing but its own machinery, by a machination which always comes to it from somewher But writing doesn't do anything; rather, it lets itself be done by

cry: nothing but altered sense. sense to light in its answer. But here sense is presupposed merely as the apappear as a question. A question presupposes sense, and aims to bring this where the ellipsis itself, and its geometry, are eclipsed by a cry. But a silen nally never closes off anything, but which calls: the "gaping mouth," there peal to sense, the senseless sense of the appeal to sense, the ellipsis which fisense (of being) is altered as a question in such a way that it can no longer This also means that, as in the question of writing, the question of

vent, a coming to presence. Ereignis, for Heidegger, names the advent of "trace," and of "our hands." ing of "all natural place and center," the spacing of the place itself, of the the event takes place—taking place with no other place than the displace lipsis of the present in this advent itself, this ellipsis of the present by which presence proper in (and to) its inappropriation. "Writing" bespeaks the ch What responds to a call or to an appeal is not a response but an ad-

wouldn't "say" even this. It wouldn't substitute an affirmation to the quest tion. It wouldn't substitute anything for anything; it would operate no Yet writing, at the limit that is its own but where it is not itself

> sion, and the impatience which arises with sense, "all sense." of writing is not another discourse "on" sense. It is the movement, the pastransformation, re-elaboration, or re-evaluation of discourse. The "system"

out relentlessly? ahead of itself), the program of an extenuation? One that Derrida carries doesn't amount to a "project" or to a particular "enterprise of thinking." ing. No longer to think, but to come and to let come. Needless to say, this at least, would have been his passion: to elide, to eclipse thinking in writno discourse, no philosophy, and thus no thinking that is Derrida's. This, Yet might we not say that there is a "program" (a trace running always In a sense, an exorbitant sense—the ellipsis of ellipsis itself—there is

coming ever being halted-being, on the contrary, what is always coming. discourse, in all discourse, at its fractured juncture, no possibility of this anyone else's. It would be what comes today, here and now, our history, to all wouldn't be Derrida's discourse, any more than it would be Dérissa's or not make sense, the rabbi of open books and not of the biblia, all of this ference, always remembering itself in the letter of sense which literally does to be the same as existence and nothing else-and calling to itself, calling for itself, and repeating itself as being the "same," right at existence, its dif-The sense of being differs—differs (from) its own difference, coming

the limit of coming: infinite finitude. not a question. But it is precisely about coming, coming to the limit, and never wanted to know anything about it, or whether it has always known—and here Spinoza speaks on behalf of all philosophers—that it is tion." It has never been a question for philosophy, whether philosophy has What is it to come or to enjoy? What is joy? This is no longer a "ques-

nology, the work of art, voice, community, the city, and passion, passion we need to rewrite totally as the world, history, the body, sense, work, techis—all the rest, all the sense of all the rest: what we call, and what perhaps less; this is no longer writing—writing is the coming, and its call. But it As for what it comes to and where it comes from, this is discourse still

irrecusable demand. explode, of course. Joy, the sense of existence, is the infinite but irrefutable, cery stores and to crack. The stench is still with us. Its accumulation will "happiness" that reeks. Happiness succumbed to the killing fields, to grobut not beyond appeal—reeks of facile and complacent discourse. It is Let no one come to say, in any event, that this joy beyond question-

Let's go back; let's repeat the text again, returning to the other end of the ellipse, and take up the altered ring at its beginning, insofar as a ring has a beginning.

"Here or there we have discerned writing": everything is there, in one fell swoop, in this lapidary *incipit* whose affirmation or affirmativity rests on a discreet prosody. (And *here*, we ought to re-read this sentence with its proper scansion.) Everything is there in a passion of language which has overcharged with sense this simple sentence, otherwise so anodyne; which has saturated with resonances this very brief monody, to the point that somewhere, in some obscure place, it alters itself, fissures, and noiselessly gives in. Derrida has always had a devouring thirst for language, and has always striven passionately to make it do his will.

given, but always offered or presented, which means offered to our decision whether or not to receive it. the unlimited gift, present, of presence, or its offering: for presence is never limit itself nothing but the unlimited coming to presence—which is also whom we are writing); it is the coming into presence of what is not present present, its gift, which gives nothing without also giving the giver, "on is not a "present perfect," but the passage of the present of writing (its ceases to be at stake, still and most especially when it is written "here." It ing, and coming at a limit. Presence itself is nothing but limit. And the book—but it is here, under our very eyes, between our hands, and it neve (What comes into presence does not become present.) It does not stop com laid down—this incipit is a conclusion, the systematic conclusion of the he start writing? It is done; a discovery has taken place; a principle has been present already past, just started up. When did we begin to read? When did cerning of writing) has been done right here, and so it is right here: in of this text itself and of the book it closes. What has been done (the dis "Here or there": the first words of the text effect a mise en abîme, both

And the *here* is immediately redoubled: it is either here *or* there. There, the *there*, will come at the end of the text, and will be redoubled in turn: "there, but out there, beyond." Here or there: already the two foci of the text, already the ellipsis. It's all there. Some years later, at the end of another text, accompanying once again the form and forgery of his own signature (of the proper sense of the proper name, where all sense is altered in effect), Derrida will write that he signs "here. Where? There." Here re-

moves itself from its own place and there pierces its own place (in performing it). Derrida's entire text and oeuvre is altered by perforating and performing itself. He has, he is, an inextinguishable thirst for a wild and drunken pursuit of self-externalization of offering himself up where he is not, of blocking himself from being where he is. He cannot bear himself, though he is borne only by himself. And that sums up the violent, desperate, joyous errancy of the sense of the age, of our sense, disseminated in a great gust coming from beyond the West, just as it is sedimented and paved over by the thickness, and thus the speechlessness, of our words. All of Derrida's text is a deaf-mute text.

It is already time to inscribe an ellipsis here—as the title (Derrida's, and mine in repeating it) has already done. Or, more exactly, one can't do less, but one must go to the end, the ellipsis of ellipsis.

For Derrida has neglected, by ellipsis, in accordance with the tropological use of the word "ellipsis," which surely he could not have failed to remember, making explicit the sense of this word. (And so: "Ellipsis" as a title; the ellipsis of the title. He contrives not to entitle this text any more than he signs it.) He will inscribe it in Greek, and elliptically attach to it the double value of a lack, of a decentering, and of an avoidance. *El-lipsis*, from *ek-leipō*, I avoid: I avoid—writing what I write. I live off writing, I leave off writing.

And he will leave out saying (writing) that the ellipsis (as eclipse) has as its etymon the idea of fault, of the absence of precision or exactitude. The geometrical ellipsis was initially a generic term for figures that failed to be identical, before being used (by Apollonius of Pergamon, in his treatise on Conics) in the sense familiar to us, as designating what is missing in a circle and doubles the property of the constant radius of the circle into the constancy of the sum of two distances, which always vary. All of this, together with an entire structural, historical, rhetorical and literary analysis of the ellipsis and ellipses, has been subject to an ellipsis.

However, it is not simply a question of the specular play "Ellipsis upon ellipsis, and in ellipsis." In calling itself "Ellipsis" (which is not at all speculation, itself simple, infinitely so, the text says, writes, or "ellipses" (eclipses and reveals) something else entirely. It indicates that something else is subject to ellipsis, something we cannot and must not know. It lets us know that we are really and truly missing something. Lots of things at once no doubt: for example, the identity between "Derrida" and "Dérissa,"

and about sense, and it says that it has something else tucked away, that it is to alter or to change his reader. What other passion could a piece of writwe will have missed the sense. It will have changed us. The passion of J. D it traces, retracing the effacing and effacing this trace as well . . . Certainly nothing, that there isn't another story or, at least, that he doesn't know it telling another story. But also it says that this exhibiting of a secret hides hand, or fish's . . . This text says all sorts of sensible things about writing unnameable-and those suspension points that follow it ... serpent or else "this other hand," named, pointed to, and shown to be invisible himself... This text effaces as much as it traces, effaces precisely insofar as

would take place everywhere or nowhere: no more play, nothing but sense the game or even make the rules. If the circle of sense did link up, the game given over to the vagaries of language. Here or there language might favor seminates sense—this very calculus (in fact, especially this calculus) is tenacity ruled by the systematic tracking down of what deregulates and disis meticulous and fierce, with all the rigor of the geometer (is he also from writing, to which we see Derrida give himself over to here—a calculus that ments, from time to time," and therefore "by accident, by chance, fortu-"Here or there" is without a definite place, it is also "sometimes, at mo-But the game of sense implies the hazardous ellipsis of its rules. Pergamon, the city of parchment?, this little secret, scratched here?), a itously." Writing can only be made out by accident. Even the calculation of this or [ou] which does not say where [où] writing is. Nor when, nor how the suspension, the hesitation, and the beating of the or that counts. Of more than two; "two" opens onto the multiple. In the "here or there" it is patches, are shown to us, then removed from view. What is more, "two" is have discerned. This double focus, these two fires, two lights, two burns two foci, neither of which can center the text or localize the writing that we Once again, and first of all: "here or there." An ellipsis of places, of

ence, exposed before or beyond all presentation and any present of a sigof a presence is the joy, the pleasure and pain of the enjoyment of this pressense: a rabbi, a fish, a piece of parchment, who and what else? This sense there—where signification is eclipsed and a presence only arrives at 115 moving around a fixed point, but coming endlessly to the limit—here of always once more the ellipsis, which is to say: sense itself as ellipsis, as not makes sense of the text. Neither the "whole" nor the "hole" of sense. But Neither manifest literalness nor mise en abîme, no less manifest

> to all the differences between them: a constant sum, here or there. has no signifying privilege, unassuming places indifferent to all presences, nifiable sense (of a sense present to itself?). This takes place where place

duced here to an extenuation, to a vestige in the half-light-to a twilight ing to be discerned if not here, right at the "grapheme" itself?). In the inwhich itself represents itself from detour to detour" (for where else is writsight, a perspicacious gaze which has insinuated itself into writing, across vision, not one of daytime. barely to see, or to guess, in an ellipsis of the eye. Theorein has been re-But to dis-cern, strictly, means to see between [to glimpse, entrevoir], it is terstices of a "deconstructed" discourse, a piercing theory has seen what "labyrinth" and "abyss," plunging "into the horizontality of a pure surface, there we have discerned writing"). That is to say, a fine, penetrating inhad never been seen before. So far, a classic incipit of the philosophical text. What by chance takes (has taken) place here is a discerning ("here or

where, and nowhere, offering itself to us as it takes us away from ourselves. calling forth; it is "all the sense" that traverses it, always coming from elsealong its traces. But its effacement is its repetition: it is its demand and its the very eyes of anyone who would try to look. It sets its course by groping can't be seen, or barely; it writes itself; it traces itself and effaces itself under retraced the limit of writing, writing as limit. We have written writing: it of itself; separation and communication, exchange and isolation.) We have "sketch" this "dividing line"—and that "dividing line" will divide and share vision, the division as contour. (The sentence that follows in the text will thus we have divided off from two cernes, tracing the contour and the di-French is the contour and particularly the ring of fatigue around tired eyes; "We have discerned": we have divided off with a cerne, which

Derrida will retrace the separation of book and text back to Plato: ellipsis this discerning is as ancient as the first philosophical inscription. Later, sumed and assured (in other words: where he invents "literature"). And yet title or graph of writing whose philosophical inscription Derrida has asmodernity (let us say from Benjamin and Bataille to Blanchot), of a certain of the discerning of writing. This discerning is as recent as the outline, in also ours: the we of a community in its history. "We" voices the historiality the modest authorial "we" and the royal "we" of the philosopher. But it is But who, "we"? This we which has, or have, discerned writing is both

sion of its foci, frees up the task of thinking (though in what sense is it still "thinking"?) the sense of our finite existences Here we are at this limit: the waning [occident] of sense, the disten

always lays claim to an a priori purity as condition of possibility). sort of experimental setup, as is the concept of the transcendental (which elliptically so. Thus the transcendental experience of writing is no "experience" is itself inappropriate, at least insofar as it presupposes som trast, experience is impure—and this is why, undoubtedly, the concept of perience, the reduction and purification of the empirical. Here, by con Husserl's "transcendental experience." Husserl's was meant to be pure ex offering as a narrative what is, by rights, an exposition more geometrico, bu word of the book). It opens up an irrepressible empiricity, in writing it, to writing, but it already breaches it ("breach" will be the penultiman of place and moment, the simple facticity of discerning. The incipit give Here's what happened, it's happened to us. It not only opens up discours the origin and the principle of the system in the register of the empirica this incipit that does not bear the stamp of the empirical: the randomne Transcendental experience is right here. There is, in effect, nothing

chained peninsulas." tion, the erosion of politics by global technology, the drifting of "un sense of History is changed: wars and genocides, collapses of representa non-purity of the event and the accident, the historical passage in which a Instead it is a question here of putting together what befalls us, in the

it, passive at the limit where the impossible comes, which is to say, where sibility" here (but also an "ontology") would be on the order of passion everything comes, all sense, and where the impossible is reached as the into the possible, does not master it; rather, it is dedicated and exposed to But passion is always destined to the impossible. It does not transfom I passion itself: the passion of sense. What would pass as a "condition of pos ing," as "adventure," and as the "dance" named in the text-in short, as In that case, experience should be expressed or thought as "wander

surface." The circle gapes; the ellipsis surfaces. Touching the center, on that it has plunged into nothing other than the "horizontality of a pur sinuated itself." But when it insinuates itself there it discovers or discern gerous hole" into which the "anxious desire of the book" seeks to "have in ellipsis of the center, its lack, its failing, and the presentation of the "dan The impossible is the center, the origin, and the sense. Ellipsis is the

> traces anew? center and to touch writing? Is it the same machine which digs, fills in, and sense, once again, without end? And is it the same passion to touch the parchment), would these not be the same? The same which alters, and all (brilliant, slippery fish . . .) and what plunges into the hole (tightly rolled touches writing. All sense is altered—but what glides across the surface

world. At the center, and in the belly. strange, orbital touch: touching the eye, the tongue, language, and the orbit touches the edges of a system, whether cosmological or ocular. A touch the ellipsis itself—and to touch ellipsis inasmuch as it touches, as an brates in the "open mouth, the hidden center, the elliptical return." touch the trace, and to touch its effacement. To touch what moves and vifor touching language, as he will have repeated. To touch language: to the other. Both completed, raised up, or cast into the depths by the passion cording to the two senses of the genitive, and one in the other, and one for passion of philosophy as the passion of writing. The one and the other, acand for the touching of the center has always been J. D.'s passion—the ity is in essence plural? The passion for the center, for touching the center, one passion—more than one anguish, more than one joy, even if this unic-Undoubtedly it is the same machine: has there ever been more than

the book. sharper and more strangled. It always has its two hands clenched around narrowing in all discerning: sight narrows to the extreme, and becomes To the see the center differing (from itself): the ellipsis. There is a certain sion—and the limit of touch. To discern is to see what differs in touching. eyes. Discerning is where touching and vision touch. It is the limit of vitrace at the point where the rings around the eyes touch-between the It is the same passion: to discern is to see and to trace; it is to see or to

self, without anything being appropriated. That is writing, love, and sense. nonetheless. To touch oneself, to be touched right at oneself, outside onethat our hands touch, always through the intermediary of skin, but touch book; that its hands touch, reaching just as far as its skin, its parchment; to touch: the wish that the hands touch, across the book, and through the knows, or thinks he knows? Doesn't will differ in its essence?) It is the will It is the system, again. It is the will to system. (But what is will? Who

missing and always being undone, and this is how it covers up, unveils fected an ellipsis of the skin. But that is why there is no skin as such. It is a serpent or a fish," even more than hands, the surface of the skin. The skin repeats itself, here or there. The text says nothing of this: it will have efmal-like, quick, silent, smooth, brilliant, sliding motion, in the fashion of logical" in it) is touch: obscure, impure, untouchable touch, "with an ani-Sense is touching. The "transcendental" of sense (or what is "onto-

gestures and dances of this senseless model, à corps perdu.) One always writes as if overcome by a sovereign, sublime Mimesis of ing a writing which imitates nothing, no sense having been given to it. of a skin of sense stretched tight and perforated, intact and enacted, mimepidermic writing, mimicking the movements, contortions, and alterations tooed yet smooth and slippery, on a piece of parchment, on a voice. An someone, on some singularity of the skin, on a surface scratched and tat-Sense, and by its inimitable Style; in writing one is always mimicking the ing, or from anyone who writes on anything at all. We always write "on "on" Derrida is no different from Derrida writing "on" sense and "on" writown skin, hand to hand, à corps perdu. (This means that whoever writes emerges. It is the passion after a skin to write on. He writes endlessly on his Always an undoing of sense, always an ellipsis in which sense

one and over one what merely presents itself at the limit where inscription scribe presence is not to (re)present it or to signify it, but to let come to scribes its presence beyond all recognized modalities of presence. To initself withdraws (or ex-scribes itself, writes itself outside itself). loses its own body à corps perdu, this occurs to the extent to which it in presence full of sense, charged with sense. And if writing loses the body crete" presence. Rather, it is lost to all material or spiritual modalities of the body, writing loses touch itself. Writing has only to trace it or efface it But the body is not lost in the simple exteriority of a "physical" or "coning. Writing can do nothing but lose its body. As soon as writing touches French in Hegel. (See the beginning of Margins.) It is the passion of writ-This corps perdu, this lost body—Derrida found it one day written in

language, the foreign body, which is the body of our foreignness. has always played—on stage and at stake—the body lost at the limit of all system or nonsystem of some new disposition of sense. On the contrary, he is not trying to make some new power arise through language, to erect any name—will not have stopped inscribing the presence of this lost body. He Derrida—under the name "Derrida" or some alteration of this

> end, yet still place and the ellipsis of place. or even a thinking). The experience named "writing" is this violent exsource and plenitude of sense, even though it is neither its origin nor its haustion of the discourse in which "all sense" is altered, not into another or deconstruction of metaphysics, insofar as that is a discourse (a philosophy the other sense, but in this exscribed body, this flesh which is the whole re-That is why this body is lost in the very discourse of writing and the

lipsis, there, out there, and beyond. unavoidable withdrawal of writing, where it can be nothing but its own elit or present it as a "[subject] matter." It is present with that presence of the _{Jacques} Derrida—but it is material in a singular way: one cannot designate This body is material and singular—it is also the very body of

movement of a lost body presented at the limit of language. This body is sense, but which is sense, its ellipsis and its advent. but it is none of these meanings as such. It is the presence which has no drives; it is dynamic, energetic, economic, political, sensuous, aestheticmade of flesh, of gestures, forces, blows, passions, techniques, powers, and have moved with a movement discreet, powerful, and trembling: the being brought back to such transformative operations). Philosophy will nothing to do with any of the possible transformations of ontology or of tory will have moved. It will have inscribed/exscribed something which has the transcendental (even if the discourse frequently proves susceptible to his body and his text, philosophy will have moved, materially, and our his-There, out there, beyond "Derrida" himself, but nonetheless here, on

perdu—discreet, powerful, trembling like everything which is to come. always-retraced limit where its own presence never stops coming à corps crazy for it, crazy with its presence, crazy with laughter and anguish at the Derrida "himself"—or his ellipsis—is a wild singularity of this body,

Translated by Jonathan Derbyshire

Borborygmi

Т

"Borborygmi" was a nonchalant and hasty response, premature as always, to the request to provide a title for this talk. I thought: I don't know what to say. I was mumbling and stammering. Then this word came to me a Greek onomatopoeia, now a medical term for a rumbling in the bowels, which has, in turn, developed a figurative meaning in French, connoting "incomprehensible and inarticulate remarks."

As it happens, this sort of response isn't restricted to this particular request—the request to speak about Derrida.¹ More and more, I find that each request to speak arouses in me an anxiety—but also, paradoxically, a need to respond with an inarticulate grunt. As if each time it became clearer to me that the response, indeed every response, must lead back to the edge of language, exhausting its semantic resources in order to let something that is, immediately and materially, the unheard sense of which we are the hearkening, murmur and creak, albeit at the price of any possibility of identifying this "we."

So, at the very moment that I let you in on this insignificant anecdote concerning my title, doing so simply in order to avoid having to come back to it, I am confirming its structural or transcendental, which is to say historial, necessity. What behooves us—us other philosophers—is to articulate the inarticulate remarking of a sense more powerful and more remote than all configurations, constellations, or constructions of sense.

What falls to us in this way is the job, precisely, of articulating sense, its power and its withdrawal. It is a matter of articulating the inarticulable, not of lapsing into mumbled incantation (poetry in the worst sense) or of settling for the displacement, reversal, and perpetual relativization of concepts (of settling, that is, for nihilism). It is the inarticulable as such that has to be articulated, with the proviso that it is precisely the "as such," in withdrawing, which is the problem here, though in such a way that this withdrawal is seen to belong essentially to the "as such" as such. In short, we need to express the fact that truth, each time, opens and inaugurates the outside of all truth, but in a way that is, each time, proper to itself, absolutely proper, exact, clear, distinct and distinctive, unique, certain, and present.

Or, to put it another way, we must name that which has no name, name that which, by definition, witholds itself from nomination. More exactly, we have to name de-nomination itself, put a name to the very withdrawal of the name, as opposed to naming a "that" which would have no name. The tradition has always sought to give the name "God" to what has no name. God is the (nick)name of the Name taken absolutely. It is the nominal essence of what is beyond all names. If the "death of God" means anything, if we are at last to find a sense of ourselves in it, it is because we need to learn to stop naming a "this" or a "that" which would be beyond all names (but which would be, for this very reason, the repository of an ultimate nomination and propriety) and instead to name properly, for every "this" and every "that," for all things, the deprivation of the proper and the name: the most essential origin in the midst of the inessential fragility of being.

Naming requires that a name be made. In Greek this is called ono-matopoeia, the production, creation, or poiesis of the name. We know that there is never genuine onomatopoeia in languages. Its very concept is contradictory: either there is a noise, which is precisely not a name, or there is a name, which imitates a noise without being the noise itself. A contradictory or limit concept, then, but one that language nevertheless brushes up against incessantly: the thing making a name for itself, rather than the ostension of its sense by its name.

Not a proper name then, but the thing itself, materially, being the singular stamp of its truth and, at the same time, the syncopated withdrawal of its name, and this very withdrawal, moreover, being the truth of the name. Is it possible to think of an onomatopoeia of truth? Of truth

naming itself with its own sound, so that what is proper both to it and to us can resonate or ring out? But truth is essentially self-presentation. Truth presents and names itself. All the while truth turns itself inside out, as a relation to itself, as the enfolding of the innermost distance which forms it, just as it presents itself to itself and as it presents self. Can we thus imagine a borborygmus for truth's "intestinal difference"?

This self-presentation is so intimate and intestinal that it is also entirely foreign. Is it a question, then, of a barbarism, of the language of truth being a language of the other, of the wholly foreign, and, as such, being badly formed, mumbled, and stammered? A barbaric idiom? Does Derrida think about anything else? Is Derrida naming anything else when he writes his own name, "Derrida," when he writes this name and about this particular proper name beneath his signature? Throughout his work autobiography is at issue to such an extent that all other questions appear secondary or derived. The philosophical order itself seems to dissolve, to capsize, or to run mad in the erratic empiricalness of a name beyond all question or concept. But beneath autobiography, and beneath this "outside," if not at this outside, could it be that what is really at stake is an auto-hetero-graphy of truth?

 \blacksquare

What or who is there behind Derrida [derrière Derrida]?

riddle, or a drawn-down—but in what language? proper name, in general, the sense of a "derrida," like that of a rudder, the signature, the name, the signifier, or the improbable signified of of its questioning: Derrida the individual, the philosopher, the signator) hind" or "after," precisely. Finally, the question leaves open the very subject "there," the "there" that stands there for the "there" presupposed by "be there or who is there, two possibilities that leave open the elision crossed by frontally. We could say the same about the object of the question: what is or as the coming of a return. But always coming from behind, never ahead; as "behind," de retro; as an antecedent or a return, as already there direction: backwards, forwards, as already given or to be discovered up ilarly, there are several ways of construing that "behind" as a meaning or substance, as well as a suspicion about a disguised presence or motive. Simconceivably contain questions of genealogy, antecedence, foundation, or would say himself. This question cannot be made univocal, for it could There is more than one question here—as we might suppose he

Consequently such a question must be handled in accordance with the use he himself—he, Derrida, the one in question here—makes of the such [tel], of a such without an as or a that, of this archaic such, which he has made into one of the singular features of his lexicon and syntax (precisely, of his syntactical lexia). His fanatical use and abuse of the such shows just how much he values the ability to upset demonstrative, indicative, or indexical determinacy—of this, that, or the other—to make resonate there both under- and over-determination. A such that is not as such, a such which stands alone, the subject of an ostension rather than a designation, without reference or referent, comparable only to itself and therefore incomparable, incommensurable, with no gap between the similar and the same. Neither as such nor such as it is, but such without relation to any genre, or else strictly unique in its genre and thus without generality or genus. The idiom of a unique singular, one such, such a Derrida. The real Derrida or the truth of Derrida, or even such a truth of such. What is there behind that?

Its sound, its echo, its muffled cry, its rustle, its murmur, or its shout. crackle, a barbaric idiom whose very barbarity can be heard at least by those with an ear for it. Against such a name, sense or truth itself resounds: same wanting-to-say-the-impossible makes the impossible itself snap or How the expression of the impossible is an impossible meaning. But this question: "How does the impossible express itself, what does it mean?" understood that we stand face to face with the impossible, faced with the an intake of air, a pure and vertiginous aspiration. Idiom is impossible, we know. It is the impossible, as he (Derrida) never stops repeating: it must be granted, but a vacuum which creates a gulf, an appeal for sense that is like in reference; it relates to relation and names naming. In a vacuum, or a noise, like the emphasis of a pure phasis. And yet it is already implied nothing, it makes no sense or connection, it merely echoes itself, like a shot the outermost limit of the idiom. There is nothing behind it. It refers to names only the name, as the proper itself, "Derrida"—we are brought to "such") and, on the other, the nominal form which signifies nothing and the extremity of the syntactical operator which connects nothing (the In putting these extremes of the idiom together-on the one hand,

such and the proper name. No relation, no signification. What is said, if it is said, what is stammered, mumbled, or murmured, is just at the idiomatic word, just at the onomatopoeia of the impossible. There is nothing behind, therefore: no depths or reserves of sense or of truth. There is nothing be-

ward with no backward, not even a phenomenon, not even a surface. consequence, everything up front. Everything pushed forward, but a forwishing to speak, all intentionality, and all plan. Nothing behind and, in tone is responsible, by itself, for this disappearance and abolition of all hind Derrida as such, evidently and eminently, nothing. All background, all hypokeimenon or subjectum, disappears ipso facto: the idiomatic gesture or

a manifestation or an event, not a story and thus neither a process nor a ahead of itself or of us, nothing which relates to itself or to the other. Nor the most extreme sense or truth of all sense and truth. tograph, an event, if you like, though with nothing occurring or arising bu narration. No autobiography, therefore, but the scratched outline of an au-If there is nothing behind, there is nothing in front, either: nothing

even if it expresses nothing, if it wills to say nothing, or even if it wills not said that I am not saying. And that is what cannot be affected by even the general, I could very well be said to be saying nothing, but it could not be just the triggering of self-presence. and so in tune with itself that it is precisely the annihilation of the will as ing outside itself, necessarily an auto-hetero-graph. An expression so pure outside itself, stamping its own truth on itself. Dividing itself without gobut is the pure expression of that which puts itself forward without going to will. It is beyond the will. It seeks neither to communicate nor signify the limit. It is language that has become a thing, withdrawn from any retion—but it is still language, it is language which is thereby stretched to iom can indeed take language to the limits of meaning and communicamost extravagant claims of the skeptic. The most obscure and barbaric idfact, the truth of sense. If I say such and Derrida, and if I say One Such in without the alterity which works over sense as such. That is its truth, in representation and as power to present representation. It is, in its tension lation to sense. But this thinglike language, this noise or mark, itself means And all this only in a sense, of course, for there could never be sense

angiospermic, androeciumic, epigynetic, petroglyphic, heliotropic, and dike, tint, sing, an obsession with resonance and assonance, a poetics that might one call, in their way, phone-emphatic, wink, gul, hinge, thence parentheses, onomatopoeias, such glug-glug, tic-tak, trrr, or words that or intra-verbal phonemes, like the inaudible "a" of "differance" or such tion sonorities slipping outside the sign, drawing out the sound of the sign is above all sonorous, infra-significant, where one blows out of all propor-The click of the trigger. "I cl'," he says:5 clack, lack, alc, gl, tr, infra-

> guardians until he decides to banish them or send them all flying, to the manteau-words and concepts multiplied almost to the point of exhaustion, he had already given away up front. point that he pulls the rug out from under his own feet or takes back what potheses, references and allusions, to proliferate, making them each other's ner in which he piles them up and arrests them, allowing questions or hythen the indefinite sequence of books and the fearsome, irrepressible manculation, peniclitoris, logoarchy, signsponge, the jerky spasm of an eructountenable yet retained, hurled, lost in the profusion, destinerrance, emasthus communicating with a philosophical beyond of signification, portwhole sentence, and then the set of sentences making up the book, and jaculation, logoroperatergo. This is not all: one must then consider the

ways sent up ahead and behind: and thus, properly. sets language going behind and in front of itself, always in retreat and al guage engraves or has engraved itself on itself, a mark that at the same time necessarily, such that to the other, in the other, and for the other this lansymbolizing thing from itself, splitting so as to let its fracture sound and at unless it were so absolutely, purely, and simply: a pure division of the thus let itself be recognized, by and to itself. For and in itself-but then, that would no longer be Leibnizian because of no longer being symbolic but also, cut off from any tongue, purely the thing itself, a characteristic make idiomatic the barbarous, thus making a language purely wordbound, turn back in the rear—that his frenzy of language seeks indefatigably to by turning around back to the front, by twisting all the front to make it by letting oneself slip to the bottom, to the rear, or indeed from behind it A tergo, here we go again. It is from behind language—from behind

nary trigger, or starter of self-presence, stemming originarily from presence to itself. A heterogeneous auto-mark, generated from the other in the most very auto-mark by which alone the "auto" sets itself in motion: the originothing, not even a Kantian empty "I," without such an auto-graph, the sion. There is no proper, no own, without appropriation, and the "I" is self of a formidable logic of self-marking, self-reference, and self-expres-What is most properly the proper is the development and sequence in iting"—is that it is not enough for the proper properly to be the proper.6 the alterity of the proper? What haunts the proper, as he likes to say, as he likes to haunt himself with haunting and the sound of the word "hauntmation, what if not what is proper, what is its own? But what is properly And what is behind all this, at the very least and in a first approxi-

intimate or intestinal reaches of the *auto*. But what is this trigger if it is not truth? What else could it be but this alterity of the true, which grasps the thing *as such* and properly names it, not in order to signify it, but to make of it the senseless origin of sense?

The truth is that the thing names itself properly in such a way that nothing precedes it or subordinates it; it says itself in being, if not this side of or beyond being, but always saying itself with a saying before or beyond discourse, saying or manifesting the itself of the proper and the proper as itself—the to-itself which opens sense itself.

Without that, would there be anything there at all? Would there be someone, a thing or a person? In allowing the impossible idiomaticity of the proper to proliferate in a starry madness of sub- and sur-nominations, of hyper-nominations, like galaxies expanding around a black hole of the proper name absorbing all sense, it is the proper which "Derrida" is stalking and tracking, and trying to make melt away and implode on top, underneath, behind, or in front; nothing less than the totality and the architotality of the proper in truth, thus its absolute, singular, irreducible, incompressible, irrefragable, irrecuperable uniqueness, but also its absolute, indefinitely plural, multipliable, extendable, communicable, exchangeable generality. Such a Derrida = One Such = all origin, any living present of sense, the birth and death of each one as every one which recognizes itself as such, as having nothing to recognize but its uniqueness without unity.

Ξ

Let's leave Monsieur Derrida there, as we must. Let's abandon him to that for which he is merely the borrowed name: the self-naming-in-truth of everyone, of each entity unique in itself. This today is the absolute need, the most pressing requirement of philosophy (and/or poetry, of their intestinal difference) in the age of suspended assumptions and abandoned figures: that everyone be truly named and that sense emerge afresh from the heterology of all these singular nominations.

Let's immediately move behind Derrida, straight to this truth. We can expect to do so, however, only by passing through his eponym (as if there were ever a name that wasn't borrowed . . .). What is behind him is behind there: truth does not reside in a generality, or, at the very least, this generality does not have the consistency of a homogeneous other world or

of a subsumption. On the contrary, its "consistency" is that of the discrete, singular disjunction of all in one and one in all, at once the same for all, just like that identical for all, and each time identical to itself alone. (It's the same question: neither "the people" nor "the individual"; neither "the community" nor "the hero"; and indeed, neither "philosophy" nor "the thinker"; neither "language" nor "the poet." Rather, the question is how one distinguishes itself from the other, and how to pass from one to the other without referring or reducing one to the other.)

Behind there: in the same spot as the name "Derrida," a random place like any other, but also the unique, the most unique place to which he accords the exorbitant privilege of revealing what truth truly amounts to—that there is no truth which is not, each time, exorbitant.

"What or who is behind Derrida?" is the only autobiographical question worth asking, so long as one hears it as a question about auto-constitution or auto-manifestation, not so much a question, in fact, as a wish or a drive to search behind the self for what moves the self and makes it come to itself, as itself. (Posed from outside, it is in effect a false question, one that belongs on the side of the antithesis in the Kantian antinomies, reaching back all the way along the infinite regress of causes. But it will be understood that the truth I am speaking about is inseparable from freedom, from its singular and absolute beginning, from its liberation before each and every particular "freedom.")

there, after all, this behind that gives to this question or compulsion, this of the autos itself, or in the autos itself, or in its ownmost behind. And it is express itself as such). Strictly speaking, therefore, the autobiographical say, a unique resonance and an inimitable timbre, or that which wants to question can be nothing but the question of the heterological antecedence vance what is proper to its voice (the proper of a voice in general; that is to onate before it finds its own voice and indeed so as to let be heard in ad-18 conjured up, that which is pre-dicted in being pro-duced, is made to resmands itself, and pushes itself (marks itself or implodes), and, preceding, sures the advent of the self, something hidden from the self but which it that is to say the autos itself, which is not there unless it seeks itself, dedrive must inquire after what precedes it: it, the question, or the drive, but searches after in order precisely to be this very self? This questioning or ceed from this interrogation: What is there behind the self, and what enriosity, attraction, instinct, compulsion, and indulgence⁷—can only pro-The autobiographical question—or the autobiographical urge, cu-

compulsion to question, at once its absolute, vertiginous necessity and drum or putting up with the echoing of the void. which it is being put together. But perhaps it's precisely the sound of this constitutive trait of impossibility: it always fizzles out at the very point at fizzling out that it wants to be heard, even if that means bursting the ca

Derrida hasn't failed to amplify the question. In a frenzied autobio-graphical turn, he has not only answered the question "What or who is berida," already, right at the back. Thus (and here I'm cutting, extracting harmonies of the autobiographical music in play here): plied enough of the context, though, so as to give a whiff of the chords and from, a text that's arranged precisely to prevent such abbreviation; I've suphind Derrida?" but has given, prescribed this response in inscribing "Der-

gold spurs for the parade. ready for the attack, the defense, a fleet guarding itself at the prow and the poop A fleet of screens [paravents] with purple sails, purple veils [voiles pourpres], a fleet

The parade always stays behind [derrière].

and with a capital letter, something inside me used to start to recognize there my tather's name, in golden letters on his tomb, even before he was there. Derrière: every time the word comes first, if written therefore after a period

A fortiori when I read Derrière le rideau [Behind the curtain].

Derrière, behind, isn't it always already behind a curtain, a veil, a weaving

same time the back or behind of truth, the back side of the fabric, texture both exhibition and protection, ostentation and dissimulation. the high seas and making for clear water, without limits, a showing that but something set out—something that sets sail, in the sense of taking to unveiled or remain hidden, a promised and intangible nudity, and at the Behind a veil, the truth. The truth of what is behind, of what either can be itself, itself and spun out of itself, not something to be veiled or unveiled

of time and before its hour, ahead of its own emergence, already, properly speaking, conveyed to its properness of immemorial provenance. The of the name as death, my own death, then, in my name, though a death deathly inscription of the name, the inscription of the death of the name by itself, a self behind the self, a self like its own origin or provenance. No me" grabs hold of itself, how the very thing of the self grabs hold of itself hold of himself from behind himself, or rather, he says how "something " just the active origin of the father, but an origin already originated ahea What is he showing here, what truth? He shows how he already grab

> beneath. there, what is not there, offered, indicated, or localized, but inscribes itself ing-with, being-alongside-oneself, being-with-what-is-before-oneself, and without da, like Sein, or, who knows, like Mit-Sein. Being alone, and beturned upside down, turned upside down and cut off from his da. 10 da from behind and as the behind.9 "Derrida," therefore, picked up and the origin—of its own origin, which it will never grasp or recognize, except the tombstone allows me to see the name as the obverse, as the reverse of seized from behind as what was already behind the origin itself. Before me not being-there, nor even being-the-there, but being what is behind the

emergence, genealogy. family, the name of the father, and, first of all, the genetic outpouring, opening or clearing in which the house consists. The house or home: the house (as the assonance Hauslaus suggests): the emerging which makes the emerges, even if, at the same time, it is the emergence which makes the most being," and which implies a house behind or from which one might present. Rather, it literally brings it along "all the way from home" its ownmost Being":11 it does not carry it in front of it, like something it without which there would be no place, no site of being: the hinterland of and as such? For there is not one encircled locality, determinate and opbehind the place. Da is the "essential openness" which Dasein "carries in the ownmost presupposition of the da, in and as its taking place before and instead of presupposing it as a given locale, presupposing oneself in and as (von Hause aus mit), which is a way of saying "originally" or "in its ownplace. The da cannot be occupied. Rather, it is a matter of being; that is, da). Da is the opening up of place before the place itself, the already-open posed to another (not the *da* as opposed to a *fort*, but rather the *fort* of all Isn't that the truth of the there, however? The truth of each there in

ways ahead of itself. opening a "self [soi]" as such, which is to say, again, a "home [chez dwelling place, in which dwelling consists in opening and opening oneself, cedes, which is precedence itself and thus the essence of pre-sence. A soi] which is always, infinitely, behind itself and, in consequence, also al-Hence da is behind as the up-ahead of the clearing which always pre-

^{da} over to its truth, he reopens it and reinitializes its ending—and this gestrace and of errance; era of the great temporal openings): thus, he gives his like a delocalization and an alteration (er, "he" in German; erring of the Derrida cuts off his da, 12 he scotomizes it in order to substitute for it,

turn. The exchange is impeccable: derrida is always already behind [derstone or weaves into the curtain the paternal da, on the era cut off in its ture is none other than one of collecting, by which he inscribes on the rière], which is always already behind derrida always already behind.

knocking himself out, from behind. ness13 of effacing the mark in marking effacement, in one fell swoop always load of traces, marks, and gilded letters. His mania for marking is the mad trail of the trace, which he effaces insofar as he leaves its imprint behind watches himself, watches out for himself, gets himself caught. He is on the him. He is on the scent of effacement itself: he effaces an enormous over Derrida is always susceptible to surprising himself from behind. He

any well-informed reader).15 occurrence in The Post Card (which comes after Glas, and is duly legible by in advance? He didn't miss the opportunity.14 See, for example, a doubl himself, holding himself up, or objectifying himself? Has he sent this bac his proper provenance, birth-and-death, by writing it is he appearing to he cannot encounter without recognizing what is his own, what is proper through a dot and through a blank space behind it—this "Derriere" that in the syntax, thus coming about in the course of the sentence, raised first"—not as a substantive, therefore, not as Monsieur Derriere, but has But this "Derriere" with a capital letter, this "Derriere" "coming

of course, he disguises his own track, if ever a throw of the dice . . .). The second occurrence, this time at the beginning of a paragraph, is "Behind when it reveals itself as what he so visibly calculated (and with that mark stammeringly repeats—dé-dé ["à dès. Derrière"]—was a matter of chance. Socrates he is as stiff as justice." plausible that this cast of assonant words that ends in a beginning tha to hitch himself up." "A dès" concludes "a dice cup," as if to make more the great man the dwarf with the flat hat, the slave or the preceptor seek the last words of a sentence that remains invisible behind it: "cup. Behind The first occurrence, one line at the top of a verso page, begins with

an eye: Derrida behind and ahead of everyone, ahead of an entire genear open secret that he wants us to ignore yet to recognize in the same blink of sophical as such, defines the philosophical family and ancestry in the idby default or excess, from the self-engendering which defines the philoogy and lagging behind the whole of philosophy, the philosopher cut off. iomatic logic of the proper (which is perhaps only a double tautology, and I won't try to dissect what is so clearly presented to us in disguise, the

> self in the moment that it unwinds, but arising also from this very close would wish itself to be nothing but a gigantic tauto-phono-grapho-cryptoof which the whole of Derrida's text, the whole text of every Derrida, fects simultaneously, fireworks and cold ashes, a madness watching over itphaner-ology, biting its own tail, in all senses and with all imaginable ef-

intestinal difference of the phusis and technology of its reversal. of what is properly or improperly called "metaphysics," that is to say, the no longer predicated of anything: an absolute incipit gaping at the origin to burst forth in the sub or the bypo which no longer refers to anything, is to emerge from behind any allocation of being, substance, or subject, so as a clean pair of heels. Not only to be seen only from behind, but in order to being, not being, not being an entity there, but instead withdrawing so as has to be in opening itself up, not yet being, then, only opening itself to this Dasein be nothing other than this da which precedes it, but which it be simply the back, in the absolute sense of being, in order that the sein of self behind, but also better frantically to emphasize that he puts himself there. Not only, in effect, better compulsively to show that he hides himforward, in order to turn round and be nothing but his back, as if showing Once more, and very logically, we need to leave Monsieur Derrida

Perhaps a cast before all of speech, the blow or throw. quence, before all sequence, the casting into words, speaking as a cast, and the affirmation, the declaration, the leap without consequence or subsethe incipit of the sentence: there must be the sentential or phatic opening, the propriety of the name in the impropriety of the behind. There must be or, at the very least, goes by way of it. It is the capital letter which triggers of the behind, and what went on behind, comes down to the capital letter Everything comes back, you see, to the capital letter: the whole affair

can simply be the mark of the incipit, "he" may be anyone, or perhaps the ^{other} capital letter or the capital letter of the Other." The capital letter this phrase.... by what right *He* carries a capital letter"? He replies, "Perthis situation a sort of general formalization when, proposing this leading naps not only as an incipit," since one must allow the hypothesis "of an-(princeps) sentence "He will have obligated," he asks "Who is the 'He' in But first, at the incipit, the capital letter is undecidable: Derrida gives

all possible identification (or else echoes like the trigger or the echo of the complexity of genealogies), and at the same time the one and only Derrida leading to another, will soon end up scrambling all proper names in the again at the same time, any "derrida," the son or the father, and of course withdrawal into the other of all identity and all presence; but also, and unique "behind" which subtends all possible presence, the opening and such, has nothing proper about it and, at the same time, the absolute, name, simply the mark of this absolute limit: naked propriety, which, as covers over one with the other indefinitely. The covering up of "Detrida" faint timbre of the other at the very heart of its own identification). himself something other than all identity, something which passes behind the madman who signs all that, absolutely, though by doing so he makes with that the father's father (which process, from son to father, one thing by "Derrière" effects nothing else: at once any "behind" [n'importe que It is both at once, it carries both at once and one in the other, it replaces or drawn, buried deeper, than any primacy of the logico-grammatical subject mark of the absolute distance of the Other-a hyper-incipit more with 'derrière'], which is also to say any proper name, and anything as a proper

changeable "he" (the other, always an other, yet an other). the Most High, the Most Distant) and a common, indifferent and interin the properly untenable conjunction of an absolute "Illeity" (the Other hind oneself in order to endow oneself with the proper) can only take place vertigo is basic or elemental. The appropriation of the proper (reaching be-All this is not as vertiginous as it appears—or rather, this very real

after all, is the most enduring lesson we have learnt about the constitution of subjectivity—going back at least as far as Saint Augustine and then right as identical and equal to all others insofar as he is the Unique itself. That opening opens meaning or significance in general: that it has sense, or the up to the Jemeinigkeit of Dasein, by way of the ego sum, the universality of another way: the absolute Narcissus can only grasp himself, if he does so truth of sense, is something absolutely proper, unique and originary, and emerge by way of the other, the one opens out in the other. This mutual the Hegelian I, and the Husserlian alter ego. thus indistinguishable from its own substitution by every other. To put " the conflagration of sur-significance and in-significance: the one can on What occurs in this conjoining or conjunction is nothing less than

tact, certainly the most powerful constraint, the one richest in resources This lesson forces us to confront what is perhaps the most significant

> requirement owes as much to the erratic, incalculable, and inappropriable exposed to other origins and to the other, to all others, at the origin. This and internal, even intestinal, to me than my ownmost innerness; and that inexorably, retreat both forward and backward, into what is more intimate and aporias, in our entire tradition: namely, that autology is intrinsically at a distance: this is what is called "being in the true." both are plunged into the proximity of an infinite distancing. They touck The retreat behind myself is the same thing as voyaging out among others: sence of necessity which I share with everyone, and where sense opens out. time its singular necessity. I occupy necessarily the indifferent site of an abluck of others as it does to myself. The singular has no necessity: it is each there is sense, in all truth, only to the extent that I go outside myself, am this axiom, and to its double condition or double bind: that I must always, heterology. Logic, ethics, aesthetics, poetics, and politics are all subject to

as the "any," here, signifies each time in its singular occurrence. through anywhere and through anyone, but anywhere and anyone insofar Through "there," through "Derrida," which, of course, also means: rida" serve? Why should such a general lesson have to pass through there? In this connection, what purpose does the detour by way of "Der-

of autology constitutes autology itself in singularities whose difference constitutes, institutes, and opens the "auto" as such. term, for "our tradition"—lies precisely in its nongenerality: the heterology more general or more generic in what passes, in the widest sense of the The generality of this lesson—and, I repeat, there is perhaps nothing

a substantia noumenon. Nothing would happen and no-one would come on behind—given, thrown rather, like nothing so much as a uniqueness comes on the scene. It comes from nowhere—from behind, ever farther up front, vorhanden, objectum. What happens, on the other hand, the subno Dupont, no Schmitt, and nothing behind, everything quite simply put each "one." Without doubt, each "one" is as such in-significant and substi-Jectum surging and bursting forth, is that everything happens, everyone the scene, there would be neither birth nor death. No Derrida, no Plato, that there would just be indistinctness, the mere, massive conservation of in its uniqueness, without which there could be no substitution. Without tutable. But, in order to be substitutable or substituted for, it must be given mogeneity: the genus, here, is from the outset the differential uniqueness of discrete units carved out of an overarching, transcendental or original ho-In the singular—singulus, one by one—generality is not arranged in

empty of sense: this emptiness, in truth, is the opening of all sense, in and to all senses and in all directions. But the opening has to be opened, slit, launched, burst apart, or cracked, each time, incessantly.

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Opening has the character, simultaneously, of something entrenched and of generality or universality. Entrenchment because it (\$\varepsilon a\text{l}\text{opens}, it snaps apart, the depths or the whole is undermined (those depths or that whole which will therefore never have taken place, which subsist nowhere, which are neither depths nor whole). Universality because once that snaps open, it opens in every sense, communicates opening to all points and in all directions (it is that which opens points and directions as such).

All our concerns are gathered together there, those belonging to us latecomers and early risers: we emerge from the depths and the whole, and we call this emergence history, Occident or world, technology. We spring up, strange and frightening, from an opening which gapes everywhere and which refers all cohesion of ground and of totality to the nonplace. Thus from behind ourselves, from beyond all identity, we come on the scene, which is to say, we bring *ourselves* on the scene, unspeakably new. They come on the scene, over there, up close, just behind or ahead of us. This violent torsion exhausts and dazzles us.

In a flash, an entrenchment is communicated throughout. Its absolute uniqueness (its infinite value and dignity) is distinguished absolutely: this distinction is nothing but the negativity of entrenchment, a negativity which is itself the most complete affirmation, the unique and its propriety, the unique appropriating itself properly. All distinctions are equal, they each merit, equally, the passion of the origin, an excessive love which signifies nothing less than the recognition of unrecognizable uniqueness. They are equal, and substitutable, though this equality is the equality of what is most unequal in the world: equality of the incommensurable, equality of an appropriation which is each time an infinite over flowing of self into self.

The *proper* is not only what digs itself in, entrenches itself against the rest: it is also what digs itself in and retreats into itself infinitely in order to open there the space of appropriation. The advent of self is behind every self. The proper pushes the self back beyond all propriety, so as to let it emerge. *Proper* is *pro privo*, it is a movement, not a given but a giving:

giving of itself to itself, which in fact means giving itself up to what has no other place or consistency than the "itself" of the "giving itself up" itself. To appropriate oneself: giving oneself up, or devoting oneself, to giving oneself up or to devoting oneself—and always, in the final analysis, surrendering to the infinite turning back which constitutes the structure and the sense of self.

Behind, consequently—not what would be behind, but the beingbehind-itself of the unique. Behind there is nothing for sense, but this
nothing itself is like a hard, impenetrable, resisting thing: the being-back of
the back itself, which attaches to nothing and through which nothing,
coming from elsewhere, can penetrate. Behind each "one," as its behind,
there is the primal matter of the unique: uniqueness itself, insignificant and
as if reduced to its impenetrability. Primal matter is the back side: that is to
say, that which has no face, that which one cannot face up to, but which
opens and which comes into the open, or as the open itself. The open as
such, that which cannot be indexed "as such," being comparable to nothing, not even itself, since the "self" itself is still, infinitely, to come. The
open as such, incomparable, but which, barely open, resounds in itself as itself, the echo of its idiomatic creaking, cracking and straining.

this splitting at the bottom, which does not arise from it but nonetheless touch it is not to merge with it: it is to come into contact, to experience the some other thing behind the thing, but the thing itself behind itself, withquently withdraws into the depths, as unobtrusive as disruptive or diffiteration and torsion of absence and form. This torsion of the irreducible, realization itself. Not only does this realism affirm the real, it touches it. To realizing everything, while being nothing realized, being nothing, the res of Pure real, that is, of the real which springs forth from behind everything: self in its own detonation. Derrida's thinking is an absolute realism of the drawn into its reality. It is here just a question of the real: res, the thing it-^{Capes} from "the laws of presence itself." It is the hard kernel which is not cult—is a "kernel," not as a hidden presence, but as something which esbelongs to it just as it breaks it to pieces—this splitting which consethough it has the irreducibility of matter and presence, and it has the alpresent nor absent, it is, properly speaking, neither form nor matter, behind: it doesn't pass behind as one might journey to the depths, behind pass uniquely to the unique reverse of the unique. This reverse is neither appearances or into the supposed consistency of a whole. Rather, it must This is why it must be one, each time one, which impossibly passes

resistance of the impenetrable, of the thing or being as the hard blow

nation of anxiety and joy. consists in an endless recoil or retreat, though this recoil without end, the real, is a hard kernel because it is not given, because its being as kerne turns out to be nothing but a being-to-that-which-is-not-already-there: sel opening and its gaping wide. This is simply being-to-self, but being-to-self from implying flight, is its most proper stance, its emergence in a combi the excess of sense, neither its hyperbole nor its exhaustion, but merely its hind of sense or, rather, in a sense behind which is neither the reverse nor he wants to touch the real as if it were himself: to be himself the inexpress. ible kernel from which sense originates in what is beyond sense, in a be This is why Derrida wants to touch himself as if touching this real

one unveils it, especially when one unveils it, that about which there is of all names and is the secret par excellence: what remains secret even when baric background noise. nothing to say, except to say its name again and again, a bizarre and bar name. Thus he wants to touch the secret of his name, 19 which is the secret together, in the jubilant mourning for his name, which resounds as a los he wants to wish just that its breath is taken away, anxiety and joy mixed When I say that he wants it, I mean: he wants to get behind the will

spirit of philosophy out of the matter of music, this is our entire history. ing trait of the sonic rip around which the air wraps itself, vibrating: the discourse, of form, and of sense, a proffering of the unnameable, archi-trac-(Music deprived, at bottom, of art and of articulation in general, of

autoheterography of existences. emerges in falling. Thrown, then, as if rhythmed by its going-to-itself, in the very rhythm which disjoins and conjoins them one to the other. Rhythmed self, 20 which takes it out of itself, wrenches it from the depths and the abyss, but thrown into the splitting which opens it, and out of which it hurls it back into the general communication of all uniquenesses in the whole in order to hurl it toward the inexpressible unique which, in turn Being-to-itself: being-thrown—but not simply precipitated into an

original impropriety of the thing itself; the syncopated beat of being, w guage, a barbaric glottal stop at the back of the throat, the rough crashin which being is reduced. Already and not yet language: the back of where the real properly refers to itself, across its opening, the absolute and The itself of the self is just the step and the echo of this rhythm

> which gives voice. and the ending of a song, growling and grunting, a nonspeaking animal

like the rhythmic and melodic idiom of the origin itself, its unique poem. ticulated in the opening of the real, a song which sings nothing but which which name only the behind of all naming, which articulate what is inarrecognize them myself."21 Words which no longer name anything, or rather traits of language," toward "words' that are so 'true' that I can no longer modulates—or even silences—this opening itself. A proper name, then In order to touch this rhythm, one must never stop "effacing all the

nouns are proper names: names and language are born in this vacillation. All proper names are common nouns and, reciprocally, all common

each uniqueness. The example of the inexemplifiable must bury itself in and re-emerge from never be any exemplarity: the unique must begin (itself) again each time. hind Derrida still Derrida rather than a bottomless behind. There must unique and inimitable example of self, "Derrida" in this case then and beable: but at the same time, necessarily, not any one but this one alone, the indefinitely substitutable, a simple exemplar at the heart of the innumer-Any which, consequently, any such and any da, making any sound

chokes even. for itself as much as for every other. It resonates dimly, it creaks or grinds, nances, and by their very coinage, is coined the absolute significance of one Right at the insignificance of a name, in the vagaries of its asso-

heard, but the whole of the real resonates there. to the others, which a hiccup would suspend. This does not make itself nameable sounds and the inimitable timbre of a voice, like the echo of one It's not something that can be heard, it hovers as if between un-

Translated by Jonathan Derbyshire

JUDGING

The Kategorein of Excess

Stark violence
Lays all walls waste; private estates are torn,
Ransacked in the public eye. We forsake
Our lone luck now, compelled by bond, by blood,
To keep some unsaid pact; perhaps concern
Is helpless here, quite extra, yet we must make
The gesture, bend and hold the prone man's head.¹

Might not the categorical imperative be something that we can no longer avoid? Might it be—in Kant, certainly, but also in what is a long way from Kant—an obligation for our thinking? An obligation, moreover, that is indissociable from what most urgently obliges us to think, an obligation that is not the self-reproduction of the philosophical exercise but, if we can seriously say this, a worldly demand? And, over and above its being indissociable from this demand, might this obligation not be inalienable, not merely as something proper but also wholly otherwise?

Nothing is more foreign—or stranger—to us than the categorical imperative. The phrase itself is one of those rare technical expressions that have passed from philosophy into everyday speech, as if our language had been exposed [impressionée] to it, in both a moral and a photographic sense. And yet, perhaps it only seems to have been thus exposed; our language holds this phrase at a distance, never uttering it without invisible quotation marks. Indeed, although this phrase does haunt our language, our language strives to exorcise it. "Categorical imperative" evokes, on the one hand, the unreserved sovereignty of a moral absolute, the formidable inaccessible character of such a commandment, the impossibility of its ex-

ecution, which is ultimately to say the impossibility of obeying it or the vanity of trying to submit to it. Moreover, its majesty is soon cloaked (and this has long been the case) in a degree of absurdiry or, in any case, comports itself in a manner that is decidedly obsolete. Insofar as Kant's signature, included between parentheses in the quotation marks, is not efface (and it never is completely effaced), it is the Kant of a rationalist and formalist Schwärmerei that shows through, the Kant in whom pietis hypocrisy competes unstintingly with a catatonic understanding. Two choices: either we smile at this or we become enraged by it, from Hegel to Nietzsche, from Hegel to ourselves.

Above all, however, the "categorical imperative" carries with it the values or the determinations that we hold to be most loathsome for our culture and our moral sensibility (something that stems from there no longer being any moral philosophy, without which the nature and scope of this fact cannot be put to the test). What the imperative brings with it, then, is not only the famous "respect for principles" that takes matters "our of our hands," so to speak (echoing the famous "dirty hands" of culpability), but, first and foremost, the notion of absolute commandment, the urgent tone and the coercive gesture, referring sometimes to the beautiful soul, sometimes to an unqualifiable tyranny. Moreover, the imperative brings with it something that inverts all of this: obedience, submission, being-obliged or being-constrained, manifest and inadmissible antitheses of the freedom whereby we define or assert ourselves.

gives itself its own law. Lacking the ability to assign this act of self-givin and Nietzschean motifs; or, again, it continues to eye Stirner and Feuer Spontaneity to Values . . . from Nature to History, from Man to God, from People to State, fro our ethics and our politics lose all sense of direction and wander aimless dom is contrary to all obligation; it gains its authority from itself alone an bach in the same glance. Humanity and the individual are self-determin this sensibility no longer discriminates, for example, between Rousseaus tion, and it cannot be engaged without there being singular confusions be able to command. Nothing is stranger to our modern ethos than ob that consists for us in an absolute self-determination that nothing ough us, the Good itself, the "Good" that we no longer designate as such but press the freedom of self-determination, that is, they suppress what is, for ing; freedom is both project and nature. One thing is clear, however: free cal imperative suppresses the freedom of deliberation. Together, they sup The imperative suppresses the freedom of initiative, and the categor

And yet it is always possible that the categorical imperative is, at the same time, rather closer to us than we might suspect. Freedom itself, this freedom conceived as a state—or as a being—withdrawn from every power and from every external command, this freedom is posited as a "categorical imperative," by which we mean, at the very least, that it is not open to debate. (This is, for instance, the explicit or implicit motif in our most general practice of defending "human rights.")

the exercise of an injunction, an obligation or a submission. imperative. The imperative of our imperatives is that true imperatives musi of an essential and pure spontaneity. The imperative, then, is not exactly an not have the character of constraint, of externality, nor must they be tied to tion; if it were not imposed on those who ridicule and degrade it (or if its only thinkable as being simultaneously the ratio essendi and the ratio solutely and unconditionally. In one way or another, we pose or suppose word "freedom." We claim that freedom is imposed by freedom itself, abflourish, it would bloom spontaneously, since its nature is ultimately that imposition were not sought), freedom wouldn't impose itself; it would cognoscendi of all moral law. Self-evidently, therefore, freedom imposes or thority of this "knowledge"); for us, by contrast, freedom is thought and is for Kant, is the ratio essendi of the moral law, this law is, in turn, the ratio man rights") is given, conceived, recognizable, or assignable. If freedom, it in terms of an essence, then this or that collection of "freedoms" or "huthat this freedom (or, if we no longer want to run the risk of determining has to impose itself. But this self-imposition is no longer really an imposicognoscendi of freedom (which turns the imperative into the singular au-This being so, we somehow tap into and divert a certain aspect of the

(At the same time, an abyss opens up between what we oddly persist in calling a "subject," between what we represent as being stripped of its spontaneity by economy, history, the unconscious, writing, technology, and what is, in fact, the true metaphysical concept of the subject—to which, in the last analysis, we no longer even realize we have been subjected in the name of freedom.)

Yet it still falls to us, like a muffled and obstinate demand, to think something (freedom, for instance) as an unconditional prescription. Perhaps we cannot even think without insisting, in one way or another, that this very thing—"thinking"—immediately obeys some secret intimation. So, through or because of its very withdrawal, the imperative draws nearer to us. And this proximity may well be closer than everything that, under the guise of proximity, we think of in terms of familiarity or intimacy. It

would be the proximity of that with which we are obsessed but that is lost to us, the proximity of that whose loss haunts us.

Now, what haunts [hante] is, according to its accepted etymological origins, what inhabits or occupies [habite] or, on a more knowing etymological reading, what returns to the stable, to the hearth, to the home. Haunt is from the same family as Heim. The proximity of the imperative might well be the Un-heimlichkeit that haunts our thinking, a disturbing peculiarity that disturbs only because it is so close, so immediate in its extrangement. But to return to the familiar abode is still to return to the ethos. The stakes here are none other than those of an ethics, therefore not in the sense of a science or a discipline, however, or in the sense of a moral sense or sentiment, but in the sense, precisely, of a haunting.

Now, it cannot be a matter of taming the peculiarity of the imperative or of pacifying its haunting. Even supposing that the imperative were able to anticipate our future—to predict the return or the advent of an imperative ethics—we have known since Hegel that such anticipation is not the job of philosophy, which cannot pass beyond its own time. Which means what, precisely? Simply that time—the element of thinking—does not overstep itself; this limit, in short, defines it. To think is neither to predict nor to prophesy nor to deliver messages, but to expose oneself to what happens with time, in time. In the time of haunting there can and must be a thinking and an ethics—if ethics it is—of haunting.

But assuming, despite everything, that such anticipation were possible, it could never be the anticipation of a tamed imperative, an imperative rendered familiar and natural. If we have indeed lost the imperative (assuming that such a remark makes any sense), we can rest assured that, at the very least, we are unlikely to recover it; its essence runs counter to of avoids this. The imperative cannot be domesticated—and this is again one of the hallmarks of haunting: it is, by definition, something domestic that cannot be domesticated. It does not enter into the economy that it haunts. It leads us back to an abode that, as an abode, doesn't allow us to settle comfortably into it. And yet it is still an abode. We certainly don't dwell in the imperative, but we do dwell under it.

As such, it isn't a matter of recognizing, reevaluating, and reappropriating the categorical imperative, whether as a reactivation of Kant's philosophy or as a "resource" within it (philosophy cannot go beyond its own time), nor even as a way of appeasing the ghosts that haunt us. It can only be a matter of indicating the imperative's *insistence* for a thinking, out thinking, that is less a "tributary of Kant" than it is one that submits to an

imperative necessity whereby it is referred back, initially, from its very opening, to Kant.³

2

Why, for Kant, the imperative, therefore? Why does the expression of the moral law take place in the imperative voice? Why a prescription rather than a description? Why an order rather than a recommendation or an exhortation?

Kant's reply is simple: the imperative exists because *evil* exists in man. There *has* to be the imperative because there is evil.

We're not about to tolerate Kant's imputation to man and in man of a wholly radical evil. To the evil the spectacle of which the political scene (and can there be, henceforth, any other scene? isn't every scene political?) gives us a glimpse, a spectacle that we can agree is unparalleled in our history due to its constancy, its technical nature, its rationality, to this evil we want to concede only the nature of an accident (and, reciprocally, the very category of "accident" has ended up inheriting the intrinsic value of an "evil" or a "misfortune"). Those who do not see history as the necessary and perhaps asymptotic process of this accident's elimination see it instead as an accident in general, as a catastrophe having taken place on a prior or ideal register. In either case, wouldn't the accidental character of evil be the hidden metaphysical resource underlying our paradoxical capacity to resign ourselves to evil as such—the evil that we tend to call "banal"—so that we can have done with it once and for all?

Here, though, I'm not so much raising the question of evil—which is basically the question of its Kantian incomprehensibility—in itself as I am evoking it from afar. Any such examination would demand a great deal of groundwork since, in all likelihood, it couldn't really begin without sustained and prior consideration of the imperative. As is the case with freedom, the imperative is the *ratio cognoscendi* of evil. Concerning the latter, in the classical philosophical sense) is there at the very horizon of our questions and, second, that its presence as a question does not, in the face of the accidentality of evil, posit something that amounts to its pure and simple essentiality, and thus to some modern avatar of "original sin." Not that I want to make concessions to our sensibility, which recoils from the evo-

cation of an "original sin" (without ever going on to ask what we might mean by "origin" or by "sin"). No, I merely want to say that our sensibil ity—whether "pessimistic" or "optimistic"—is incapable of measuring up to the question of evil, and that this inability itself provides the measure of what falls to thinking (here, the "thinking" for which we are calling requires not simply a dispassionate or cold consideration but, perhaps, a wholly different sensibility for thinking).

ative involves neither punishment nor reward: and it's in precisely this that would address itself to the infant in man, and not to man. But the imper would have a decidedly supplemental corrective and pedagogic function. case is typical where laws are concerned), the imperative would not be the or herself spontaneously according to the law. Were this the case (and this there are physical laws, for example, laws of nature) and, on the other, the does not mean that there is, on the one hand, the law itself (in the way that to say, the possibility of transgressing the law—and the tendency to do so pose that the imperative prescribes the act of legislation (hence it prescribes dwelling on the formidable implications of this state of affairs, let us sup the maxim of action be the founding act of a law, of the law. Without "the law," in this sense, is given neither by the imperative nor prior to II. perative does not prescribe that we act in accordance with the law, since imperatives). The law takes place only as the imperative. And so the imtinction equivalent in Kant to the distinction between moral and technical we find its categorical rather than its purely hypothetical character (a dislaw itself; as an imperative, it would not be identical with it. As such, it imperative addressed to someone who, accidentally, might not direct hin-The law exists as a commandment because it can be violated. Now, this Rather, it prescribes acting legally, in the legislative sense. It prescribes that There is the imperative because there is evil. There is evil, and that is

Let us leave to one side the metaphysical or ideological model of legislative sovereignty—whether originary, institutive or constitutive which is also involved in this thinking. The effects of this model, income testable though they may be, are submitted by Kant to an essential limitation: it can never be a matter of either producing or presenting this limitation: it can never be a matter of either producing or presenting this limitation.

realm Kant explicitly renounces any search for the originary institution of the legal state. On the contrary, the political order is itself submitted to the imperative:

There are thus three distinct authorities (potestas legislatoria, executoria, iudiciaria) by which a state (civitas) has its autonomy, that is, by which it forms and preserves itself in accordance with laws of freedom. A state's well being consists in their being united (salus rei publicae suprema lex est). By the well-being of a state must not be understood the welfare of its citizens nor their happiness; for happiness can perhaps come to them more easily and as they would like it to in a state of nature (as Rousseau asserts) or even under a despotic government. By the well-being of a state is understood, instead, that condition in which its constitution conforms most fully to principles of Right; it is that condition after which reason, by a categorical imperative, makes it obligatory for us to strive.⁴

Contrary to appearances, this doesn't concern a thinking "of the state" in the usual sense in which we understand the term. The "state" designates, rather, the space necessary for the legislation that demands the imperative.

a being disposed toward evil.) self: at the very least, however, this means that freedom is addressed only to everything is good. What freedom is remains as incomprehensible as evil ittree choice between "good" and "evil" since, ultimately, for such a choice, out a disposition toward it, there would be no freedom. Freedom isn't the free will; instead, it means that without the possibility of evil and so withthere would be no freedom, since freedom would then be confused with comprehensible possibility, is evil, which is to say, free. If it were not free, it this imputation, evil is incomprehensible. But this is why evil, as an inpossibility of violating the law has to be imputed to us.5 In the necessity of ity), the prescription of the good would be absurd, and futile. Besides, the would not be "evil." (But this does not mean that without any evil act an animal or the devastating force of a volcano with the cruelty of humangiven. That is to say, it couldn't prescribe what it prescribes if the legislalaw of nature (we tend to view it this way when we confuse the ferocity of the evil disposition implicated in law by the imperative law. If evil were a recognized evil, localized by a law that takes it into account as a fact, and scribed in this legality independent of it. We need to distinguish between tion were given independently of itself; it couldn't prescribe if evil were in-The imperative wouldn't be able to prescribe if the legislation were

As such, the imperative corresponds to radical evil, to the evil that corrupts the very ground of maxims. That this evil is not that of a "propensity" is evident in two respects: it doesn't originate in a natural in-

clination, and it doesn't correspond with a slip, with a deviation from the maxim (in this case, the deviation would perhaps be no more than an error and perhaps there would be no possibility of voluntary evil; here, however, the will itself has to be radically corruptible). Evil is the corruption of the ground of the maxim and a maxim thus corrupted is a maxim that is no longer law making. Evil is not a contrary law; it is the disposition contrary to the law, the il-legislative disposition.

And yet it is because the law is the law of making the law (or of law making) that it reveals of itself—and, in a certain way, in itself—the inscription of this possibility. By definition, an ordinary law sets the "outlaw" outside the law. Yet the law of the law includes the outlaw as the one to whom it is necessarily addressed—the one to whom, in this sense, it is abandoned, while its addressee is, in turn, abandoned to the entire rigor of the law. "Act in such a way. . . " only makes sense if it is addressed, not only to one who is able to refrain from acting in such a way, but first and foremost to one who, radically, in his or her very disposition, does not are in such a way. The law prohibits the one to whom it is addressed from obeying it from the outset, without stumbling. It is the law of freedom, therefore, and this is why it takes the form of an imperative. This latter isn't an expression derived from the law, its mouthpiece, as it were. As the imperative, it is or makes the law.

The imperative law thus differs from right. Right never says "Act" It articulates a rule and asks that a particular case be submitted to it; as such however, it does not command. Or, more exactly, it commands to the extent that it is recognized as right, to the extent that it has the force of a law which presupposes the parceling out of a scope proper to law as such (collectivity, state, church, etc.). Here, though, we are dealing with the law of all reasonable beings, all beings capable of law. The imperative states—but is this still a matter of "stating" or of "saying"? And if so, in what sense?—the law's case, absolutely.

And yet, for all that, it is not an *order*. As with right, it differs from the orders with which our sensibility continually confuses it. At the very least, it differs if we understand the order as Canetti, for example, under stands it: as the gesture or relation whose most primitive form would be that of the threat of death that guides the fleeing deer. In fact, it could be that every human exercise of the order arises from such a menacing contraction.

mandment. But the imperative contains neither threat nor promise. Indeed, its essence lies in the fact that it contains neither. Such is the sense of obedience out of duty, as opposed to an execution that only conforms to duty. To obey because of duty is to obey in the interests of duty itself alone, which is what has no interest. Moreover, duty obliges us to nothing other than duty itself, whereas the order requires its being carried out. (Do we really need to be reminded of the fact that, for Kant, this has nothing to do with a morality that is satisfied with good intentions, with a morality exempt from doing everything possible in order to carry out its duty?)

Duty obliges us to duty. In other words, it prescribes the legislative act, and this act, by itself, has no option but to *obligate itself* to the universality of the law, since it is obligated to a universality which is precisely not the universality of the particular contents of the law but that of its legality or, more exactly still, that of the being-law of the law. The law of duty obliges us to the duty of the law, this law that is not given.

Hence, although the law lies outside of the realm of orders, it does not lie outside that of duty. The former is limited to the application of a law with which it cannot, by itself, identify. On the contrary, it presupposes that such a law is known, whatever it might be (for example, the law of the strongest...). In the same way, and for the same reason, the order isn't identified with the utterance of the law, and the act of ordering can generally do without speech: "The order is older than language, otherwise dogs would not be able to understand it." On the other hand, it makes no sense to imagine the imperative as other than being uttered. The imperative is *only* a verbal or discursive form. *Duty* is not a mode of being—at least not in the classical sense of the term—but a mode of language—although perhaps in a radically new sense. What I have to do can be presented nonlinguistically; the fact that I have to do it can only ever be said. Ultimately, moreover, the fact that I have to do it can only be said to me. "Act..." This has to be addressed to me.

The duty of the law is no more a duty of love than it is an order: "There is no feeling of duty, although there is, indeed, a feeling from the representation of our duty, for the latter is a necessitation through the categorical moral imperative. Duty of compulsion not duty of love." Indeed: "One can demand of man that he do what the law commands of him, but not that he do it voluntarily." If duty depended on seduction, it would no longer be duty, strictly speaking, but would possess a power whose effect would be a matter of what Kant calls the "pathological." In this respect, such an effect could no longer distinguish duty from the threatening order.

sibility, to the condition of possibility of a reason that is itself practical sense of the term, its subject status: it belongs to reason's condition of pos only phenomenologically (and so never really as substance), but only in this subject. (This fact has no subject; it is not a subject). ticality happens to it as a fact, as the factum rationis of which it is not the that it shows itself to be such (it does not "reveal" itself); rather, this praclongs to what, although resembling a subject, exceeds, in the stronges that the imperative does not exist in the psychic substance known to u him irresistibly according to the law of moral practical reason"13 he mean accompanying him not as soul ... but as spirit, one that ... command More precisely: a reason that is practical in and of itself. Not, however, in The imperative does not belong to the nature of the subject; rather, it be Gemüt whose main job is to be the unity of transcendental constitution When Kant writes that "in man there dwells an active principle

of action but the discovery that reason as such, as pure reason, has to act tinct result). Or, if you prefer, the stakes are not primarily the rationalizing and insofar as it imposes praxis, that is, action whose result is not distinct pure practical reason it is identical with the a priori duty of being—that is the order of action itself insofar as it imposes itself as the order of reason Aristotelian tradition), praxis isn't in the first instance the order of action sonable beings as such. For Kant (who turns back, in this respect, to the principle of praxis isn't a transcendent reality; rather, it consists in reason than anywhere else, this transcendental indicates nontranscendence. The itself the transcendental of praxis. As elsewhere, yet here, perhaps, more of acting out-what it is: pure practical reason. in a given rationality in terms of which acts have to be measured; rather, as this account, and for the first time in its history, reason no longer consists To act as pure reason means to make law. Such is the duty of reason. On from the agent (unlike—or as opposed to—poiesis, which produces a disinsofar as they demand submission to evaluations and norms; rather, it is being practical in and of itself or in the a priori practical condition of rea The imperative provides the conditions of possibility for praxis or i

physics. Yet it could well be that a new task announces itself thus: the task of thinking "pure reason" in terms of its being-practical, in terms of the dun sensibility but one whose concepts need to be submitted—perhaps more that constitutes or enjoins it. than any other concepts—to critique or to the deconstruction of merc No doubt pure reason is not only an expression that is foreign to our

> at an injunction. gency but something that possesses an unconditional necessity. In all hyof reason (engaging thus, perhaps, in its own deconstruction) takes places sense of having been pre-inscribed; it is enjoined. Reason or the rationality thing from out of oneself). What's more, freedom isn't prescribed in the more than a beginning, an initiative or an initial move without any end of a telos programmed by an archē. Free action as end is never anything the rationality of reason, and why it does not constitute an end in the sense of nature, for example. This is why freedom is not, as in Hegel, reason or cannot be presented as a necessity derived from a prior law—from the law free) action of pure reason. Since this end is unconditioned, however, it the sense that the action that holds here as an end is the unconditioned (or an end-not in the activist sense of "acting for the sake of acting," but in condition of an end. By contrast, the categorical imperative makes action pothetical (or technical) imperatives, action is a means submitted to the This means that the action is not just an empirically determined continrive to the modality of action,14 it prescribes action; it obliges us to act. ertheless prescribes effectively. That is, even before giving instruction rela-(and, as we know, Kant defines freedom as the power of beginning some-If the imperative is not an order in the aforementioned sense, it nev-

exceeds it absolutely. to reason. The imperative injunction forces reason in the direction of what such is deprived of all executive power. Equally, though, it imposes, it apwhich nothing, not even its mere possibility, can be known by or revealed plies, it joins to reason the prescription of a free action, a free legislation of threaten, does not force an action to be carried out—and the imperative as This injunction is both more and less than an order. It does not

Where would duty lie, and where freedom, if I have to act because, here or grounded on the condition that is thus imposed on an unconditioned inthe sensible (nothing could be more foreign to Kant), but an argument Over, does not constitute an argument grounded on a moralistic disdain for Were, it would submit the imperative to a sensible condition. This, moreself as factum rationis. The factum rationis is not an empirical intuition: if it or empirical."15 It imposes itself as a fact imposes itself, and it imposes itsynthetic a priori proposition that is not based on any intuition, either pure Junction. The factum is that the imperative doesn't depend on any fact. This is why the imperative "is impressed upon us [uns aufdringt] as a

the experience of action? there, in the other or in myself, I am obliged to encounter something in

and every self-mastery. It is also the practical mode of reason's being-a ceeds absolutely every self-positing act of reason, every self-representation occupies, in the synthetic a priori proposition that the imperative is, the outside, as it were, from an outside that, although exceeding all passivity, is tolerate?), but what it means before all else is that it befalls reason from the mode of this a priori gift. The anteriority of this gift is irreducible and ex it affects the mind [Gemüt] in a certain way.")17 The factum is the practical place insofar as the object is given to us; but this in turn is possible only praxis; rather, its praxis enjoins it. And in this sense, its praxis is given to it is not such that, in it, reason can present itself as the originary power of it than originary, and that, for this very reason, it is a factum. 16 Its factualing with the a priori forms of pure intuition a position that is derivative rather time of pure practical reason. This perhaps means that it at least share place of the a priori forms of pure intuition. It is, we might say, the space relation between active and passive, between spontaneous and receptive tivity is the end). The imperative is inactive; it is imperative. It exceeds an far from being identical with activity (which, remember, is prescribed; acreason (and might it not be precisely this that our sensibility is unable to fected. The imperative affects reason. Yes, this does mean that it humiliate just as objects are given to it in pure intuition. ("Intuition . . . only take No more, however, is the factum rationis an intellectual intuition; it

and receptivity or between subject and finitude. It is not, like Hegelian state). It is—or is given—differently. raising itself to the level of subject (the subject of philosophy or of the ethos, the being-finite realizing the moral Idea by denying itself and there does not dialectically sublate the critical distinction between spontanety (for this would amount to the same thing) an originary act. The imperative Hence this excess reconstitutes neither an "originary intuition"

and the imperative only imposes separation insofar as separation is imseparation as if it had produced it; rather, separation is imposed upon it activity (which it enjoins). What it does not do, however, is impose this ative imposes the separation of a passivity (to which it is enjoined) from an the imperative repeats this distinction: since it is the imperative, the imper latable distinction is imposed. posed upon it. Put differently: there is the imperative because this unsub-In this difference—which, being absolute, is also not the Absolute

> it obliges us. neous to and incommensurable with the reason from the heart of a fact (posited, established, available), designates a factuality heterogewhich, nonetheless, it emerges. This incommensurability measures us; Now, the factum rationis, far from corresponding to rationality as

our question). This is not impossible; in any case, this problem belongs to the horizon of reached, much less surpassed. Still, we can at least indicate this—even if zon of this section of the present volume, 18 a horizon that has not been this term (can a question, for instance, be transformed into an obligation? this indication carries us beyond any question in the conventional sense of difference and the Derridian question of differance), constitutes the horipeats and displaces the Heideggerian question of the ontico-ontological This question, understood as an ontological question (one that perhaps re-What does it mean to be obliged? What does it mean to be enjoined?

moral law we have never been able to lose."19 tion of the original predisposition to good in us is . . . the acquiring of a that is nevertheless neither a grounding nor an institution: "The restoraobliged not by force of an authoritarian order but by force of a constitution lost incentive for good, for the incentive that consists in the respect for the We are obliged—reason is obliged—to respect the law. We are

"there is [or there is not] a universal law," for example—does this make speak neither of "good" nor of "evil." sense for an injunction alone . . . ?). Without this relation, then, we could ^a descriptive proposition can be posited separately, devoid of relation gives the law (always providing that it is even possible for us to isolate it; if Place without respect, and it is not the imperative as such, in isolation, that sider here), forms the very relation to the law. The imperative cannot take being qualified as "a feeling of reason" (an aspect that I do not want to connal the loss of any relation (albeit negative) to the law. Respect, even before We have been unable to lose respect, for the loss of respect would sig-

harm in refusing to follow them. And if, moreover, I consider it to be become irrelevant to me; they can no longer oblige me; I might see no such cannot be lost. I can indeed lose respect for all sorts of laws; they can Equally, it isn't out of respect for any particular law that respect as

to any legislation and more archaic than any legislative subject. It is, para obliged. "It is prohibited to prohibit," for example (which, moreover, proves unabatedly in our souls."20 Losing this respect would signal our submission doxically, the law of what has no law. "Nature" has laws, "man" does not The law of obligation is not a particular law; it is the law of the law, prin that the imagination of May '68 had an acute sense of an imperative ethan archy or absolute sovereignty oblige themselves; they are obliged to be the law of an absence of law or the law of a pure self-giving of the law. An to another law, another obligation, one for which the good itself would be And he cannot lose respect. [into evil], the injunction that we ought to become better men resound Respect, however, binds me to the law of obligation itself: "Despite this fal "good" not to follow them, it is because I am bound by some other law

selves as law (it's not through "humanity" that the law has to be deter about obligation, and the relation to this incommensurability constitutes dignity, is appalling. It is unstoppable. The protestation of respect thu ethical resistance," as Levinas has it.)21 The price paid for this in time, lives as we know all too well, doesn't mean that respect is something that sweep truth, at least insofar as it manifests itself as a challenge to violence (which straint or propensity. Ultimately, what we call the empirical proves nothin command us but because it is incommensurable with any power of con mined but vice versa, as we shall see) we give ourselves over to the law, still less to say that we have to give our us, makes of us the factum rationis that obligates us. Yet this isn't to say that perience of evil. Respect protests in the name of what is incommensurable constitutes a dimension of experience without which we would have no ex violence away; here, it is a matter of a "resistance of what does not resistspect for a higher obligation, for the true authority or for the authority o more than this: the force of a constraint always ends up by resisting the re obligation's injunction. Not because such an injunction has the power to We are obliged by and toward what obliges us, by and toward thi

much as the law is not decreed by my maxim. If they were, universality to the form of the law, that is, according to its universal form. Universality appropriation of a good. The law prescribes the act of legislating according join us. The gift can be tied to the injunction, not to violence would not be given but imposed; it would do violence to us rather than en however, is not given. Neither its criterion nor its nature are given in Respect isn't addressed to a good, since the law doesn't prescribe the

> that of subjectivity.) universal law. But this doubtless demands a singular status that is no longer It doesn't prescribe submission to the universal but prescribes that I make that it can't be my law; on the contrary, it has to be the law of my maxim. cess of what ought to be a rational subject, it also enjoins a beyond of subconsist in the establishment at the universal level of a singular will.²² The imperative—from this side of the subject to beyond it. (Which isn't to say jectivity in general. The law traces a single trajectory—the trajectory of the priation through subjective particularity. The moral law is not only in extask of the universal lies in an entirely different direction from its approthe law decrees (this is even its only decree) that universality should not tionality as a task and not as a good that has been assigned to it. Inversely, law that exceeds it. The moral law prescribes universality and, with it, ra-Hence the moral law—the imperative—withdraws from the rationa

fore, from a doubly other outside that demands, addresses, and enjoins it. in reason itself, an injunction is addressed to reason, from without, thereof the law: it is not a matter of the subject's giving -its -law to itself; rather, reason itself. This "in ... to ..." provides the incommensurable structure small one, even though it determines the being-other of every other. It is alterity isn't the fact of some assignable other, whether a great Other or a Junction in reason to reason, the fact that reason's other is inscribed within upon) or responds to (but without responding24) the alterity of the law. This subject, joining to it its fundamental inability to satisfy the law-which the fact of reason, the fact that there is a factuality or a facticity of the inthe subject; that is, the latter faces up to (but without being able to look disjoins it.23 Respect is the very alteration of the position and structure of the law and the humiliation of the subject before it: the law enjoins the This is why respect is simultaneously admiration or veneration for

nothing. This leaves no room for a more elevated sense of the good and Points instead to the immeasurable extremity of this elevation: das höchste goods in general, it also consists in nothing other than this reduction to De or make a "good."25 The Sovereign Good not only reduces to nothing cording to a difference that is incommensurable with anything that could understood less in terms of the good than in terms of sovereignty: that is, acthe self-legislation of the subject. And this is why the good that is in here In play, since it still falls under the name of the Sovereign Good, needs to be Respect, then, is to the consideration of a good as the imperative is to

ken, it obliges us: timately, means that we cannot measure its excess. And that, by the same to treme: not the "highest" good, in other words, but the excess of extremity beyond all height and measure. The Sovereign Good also, and perhaps ul. measured in terms of "height" of any sort. The Sovereign Good is this ex-Gut, the highest, supreme, or sovereign good, which, in fact, is no longer

alone can make life worth desiring) in opposition to the law-a law by virtue of by the idea of an original predisposition (in us) that we count them all as nothing and ourselves as unworthy of existence, if we cater to their satisfaction (though this which our reason commands us potently, yet without making either promises or nature through so many needs, are at the same time raised so far above these need What is it in us (we can ask ourselves) whereby we, beings ever dependent upon

a "good," namely, being-obliged by the law. Kant writes: ness) and require, as its very sovereignty, what can no longer be thought as Equally, the Sovereign Good cannot both exclude goods (or happi-

same time in the ethical, law-abiding conduct of rational beings.²⁷ which reason can award it to rational beings in the world and, of course, at the it is to be sought in the supreme requirement, that is, the only condition under can provide, that is to say, in happiness (the greatest amount of pleasure). Instead sible in the world, which good, however, is not merely to be sought in what nature This ultimate end of pure practical reason is the highest good, so far as this is pos

phenomena that does not itself appear in the phenomenal sense. In his and, if it needs to be constructed, according to the second formulation of sublimity of our own destiny which enraptures us more than any beauty. which invites familiarity); and in this instance, since the ruler resides it isn't in the sense of a phenomenal law but in the sense of a law of the the categorical imperative, in terms of the type of a universal law of nature law exceeds absolutely the farthest limits of representation and measure 11y, there is only one sublime) is the feeling of the limit of our faculties. The tinguished from the feeling of the sublime involved in our destiny; in real The feeling of the sublime in general (always assuming that it can be diswithin us, this respect, as of a subject toward his ruler, awakens a sense of the law (as of the law on Sinai) instils awe (not dread, which repels, nor charm Respect for the law concerns its sublimity: "The majesty of the mora

> feeling of the sublime is addressed to what exceeds form. own copy of the Bible, next to Luke 17: 20: "the kingdom of God cometh not with outward show," Kant wrote these words: "visible (form)."29 The

law of forming it. of this world under moral laws-is concerned, there is no law if not the one, in which we could live. So far as the formation of this ethical worlding an ethical world—making it or forming it as if there could be a natural absence of law; that is, there is the law of making an ethical world, of formrechnical task. There is no natural law of formation (in the same way that joined because it can be neither represented nor taught in the manner of a invisible. What exceeds form doesn't take on a superior or supersensible life is unrepresentable for us). There is simply the law of legislating in this form that appears and delivered over to reason as a task.30 This task is enform. Rather, it denotes the very formation of form, concealed in every And yet the universal character of the law is not given as something

end in a manner that is both "divine" and "sublime." resentation (and of the subject) makes the law. And the law destines to this withdraws the very formation of form and of world—this beyond of repopening onto a limitlessness of form that would somehow lie beyond form, it marks the end of form and of the world insofar as it exhausts or representation—the limit beyond which we cannot pass since, rather than him. "God" is not beyond representation. On the contrary, the beyond of the divine destination of man insofar as this destination is enjoined by more than, for the same reason, He is the God of religion. No, "God" is imperative and not the reverse."31 "God" isn't the God of nature—any egorical imperative exists: "the idea of such a being . . . emerges from this project) of law. Granted, God is the legislator, but God exists because a catity's "divine destination." But the "divine" doesn't name a subject (or a Understood thus, the sublime character of the law indicates human-

this abandonment. 32 tion or since the imperative began to present us with its irreducibility, is destiny has essentially abandoned. The law abandoned—to itself. What or an accomplishment. Rather, it is a way of abandoning. Perhaps the cathaunts us, what has haunted us ever since our loss of tragedy's representaegorical imperative is only a transformation of tragic truth, a truth that This mode of destining is not a way of promising nor of fixing an end

of finitude. The sublime character of the law—which depends strictly on Hence there is a destination, an ultimate abandonment to the sense

solute telos of the infinite development of a finite being.33 the other hand, there can be no destination to an end thought as the ab sality, to the absolutely grand and to the incommensurable in finitude. On its imperative nature—stems from the fact that it destines to the univer-

tion is addressed. conception of the law as slavery. By contrast, the imperative imposes the Now, to this thought is joined the corollary of a (Christian and speculative to its only freedom, a freedom that, moreover, it thus confers upon itself sublates itself, conserves itself by suppressing itself as a law into a submission which turns the substance into a subject-God, Nature, or Man-the law law as the outermost, unrecoverable limit on the basis of which the injunc the self-legislation of the subject. In the self-legislation of a substance perative. The law is unsurpassable as the imperative law because it is no What still counts here is the beginning, then, the sending of the in

of which is recoverable and each of which seems, indefinitely and in turn else, the recipient of the law. Here, there are always two "origins," neither is the recipient and not the self-positing and self-legislative freedom of the itself the ground of the imperative: there is an imperative because freedom the law. And yet, it prescribes this to freedom, enjoins it to it, and this is folds as if the law prescribed to freedom the job of beginning this side of the status of a principle: the imperative and freedom. And everything undifferently, there are two "principles," neither of which responds strictly to to step over the other: the address of the law and the free beginning. Pu dom, therefore, prior to all law. And yet this freedom is, before anything proper to its nature—but in beginning from itself: it is an inaugural free rocally, freedom does not consist in obedience to its own law-to the law Hence the law is addressed to a freedom and not founded by it. Recip

not as the condition of existence or manifestation, but as the condition of realizaing? In reality, it is nothing like this: freedom is the ratio essendi of the moral law ventive power behind it, that it is nothing other than its autonomy, its self-position actually indicate that freedom is, in some way, beyond the law, that it is the inbe a contradiction.34 tion in the sense that a moral law addressed to a will not subject to the law would moral law is the ratio cognoscendi of freedom. But does the expression ratio essenti Critique of Practical Reason: freedom is the ratio essendi of the moral law and the True, we could go with the opposite by invoking the well-known passage from the

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maxim of that to the condition of an end. cause it is addressed to a freedom and so cannot in advance submit the tones. And what this also means is that the imperative is categorical bethat is modified accordingly in various ways or able to take on different etc.), unless it defines a constant underlying this whole group, a constant it is addressed and because it belongs thus to a more general group of addresses (interpellation, prayer, order, call, demand, exhortation, warning, ply to its freedom."35 This means that the imperative is imperative because the possibility of categorical imperatives is this: that they refer to no other property of choice (by which some purpose can be ascribed to it) than sim-The imperative is essentially addressed to freedom. "The ground of

what is proper to man. essence or nature of man, doing so in excess of every category, in excess of and so to affirm, impute, and attribute. The imperative categorizes its adother. Kategorein is to accuse, to speak the accusative truth about someone tends or abandons it to the law. In this way, the imperative categorizes the dressee; it affirms the freedom of the addressee, imputes evil to it and ineven, according to the Greek sense of the term, of being categorized by the by the sameness of the other); it is the possibility of being interpellated or, from out of the alterity of the other (and not of being in some way ratified "collective" as such—is the possibility of being "addressed" by the other, individual, is not individual. And what is not individual-but also not be seen as the free will of the individual subject. It concerns what, in the not accidentally or provisionally the addressee of the injunction. As such, this freedom, which is not the self-position of the Subject, is no longer to What this ultimately means, then, is that freedom is essentially and

continually addressed is to avoid the conditional submission to any concept of man whatsoever, whom, in the finite space that he never exceeds, the kategorein of excess is but only to the injunction that is destined for him and that destines him. This injunction destines man to nothing but being such a destinee: one to To treat humanity as an end is to treat it as just such an addressee. It

Translated by James Gilbert-Walsh and Simon Sparks

Lapsus judicii

What happens when philosophy becomes juridical? What happens when philosophy becomes juridical, not in the sense that it takes right as one of its objects and assigns itself the task of a reflection or meditation on it (although philosophy cannot legitimately neglect this sort of work...), but in the sense that philosophy itself, as such, would be instituted, determined, and presented according to the concept and in the form of a juridical discourse and practice? In the sense, then, in which philosophy would be legitimated juridically. What would be the stakes, the nature and the validity of this operation, which goes beyond anything that we might term a "philosophy of right"? What then of philosophy? What then of right?

Such questions might seem a little odd, but posed in terms of historical figures, they could be stated thus: What would happen if Athens were presented in Rome, and as Rome? That is to say, if Rome were only Rome in order to be the very thing whose exclusion constitutes it? For Rome can no doubt be seen as the substitution of right for philosophy; leaving aside the officially recognized history of philosophy, the history of its teaching would be more than enough to make the case.

Posed in historical terms the question would therefore be: What hap pens when, in Rome, philosophy passes into right?

It's no coincidence that the very philosophy that seeks to know itself through its own history—namely, Hegelian science—sees, in the moment of the Roman discourse on right (the corollary of which can be found in philosophical skepticism—and so in what can scarcely be said to belong to

philosophy), the very negativity of the Self, something that needs to be understood here as negativity turned in upon itself and deprived of its dialectical richness: the Self knows "the loss of its essence" in "the equivocal universal exclusion" and the "reciprocal dissociation" of consciousness that right designates by the "disdainful expression" persons (Person in Hegel's text, the German rendering of the Latin persona: mask and anonymity). The Latin concept (the Etruscan word) persona provides the strange figure that undoes the figure or the Gestalt—the form and the content—of the Self. Although the Life of the Concept, here as elsewhere, is sublated, the "state of right" is still a pure or, rather, wholly impure loss of substance and consciousness. Spirit—philosophy—passes it by rather than passing through it.

Yet in the run up to Hegelian science, Rome had already repeated itself. Philosophy had already become juridical. It had already become so with Kant. So common has this currency become (with and since Hegel), that it's sometimes even said that, with Kant, philosophy becomes legalism, an entirely formal, formalist, and procedural discourse. For a while, Kant would have been the Chicanneau of philosophy²—and for many he still is. In philosophy, it's Kant who prompts the question: What happens when philosophy becomes juridical, when it's articulated as jurisdiction?

The question is a double one, therefore, and doubly heterogeneous. If philosophy is Greek, it's the *Latin* question of philosophy; if Rome is the dissolution of philosophy, it's the *philosophical* question of Rome. I want to try to broach this question by explaining as briefly as possible this reciprocal implication, even if my explanation will have to take the form of an assertion rather than an argument. To the extent that it will ever be possible to *justify* this sort of assertion, that's something that will have to be done later on by examining the Kantian operation in and of itself.

If the Roman discourse on right is substituted for philosophy or imposes its mask upon it, then this is perhaps because it's in Rome, and on the basis of this, that metaphysics sets about declaring itself by right. Intifore, would be a Latin discourse. Greek discourse of metaphysics, therefore, would be a Latin discourse. Juridical discourse. (Of course, we would need to complicate matters still further by addressing the fact that "discourse" itself is a Latin concept, but we must take one or two shortcuts here.) Befalling logos both from within and without, "within" as "without," his substitution, however, Latin jurisdiction holds its ground and affirms

itself is articulated by it. by logos. And, to the extent that logos must pass into its own history, logo. its right: no jus without ratio. As such, it has (always?) already been claimed

such, indeed, is the logical duty, office, and right of "saying" . . . The basic and dictio, in the twin production of the judicial and the judicious. statement and reason—takes the place of logos through the coupling of ju entanglement of speech (and language in particular) with right constitutes ing said, if an element of a code is going to be determined for language and right—just as, reciprocally, right has to be inherent to its saying, to its be facts here.) Jurisdiction is the fact of saying right. Such saying is inherent to borders on tautology. (Almost inevitably, we will repeat some well-known earlier, here and now, hic et nunc—the very notion of "juridical discourse" Latin discourse. Discourse—in the language of the sixteenth century, both if the statements formed within it are going to be just or even judicious But what is juridical discourse? In the Latin world—or, as we saw

cause, to plead. From this point on, discourse only shows things by pleadever it is that is being determined (indicere). Latin saying operates by judgto show, to discern or to fix, to establish and to point the finger at what ing their cause; and such is the program that it falls to Kant to carry out ing; it is constitutively judicial: causam dicere is to establish and to show the fore it's actually formulated. Dicere means to show and, in order to be able Hence dictio, by itself, in some way comprises a judgment even be-

of every jus, the formula that articulates its limits and, within these limits maximum claim resulting from the natural definition or conventional staonly through and as formulation. ratify in accordance with right. In itself and for itself, however, right exist action that conforms to the terms of right. To formulate, to articulate, is 10 is itself a juridical term. It is the mise en forme needed in order to engage an is not the idea (or the concept), but the formula, the "minor form." Formula secures it, is essential." Yet the form of this (other) determination of logue fined, in each case, extremely precisely." Equally, "the explicit articulation tus of an individual or a group."4 Yet this area needs ipso facto to be "dehere), jus is doubtless not a word; it is the "area [l'aire] of the action or the to a more Hegelian vocabulary (as if that wasn't precisely what's irrelevant last resort does it establish it. In itself, we might say, if we wanted to resort Jurisdiction is not added to jus. At most it explains it, but only as

Essentially, then, jus is articulated as a subject, but as a subject that is

of right) of "action" and "claim"; a subject that shows itself less through its less substance (rather, and as Hegel points out, this is what it loses) than a lished—or stated—on a nothingness of being and nature. phone, whose artificial voice) establishes and circumscribes propriety. This right is the one the power of whose voice (or, more precisely, whose megasonat, it amplifies the voice and lets it be heard from afar. (The subject of) the sense of "mask") the popular etymology of the word: the mask perassuming that we can indeed map onto its Etruscan origin (which carries persona. This (juridical) person, this persona, is still one who formulates, rours of the area that defines its figure and its identity: the outline of the presence (its figure, what is proper to it, its Gestalt) than through the conpower (an ability, will, desire, potential, faculty—always, though, in terms power itself is artificial and theatrical: (the subject of) right is estab-

uself without ever conceiving its necessity. evidential as such), the juridical order is the order instituted through the tion), cases ought to be referred and legitimated case by case. This necesformal—in every sense of the term—taking into account of the accident metaphysical necessity to the empirical, to the factual, to the actual or the rather (since what's doubtless involved here is a certain aporetic relation of overflow the inevitable limitation (itself entirely empirical) of the various sity of empirical conditions (of personal situations) that would always sity doesn't stem from the pure and simple accident of an indefinite diverforms of right. Here, it is a matter of the necessity of the accidental. Or essence. De jure, the law ought to be the universal code whose very definiconstitutes the judge as much as the criminal); the fall, then, as accident (but this fact is itself constitutive of right, is itself the very fact of juris-diction implies the annulment or the reabsorption of any accident. De facto The "essence" of right stems from the singular relation of accident to through contingency, the fall according to opportunity (an opportunity than of jurisdiction. Casus denotes the fall—the fall in or through chance, is the formula that says or makes right by setting out the relation of the law lowing way: casuality constitutes the essence of right; casuistry, the essence herent to right corresponds to a specific status that I'd sum up in the folto the case hic et nunc in question. The fact that enunciation [le dire] is in-What is stated by the judge—judex, one invested with jurisdiction—

sumes it, suppresses its accidental character; picks it up [relève] after its fall; the one hand, it states the right of the case, thereby making it a case: it sub-Jurisdiction is articulated around a double structure, therefore. On

show, the other Latin name for a fall: lapsus. one of falling or sliding in on itself, a logic of falling back. In terms of the settled [case] and domesticated (casa, house, has nothing to do with casus sublative (aufhebend) jurisdiction proceeds thus in the same way as the judged, is always lapse and relapse. And it carries, too, as I shall want to model established by right, the case, even the case that has already been it has to fall down once it is picked up or sublated. The logic of the case i through the case alone, through its accidental character; even if the case; of this case and so states right itself through this case: in a sense, right exist Concept of Hegelian science. On the other hand, though, it states the righ

cident as such into account: therefore, never completely Greek (logical) never completely German (speculative). Kant's predilection for Latin seems less and less an accident. The Latin discourse of philosophy would be a way of taking the ac

other words, however counterfactual and improbable they may be: any is given as the case of its own utterance, so juridical discourse shows itself generic ability of fiction. right. In order to produce them, however, right will have to have the sent little more than a certain number of typical cases in the exercise of macy of a sign). According to this summary division, fiction would repreto which it does not actually apply (the illegitimate extension of the legititious Roman discourse on right through which the law is extended to a case you like, of a reality of pure signs); finally, the action of the so-called feth tion as a juridical case of a reality that is in itself concealed (the creation, if thing can happen) forms the handling of jurisdiction; then, the constitudemic exercise, in which the treatment of fictitious cases (possible cases, in cate the three registers on which this notion can be invoked: first, the acaknown, and I don't want to deal with it here. It should be enough to indition of "juridical fiction" in and since the Roman discourse on right is wel to be the true discourse of fiction. The prominent part played by the no-Since the case is not only unforeseen but has to be so, and since right

seal of the law (of its utterance) in order to be not simply judged but conlaw speaks of it. The accident—what happens—has to be struck by the means that no case is a law and that a case only falls under the law once the In fact, the relation of law to case—the relation of jurisdiction

> stituted as an instance or case of right, modeled or sculpted (fictum) in over to the state . . . and through one another. The implications of this necessity are quite radrerms of right. Juris-diction is or makes up juris-fiction. Law and case come which there can be no prior right, and which is the case of right. (When takes the right to state it.5 The persona of the judge and his edictum are peats its installation with the investiture of each person who receives or ical, however: the installation or inauguration of right must of itself be ficbefore right only if they are modeled, shaped, fashioned-fictioned-in judging: in fact, every installation of right would henceforth be handed Hadrian laid down a "perpetual edict," there was no longer the fiction of forged from the same fictitious gesture: right is said here of the case for the yearly manifesto formulating the principles for right saying. Right retioned. Jurisdiction as such needs to be uttered: the "Praetorian Edict" was

tially arises from a "cynicism" of fiction, from a "bare-faced lic." We prodeed, we might well be forgiven for saying that the juridical order essencific order of the persona, the formula, and the dictio. By saying right, the trom fingo) can in no way move past or be surpassed; it constitutes the spein the Concept, beyond any figure. The figure (which, like fictio, comes sure of each one of its distinctive traits, right up to its complete resolution synthesis, where the mark is always already led toward the dialectical era- 14W and that saying it fictions or figures the very "being" of the case. In-Judex always says at the same time that the reality of the case is included in ble mark of the case, a situation that stands in sharp distinction to Hegelian contingency, doing so in such a way that what is shaped carries the indelishapes the meeting of the universal and the particular, of necessity and there's always something that exceeds the limits of its spaces. Fiction always ory: a vision that produces visions. By contrast, (juridical) fiction works production; if anything and everything can happen for right, it is because pen in Dichtung, that's because it produces the unlimited field of its own the law neither produces nor sublates. If anything and everything can hapwith a world, with the accidental, eventful actuality of a "worldness" that like the world of metaphysical theoria. If poetry fictions, it does so as a thewhich come together in German Dichtung. Dichtung makes up a world; by definition, it excludes anything like a causal or accidental "structure"—just that word—the mixed values of the Greek poiesis, mimesis, and phantasia, principle, nothing to do with the values that are normally associated with Now, although we can hear the fiction in Latin discourse, this has, in

ing one of the central motifs that Kant introduces into philosophy. ceed as if (and the Greek word for fiction, remember, is hypokrisis), this be

par excellence, and it presupposes the sovereign autonomy of its sub tonomous operation (and, in Greek, autonomy is what gives itself its law clares Spinoza, and, in this regard, Leibniz, Hegel, and Mallarmé all stub and autonomous sense beyond all signs. "Veritas nullo egeat signo," de bornly insist on the same sort of poetry (poetry itself). This is the ausense—or, what amounts to much the same thing, the creation of a pure ple dictates that it involve the resolution of figures, that is, the signs of physics—consists in a putting to work (energeia) of sense. Its very princi-The poetic operation—at least in the way that it's thought by men

it is so first of all insofar as its agent fictions or fashions him or herself into the thing; more accurately, it is the act of this break or this breaking, and side of this form. It deliberately institutes the break between the sign and or figures a fact whose essence or whose own sense falls, on principle, our The juridical act—it scarcely merits the name "operation"7—forms

the person of the right to utter right.

substance of the Self is equivalent to the de-finition of the person; to fine case of the absolute subject itself. Jurisdiction implies that the origin is own figure. The accident that affects it or the occasion that befalls it is the of a dislocation. The subject undergoes a dislocation; this is the limit of its of a right, in other words, whose "area of action or claim" would be total solute origin and propriety of an absolute right: that of creation or of truth actio in personam.9 lar case, concedes the judicial action: not jus in personam, therefore, but ject nor the seat of right, unless the magistrate, on the basis of the particular tude, in other words. In much the same way, the person is neither the sublimitation, thereby contravening the logic of the subject. The loss of the case or that the inaugural gesture of right involves an "area" and thus a de-Right always proceeds from a delimitation to a localization, that is, by way unlimited, always escaping the limiting, localizing conditions of right extent that this subject wants to be and thinks itself accordingly as the abpens—accidit—to the subject of the poem (or) of knowledge, even to the well say, a little more precisely, that the juridical person figures what hap *judex* is equivalent to the poet and so to the theoretician. Indeed, we might diction" (but can we actually speak Greek and Latin at the same time?), the It's tempting to conclude that, because of this self-saying, this "auto-

The juridical person is determined by way of the accidental, the fic

opposite of the subject. 10 And this is also why its determinations are gathshe does so in such a way that this "self" is not a substantial identity, not a sation, defense, or sentence—and who states him- or herself thus; yet he or is stated.) The person is the one who states-whether on the level of accuered in that of the "subject" of the statement. (We've already seen that since tional, and (so) by way of finitude. This is why such a person is the precise "personality" per se; rather, it is the judgment of the person. right is what is said, the subject is only ever going to be the subject of what

lem taken from Greek discourse. Or, rather, at the same time that right was busy being substituted for philosophy, philosophy had already begun discreetly to saddle it with a prob-With judgment, right brings us back into the sphere of philosophy.

the sense that light produces colors. and if it does "see" it (in the sense of theoria), it is still, as Aristotle says, in than signifying the thing, however, the subject engenders or produces it, ceives the thing and, by conceiving of it, thereby conceives itself. Rather ones—is distinct from the concept. The subject of conception is the physical or metaphysical, poetic or theoretical subject; the subject always con-Judgment—logical or philosophical statements as well as juridical

gnoseological. political (or technical, and medical in particular) than they are properly choice, and decision, with connotations that are always more moral and tion that is more "practical" than "theoretical," denoting discernment, the Latin philosopheme par excellence. Its Greek precursor is krisis, a nojudicium—the juridical word, the term of jurisdiction—might well pass for Greek discourse has no real term for judgment. As we shall see, the

still need to avoid mistaking it, under the effects of a pathos, by reading the Phantasma. What we have to do, therefore, is krinein, to discern correctly signs incorrectly and so by running it together with *phantasia's evil* double, resentation." Yet we still need to gain or to recognize this criterion itself; we make it known. This is the phantasia kataleptike, the "comprehensive repactually corresponds to the character of the thing. The thing isn't given or of determining the "gnoseological" as a whole—with the Stoic theory of tion, through those criteria that mark it out, distinguish it, and thereby Produced in or through the subject; rather, it is known through its critethe sign. The kriterion is the distinctive sign, the mark or the imprint that Now, krisis only becomes a gnoseological notion—even to the point

as a lack of it. Second, the role of the decision (of a gesture "over and above that the accident might actually happen to knowledge rather than simply the sign. First, the pathological possibility of error; that is, the possibility ment, at least as the attribution or predication that relates the sign to the the logos) concerning the precision of the sign. Third, the role of the state the signs specific to it (its idioms). Three things emerge with the theory of

would be nothing), are still elements that are already different enough to and their soul), though certainly united (were this not the case, the things point of view, things are said to be finite, because they consist in a judgessentially a division: "Judgment is an expression of finitude and, from this opening of the thing itself but the imposition of its idiom, won against the ment, because their being present and their universal nature (their bod) tutive of judgment, since its job of adjustment needs to be understood as gained and thus a risk that always needs to be run. Uncertainty is constidanger or the risk of a fall into phantasy—a victory that always needs to be nongenerative conception. The "concept" furnished by the sign isn't the prepares the concept for the absence of conception—or for unnatural or from any sense of pathos will be transcribed by the judicium. It is right that The decision that is stated in order (in principle) to separate out

sign for the thing figured thus, the investiture through the sign and conerly comprises conception. Compositio implies first and foremost assent act of a compositio as opposed to the intelligentia indivisibilium that prop is one and the same thing) it implies the position or the imposition of the blage, fashioning, fiction; krisis always involves a hypokrisis, 12 then (but this will have to be no less changeable and personal in the manner of its estabtion, of an estimation that, in order to be ultimately certain of its result tion that, in turn, has Stoic origins)—as the specific part of an appreciatradition and the interpretation of the figures of Scripture (an interpretaferred by the sign of the right to say the thing. that treats of judgment), the judicium will be determined as the intellectual lishment. Through scholasticism and the critica (the part of the dialectica The judicium, then, will be determined—through the Augustinian

given in advance by the materials used, we're going to have to judge the tonic works built of irregular stone. Since the order of construction isn't and the unequal. Opus incertum, as we say in Latin to designate architec-The order of judgment is made up of the multiple, the uncertain

> is opus philosophicum incertum par excellence. possibilities of adjusting them ourselves. Judicial work is essentially an opus incertum. And Kant's notion of critique, constructed as it is on judgment,

masked statement of the law of its fiction and of the limits of its validity. some way given back what it has taken from metaphysics. It has given back tion of signs and the composition of figures-and the judicium, the natio—the reason that henceforth needs to be referred back to the separatrue from what is false." Through the history of judgment, right has in means that most of the time they make little effort to distinguish what is should be to form our judgements. . . . That men have little love for truth the first discourse of the Logique of Port-Royal: "Our principal concern ment henceforth qualifies the essential nature of man. Hence this, from lapsus belongs structurally (if not essentially) to the judicium—and judgto correct lapsus judicii. An enterprise de jure infinite, therefore, since the entire treatise of reason becomes a review of its case, an enterprise designed rors, of its education and rectification, in short, of its misconception. The remember): it becomes entirely a logic of judgment, of its fragility, of its ercan be seen from the Logique of Port-Royal ("... or the art of thinking," on the scene, from the time of certifudo, therefore. What happens to logos statement of the ego. The opus incertum is at work well before Kant appears ment of its own substance and of this substance as itself constituted by the metaphysical rule of truth as certainty—of truth as a subject's own stateis going to vary from one person to the next. 13 Descartes's Discourse on Method opens onto this shared division, installing a hitherto unknown inequality. If ratio is unequal for each and every one of us, then judgment The judicium is always unequal; more accurately, it is "founded" on

opens the tribunal of reason. Hence, the Latin discourse of philosophy comes into its own: Kant

ing to the fictioning structure of Latin right. In the sense that the entire discourse of metaphysics is determined accord-And if we can't avoid thinking here in terms of figures, this will have to be A. 1... we need to see it as the very conceptuality that Kant puts into play. more than a discursive ornament, it ought not to be seen as a mere figure; the fact that the notion of a "tribunal of reason" is still often seen as little with which Kant fits out his discourse. Quite the contrary. Indeed, despite can be no question of seeking metaphorical values in the judicial apparatus This expression needs to be understood literally. As we know, there

dure of the Critique of Pure Reason. of reason" that should occupy all our attention. It is mentioned here only because this idea opens—both figures and formulates—the entire proce Indeed, it is actually not the celebrated text concerning the "tribunal

of a judicial history of reason. In its dogmatic age, metaphysics began as cure its rightful claims while dismissing all its groundless pretensions, and self-knowledge, and to institute a court of justice, by which reason may se son should take on anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of with illusory knowledge. This judgment, Kant writes, "demands that rearipened power of judgment,"15 and it is this that calls for us to have done though, is "the effect not of the thoughtlessness of our age, but of its dogmatism" before drifting into indifferentism.14 Such indifference, purely empirical) "metaphysics fell back into the same old worm-eaten thought to have put an end to all this, but once it was usurped (because illegitimacy, then); Locke's "physiology of the human understanding" was despotic, before its internecine struggles cast it into anarchy (two forms of own "eternal and unchangeable laws." The problem, though, is that the are torn up and severed. Knowing ourselves becomes a matter of judging of metaphysics. Now, it is in precisely this regard that the founding logor or originary instance, but the belated and derivative product of the errors essentially judgment. In this instance, judgment comes before all else; it is It says the right of the right to say. And yet, setting itself thus in the post selves. This judgment of judgments is the praetorian edict of metaphysic according to these laws at the same time as it puts to work these laws them within metaphysics. The tribunal can only put to work a sentence passed history of reason—and here, no doubt, the very fact that reason present ourselves; judging ourselves presupposes that we have at our disposal our judgment that evokes the tribunal. And yet judgment isn't just a founding age (and this maturity can't simply be seen as something natural) is itself ther archē nor phusis; it is essentially reason. Yet reason matured into old the models of power and nature in favor of the model of right. Right is new able laws."16 The history that Kant relates consists, accordingly, in rejecting this not by mere decrees, but according to its own eternal and unchange tion of absolute praetor,17 reason is also touched by juridical casuality. itself as a history—belies the fact that these laws have only ever been given the logos that says "know thyself," submits to a radical conversion: its room The Preface to the first edition (1781) introduces the Critique by way

> fault from, or a lack of, right; I. Since it has to judge itself, reason is itself a case in the sense of a de-

the basis of critique). the growing entropy of reason itself (a true History can only open out on accidental institution of its tribunal: it arises from a history that is neither from itself alone, its jurisdiction can only be "absolute" in the paradoxically the growing richness of the Concept, seems, rather, to be deregulated by natural nor metaphysical, from a history that, far from being regulated by 2. To this extent, and to the extent that reason ought to draw right

self. Reason stumbles over its own case—the case of the judge. knowing itself—reason has an accident, which involves having to judge it-Rather than having an essence, therefore—which would involve

ically in the following three motifs: risdiction as such obsolete.18 It doesn't found the tribunal but leaves it physics down this route. However, the law thus invoked doesn't make jumatics, physics, and chemistry, and the job of critique lies in leading metathe—infinite—task of justifying itself. All of which can be shown schematpossible to judge. The "secure course of a science" is signposted by matheis a model for the tribunal, or at least a criterion according to which it is Surely, as the Preface to the Critique's second edition points out, there

insofar as it is bereft of knowledge. heation. Kant has no real theory of knowledge; rather, he addresses theory ence). The exemplary character of the sciences doesn't prevent them from this heterogeneity—but this gesture is a fictioning one, not one of identi-Deing heterogeneous to metaphysics. Analogism runs all the way through to the philosophical analogy charged with thinking the unity of experi-Ical analogy is able to provide no more than a model that is itself analogical logical models (in the Analogies of Experience, remember, the mathematother science altogether, one that appeals to the established sciences as anamakes up their soul or their core. Instead, then, Kantian metaphysics is an-"envelope" of "vulgar mathematics," denotes the universal science that Equally, it is entirely different from Cartesian mathesis, which, through the metaphysics. Kantian philosophy isn't geared toward epistemology (a discourse that aims merely to reproduce the rigor of scientific discourse). I. The mathematico-physical sciences are not and do not constitute

1ts own rationality; hence it has no need to judge. 19 And yet the fact still rehas always already recognized itself; it has always mastered from the outset 2. Reason doubtless sees itself at work in the sciences. In this sense, it

question raised by it. The famous Quid juris? with which Kant opens the to decide as to its own rationality, both insofar as it isn't at work in the sci accordingly never hope to equal. The sciences lack reason because reason sistency proper to them qualify them as models; mathematics, especially logues," on the other, who commend or blame Kant for one and the same selves as founded by philosophy (this interpretation is the parallel double son doesn't actually have a figure, or that it has lost it, or that it has not yet son is going to be given a figure—from which it doubtless follows that refacto, there are such judgments, this is both the question of right and the question: How are synthetic a priori judgments possible? Given that, a tative, nor justificatory, but all of these senses doubled . . .) of the critical cal sense (a sense that's neither foundational, nor explanatory, nor interpreences and insofar as it is not, in itself, a science. This is the properly jurial as such cannot be found in them; from this point on, reason has to judge the object that can actually take place, a presentation that philosophy can error made by the neo-Kantians, on the one hand, and the "epistemo isn't to say that, in order for them to be sciences, they need to see them mains that these sciences are always going to be lacking in reason. This found the figure proper to it. (something of which they have no real need).21 Rather, it means that reafinds itself qualified as the only adequate and autonomous presentation o bad reason).20 No, precisely the self-legislation of the sciences and the con Deduction in no way means that the sciences are going to be legitimated

ace to the second edition) bring to light is the judicial figure of reason on which it falls-is already that of the tribunal. What Thales, Galileo compels the witnesses to answer the questions he puts to them."22 As we out in accordance with these principles . . . like an appointed judge who ances can count as law, and, in the other hand, the experiments though "Reason, in order to be taught by nature, must approach it with its prince can see, what's at stake here isn't the functioning of scientific laws as such ples in one hand, according to which alone the agreement among appear solutely but merely established by saying right. physics (a subject that is science) and so insofar as this "subject" is not abprecisely insofar as this "subject" is not the subject of Cartesian metabut the gesture through which the "subject" of such laws is established-Toricelli, and Stahl (to recall merely the most celebrated page of the Pre-3. The analogical model that reason finds in the sciences—the mode

The stakes of this jurisdiction are double:

the areality of the rational area. This jurisdiction says juris-diction itself. cal), saying right is a matter of saying the area of the figure in general, of condition of its figurability. In the Critique (in philosophy become juridi-Itself (to say the outline, the contour, the *limes* of and in reason); it is to say phenomenal fiction (and phenomenal fiction is what replaces the poiests concept's area of legitimacy, the area that traces the sensible, phenomenal or] mimesis of the "thing itself"). It is, then, to say the area as such and for in each case by stating the very nonempirical possibility of statement) the cation makes jurisdiction; it assigns or it states (and does so first of all and reunion, fashioned in and as a figure, of the concept of intuition). Signifiline that models figures. Signification operates within a significtion (the place with respect to the figural or whose right is coextensive with the out-"imagery." It is or forms the condition of a cognition that can only take erty of an empirical image, and calling it a schema involves no recourse to the schema may be, it is still a figure: it is precisely not the intelligible propwith bringing judgment into play. Yet however nonempirical the figure of empirical figure charged with giving concepts their signification and so Equally, the triangle will still be the first model for the schema, that nonsentation of the concept in intuition. Figuration is the basic prerequisite. trace,25 through the tracing or the modeling of its "representation a priori," stand all this as a simple play on the word "figure" (unless the whole of geometry, whose "shining example" finds a permanent place in the critical the geometrical figure as such provides what is needed by reason: the pre-Kant's text is seen as a thoroughgoing play on this word); through its macy that has to be assigned to reason. Yet it would be wrong to undercepts."24 The construction of the figure thus forms the nexus of the legitiobject and presented (through construction) according to a priori conenterprise. 23 By "demonstrating the isosceles triangle," Thales in fact found these analogical models: the model of mathematics or, more precisely, of "that he had to produce this figure from what he himself thought into the I. It leads to a fictioning whose principle is furnished by the first of

ent the totality and unity of experience. This, indeed, is precisely what it multiplicity—would imply, in the first or last instance, that it could present phy, by contrast, has to deal with that existence—with its actuality and mathematics doesn't involve the existence of things. The fact that philosolosophy. Now, philosophy cannot hope to attain the pure and direct presentation of mathematics, a presentation that is only possible because 2. Yet the jurisdiction that needs to be established here is that of phi-

space. Time itself, the a priori form of the subject, does not present itself, imposed on it not precisely that of the nonoriginary position of reason of it face on, as it were, are one and the same. Philosophy can never attain ought to do and what, in principle, it cannot, since reason isn't intuin gaged in this precise case: ontology falls under juris-diction. problem. They suggest that reason is subject in advance to the condition of represent the temporal sequence through a line"):26 these remarks, from the it can only ever be figured by space ("because this inner intuition yields no right in general (its foundation in being), or it would be were the condition indiscernible from the sovereign gesture of the absolute establishment of put differently: reason has to trace the area of its own right. This gesture is rary with the concept. Philosophy has to judge the legitimacy of the figure originarius, that for which the production of the thing and the presentation from within a limiting structure. As such, the ontology of finitude is enthe figure; that reason cannot create its own limes, merely delimit itself Transcendental Aesthetic, which opens the Critique, sum up the whole figure [Gestalt] we also attempt to remedy this lack through analogies, and Reason is subject to the "a priori forms of sensibility," namely, time and the "demonstrative construction" of geometry, therefore, the pure a-real ization (or figuration) in which intuition is isomorphic to and contempo-

stitutes a case; it is neither necessary nor foreseeable, therefore, neither ent that cannot be taught but only practiced." Defined as a "logic," judg case, and hence judgment properly called, thus depends on "a special rate whether a case in concreto" belongs under them.28 The judgment of the distinguishes transcendental logic from its merely formal aspect. Merely man (the practitioners of krisis) might easily make;²⁹ in short, it is only by dent, against the errors of judgment that "a physician, a judge, or a state" programmable nor teachable. As such, it cannot be insured against acc ment—and the judgment uttered by the person who judges—itself contion to the content of cognition; it cannot, in other words, "distinguish ment,"27 since it deals with formal rules alone and not with their applicathe Introduction ("On the Transcendental Power of Judgment in General") Transcendental Doctrine of Judgment. So far as judgment is concerned chance (a word that comes from casus) that a case is properly judged. formal or general logic "contains no precepts at all for the power of judg All of which explains why the decisive moment of the Analytic is the

of judgment in the use of the pure understanding through determinate Transcendental logic repairs this fault. It alone can "secure the power

> sheltering jus from the casuality of its dictio. of right; it is, in principle, charged with saying the right of right and of The role of the Critique, therefore, is to occupy the place of the foundation scrutiny is called up (even though its use is then only a negative one)."31 standing that we have, philosophy with all of its perspicacity and art of rules, 30 thereby defining and concentrating in itself the very task of phijudgment (lapsus judicii) in the use of the few pure concepts of the undernot win territory or an area) but "as critique, in order to avoid errors of losophy. Philosophy cannot "expand the role of the understanding" (it can-

of substance within which jurisdiction takes place. sus judicii, by the slipping and falling that are an intrinsic part of the lack it inevitably thinks in a way that is structured around (or affected by) lapother words: since philosophy thinks itself—says itself—in terms of right, self the infinite flaw that leads it to fall continually upon its own case. In sets itself up as the site of privilege), with this same gesture it carves into ittion of all jurisdiction disengages from all juridical statutes (as much as it the very heart of critique as such. For this reason, as much as the jurisdicjuridical act par excellence: with this, we come before the tribunal itself, at Now, it is precisely this foundational operation that shows itself to be the

of this constitutive and permanent lapsus: the one that concerns the very principle of critical jurisdiction. By way of conclusion, let me simply try to address the first function

owes nothing to experience. ity of the case and forges the contradictory notion of a jurisprudence that ori case to which the rule can be applied. As such, it eliminates the casualtranscendental logic is the faculty of indicating, beyond any rule, the a pri-Because of the claim that it makes (the rights that it assigns to itself),

concepts of the understanding ought to establish the right of reason in establishment of right. Hence the transcendental deduction of the pure Proof that responds in a cause to the question Quid juris? Deduction is the ridical concept of deduction.³² Now, for "jurisconsults," "deduction" is the Critique, it is not under the motif of jurisprudence, but under the ju-And yet, although this operation will already have been carried out in

Judge, ends up falling upon its own case, on the case of its investiture as ling." is itself the legislation for nature."33 Sheltered thus from any external umiting condition, the understanding, from the moment that it comes to In fact, this is what it does, finally establishing that the understand-

subject of legislation is able to present itself (to itself) only as represented of this subject refers to the figural, delimiting outline of signification in ment: I "am" right; I "am" the limitation of my own statement. The right as figured, as a-realized in general. All cases are absorbed by right a prior ition and concept, if it demands figuration, that is simply because the very sketching out its persona: in the case that says the right of every case, it is general. This outline is the outline of a limit that is internal to itself, a fron areality. For this very reason, the subject is nothing more than the state ori is essentially dis-locative. Right consists in the statement of its subject; bility—only in this way can it allow jurisprudence to take place. The a_{pri} "legislator." If, in the schematism, judgment demands the reunion of inn. the persona of the judge that speaks. ity, that stamps it with its figure, and that subjects it to this figure by that infinitely separates the subject of right from the whole of its interior (that is, between the concept and its conception). It is the outline, then tier that falls within reason, the frontier between concept and intuition here, though, the a priori, right itself, is formed by the condition of sensi

of the figure that fictions and traces areas in general. perception as to a faculty." I, the judge, is the fiction of a legislative figurereality of this consciousness. Instead, it is a matter of the possibility of the whether this representation is clear or obscure; it is not even a matter of the propos the transcendental consciousness thus evoked: "It matters little mand through the (re)presentation of a persona. In fact, Kant declares a to be a judge presiding over it). Critique can only adequately meet this dethe condition sine qua non of its subject (the tribunal judges that there has a unitary experience and be capable of making sense. Here, right calls for I) to which representations have to be related if they are going to constitute logical form of all consciousness necessarily resting on the relation to this The end result of the Deduction is the unity of apperception (of the

an area, as a limit, and as a figure. Equally, though, it is to say the modest son is lies in the saying of that person. stages it or puts it into play. The transcendental unity of the judge that real reality or the essential un-reality of the person who represents it, who which the word areality lends itself. To say the subject of right is to say it as We don't need to worry, then, about the lapsus of signification to

guarantees its figure or its fiction as guarantor. Moreover, the Critique facto—but this fact is itself the fact of right—the guarantee itself only even De jure, every step is taken to guarantee against lapsus judicii. De

> tuting oneself as a judge (of the universality of my maxim), even though ured subject. It will say it as duty. The imperative says the duty of constireason. The pure fact of a pure moral person will say the last rights of a figof its own jurisdiction. The moral imperative alone will be capable of makson will be recognized and stated by the tribunal itself, as the factual limit though, and by the same token, the irresistible character of the Trieb of reaforge dangerous and dogmatic fictions (God, the self, the world). Equally, imperative is illegitimate. Only thus does it make the law. tablishment of right that is neither a foundation nor a self-foundation. The accident (of reason) because it is the only form that can be taken by an essented in experience. Yet it is precisely because no such case exists that we there's perhaps no case conforming to this judgment that could be prethe ultimate jurisdiction resides, can only ever offer itself up as a factum of ing this impulse "see reason." Yet this "categorical" imperative, in which the impulse that leads it to judge outside the limits of experience and to never be able to stop reason from abandoning itself de facto to the Trieb have to judge in all cases. The imperative is factual; it takes the form of an

vealed in its entirety (it reveals the cause, its cause, its thing, res—nothfictio, but always signific ting its right to say. ing)—saying, in the way of all Latin discourse, fictio for dictio or dictio for judgments can only be passed through the mouth of a person ceaselessly talling prey to the same lapsus, this lapsus through which philosophy is re-When philosophy becomes juridical, when it passes into right, its

mate demand of the right to say the right of what is by rights without right ders a sometimes open, always latent revolt over the right to say-the ulti-Its "essential" lapsus. And it's hardly surprising, then, that the State engenof making it an Essence and a Sense. At the cost of forgetting or repressing of the bourgeois State. Yet it did so at the cost of hypostasizing juris-diction, As we know all too well, right furnished the model and the ideology

doubtless not yet finished falling on its own case. Anything can happen. ter of waiting on some sort of a "return" to "juridical reason." Reason has doubtless not seen the back of it, although this doesn't mean that it's a matas philosophy, it is the resistance anticipated from Kant to Hegel. We've What also opened up was the resistance of a dislocation. In philosophy and And yet, at the same time and place at which the State was born,

origin, and it is this that comprises the dis-location), and that it therefore leads back surreptitiously to the general metaphysical thematics of origin cated origin (I would suggest, rather, perhaps provocatively, that there is an Dichtung) has to play the part of the "substitute" or "proxy" for a dislo ridical fiction (which I was careful to distinguish from poetic fiction, i.e. loquium The Ends of Man). 35 But it does not necessarily follow that the ju the text "The Free Voice of Man," written for and in the spirit of the col of the question of ends" I wholeheartedly agree (and let me refer here to Kant, in his account of judgment, dethrones the issue of origins "in favor in his view is indebted "to a problematics of founding or origin." Tha disputatio).34 Lyotard wants to break with the motif of "fictioning," which which I must return (and salute in passing the rare occurrence of a genuing Jean-François Lyotard has honored this essay with a generous note to

scribes in being its own fragmentation, that is, its end or ends: the question opened itself before him. (Incidentally, I do not think that Kant can be dewhether being or subject" or does it expose, qua proxy, attesting to in of ends, the end as a question, and maybe as what lies beyond questioning and this is what we might call the Kantian slide of ontology—proxy III can; the thing is to know which "Kant" we are talking about.) But thenvested of his Enlightenment spirit to the degree that Lyotard believes he everything he can to wish away the crisis that he himself opened, or that saying this, I confine myself to the Kantian version of supplementarity.) At proxy character, a fragmentation that it does not actually "conjoin"? (In the end inscribed as the judgment of being. the same time, Kant's version strives to exorcise fragmentation: Kant doc plementarity). Does proxy "conjoin . . . the fragments of an origin in general (here we might revisit Derrida's exploration of the logic of sup On the one hand, we need to determine precisely the role of proxice

without illusion." That means that it is an illusion to speak of being, of legitimacy" such as "language (which, if you like, is being minus the rightly, the differences between phrases—is defined "if you like" as "bein cal language, without rules." Language—which means, if I understand being. Lyotard himself certrainly is not. He charts "passages among areas that speaking is being "without illusion." Lyotard stands at the hub of be lusions) in the process of establishing various families of legitimacy, a crit This supposes, on the other hand, that we are never quite done win

> that truth is, while "being is not," as Heidegger points out. out "phrases"). Truth is not a phrase—and yet truth happens. That means It's not "phrases" that are "right" (although there is no being "right" withcide or articulate that. If it isn't "being," then at least it is what happens, under way, he has not yet finished, nor has he yet begun, but instead, in view? Next, Lyotard underlines "in the process." This "in the process" to can illusion be determined, if not from an exact and adequate point of ing, of the naming of being. Who would not take that position? And how factually, to being, the truth of an experience, the judgment of a history doubtless say that the question is illegitimate. Let's concede that he's right. place of his, in the process . . . he is. But what is this place? Lyotard would (with everything that it entails) is unmistakably, irresistibly, a proxy: he is But what is it to be right? Ultimately, no "play of sentences" is going to de-

ent or interchangeable. "sentences" say. But this does not mean that these sentences are indiffershared imperative) that is both more and less than what our respective disputatio possible: the debate is regulated by a common concern (or a But Lyotard basically knows all this-and that's what makes this

Translated by Simon Sparks

9

Originary Ethics

There is a threefold difficulty involved in presenting Heideggers thinking about ethics, whose terms inevitably need to be set out, at least briefly.

tended to respond) the precise ethical expectation to which his political engagement was in thinking as our point of departure (not forgetting to ask ourselves about give rise to further thinking. But that is only possible if we take Heidege dignity (Würde) which it took thus as its theme is something that ought choice and conduct of existence. That this thinking wasn't equal to man as the being through whom being has as its original sense (or ethos). the logic by which his thinking sought to analyze what it is that constitute his works), it is wrong to draw such an inference when what is at issue is error a certain style or a certain professional intellectual conduct (across a to saying this: while it is certainly correct to infer from Heidegger's more nicaud, Richard Wolin, Hans Sluga, etc.). Instead, I want to restrict myse Labarthe, Jacques Derrida, Gérard Granel, Nicole Parfait, Dominique Jürgen Habermas, Jean-Pierre Faye, Otto Pöggeler, Philippe Lacour ready been well investigated in the important work of Pierre Bourdieu ing. It isn't my concern to analyze these particulars (and the case has alvalidating any ethical proposition on his part, if not the whole of his thin properly political judgment) with a moral taint that many have seen as in complete silence about the camps, have marked him (even aside from an First of all, Heidegger's Nazi engagement, followed by his almost

> ful as possible while avoiding piety. nal interpretation [explication] of Heidegger himself, striving to be as faithume. But this isn't my concern here; rather, I want to sketch out an interand "morality" inherited (if at times confusedly) by the whole of our own "knowledge," presupposing, in particular, a distinction between "ethics" understood itself (once again) as "ethics" and not, let us quickly say, as showing how, with Heidegger and with Heidegger's period, philosophy Hegel or to Husserl, or prevent us from showing how, and doubtless for which amounts to saying that, in general terms, there would be a case for very different from the next) Bergson, Wittgenstein, or Levinas. All of specific historical reasons, it chimes with Heidegger's contemporaries (each vent us from showing how appropriate it is to Spinoza or to Kant or to us, today, necessarily Heideggerian in tone. Of course, this wouldn't preunderstanding of philosophy is itself already Heideggerian or, at least for position of having to choose norms or values. Perhaps, incidentally, this think, in other words, the essence or the sense of what puts action in the essence or the sense of what makes up action [l'agir] as such; it should choice, whether collective or individual. In fact, however, there is no phiis a body of principles and aims for conduct, fixed by authority or by enough works in existence to refute this prejudice. It should be enough, philosophy's job to prescribe norms or values: instead, it must think the losophy that either provides or is itself a "morality" in this sense. It isn't have to say): there is no "morality" in Heidegger, if what is meant by that then, to spell out the following (which will be complemented by what I think him a stranger to ethical preoccupations. Moreover, there are already sary.1 Only those who have read Heidegger blindly, or not at all, could there no space for this here, but it can even be considered quite unnecesmoral interpretation of the analytic of Dasein. Now, in order for the presding absence of a "moral philosophy" in his work, and on his refusal of any claims on his own objection to ethics as a "discipline," on the corresponble to deny any ethical dimension to Heidegger's thinking, basing their sibility of a properly ethical approach to Heidegger. However, not only is demonstrating the falsity of this argument, and by reconstructing the posent essay to have any relevance whatsoever, we would need to begin by Second, over and above all this, there are those who think it's possi-

The third difficulty runs counter to the second. If, paradoxically, work and a constant preoccupation, an orientation in his thinking, then we

ophy." Instead, let me confine myself to addressing the basic intention of wasn't wholly unrelated to a reflection silently tensed and perturbed by the ment or a "folding" of the ethical motif. And this, we might suppose to logy to ontology," basically corresponds to an accentuation, a reinforce grounded foundation"; 2. The thinking of language and poetry as a true fice (and by "the rest" I mean: 1. The thinking of freedom as an "unthe "Letter on 'Humanism." Linked to this will be some essential rethen, so de jure there can be no isolation of a Heideggerian "moral philo space mean that we cannot de facto cover the whole of Heidegger's wor terized most succinctly in the words of the Beiträge as a "passage from on not be difficult to show that the celebrated "turning" (the Kehre), charge after all, the main or even the exclusive title of Heidegger's thinking. would have to show the extent to which the "thinking of being"—which tions and the delivery of a different ethical demand.) ethos; and 3. The thinking of "technology" as a retreat from moral foundaand the Problem of Metaphysics. As for the rest, suggestions will have to sufminders of what paved the way for this motif in Being and Time and Kam the text in which the motif of "original ethics" is brought to light, namely National Socialist aberration. In much the same way that constraints of it is so throughout, in all its various developments. In particular, it won nothing other than a thinking of what he called "original ethics," and tha would need to undertake a general examination of that thinking. We

are not so much ruled out here as reserved for a different sort of analysis its theme Heidegger's thinking itself conceived of as a fundamental ethics Instead, the only kind of analysis that is appropriate here needs to take as raised: "Heidegger has a bad morality"; "Heidegger has no morality." These To sum up the situation, two overwhelming objections could be

self." (Conduct or action, insofar as it is its own end, action that does not what man is (of his humanitas) insofar as he has to act or to "conduct him very clear that the question of humanism is, for Heidegger, the question tinctly, in its very first sentence, as a reflection on Handeln, action.2 It is the German Handeln as well as the Greek praxis, especially in the presen "cause an effect," seems to me an appropriate term with which to render The "Letter on 'Humanism" announces itself forcefully and dis-

being, but his very being itself. If Dasein—according to the opening for

> merely theoretical or speculative. Rather, it destroys the supposed autonthis es geht um, this "it is about," doesn't bring into play an interest that is the bringing into play [la mise en jeu] of being. ing of Dasein, is what is at stake [l'enjeu] in its conduct, and its conduct is ing is a matter of action [l'être est de l'agir]), it is because being, as the beomy of such an interest. If, in Dasein, it is being that is at issue [il s'agit de that being is at issue for it,"4 it is because this "is at issue," this il s'agit de, mulations of Being and Time—is the being for which, "in its very being, ["erre] (and if, without playing on words more than language itself does, be-

a difference between two realities, but the reality of Dasein insofar as it is, the proper fact of being.5 in and of itself, open and called to an essential and "active" relation with ence of being (it is not the difference between two kinds of being), it is not as follows: because the difference between being and beings is not a differtranscendental absolute of all thinking of being-could also be expressed This point of departure—and more than that, this axiom or this

more in keeping with Heidegger's thinking to call it practical "in the first a sense somehow opposed to the theoretical (on the whole, it would be of making sense. This "making sense" is not theoretical, nor is it practical in a direct line from Kant: pure reason is practical insofar as it is theoretical.) with the action of sense or with action as sense. To be is to make sense. (In instance"). Knowledge or the understanding of being as sense is identical the fact of being—or, more exactly, in Dasein the very fact of being is one This relation is one of sense. In Dasein, it is a matter of giving sense to

sue in action. Thinking (and/or poetry) is not an exceptional form of acaction, brings into play the sense (of being) without which there would be tion, the "intellectual conduct" to be preferred to others, but what, in all ethics—to an activity that we might be inclined to call abstract, speculareading. In reality, "thinking" is the name for action because sense is at isthe "thinkers" and the "poets"), then this is the result of an inadequate tive, and only metaphorically "active" ("active" through the metaphor of with many other texts, appears to restrict action—and with it original onducting oneself. Conduct is the accomplishment (Vollbringen) of be-'a (merely) theoretical practice." If the "Letter on "Humanism," along ing. As sense's conduct, or as the conduct of sense, it is, essentially, "thinking." The essential act is thinking. But that doesn't close action back up on This "making," however, is not a "producing." It is, precisely, acting,

This is indeed why action qua thinking—the bringing into play of sense—is "desired" by being. This desire is love thought as ability (Magen), 6 in other words, as having a taste, an affection, or an inclination for, as wanting something, as having the ability to do something. Being desires thinking (and here we might draw a direct connection with Hegel: "the Absolute wants to be close to us"). Being desires thinking insofar as thinking can accomplish the sense that it is. What thinking names is this, the fact that sense desires itself as its own action. (And we would need here to develop the question of how the concept of such a "desire" is not that of an other desire.)

stred thus, given as what is desired (even if, once again, the sense of the "given," therefore, is the making-sense of being and what is given or deessence" in which being gives itself essentially as the action of sense. The what is given [donnée] or "handed out" ["donné"] is precisely the "gift of sense, even if it is itself the abyss of senselessness."7 The fact of being supporting 'ground' of beings, for a 'ground' becomes accessible only a sense of being can never be contrasted with beings, or with being as the itself as sense, Heidegger having established in Being and Time that "the tion to being itself could not properly be the sense of being, still less being other hand, sense conceived as signification conferred on or found in addiin thinking being as the fact of sense and sense as the gift of being.) On the philosophies of the absurd. The specificity of Heidegger consists, however posit being as a brute fact of existence "in itself," in the face of which a sub great philosophy. It shows through only wherever it has been possible to cation. (Moreover, such a problematic is never truly encountered in any there is a gift—and sense cannot be conferred on it as an external signifiing is not a "fact" in this sense—it is not something given, the "fact" that from somewhere other than the fact of being. Now, on the one hand, be derstood in all its radicality and originariness. There is not first a brute fact complished (unfolded, acted) as sense. But this proposition needs to be unsomething in general—constitutes by itself the desire that this fact be ac Dasein—is eo ipso the desire, ability, and love (ability-love) of sense. But thinking—explicitly targeted in the "Letter on "Humanism"—or of jectivity has to assume a giving of sense "for itself." This is true of Sarue If this were the case, sense, action, and ethics would have to come after and (the being of beings, the "there is"), then a desire for sense (for this being) This means that being as the fact of being—the fact that there is

words would need to be reevaluated), is for the "truth of being" to be said,9 for it to be "brought to language." 10

Making-sense is not the same as producing sense. Let me say, in order to make things absolutely clear, that it isn't an activity that could be der to make things absolutely clear, that it isn't an activity that could be compared to that by which, according to Lévi-Strauss, an existential given, itself reducible to a senseless materiality, is turned into an operative sense. To which we might add, still by way of clarification, that in a world that is not related to the other world of a principle, a donor origin, a creator, or a world-subject in general, there is, strictly speaking, no other "fundamenand Lévi-Strauss. Unless there is a different way of going beyond both formulations of the alternative, which is another story—ours, perhaps.)

If action is an "accomplishing," that is because being itself accomplishes itself in it as the sense which it is. But being is itself nothing other than the gift of the desire of or for sense. So making-sense is not of sense's making: it is making being be, or *letting* it be¹¹ (depending on how we want to stress the ambivalence of German *lassen: bauen lassen*, to have something constructed, also means to let or to give to the constructing activity as such; *sein lassen* means to let be, to give, to entrust to the activity of being as such).

Value (the most ethical and least directional value). of being, depending on which of these two expressions has the strongest of this thinking. From which it follows that ontology is, from the outset, engagement" as the action of sense, therefore: 12 such is the decisive axiom within or beyond itself, being's conduct of sense or the conduct of the sense being, it "makes" them be, makes them make-sense), is essentially its own sidered according to its unnominalized value as a verb—being is or exists also means, to allude to other developments in Heidegger's thinking, constake in sense. Being, absolutely and rigorously considered as such (which as such. It engages it and engages itself in it: "that there is" is what is at a property of the "that there is." It properly is (or makes) the "that there is" another); rather, it is the "that there is" of being as sense. This sense is not to act the sense which it is or desires. Being as such—the fact that there are being of beings in general is no more present or absent in one place than beings in general—is no more "present" in Dasein than anywhere else (the sofar as action is the essence of being. It is a case of allowing being to be or Letting be isn't passive; it is action itself. It is the essence of action in-

a definition variously characterized as Christian, Marxist, etc.). By fixing originary in man than man, namely Dasein qua finitude.15 concerned not with a determinable essence of man but with what is more importance of Kant's fourth question-Was ist der Mensch?-as a question of man for the dignity of his humanitas."13 Dignity (Würde) exceeds any sense—the signification of sense—humanism conceals or loses sight of the is already given, 14 on an interpretation that has already fixed sense (through manism stems from the fact that it rests on an interpretation of beings that rather, against action itself as the absolute measure. The inadequacy of hu assignable value, any measure of action regulated by a particular given. Hu manitas needs to be measured against this measurelessness of action on that man is. The conduct of sense is indissociable, then, from a "liberation" acted by and as Dasein. Dasein is being insofar as it is at stake as the being Sense's conduct—or the conduct of sense—makes being as being

fix it, but as the power to leave it open. which he could derive his sense, or his lack of it. Instead, it means precisely man—negatively, positively, dialectically—to some other authority from of sense. "Finitude," then, does not mean a limitation that would relate the non-fixing of such a signification: not, however, as the powerlessness to The finitude of Dasein is the finitude of being as the desiring-action

such, or as the gift of the desire of and for this action, as, in other words duct), being still has to be exposed to-and as-the action of sense as "the relation of being to the essence of man," that is, it is being that is reduced to a fixing of the sense of being. For such fixings (significations) to be of sense, and the making-sense of being, which could therefore never be at issue in man, or that man consists in (has his humanitas in) the making the mediation of its loss." Rather, it means that sense itself has to be seen sense. This does not mean a "loss of sense" or a "sense produced through accomplishment of action (or for the accomplishment that action is) as the non-given of sense, which is the very fact of being as sense—and thus be brought about (to be determined, to be chosen, and to regulate con-"Finitude" thus means: unaccomplishment as the condition for the

the gift [le don] of or the abandonment [l'abandon] to sense. Nor is say: there precisely is no "factual given" before there is the gift of the "the" is" itself. There is no "fact" before the gift of being, which itself constitute tude has come to exist."17 But existence is not the factual given. One could This is why "there is and has to be something like being where fine

> sense, or, again, as making-sense or action. (We might try saying: ek-sisconduct of being as being "outside" of itself: in other words, as being-totence actualities, the entelechy of an essence. 18 It is "ek-sistence," the way or rence is the entelecthy of what is neither essence nor power but the sense of

sense—both dissimulates and reveals itself. cisely in having to make sense, and not in the disposition of a given proper Priety of simple existing, being's propriety of sense—which consists prebeing, desired and to be accomplished (acted out). In the ordinary impropure 'that it is' shows itself, but the 'whence' and the 'whither' remain in the facticity of sense that is the ontological fact of existence itself. "The proper's "turning-away" from the proper.20 Put in another way, factual exright at everyday existence—and, what's more, in the very mode of the imof translating "authentic" but which is, in fact, the "proper" (eigen, structure of Dasein. In general, what people have gotten into the bad habit case, exists, and that his "ontical" existence as such has the ontological takes place right at the fact that such and such a concrete human, in each world,"19 nor is it detached from the simple factuality of a concrete exisconcrete existence. What Being and Time calls the "facticity" of Dasein is egory alien to concrete existence. Just as this word is but a different way of that leads onto the proper dimension of sense as what is, in being and of darkness."21 But it is precisely this darkness, this being-not-given of sense, istence is "proximally and for the most part" constituted in ignorance of Eigentlichkeit), takes place nowhere other than right at the "improper," tence. The "fact" that Dasein is in that it is desired as the action of being doubtless not the factum brutum of some being that lies "within the writing "existence," so the structure it designates takes place only right at Yet for all that, we mustn't think of ek-sistence as an ontological cat-

From which it follows:

I. that ontic existence has, as such, the structure of ontological

structure of making-sense or of action. 2. that, correlatively, the fact of being (of Dasein) has, as such, the

stems neither from heaven nor from an authority of sense: it comes from everyday existence finds itself asked to make sense.²² This request, in turn, Istence provides it in advance with a norm and a signification. But this existence. No "value," no "ideal" floating above concrete and everyday ex-In principle, the ethics thus announced refers to nothing other than

selves ideas or values—and, what's more, this will make sense only accord original request will it be possible for beings, in their action, to give them ing to the original action which is at issue in the request. existence, being the proper request of its being. Only on the basis of the

ready present in Plato's agathon and first radicalized in Kant's imperative. whether this problematic is not in fact that of the whole of philosophy, already given sense, with the evaluations which would be deduced from it (And although this is not the place to do so, we ought to ask ourselves impossibility, which has arisen with and as modernity, of presenting an al-Hence, this thinking strives to take most rigorously into account the

self,"24 the latter having, in principle, nothing solipsistic or egoistic about quested in the essence of being.²³ So it also engages itself according to the it but, on the contrary, containing the possibility and the necessity of be ing less than "being's being-responsible towards itself, proper Being-its-Discreetly explicit, like that of ethics itself, this motif tends toward not (I can only signal in passing the importance of the motif of responsibiling theme of a total and joint responsibility toward sense and toward existence reverse of nihilism: as the bringing to light of making-sense as action reing-responsible toward others.) the basis of nihilism—as the general dissolution of sense—but as the can To clarify, we could say: the ethics engaged in this way is engaged on

sis" also undergoes a modification into "standing-out."28 yond the bounds of the ordinary. (Besides, ecstasis as exaltation is in no was about. "Ecstasis," as it needs to be understood here, is not exaltation be something like a "self" (a subject, and a responsible subject) can come doesn't happen to an already given "self." On the contrary, through position of the ek-sistent. This being-outside-itself, this "ecstatic essence" opening consists in) the desire/ability of sense. Insofar as it is opened in open to making-sense, a being-open that is itself opened by (or whose being. 25 This way of being is immediately a conduct: the conduct of being the hallmark of an accession to authenticity.²⁷ This is why the word "ecstern" this way, this conduct is a setting-outside-itself or ex-position as the ver Ek-sistence, then, is the way in which Dasein is as Dasein, its way of

name of a substance but the sentence of an action. "Being-there" in and transitively, as being-the-there. Hence, Dasein is definitely not understood not adverbally and locally, as being-there, but verbally, actively Being in ek-sistence consists in "being the there."29 Dasein has to

> conduct of sense. mination or revelation that brings being to light, but being itself as an presupposes the prior given of both a being and a place. "Being-the-there," on the basis of it, on the basis of its opening, something can take place: a opening, a spacing-out for possibilities of bringing to light. 31 Being ek-sists however, implies that being properly ek-sists as its "clearing." By this tence hic et nunc, making-sense is at issue. The there is the place in which, (is) in that it opens being. The there is the open in which, right at an exis-"clearing" we need to understand not, or not in the first instance, an illu-

opening, which is essential to sense, which is what is essential in the action is that, whatever the moral choice, the other is going to be essential to that makes up the essence of being.) this the prescription of an "altruistic" morality. What is established, rather, terly impossible in a solipsistic mode.33 Nonetheless, we cannot take from with one another" as its "foundation." The opening of making-sense is utspring); it is the activity of opening or of opening oneself as making-sense. no ethics without measure), in which, by being the there, by being that measure (indeed, it is itself to be understood as measure insofar as there is (Let me note in passing that action as essentially opening implies "being the given opening of a source, for example, from which sense could there is there an existence, being is sense. Sense, indeed, is "the structure of the opening."32 But such a structure is not the setting up of a distance (like The ek of ek-sistence is the conduct proper to being the there in full

of sense, this means that sense (the sense of human existence, but also, and tion, or conduct. Conduct is thus the proper transcendence of the immaalong with it, the sense of the world) is in principle nothing other than acand not simply verbal acrobatics to say that the sense of being is the being simple transcendence nor a simple immanence. If it is entirely legitimate of being by simply positing a being-there. There is, in principle, neither a signed according to something other than being than one can make sense now been acquired. But the fundamental definition is undoubtedly this: ify the scope of this expression by considering all the definitions that have the sense which it is a matter of "making" is no more a sense that can be as-Essentially, then, being is a making-sense(-of-itself) and we can spec-

tensive with all action, whatever its signification and whatever its value. As that will doubtless be raised at this point: sense is thus identical and coex-Now, let me pause for a moment in order to address the objection

such, this supposed "ethics" leads to an indifferentism (a subjectivism or tion." To this objection, two responses: moral relativism), even if that indifferentism is of the kind "morality of ac

of the problem. ground of being. So Heidegger will at least have marked out the particular of morality (between Aristotelian-Thomist proponents of a determinable which the contemporary Anglo-American debate on the (non-)foundarion ontology of making-sense. In general, it is instructive to note the extent to American context, Charles Taylor's investigation into the "ideal of authen so of humanity and the world). Remarkably, what is undoubtedly one of what can be called, for want of a better term, the objectivity of being (and every subject as such: fundamentally, subjectivity itself as good. By conspect" meant engagement by and before oneself as "acting self."34 There is the maxim" meant the totality of responsibility, while the condition of "rea fully-fledged ethical subject. Already, nothing else was at stake in the tence as making-sense, without prior subjection to any fixed sense, can be only a subject which is entirely responsible for sense, and for its own conabsolute dignity as the character of Dasein. Transposed into different temes sense. This is indeed necessary if what is at stake in the first instance is an sense is ontologically and logically prior to any evaluation of a determinate physico-theological foundation to morality so as to arrive at ethics as authority, it actually indicates—albeit unconsciously—the necessity of an the extent that it challenges subjectivism without invoking a transcendent ticity," is left as though hanging halfway between these two directions. To the most significant contemporary ethical investigations in the Ang trast, the dignity of Dasein consists in needing, in each choice, to engage in fact, evaluative moral decision making is represented as a good in itsel no more subjectivism in Heidegger than there is in Kant. For subjectivism nature," which precisely is only an analogical model) the "universality of behind it. What is at issue here is nothing other than the end of a mea fering subjective "goods") has the same ontological demand unwitting "good" and liberal proponents of "justice" concerning individuals with (the "freedom to choose"), the only real "good," already appropriated by Kantian notion of dignity, for which (setting aside the model of a "law of I. In fact, the determination of being as the desire/ability of making

nity of making oneself the subject (or the agent) of possible evaluations. mental level, where what is at issue is valueless value, the unevaluable dis 2. Even though no norm or value can be determined on the fund

> can, by contrast, take this to indicate a positive hint in the direction of to a "respect for life," as though the sense of life or life as sense were someimperative, we might be tempted to say, is this: respect existence. But this event and appropriation, Ereignis—a theme that I can't develop here). The this truth takes place right at existence, or that it is its very event (its every other than the truth of ek-sistence. But we must not fail to remember that what can quasi-orient action as such, if I may put it that way: nothing aware, is not only possible but necessary.) can grasp how all the problems being raised today by bioethics as well as by its conditions of recognition, dignity, and so forth, might be. From this we one to all the problems of determining what "life" is, what "human life" is, thing given. On the contrary, talk of a respect for life immediately exposes we make sense of existence as existence. It cannot be reduced, for example, imperative provides no sense or value. What it does require, though, is that such an extrapolation, of which Heidegger will doubtless have been unwholly extrapolated from Heidegger, but we need at least to indicate that acquired once and for all. (I'm well aware that these considerations are is—without ever having the ability to fix this being as a given that has been self in the position of having, for example, to decide what a "human life" that we can apprehend the absolute making-sense of the action that puts ittology of action: not so that they can be resolved once and for all, but so human rights bring to light the necessity of heading back toward an onand how it does or does not differ from "animal life" (or "plant life"), what

him by ex-posing itself as the opening of making-sense. Man, no longer that exceeds in man all significations of the human. signed senses of the human. "Dasein" means: the making-sense of being In the sense that he indicates and opens its task as one that exceeds all as-Its signifier; not, however, in the sense that man designates its concept, but signified of sense (that would be the human according to humanism), but even risk an expression such as the following: the human is no longer the through which being ex-poses itself as making-sense. Indeed, we could the "son of God," the "purpose of nature," or the "subject of history"—no longer, in other words, a being that is or that has sense—is the being The "proper dignity" of the human, 35 which doesn't depend on any

"guarding" of its truth. In this sense, Heidegger calls man "the shepherd of Exposed in this way, being properly is the entrusting to Dasein of the could probably be found in Levinas or Spinoza as well.) an originary ethos, even though it is all too easy to slide imperceptibly from is lodged here is the whole ambiguity of the "gift"; I will come back to with an assignable origin of sense, an opening with a gift (and, again, what of an absolute responsibility. Here we doubtless find the crux of a radia open itself, and that the pastoral tone ought not to conceal the indication problem, one that needs to be addressed. For it's still the case that, quin dignity of the open we might then substitute the emblematic value of in something that the "guarding" itself risks closing back up again. For the what ought to be open and to be risked. There's a reactive if not out and being."37 We ought to pause here for a moment, since this sort of pause toralism" has often raised a smile. Granted, terms like "shepherd," "guard the one to the other. (The difficulty here isn't specific to Heidegger and thinking of ethics: in the possibility of confusing original making-sense logically, the "guarding" of the "open" can only ever be the opening of the minate figures of the "thinker" and the "poet." All of this has to pose a guardians, which will soon be identified, moreover, in terms of the deterprotected or safeguarded. Now, what has to be "guarded" is the open tection, without the reassurance of any given sense, itself needing to be though inaugural dignity were brought to light without any acquired proout reactionary tone here, one that Heidegger wasn't alone in taking, a tone ing," and "protective heed" aren't entirely free of evangelistic, backward this). Thinking the origin as ethos or conduct isn't the same as representing that often befalls moral discourses ("preserving values," etc.). It is a looking connotations. They evoke a sense of preservation, a conservation of

Be that as it may, let us recall for the moment that these very terms—guarding, protective heed, the solicitousness of the shepherd—indicate the order of a conduct. It is less a case of leading [conduire] a flock than of conducting ourselves in such a way that "beings might appear in the light of Being." 38

This "appearing," however, isn't the effect of a production. Man doesn't produce beings, nor does he produce himself; his dignity is not that of a mastery (which, in general, is not susceptible of dignity, merely of a mastery (which, in general, is not susceptible of dignity, merely of prestige or impressiveness). In fact, "man does not decide whether and how beings appear." This is a matter for the "destiny of being." "By there is something, and that there are such things—this world—is not there is something, and that there are such things—this world—is not us to decide. This, then, is given. But what is properly given with this given what is properly the destination of this "destiny" (and without which the content is properly the destination of this "destiny" (and without which is properly the destination of this "destiny" (and without which is properly the destination of this "destiny" (and without which is "destiny").

there would be neither "gift" nor "destiny," but factum brutum) is what is not, in other words, the being of beings as the desire/ability of sense. What is properly given—what being gives and that as which it gives itself—is the need to make sense of and in beings as a whole (their "appearing in the light of being"). It is in this sense that humans are responsible for being, or that the Dasein in them is the being-responsible of/for being itself.

be its own letting-be. any sense of a giver; where this not the case, it would not let—or make versely and correlatively, what is "let" becomes "mine" without retaining comes "mine" without alienating its inappropriable essence qua gift. Cones gibt, tends to be called the "gift," cannot designate "a gift"). The gift befor the essential reason that what, on account of the idiomatic expression gift becomes "mine" without alienating its inappropriable essence qua gift; come our property in the way that something we have acquired does; the what it "gives" or "lets" (hence, what we receive as a present doesn't besignification. The "gift" is inappropriable qua "gift," and this is exactly onto sense—and precisely not as a sense or as an appropriable horizon of itself or "transfixes" beings as "truth," in other words, as that which opens thing is. Hence the very being of beings, their essence, "gives" itself, "lets" ing does not "give" anything: being is the letting-be through which somewell prefer the term "letting" to that of "giving." Being lets beings be. Bebiguity of the theme of the "gift," and it is for this reason that we might ings) is not a "gift" that it "gives," therefore. And therein lies the whole am-What being gives is being itself. Being gives of being. (The) being (of be-"The essence of being" is an essence "that is giving, that grants its truth."41 We need to replace for "being is" the expression "Es gibt" das Sein."40

This is why it is a matter of corresponding to this "gift," to this "letting-be/-make" as such. It is a matter of responding to it and of being responsible for it, of being engaged by it. It is a matter of finding the fitting
gesture, the right conduct (das Schickliche . . . , das diesem Geschick entspricht, as Heidegger says) toward the giving or the letting-be/make as
such. 42 Toward being, in other words, since being is definitively not the
giver of the gift (es gibt—however we look at this, the gift has no owner;
and let me say that throughout our dealings with the motif of the gift in
self; or, rather, being is letting-be, just as it is "the clearing," 43 just as it eksists beings. Being doesn't "give" being existence, therefore; being is, in a
transitive sense, ek-sisting.

it "moves" itself, sets itself moving outside of itself and affects itself with its own ek-. Action, this action of "touching," is what is at stake, therefore, in because of this intimate nearness: existence touches itself; in other word touching it, this is because being is "the nearest," 45 and insofar as it denotes stirring, affecting, moving.) If it is a matter of "touching" on being or of man, Tast, tasten—and the rühren that Heidegger uses to denote a sense of need to develop the difference between touch as a mere sense—in Ger affect, as the theme of an originary ethos.) self-affection is reawakened here, beyond the sphere of consciousness and the being "that is at issue." (We could also say that the theme of originary the transitivity of ek-sisting. If, in Dasein, it is being that "is at issue," it is The fitting gesture is one that "touches" on being. 44 (Here, we would

of man," in other words, according to which "being itself is the relation," ing to an accomplishment of sense. Being is the relation of existence to itself as the action of sense. For being, being is precisely not being-there, Dasein pure and simple, but the open the intimate distance according to which "being" is related to "the essence "Nearness" and "touching" evoke what would we would have to call

other words, without being deceived by a "sense" supposedly given to extend making-sense of ek-sisting. tence, as if from within or beyond it, instead of confining ourselves to the ing is rarer than responding to this call in a fitting ("responsible") way, in call, most often an undeceived one, to the "sense of existence," and nothsense. One could transcribe this thus: nothing is more ordinary than the avoiding. Which means: it has a relation with its own "proper [son proper an essential relation with the "proper"—even if only in terms of fleeing or nothing other than the relation of the "improper" to the "proper." The improper of ordinary existence reveals itself as "improper" insofar as it has "propre"]," with what is most proper and nearest to it, the call to make The relation of existence to itself as the opening of and to sense is

given), and that the dignity of man comes from his being exposed to as a laid-down sense (and so, to make the point again, to be not propen essence of sense as that which touches him most closely. What touches means that it belongs to the essence of the sense of being not to give issue him—or that upon which he touches—doesn't let itself be incorporate privilege reserved for a few or that it is very difficult to obtain: rather The fact that this sort of response is rare doesn't mean that it is

> appropriated, and fixed as an acquisition. If sense were acquired or, what ontology itself (as for appropriation, it is the event of being, the Ereignis). ing, then not only is there an ethics, but ethics becomes the ontology of tion with ("touching") what is nearest but cannot be appropriated as a beical possibility. If, however, the action of sense is the exercising of the relaamounts to the same thing, needed to be acquired, there would be no eth-

accurately as possible. degger himself). For the moment, however, we need to situate language as though the potential for countering such reservations can be found in Heireservations regarding the role Heidegger entrusts to language (even tical" actions to second place. Later on we will have to make clear a few of language doesn't contradict the primacy of action. It's not a case of saying that the exercising of language is the only real action, relegating "prac-"Nearness occurs essentially as language itself." 48 This essential role

refers perhaps rather to "due silence").53 the ground of making-sense, which is not itself a signification (and which of significations. It is so in that significations can only ever be signified on the element of sense. And yet, it is not so much an element as a production event-appropriation (desire/ability) of sense. Why? Because it is properly is less a "lodging" for a particular sense than the very Ereignis of sense, the This is why language itself is "the house of being, which is propriated [ereignet] by being and pervaded by being."52 As a structure of language, it dens and responds thus to transcendence by taking responsibility for it. rather, it responds by co-responding to the transcendence of the transcenstendens: what it doesn't do is respond to it by assigning the transcendens; transcendens pure and simple."51 Language responds to being as the tranbeing, in other words, being as sense⁵⁰—it experiences or undergoes as "the periences sense as what is to be asked or questioned. It is "a questioning that experiences."49 On the other hand, what it experiences—the sense of conduct confirms itself as conduct of sense. On the one hand, language ex-Language isn't a superior kind of conduct. It is the element in which

Pertain to language but to a different experience, a—let us say mystical— Wards a pure "beyond" (and which, by the same token, would no longer understood very precisely, not as that which might transcend existence tocasely, the experience of transcendence (or, more exactly, experience as traneendence, and as its responsibility). Nevertheless, transcendence has to be that on the basis of which this order can take place,54 and which is, pre-In truth, "language" designates much less the order of the verbal than

this desire/ability as making-sense. manence: it is nothing other than the desire/ability of making-sense, and as that which structures existence itself into a "beyond," into ek-sistence, experience of the transcendens as such, rather than of transcendence), but The transcendence (of the sense) of being is a transcendence of and for in-

say: sense is the law.) As regards Kant, Heidegger writes: "the respect besary, since there would need to be an obligation to enforce a law, about concern was to regain the point at which Kantian subjectivity frees itsel once again the importance of Kant to all this. It is as though Heideger spect, the moral law."58 (Let me take the opportunity here to emphasize whereas "Reason, as free, gives to itself that for which the respect is rewhich, moreover, we would still know nothing. It is, on the contrary, the that say how man, experienced from ek-sistence towards being, ought to pears instead as "the demand . . . for an obligating intimation and for rules expressed as "originary ethics." Sense, in fact, does not relate a particular sense that isn't given.) fication—and confirms itself as acting, in other words, as exposed to by itself, from its subjective foundation—from representation, from sign fore the law . . . is in itself a making-manifest of myself as acting self: manifestation of sense as such, as the sense of action. (If you like, we could live in a manner befitting his destiny."57 Such an intimation is unnecess to a transcendent signification that sublimates it outside of itself. Sense ap-On this basis, the transcendence of being can and must be explicit

of it, just as the conduct of existence is prior to any determination of significant significant of the conduct of existence is prior to any determination of significant significant conducts of existence is prior to any determination of significant significa such. Making-sense as such is prior to any such division, an "intimation nifications (from which we ought logically to deduce that all disciplines are can find their place as regimes of signification only "after" making-sense nitive or natural significations ("logic" or "physics"). 59 In fact, "disciplines distinguish the order of moral significations (values) from the order of cog thetic just as much as the moral). "originarily ethical"—the cognitive, the logical, the physical, and the acs Here, ethics isn't the effect of a distribution of disciplines that would

curately, "residing" is principally a conduct, the conduct of being the As such, the abode is much more a conduct than it is a residence; more ing: ethos anthropoi daimon.)60 The abode is the "there" in that it is open thinking ethos as the conduct of/according to the truth of being. This so there. To think this conduct is thus "originary ethics," since it involved Ethos needs to be understood as "abode" (following Heraclitus's

> nor ontology," "neither theoretical nor practical."62 the expression "the thinking about Being," stating that it is "neither ethics Dasein. And this is also why, in preference to any term that might evoke a of thinking is more fundamental than any ontology, therefore; it doesn't "moral philosophy" deduced from a "first philosophy," Heidegger retains what ex-poses them to making-sense. Being is the ek-sistent conduct of Rather, being is—because it is in no sense a being—what ek-sists beings, it, does not happen to it, does not give it rules that come from elsewhere. point: ethos isn't external to or superimposed upon being; it is not added to one name for the other without losing sight of the following essential about fundamental ontology. Nonetheless, we cannot simply substitute propriate name for "fundamental ontology." Ethics is what is fundamental ically, that it involves itself as an ethics. "Originary ethics" is a more apnot simply that the thinking of being involves an ethics but, far more radscribed as "fundamental ontology."61 What becomes clear now, however, is that the thinking that took place in Being and Time had already been dethink "beings in their being" but "the truth of being." It was in this sense

stence nothing less than the very possibility of acting."65 sense of being. Besides, if thinking as originary ethics were to provide constitutes dignity itself, namely, having, in one's own being, to make "maxims that could be reckoned up unequivocally," it "would deny to exin general⁶⁴—not as something to be normalized or finalized, but as what does not guide conduct but conducts itself toward the thinking of conduct This thinking "has no result."63 It gives neither norms nor values. It

are rather different from what initially seems to emerge from Heidegger's a sense projected indefinitely beyond (a "philosophy of values") nor sense ensure such a dignity. Both, moreover, lead to bitter disappointments that captured and fixed as pure autonomy (the subjectivism of free choice) can ing in the usual sense of the word (idea, concept, discourse, etc.). Neither ter is incommensurable with a fixing of signification and a filling out of to say that it obligates itself to encounter human dignity insofar as the lat-Sense: in other words, it is ultimately incommensurable with any "thinkduct, an existential action. It posits and posits itself actively, which is also thinking (in the manner of all true thinking) insofar as it is itself a conspeculation leads it around in circles, but because it is only possible as a such a thinking is its own result, or "effect"66—not because the purity of its no result" requires careful consideration. It also amounts to saying that What is deliberately provocative in the expression "this thinking has

notion of thinking as having "no result." Indeed, this is shown by content porary moral confusion, which fails to find either values or free will. Doing so, however, it shows that it has no sense of an ethics.

Dignity is possible only if it measures up to finitude, and finitude, a will now be clear, means the condition of a mode of being whose sense makes-sense as a ground and a truth. (Infinitude, by contrast, would be the condition of a mode of being that results in a sense being produced, acquired, and related back to itself.) Schematically speaking, therefore: ek-sittence is sense; it has no sense.

Existence, however, still has various senses (and non-senses). It can and must have them, can and must receive, choose, and invent them. Their number and scope is incommensurable with the unitary sense of dignity. Touching on this sense—not absorbing it as a signification, therefore, but ex-posing ourselves to it—such is the conduct toward which thinking strives. What marks it out as a conduct is the fact that it knows that it is conducting itself toward the "shattering" that consists in "shattering against the hardness of its matter." This is a long way from being either a conduct of shattering or a way of "philosophizing" about shattering. Rather, it is a conduct that conducts itself in such a way as to take the measure of the incommensurable interval between every "thinking" (ideal representation, etc.) and the fundamental action through which it makes itself think. It takes the measure of the absolute interval that sense is.

There's nothing mystical about all this; what is mystical, though, is thinking that immediately projects its insufficiency onto the sufficiency of a signified effusion that somehow lies beyond it. Here, however, thinking merely experiences the relation of the improper to the proper as what properly needs to be thought, despite its being precisely not an "object of thinking" but the gesture of conduct or, more than this, the event of being that ek-sists as the conduct of sense. What we call "thinking" is not a discussive and representational elaboration "about" this conduct, therefore; it is being-engaged in it.

Let me recall briefly just how this event of being comes to be described in *Being and Time* as a "call of conscience." The call "makes" Dassein schuldig, guilty or in debt. 70 However, this idea of *Schuldigsein* isn't simply a matter of "having debts' and law-breaking." Rather, it is "a predicate ply a matter of "having debts' and law-breaking." Rather, it is "a predicate ply a matter of "having debts' and law-breaking." Rather, it is "a predicate ply a matter of "having debts' and law-breaking." Hat is incum for the 'I am." In this sense, then, it is the "responsibility" that is incum bent upon me insofar as I am "the ground of a nullity [*Nichtigkeit*], the other words, the "ground" of ek-sisting as such. In the terms used by "Letter on 'Humanism'. I am responsible for the gift as such.

At the same time, responsibility isn't played out between an impersonal "being" and an isolated "self." There is no "impersonal being." Rather, being is, if you like, the being-person of Dasein or, a little differently, in a formulation that would be both provocative and humorous, the personal being of Dasein. 74 Hence, responsibility only ever takes place as a responsibility with and toward others. 75

Thinking in the sense of "originary ethics" is the experience of this absolute responsibility for sense. Nevertheless, this way of "experiencing" isn't a "feeling" (a word that isn't used in the text, and that I'm only using here as a provisional recourse). This ethics is no more an aesthetics than it is a mysticism. It is not a matter of feeling the sublime sentiment of incommensurable dignity, and the action of thinking doesn't consist in savoring its mixture of pleasure and pain . . . It is a matter of exposing ourselves to the absence of concept and affect (we should think, once again, of Kant's notion of respect—but also, if we reread the texts carefully, of the sublime as apatheia) that constitutes the articulation of being as ek-sistence or as making-sense. The intimation of sense and/or its desire is without concept and without affect. Or rather, the original ethos is the ek-sistent a priori synthesis of concept and affect in general. And it is only thus that, rather than being the object of thinking, it is its very matter.

Opening ourselves to making-sense as such, as what is at stake in being, means at the same time opening ourselves to the possibility of evil. "Being nihilates—as being." In other words, the gift, as the possibility/intimation of making-sense, also gives itself as the possibility of not receiving the gift as a gift (without which it would be neither a "gift" nor "desire" nor "intimation"—nor what is more properly the synthetic a priori of these three categories). It isn't a matter of denouncing human "badness" as opposed to the generosity of being. This generosity itself offers the possibility of the "nothing" within the essence of being. This isn't say that there is no difference between the two antagonistic possibilities; were that so, they could hardly be called "good" and "evil." Rather, then, it neans that evil is possible as the "rage" that precipitates being into the nothingness that it also is.78

How can ek-sisting, precipitated thus into its nothingness, be distinguished from ek-sisting exposed to its ownmost possibility of sense? Basically, how can one nothingness be distinguished from the other? Heidegwants us to understand that no distinguishing ("normative")

away from the possibility of being as ek-sistence. need to be addressed elsewhere. What has to be conceded is the fact that the slightest determination of evil can seem a touch worrying. This would as such. No doubt the glaring tension in this text's refusal to attempt even proposition can have any real sense if thinking is not firmly upheld in the any determination of evil would lead us away from the necessity of think ing the possibility of evil as a possibility of ek-sistence. It would lead us face of the possibility that making-sense might "nihilate" or destroy itself

self as the will to knowledge and to love";80 in other words, dialectics subwith speculative dialectics that negativity appears in being, but he does so out a recent history of negativity "in the essence of being"79 (revealing "nimerely in order to observe that "being is thought there as will that wills it. world. We cannot ease the "distress" by filling up the horizon with the senses; we have to take absolute responsibility for making-sense of the tory of "the West" or of "metaphysics." We can no longer refer to available also what is delivered at the end of and as the accomplishment of the his ethics" is not only the fundamental structure or conduct of thinking, it is to be the movement of this demand over into "rage"). In this, "original" intended to respond was ethical and that Nazism ultimately showed itself may mean, moreover, that the demand to which the Nazi engagement was "engagement" of ek-sisting in the complete responsibility for sense (which its most recent "sending"—brings to light, to a harsh light, an unreserved moral protest). This means, at least, that the modern world—or being in to the unleashing of "technology" (which it's not enough to oppose with a an essential Weltnot,81 a distress or deficiency in the modern world linked is surely because he refuses to separate the question of Nazism from that of thinking of the date of the text: 1946. If Heidegger isn't more explicit, that fested itself without dialectical resorption. We can gloss this indication by is still concealed." Hence it is as will to power that nihilation has mantheodicy, "nihilation" remains "essentially veiled." "Being as will to power lates evil in this knowledge and this love. In this, the most recent form of history—that brings it to light in its essential character). He notes that it hilation" to be indissociable from "the history of being"—or from being as same "values" whose inconsistency—once their metaphysical foundation however, is that the ground needs to be thought somewhat differently. had collapsed—allowed the "will to power" to unfold. What this means This is what Heidegger indicates in the passage in which he sketches

> It is a matter of upholding ourselves and "bearing" or "carrying" ourselves servedly. Man has to understand himself according to this responsibility. in a way that befits the injunction of being—the injunction to be-ek-sisnomos: the nomos of the "abode," of "upholding" according to ek-sistence. 82 bear up before the responsibility for making-sense that has unfolded unrerent. Conduct, dignity, is a matter of bearing. We have to bear ourselves, This is how original ethical conduct encounters its law, its proper

nothing about what does or does not make sense through "life" and our example once again: we can express a "respect for life," yes, but that says order of maxims. These, as such, don't need to be brought to language; in "bringing to language." What has to be brought to language isn't of the "respect" for it.) they are, at least to a certain extent, available significations. (To take up the This bearing is above all that of language. "Thinking" action consists

call" as "wanting to have a 'good conscience'" or as "cultivating the call volfell into both of these traps.) untarily."83 None of which rules out the fact that the "Rectoral Address" why Being and Time was to dismiss interpretations of "responding to the moralizations or aestheticizing seductions (whence, for example, the reason for the job of making-sense; the refusal, consequently, to reduce it to facile This bearing of and in language is nothing more than respect or care

careful—even fastidious—restraint that they evoke, which has a whole tion with the unmeasurable character of making-sense. three maxims are merely the maxim of the measure of language in its relanot be confused with a morality, still less with a policing of styles. These into puritanical affectation. The ethics of "bringing to language" should gality with words."84 These three maxims propose no values. Nor could Kantian and Hölderlinian tradition behind it, can just as easily be turned they be used simply to measure the "ethicity" of any given discourse. The maxims of "bearing" itself: "rigor of meditation, carefulness in saying, fru-'Humanism'" expresses what are, properly speaking, its only maxims, the Hence it is with regard to the bearing of language that the "Letter on

guage" doesn't consist in expressing through words a sense laid down in the ally,"85 If we think it, he says, then "we have brought something of the Itself," an expression that he has just said needs to be taken "quite literconspicuous deed of thinking" the use of the expression "bring to language essence of being itself to language." This means that "bringing to lan-All of which explains why Heidegger takes as his example of "the in-

of a question—What is man?—that is already experienced as being beways mean, so to speak, letting ourselves be conducted by the experience tude of being, in other words, to the ek-sistence in which "man infinitely yond any question to which a signification could respond. Language is achave "bearing"—cannot amount to expressing an acquired value. It will alsponsibility. Hence, saying "man" or the humanitas of man—provided we conduct of sense that it is. Language is the exercising of the principle of reing but makes it be. But "making being being" means opening it to the event that it is: to the action of making-sense. Language doesn't signify beselves on this point) bringing being itself, as ek-sisting, to the advent or the trusting the acts of language, as all acts, to the conduct of sense, to the finidoesn't mean entrusting ourselves to words; on the contrary, it means ention in that it is indefinitely obligated to act. "Bringing to language" (and we probably ought to say "physically," had we the time to explain our thing that we call being (being is precisely not a thing). It means literally

with a whole history of post-Heideggerian elaboration, particularly in demonstrate a marked failure of integrity not to indicate the perspectives which will extend beyond the scope of an article such as this. This isn't the France, Italy, and the United States). ian ethics (and it should be pointed out that these perspectives are in line from which it has here been possible to present my remarks on Heidegger place to develop them, but it's relevant to mention them, since it would If it isn't going too far, allow me three brief concluding remarks

event of being also needs to be considered insofar as it affects the totally same" individual and "the same" group. Moreover, the singularity of the is indissociable from a "communicating," something over which Heidege the ethical sense of nonhuman beings. At any rate, "bringing to language of beings. It would also be necessary to "bring to language" the being to extend to plural singularity as the condition of ek-sistence. Such singularity "people" as an individual. In order to be rigorous, the analysis would need the reason why it will have been possible, without further ado, to treat larity isn't that of the "individual," but that of each event of being in "the finitude essentially is, this is what is not emphasized. And this is doubtes implied in ek-sistence. That sense is or makes sense only in the sharing that the "being-the-there-with-others" that is, according to Being and Time. coa. Unquestionably, Heideggerian ethics is a long way from stressing

> tion), but that of making-sense-in-common, something that is quite difdoes not linger. This isn't the communication of a message (of a significaferent from making common sense. It is finitude as sharing

would need to be "phatic" rather than "semantic." And I would also sugin particular, within making-sense-in-common; in other words, through a on language, on the point of privileging a silent enunciation, one that than being inscribed in maxims or works. gest that we put it in the following way: making-sense ex-scribes itself rather language that is first and foremost an address. We might well say: ethics outside language through language itself, something that would take place properly speaking, more so than language, and how existing ex-poses itself would need to think how the "bringing," bringing being itself, is action sense") as the sole and final (no longer "original") action. Poetry-and/or utterance of sense (and not of what I have been calling the "conduct of might well prove to have the structure, nature, and appearance of a pure this precise point, at the apex of the action that "brings to language," we thinking—would give sense, even if silently, instead of opening onto it. At the form of poetry—is always, and above all in the Heidegger of the essays b. At the same time, the attention paid to language-particularly in

to think the responsibility for its own ex-position (to others, to the world) an ex-position that constitutes its true logic. These two points amount to saying that "originary ethics" still fails

that "blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself."86 that ethos is the ek-sisting of existence itself might be another way of saying to say about this, but the most summary of observations will suffice: to say but it is doubtless here that it is at its most deafening. There would be lots well as a "logic" and an "ethics." His silence about Spinoza is well known, only major work of philosophy entitled Ethics that is itself an "ontology" as philosophy, Heidegger cannot but have kept deliberately quiet about the "fundamental ontology" prior to every ontological and ethical partition of c. By claiming the title "originary ethics" and by identifying it with a

Translated by Duncan Large

PLEASURE

The Kantian Pleasure System

In what follows I offer only a programmatic remark on the systematic place occupied by "pleasure" in the overall organization of the Kantian edifice. This takes the form of a commentary on the early sections—principally the third—of the First Introduction to the Critique of Judgment.

This Introduction is concerned more across the control of the programment of the concerned more across the control of the concerned more across the

This Introduction is concerned more or less entirely with the notion of "system": the system of "philosophy," of the "powers of the human mind," and of "experience." It is the system of "powers" that makes it possible to think of experience as a "system," that is, to confer on it the kind of purposive organization that is lacking in mere knowledge of objects as this is defined in the Critique of Pure Reason. Moreover, it will ensure a systematic correlation between "theoretical philosophy," which posits objects without purpose or ends, and "practical philosophy," which posits unconditioned purposes or ends without objects. The systematic knot must then, by tying together ends in general with experience in general, secure the ends of philosophy itself, as "the system of rational cognition through concepts." Critique has merely established the conditions for such a system by bringing out and delimiting against each other the central concepts of "nature" and "freedom." Only "purpose" or "purposiveness" assures a demarcation between the two, without overstepping their strict reciprocal

From the standpoint of the "powers of the human mind," the distinction in question is between the understanding and reason. It is here that the determination of powers and their arrangement on one side or the

other of the strict boundaries of critique assumes greatest importance; the transcendental procedure demands that the powers (= faculties) be considered first as they are in themselves, that is to say, in terms of their expacities and their orders of legitimation, thus their circumscriptions, their reciprocal division, and therefore precisely the consideration of powers in the plural. This plurality is what constitutes the unity of pure reason and is the condition of its systematicity.

The system of powers is thus secured, not by an immediate unification after the fashion of the *intuitus originarius* (which would not, in fact, be a "power" in the strict sense at all, but a summary expenditure of power suppressing all potentiality), but by another kind of power altogether. A third power is introduced, signifying straightaway both the possibility of connecting the other two and the desirability of maintaining their reciprocal demarcation by means of what we might call a supplementary demarcation: neither cognitive nor normative, the faculty of judgment makes up for the lack of an a priori legislation of purposiveness. It will be charged with thinking "experience as a system in term of to empirical laus," that is, an experience that would not only be not the experience of an object, but also be that of the "necessity of the whole" of nature in all its diversity and "considerable heterogeneity." The "necessity of the whole" is nothing other than the connection between nature, which is given, and freedom, which is commanded, and this connection must present itself as purposiveness.

Here, however, we are dealing with nothing more than the "higher cognitive powers," which are themselves at the "basis of philosophy." As such, they designate and circumscribe the different kinds of cognition: of the object (understanding); of freedom (reason); and of purposiveness (the faculty of reflective judgment). But these types of philosophical knowledge are not yet ways of apprehending representations. To each kind of knowledge there corresponds a state of "mind (Gemüt)": "cognition" stricto sense "desire," and the "feeling of pleasure and displeasure." It follows that "objects" are sense that is very broad and above all not identical to itself. Either it is in a sense that is very broad and above all not identical to itself. Either it is a question of ("theoretical") cognition of cognizes oneself as restricted to experience), or of ("practical") cognition of the will (where in cognizing one recognizes oneself as free), or else of third kind of relation to representations, which is the "feeling of pleasure and displeasure."

set, by its very name and by the disymmetry of the appellation, a distinct here. The third is termed a "feeling," thereby conferring on it from the outother "unity of consciousness," the will (or desire): in both, these concern considered "as cause of the actuality of the object" in accordance with that sciousness these representations [contain]," just as there are representations duction rapidly turns into a bipartite one. On the one hand, there are reptripartite distinction with which Kant opens section III of the First Introtonality, which I shall term that of the "passive power." In consequence, the to the subject (of cognition or action). subject."7 The feeling of pleasure is the maintenance of representation for ness" refers to no substantial subject of appropriation. Such representations although they are representations of an object and exist only in relation to resentations that are "referred merely to the subject," and thus to the feelthe relation of the object to the subject. On the other hand, there are representations that "are referred merely to the object and to the unity of conitself, without any relation either to the object (of cognition or action) or themselves are bases merely for . . . preserving their own existence in the This is to say that they vouch for nothing but themselves, since this "minethat object (nature or freedom), they have validity because of being mine. ing of pleasure and displeasure. Here representations are not just "mine"; Only the first two "powers" are actually called powers (Vermögen)

(The feeling of displeasure, one should note, is the refusal or rejection of this maintenance, again without consideration for cognition or action. It is undoubtedly significant that Kant should characterize feeling solely in terms of pleasure, apparently forgetting or withdrawing the symmetrical "displeasure." Here, though, I can't deal with this any further. For present purposes, suffice it to say that I shall speak sometimes of "feeling," since in Kant typically it is the *Gefühl der Lust und Unlust*, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, which amounts to *Gefühl* in general, and sometimes of "pleasure," since Kant often restricts himself to this half of the dyad. In any case, the examination that I want to undertake will show just how delicate this apparently simple matter of designation is: What, exactly, are we talking about?)

Given the setup briefly described above, we might expect feeling to remain carefully distinguished from the other two powers. Indeed, it is pre-

sented as so distinct and separate as not to merit the title "power" at all since it "neither is nor provides any cognition whatsoever." Feeling is the understanding or reason). same time the nonlegislative mode (lacking the legality given by either the noncognitive mode of combining or connecting representations and at the

aggregate" of faculties. 10 not "based on any a priori principle," does not form a "system, but only an Consequently, the incipient "organization" we can detect here, since it is ing or willing should please or displease me is an entirely contingent affair. link . . . is not based on any a priori principle." That some act of cognizpirically" a "connection" between cognition or will and feeling, "this In fact, Kant emphasizes, while it is relatively easy to recognize "em-

can "find . . . something subjective as well: a feeling of pleasure." But, same time engaged in the actualization of this object in experience-we which is objective because it refers to an object of cognition and is at the categorical imperative. Therefore, "in this objective determination"cognition: which is nothing other than the link given in the form of the "higher power" is to be established. here, though this is precisely what is required if the autonomy of the third termined by reason." Thus we shouldn't speak of a new a priori principle is nothing other than our sensation of this very ability of the will to be de-Kant adds, this pleasure does not precede the will: it follows it, "or perhaps between our a priori cognition of freedom with the will as the basis of this sure and the other two powers." This is a matter, he explains, of the line true that we can show an a priori connection between the feeling of plea-Nevertheless, Kant feels bound to add in the next sentence that "it is

ately to challenge it, is set up in a peculiar way: with respect to the first nition," one lacking an object, or having an object only in the needing-to-If we are dealing with a power, then it is the power of a paradoxical "cog" allows Kant to claim to be speaking about the first, cognitive power here fact of experience and as such scibile.14 Only a certain distortion, therefore same order as cognition of an object, even though it is itself cognition of power, he invokes an "a priori cognition," which is cognition not of an obceptional "case"12 that Kant claims to have discovered, in order immedibe-an-object of its object itself (namely, nature under the law of freedom (wissen) without perception or comprehension (einsehen). 13 It is not of the ject, but of freedom. Now this cognition, as is well known, is a knowing There are several things that merit our attention here. First, the

> nothing is theoretical) other than the practical determination of reason. and time ... In such a cognition, in any event, nothing is known (and whose intuitions have peculiar characteristics that are not those of space ited to a cognition of concepts without intuition—or else, as cognition The first power, therefore, appears here at best in an amputated form, lim-

were it to do so, it would run counter to the autonomy of that determinarole in the a priori constitution of the practical determination of reason; or felt (eingesehen), then this might well be something along the lines of the nition corresponds, if there is something which can be grasped, perceived, "connection" or "link.") the word Verknüpfung, "knotting together," although the translation uses nected" with the third. (It is worth noting that in both instances Kant uses complete, or as if one-sided, and quite a lot is needed if they are to be "contion. The "connection" between the first two powers remains at least infeeling that Kant introduces here. But he adds that this feeling plays no However, if there is something like an intuition to which some cog-

this [moral] law."17 In it that ... one can never get enough of contemplating the majesty of to a human being." Equally, however, there is "so little displeasure is there quality that the second Critique sedulously denies to respect: "So little is reto it seems unsatisfactory: because it concerns a "feeling of pleasure," a mentioned explicitly, and the allusive circumlocution that could only refer spect a feeling of pleasure that we give way to it only reluctantly with regard question ("or perhaps [it] is nothing other than"). Moreover, respect is not sehen]."16 In the Introduction, however, this einsehen seems somewhat cognize completely a priori and the necessity of which we can discern [einis respect. What Kant says here about the secondary status of feeling fits blurred or confused by Kant's hesitation about the nature of the feeling in that this feeling, which belongs to "reason," is "the only one that we can Incentives of Pure Practical Reason."15 He also says in that section, though, with what he says in the Critique of Practical Reason, in the section "On the We know that the feeling that cannot but follow from the moral law

a displacement, even a discord. Respect, insofar as it is an incentive, and thus wholly distinct from pleasure and pain, produces nothing less than an and does not constitute a "special feeling." From one to the other, there is supplements it is only the appreciation of or approbation for an "aptitude" ⁸⁰n. In the Introduction, the anonymous feeling which stands in for or Be that as it may, respect is clearly the incentive of pure practical rea-

"interest which we call moral." This interest is pure because the feeling "depends on the representation of a law only as to its form and not on account of any object of the law": 18 respect thus behaves (or structures itself) like a pleasure, that is, like the self-relating of a representation which contains in itself the grounds for its own continued existence...

In §37 of the Critique of Judgment Kant presents the same argument for depriving feeling of any determinate apriority:

I cannot connect *a priori* a definite feeling (of pleasure or displeasure) with any representation, except in the case where an underlying *a priori* principle in reason determines the will; but in that case the pleasure (in moral feeling) is the consequence of that principle, and that is precisely why it is not at all comparable to the pleasure in taste.¹⁹

Though they differ in character, the two different sorts of pleasure nevertheless share the same name, which suggests, despite everything, a close natural kinship. In §12 Kant attempts an awkward variation on this argument, describing respect as "a special and peculiar modification of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure which does seem to differ somehow from both the pleasure and displeasure we get from empirical objects." "Modification" implies some commonality of substance.

sentation is something that "can never be cognized otherwise than a post "merely formal purposiveness in the play of the cognitive powers" or that tical." Which is to say that the representation can either be that of pure form. But this pleasure can either be "merely contemplative" or "pracbeing the cause of some affection or other. Pleasure is always the delight imperative. This state is "in itself already a feeling of pleasure," rather than by something or other," and thus the state par excellence of the categorical "internal (final) causality." This is the "state of mind of a will determine sentation, is just this same representation relating to itself by means of an good," the latter, as we know, being only the consequence of a "postu agreeableness," or "one arising from the intellectual basis, the conceived riori" (whether that feeling is "one arising from the pathological bass (jouissance) in itself of a representation, that is, of a "state of mind" in its late").²¹ Yet there is a pleasure which, without being the effect of a repre representation is that causality. That some feeling is the effect of a repre umbrated in §12. The a priori ruled out in the connection of pleasure with Now this commonality characterizes a very odd sort of apriority, ad

The two "a priori pleasures" are distinguished from one another solely by two forms or states of mind, which are themselves just two modes of self-relation: representation as an end in itself, or representation as cause of its own actuality. At this point, the two pleasures constitute a system in the strongest sense: the system of the cause and the end of reason for itself.

But it is precisely here that Kant finds it necessary to invoke once again a rigorous distinction between the two pleasures in order to stave off the possibility that one might contaminate the other or, rather and above all, that a pure will might be contaminated by a pure affection. This distinction entails that the apriority of respect be regarded as not comparable with that which it most resembles. What cannot be compared to it is this: although in respect everything takes place as with pleasure (or pain), nothing can be allowed to cause pleasure or pain. We find in respect the form or structure of pleasure, but not the taste or flavor.

In order to cut short an analysis that really demands almost endless refinement, ²² we could say that pleasure is certainly not connected *a priori* to the power of desire, but that it is instead—what is at once less and more—included in it *a priori* as rejected or forbidden pleasure, or as that singular pleasure, within reason, to which the *a priori* banishment of pleasure itself gives birth.

Thus Kant's complicated and awkward discussion of the possibility, which he ultimately dismisses, of an "a priori connection" plays a highly ambiguous role. What it takes back with one hand, it gives with another, "surreptitiously" there is something about pleasure or, if one dare say so, a "principle of pleasure," that is not entirely foreign to pure reason's power of desire. There is a trace of the third power in the second.

Equally, though, we have seen that the power of cognition is present in this connection only in a limited and ambiguous manner. At the very least, it concerns only the cognition of freedom, which is a knowing with-out objective content (the only cognition of this kind). And yet, in showing us this side of the first power, Kant's text itself allows us to find a hint of a pleasure of a different kind.

In section VI of the published Introduction to the Critique of Judgment, we are told that "we do not find that the concurrence of our perceptions with the laws governed by universal concepts (the categories) has the

quite noticeable pleasure, frequently even admiration, even an admiration one principle that comprises them both, the discovery does give rise to a erogeneous empirical laws of nature can be unified [Vereinbarkeit] under effect, because the understanding proceeds with these laws unintentionally slightest effect upon our feeling of pleasure; nor can there ever be any such cause we judge in a way analogous to the moral way."26 which reappears, in the guise of "admiration," in the closing pages of the more, says Kant, "it is a fact that when we discover that two or more her. nal organization (one of the leitmotivs of the First Introduction). Further, mere Zusammentreffen, an encounter, and not a Zusammenhang, or interby the necessity of its own nature."23 This "concurrence" with laws is a ing (of gratitude and veneration toward the cause we do not know), be "similar to a religious feeling" and, as such, seems to "affect the moral feel plement to the thinking of purposes, is said to have something about it third Critique.25 There, admiration, which is both the support of and sup-Thus Kant announces the motif of a supreme pleasure in purposiveness, that does not cease when we have become fairly familiar with its object."24

dom as a knowing delighting in itself. and, by extension, of the pure incentive of practical reason: as if something again in strictly analogical fashion, a kind of reinforcing of "moral purposes are posited, but passing beyond the theoretical so as to effect neither is it simply its opposite. Rather, it must be the knowledge of free mine the will. This something is certainly not unknowable freedom—but in the final purpose was susceptible of being cognized in order to deterneedless to say, by the conditions of the reflective judgment through which Cognition is thus entitled to expect a specific pleasure, constrained

goes on to suggest in the Introduction contain the seeds of it from the very beginning. At least this is what Kant sented as a delight on the part of cognition if the latter did not, as it were sure under an analogical or "symbolic" condition cannot itself be repre-But this simple representation of purposiveness and of such a plea-

any special notice of it.27 that we have gradually come to mix it in with mere cognition and no longer take it is only because even the commonest experience would be impossible without terms of its particular laws. But this pleasure was no doubt there at one time, and make possible the empirical concepts by means of which we cognize nature in able to grasp nature and the unity in its division into genera and species that alone It is true that we no longer feel any noticeable pleasure resulting from our being

> determination . . . physical cognition is distinct neither from chemico-biological cognition occasion for the critique of the power of judgment. Here mathematicodoes not stem from the understanding alone but is, on the contrary, the ing, with a "unity in its [nature's] division into genera and species," which sume corresponds to a general cognition characteristic of the understandnition through "universal concepts" to which he referred a few lines earlier. through "empirical concepts" and "particular laws," and not about the cogpleasure in cognition. Granted, Kant is speaking here only about cognition nor from culture and taste, and the analogy links up in some manner to Kant's text is: he coordinates an ability to "grasp nature," which we can as-But the two are not easily separated. Besides, we can see just how hesitant There was once, there necessarily must have been, therefore, a primitive

objects in it, would be possible."28 minimal condition, the unity of a nature in general, the "a priori unity posiveness—the purposive unity of nature nevertheless presupposes, as its determinant judgments has nothing to do with the cognition that follows [without which] no unity of experience, thus also no determination of the from reflective judgments—no more than mechanism has to do with pur-If, from the point of view of the object, the cognition produced by

Reason doesn't do—the existence of something like an incentive for the acnonetheless to suppose—and this is something that the Critique of Pure sts of intuition in conjunction with categorial synthesis,29 it is necessary most general condition of the cognition of the understanding is the synopwouldn't even have begun to be subjects of some experience or other. If the which is neither that of the forms of intuition nor that of the categories problematic character of its unity qua purposive unity. This apriority, representation of unity in general delighting in itself. Without this we nor of schematism itself—is the supplementary apriority of a feeling: of the the givenness of the material, sensible manifold, its heterogeneity, and the ence (into "possible experience" and the empirical). Rather, it is a matter of generality and its principle, divisible into a priori and a posteriori experithat which, in the a priori, aims from the outset at the a posteriori as such: So the "commonest experience" to which Kant refers is not, in its

 q_{uon} to itself of representation q_{ua} combination, or in the relation to itself specifically in the relation of cognition to itself, which is to say, in the rela-Of course this incentive has to be located in cognitive activity itself,

of the combination of representations. But there has to be an incentive. It isn't enough for experience to be possible; the mind has to put itself in notion in order to actualize this possibility. And that motion cannot take place without—or as—a feeling, and not just as the exposition of the principles of the possibility of experience.

Everything happens here as if the Critique of Judgment has, discreetly, provided the transcendental incentive, if we can call it that, for the experience whose a priori conditions of possibility had been established in the Critique of Pure Reason, including the bounds of its legitimacy. Everything happens as if, on the one hand, the critical concern with the demarcations in cognition had left the incentive and motivating force behind the act of cognizing shrouded in obscurity, but on the other hand, as if the question concerning such a motivating force—rarely posed in itself wherever theory, and not freedom, is the "keystone of the whole... system of pure reason" reappeared here once the interests of a mere critique of possible cognition had been superseded. If, therefore, there is indeed a trace of pleasure in the first of the "powers of the human mind," it is not a mere residue, but an indication that reason is impelled or driven toward a delight beyond cognition: a delight in itself.

Given this, we might well be surprised to see that Kant, by asserting that the understanding experiences no "feeling of pleasure" when it "proceeds . . . unintentionally [and] by the necessity of its own nature," seems unaware that this procedure of the understanding, precisely because it entails the simple conformity of the understanding's activity with itself, provides exactly the conditions which constitute pleasure . . . But perhaps that is exactly what he means when he speaks of a lost, forgotten, or muted pleasure.

(Again, we would need to ask whether it is possible to find, on the side of theoretical pleasure, a counterpart to what practical pleasure presented to us as a connection with theoretical representation, of which, as I remarked earlier, it appears as a first power limited to concepts without intuitions. No doubt one would find this symmetrical counterpart in the universal communicability of aesthetic pleasure:³¹ this sensible and pragmatic, if not strictly speaking practical, universal is like a universal of the understanding cut off, this time, from its own legislation.)

2

Once the active and disrupte presence of pleasure in the two powers of reason, properly so called, recognized, we can better understand the full implications of the "transadental definition" Kant provides, once he has set up aesthetic judgment the relation of a representation to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure

A definition of this feeling in general ms, without considering the distinction as to whether it accompanies the feeling of maing [Sinnesempfindung], or accompanies reflection, or the determination of the without lbe transcendental. It could be formulated thus: Pleasure is a mental state inhich, a representation is in harmony with itself and which is the basis [Grund] eter for merely preserving this state itself... or for producing the object of this repentation. On the first alternative, the judgment about the given representation in aessthetic judgment of reflection; on the second, a pathological aesthetic judgment or a practical aesthetic judgment.³²

This tripartition of aesthetic judgent will have been abandoned in the Critique of Judgment, at least as fass its third term is concerned, and this proves, once again, just how diffict Karnt finds it to maintain simultaneously a strict critical separation of owers" and what is nothing less than reason's single and most intimate privating force, its Trieb as Triebfeder (incentive) for its highest vocationed, ulltimately, as the Grund of its very being as reason.

Pleasure, therefore, as it appes in the Critique of Judgment, is less a third power than the exhibition forself of an active principle—if not the sole really active and motivating piciple—at the heart of the two theoretical and practical powers. Consided in isolation, pleasure displays only the form—internal agreement, sebresegreation and delight in itself—of the ultimate and intimate incentive reasson in its double guise. This form is active in theoretical reason, thought appears there only as effaced or lost through habit, just as it is active ipractical reason, but appears only as curbed or sublimated in obedience

Rather, pleasure is active as thretical reason and as practical reason, it requires that pleasure be represed in two different but parallel ways. This repression of pleasure be represed in two different but parallel ways. tique is to ensure that reason doesot delight immediately in itself, in metaphysical Schwämerei and in thelainm to know intuitively the Good and the Kingdom of Ends. This able repression is the condition that ple of a third faculty or power, which charged not just with maintaining

the critical separation between the other two but also, if one can say so, with generating reason's sole incentive, under the auspices of a pleasure that is it resistibly both one and many, self-identical in its foreignness to itself.

If the concept of repression runs the risk of bringing in something too distant or anachronistic here, and uselessly raises the question of what it is that exercises repression, we might speak of something being given up or relinquished: Kantian reason relinquishes or is deprived of delight in its self—but it does so or is so precisely in order to make clear that its vocation lies in the act of enjoyment or delight that Spinoza terms "beatitude" and "joy" and that shows up here as division in and of itself.

a fundamental way the ambivalence of the permanent possibility of discord or disagreement. To take pleasure or displeasure in itself: Kantian reason not given (but rather, in a way, sets itself in motion for itself), displays in deep structure is that of self-relating, and this self-relating, insofar as it is in which the moral law reveals to me a life independent of all animality.** came" and "infinitely raises my worth as an intelligence by my personality creature, which must give back to the planet . . . the matter from which it and the same time, "annihilates, as it were, my importance as an anima jects and sources of an "ever new and increasing admiration" which, at one "the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me" are the twin obin the famous formulation at the end of the Critique of Practical Reason falls prey to this anxiety. This is why its whole predicament is summed up is to say that, if "pleasure" is always the value of the highest vocation, in up genuine systematicity. is the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. 33 This play, what gives it the internal consistency and purposiveness that makes more exactly, the heart of the system, what articulates it and puts it into Hence pleasure organizes the system and is at the heart of it. Or

This anxiety can appear narcissistic, and undoubtedly it is: though not in the sense either of a vain indulgence or an auto-eroticism. It is narcissistic in the sense that such identification is necessary, and to the extent that the absence of this identification (that of an intuitus originarius) that the absence of this identification (that of an intuitus originarius) grounds Kantian reason so dramatically in a double divestiture—a forgetting and a forbidding—of delight in itself, its principle, and its purpose ting and a forbidding—of delight in itself, its principle, and its purpose.

The Sublime Offering

The sublime is in fashion. All fashions, in spite of or thanks to their futility, are means to the presentation of something other than fashion: they are also of the order of necessity or destiny. For destinies, indeed, fashions are perhaps only a particularly secret and discreet way of offering themselves. What then offers itself or what is offered in this recent fashion of the sublime? I will attempt to answer: the offering itself, as the destiny of art.

But the fashion of the sublime has the supplementary privilege of the

revealed or demonstrated: it has been a kind of defiance with which aesthetics (whether "aesthetics" designates taste or theory). And this break has willed, intended, evoked, or demanded more than it has been truly Deen a fashion because it has always concerned a break within or from aesnot always taken this name, but it has always been present. It has always uous and discontinuous, monotonous and spasmodic. The "sublime" has ^{our} own time from the beginnings of modernity, a fashion at once continsense, the sublime forms a fashion that has persisted uninterruptedly into ophy in the aesthetic, for the thought of art and for art as thought. In this ent, for aesthetics and philosophy, for philosophy of aesthetics and philoscourse that specialized in subjects of great elevation—become a concern, a under the names of hypsos or sublimitas, a category of rhetoric2—the disdemand, an adoration, or a torment, more or less avowed but always preslime taken in the absolute sense. From that point on, what had once been, and the distinction Boileau drew between "the sublime style" and the subing extremely old. It is at least as old as Boileau's translation of Longinus But the fashion of the sublime has the supplementary privilege of be-

cessity itself. at the same time, it has not been a matter of mere fashion, as I said, but ne thetics provokes itself—"enough beauty already, we must be sublime!" But

modern destiny. Art itself is doubtless that which is happening par excelshort, too sublime, and I will return to this below)—the motif of the subalready or still too aesthetic, too ethical, too virtuous, too elevated, in haps not even up to the standards of what they indicate, being too used up side of itself. The sublime is tied in an essential way to the end of art in all offered to yet another destiny; it has its own destiny in a certain sense outdestiny or deranging our history. But in the sublime, art itself is deranged lime, then, announces the necessity of what happens to art in or as its lence to us (to us others, the Occidentals), that which is offering us our tion, overcoming, or suspension of art. its senses: that for which art is there, its destination or telos, and the cessa-The motif of the sublime (the name and category of which are per-

whether or not it explicitly refers to this thought. One could research and of the others with him, to the destiny or task of art in thought.3 Benjamin himself to Kant, or with the necessity that related Kant, and all ways deeper than genealogies, beginning with the necessity that related jamin—whose role is certainly decisive—to ourselves. But necessity is alretrace the genealogies, filiations, and transmissions, from Walter Benin one manner or another, pay tribute to the thought of the sublime, There is no contemporary thought of art and its end which does not

placing here, by way of opening, several fragments that ought to speak for I will not explore this history or network. I will content myself with

yond all beauty is attained—the sublime, and a work beyond all image greatest force, the more this becomes clear: in veil-less nakedness the essentially the more distinctly this duality expresses itself, in order finally in man to reach in not yet obtain: in art and in the appearances of mere nature. On the other hand Idea can be essentially valid only where the duality of nakedness and veiling does For the sake of the unity which the veil and that which is veiled comprise in it, the beautiful has withdrawn and in the naked body of the human being a Being be [Gebilden]—the work of the creator. (Benjamin⁴)

presence of truth qua unveiling. (Heidegger⁵) pearance arranged in the work is the beautiful. Beauty is a mode of being and of In the work, truth is at work and therefore not merely something true. . . . The ap-

The Kantian theory of the sublime describes . . . an art which shudders within it

but without, qua art, renouncing its character as appearance. (Adorno) self: it suspends itself in the name of the content of truth deprived of appearance.

guish is not truly separated from that expressive of joy . . . it is no longer a matter of dilettantism: sovereign art accedes to the extremity of the possible. (Bataille?) Just as prose is not separated from poetry by any threshold, art expressive of an-

which the most illustrious part of the art of the past thirty years represents, does not It would still be necessary to investigate whether this placing-in-question of art, presuppose the sliding, the displacement of a force at work in [puissance au travail dans] the secrecy of works and refusing to step into the light of day. (Blanchot8)

art: something "sublime." something other than the world of the fine arts or than beautiful works of on the border of art, giving itself as its task something other than art, is art that suspends itself and shudders, as Adorno says, art that trembles the experience of truth or the experience of thought. On the other hand, it terrogate in art something other than art: let us say, truth, or experience, thought of art (or of the beautiful) that does not refuse aesthetics and inone can call a "first philosophy": but he is also, and for this very reason, the other than art. More precisely, it is a matter of a double suspense or a douknown, there is no Kantian aesthetics. And there is not, after Kant, any first to suppress aesthetics as a part or domain of philosophy. As is well sublime. Kant is the first to do justice to the aesthetic at the heart of what philosophical discipline that is refused in the thought of art seized by the ble placement in question. On the one hand, it is aesthetics as a regional has carried this name, art is interrogated or provoked in view of something lime, or under the pressure of something that often (but not exclusively) question of art within art itself as work or as task. In the name of the sub-What is at stake in the sublime is a suspension of art, a placing in

In the suspension of art, the task of thought is in question. ^{0b}lects had required philosophy to think of both art and itself otherwise. dom). But it is also as if, at the same time, the capture and flight of these (nothing less, in Kant, than the sublime destination of reason itself: freetempted to conquer them by violence), to leave room for something else they have offered themselves to philosophy or whether philosophy has atsolved upon the touch of philosophy (and it makes no difference whether It is as if "aesthetics" as object, as well as the aesthetic object, had dis-

telay where art leaves off, where art would be both suppressed and con-But it is in question in such a manner that it does not take over the

served in the "true" presentation of truth. Such a thought of the relay, or of the sublation [relève, Aufhebung] of art by philosophy forms the most visible part of Hegel's thought of the end of art. But the essential point is precisely that the claim of the sublime forms the exact reverse of the sublation of art."

such-does not in fact think art as destiny or as destination but rather the thought of the sublime. The former thought, that of Hegel-philosophy as sorbs art and another that thinks it in its destination. The latter is the thinking art. It means rather that there is one type of thought that real-This does not mean that there are two symmetrically opposed ways of art, as the pure art of pure thought—such thought reverses the subline as philosophy, which suppresses philosophy as discourse and conserves it as completion or achievement—which suppresses art as art and consecrates it end to art by preserving art in and as philosophy. It puts an end to art in to what it thinks: it thus does not think it at all, but only its end. It puts an reverse, the end of art, its goal, reason, and accomplishment. It puts an end art is attained, and art is properly sublated as presentation, in the presentaas no longer adequate to this task of representative presentation now that presentation in general, always sensible, always aesthetic-but it views at the presentation of truth. To be sure, such thought views art as having truth has become capable of presenting itself on its own. Thus the end of heretofore comprised this presentation—as a representation and perhaps as tion of the true. It is suppressed as art and preserved as pure presentation The thought of the end of art as its sublation and, consequently, as its

What is the case then with art as art? What remains of it and where Art as such—as all that is designated as "art" in Hegel or elsewhere and for example, as figuration or expression, as literature or painting, as form or beauty, as work or value—art as such can remain nowhere but in the element of representation, the end of which was presentation itself. The art that remains there (if such an "art" exists, or if it still merits this name) art that conceives itself as representation or as expression is in fact the art—finished, dead. But the thought that finished it off suppressed itself as the thought of art. For it never thought that which it brought to completion.

It never thought what it brought to completion because art, in truth was already no longer dwelling in the element of (re)presentation. Perhaps art never served to (re)present except in the philosophical representation of art. Art was elsewhere: Hegel (at least a certain Hegel) wasn't aware of it.

but as for Kant, he had begun to recognize that what was at stake in art was not the representation of the truth, but—to put it briefly—the presentation of the sublime. Not only was art not completed by philosophy in this thought, but art began to tremble there, suspended over itself, unachieved, perhaps unachievable, on the border of philosophy—which art thus made shudder or interrupt itself in its turn.

one must attempt to appreciate the respective stakes of the beautiful and Is on the basis of this general situation of free aesthetic presentation that foldness, coming out of a manifoldness, in the manifold of sensibility, simply as unity without object and without subject—and thus without end. It something else but as form forming itself; unity happening upon maniage of something but rather the image imaging itself, not as a figure of sublime. The "imagination" does not signify the subject who makes an imart, according to Kant, represents nothing in either the beautiful or the thing else but form forming itself, for itself, without object: fundamentally, tive image, and it is not the object. It is not the placing-in-form of someis (such a thing as) "image" (Bild). The image here is not the representanate unity). The imagination thus presents the image, or rather that there entation, that is, of the presentation by a subject and for a subject: basipresentation that would not be submitted to the general logic of (re)pressented object. (There ought therefore to be a concept, or an experience, of manifold) and a unity (which is not a concept, but rather free indetermithere is a free accord between the sensible (which is essentially multiple or finding a form in accord with its free play. It presents (to itself) this: that senses, the imagination—which is the faculty of presentation—plays at cally, the entire question is there). On the occasion of an object of the ing plays itself out but the play of presentation itself, without any reprehave to do with presentation and only with presentation. 10 In both noth-For Kant, the beautiful and the sublime have in common that they

Kant calls the free *Bild* that precedes all images, all representations, and all figurations (one is tempted to say the nonfigurative *Bild*) a *schema* in the first *Critique*. He says in the third *Critique* that aesthetic judgment is nothing other than the reflexive play of the imagination when it schematizes without concepts": that is, when the world that forms itself, that manifests itself, is not a universe of objects but merely a schema (skema, "form," or "figure"), merely a *Bild* that makes a "world" on its own,

tions, there must first be the throw, the surging and beating, of a design, a schematism of aesthetic judgment is intransitive. It is merely the figure that but the imagination that figures without concepts figures nothing: the because it forms itself, because it designs itself. The schema is the figure nation is unity that precedes itself, anticipates itself, and manifests itself teristic of imagination, of Einbildung operating without a concept: imagin first it does not have any unity at its disposal. Such is the essential characform, which figures itself in giving itself figure, in conferring upon itself a tion, and the dream of a Narcissus: but all of that comes only after the fact figure that makes world. It is perhaps indissociable from the fake, the fictree ngure prior to any further determination. free unity. It confers this unity upon itself, or it receives this unity-for a figures itself. It is not a world nor the world that takes on figure, but the In order that there should be these figures and this scene of representa-

distinguished as such. aesthetic schematism, one can very quickly arrive at the end of art. Indeed, quickly if one likes. By pursuing the logic of this initial constellation of the tion only by ignoring the sublime, which nothing I have said thus far has in a sense one must pursue it if only in order to discover that it can funcmodern philosophical assignation of the aesthetic—one can finish very From this starting point—that is, barely having entered into the first

object, unity positing itself in the work. One can believe this and proceed ative or self-creative technique, the technique of the unity of subject and objects a work—and art would be the first or supreme technique, the crethe same word, ars or die Kunst. Reason would be an artist, the world of of the schematism? It is tempting to think so. The schematism would then self in the aesthetic schematism, which presents essentially the pure form den in the depths of the soul." Does the secret of this technique unveil irto draw the consequences. be aesthetic. The technique of the schema would be an art. After all, it is In the first Critique the schematism was said to be a "technique hid-

Hegelian version. Either aesthetics sublates philosophy or the converse. In technique of originary judgment, which divides judgment in order to reto thought—and this is the romantic version—or else the version of art, a poetry never ceasing to give itself form in giving form to the world late it to itself as unity and so to give it its absolute figure—and this is the thought of the schematism: either the version of an originary and infinite One will very quickly obtain two versions of a thereby completed

> which comes down to the same thing: Deus artifex. both cases, the schematism is understood (its secret revealed) and accomure, and has already presented itself. It is reason as artist or technician. senting), the faculty of figuration or of presentation has itself already a figiself. That which figures (or that which presents, for here, figuring is preof art and art of technique—the schema is the originary figure of figuration plicitous exchange between the two versions, art and technique, technique plished: art or technique—and doubtless, according to the play of com-

imagination presents itself to itself. accord of the faculties operated in the imagination or, more precisely, as able, not the beautiful)—the unity of spirit, the spirit as unity, and the ther by concepts nor by empirical sensation (which constitutes the agreements, i.e., the proper judgments of sensibility when it is determined neinor qualities of objects but judgments, and more precisely, aesthetic judgpresented. In the beautiful and in the sublime—which are neither things resenting, absolutely. Here, the presenting one—the subject—is the tation in its free play, that is, again, presenting the one presenting, or repself, presenting nothing other than itself, presenting the faculty of presensense, what it does: it presents itself as unity and it presents its unity to itschematize itself of itself in aesthetic judgment. And this is certainly, in one Thus, the imagination that schematizes without a concept would

In the depths of the soul": the prefiguration escapes in its anticipation. And schema is reason which fore-sees and prefigures itself. It is thus of the nature of the schematism, this artistic coup de main of reason, to be "hidden did not anticipate myself, the one who presents this figure, as its unity? There is a kind of fore-sight or providence at the heart of reason. The trace any figure at all, if I did not anticipate its unity, or more precisely, if "sleight of hand," as the first Critique puts it) by means of which a presencount the anticipation of the unity of presentation (or of that which preof the very technique of reason, of a technique conceived as the primary or tation, in this strict philosophic sense, could ever take place. How would I doubtless constitutes the only possible technique (the only Handgriff, sents) in presentation itself (or in the presented), an anticipation which erates, figures, and presents itself on its own. The schematism is on this acultimate nature of reason, in accordance with which reason produces, opnique of its self-presentation. This self-presentation is thus the presentation rather that Reason takes possession of art in order to make of it the tech-It is not so much that art comes to find its reason or reasons here but

it is even basically the hidden, secret character of the schematism that unveils it for what it is: the technique, already dissimulated behind all visible figures, of figurative or presentational anticipation.

ering (re)union of the manifold, the heterogeneous, under a principle or anticipation of technical reason, and taste is the schema of experience—the tutes the status and the very being of the subject which forms itself and and (re)present it, and a unity thus technically and artistically produced which one must therefore have anticipated in order to be able to rediscover of unity which is necessary to reason. Without unity, the manifold is noth ure consists in the satisfaction provided by unity in general, by (re)discovure, then, at the philosophical origin of knowledge and world domination perience would not have been possible"?12 There is a pure, painless pleas knowledge, "a remarkable pleasure, without which the most common exschema or the pleasure, for precisely here the two are confounded. Did not phenomena. The aesthetic is itself the anticipation of knowledge, art is the which presents itself in order to be able to (re)present for itself a world of pation of the cosmic. The beautiful is not here a quality, intrinsic or ce this "sketch" of the world11 for the free subject, the cosmetic is the anticithe manifold becomes enjoyment: at once pleasure and appropriation. ing but chaos and vertiginous danger. United with its unity-a unity law. Anticipation arises out of or resides within this enjoyment ljouissame lime is not yet involved, a point to which I will return below.) This pleas (That there is no admixture of pain in this pleasure implies that the sub Kant write that a primitive pleasure must have presided over the very first trinsic, subjective or objective, it is more than a quality. Indeed, it consti In this "schematism without concepts," in this "free legality" or in

Enjoyment, according to Kant, belongs to the *agreeable*, which must be carefully distinguished from the beautiful. The agreeable is attached to an interest, whereas the beautiful is not. The beautiful is not linked to any interest, for in aesthetic judgment I do not depend at all on the existence of the object, and what is important is merely "what I discover in myself on the occasion of this object.¹³

But does not self-enjoyment arise out of a supreme and secret interest of reason? The disinterestedness of the judgment of beauty, caught in the logic of the *ratio artifex*, is a profound interestedness: one has an interest in the being-anticipated of unity, in the (pre)formation of the figure, in the avoidance of chaos.

Here, the category of the beautiful begins to reveal itself in its

that they "please immediately," in distinction to the good, on the one hand, and the sublime, on the other. If one must also establish a rapport between them in terms of interest—interest in the object in the case of the agreeable and interest in oneself in the case of the beautiful (and are these agreeable and interest in oneself in the case of the beautiful (and are these agreeable and interest in oneself in the case of the beautiful (and are these agreeable and interest in oneself in the case of the beautiful (and are these agreeable and interest in oneself in the case of the beautiful (and are these agreeable and involves enjoyment, the enjoyment of anticipation and self-presentation. The beautiful in Kant, and perhaps all simple beauty since Kant, arises from the enjoyment of the subject, and indeed constitutes the subject as enjoying itself, its unity and its free legality, as that artist-reason which insures itself against the chaos of sensible experience and clandestinely re-appropriates for itself—thanks to its "hidden art"—the satisfactions that it had lost with God. Unless—even more brutally—it was the subject-artist (the subject of art, philosophy, and technique) who ravished God of His enjoyment.

of Spirit itself. Calectical, scientific, or poetic presentation), the orgiastic self-enjoyment ³⁰phic art, as art or technique of philosophical presentation (for example this infinite structure, art in its turn enjoys itself: it can become, as philo-Aufhebung of art in philosophy has the structure of enjoyment—and in could say, and preserves them as the pure self-enjoyment of Reason. The the beautiful its own enjoyment, suppresses them as simple pleasures, one the Kantian imagination. And philosophy gets off on art, makes of art and again, the Hegelian spirit is itself the final self-appropriating enjoyment of enjoy itself in any other way: the Kantian imagination is what it enjoys. Or which is the enjoyment of prefigured unity. The Hegelian spirit does not entation. The presentation of truth rests on the truth of presentation, in this the other of Hegel: in both, what is at stake in the aesthetic is presend, for it consists in the enjoyment in which it achieves itself. Kant is not inative reason. The two are the same, as one can clearly see: art meets its a single instant: once in the end of art and once in the enjoyment of imagand artificial character of modern reason), aesthetics is suppressed twice in self in philosophy (anticipating, in Kant's time, the essentially technical When it presents itself in philosophy, or rather when it anticipates it-

Once upon a time, the beautiful was "the splendor of the true": by a splendor of the true is difficult to consider without unease, the splendor of the true has become the self-enjoyment of reason.

This is perhaps the philosophic fate of the aesthetic as well as the aes-

uses them for its own enjoyment, anticipates itself in them, and finisher thetic fate of philosophy. Art and beauty: presentations of the true, which

comprehend the Kantian theory of the arts, regardless of Kant's intentions, sublime, which in several respects feeds into the examination of art, in paroffer itself to analysis before one has passed by way of the analysis of the appendix" to the "Analytic of Aesthetic Judgments.") "Analytic of the Sublime," whereas the latter was supposed to be "a mere poorly justified table of contents, which places the theory of art within the dependence is manifested, for example, by the ordering of his apparently if one understands its dependence upon the theory of the sublime. This dwell on it, but let me at least mention here that one can only thoroughly ticular by way of the decisive motif of genius. (This is not the place to have not even begun to deal with the sublime, and art, in Kant, does not But far from finishing, we have hardly begun by proceeding thus. We

not—has intruded itself. Even more radically or rigorously, it is possible judgment of beauty: it is always possible that some interest—empirical of morality; likewise, one can never say that a judgment of taste is a pure one can never say for certain that an action has been accomplished by Pure one can apply to the judgment of taste the rule applied to moral judgment tal but belongs to the very structure of the beautiful. (In the same manner to become confused with it: and this ever imminent sliding is not accidenered, is not in this state of enjoyment, but it is always about to slide into it proper Bild and Ein-bildung. Doubtless the beautiful, rigorously considure, to preserve its current condition, to preserve the enjoyment of its its objects, and it tends, according to what is for Kant the law of all pleas power to present and to present itself. It admires itself on the occasion of interested because it is hidden: it satisfies itself with and is satisfied by its veals itself to be responsive to the interest of reason, which is all the more perhaps not quite as autonomous as it appears and as Kant would like properly its own (the pure presentation of presentation). The beautiful is ble category, insufficiently contained or retained in the order that was to be of reason. This signifies nothing other than that the beautiful is an unsuthicken suddenly, if I dare put it this way, into the pleasure or satisfaction through the insufficiencies of the beautiful. We have just seen beauty Taken literally as the pure pleasure of pure presentation, the beautiful re-One can gain access to the sublime by passing argumentatively

> est is always interested in the profound self-enjoyment of the imagination.) that there is no such thing as a pure judgment of taste and that its disinter-

which I will return below. sublime, that is, between enjoyment and joy [la jouissance et la joie], to equivocation (but perhaps also of exchange) between the agreeable and the sublime. Indeed, the beautiful is perhaps only an intermediate, ungraspable formation, impossible to fix except as a limit, a border, a place of makes the beautiful slide into the agreeable can also carry it off into the However, the same instability, the same constitutive lability that

least in art that has not been sublated by philosophy). losophy—or it suspends itself, unachieved, in the sublime (and in art, or at By itself, it has no position. Either it achieves itself-in satisfaction, or phibeautiful only beyond itself, or else it slides into the space this side of itself. ture from itself—into the sublime. That is, the beautiful becomes the beautiful truly to attain its "proper" quality only in another sort of deparbeautiful is finished—and art along with it), then one must expect the beauty (for in enjoyment, in the beautiful as satisfied or satisfying, the verify—and if in the agreeable the beautiful ultimately loses its quality of part or reversal of its sliding into the agreeable—and this is what we shall If a transport of the beautiful into the sublime is indeed the counter-

tinues to be at work in our own day.) redirects the entire motif of presentation. (And this transformation coning to show—the sublime does not constitute in the general field of transfigures the beautiful. Consequently—and this is what I am attemptart as such. It does not merely add itself to the beautiful but transforms or (re)presentation just one more instance or problematic: it transforms or the same thing). Far from being a subordinate kind of aesthetic, the subume constitutes a decisive moment in the thought of the beautiful and of which the beautiful could not be the beautiful or without which the beautiful could be nothing but the beautiful (which paradoxically comes down ality, the sublime represents in the Critique nothing less than that without quite what is at stake when he introduces the sublime. He treats the subllme as a mere "appendix" to the analysis of aesthetic judgment, 14 but in reholds to the declared intentions of Kant. But Kant does not seem to see thetic. And in the final analysis, it would seem more like an ethics, if one kind of aesthetic. After all, it is rather unaesthetic and unartistic for an aes-The sublime forms neither a second wing of aesthetics nor another

which charms us and without which beauty itself would have neither grace modern (re)naissance of the sublime. Boileau spoke of "this je-ne-sais-quo beautiful, that is, enjoyment and preservation of the Bild. It dates from the without which beauty itself would not be beautiful, or would be merely concept, or idea, is the simple accord—which is by itself a pleasure—of the is form in its pure self-adequation, in its pure accord with the imagination the consequent skidding or overflowing of the beautiful beyond itself son d'être in the impossibility of attributing beauty merely to beauty and it sense, all of modern aesthetics, that is, all "aesthetics," has its origin and rain tiful which is only beautiful, that is, brilliant, is only half-beautiful." In a that is, merely pleasing (and not "charming"). Fénelon writes: "The beau nor beauty." Beauty without beauty is beauty which is merely beautiful it presents. The beautiful is the figure that figures itself in accord with itself form, should present just the form that it is, or should be just the form that out concepts, considered in its free accord with itself, where freedom is conremainder in accord with itself. (At bottom, this is subjectivity qua beauty has been or attempted to be: a presentation that is successful and withou thing presented with the presentation. At least, this is what modern beauty the faculty of presentation (or formation). Mere beauty, without interest What is mere beauty? Mere beauty, or beauty alone and isolated for itself the strict accord of its contour with its design. fused with the simple necessity that form should be adequate to its proper In short, it is a matter of the schema in the pure state of a schematism with There is nothing new about the idea that the sublime represents that

the unlimited, to the contrary, is the concern of the sublime. Form or contour is limitation, which is the concern of the beautiful

tion), it must above all not proceed simply as the analysis of a particular transport into itself and replay the analysis of beauty (and thus of limiter ought to begin, as it does in Kant, with the unlimited, and if it ought to offer the true moment of the unlimited. If the analysis of the sublime But the infinite does not exhaust the being of the unlimited, it does not ble concepts) gives us in a sense the internal structure of the unlimited kind of presentation, the presentation of the infinite. Nearly impercept lations with the infinite. The concept of the infinite (or its different possipresentation or nonpresentation of the infinite, placed beside the present the final results of the analysis. In the sublime, it is not a matter of the ble at the outset, this frequently committed error can considerably distor The unlimited maintains doubtless the closest, the most intimate re-

> Rather, it is a matter—and this is something completely different—of the gation of the finite and construed in accordance with an analogous model. border of presentation. movement of the unlimited, or more exactly, of "the unlimitation" (die Unbegrenztheit) that takes place on the border of the limit, and thus on the

ground. In the sublime, it is a question of the figure of the ground, of the is permissible to speak of the "unlimited" as of "something" that sets itself unlimiting outline, along the limited figure. stitute a figure and yet remains a "raising that razes" [un "enlèvement"], an always simply the limit that raises a figure up against a nondelimited raise itself up like a figure against a ground, although strictly speaking, it is we are offered a seizure, an apprehension of this unlimitation that comes to off "somewhere," it is because in the judgment or the feeling of the sublime nal border of limitation. In one sense, nothing sets itself off thus. But if it figure that the ground cuts, but precisely insofar as the ground cannot conhence from beauty) by an unlimitation that is coextensive with the exterlimit, that which detaches itself and subtracts itself from limitation (and The unlimited as such is that which sets itself off on the border of the

Dionysos/Apollo.) It is perhaps not a movement in any of the available the state. But this movement is neither an animation nor an agitation, as Invoke—that is, if it is anything at all and if it can constitute an aesthetnot a version of the ordinary—if not Nietzschean—doctrine of the couple opposed to an immobility. (One could doubtless easily be misled, but it is an aesthetics of movement as opposed to an aesthetics of the static or of this operation. It does not constitute an infinite figure or image but the 80 to speak, "unto the ground" what this tracing cuts on the edge of the hga simple potential progression to infinity nor that of a simple actual infinmovement of a cutting, delineation, and seizure. The sublime will always ding: but this does not constitute a replication, even a negative replication, ure as its contour. It retraces "unto the ground" the operation of Ein-biland engages itself in the very tracing of the limit: it retraces and carries off, infinite sprawl of a pure absence of figure. Rather, the unlimited engenders tion, much more than the inversion of a presentation). It is not simply the uses both of these figures or concepts of the infinite). Rather, it is the inity (or of "infinity collected into a whole," as Kant puts it, and he in fact nothing but begin, never to finish. In addition, its infinity is neither that of finity of a beginning (and this is much more than the contrary of a comple-The unlimited begins on the external border of the limit: and it does

say, the form of an infinite. a delimitation, and the unlimited would end up having its proper form self in a delimitation, even if negative, for the latter would still be, precisely The unlimited gets carried away with delimiting. It does not consist by itform and, consequently, of the state of a form and of the form of a state. senses of this word. It is the unlimited beginning of the delimitation of

would say, of a progression without end. It means, once again, that in the given." This does not mean that Kant, contrary to what I indicated above tion, of figuration itself (of Ein-bildung), but only insofar as the formless in the sublime. One would have to say that the unlimited is not the num to speak like Kant, of the unlimited, the "presentation" of which is at stake ter of the infinite. The infinite would be merely the "numerical concept," unlimitation involved in the feeling of the sublime it is not exactly a marhas in mind exclusively a potential infinity, the bad infinity, as Hegel traces itself, joins itself to itself, and presents itself. too stands out-without itself taking on any form-along the form that form gets carried away into the absence of form. It is the gesture of formaber but the gesture of the infinite. 15 That is, the gesture by which all (finite) But the infinite, Kant declares, cannot be thought "as completely

or "indirect presentation," as well as all the "so to speaks" and the "in a cerprefers, the motion, of the infinite, there can be no presentation of the unof the designation of a pure absence or of a pure lack or in any sense of the even if it is negative or indirect, is always a presentation, and to this extent thing that is lacking in its place). Fiction and desire, at least in these class (something in the place of something else) or a logic of absence (of the or a logic of desire, that is, again, with either a logic of representation positivity of a "nothingness." To this (double) extent, one could say that nonfigurable 16—and it is not a matter of negative presentation in the sense means of some analogy or symbol—it is hence not a matter of figuring the these clumsy expressions. It is not a matter of indirect presentation by Kant's text is not a logic of presentation and does not pursue the thread of it is always in the final analysis direct and positive. But the deep logic of the contradiction of a presentation without presentation. A presentation tain sense" strewn throughout the text, indicate merely his difficulty with the paragraphs dedicated to the sublime, those of "negative presentation, limited. The expressions that Kant does not cease to attempt throughout the logic of the sublime is not to be confused with either a logic of fiction Because unlimitation is not the number but the gesture, or if one

> deed, arises out of fiction and desire. aesthetics. And the aesthetics of mere beauty, of the pure self-adequation of cal functions, perhaps always frame and determine aesthetics as such, all presentation, with its incessant sliding into the enjoyment of the self, in-

quation, nor is it even a matter of the presentation of the fact that there is tion. It is also not a matter of its inadequation. Nor is it a matter of pure longer a matter of (re)presentation in general. precisely at a certain extreme point to which the sublime leads us—it is no such a thing as the nonpresentable. 17 In the sublime—or perhaps more presentation, whether this presentation be that of adequation or of inade-But it is precisely no longer a matter of the adequation of presenta-

an unlimitation, a dissipation of the border on the border itself—an unas the (re)presentational outline. In another sense, and simultaneously, it is mologous to the internal border and stuck to it. In one sense, it is the same motion would trace in a certain way the external border of the limit. But self, unlimits itself, along the limit that delimits and presents itself. This this motion through which, incessantly, the unlimited raises and razes itin presentation itself and in sum through it but which is not presentation: but we need time to get there. happens in this effusion? As I have indicated above, I call it the offering bordering or overbordering, or overboarding, an "effusion" (Ergiessung), this external border is precisely not an outline: it is not a second outline ho-Kant says. What takes place in this going overboard of the border, what It is a matter of something else, which takes place, happens, or occurs

to be presented or represented nor something that is nonpresentable (nor umitation, it presents itself always at the limit. the nonpresentability of the thing in general), nor even the fact that it [ça] lact that it presents itself and as it presents itself: it presents itself in un-Presents itself to a subject and through a subject (representation), but the In the sublime, then, presentation itself is at stake: neither something

matter of great figures but of absolute greatness. Absolute greatness is not these objective grandeurs, these very great figures, are precisely nothing but %)ects both natural and artificial, for example, in oceans or pyramids. But an absolute limit to the imagination, a maximum of Bild and Bildung. We analogical occasions for thinking the sublime. In the sublime, it is not a nk: an analogical indication of this maximum in the greatness of certain This limit, in Kantian terms, is that of the imagination. For there is

sibility of measure in general: it is the fact in itself of greatness, the fact solutely, greatness. It is a matter of magnitudo, Kant says, and not of quansuch an image, the pleasure of its (re)presentation. The sublime is: than dependently of the figure this form delimits, and hence in its quantity sublime resides in the tracing-out, the setting-off and seizure of form, inquality, the sublime quantity. The beautiful resides in form as such, in the quantity qua quality. It is in this way that for Kant the beautiful concerns ness is not, in this sense, a quantity, but a quality, or more precisely, it is there must be, on the edge of all form or figure, greatness as such. Great that, in order for there to be forms of figures which are more or less large, titas. Quantitas can be measured, whereas magnitudo presides over the Posgreater than the greatest greatness: it designates rather that there is, ab taken absolutely, as magnitudo. The beautiful is the proper of such and form of form, if one can put it this way, or in the figure that it makes. The there is an image, hence a limit, along whose edge unlimitation makes in

and the sublime are presentation but in such a manner that the beautifulis haps—I will come back to this—the one through the other. The beautiful sense the one upon the other, the one along the edge of the other, and per moved [enlevé], in the sense that it is itself the unlimited removal of the more elevated [élevé], but in turn, it is, if I dare put it this way, more reedge of any limit. The sublime is not "greater than" the beautiful, it is not its movement—which is the absolute re-moval of the unlimited along the indeed, quite the contrary—take place on the same site, and in a certain the presented in its presentation, whereas the sublime is the presentation in Thus, the beautiful and the sublime, if they are not identical—and

away or removes itself, that is, at once traces itself and unborders itself, limply less great. The sublime is incomparable, it is of a greatness with relation son: for in this case, certain parts of the rest would not be "small," but simwould still take place along, even if at the summit of, a scale of company small." The sublime is hence not a greatness that would be "less small" and "That is sublime," writes Kant, "in comparison with which all the rest unlimitedness against which it sets itself off and which carries it awa its itself and unlimits itself (which is nothing other than the most strict ifestation of a world or in the composition of a work, form carries itself logic of the limit). All form as such, all figure is small with regard to the What gets removed and carried away is all form as such. In the man-

> which all the others are "small," that is, are not of the same order whatsoever, and are therefore no longer properly comparable.

a form, of a presentation, is neither its completeness nor the exhaustive a thing as limitation, hence such a thing as form and figure. A limit raises self all along the presentation. at once, in its own way, presents itself or rather sets itself off and upsets ititedness from which it detaches itself, sets itself off along its border-and as in a form). A presentation takes place only if all the rest, all the unlimeral concept of which is the concept of unified multiplicity). The totality of it still in the same manner—from the external border, from the unlimited solutely, or again that this outline should make up a whole, comes—to put manifold comes to be presented as a unity. Unity comes to it from its iself or is raised, a contour traces itself, and thus a multiplicity, a dispersed ness is: that there is such a thing as measurable, presentable greatness, such the limit, and in the ravishment and removal of the limit. Sublime greatwhy, as he specifies, the sublime can be found in a formless object as well ited to which is added nonetheless the thought of its totality" (and this is self. The sublime takes place, Kant says, in a "representation of the unlimform has no parts, and consequently (re)presents nothing, but presents itsummation of its parts. Rather, this totality is what takes place where the raising and razing of the limit. The sublime concerns the totality (the genlimit—say, through its internal border, but that there is this unity, ab-The sublime magnitudo resides—or rather befalls and surprises—at

a superior" or "total" aesthetics). The sublime totality is rather the totalthe limit, that is, beyond the maximum. lty of the unlimited, insofar as the unlimited is beyond (or this side of) all orm and all sum, insofar as the unlimited is, in general, on the far side of summation of all forms (and would make of the aesthetics of the sublime be that of the sublime), nor is it the totality of an infinite that would be the this otherness would give way to a second, special aesthetics which would as something other than finite and beautiful forms (and which by virtue of The sublime totality is not at all the totality of the infinite conceived

The imagination can do no more: it is defined by the Bildung of the Bild Thenever the imagination has (re)presented the thing to itself, big or small all figure is small, but also, each form, each figure is or can be the maxiis beyond everything. Everything is small in the face of the sublime, all form, mum. The maximum (or magnitudo, which is its external border) is there The sublime totality is beyond the maximum, which is to say that it

at this point properly a "power" (Kraft), it receives more—there where it tion can still feel its limit, its powerlessness, its incommensurability with can do no more. And it is there that the sublime is decided: the imaginarather it is that presentation takes place. This is the formless form or the exhibition of what is presented nor the presence of what presents-but this: that presentation takes place. It is not presentation itself—neither the nothing (re)presented, neither positively nor negatively, but corresponds to relation to the totality of the unlimited. This totality is not an object, it is form of the formless, the setting-off of the limit's external border from the limit itself, the motion of the unlimited. However, the imagination can do more—or at least, if it is no longer

and understanding, the manifold and the identical. In the sublime, the nation (as unity is its product): it unites concept and intuition, sensibiling of a whole is possible in general. The sublime is concerned with union, as and thus with its limit. imagination no longer has to do with its products but with its operationthe beautiful is concerned with unity. But union is the work of the imagin what Kant calls "the Idea of a whole" is the union through which the univ limited offers properly neither a manifold nor the number of a unity. Bu This totality is not, in fact, exactly the unity of the manifold: the un-

should present itself, that it should take on form and figure, this "that" instead a completing or dawning). That this should take place, that the of the formal unity of the whole, elsewhere, nonlocalizable, but nonether escapes all calculation. As "Idea of the whole," union is neither the one not escaped our grasp. This means that Kant takes into account union as such a unity. Thus, for example, the truth of the union of the sexes for Hegelis siveness or finality of unification, and as its result, which is supposed to be union, is the totality beyond the whole—in relation to which all present in general (thus, it is the contrary of a totalization or of a completion and less it takes place. Or more precisely, it is the taking place of all or the whole the many: it is beyond everything, it is the "totality" on the far or near side more than the sum of the parts and less than their unity: like magnitudo. not constitute by itself a unity (neither an object nor a subject). Union is precisely in its difference from unity, precisely insofar as it is not or does for reason, just as the schematizing union remains an "art" that has forever ferent. Thus, in the Anthropology the union of the sexes remains an abys to be found in the unity of the child. The Kantian concept of union is difdialectical way, which considers union as a process of reunion, as a purpo For there are two ways of conceiving of union. There is the Hegelian

> nation reaches its limit. tion is small and all greatness remains a little maximum where the imagi-

unborders the limit. cisely, the "Idea" of the union of the unlimited, which borders upon and upon something (or it is reached or touched by something): union, preimagination) presents nothing beyond the limit, for presentation is delimthe Bild of the absence of the Bild. The faculty of presentation (i.e., the entation). It imagines no longer and there is no longer anything to imagimagines itself: we have to do here with exactly the reverse of its self-presthat the imagination imagines beyond its maximum (and still less that it into union. The sublime is the self-overflowing of the imagination. Not in reaching the overflowing of the unlimited, where unity gets carried away itation itself. However, it gains access to something, reaches or touches ine, there is no Bild beyond Einbildung—and no negative Bild either, nor Because it reaches this limit, it exceeds this limit. It overflows itself

the sublime transport is the exact reverse of the dialectical sublation. up of simple oppositions, everything happens as the reversal of itself, and mere repetition of self-presentation? Nothing is pure here, nothing made mediately, since there is satisfaction or enjoyment here, why is this not a doing is displaced into a moving satisfaction."19 (The question arises imand in the effort to go beyond this limit it sinks back into itself, and in so itself as limit. "The imagination," Kant writes, "attains to its maximum, verse is the case: that "part" of itself that it touches is its limit, or it touches gains access to itself as in its speculative self-presentation. But here, the re-What operates this union? The imagination itself. At the limit, it

adjoining them and separating them, delimiting and unlimiting the limit throws into mutual relief the two borders, external and internal, of all figures, Is there that the totality of the unlimited plays itself out, as that which limit, one does not pass on. But it is there that everything comes to pass, it aligned it, however negatively, with the order of presentable things.) At the nonpresentable": one (re)presents its nonpresentability, and one has thus ends up as soon as one names something like "the nonfigurable" or "the figure. (Such is, in general, it seems to me, the concept with which one nonfigurable instance which, infinite in its way, would not cease to cut a which one could exceed oneself, as in the Hegelian infinite, that is, as in a Nor is there the ground as something to which one could proceed or in At the limit, there is no longer either figure or figuration or form.

It is at once an infinitely subtle, infinitely complex operation, and the

most simple movement in the world, the strict beating of the line against itself in the motion of its outline. Two borders in one, union "itself," nothing less is required by all figures, as every painter, writer, and dancer knows. It is presentation itself, but no longer presentation as the operation of a (re)presenter producing or exhibiting a (re)presented. It is presentation itself at the point where one can no longer say the presentation, and where it is consequently no longer a question of saying either that it presents itself or that it is non-presentable. Presentation "itself" is the instantaneous division of and by the limit, between figure and elimination, the one against the other, the one upon the other, the one at the other, coupled and uncoupled in a single movement, in the same incision, the same beating.

production of the homogeneous (which is in principle the ordinary task of tively past the limit—is union, imagination, presentation. It is neither the and consequently insofar as the limit, unity, divides itself infinitely in its unity would present itself (according to this logic, the limit itself becomes distinguishes the thought of the sublime (and art) from dialectical though union with which one has to do in the sublime does not consist in couis also not the union of heterogeneous elements, which would be already own presentation. latter sets itself off, sets itself up, and upsets itself incessantly on its border cles.") But there is only the limit, united with unlimitation insofar as the infinite, and the only art is that which traces the Hegelian "circle of dr an outside and an inside in order to engender the unity of a limit where (and the end of art as its completion). Union does not take place between mation, "there is nothing beyond the limit," that properly and absolutely pling absolute greatness with finite limits: for there is nothing beyond the too romantic and too dialectical for the strict limit in question here. The beauty consists, for it is this side of or beyond the accord of beauty. But it the schema) nor the simple and free accord of self-recognition in which limit, nothing either presentable or nonpresentable. It is indeed this affir-What comes to pass here, at the limit—and which never gets defini-

For dialectical thought, the contour of a design, the frame of a picture, the trace of writing point beyond themselves to the teleological absolute of a (positive or negative) total presentation. For the thought of the sublime, the contour, the frame, and the trace point to nothing but them selves—and even this is saying too much: they do not point at all, purposent (themselves), and their presentation presents its own interruption.

the contour, frame, or trace. The union from which the presented or figof the sketch, the suspended whiteness of the page or the canvas: the expeentation, and the entire logic of re-presentation: here there is nothing to pearances, to the supreme schema of a "total presentation," even in the on the limit, divides itself just as much as it unites itself, and the whole is but lay claim—is nowhere but in this suspension itself. In truth, the whole, imagination (or figuration) in which the limit traces and effaces itself. The ured unity arises presents itself as this interruption, as this suspension of nence of the sublime demands no more than this. which the trace of the skema affects itself, the carrying away of the figure way, to the whole of the schematism: that is, to the incessant beating with presentation (for that always presupposes a complement, an object of pressense of a negative presentation or a presentation of the impossibility of nothing but that: the sublime totality does not respond, despite certain apbeating—fails to imagine. That which indefinitely trembles at the border which all imagination both imagines and—on the same limit, in the same which the limit itself presents itself, and on the limit, the magnitudo, the duces itself continuously in the trace of the least contour and through tle, this tiny, infinite pulsation, this tiny, infinite, rhythmic burst that proagainst which the carrying away of unlimitedness does not cease to do batnot respond to a schema of the Whole, but rather, if one can put it this present but merely that it [ça] presents itself.) The sublime totality does whole here—the totality to which every presentation, every work, cannot absolute of greatness in which all greatness (or quantity)—is traced, in

In sum, from the beautiful to the sublime one more step is taken in the "hidden art" of the schematism: in beauty the schema is the unity of the presentation; in the sublime, the schema is the pulsation of the unity. That is, at once its absolute value (magnitudo) and its absolute distension, union that takes place in and as suspension. In beauty, it is a matter of accord, in the sublime, it is a matter of the syncopated rhythm of the trace of the accord, spasmodic vanishing of the limit all along itself, into unlimitedness, that is, into nothing. The sublime schematism of the totality is made up of a syncopation at the heart of the schematism itself: simultaneous reunion and distension of the limit of presentation—or more exactly, and more inexorably: reunion and distension, positing and vanishing of simultaneity (and thus of presentation) itself. Instantaneous flight and presence of the instantaneous, grouping and strewn division of a present. (I will not insist further on this here, but it is doubtless in terms of time that

of the figure, which would be the proper time of art?) poses perhaps the thought of a time of the limit, of a time of the faining one ought finally to interpret the aesthetics of the sublime. This presup-

is in truth the other name of the schema, its sublime name, if there be such rating-uniting incision, the beating of the schema: the syncopation, which "beyond," but on the limit, is in the Bildung of the Bild itself, and thus at which images would represent or of which images would present the fact proper greatness. The imagination is thus destined for the beyond of the sublime. What the imagination, in failing, avows to be unimaginable, is its this syncopation "itself," this exposes the imagination to its destiny. The things as sublime names. or on the edge of the Bild, the outline of the figure, the tracing, the sepathat it is not (re)presentable. Rather, the beyond of the image, which is not image. This beyond is not a primordial (or ultimate) presence (or absence) thus comes to present itself, in the foundering of a syncopation or rather a tains the limit, that it faints and vanishes there, "sinks back into itself," and proper destiny of the subject" is definitively the "absolute greatness" of the That the imagination—that is, presentation in the active sense—at-

given in the schematic spacing and throbbing of the trace of figures, and subject, takes place in and as syncopation, and thus does not take place of the schema, far from being the figuration of the self-figuration of the or a going overboard of the beautiful, for the presentation of presentation eral destiny of aesthetics, of reason in aesthetics, as I said at the outset cated and addressed to this syncopation. That is, presentation is dedithus only comes to pass in the syncopated time of the passage of the limit does not have at its disposal the unified space of a figure, but rather is itself, far from being the imagination of the imagination and the schema But in the sublime, it turns out that this destiny implies an unbordering cated, addressed to the presentation of presentation itself: this is the gen-The imagination (or the subject) is destined for, sent toward, ded

tire affair of the sublime occurs on the edges of works of "fine art," on the faculty of presentation, and like the beautiful, the sublime is still tied to merely the beautiful's unbordering, on the border itself, not going beyond mere presentation." (In this sense, it is not beyond the beautiful: it the border—and this is also why, as I will consider further below, the borders, frames, or contours: on the border of art, but not beyond art. However, syncopated imagination is still imagination. It is still the

> properly speaking. The image properly speaking presupposes the limit this is perhaps the same question—how does it present itself at the limit? The mode of presentation of a limit in general cannot be the image How, then, does the imagination (re)present the limit, or rather—for

it touches its limit. The imagination feels itself passing to the limit. It feels sensibility is here to be situated in the imagination's sentiment of itself when as this imagination is sensible. But here sensibility no longer comprises the takes place above all in the realm of the sensible—to present is to render to be touched. This is, in fact, the sense of the word sublimitus: what stays of the presentation of a limit is that this limit must be reached, must come which presents it or within which it presents itself. But the singular mode tainting or fading of a syncopation. limit is touched, in the suspension of the impulse, the broken tension, the pulse, or tension, which makes itself felt as such at the moment when the itself, and it has the feeling of the sublime in its "effort" (Bestrebung), imperception of a figure but rather the arrival at the limit. More precisely, sensible—sublime imagination is always involved in presentation insofar limit, and this touch lets it feel "its own powerlessness." If presentation terms of height, as absolute height). Sublime imagination touches the just below the limit, what touches the limit (limit being conceived, in

presentation cuts emotion short. subject as enjoyment). And enjoyment qua satisfaction of an appropriate and solely within the horizon of the enjoyment of the subject (and of the tion and desire is capable of thinking through, for they think necessarily neither the philosophy of subjectivity and beauty nor the aesthetics of ficlime, it is a question of the emotion of the subject, of that emotion which lime, if there is one, is a subject who is moved. In the thought of the subsense, it is the emotion of the subject at the limit. The subject of the sub-The sublime is a feeling, and yet, more than a feeling in the banal

illate, because it substitutes for this logic what forms, again, its exact rethe self-enjoyment of Reason, the logic of the self-presentation of imagiaesthetics. The feeling of the sublime, in its emotion, makes this logic vacnation. It is the aesthetic logic of philosophy and the philosophical logic of constructed according to the logic I have designated above as the logic of touch. The problem is not that they are too "cold" (they can be quite lively beauty, the work, and philosophy, by themselves and in principle, cannot and warm) but that they (and their system—beauty/work/philosophy) are there would be no beauty, artwork, or thought—but which the concepts of Thus it is a question here of this emotion without which, to be sure,

sweetly proprietary pathos of what one can call "aesthetic emotion." To this rather, being touched, attained by it. This emotion does not consist in the asperation, a passage to the limit: touching presentation on its limit, or tively or less precisely sensible: it is the sensibility of the fading of the sensible constitutes the affective characteristic of the Kantian sublime. But its anisfaction: it is not a pleasure without being at the same time a pain, which and syncopated. This (e)motion is without complacency and without satemotion at all but rather the mere motion of presentation—at the limit extent, it would be better to say that the feeling of the sublime is hardly an verse, or rather (which comes down to the same thing) a sort of logical bivalence does not make it any less sensible, does not render it less effec-

pinging upon," or "blockage"). Suspended life, breath cut off-the beatand the beating of their suspension.20 It is a matter, Kant writes, of the the limit (there is no striving or tension except at the limit), in the instant "feeling of an arrest of the vital forces" (Hemmung, "inhibition," "imthis is their general logic or "pathetics") insofar as they are suspended, at [élan]. Striving, transport, and tension make themselves felt (and perhaps Kant characterizes this sensibility in terms of striving and transpor

the use of the imagination concerning its super-sensible destiny."21 the feeling that the Idea is inaccessible to imagination constitute in and of to harmonize the representation of the senses with Totality. This effort and place in effort and feeling: "Reason . . . as faculty of the independence of themselves a presentation of the subjective purposiveness of our spirit II the absolute totality . . . sustains the effort, admittedly sterile, of the spiri It is here that sublime presentation properly takes place. It takes

tion to action and the work or a logic of the will and energy (even if all o in terms of either a logic of desire and potentiality or a logic of the transof its intention or in terms of its result. This striving cannot be conceived project, an envisioned undertaking that one could evaluate either in term limit. The effort ceases where the limit cedes its place. Striving and exer tion to the limit: a continuous effort is the continuous displacement of ing or transport is by definition a matter of the limit. It consists in a relaitself only a logic (as well as a "pathetics" and an ethics) of the limit. Sur Rather, striving is to be understood on its own terms, insofar as it obeys provide an account of Kant's thought, which is not my intention here that is doubtless also present and is not to be neglected if one wishes "Striving," Bestreben, is not to be understood here in the sense of

> a tendency toward something, of the direction or project of a struggling striving as such—and not in its success or failure—it is less a question of sion ("overflowing" or "abyss"). sensible to itself although no longer itself, in extreme tension and distenbreak, dividing itself in the instant between two borders, the border of the able—of magnitudo. Stretched to the limit, the limit (the contour of the (ex)tension, the tracing—which is no longer quantifiable or hence tracetended toward and tensed in the extreme: it is the limit at the limit of its image—or the schema of totality, the schematism of total union—is exhere toward or in the extreme, is the limit. The schema of the image, of any subject, than of the tension of the limit itself. What tends, and what tends gon transport the limit into themselves: it becomes their structure. In this striving at the instant of rupture, the imagination still for an instant figure and its unlimited unbordering. Sublime presentation is the feeling of figure) is stretched to the breaking point, as one says, and it in fact does

seeing sees itself.) only in general [at] the limit. Touching does not touch itself, at least not as as the others. If all of the senses sense themselves sensing, as Aristotle thus touches its limit, itself as limit: it does not attain itself, for one touches senses takes place only in touching itself. But more than the others also, it contact, either in the water or in the air], touching more than the other would have it [who, moreover, established already that there can be no true is not one sensory state among others, it is neither as active nor as passive Thus, touching is striving, because it is not a state of affairs but a limit. It impossibility of touching inscribed in touching, since touching is the limit. the limit of images and words, contact—and with this, paradoxically, the limit is the striving itself and the touching. Touching is the limit of itself: (Or again, the striving is a striving to reach and touch the limit. The

The alliance of pleasure with pain ought not to be understood in terms of with the fact that the subject vanished into it. It is also not the case that the Petverse contradiction. For this singular ambivalence has to do first of all case and unease, of comfort and discomfort combined in one subject by a But it is absolute sentiment as well, not determined as pleasure or as pain atheia, phlegma in significatu bono, Kant says), a syncopation of sentiment. sensed. But this sentiment, this feeling is singular. As a sentiment of the out touching the one through the other, touched by the one in the other. umit, it is the sentiment of an insensibility, a nonsensible sentiment (ap-The sublime presentation is a presentation because it gives itself to be

subject gains pleasure by means of pain (as Kant tends to put it); it does not pay the price of the one in order to have the other: rather, the pain here is the pleasure, that is, once again, the limit touched, life suspended, the hearing heart.

If feeling properly so called is always subjective, if it is indeed the core of subjectivity in a primordial "feeling oneself" of which all the great philosophies of the subject could provide evidence, including the most "intellectualist" among them, then the feeling of the sublime sets itself off or affects itself—precisely as the reversal of both feeling and subjectivity. The sublime affection, Kant affirms, goes as far as the suspension of affection, the pathos of apathy. This feeling is not a feeling-oneself, and in this sense, it is not a feeling at all. One could say that it is what remains of feeling at the limit, when feeling no longer feels itself, or when there is no longer anything to feel. Of the beating heart, one can say with equal justification either that it feels only its beating or that it no longer feels anything at all.

On the border of the syncopation, feeling, for a moment, still feels, without any longer being able to relate (itself) to its feeling. It loses feeling: it feels its loss, but this feeling no longer belongs to it: although this feeling is quite singularly its own, this feeling is nonetheless also taken up in the loss of which it is the feeling. This is no longer to feel but to be exposed.

Or in other words, one would have to construct a double analytic of feeling: one analytic of the feeling of exposition: one of a feeling through or by oneself and another of a feeling through or by the other. Can one feel through the other, through the outside, even though feeling seems to depend on the self as its means and even though precisely this dependence conditions aesthetic judgment? This is what the feeling of the sublime forces us to think. The subjectivity of feeling and of the judgment of taste are converted here into the singularity of a feeling and a judgment that remain, to be sure, singular, but where the singular as such is first of all exposed to the unlimited to tality of an "outside" rather than related to its proper intimacy. Or in other tality of an intimacy of the "to feel" and the "to feel oneself" that prowords, it is the intimacy of the "to feel" and the "to feel oneself" that produces itself here, paradoxically, as exposition to what is beyond the self.

Can one still say that the totality is presented in this instant? If were properly presented, it would be in or to that instance of presenting

sented to it, that is, this unlimitedness cannot become present in and for a tion (or [re]presentation) which is the subjectivity of feeling. But the unnamed, the inexpressible is communicated: all is presented—at the limit. art) "expresses and communicates the unnamable." The without-name is the genius (who represents a parte subjecti the instance of the sublime in the totality presents nothing at all. One could no doubt say, in a certain vohaps the secret of the sublime as well as the secret of the schematism—that of the values of presence and the present. One must learn—and this is perlimit, as "a representation," one must consider this concept in the absence nonpresentation. When Kant characterizes feeling, in the striving for the unlimited, beyond (its) figure, but this means that it is affected by (its) subject. In its syncopation, the imagination presents itself, presents itself as limitedness that affects the exposed feeling of the sublime cannot be pre-But in the end, and precisely at this limit itself, where all is achieved and one could say that it presents the nonpresentable. Kant himself writes that cabulary, that it presents nothing or the nothing. In another vocabulary, pure presentation (presentation of presentation itself) or presentation of presentation does indeed take place but that it does not present anything. where all begins, it will be necessary to deny presentation its name.

It will be necessary to say that the totality—or the union of the unlimited and the unlimitedness of union, or, again, presentation itself, its faculty, act, and subject—is offered to the feeling of the sublime or is offered, in the sublime, to feeling. The offering retains of the "present" implied by presentation only the gesture of presenting. The offering offers, carries, and places before (etymologically, of-fering is not very different from ob-ject), but it does not install in presence. What is offered remains at a limit, suspended on the border of a reception, an acceptance—which cannot in its turn have any form other than that of an offering. To the offered totality, the imagination is offered—that is, also "sacrificed" (auffered to its limit.

The offering is the sublime presentation: it withdraws or suspends the values and powers of the present. What takes place is neither a coming-into-presence nor a gift. It is rather the one or the other, or the one and the other, but as abandoned, given up. The offering is the giving up of the gift and of the present. Offering is not giving—it is suspending or giving up the gift in the face of a freedom that can take it or leave it.

What is offered is offered up—addressed, destined, abandoned—to

"the spirit abandons itself, without paying attention to the form of things does not impose or determine it. "In sublime contemplation," Kant write, limit. What comes to pass at the limit is the offering. to the imagination and to reason, which only enlarges the imagination. The abandon is the abandon to total extension, unlimited, and thus at the the possibility of a presentation to come, but it is left to this coming and

say. Indeed, it is the offering—it is being offered to the offering. between the thing and the subject, elsewhere. This is not a place, you will The offering takes place between presentation and representation,

act of freedom in the double sense that freedom is both what offers and act—or the motion or emotion—of freedom. The sublime offering is the sense whatsoever, for freedom is not a content, if indeed it is any thing at opening is offered to the possibility of gesture which "totalizes" figures, or of a totality, the possibility of beginning, along the edge of the unlimited more than the destiny of reason consists in a triumphant Ideal. The Idea of image, nor is it a grandiose form-nor deformity-beyond all images, any sists in nothing but an offering, or in being-offered. In fact, it is not a marnite. For if such a capacity, at the limit, is supposed to be attained, it conthe present offered. what is offered—just as the word offering designates now the gesture, now all. Instead, one must understand this: that the sublime offering is the felt in the feeling of the sublime. In all likelihood, that would make 100 traces. This possibility of a beginning is freedom. Freedom is the sublime mentally open" of which Deleuze speaks with respect to the sublime.24 The the outline of a figure. If it is a matter of the whole, then as "the fundaity of engaging a totality, the possibility of involving oneself in the union the whole means rather (finally, neither "Idea" nor "Whole") the possibili-Idea and of the destiny of reason. The Idea of the Whole is not a supreme ter here of the Whole or the imagination of the Whole. It is a matter of in itself), does it offer the sovereign satisfaction of a spirit capable of the infi Kant's text (and in every text dedicated to the sublime, in the word sublim totality of the unlimited. Nor, despite certain pompous accents audible in ject of the judgment of the sublime nor that it is freedom that makes itself idea kat'exocen. This means neither that freedom is the content or the ob-The offering does not offer the Whole. It does not offer the present

itself is a limit, because its Idea not only cannot be an image but also can into contact with its limit—which is freedom. Or, more exactly, freedom In the sublime, the imagination qua free play of presentation come

> thing like a hyperimage, a nonpresentable image). It must be an offering. 25 pot-in spite of Kant's vocabulary-be an Idea (which is always some-

which defies this distinction. there is neither aesthetics nor ethics. There is a thought of the offering leave aesthetics in order to penetrate ethics. At the limit of the sublime, at the limit and takes place there. This means, further, that it does not The sublime does not escape to a space beyond the limit. It remains

accord, or it can carry itself to the limit of this accord. The unlimited bornothing—the mere self-accord of presentation. The spirit can enjoy this whenever it does not slide into mere enjoyment. The beautiful by itself is nate to freedom), the instrument of reason and its Ideas."26 Thus, freedom of the faculty of judgment (consequently, to the extent that it is subordischematism without concepts. The condition of the schematism is nothing this sensible thing, on the edge of this sensible thing that the limit makes der of the limit is the offering. The offering offers something. I said above offers the schematism, or, again, freedom schematizes and offers itself in imagination itself is, in accordance with the principles of the schematism other than freedom itself. Kant declares this explicitly when he writes: "the itself felt. This sensible thing is the beautiful, the figure presented by Something, a sensible thing, is offered in the offering of freedom. It is in that it offers freedom. But freedom is also what does the offering here. this very gesture, in its "hidden art." The aesthetics of the beautiful transports itself into the sublime

concept with a plenitude of thoughts, to which no expression of language Itself is always grasped here as a work of art, a work of supreme freedom) striving—then this thing will be instead a thing of art (moreover, nature ters freedom—in the striving of the imagination and in the feeling of this which might accord with it, that form which links the presentation of this ^{larges} the soul by giving freedom to the imagination and by offering²⁷ Kant places poetry above all the other arts, describing it as follows: "it enthing, as a thing of freedom, is not merely offered but also offers itself, ofcording to Kant, the occasion of the feeling of the sublime. But since this entation, and it takes place on and all along this limit, along the contour of Within the limits of a given concept, among the limitless diversity of forms form. The thing offered can be a thing of nature, and this is ordinarily, acpresentable" something or other. The sublime offering is the limit of presdrawn from our own nor in a world of "Ideas" nor in any world of a "non-The sublime offering takes place neither in a hidden world with-

is perfectly adequate, and which in so doing elevates itself aesthetically to the level of the Ideas."

There is thus in art more than one occasion for experiencing sublinity. There is—in poetry at least²⁸—an elevation (that is, a sublime motion. Kant uses the verb erheben here) to the "Ideas," which, even though it is an elevation, remains aesthetic, that is, sensible. Would one have to conclude from this that there could be another form or mode of sublime presentation in art, that of moral feeling, which would be distinct from the first mode? But in truth, it is in art and as art that the sublime offering happens. There is no opposition between an aesthetics of form and an ethical meta-aesthetics of the formless. The aesthetic always concerns form; the totality always concerns the formless. The sublime is their mutual offering. It is neither simply the formation or formalization of the formless nor the infinitization of form (which are both philosophical procedures). It is how the limit offers itself to the border of the unlimited, or how the limit makes itself felt: exactly on the cutting edge of the figure the work of art cuts.

It would not be difficult to demonstrate—and I dispense with doing so here—the systematic engenderment or derivation of art, in Kant, on the basis of both the beautiful and the sublime. Only in this way can one understand both the order of Kant's table of contents in the third *Critique* and the doctrine of genius, as well as the doctrine of the beautiful as "symbol" of the ethically good.

Beginning with Kant, the sublime will constitute the most proper, decisive moment in the thought of art. The sublime will comprise the heart of the thought of the arts, the beautiful merely its rule. This means not only that, as I have said, mere beauty can always slide into the agree able (and, for example, into the "sublime style") but perhaps, above all, that there is no "pure" sublime purely distinguished from the beautiful. The sublime is that through which it pleases us. It is joy and not enjoyment [la joie, non low is sublime because it is to be exposed and to be offered. To experience joy is sublime because it is to be exposed and to be offered. To experience is to be exposed in enjoyment, to be offered there. The sublime is in the is to be exposed in the sublime is form. This contact is beyond the work, at its contact of the work, not in its form. This contact is beyond the work, at its limit, in a sense beyond art: but without art, it would not take place. The sublime is—that art should be [soit] exposed and offered.

Since the epoch of Kant—of Diderot, Kant, and Hölderlin—art has

been destined for the sublime: it has been destined to touch us, in touching upon our destiny or destination. It is only in this sense that one must comprehend, in the end, the end of art.

exemplary—but which poetry? Quite indirectly, Kant has given us an extween particular arts nor between artistic tonalities and registers. Poetry is presentation." This presentation must attempt neither to "agitate" nor to what properly constitutes the search for the genre or aesthetics of "sublime ing shows that the sublime is present also, and perhaps more essentially, in the "form" of the biblical text. For this passage is quoted in the middle of mandment, in the distancing of representation. But a more attentive readthe Jews," that which articulates the prohibition of images, the sublime, in ample. When he cites "the most sublime passage of the Book of the Law of mandment, as such, is itself a form, a presentation, a style. ment, the law that commands the abstention from images.²⁹ The comfurther on "pure, merely negative." This presentation is the commandseparated presentation" (abgezogen, abgesondert), which will be called a bit ination of reason over sensibility." And this presupposes a "withdrawn or fact, is present twice. It is present first in the content of the divine com-"excite" the imagination but ought always to be concerned with the "dom-What art is at stake here? In a sense, one has no choice, neither be-

And so sublime poetry would have the style of the commandment? Rather, the commandment, the categorical imperative, is sublime because it commands nothing other than freedom. And if that comprises a style, it cannot be the muscular style of the commandment. It is what Kant calls simplicity: "Simplicity (purposiveness without art) is so to speak the style of nature in the sublime, as of morality which is a second nature."

It is not the commandment that is simple but rather simplicity that commands. The art of which Kant speaks—or of which, at the limit, he does not manage to speak, while speaking of the Bible, poetry, and forms of union in the fine arts—is the art of which the "simplicity" (or the "withdrawal" or the "separation") commands by itself, that is, addresses or exposes to freedom, with the simplicity of the offering: the offering as law of style.

Purposiveness without art" (without artifice) is the art (the style) of purposiveness without purpose, that is, of the purposiveness of humanity in its free destination: humans are not devoted to the servility of representation but destined to the freedom of presentation and to the presentation of freedom—to their offering, which is a withdrawn or separate presenta-

tion (freedom is offered to them, they offer it, they are offered by it). This style is the style of a commandment or proscription because it is the style of a literature that proscribes for itself to be "literature," that withdraws from literary prestige and pleasure (which Kant compares to the massages of the "voluptuous orientals"): the effort by means of which it withdraws is itself a sublime offering. In short, the offering of literature itself, or the offering of all art—in all possible senses of the expression.

But "style" is doubtless here already one concept too many, like "poetry," "literature," and perhaps even "art" itself. They are certainly inappropriate and superfluous here if they remain caught up in a logic of lack and its substitute, presence and its representation (as this logic still governs, at least in part, the Kantian doctrine of art as a "symbol"). For nothing is lacking in the offering. Nothing is lacking, everything is offered: the whole is offered (opened), the totality of freedom. But to receive the offering, or to offer oneself to it (to joy), presupposes precisely the freedom of a gesture—of reception and offering. This gesture traces a limit. It is not the contour of a figure of freedom. But it is a contour, an outline, because it arises in freedom, which is the freedom to begin, to incise, here or there, an outline, an inscription, not merely arbitrarily, but still in a chancy, daring playful, abandoned manner.

sublime grammar, on the edge of the language (or the drawing, or the and the thought of a "withdrawn, separated presentation." It is not 4 offering, as opposed to or rather differentiated from thought): it is style style of which the philosopher30 dreams (philosophy as such and without such thing as general sublimity). This is not style "in the accoustico-decosong). Consequently, this trace is still or again art, this inscription still or establishes and extends a rhythm—, the syncopation offers its syntax, its one itself. In its pulsation—which assembles—in its suspension—which tutes a trace, puts the limit into play, touches without delay all extreme style—there is no sublime style, and there is no simple style—but constrrative sense of the term" (Borges), but it is also not the pure absence of ner of abandoning oneself (there is no such thing as general freedom, no again style, poetry: for the gesture of freedom is each time a singular manplace independently of all syntax, but rather imposes one, or better, it is ties—and it is perhaps this that art obeys. Abandoned but nonetheless regulated: the syncopation does not take

In the final analysis, there is perhaps no sublime art and no sublime work, but the sublime takes place wherever works touch. If they touch

is not commanded (an obligation to enjoy is absurd, Kant writes, and Lamere enjoyment when it does nothing but please: in the beautiful. But lime is not what would take its distance from enjoyment. Enjoyment is with Epicurus. There is enjoyment, and there is joy in enjoyment. The subthere are sensible pleasure and pain—all pleasure is physical, Kant repeats is indissociably "art expressive of anguish" and "that expressive of joy." The art," as Bataille writes, "accedes to the extremity of the possible." This art emotion qua law—and the law is necessarily a-pathetic. Here, "sovereign pathos, into ethos, if you like, but without ceasing to enjoy: touching or can remembered this), but commands one to pass beyond it, beyond ure): in the sublime, enjoyment touches, moves, that is, also commands. It please, is not simply pleasure (if there is ever such a thing as simple pleasthere is the place (or the time) where (or when) enjoyment does not merely in tragic joy, or in this animated joy of the "vivacity of the affects" of which one and the other in an enjoyment, in a dispropriated enjoyment—that is, they too being syncopated, at the limit of (re)presentation, at the limit of Kant speaks (§54) and which extends to the point of laughter and gaiety the "body" and the "spirit," at the limit of art itself.

nonetheless a beyond, as art is always an art of the limit. But at the limit of art there is the gesture of the offering: the gesture that offers art and the gesture through which art itself reaches, touches upon, and interferes with its limit.

As offering, it may be that the sublime surpasses the sublime—passes it by or withdraws from it. To the extent that the sublime still combines pathos and ethos, art and nature, it continues to designate these concepts, and this is why, as such, it belongs still to a space and problematic of (re)presentation. It is for this reason that the word "sublime" always risks burdening art either with pathos or morality (too much presentation or too much representation). But the offering no longer even arises out of an alliance of pathos and ethos. It comes to pass elsewhere: offering occurs in a simplicity anterior to the distinction between pathos and ethos. Kant speaks of "the simplicity which does not yet know how to dissimulate"; he calls it "naïveté," and the laughter or rather the smile in the face of this naïveté (which one must not confuse, he insists, with the rustic simplicity of the one who doesn't know how to live) possesses something of the sub-

simply lets them be offered to us. sion and distance, striving and respect, and the always renewed suspension sublime spasms and syncopations. But it does not renounce infinite tenously lacking in the bloodless culture of form." In what offers art today to and "neo-plasticism," of "the joy and the seriousness which are simultane vasses, screens, music, dance, and writing. Mondrian spoke, apropos of jaz vibration, difficult, continuous, acute, offered upon the surfaces of can altation, but also without puerility or silliness. It is a powerful but delicate touches the limit, without any disarticulating excess, without "sublime" exnew about this but a more strongly marked accent). This childlike art no stood in this way. Let us say: something of a childhood (doubtless nothing that gives art its rhythm like a sacred inauguration and interruption. It reconciliation nor immobility nor peaceful beauty, but it is not sublime its future, there is a certain kind of serenity (Mondrian's word). It is neither longer inhabits the heights or the depths as did the sublime but simply sense. There is sometimes, in today's art, something of the offering underlaceration. The offering renounces (self-)laceration, excessive tension, and (self-)laceration either, assuming the sublime is supposed to involve (self) telos of art? There is in the offering something of the "naïve" in Kanty Would he characterize this extremely rare art as being henceforth

My painting, I know what it is beneath its appearances, its violence, its perpetual play of force; it is a fragile thing in the sense of the good, the sublime, it is fragile like love.

—Nicolas de Staël

Translated by Jeffrey Libbrett

12

Shattered Love

Thinking: of Love

I love you more than all that has been thought and can be thought. I give my soul to you.

-Henriette Vogel to Heinrich von Kleist

The thinking of love, so ancient, so abundant and diverse in its forms and in its modulations, asks for an extreme reticence as soon as it is solicited. It is a question of modesty, perhaps, but it is also a question of exhaustion: Has not everything been said on the subject of love? Every excess and every exactitude? Has not the impossibility of speaking about love been as violently recognized as has been the experience of love itself as the true source of the possibility of speaking in general? We know the words of love to be inexhaustible, but as to speaking *about* love, could we perhaps be exhausted?

that it still has something to say—be at the same time a communication of love, a letter, a missive, since love sends itself as much as it enunciates itself. But the words of love, as is well known, sparsely, miserably repeat their one declaration, which is always the same, always already suspected of lacking love because it declares it. Or else this declaration always carries the promise of revealing itself as the unique incarnation, the unique and certain, if derisory manifestation of the love that it declares. The discourse

might well have nothing more to say or to describe than this communal indigence, these dispersed and tarnished flashes of an all-too-familiar love.

This is why, at our slightest attempt to solicit the thinking of love, we are invited to an extreme reticence. (Should this thinking be solicited? I will not discuss this. As it happens, it is. As it happens, indeed, this solicitation regularly returns, throughout our history, to formulate its demands. One asks what has become of love, but one does not forget to return to it after a certain period. When, for example, as is the case today, love is no longer the dominant theme of poetry, when it seems to be essentially relegated to dime-store novels instead, it is then that we inquire and question ourselves about love, about the possibility of thinking love. As though this possibility were always, recurringly indispensable to the possibility of thinking in general—that is to say, to the possibility of the life of a community, of a time and a space of humanity—something that would not be the case for other objects, such as God, for example, or history, or literature, or even philosophy.)

and contemplate at a distance. Love in its singularity, when it is grasped of love, without submitting them to an order that they essentially delyabandon: to receive the prodigality, the collisions, and the contradictions order of these explosions. The thinking of love should learn to yield to this sible loves, and an abandonment to their dissemination, indeed to the disabsolutely, is itself perhaps nothing but the indefinite abundance of all possubstance or their common concept, is not something one can extricate to privilege, not to hierarchize, not to exclude. Because love is not their would command reticence: the generosity not to choose between loves, not less generosity toward all these possibilities, and it is this generosity that kiss, passion, friendship. . . . To think love would thus demand a boundthe love of lovers and the love of God, fraternal love and the love of art, the istics, which are impossible to confuse and yet ineluctably entangled: charpart at once secret and boisterous, miserable and sumptuous. But this rethe genres of speech or of art is perhaps an integral part of this essence—a ity and pleasure, emotion and pornography, the neighbor and the infant loves possible are in fact the possibilities of love, its voices or its character icence might signify that all, of love, is possible and necessary, that all the ered by its very essence, and its unrestrained and brazen exploitation in all would be indiscreet to deflower love. Love deflowers and is itself deflow-This reticence of thinking that beckons to us does not imply that it

But this generous reticence would be no different from the exercise of

thought itself. Thinking rejects abstraction and conceptualization as these are recognized by understanding. Thinking does not produce the operators of a knowledge; it undergoes an experience, and lets the experience inscribe singular moments of this experience offer and arrange themselves. The thinking of love—if it is necessary to solicit it, or if it is necessary that it be proposed anew, as a theme to be discussed or as a question to be posed—does not therefore lay claim to a particular register of thinking: it invites us thinking as such. Love does not call for a certain kind of thinking, or for a thinking of love, but for thinking in essence and in its totality. And this is because thinking, most properly speaking, is love. It is the love for that which reaches experience; that is to say, for that aspect of being that gives itself to be welcomed. In the movement across discourse, proof, and concept, nothing but this love is at stake for thought. Without this love, the exercise of the intellect or of reason would be utterly worthless.

This intimate connivance between love and thinking is present in our origins: the word "philosophy" betrays it. Whatever its legendary inventor might have meant by it, "philosophy," in spite of everything—and perhaps in spite of all philosophies—means this: love of thinking, since thinking is love. (Love of love, love of the self, in consequence? Perhaps, but we will have to return to this.)

We cannot, however, dispense with asking what we must understand by this. To say that "thinking is love" does not mean that love can be understood as a response to the question of thinking—and certainly not in the manner of a sentimental response, in the direction of a unifying, effusive, or orgiastic doctrine of thinking. Even though the paradox might appear simple, it is necessary to say that "thinking is love" is a difficult, severe thought that promises rigor rather than effusion. Faced with this thought about thinking, we can do nothing but begin the quest for an ignored essence of thinking for which we lack any evident access. It might well be that nothing that has been designated, celebrated, or meditated under the name of "love" is appropriate for this determination: "Thinking is love." It might also be that everything is appropriate, that all loves are at stake in thinking and as thinking.

In fact, to say "thinking is love" (*la pensée est amour*) is different from ^{saying} "thinking is Love," (*la pensée est l'amour*)¹ or "Thinking is a certain ^{species} of love." Neither genre nor species, perhaps not any genre or perhaps all species. However this may be, "love" thus employed would be, so

of thinking as much as or more than it would its nature. (The model for this phrase is obviously the ancient "God is love," which entailed the same formal implications.) We know nothing more about what this means. We only know, by a sort of obscure certainty or premonition, that it is necessary or that it will one day be necessary to attest this phrase: Thinking is love. But philosophy has never explicitly attested this.

One single time, however, the first philosopher expressly authenticated an identity of love and of philosophy. Plato's Symposium does not represent a particular treatise that this author set aside for love at the heart of his work, as others would do later (and often by relating to this same Plato: Ficino, among others, or Leon the Hebrew, as though Plato were the unique or at least necessary philosophical reference, de amore, always present, beyond the epoch of treatises, in Hegel or in Nietzsche—"philosophy in the manner of Plato is an erotic duel"—in Freud or in Lacan). But the Symposium signifies first that for Plato the exposition of philosophy, as such, is not possible without the presentation of philosophic love. The commentary on the text gives innumerable confirmations of this, from the portrait of Eros to the role of Socrates and to the figure—who appeared here once and for all on the philosophical scene—of Diotima.

a way that it restores to love, to the limit, its very task and destination. Phr faces itself before the love (or in the love?) that it recognizes as its truth. present elsewhere: it broaches its own limit, that is to say, its source; it er thought takes place, to be recognized. In the Symposium, Plato broaches deprivation and weakness, which allows the experience of the limit, where self with the mastery of a triumphant doctrine; it also appears in a state of or the joy that traverses it, attests to a consideration that is unique in Plato it opens thought to love as to its own essence. This is why this dialogue is Thus it thinks its own birth and its own effacement, but it thinks in such the limits, and all his thinking displays a reticence or reserve not always finally exhibited as true love, philosophical Eros, does not only present it posium; there is discussion, but there is no exclusion. And the love that 18 ject of discourse. All the different kinds of loves are welcomed in the Sym-(to such a degree, at least)—consideration for others, as well as for the obfrom the speech of the interlocutors of Socrates. The scene itself, the gaiety tors or thinkers and offers them a speech tempered altogether differently more than any other the dialogue of Plato's generosity: here he invites ora-Although the Symposium speaks of love, it also does more than that

losophy is not occupied with gathering and interpreting the experiences of love here. Instead, in the final analysis, it is love that receives and deploys the experience of thinking.

But this has only taken place once, at the inauguration of philosophy, and even that time it did not really take place, since it did not reach its ends. For all its generosity, the *Symposium* also exercises a mastery over love. At any rate, we cannot fail to read or to deduce here, in the order and the choices of philosophical knowledge, a truth regarding love, one that assigns its experience and hierarchizes its moments by substituting the impatience and *conatus* of desire for its joyous abandon. Thus in Plato, thinking will have said and will have failed to say that it is love—or to explain what this means.

There is not one philosophy that has escaped this double constraint. In each, love occupies a place that is at once evident and dissimulated (as, in Descartes, between the theory of union and that of admiration), or embarrassed and decisive (as, in Kant, in the theory of sublime reason), or essential and subordinate (as, in Hegel, in the theory of the State). At the cost of these contradictions and evasions, love consistently finds the place that it cannot not have, but it only finds it at this cost. What we would have to understand is why this place is essential for it, and why it is essential to pay this price.

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Philosophy never arrives at this thinking—that "thinking is love"—even though it is inscribed at the head of its program, or as the general epigraph to all its treatises. One might say: it reaches toward it; it does not reach it. But this does not mean that it does not have any thinking of love. Quite the contrary. Since the *Symposium*—or, if you prefer, since before Plato, in Heraclitus or Empedocles, in Pythagoras or Parmenides—the general schema of a philosophy of love is at work, and it has not ceased to operate even now, determining philosophy as it understands and construes itself, as well as love as we understand it and as we make it.

If it were necessary to take the risk of grasping this schema in a formula, one might try this: love is the extreme movement, beyond the self, of a being reaching completion. The first meaning of this formula (and it deliberately has several meanings) would be that philosophy always thinks love as an accomplishment, arriving at a final and definitive completion.

self beyond itself (in the final analysis, death and transfiguration-and this of self in love, and the correlative suppression of the self of love, as its uliend). The fifth meaning would be that philosophy thinks the suppression self" in which, in a very general manner, love has taken place is necessarily is not by chance the title of a musical work, since music accomplishes the mate truth and as its ultimate effectivity: thus, love infinitely restitutes itquently fulfills it only by depriving it of itself-which comes down to supsult). The third meaning would be that philosophy thinks the being in might also be conceived as "love," which would thus designate its own rerather than an end: the end is the completion of being (even though this in an other the moment of one's subsistence place of the same in the other, if love consists, in Hegel's terms, of "having that this "beyond" is the place of the same, where love fulfills itself, the pletion would be possible. But the seventh meaning would nevertheless be the place of the other, or of an alterity without which neither love nor comphilosophical erotic). The sixth meaning would be that this "beyond the pressing its tension: thus, love suppresses itself (inasmuch as it reaches its meaning, that this completion surpasses what it completes, and conselove2 as incomplete and led by love toward a completion. The fourth The second meaning would be that philosophy thinks love as an access

ophy, it is destined by right—and that have crystallized in the figure of end, the incomplete being and the completed being, the self and the beot a new contradiction and of its resolution, since each of them is carried contradiction of the contradiction and of the noncontradiction organize own contradiction. This nature is thus neither simple nor contradictory: II out by the other and in the other. ters on love the universality and the totality to which, according to philosyond of the self, the one and the other, the identical and the different. The in an identical manner between all the terms in play: the access and the is the contradiction of contradiction and of noncontradiction. It operates and contradictory, even though it also contains the infinite resolution of its Christian love, where the love of God and the love of men form the poles love infinitely and in each of its meanings. It is this that definitively con-According to this schema, the nature of love is shown to be double

philosophical discourse or to its theological avatar. It is easy to see that it that the "Occident," here, might not include both Islam and Buddhism). structures all occidental experience and expression of love (it is not certain Of course, this kind of philosophical thinking is not confined only to

> conflictual, or ambivalent: necessary and impossible, sweet and bitter, free vaux or Maturin, Monteverdi or Freud. For all of them, love is double, of the Cross to Strindberg, and moving through Racine or Kleist, Mari-10 Baudelaire, from the troubadours to Wagner or Strauss, from Saint John is poetics, its drama, its pathos, its mystique, from the Grand Rhetoricians very structure and life of love, while at the same time, love carries out the altruistic and egoistic. For all, these oppositional couples constitute the and chained, spiritual and sensual, enlivening and mortal, lucid and blind, simultaneously surpasses them and maintains them: in the realization of resolution of these very oppositions, or surpasses them. Or more often, it truth of the poem, according to Char; it speaks the truth of love. More presire remaining desire."3 This sentence, in effect, does not only speak the love, the subject of love is dead and alive, free and imprisoned, restored to onciled with it ("remaining desire"). the contradiction (desire) opposed to the noncontradiction (love) and reclove, thus confirming, moreover, that love holds the highest truth for us: cisely, it intends to speak the truth of the poem by grace of the truth of this thinking and its entire tradition: "The poem is the fulfilled love of dethe self and outside of the self. One sentence by René Char best epitomizes

at the heart of being. other: The Absolute loves us—and the Absolute dialectizes itself. Love is of the statement "The Absolute wishes to be close to us" says nothing alectic is in love. Hegel transcribing Christian theology into the ontology not only form one case of its ontic application. If one may say so—and one Supreme Being. Love is not only subject to the ontological dialectic, it does existed or have even intermixed: that "God is love" and that God is the as the essence of the dialectic, love is assigned to the heart of the very esis of a dialectic, which formulates the law of its process by way of a rethe thinking of the dialectic. One might say that love is the living hypothmuch of our thought received its name and its concept in philosophy: it is this dialectic. The idea of love is in the dialectic, and the idea of the dimay, rightly, in the most accurate or proper manner—love is the heart of movement of being. And it is not surprising that these two ideas have cologic of being in general. By being thought according to the dialectic and tion that remains a contradiction: it gives, under this rule, the law and the turn. This law is not only the formal rule of the resolution of a contradic-But this thinking that so profoundly and so continually innervates so

Again it is necessary that being have a heart, or still more rigorously

cisely what has never been attested by philosophy. a heart—that is to say: that which alone is capable of love. Now this is prewould be necessary to suppose that the essence of being is something like being, that by virtue of which it is being. To suppose that "the being of be that being be a heart. "The heart of being" means nothing but the being of or "the essence of being," is an expression endowed with meaning, it

say that love is missing from the very place where it is prescribed. Or bet heart of being. is nothing dialectical about this loss or this "lack": it is not a contradiction, ates—the law that we have had to recognize as the law of love. And there ter still, love is missing from the very place where this dialectical law operexplains its implications, as close as it might come to thinking it. It is not it is not made to be sublated or resorbed. Love remains absent from the thing summons it thither, as we have just shown. Thus, one must rather that love is excluded from fundamental ontology; on the contrary, everyfrom the throbbing of love. Philosophy never says this, and above all, never pulsation. And yet, this heart of being is not a heart, and it does not bear might say that being beats, that it essentially is in the beating, indeed, in lates its simple position in order to reveal this contradiction in the becomthe e-motion of its own heart: being-nothingness-becoming, as an infinite ing of reality (or of reason, of the Idea, of history)—and in this sense one Perhaps being, in its essence, is affected by the dialectic that annih.

to believe. The heart lives—that is to say, it beats—under the regime of perhaps shattered). The heart does not sublate contradictions, since in a to what poetry (or perhaps only its philosophical reading?) might allow us general sense, it does not live under the regime of contradiction—contrary is one) designates the place where the dialectical power is suspended (or heart. That which has the power of the dialectic is not a heart, but a subture of love. Nothing is false, but love is missing, because the heart of beject. Perhaps one could find a heart in the subject. But this heart (if there ing, which has shown itself to be commanded by the dialectic, is not a is talse in what we have just demonstrated regarding this law and the nathe dialectical law of being is inappropriate for love. In one sense, nothing That love is missing from philosophical ontology does not mean that

that whose essence or destination consists in being presented: given over becoming in order to be, exposition, on the other hand, is the condition of If the dialectic is the process of that which must appropriate its own

> not exclude one another (they do not form a contradiction), but they are offered to the outside, to others, and even to the self. The two regimes do not of the same order. The being that has become through a dialectical its proper becoming. the subject of a dialectical process, but what is exposed, what makes it exbut the dialectic knows nothing of this, it believes it has absorbed the enhappens, despite everything, at the end of The Phenomenology of Spirit)process is perhaps destined to be exposed (one could show that this is what self" to the outside; it is presented, offered to something that is not it nor posed, is that it is not completed by this process, and it "incompletes ittire destination in the becoming-proper. The exposed being is perhaps also

is when the affirmation "I love you" is given over to that which is neither ot posing or of opposing and then of resorbing the same and the other. It even though it dimly emerges. This is the moment when it is not a matter itself and to "maintain it in itself," as Hegel says. Thus it surmounts it or is not love. The subject poses its own contradiction in order to report it to resembles love; in any case it calls to and even demands love—and yet this (Spinoza), that he becomes what he is by traversing the other (Hegel). This and their contradiction, in order to constitute therefrom his proper being That is to say that the heart is not a subject, even if it is the heart of a subyou," a declaration where "I" is posed only by being exposed to "you." which engages love neither more nor less than the cogito), but it says "I love not say "I love," which is the reflection or the speculation of an ego (and operate by reporting its own judgment to itself (if it is a judgment). It does alectic. But in its modes of affirmation and negation, the heart does not love, it is not loved. Affirmation and negation are present here as in the dilove me, or the risk that I do not keep the promise of my love. contradictory nor noncontradictory with it: the risk that the other does not infinitely sublates it. By principle, the moment of exposition is evaded, for example, that he is (Descartes), that he is not his immediate being ject. The subject is one who reports to himself, as his own, his judgments The heart exposes, and it is exposed. It loves, it is loved, it does not

stake is nothing but a dialectic of the heart and the subject, of love and the mands, in turn, an infinite migration through the other, even the gift of the again a subject: it is the infinite rapport to the self. That this rapport dederiving all its consistency. Philosophy will not fail to retort: what is at self, does not in any way hinder the structure of the subject from thence The being of philosophy is the subject. The heart of the subject is

conscience or the reason. From Pascal to Hegel and beyond, this dialectic is well attested. But the response of philosophy is not admissible. There is no dialectic of the heart and the reason, not because they would be irreconcilable (the question of their rapport, if it be a question, cannot be posed in these terms; the perhaps pseudo-Pascal of the Discourse on the Passions of Love writes, "They have inappropriately removed the name of reason from love, and they have opposed them without a sound foundation, since love and reason is but the same thing"), but because the heart is not able to enter into a dialectic: it cannot be posed, disposed, and sublated in a superior moment. The heart does not return to itself beyond itself, and this is not, as Hegel would have wished, "the spirit which is attendant to the power of the heart." Or again, there is no sublimation of the heart, nor of love. Love is what it is, identical and plural, in all its registers or in all its explosions, and it does not sublimate itself, even when it is "sublime." It is always the beating of an exposed heart.

This argument carries a corollary: because it is a stranger to the dialectic, the heart does not maintain itself in opposition to the subject, any more than love does to reason. But they are one in the other, and one to the other, in a manner that is neither a mode of contradiction nor of identity nor of propriety. This mode might declare itself thus: The heart exposes the subject. It does not deny it, it does not surpass it, it is not sublated or sublimated in it; the heart exposes the subject to everything that is not its dialectic and its mastery as a subject. Thus, the heart can beat at the heart of the subject, it can even beat in a movement similar to that of the dialectic, but it does not confuse itself with that.

This is why love is always missed by philosophy, which nevertheless does not cease to designate and assign it. Perhaps it cannot help but be missed: one would not know how to seize or catch up with that which exposes. If thinking is love, that would mean (insofar as thinking is confused with philosophy) that thinking misses its own essence—that it misses by essence its own essence. In philosophy (and in mysticism, in poetics, etc.) thinking would thus have said all that it could and all that it should have said about love—by missing it and by missing itself. Loving, and loving love, it will have lost love. It is thence that Saint Augustine's amare amabam draws its exemplary force of confession.

This does not at all mean that in all this tradition thinking has never occurred, or that love has never occurred, or that thinking about love has never occurred. On the contrary. But this does mean that love itself, in that

it is missed by thinking, and by the love of thinking, gives itself again to thinking. This is to say that in thinking, it calls forth once again this love that it is. Something revealed and re-veiled with the *Symposium*, like a missed rendezvous, calls again for its repetition.

The Heart: Broken

Love is a series of scars. "No heart is as whole as a broken heart," said the celebrated Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav.

—Elic Wiesel, *The Fifth Son*

or deliverance by love, etc.). But in all these figures (which their occidenoutside of the Occident, that is to say, apart from love as we have come to what is at issue, outside of the Occident, is not love absolutely. Only the not figures, but rather so many distinct essences—or so many flashes, tal denominations here risk falsifying, and which, moreover, are perhaps tion of love, as the adoration or supplication of love, or the gift of the self, fidelity, abandon, union, desire, jealousy, or what we represent as the emoknow it from our history and from our thinking. That which is not the verse as the realities are that are designated by amor fati, by the love of of proximity and of the neighbor, because it is the evidence and the cerand closer to totality, because this thing is the principle or the movement thing of this kind—that diffuses itself through all things, that comes closer only confirms its imperious, demanding, insistent, or insidious character It is continually found guilty of delirium, of contradiction or of bad faith, universality. That this claim is continually disappointed or ridiculed, that God. Only the Occident raises with this one name, "love," such a claim to totality of being and of beings, of nature, of the city, of knowledge, and of meaning, one sole essence—an ordering (or disordering) principle of the absolute of all its conjoined meanings, which obstinately make up one sole Occident designates within love-absolutely and in every sense, or in the love (sexuality, erotism, tenderness, passion, friendship, fraternity, or even Occident is, in fact, no stranger to any of the figures or forms we know as tainty of recognition, and at the same time the power of fulfillment. Di-When we name love, we name something—and without a doubt, the only One would want to be able to engage this repetition, at least in part,

the same, unchangeable and infinite: it is always the furthest movement of love in flight, or by the sacred love of the fatherland, the meaning remains God, by the love of Tristan, by love in the afternoon, love on the ground

unique and universal, plenary, fulfilling—that caused the rendezvous to be been missed once and for all, since it is the very nature of this love_ love, how then can we hope to repeat the rendezvous that seems to have If we take love within the Occident, and the Occident in turn within

or heroic communions, as certain ethnological or archaeological fictions unique nomination, and the intimate communication it establishes bewould like to do. For there we would instantly lose what makes "love," its edges exist, in order to abandon it to voluptuous rituals, innocent games, the dialectic, to literature) than love. leads us more surely back to ourselves (to the Occident, to philosophy, to fact, lose the very meaning of these words, of all love's words). Nothing tween caress and devotion, between charity and nuptials (we would, in We will not be able to redirect love to the edges of the Occident, if such pleasure or desire, vows, sacrifice, or ecstasy, but "love" will not be found ists, but this is not the question here), one will find, by definition, only that love is not to be found elsewhere. Elsewhere (if such an "elsewhere" ex-If such an undertaking will always be in vain, it is nonetheless certain

style of love as heart's touch obstinately haunts the thinking of love as law ure of Don Juan testifies with remarkable force and insistence that this spite of himself, Mozart let him be condemned. But even in hell, the he until the end merrily thwarting the condemnation. And, yet, perhaps in there is no innocent or joyous Don Juan. Mozart's, it is true, continues up impunity as a diabolical or perverse challenge to the very law of love. Thus cess: but we can think Don Juan only condemned, unless we represent his sophical assignation, love seems to skirt this touch of the heart that would and delicious moment of contact, at once eternal and fleeting. In its philonot complete anything, that would go nowhere, graceful and casual, the to deal only with a moment of contact between beings, a light, cutung self from it. Instead of this law of the completion of being, one would want freed from itself. That is Don Juan's wish, it is his fervor, it is even his sucjoy of the soul and the pleasure of the skin, simple luminous flashes of love That is why one would want to separate oneself from love, free one-

> tion, always imminent. An entire modern eroticism and an entire modern determined according to this dialectic.) spirituality, those of romantic love, of savage love, of transgressive love, are tion—but a promise always disappearing—and the threat of decomposisignable, and inassimilable. Thus love is at once the promise of compleits living essence, love is reputed to be rebellious, fugitive, errant, unasrespect to love the procedures of control or of conciliation. But for itself, in same time challenges that which it must replace: we represent love as hoscommunity, the immediate emotion of the other and of the divine. But something else: it is a sacred order, a social tie, or a natural attraction that eign to the law of love, we supplement this law, in our representations, by they are founded within love or virtually fulfilled in it, they multiply with tile or as foreign to the city and to religion—so that while affirming that figuring it. Love conceals a fundamental ambivalence in which it at the been lost—or, in the most Christian version, it is not satisfied with transthis substitute is not satisfied with coming to the place of what would have inary figures as realities that we would have possessed, then lost: religion, the guise of a substitute or a transfiguration of these things that our imagtism, and fraternity their independence. This means that we think love in plays, in the final analysis, the role of love and that gives tenderness, ero-(Actually, when we represent modes of existence and thinking for-

sented, and extensively theorized for some two centuries: the impossible cess or the lack of this completion, which is represented as the truth of It nor free oneself from it, and this is at bottom exactly what it is: the exlove. In other words, and as it has been extensively said, extensively repre-Love is thus not here, and it is not elsewhere. One can neither attain

^{0ther} love movement that we in fact touch or that touches us, but that is and that it is never "love" that is at the rendezvous, or unique and univerto stop thinking in terms of possibility and impossibility. We will have to ence or another movement of love. Or rather, another love presence or ansal love (Catholic love), or nomadic and multiple loves, but another presdezvous with love, takes place not once, but an indefinite number of times We name "love." We will have to admit that the rendezvous, our renmaintain that love is always present and never recognized in anything that We will thus have to engage the repetition differently. We will have

would not at all imply the invention of another "love" or of a beyond love. other love movement: that is what the repetition should let emerge. This vealed thereby—and betrayed. Così fan tutte.) Another love presence or annot the "love" we were expecting. (Classical figure of romantic comedy or to taking account of its miserable means of loving. letting it once again call thought toward it, thought exposed to missing It would imply letting love once again open up its paths within thought, drama: it is another who is at the rendezvous, but it is love itself that is relove as well as to being touched by it, exposed to being betrayed, as well as

ontological, erotic, political—is excluded from the start and could only be defined above all as that which is not self-love. Any other determinationthat is offered right in the middle of the tradition. In this tradition, love is recaptured, if that is necessary, starting from there. We will set out again from the given that is perhaps the simplest and

lation of love came to be privileged. As an example, some lines from (It was within the spirituality of the mystic tradition that this formu-

ership; stetit in se, as Saint Augustine says. Ownership, of course, is nothing but everything for God and nothing for the creature. The angel's sin was a sin of ownpurity, is only the search for one's own solace and one's own interest in the jour own, and which, instead of coming back completely and uniquely to God, still to self-love or pride, which is the love of one's own excellence insofar as it is one's sance of the gifts of God, at the expense of the jealousy of the pure love that wants a small extent brings the gifts of God back to the self so that it can take pleasure The ownership condemned with such rigor by the mystics, and often called im-

cal logic, but which would touch the heart of the schema, the heart of movement, barely perceptible, which would not reconstitute the dialectrfillment proper. It is simply a matter of letting oneself be carried by a tiny ready contains, and, nonetheless, it displaces its entire economy of a fulnot say anything other than what the philosophical schema of love althinking of love that we have been able to know. In one sense, this does to "God" belongs in one way or another to all modes and all forms of the love itself.) What is expressed in these terms and under the rubric of a relation

read, "the love of one's own excellence insofar as it is one's own." One can self-love. Self-love is not simply the love of the self; it is, as we have just Love defines itself as the absolute opposite and as the destruction of

> of possession. It is the love of the self as property. with sensitivity, is the love (which, from this moment on, is no longer one) authors gave to it, and not as a term in psychology almost synonymous later). But self-love, understood according to the signification the spiritual in this love of "self": that is a question that we will have to take up again discover, without being themselves put into play, precisely who is at issue love oneself with a real love, and it might even be that one must do so (however, it is not certain that these words, "the self," "oneself," can let us

world, and thus "the first existence of freedom" (Hegel). Property is the aterty is the objectivized presence of subjectivity, its realization in the outside subjectivity (me as will, need, desire, consciousness—of me), and in this its authenticity and the truth of its fulfillment. side itself, in objectivity and in exteriority, the subject has the moment of posits. Self-love is the desire and the affirmation of this autoposition: outpresents itself there outside itself, but in this presentation it is itself that it testation and the assurance of the self in the actuality of the world. The self respect possession properly becomes property. Which is to say that propproper to itself" (Hegel), it can therefore become my possession. But in this possession, it is I myself, as subject, who find myself realized, it is my object possessed, but the subject in the object. "Matter, for itself, is not Property is an ontological determination. It does not designate the

philosophical economy, each one giving to the other its stability or its the formulas of love and of property respond to each other infinitely in the ter of "having in another the moment of one's subsistence." In one sense, Thus self-love indeed has the structure of love: here also, it is a mat-

the self." Actually, the problem has been posed since the Aristotelian disbled all Christian thought since Saint Augustine. (The question that domcussion of philautia, of the love of oneself, and it has traversed and trouwho writes, "To love is also to love oneself within love and thus to return sche's formula "a refined parasitism," and so on until Levinas, for example of an absolute surplus value of the self-would proscribe love from the Itself. La Rochefoucauld, in this respect, sums it all up, or there is Nietzneart of love itself. The tradition knows well this absence of love from love economy—the dialectical economy of fulfillment, the capitalist economy would be its heart, the heart of love, and this implacably reconstituted Propriation of the self. Self-love would therefore be at the heart of love, it If love is the gift of the self, it would thus also be, dialectically, the ap-

inated all the debates of the Middle Ages about love was the question of knowing "if man, by nature, is capable of loving God more than himself." One could even explain by way of this absence the missed rendezvous between philosophy and love: if the latter always frustrates love or diverts it to self-love, if love finally lies to itself and lacks itself, how could one fail to forever lack it? And how could one not substitute for it sometimes its dismembered parts (the sexual organ, sentiment . . .), sometimes its sublimations (friendship, charity . . .)?

Ξ

But this knowledge is too slight. Love frustrates the simple opposition between economy and noneconomy. Love is precisely—when it is, when it is the act of a singular being, of a body, of a heart, of a thinking—that which brings an end to the dichotomy between the love in which I lose myself without reserve and the love in which I recuperate myself, to the opposition between gift and property.

Of course, philosophy and theology have always surmounted and dialecticized this opposition: God's love for himself in his son brings itself about as a love for man on the part of this same Son, given, abandoned, and retaken in glory, with all of creation redeemed and brought into relation, through the love thus received, with its creator. But the separation is thus surmounted only because it is annulled in its principle: God gives only what he possesses infinitely (in a sense, he thus gives nothing), and reciprocally, he possesses only what he gives. (He is the proprietor par excellence; he appears to himself in the totality of objectivity—and that is what the idea of the "creation," in this respect, signifies. And if our time still had to be one of such a research, it is in an entirely different direction that we would have to look for the mystery of the "god of love.")

Love brings an end to the opposition between gift and property with out surmounting and without sublating it: if I return to myself within love. I do not return to myself from love (the dialectic, on the contrary, feeds on the equivocation). I do not return from it, and consequently, something of the definitively lost or dissociated in its act of loving. That is undoubtedly why I return (at least if the image of a return is appropriate here), but I return broken: I come back to myself, or I come out of it, broken. The "return" does not annul the break; it neither repairs it nor sublates it, for the return in fact takes place only across the break itself, keeping it open. Love

this to it: he, this subject, was touched, broken into, in his subjectivity, and he is from then on, for the time of love, opened by this slice, broken or fractured, even if only slightly. He is, which is to say that the break or the wound is not an accident, and neither is it a property that the subject could relate to himself. For the break is a break in his self-possession as subject; it is, essentially, an interruption of the process of relating oneself to oneself outside of oneself. From then on, I is constituted broken. As soon as there is love, the slightest act of love, the slightest spark, there is this ontological fissure that cuts across and that disconnects the elements of the subject-proper—the fibers of its heart. One hour of love is enough, one kiss alone, provided that it is out of love—and can there, in truth, be any other kind? Can one do it without love, without being broken into, even if only slightly?

It disjoins me (it does not wound, properly speaking: it is something else toreign to a certain dramatics of love). each time singular, a blade thrust in me, and that I do not rejoin, because the outside. It does not remain outside; it is this outside itself, the other opaque). But this transcendence is not the one that passes into-and of a transgression, of a transparency, also: immanence is no longer scendence is the disimplication of the immanence that can come to it only Passing: but here it is not at all a "surpassing," and even less "self-"; tranbecause it comes from it. (Transcendence is always thought as a self-surrigor, a transcendence. Love is the act of a transcendence (of a transport munion") is opened up, broken into-and this is what is called, in all of the subject (to which the dialectic always returns to fulfill itself, includthing of me remaining, outside of me. This signifies that the immanence myself (nor im-pose myself on another) without remains, without sometrom the outside.) Love does not stop, as long as love lasts, coming from ^{cogito}, the evidence of a property). It does not pass through the outside reconstitute in it the interior and the identical (God, the certainty of the through—an exteriority or an alterity in order to reflect itself in it and to ing in what we call "intersubjectivity" or even "communication" or "compresence to myself I may maintain or that sustains me, pro-pose myself to The love break simply means this: that I can no longer, whatever

The movement of the transcendence of love does not go from the singular being toward the other, toward the outside. It is not the singular being that puts itself outside itself: it is the other, and in the other it is not

other it is this movement that makes it other and which is always other there is no domain or instance of being where love would fulfill itself, scendence thus fulfills nothing: it cuts, it breaks, and it exposes so that than "itself" in its identity; that is what transcends "in me." This tranthe subject's identity that operates this movement or this touch. But in the

self, and within love it is perhaps a question, in the final analysis, of that the offering, it is already a question of what, in fact, exceeds the sublime itsublime and with this extreme mode of presentation that I have attempted presentation." (Love, certainly, has the most intimate relations with the we would call-for example, in the theory of the sublime-a "negative goes elsewhere than to "me" who would receive it: its coming is only a dehappens endlessly in the withdrawal of its own presentation. It is an offerunfulfillment of love (which becomes neither substance nor subject), it at which exceeds love.) When the transcendence that touches me presents the to designate elsewhere as the "sublime offering" (see Chapter 11); but with parture for the other, its departure only the coming of the other. its arrival, and not presented, imposed, already having reached its end ing, which is to say that love is always proposed, addressed, suspended in the same time offers its actual advent: love takes place, it happens, and it Love arrives, it comes, or else it is not love. But it is thus that it endless This does not mean that this transcendence accomplishes only what

and this departure, this incessant coming-and-going. What is offered is the only in order to come again. This crossing breaks the heart: this is not nec diately leaves for the other: it does not return to itself, because it leaves coming-and-going. The other comes and cuts across me, because it immewhere, neither in "him," nor in "me," because it is nothing other than the is traversed by the alterity of the other, which does not stop or fix itself any offered being itself: exposed to arrival and to departure, the singular being is not less deep than a wound. serenity or gaiety. The break is nothing more than a touch, but the touch essarily bloody or tragic, it is beyond an opposition between the tragic and What is offered by transcendence, or as transcendence, is this arrival

tude. Because the singular being is finite, the other cuts across it (and never crossing, to its coming-and-going—and this is nothing other than fair "commune"). Love unveils finitude. Finitude is the being of that which is does the other "penetrate" the singular being or "unite itself" with it love cuts across, and what it reveals by its crossing, is what is exposed to the Transcendence will thus be better named the crossing of love. What

> other, in the other and in the one"—Valéry). I can appropriate itself nor be appropriated ("Infinity of one and of the iself or in a dialectical sublation of the self. Neither the other nor love nor infinitely inappropriable, not having the consistency of its essence either in

rending toward its end-but love does not extend, nor does it extend itamorous operation as calculation, investment, completion, retribution ally, an entire analytics—that is not only of the "psych" variety—of the eign to love: demand, seduction, dependence, and so on, and more generself toward an end. If it is extended, it is by an upheaval of the other in cause it sublates, be it negatively, the logic of fulfillment. Desire is self exhas thought as desire: will, appetite, conatus, libido—is foreign to love bepriates it to itself while lacking it). Desire—I mean that which philosophy subject—and lacks it while appropriating it to itself (or rather, it approme. (Along with desire, all the terms of this contemporary lexicon are for-This is why desire is not love. Desire lacks its object—which is the

totality into play—that of the crossing—to which I cannot accede. Cor other "state." And this limit corresponds to that of its finitude: the heart tered, at the limit between one and the other "sentiment," or one and the sire itself is broken. This heart is no more unhappy than it is happy. It is ofgular being is that which is not totally his, but it is thus that it is his heart. tuum nondum est totum tuum (Baudoin du Devon). The heart of the sinthe mode of happiness or unhappiness. To love "with all my heart" puts a does not belong to itself, not even in the mode of a desire, and even less in and the exasperation of the desired happiness. But in the broken heart, dedialectic tries indefinitely to convert into positivity. It is infelicitous love infinite exposition of finitude. Desire is the negative appropriation that the Desire is unhappiness without end: it is the subjectivist reverse of the

self is love.) of the limits, the ends, of presence, of life, of consciousness—thinking itof the sharing of singularity—cuts across presence, life, consciousness. That is why thinking—which is nothing other than the weighing or testing Open. The beating of the heart—rhythm of the partition of being, syncope Is not an organ, and neither is it a faculty. It is: that I is broken and traversed by the other where its presence is most intimate and its life most before the break. But it is the break itself that makes the heart. The heart (Actually, the heart is not broken, in the sense that it does not exist

Love does not transfigure finitude, and it does not carry out its

transsubstantiation in infinity. (The transsubstantiation is infinite, without being the infinite.) Love cuts across finitude, always from the other to the other, which never returns to the same—and all loves, so humbly alike, are superbly singular. Love offers finitude in its truth; it is finitude's dazzling presentation. (This could be said in English: glamor, this fascination, this seducing splendor reserved today for the language of makeup and of the staging of faces. Glamor: love's preparations and promises.)

Or perhaps love itself is eclipsed in this outburst, at once because it does not stop coming and going, never being simply present, and because it is always put into play farther off than everything that would have to qualify it (sublime love, tender love, foolish love, implacable love, pure love, abandoned love). Nietzsche's Zarathustra says: "Great loves do not want love—they want more:"

To Joy and Concern

So I say it again and again, pleasure is shared.

—Lucretius

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ately destined to its own lie, or to its own ignorance, and immediately not transcend the heading.")4 It is the very sentence of indigence, immedia sentence names nothing and does nothing. ("Though spoken billions of performative (neither is it a descriptive nor a prescriptive statement). This back in their power, and that I unseat the power of words as much as I afwithout reserve. In one sense, love does not arrive, and, on the contrary abandoned to the harassment of a reality that will never authenticate times, I-love-you is extralexicographical; it is a figure whose definition canpens with "I love you," neither power nor effacement. "I love you" is not on these contradictions. But there is more, for in one sense, nothing hap firm that power at its peak. But philosophy and poetry still feed themselves ing "I love you," I suspend all recourse to gods as much as I put mysell whether by a divine force or in the splendor of words. It is true that in say. love simply because they say it and because they say that it is fulfilled that it is missed by philosophy and no less by poetry. They do not mis rive, or it arrives only at the limit, while crossing. It is also for this reason tality of sense, assignable as such—love is the impossible, and it does not ar-In one sense—and in a sense that will perhaps always conceal the to

always arrives, so that in one way or another "the love boat has crashed against the everyday" (Mayakovsky).

But "I love you" (which is the unique utterance of love and which is, at bottom, its name: love's name is not "love," which would be a substance of a faculty, but it is this sentence, the "I love you," just as one says "the cogito")—the "I love you" is something else. It is a promise. The promise, by constitution, is an utterance that draws itself back before the law that it lets appear. The promise neither describes nor prescribes nor performs. It does nothing and thus is always vain. But it lets a law appear, the law of the given word: that this must be. "I love you" says nothing (except a limit of speech), but it allows to emerge the fact that love must arrive and that nothing, absolutely nothing, can relax, divert, or suspend the rigor of this law. The promise does not anticipate or assure the future: it is possible that one day I will no longer love you, and this possibility cannot be taken away from love—it belongs to it. It is against this possibility, but also with it, that the promise is made, the word given. Love is its own promised eternity, its own eternity unveiled as law.

ever imprisoning it or holding it back. 80 many bursts of love, which reflect love in its entirety each time without ther the types of a genre nor the metaphors of a unique reality, but rather no longer of love—but these are counterfeits, and even Don Juan is not disputably, illusory or deceitful loves, loves without faith and law, that are to verification, to justification, and to accumulation (even if there are, inmean that there was no love, nor even that there was not love. Love is faith-Isolde, Don Juan, or Baucis and Philemon—and that these figures are netone of them). Love is the promise and its keeping, the one independent of promise plus the keeping of the promise. It cannot be subjected in this way ful only to itself. The promise must be kept, and nonetheless love is not the law lets itself be represented simultaneously by figures like Tristan and love's ultimate paradox, untenable and nonetheless inevitable, is that its selt: not its "contents" ("love"), but its utterance ("I love you"). That is why kept? Perhaps unlike all other promises, one must keep only the promise itthe other. How could it be otherwise, since one never knows what must be Of course, the promise must be kept. But if it is not, that does not

When the promise is kept, it is not the keeping, but it is still the promise that makes love. Love does not fulfill itself, it always arrives in the promise and as the promise. It is thus that it touches and that it traverses. For one does not know what one says when one says "I love you," and one does not say anything, but one knows that one says it and that it is law, ab-

other whom one does not love and whose expectations will not be met. were necessary: the same holds true when one hears "I love you" said by an self in any subject or in any signification. (If one more proof or account solutely: instantly, one is shared and traversed by that which does not fix it. touches us., that, while not love itself, is nonetheless the way in which its promise Despite everything, it cannot be that one is not traversed by something

ever, another thought: love arrives in all the forms and in all the figures of extenuation of a history of love-this same multiplicity still offers, howlove; it is projected in all its shatters. tions and thoughts of love-which compose in effect the enclosure and the asperated by the proliferating and contradictory multiplicity of representapromised, in words or in gestures. That is why, if we are exhausted or exways other, always at the limit of sense), it always arrives, as soon as it is Love arrives then in the promise. In one sense (in another sense, al-

my sexual property, that objectification by which I am a masculine or femdisplaces their identities. Whatever my love is, it cuts across my identity it is not: it cuts across the sexes with another difference (Derrida, in naked woman; it is the letters of Hyperion, of Kierkegaard, or of Kafka princesse de Clèves or the enfant de Bohême; it is Death enlaced around a Cupid, Isis and Osiris, Diane and Acteon, Ariadne and Dionysus; it is the inine subject. It is Uranian Aphrodite and Pandemian Aphrodite; it is Eros the fever and in serenity, in the exception and in the rule. It is sexual, and much in protecting as in exposing. It is in the jolt and in appearement, in much in taking as in giving, as much in requiring as in renouncing, as the history of a life, in jealous passion or in tireless devotion. It consists as an infinity of shatters: love is wholly complete in one sole embrace or in Geschlecht, initiated the analysis of this) that does not abolish them, but There are no parts, moments, types, or stages of love. There is only

still its black glimmer. Perverse acts of violence, or the cold rage to annihi be traversed by the love of another whom I deny in his alterity. Ultimately lence, there would not be a reversal from hate to love, but in hate I would in hate, but according to a regime other than that of Freudian ambiva-I would be traversed by this negation. This would be the limit of love, but (It is perhaps that—a hypothesis that I leave open here—in love and

> poverty of substance and of property. indigence, love multiplies itself to infinity, offering nothing other than its encountered the nature of Eros; son of Poros and of Penia, of resources and pass through the other, even though neither stops in the other. Plato had gasm, the seducer laughs at adoration—blind to the fact that they each self and flees itself in the crossing of this profusion. Pure love refuses ordefinite luxuriance of its essence—and this essence itself at once gives itnot in any one of its shatters, or it is always on the way to not being there. makes itself recognized, but it is always unrecognizable, and moreover it is Its unity, or its truth as love, consists only in this proliferation, in this infrom one burst to another, never does love resemble itself. It always

to the other "my love," it is of the other, precisely, that I speak, and nothcause it is never made) and so much other that it is never my love (if I say other, so much other that it is never made, or done (one makes love, beeruption of their multiplicity, it is itself their multiplication in one single that there is "arriving," arrival and departure: of the other, always of the itself, it arrives and arrives at itself as that by which nothing arrives, except desire within fraternity. Love does not simply cut across, it cuts itself across act of love, it is the trembling of emotion in a brothel, and the distress of a disguises. It does not withhold its identity behind its shatters: it is itself the But love is not "polymorphous," and it does not take on a series of

of the infinite crossing of the other. term, that it comes across itself and overtakes itself, being the finite touch major figures, sealed in the destiny of occidental love), if we miss what love tiself misses: that it comes across and never simply comes to its place or to novels, and moral edification all at once, as soon as it no longer supports its (and threatened with falling into sexology, marriage counseling, newsstand ters. That is why "love" is saturated, exhausted with philosophy and poetry nor is there any common assumption of its scattered and inextricable shat-There is no master figure, there is no major representation of love,

Being is put into play. The putting into play of Being in Dasein and as Daing, nor an episode of existence. It is an ontological determination of that ^{sein} is indissociable from the following: that the world of Dasein is right existent that Heidegger names Dasein—which is to say, the being in which What thus arrives in the crossing, crosswise, is not an accident of be-

away a world "that I share with others," or a "world-with." Because Heidegger, at the final frontier of philosophy, is the first to have assigned the being-with in Being itself, we must consider him for a moment.

and the other. them one to the other, which is to say one by the other beyond the one sharing itself that constitutes them, that makes them be, by addressing concern for-the-other is a world of the crossing of singular beings by this side of him, once more into the world. The shared world as the world of of liberating him for it, instead of exempting him from it. The concern say the structure and the thrust of the existent that is offered-to, ahead of concern most properly creates the Being of Dasein ("concern," that is to world; but the world is a "with"; Being consists thus in being delivered to of the Dasein is nothing other than the Being of this sharing. (One could world" is constitutively being-with, and being-according-to-the-sharing means). If the world is Mitwelt, shared world, Being insofar as it is "in the for the other sends the other—in sending me to him—ahead of him, ourtouching the other in his own concern, of restoring him to this concern or in its "advancing" (as opposed to its domineering) form, the movement of names it Fürsorge, "concern for" the other, whose analysis shows that it is, itself), concern for the other is its constitutive determination. Heidegger the "with.") Dasein is what it is in being originarily with others. And if which confers Being, on whatever it may be, is that which puts in the transpose this approximately into a more classical language as follows: that (thrown, abandoned, offered, and set free: that is what "in the world" ting into play of Being: through Dasein, Being is being-in-the-world nor an environment or neighborhood. It designates the mode of the pur-The originary sharing of the world is the sharing of Being, and the Being The "world" that is here in question is not an exteriority of objects,

I am certainly betraying in part the Heideggerian description. Concern or preoccupation for things—and not for others—that are in the world (Besorgen) plays a role in Heidegger parallel to the Fürsorge, and although the latter is in effect a fundamental ontological determination, it does not exactly accede to the privileged position I have just given it. The analytic of the being-with remains a moment, which is not returned to the matically, in a general analytic where Dasein appears first of all and most frequently as in some way isolated, even though Heidegger himself emphasizes that there is solitude "only in and for a being-with." Moreover, love is never named and consequently never furnishes, as such, an ontologico-existential character (although the description of Fürsorge greatly to

sembles a certain classical description of the most demanding, most noble, and most spiritual love).

comes to it. collide with the metaphysical-dialectical thinking of love, which had redidiably kept in a sphere of autonomic, if not subjective, allure. In accorality, as much opposed as exposed to other individualities and thus irremealways been, despite everything, the denial, and (2) kept (despite himself?) ing-offered to others, of which philosophy (since Plato? despite Plato?) has (and a fortiori outside of inter-subjectivity) in a being-exposed or in a bedegger (1) determined the essence of the Dasein outside of subjectivity ured (crossed by the other) constitution of Being in its singularity, Heidouble hypothesis: in approaching more closely than we ever have the al-Heidegger's text would demand. I will be content to propose dryly this thought as what cuts across and alters I going to the other while the other from an "I" or from an "identity" that goes toward the other, and it is not far as it is traversed by Being exceeds the very movement of Fürsorge, which rected Mitsein into the space of subjectivity. On the other hand, love insolove to the ontological register. On the one hand, he could, in effect, only dance with these two gestures, Heidegger was prevented from summoning the assignation of this Dasein in the apparent form of a distinct individusurpasses and liberates the other": this movement is still thought starting I will not undertake here the dense and meticulous explication that

It is not at all by chance that Heidegger is silent about love (at least his references to Scheler, his critique of the theory of empathy, and at least one allusion made to love demonstrate that this silence was deliberate—if it were not already obvious that it is deliberate with respect to the entire philosophical tradition). Love forms the limit of a thinking that carries itself to the limit of philosophy. Until thinking extricates itself, it will not be able to reach love. But what this thinking, at its limit, lets emerge could be this: that one never *reaches* love, even though love is always happening to us. Or rather, love is always offered to us. Or yet again, we are always, in our Being—and in us Being is—exposed to love.

(Note: I will be even less explicit with Levinas than with Heidegger. Every philosophical inquiry on love today carries an obvious debt to Levinas, as well as points of proximity, such as are easily detected here. For Levinas cleared the path toward what one can call, in the language of Totality and Infinity, a metaphysics of love, to the point that this metaphysics commands, at bottom, his entire oeuvre. For this very reason, a discussion of Levinas would have to be an enterprise distinct from this essay. I should,

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ceeds from the first given of his thought, "the epiphany of the face": love is it is because another work would be necessary to attempt to extract them ation, and fraternity. If I, for my part, do not thematize such notions here, only according to the occurrence of being, or its posing into shatters. And can see everything except "generality." There is the "each time," an-archic absolute indetermination of the there is-of an existing without exisas second and as constituted. Levinas opposes it, and pre-poses it, "to the given at the beginning, it must disappear within love and be recaptured in that no signification any longer clarifies" (that of the Eros), the fraternity order to reach, beyond the face, beyond vision and the "you," the "hidthe movement stressed by this epiphany, a movement that transcends it in hierarchizes them and prescribes them to a teleology. This teleology profrom the oriented sequence that, in Levinas, in a rather classical manner, dence lifts the equivocation only by transcending itself into fecundity, file however, indicate what its principle would be. As a citation above recalled cation. Or rather, this takes place on another level: at the heart of being constitutive of the occurrence. This takes place before the face and signifithe crossing—the coming-and-going, the comings-and-goings of love—the is what Levinas, before anyone, understood. But being-with takes place across: its being is there. Being-with is constitutive of this stake-and that is in shatters, offered dazzling, multiplied, shrill and singular, hard and cut ing, precise and hard, the theft of the generality. Being is at stake there, it ing" by itself, no concept—it does not give itself—but there is always belar occurrence. There is no existing without existents, and there is no "existin fact (or even archi-archic, as Derrida might say?), of an existing, singuin Heidegger's discourse. But in the es gibt ("it gives [itself]") of Being, one idarity with Levinas's distaste for certain accents, shall we say, of dereliction tents—incessant negation, infinite limitation," "anarchic." I can be in solunveiling of Being in general," a Heideggerian theme in which he sees "the its surpassing. I can, on the contrary, grasp the relation with the face only the expression of another and as signification. Because this signification is due to the motif of the face. The latter signifies the primordial relation as least certain traits of a dialectical moment. It retains them, it seems to me, in which, again, the epiphany of the face is produced. Love thus retains at of children, lifting its equivocation, can emerge, the fraternity of children den—never hidden enough—absolutely ungraspable."5 From this "vertigo love remains equivocal for Levinas, reducing itself to egotism. Its transcen-

> in being itself: at the heart of being, or as the promise of being. other, but by this concern, this solicitude, this consideration, and this rethat comes and goes incessantly, as the being-other of the other inscribed nunciation for the other that cuts across us and does not come back to us, We are exposed by concern—not that which "we" "hold" for the

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is the crossing of the other. The other cuts across me, I cut across it. Each one might provoke. To joy is not a fulfillment, and it is not even an event. one is the other for the other—but also for the self. In this sense, one joys departing and it departs in the arrival, in the same beat of the heart. To joy not an eventuality that one might expect, that one might exclude, or that other to me, neither confusion nor fading, clarity itself, the beating of the in the other for the self: to be passed to the other. This is the syncope of identity in singularity. A syncope: the step marked, in a suspense, from the Nonetheless, it happens, it arrives—and it arrives as it departs, it arrives in Lacan wanted it, than possible, as the sexologist would want it. To joy is heart, the cadence and the cut of another heart within it. This concern exposes us to joying. To joy is no more impossible, as

is the verb of love, and this verb speaks the act of joy (the joi of courtly It is spoken, the joy is named, but it is something with which discourses overwhelming exhaustiveness of discourses on love. It is not so much a renaving always discoursed it too much, declared it too much. hardening that is one with love"). It is not something unspeakable, because sistence, the very formation of a shatter (one might say, like Deleuze, "a sult, or "discharge," as Freud says and as it is said vulgarly, as an acute inlove). Something resists, through these two words (that are only one), the (narratives and poems) can never be even. They have never said it enough. Everything has been said of joying, as of love, but this word resists. It

ques not express the essence of love, but its property." But we have to push define love as the will of he who loves to join himself to the loved object, it with enough clarity the essence of love. Regarding that of the authors who that with this joy it is not a matter of desire, for "this definition explains Panied by the idea of an exterior cause," writes Spinoza, and he specifies cut across, undone, it is to be joyed as much as to joy: "Love is joy accom- $^{
m 0cing,\ which}$ is to say at once its completion and its limit, beyond desire or the idea of an exterior cause" to this: to be joyed—to face the extremity of Joy is the trembling of a deliverance beyond all freedom: it is to be

short of it. This is joy, and this also reflects on the essence of chagrin and of pain. For joy is not appeasement, but a screnity without rest. To joy is not to be satisfied—it is to be filled, overflowed. It is to be cut across with out even being able to hold onto what "to joy" makes happen. To joy cannot contain itself: Joy is not even to contain joy itself, nor the pain that consequently accompanies it. The joy of joying does not come back to anyone, neither to me nor to you, for in each it opens the other. In the one and the other, and in the one by the other, joy offers being itself, it makes being felt, shared. Joy knows concern, and is known by it. Joy makes felt, and it lets go the very essence of the sharing that is being. (Although it means diverting the sentence from its proper context, I will cite Michel Henry: "Far from coming after the arrival of being and marveling before it, joy is consubstantial with it, founds it and constitutes it.")

This puts one beside oneself, this irritates and exasperates, and the language for saying it is exasperated. (It would be better to let another speak, and in a language that would remain, somewhat, on the side:

Laura the basilisk made entirely of asbestos, walking to the fiery stake with a mouth full of gum. Hunkydory is the word on her lips. The heavy fluted lips on the sea shell, Laura's lips, the lips of lost Uranian love. All floating shadowward through the slanting fog. Last murmuring dregs of shell-like lips slipping off the Labrador coast, oozing eastward with the mud tides, easing starward in the iodine drift. . . . I kept it up like a Juggernaut. Moloch fucking a piece of bombazine. Organza Friganza. The bolero in straight jabs. . . . We embraced one another silently and then we slid into a long fuck. [Henry Miller])

But this is shared too much within the other. It is not that identity, in joying, simply loses itself. It is there at its peak. There is in fact too much identity—and joying opens the enigma of that which, in the syncope of the subject, in the crossing of the other, affirms an absolute self. To joy poses without reserve the question of the singular being, which we are no doubt barely on the way to broaching. It is the question of that which remains "self" when nothing returns to the self: the very question of love, if love is always proffered ("I love you") and if joy, coming from the other coming and going, is, however, always mine.

It is the question of a presence: to joy is an extremity of presence. self exposed, presence of self joying outside itself, in a presence that no present absorbs and that does not (re)present, but that offers itself endlessly.

To try to enter into the question, one could say at least this: selfthat joys joys of its presence in the presence of the other. He, she, is only the presence of the reception of the other presence—and the latter cuts across. The

presence that cuts across is a burst. To joy, joy itself, is to receive the burst of a singular being: its more than manifest presence, its seeming beyond all appearance—ekphanestaton, Plato said. But it is by oneself also that he, she who joys is bedazzled. It is in himself thus that he is delighted. But he does not belong to himself, and he does not come back to himself: he is shared, like the joy he shares.

What appears in this light, at once excessive and impeccable, what is offered like a belly, like a kissed mouth, is the singular being insofar as it is this "self" that is neither a subject nor an individual nor a communal being, but that—she or he—which cuts across, that which arrives and departs. The singular being affirms even better its absolute singularity, which it offers only in passing, which it brings about immediately in the crossing. What is offered through the singular being—through you or me, across his relation that is only cut across—is the singularity of being, which is to say this: that being itself, "being" taken absolutely, is absolutely singular (thus it would be that which remains "self" when nothing comes back to the self).

This constitution is buried at the heart of being, but it emerges in outbursts of joy. One could say: being joys. One would thus define an ontological necessity of love. But love is neither unique nor necessary. It comes, it is offered; it is not established as a structure of being or as its principle, and even less as its subjectivity. One would thus define a necessity without a law, or a law without necessity, thus: the heart of being within love, and love in surplus of being. One could say, at the limit, the fundamental ontology and the caprices of love. The correlation would neither be causal nor expressive nor essential nor existential nor of any other known genre. Perhaps it would no longer be necessary to speak of correlation. But there is this brilliant, shattering constitution of being. "Love" does not define it, but it names it, and obliges us to think it.

Postscriptum

be at the same time a communication of love, a letter, a missive, since love sends itself as much as it enunciates itself." But you didn't send this text to anyone. And you know very well that that doesn't mean that you sent it to everyone. One can't love everyone.

-But a letter, a missive, once published, is no longer a missive. It is a

—And don't you think that "I love you," by itself, is already a citation? Listen to Valéry: "To say to anyone I love you is to recite a lesson. It was never invented!" Recitation for citation, you might have risked that. You might have risked playing at losing the distance of discourse.

—I didn't want to. I was afraid, if I played that game, that it would be even more discourse, and not necessarily more love.

—And nonetheless, aren't you ever touched by a poem, by a letter, by a dialogue of love? And do you really believe that your love—if you have one, how could one know?—owes nothing to these public dispatches?

—I know. I know my debt, and I know that I don't pay returns. But you also read that I would want to be exempt from love, to be even with it. The splinters that cut across me, coming from another, from you perhaps, or coming from me, that is still something other than "love," other than this burden of the word and its declaration. It is lighter, more relaxed; it is not subject to the grandiloquence of love.

—There is then no excess, no infinite transport in this raving: it must be only this other? Only him, her, to whom you send your love, and if not there is no love? But each time, and even if you switched every day, and even if you love several at a time, love is addressed to one alone, singularly and infinitely: does not your lightness forget that?

—No, I haven't forgotten that. But this infinity is minute, and the words of love are too big for it. Or rather, they are really too small. . . . I don't know anymore. I should perhaps give them all to you, send them all to you, all imprinted, as one touches everywhere the minute infinity of skin, with impatience, with this boundless disorder that never finds an order or a measure, except by being always shaken, always broken, rushed to multiply itself, a nervousness of fingers on masses, on flanks, and in secret folds—with nothing more that is secret, in the end. . . . I should have sent everything, a thousand pages of love and not one word on it, to you alone. All the words of love from everyone. . . . It would have flown into pieces, barely thrown toward you, as it always flies into pieces as soon as it is sent.

-Yes, it's made for that.

Translated by Lisa Garbus and Simona Sawhney

PART SIX

WORLD

For Sarajevo, March 1993 In Praise of the Melee

a place to visit, to conduct business or a liaison; nor is it the uncertain to identity. It is no longer a sign beside a road or in a history; it is no longer there, a pure Subject declares that it is the People, the Law, the State, the very cipher of exact aim, the pure pinpoint of an essence. Somewhere out istico-political computer, an immobilized target in a gun sight; and it is the sionless point on a diagram of sovereignty, an orthonormal index on a balspace of fortuitous encounter or of distracted meandering. It is a dimen-Identity in the name of which "Sarajevo" must be purely and simply iden-"Sarajevo" has become the name for a complete system of reduction

mixed up in it. to Sarajevo, merely a pure and naked identity. Nothing else should come such a way that there would no longer be a Sarajevo landscape or journey Into consideration; nor should we—other cosmopolitan Europeans—get Sarajevo: no longer even a name, but a sign hung over our eyes in

which marks a locus, the locus of a melee, of crossing and halt, of entanglement and commerce, competition, release, circulation, scattering of like that of a person, should never be the name of any one person; it should lights. The name of a city, like that of a country, like that of a people, and A city doesn't need to be identified by anything other than a name,

as it were, or as his or her own person. The "proper name" has no meaning as it were, or as his or her own person. always be the name of no one who could actually be presented in person, sense, a melee of syllables swarming over the border of a semantic identity scription, indefinite in principle and in fact. An inchoate and stochastic solve the ego: the latter opens sense, a pure source of sense, while the for a place and a passage. Those who are exiles from Sarajevo have been exiled jevo will die of the death of Sarajevo itself; they will die of the militarily no need to identify it. From this point on, however, those who die in Sarathreatened, hemmed in, under siege. In order to live in Sarajevo, there was arraigns a presence in person, a sovereign Subject, this sovereignty is that is gently, obstinately deferred. From the moment that a proper name or, rather, the meaning that it has is little more than the sketch of a demer points to a melee, gives rise to a melody: Sarajevo. made nothing, engendered no ego. The "proper" name should always dis mix, from the melee that made Sarajevo what it was, but that, as such bol erected precisely in order to body forth and to symbolize what was only presence that measures up to the "nation" or the "state," some bodily symimposed possibility of identifying this name with some substance or some from this place, expunged by that body. They have been exiled from the

I was asked to write something "in praise of mixture." What I'd like to do is to write praise that is itself "mixed." Not in the literal sense of writing something that is partly praise and partly blame, only to end up with a null account of loss and gain, nor in the sense of singing faint praise, evoking, an odd concept, a sort of extreme lukewarmth. Instead, it is a matter (as everyone knows; it's there for all to see, if only we knew how to look for it and to accept what is at stake), against wind and tide—and we know how many of those there can be—simply a matter, of conceding nothing neither concerning identity nor concerning what mixes with it or mixes it up fons et origo. What we need, then, is praise mixed with reserve, with the reserve used when we do not want—that's the last thing we want!—out praise to betray its object by having identified it all too well.

In truth, the most fitting and most beautiful praise of mixture would be not to have to praise it, since it's scarcely possible to discern of identify this notion. It presupposes isolated pure substances and then the operation of their mixture. It's a notion that belongs in the laboratory. But would it ever occur to a painter to praise the blending of colors? He or she

has nothing to do with the specter of pure colors; the painter has no choice but to concern him- or herself with the infinite derivation and melee of their nuances.

Now, because it was always possible that someone was going to coin the detestable slogan "ethnic cleansing," this demands some sort of response. Not a response in the form of a symmetrical counter-slogan, however. This is why I'm seeking, above all, to avoid conferring too much identity on mixture itself. To make sure of this, we're going to need to shift accent and genre; we're going to need to move from mixture to melee.

To do justice to identities—without giving in to their delusion, to the presumption that they are, substantially, identities ("subjects" in this sense): this is the job in hand. It's both immense and very simple: to remake culture, no less, to remake thought so that it is not crude, rubbish, like any thinking of purity; to remix lineages, paths, and skins, but also to describe their heterogeneous trajectories, their networks, which are at once crossed and distinct. In no way, though, is this to believe "man" to be simple, homogeneous, or present. Nor woman. Nor the Croat, nor the Serb, nor the Bosnian. To know (but what sort of knowledge is this?) that, from now on, the subject of knowledge can only be someone, like everyone, of mixed blood

Mixing is a delicate operation, fragile, subtle, and volatile; today, this delicacy is usually coarsened, obscured. There does exist—and I'm not the first to point this out—a version of praise for mixture that derives from the more acceptable forms of "political correctness," that is, from the normative petrification of the most well-founded exigencies. This kind of praise can celebrate, if need be, multiculturalism, hybridization, generalized exchange and sharing, or a transcendental variegation.

But we know, or we feel we know, that things are not quite so simple, that turbulence, mixtures, errancies, or confusions aren't enough *in themselves*. Or rather, and first of all, we know that they do not lend themselves to being thought as such. And that's the whole question.¹

But there also remains—and, sadly, this is something with which we're even more familiar—a discourse that simplifies in order to fuel its rage, to inflate the value of distinction, identity, propriety, purity, a discourse that employs the word "cosmopolitan," for example, with evident

contempt and even disgust (sometimes clearly tinged with anti-Semitism) for what it denotes.

Finally, and as is only fitting, there are those who step back from the conflict between these two forms of "correctness" and who recite an endless catechism of unity within diversity, of complementarity, and of well-tenpered differences. This well-intentioned discourse, though often welcome amidst the cries of moral and political urgency, remains on the level of intention and exhortation. It doesn't address the very things that are at stake.

Let's be clear on this from the start: the simplistic praise of mixture may well have lead to mistakes, but the simplistic praise of purity has upheld and upholds crimes. In this respect, we don't need to sustain any sense of symmetry, of equilibrium. There's no happy medium here. There's nothing to discuss. Even the most meager discussion, the least second thought about any racism or about any "purification" whatsoever, already participates in the crime. Moreover, the crime here is always double, both moral and intellectual. Every racism is stupid, obtuse, fearful. (I always feel a certain reticence when faced with long discourses and big colloquia on the subject of racism: it seems to me that we bestow too much honor on this trash. And this is why I am bothered by the idea of a "praise of mixture": it is as if mixture as such were a "value" or an "authenticity" yet to be revealed, whereas it is, in fact, obvious or, rather, on closer inspection, proves not even to exist—if it is indeed the case that there has never been any thing "pure" that one could or should "mix" with some other "purity.")

We're not talking about maintaining some happy medium between these opposed theses. These theses only exist insofar as there is some simplification and denaturation of what's at stake.

By definition, a mixture is not a simple substance to which we could assign a specific place or nature, that we could claim as such, and that we could consequently praise without hesitation. By definition, identity is not an absolute distinction, cut off from everything and therefore distinct from nothing: it is always the other of an other identity. "He's different. Just like nothing: it is always the other of an other identity. "He's different identity everybody else." Difference as such is indiscernible. Mixture and identity cannot pin one another down. They have both always already happened.

are both always already past or both always still to come. And they are common, shared by everyone, between everyone, as much as they are shared by one another.

2

precisely because mixture is put into the mix (mixed up in the melee), it isn't a substance. Nor can we replace the nonsubstantiality of its content with the supposed consistency of the container: such is the difficulty with ideologies of the melting pot, which suppose the "pot" to contain, in every sense of the word, with all the virtues of its own identity, the enigmas of mixture along with its disruptive forces.

Hybridization [métissage] isn't "something," and, if the hybrid—this hybrid [métis] that each of us in one way or another is—is someone, this isn't due to an essence of hybridization (a contradictory notion), but is so insofar as the hybrid gives a punctuation, a singular configuration, to the without-essence of hybridization. To essentialize mixture is already to have dissolved it, to have melted it into something other than itself. Hence, we shouldn't claim to be speaking about mixture as such, least of all in order to be hymning its praise.

Mixture, as such, can take two forms: that of a fusion, an accomplished osmosis, or that of an achieved disorder. Alchemy or entropy, two phantasmatic extremities—which can only join up or be identified with one another in an apocalypse or a black hole. And yet mixture is neither the one nor the other; nor is it a happy medium between the two. It is something other, or, rather, it "is" otherwise, totally otherwise.

Rather than mixture, therefore, we would be better off speaking of melee: of an action rather than a substance. To begin with, there are at least two kinds of melee—indeed, there is perhaps never any such thing as a melee "pure and simple." There is the melee of combat, and the melee of love. The melee of Ares, the melee of Aphrodite. Neither is never identified with the other. There is neither entropy nor alchemy. A joust that couldn't happen without desire and without jealous assault, without appeal to the other as an always other other.

(The melee of Ares isn't war in the modern sense of the term, however, something that is usually a long way removed from a melee, moving

as it has toward extermination even before any hand-to-hand combat, something that aims to crush or to suppress the opponent rather than take him or her out of the fight, something that has no room for combat, no "combat zone," but instead spreads out indiscriminately, killing, raping, it radiating, gassing, and infecting "civil" space as a whole. Today, war is put mixture without limits, and not a melee. And we could make the same point with respect to the melee of Aphrodite, about the orgy or the porn movie.)

Mixture, therefore, is not. It happens, it emerges. There is melec, crossing, weaving, exchange, sharing; and these are neither a single thing nor the same thing. To begin with, mixture is an "it happens" rather than an "it is": displacements, hazards, migrations, clinamens, encounters, chances, and risks. So there is no one, nothing unitary: in a melee, there is countervalence and encounter, there's resemblance and distancing, contact and contraction, concentration and dissemination, identification and alteration.

Mixture is not simply "rich" with the diversity that it mixes. Insofar as it is *itself* nothing, it ceaselessly escapes this diversity, as well. There is a rather foolish quantitative discourse—a basically capitalizing or profiteering discourse—of "mutual enrichment." But what is at stake here is neither wealth nor poverty. Cultures—or what are called cultures—don't add up. They encounter one another, mix with one another, alter one another, reconfigure one another. All cultures cultivate one another: they clear one another's ground, irrigate or drain one another, plough one another, or graft themselves onto one another.

To begin with, every culture is a configuration, a melee from the offset. The first culture was a melee of races or species, erectus, faber, sapiens. The West, so proud of the "Greek miracle" of its foundation, should constantly ponder the ethnic and cultural diversity, the movement of peoples, the transferences and transformations of practices, the deviations of language and morals, that configured "the Hellenes," made them what they were. Let us reread the history of this melee:

The beginning of the second millennium B.C. sees a phenomenon of extraordinary novelty: a cosmopolitan culture emerges in which we can recognize the input of diverse civilizations built next to or in the middle of the sea. The civilizations were either those internal to empires—Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Asia Minor of the Hittites—or those scattered upon the seas and sustained by cities—the Syrian Lebanese coast, Crete, and later Mycenae. From that point on, however, they all communicate between one another. All of them, even Egypt, ordinarily so closed

in on itself, turn toward the outside with a passionate curiosity. It is the era of voyages, of the exchange of gifts, of diplomatic correspondences, and of princesses gent to be spouses to foreign kings as a token of these new "international" relations. The era when all the peoples of the Near East and the Agaean—Cretans, Mycenaeans, Palestinians, Nubians, Canannites—begin to show up in their native costumes on the frescos in Egyptian tombs.³

Every culture is in itself "multicultural," not only because there is a prior acculturation or because there is no pure and simple provenance, but more importantly because the gesture of culture is itself a gesture of melee: of confrontation, transformation, deviation, development, recomposition, combination, cobbling together.

It's not that there's no "identity." A culture is single and unique (always assuming that we're still happy with the word "culture," which seems to have identified in advance what is at stake in it. And yet this word identifies precisely nothing. It is a way of short-circuiting all the difficulties that crowd in when we try to say "people," "nation," "civilization," "spirit," "personality," etc.). A "culture" denotes a certain "unity," a "one." And we cannot neglect the fact and the principle of this "one," still less deny it, in the name of an essentialization of "mixture."

And yet, to the extent that this "one" is clearly distinct and thus distinguished, it is still not its own pure and proper foundation. Avoiding confusion between distinction and foundation is undoubtedly the whole problem; it is this confusion and this distinction that are, philosophically, ethically, and politically at stake in the discourse that surrounds "identity" or "subjects" of all types. As such, the absolute distinction of Descartes's ego existo ought not to be confused with the foundation that Descartes links to it, in the purity of a res cogitans, In the same way, for example, "French" identity doesn't need to found itself in Vercingetorix or Joan of Arc in order to exist...

The unity and unicity of a culture are one and the same by way of a mixture or of a melee. It is a melee that, within any given "culture," brings out a style or a tone; equally, however, it brings out the various voices or vocal ranges that are needed in order for this tone to be interpreted. There is a French culture. But this culture has many voices and is nowhere present "in person," as it were—except for those who confuse it with the Gallic cock, or with Dupont-la-Joie. The voice of Voltaire isn't the same as that

of Proust, nor is Proust's voice the same as that of Pasteur, Pasteur's not the same Rita Mitsouko's. Equally, it's perhaps not as though such voices are ever purely and simply French: what is and is not French in Stendhal, in Hugo, in Picasso, in Levinas, in Godard, in Johnny Hallyday, in Kat'Onoma, in Chamoiseau, in Dib? Again, this doesn't mean that there no "French identity": it means that an identity of this type is never simply identical in the way that a pencil is identically the same today as it was yesterday (supposing, at least, that this example isn't always going to be materially imprecise...). The identity of the pencil leaves this precise pencil much less identifiable as "this one here" (which is, up to a certain point, any pencil whatsoever) than the identity of a culture leaves that particular culture, or the identity of a person leaves that particular cultures the difference, we might term the second identity an ipsein, a "being-self-same."

An ipseity is not the pure inertia of the same remaining entirely the same set at no distance from itself: that's how we imagine the being of a stone or of God... An ipseity can be identified or makes its identity known. In order for that to occur, there needs to be a network of exchanges, recognitions, relays from one ipseity to another, from difference to difference. An ipseity takes on matter through and for the other, provided that there is an other or that there are others from which, with its singular touch, it takes and to which it gives a certain identifiable tone—that is, a tone which is unidentifiable, inimitable, unattributable to an identity. "Ipseity" would name what precisely it is about an identity that it is always and necessarily impossible to identify.

As a matter of fact, a pure identity would not only be inert, empty, colorless, and flavorless (words which describe many of those who uphold pure identities): it would be an absurdity. A pure identity annuls itself, cannot identify itself. It is solely identical to an itself that is identical to itself, and that thus goes around in a circle and never attains existence.

Was there, for example, anyone pure enough to be worthy of the name "Aryan"? We know how this question could lead a real Nazi, a Nazi who identified absolutely with his cause or with his thing, to sterilization or even to suicide.

Purity is a crystalline abyss in which the identical, the proper, or the authentic collapses into itself, null, taking the other with itself so as to convert it into the abyss. The absolute and vertiginous law of the proper is that

it purely and simply alienates itself in appropriating its own purity. Another form of mixture: mixing-in-itself, auto-mixture, autism, autoeroticism.

A language is always a melee of languages, something halfway beween the total confusion of Babel and the immediate transparency of a
glossolalia. A style is always an intersection of tones, borrowings, intervals,
and forced correspondences, to which it lends a trope. Undoubtedly, every
style seems to tend toward an ultimate, sovereign trope, which would be
the trope of an absolutely proper language, an absolute idiolect. But an absolute idiolect or idiom would no longer be a language at all; it would no
longer be able to mix it up with other languages in order to be the language
that it is; it could no longer be translated so as to be the untranslatable that it
is. A pure idiolect would be idiotic, wholly deprived of relations and so of
identity. A pure culture, a pure propriety would be idiotic.

What is a community? It is neither a macro-organism nor a big family (always assuming we know what an organism or what a family actually are...). The *common*, having-in-common or being-in-common excludes from itself any interior unity, any subsistence and presence in itself or by itself. To be with, to be together, and even to be "united" is precisely not to be "one." Of communities that are at one with themselves, there are only dead ones. These are not to be found in the cemetery, moreover, a place of dispersed space, of distinction; no, they lie in the ashes of ovens or under the soil of mass graves.

So, too, has the systematic rape of Bosnian women unfurled in exemplary fashion all the figures of the delusional affirmation of a community "one" with itself: rape in order to engender "bastards," deemed unacceptable, excluded *a priori* from the presupposed unity; rape in order to force the abortion of these bastards; rape, then, in order to kill and destroy the very possibility of the bastard; rape so that this repeated act will draw its victims into the fantastic unity of their "community"; rape in order to make manifest in every possible way that there *should be no relations* between communities. A null act, a negation of sex itself, a negation of rela-

tion, a negation of the child, of the woman; an act of pure affirmation on the part of the rapist, in whom a "pure identity" (a "racialized" identity) is unable to offer anything better than a vile imitation of what it negates; relation and being-together. (In general, what undoubtedly remains exemplary about rape is that it operates through a relation of which it is also the negation. It pursues relation, pursues melee.)

What we have in common is always also what distinguishes us and differentiates us. What I have in common with a Frenchman is that I an not the same Frenchman as he is, the fact that our "Frenchness" is nowhere to be found, in no essence, no completed figure. In saying this, it's not a matter of the nothingness of a figure, but a matter of an outline that's always in the process of being traced, a fiction that's always in the process of being invented, a melee of traits. It is not that identity is "always on the way," projected onto the horizon as a guiding star, as a value or as a regulative idea. Even as an infinite projection, identity is not going to arrive, is not going to identify itself. Why? Because the melee is already there.

I am already there when my mother and my father get mixed up with one another. It is I who mixes them together. I am their melee. Yet I do not engender myself.

everyday realities. Granted, a class is no longer conceivable as an identity anywhere as such, "in person." 4 Ipse "is" its own dispersion. tribution, dissemination, sharing of what—Ipse itself—is never present only exists singularly distributed: it is "itself," so to speak, the originary displural: singuli, "one by one," is a word that only exists in the plural. Ipselty ticing singularities, of practicing what only gives or exposes itself in the not a matter of pitting one identity against another. It's a matter of pracas conditions that certain totalitarianisms were possible. But it's precisely and it's (perhaps) because classes were configured as identities rather than wanting to know anything about classes, we end up disavowing the most a Sicilian "of the people" with a Pole of the same "people," an aristocrat from Palermo with a grand-bourgeois from Lyons. As a result of no longer class Sicilian? Perhaps we'd have more chance in Chicago, say, of confusing Sicily . . .). But could we confuse a Sicilian "of the people" with an upper Sicilian for a Norwegian (even though the Normans were also mixed up in What is a people? Yes, there are ethnic traits. It's rare for us to take a

It is nothing—it's everything, even—but we still have to think this totality of dispersion, this whole. We still have to think a melee.

2

2

Mixture as such does not exist, any more than purity as such. There is neither pure mixture nor intact purity. Not only is there no such thing, but this lack is itself the law of the "there is": there would be nothing if there was anything pure and intact. Nothing "pure" exists that does not touch otherness, not because we can't help rubbing shoulders with others, as if this were simply an accidental condition, but because only touch exposes us to these limits on which identities or ipseities can sort things out pother, from the midst of all the others. There is neither the simply mixed nor the simply identical; what there is is the always-incessant mix-up of one with the other.

The melee is not accidental; it's originary. It is not contingent; it's necessary. It is not; it always happens.

Melee of Ares and melee of Aphrodite, melee of these melees: blows and embraces, assaults and truces, rivalry and desire, supplication and defance, dialogue and dispute, fear and pity, and laughter as well. And melee of Hermes, melee of messages and conduits, bifurcations, substitutions, competition between codes, configurations of spaces, borders made to cross, so that crossing becomes sharing, because there's identity only when shared, divided, mixed, distinguished, cut off, common, substitutable, unsubstitutable, withdrawn, exposed.

Why is the "passport photo," the photo most oriented toward identity, the most colorless of all photos? Why is it always the worst likeness? Equally, why are ten passport photos of the same person always so different from one another? When does someone resemble him- or herself? When the photos show what it is about him or her that is more than identifiable, more than the "face," the "image," the "traits," or the "portrait" insofar as they are functions of the diacritical marks of an "identity" ("black hair, blue eyes, pug-nosed, etc."), and when these give rise to an interminable melee, peoples, parents, kinds of work, pains, pleasures, refusals, oblivions, wrong paths, expectations, dreams, stories, and all that shakes and rattles at the gates of the image. Nothing imaginary, nothing but the real: the real is the real of the melee. A true passport photo, a true "photo of identity," would be an indefinite melee of photos and graphics that would resemble nothing and beneath which the proper name would be inscribed as a caption.

This caption would have to be read, decoded, and narrated—but it wouldn't be a myth: that is precisely to say, it wouldn't confer an identity upon the *ipse* or upon someone for whom it would be the *legendum est*, the "this is to be read." What is to be read is what has been written. Myth isn't written: it's projected and proffered, pure flourish or upsurge, without trace, without history. Not only does myth identify, but, above all, it identifies itself: it is the infinite presupposition of its identifies itself: it is the infinite presupposition of its identifies itself: it anythic mode, I may have already said in these names more than all that can be said about them—and we can never say anything legitimate about them that would not have been authenticated in them in advance. Only the voice of France can utter what is French. Myth is sense that is its own subject, the proper name as the idiosemy of an idiolect.

But what is written and what is there to be read is something that doesn't precede its own tracing; it is the melee of the traces of a sense that gets lost as it seeks itself and invents itself. Only today I read that Sarajeve is a city made up of at least three cities, both successive and simultaneous I read that Bosna-Saray is mixed together with Milijacka and with Ilidza

Translated by Steven Miller



Responding to Existence

culture; for television programs; for public support of poetry; for poetry In space or time, limited neither by imputing subjects nor by fields of apsurely from the standpoint of responsibility that things are least deterour own existence, for beings as a whole. But which we? We, each one of and writers tell us-for being, for God, for the law, for death, for birth, for tory; we are responsible—so we tell ourselves, and so, in any case, thinkers cides; for the history of the West, now spread to the entire world, at least with or without support; for the memory and the explanation of all genospread of AIDS; for the return of scurvy; for the invention of marine agrimoreover, that faces no one but ourselves. Plication, this is, again and above all, our responsibility, a responsibility, knowing or thinking what is meant by a responsibility limited by nothing and the problems or aporias that follow from it, is our responsibility. As for minable); but also we, all of us, insofar as we know what it is to be-together us, insofar as we know where the individual begins and ends (and it is thing that could possibly be said to concern action or morals, nature or hisin Deleuze's sense when he says that "we are not responsible for the victims the transformation of the objects of African rituals into art curios; for the Bosnia-Herzegovina; for the juridical problems posed by the Internet; for probe that passes outside the solar system; for the fragile constitution of (and here again responsibility makes choice into a problem). Knowing this but responsible before them." Ultimately, we are responsible for every-For what are we responsible? For the possible effects of the space

This isn't a caricature. If it initially seems like one, that is because it is hard for us to focus on a situation from which we can't take a distance and that, from every side, represents the self-consciousness of our times. Once there's nothing—no power, no index of sense or nonsense—that could be said to be in charge of a destiny (taken here in the broadest sense of the term: story, lot, providence, destination, etc.), once there is no authority that could measure responsibility for us, divide it into circumscribed parts and define its scope, then there is nothing that could be sheltered from a responsibility that slowly becomes identical to existence itself. Or, perhaps a little more accurately: if the word destiny still makes sense, however we choose to understand this (as tragedy or progress, salvation or catastrophe, liberation or errancy, moira, anankē, vocation, envoi), it will always be as responsibility. A measureless responsibility is only the measure of a destiny that defies all the dimensions of destiny itself.

At such an extreme, does the word "responsibility" still mean anything? Of course, a measureless responsibility is quite prepared to dissolve all actual responsibility by deferring it from one subject to the next ad infinitum and by drowning obligation in an absolute and ungraspable equation of freedom and necessity. A double ideology of general responsibility thus emerges: on the one hand, the responsibility of progressively greater collective authorities: organizations, States, markets, networks, systems; on the other, the progressively more open responsibility of the individual, who is required to take charge of his or her own life, his or her own work leisure, environment, relations, and, since one thing leads to the next, the entire interdependence of systems themselves. On the one hand, it calls for connections without either interruption or end; on the other, it calls for effective solidarities between subjects who are themselves supposed to be absolute persons of reason and right. Ultimately, these two sides cover each other and dissolve into one another. The responsible subject escapes and is still at large.

In this regard, there can be no doubt that the moral, juridical, and political task is always going to be that of determining—in legislation, in evaluation, in the instruction of cases—what it is that will allow us prudently to determine (in the old and strongest sense of the word "prudence," which, in fact, paves the way for the sense of the word "responsibility") the measure of an imputable responsibility. And yet, like a mounting responsibility whose charge is neither given nor programmed this means that the "reasonable" and the "acceptable" can be only mediocre

and even labile means. If we were able to distinguish between essences, we might say that, in a world of guilt, relation to the law is fixed and given, whereas in a world of responsibility, the subject's engagement precedes and exceeds the law. (Between them, we might situate the Christian world of sin, in which it is the sinner who is first accused rather than the crime itself.) This is also why the exercise of responsibility can be rewarded and honored as well as punished according to its outcome; in the same way, I can make myself responsible for something for which no other authority can charge me.

Without there being any legislator to give us an a priori measure, if it falls thus to us to take responsibility for measuring responsibilities and for discerning responsible persons as well as their obligations and engagements, then our self-consciousness of our times wouldn't grasp in vain at a disturbing excess of responsibility that can equally lead toward the anguish of irresponsible gaiety. We call responsible any being capable of promising: thus Nietzsche, who was doubtless the first to speak of a total responsibility, of a humanity boundlessly responsible to itself and to the world.² Humanity becomes thus the promise of itself. And this, perhaps, is modern history and its worlding: not simply being given, any more than being simply promised or given over by someone to someone else, but being a promise of the self such that the "self" ends up being confused with this promise and is bound thus to answer the anticipation of an infinite law—"to stand security for one's own future," Nietzsche says.³ Surely this is our truth; strange, provocative, incisive, like all truth.

Now, it's not by chance that Nietzsche calls the subject of this responsibility "the philosopher." He writes: "The philosopher as we understand him, we free spirits—, as the man of the most comprehensive responsibility who bears the burden of the over-all development of mankind." We can read this phrase in one of two ways. We can understand it as basically "totalitarian" and thus suppose that the "philosopher" is a distinct—individual or collective—figure, the messenger of a vision of humanity upon which he undertakes to model humanity. But we can also read it as saying that what is named or, rather, denoted here by "the philosopher" isn't a figure living out a fantasy but is defined only by this measureless responsibility that is itself the responsibility of man insofar as he is determined not as man but, as Nietzsche says immediately afterward, as the "as yet undetermined animal." "Philosophy" means, therefore, neither knowledge nor belief, but responsibility for what is neither knowledge

nor revelation, for what is not available, for what does not even have concept or signification.

In this way, Nietszsche's phrases punctuate what must surely be seen as one of the most powerful traditions of modern philosophy, if not its tradition par excellence or its first virtue: it places at the apex or end of thought the act of commitment to an unconditional demand, a demand that doesn't come to it from outside itself or from outside thinking thought as the thinking of humanity in the double sense of the genitive. In fact, this was already present in the sense that Kant gave to the notion of freedom and, with it, to a responsibility in which the subject—the "intelligible person"—is confronted in itself as if by a "holy being" and sees "all our duties" as divine commands. These very duties, however, are properly without end; they are the duty to treat humanity—defined not by any given rationality or any nature but as the being of ends alone—as an end in itself. Kant's conception of humanity, to which we are all heirs, lies in being responsible for oneself as an infinite end.

ourselves responsible for the world as if it were our own creation"), Blancite just one remark that is perhaps emblematic in this regard: "to make a reliable witness). Finally, and as we know only too well, responsibility has would be plenty to say about the importance of the general and generalized ontological being-in-debt is founded upon the ontic model of responsibilsibility"),7 in Bruno Bauch or Nicolaï Hartmann, in Heidegger (for whom only in engaging and deciding for itself), in Schopenhauer, in Kierkegaard, chot, Adorno, Bloch, Levinas, Hans Jonas, or Derrida. had a continuous hold right up to our own time, whether in Sartre (let me tory, or fatality—a discussion to which Valéry's reflections, for example, are in an intimate and complex discussion around the motifs of destiny, hisdresses the possibility of what he calls the philosophy of "absolute responin Marx, in Husserl (who, in his marginal notes to Being and Time, adand modulated in Hegel (for whom Reason is nothing given and consists just after the Great War, and about the way in which this thinking engages thinking about responsibility that took place in the twenties and thirties ity).8 (Allow me to break off at this point in order to point out that there Were there more space we could show how this thought is deployed

The common thread that ties together such disparate names is itself woven into two separate strands: first, there is the prevalent motif of responsibility, of being or existence ultimately defined by responsibility; second, there is the motif that philosophy or thinking is itself both responsibility.

of these two motifs in order to refine the observations opened up by Nietz-sche. Not only has responsibility become a principle theme in modernity and, moreover, an ontological theme at that; not only has it become a history, for nature and culture, for God himself); more than all this, philosophy, which thinks this limitless responsibility, has come to see itself as the exercise of a sort of archi-responsibility. In other words, thinking isn't initially or only given in the form, the tone, or the style of knowledge or in a particular "conception of the world," but has been shown to be an engagement and a promise (a "prophecy" in Bloch's sense of the term). As a result, thinking has changed its tone, its style of writing; it ensures that what is at stake in and for it isn't just a representation or an interpretation but itself. In linguistic terms: this thinking is already the performative of the responsibility that it wants to think.

One response to this is to say that this was always philosophy's pretense and that, in fact, philosophy wouldn't know how to do without it. But once philosophy declares and "performs" or demonstrates itself to be responsible and absolutely responsible, it commits itself to sense and thus to a sense that is still to come, to sense's future, rather than merely describing or delivering sense as if it were already in place. Philosophy in this sense exposes rather than proposes; more accurately, its propositions (its meaning or its truth) are indissociable from the exposition through which it commits itself, promises itself, and risks itself.

This doesn't mean, then, that thinking is simply responsible. Rather, it is a thinking for which responsibility constitutes both the content and the act (or, drawing, tongue in cheek, on a more Husserlian vocabulary: noema and noesis). This thinking can only think in terms of responsible engagement: far from thinking denoting a disengagement from latent meaning, it denotes an opening onto a possible sense, a sense that isn't given but promised or guaranteed as something that is to come—"to come" not in the sense of something that will "definitely be there tomorrow" but, on the contrary, in the sense of something risked in the manner of the unknown and unforeseeable character of what is still to come. In short, the only thing that is assured is the risk; but the language of certainties is of little use here, and doesn't mean that the risk is covered over. It means that it is open.

Once again, however: what this thought commits to and takes re-

sponsibility for is responsibility itself, the content of a "responsibility principle." Redoubling, mise en abyme, or infinite regress, perhaps, but it is to this that thinking commits itself; essentially, it is a matter of being responsible, of being absolutely responsible, of a responsibility without limits, of a responsibility that is nothing less than being itself, a responsibility for beings as a whole or for God (Jonas) or one for the other (Levinas), for the infinite or the absolute, for truth, for its eternity and the present of its

The question arises once more: For what is there responsibility?—a question that is now sharpened or disturbed by the insistent, obsessive testimony that philosophy bears, a testimony that is necessary regardless of whether we disqualify it as ideology, as the illusion of the temporary substitution of a real failure and a deception of action, or approach it head on in order to understand it.

In what does absolute responsibility consist, therefore—whether as a responsibility to responsibility itself or as a responsibility for responsibility? In what does pure responsibility consist, responsibility that is responsible for nothing definite and that is faced with itself alone, but faced with itself as if it were faced with every other and as if it were faced in another direction entirely, facing a subject of responsibility defined only by an analogon of holiness, for whom, still according to Kant, this analogical character is precisely what removes all positivity, all determination? Yes, it is described in terms of holiness, but this holiness is without paradise or beatitude, without glory, without grace, without virtue.

What we have to do, therefore, is think this responsibility as nothing other than the responsibility of sense. But sense is still, is always, what responds to a responsibility. By this I mean that while we are absolutely responsible for sense, while sense (or truth; in this instance I'd be prepared to run them together) is that for which we are responsible, sense isn't just one more thing for which we can be responsible (like the management of a job, the solidity of a wall, health, happiness, or someone's life). Sense is not in itself independent of the responsibility of sense. It only gives itself to a being that is in a position to answer for it. Every act of language, every exchange of signs, consists in the anticipation of sense, the promise or guarantee that what ought to come from the other alone and be or make sense

only in, for, and by him will actually reach the other—as well as the other in me. As such, it's not that I grant sense because I already possess it. It's not that I draw on a secure reserve of sense that I simply then transmit. Rather, I promise, I anticipate a sense that is not yet there and will, in fact, never be there as something completed and presentable, a sense that is always in and according to the other, making sense only by being exposed to the other, to the risk of not making sense, to the always certain risk of changing the sense of the other and so of always being other, always being altered, always being outside, being by itself, as sense, a being-infinitely-for-of-the-other.

Without this infinity, there is no sense; as such, it is nothing less than an unreserved responsibility for this infinity. Absolute responsibility came to us with the absolute infinity of grounds and ends, with the moral law and the starry sky, with the death of God and the birth of the world, that is to say, with existence submitted to our absolute responsibility. Nothing else counts, nothing else is seriously at stake, above all not those values, virtues, and supplements of the soul that some have made a profession of spouting and that have no sense outside the absolute break with all received horizons.

other way in which sense is punctuated by the truth of its referral to the available (whether it takes the form of the life of a child or of a just soci-^{lagion} or its own transcendent excess. movement of expansion or flight—or, if you prefer, its own imminent con-^{0ther} and of its absence of certainty. Sense is only guaranteed by its own tice, one that is not present—this is the moment of dying, which is yet anety), it still has to have another reason beyond it, beyond even life or jussupposing that this happens, when such a reason is given, deposited and alized, the event faded, then sense—their own sense—moves along again, ture has become present, once the encounter has taken place, the work resense, in truth: a future, an encounter, a work, an event; and once the fuall the references [renvois] of the sign. What makes sense is always beyond tion, which takes every possible means [voies] of exchange, and plays with back and fixes it, is sense: a sense that has neither direction nor significame and hence in all others, assuming that nothing holds this proliferation much the same—the aspect of the other that continually precedes itself in passing beyond and elsewhere. When we're given a reason to live, always What continually precedes itself in another or-and the two are

Sense, then, has the same structure as responsibility: it is engage-

ment, oath. Spondere is to engage by a ritualized oath. 10 To one's sponsio, the other's re-sponsio responds. The response is first of all a re-engagement—an engagement in return for what engaged us or what engaged itself for us: the world, existence, others. It is a guaranteed exchange without any guarantee of making sense. It is a mutual pledge to truthfulness without which neither speech nor expression [regard] would be possible. So, when one answers for, one also responds to—to a call, to an invitation, to a question or to a defiance of sense. And when one responds to, one answers for—for the sense that is promised or guaranteed. If I'm asked the time, I guarantee the unassureable infinity of these words. What we usually call a "response" is a solution; here, though, it is a matter of the referral or the return [renvoi] of the promise or the engagement. Sense is the engagement between several beings, and truth always, inevitably, lies in this between or in this with.

This is our responsibility: it isn't a task assigned to us, but an assignment that constitutes our being. We exist as this responsibility; that is, to use Heidegger's term, we ek-sist, we are exposed to one another and together to world, to the world that is nothing other than this exposition itself. Existence is responsibility for existence. To which we should immediately add: we can substitute the difficult word "democracy," but the logic is the same.

This responsibility is as empty as it is absolute. This emptiness is its truth: the opening of sense. This emptiness is everything, therefore, everything except nothingness in the sense that nihilism understands it. Nihilism affirms that there is no sense, that the heavens of sense are empty. In a sense, absolute responsibility says the same thing: that there is no given (present, available, configured, attested, deposited, assured) sense, that sense can never be given. It says that existence is engaged in this absence of the given in order to give sense every chance—indeed, perhaps sense is made up of nothing but chances.

There is a measureless responsibility because there is, on the one hand, an unlimited interdependence of humans, of things, of nature and history, of information and decision, and, on the other hand, an imputing subject who is nothing other than each and every one of us together, and

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in each and every one of us an indefinite number of instances, degrees, stages, and connections. We might well go along with Derrida, therefore, in saying that "consciousness of a limited responsibility is a 'good conscience'" is the negation of conscience. The responsibility of the "intelligible person" has boiled down to the responsibility of the world. The world is responsible for itself. Better still: the world—or the world is constituted thus by a promise-of-self, by an anticipation of its being and its world-truth. Here, however, anticipation does not mean forecasting or predicting a future. Yes, it involves foresight, but it assures no providence. It signals that the world precedes itself, passes beyond itself, transcends or transgresses itself in a sense-of-the-world that is its truth. This movement beyond the self toward the other, this excess of the other in the self, is both sense and responsibility. Each in the other and each for the other: this is what we call thinking.

Thinking, though, not in the sense of a reserved exercise or a philosophical discipline, but in the sense of the responsible *praxis* of sense. Thinking in the sense of its becoming the oath of truth, the engagement, the pledge and the putting into play of the response to what never ceases to call, to "interpellate," as they say today, calling the subject of sense that everyone is. Indeed, each one of us is this subject to such an extent that each one of us is it infinitely, absolutely, well beyond or before all egoism, all individual personality or community.

Hence, too, existence realizes that it is responsible "to the point of irresponsibility," as Blanchot was to say of Bataille, or as Adorno similarly said of art. 12 It knows that what it responds to is, in the end, the absence of response, and thus a total freedom and dispersion of responses. We have to be able to engage ourselves to the point of play and gaiety, of promising intoxication or of no longer promising anything.

We are responsible for sense, since sense is not the response of a signification that would saturate the announcement, the sending or the gift of sense, thereby bringing our responsibility to an end. This is why Ernst Tugendhat, for example, can define responsibility in community by calling into question what it is that defines the idea of the "good life" as an "appropriation (of this idea) on the model of the question of truth" or on the model according to which "the perspective of the good is offered to us in the knowledge of nonknowledge."¹³

What's more, we can be fairly certain that no final signification—

God or Humanity, Knowledge or Justice, Power or Happiness—ever genuinely had as its function the abolition of the infinity of sense and the absoluteness of (ir)responsibility. What confronts us today is precisely the formal knowledge—the knowledge of nonknowledge, even—of the fact that every supreme signification always signifies, beyond itself, the responsibility for an ultimate irresponsibility of sense. In the last instance, we are accountants of the measureless, and this requires that we be able to bear and to settle, precisely and prudently, the absence of every given response and the eternal return of this silence in response. Existing requires nothing

This is the most rigorous and most severe of demands. It is the very place of rigor, logic, ethics, poetics, the place of responsibility that thought is: to resist being seized by a captation of sense, to resist identifying it, assigning it, or embodying it, figuring it or reifying it by turning it into doctrine or intellectual traffic. But to do so while ceaselessly and endlessly taking up the engagement, reengaging it beyond any possible certainty, to take the disproportionate risk, and to make of it our ownmost measure. Equally, and for the same reasons, to abdicate the serious pose and the pedantic precautions of those who would give lessons about responsibility.

Existence and democracy—if these words didn't have to denote the dull horizon of acquired certainties—democratic existence is neither a given, nor a matter of regime, nor an armature of rights. It is an equal and necessary sharing of thought as the absolute responsibility of sense.

And yet—as I hope I have made clear—it's not enough simply to name sense and then leave it to its indetermination, as if it were some sort of magic word. And this, even less than the word, which should serve me again today, is already visibly abandoned to usury or to inflation. "Sense it should again be said, is not an available or constructable entity, any more than it is the more or less illusory fulfillment of its pure intention. Sense is what makes one return to the other and what therefore makes it so that there is one with the other. This is why it is always of the order of response not the response to the question, which closes research or relieves the demand, but the response to the address. One always addresses the truth in me—and I always return the address to the truth in the other. It is often said that philosophy only poses questions. I would say that today it has to think only of the response: not a response-solution or a response-verdict, but a co-respondence. In such co-respondence—which defines our co-responsibility—there must be something that does not close the exchange sponsibility—there must be something that does not close the exchange

but, on the contrary, institutes and relaunches it. There must be voices, timbres, and singular modes. These voices are in themselves, in their co-respondance, the creation of sense. Democratic responsibility is responsibility for such a creation. But immediately and from the outset, this means that democracy itself is not something given, an available sense. It is responsible precisely for what is not given: the *demos*, the people, the ones with the others.

Translated by Sara Guyer

5

Changing of the World

During the sixth decade of the twentieth century—the twentieth of these centuries counted up in the computer of a culture that they will soon overflow—a form of civilization, and thus a figure of existence, began to show the marks, the fissures, the inclinations of its disappearance, and so also the marks, fissures, inclinations of its metamorphosis into another configuration.

Not a "crisis," then, as was said for decades and as is sometimes still said today (decades later, while the displacement continues on its way, interminable and always barely perceptible, like all transformations that one day show that they have divided history into large, heterogeneous blocks). A crisis appears to a continuum that it affects and that it perhaps deforms or reforms, all the while keeping it as its point of reference. On the other hand, the metamorphosis (the rupture) of figures of existence takes place in a discontinuity of histories and in the incommensurability of their worlds, for which there is no point of reference. But the breach is at once so slow and proliferates so widely that it is only perceptible from afar, once it has been completed.

In fact, today, since the "sixties," we have been engaged in an analogous passage from one "age" to another. The twofold difference between these ages lies in the fact that, on the one hand, there is no Christianity (no eschatological resource) and, on the other, we now know that the course of history is continually broken up by the mortality of civilizations. No more

than our distant ancestors, however, do we have the benefit of a vantage point from which we could see the fault opening beneath our feet, the shifts that are under way, or what it is that either makes the leap or is engulfed by it as it widens. Regardless of whether it's a matter of someone who has lived an entire lifetime or a matter of the generations that hand down memories, no aspect of the upheaval can be given a form or the reasons for it be provided.

Yet we are talking about major ruptures that affect everyone, every generation, and all their images, languages, ways of life. From one moment to the next, this opens in us, allowing us to see this vast drift [dérive] of the world. From one moment to the next, we find ourselves sensibly and physically outside ourselves, outside the blind slipping away of our little stretch of time. We see the night that borders our time, and we touch on some aspect of it—not the future, but the coming of something or someone: the coming of something that is already of us and of the world, but that has to come from somewhere else, displaced elsewhere into an unimaginable elsewhere.

Perhaps it is an ability to touch, in the darkness, this coming elsewhere, this breaching of time, of space, and of all orientation, that will have defined a character trait specific to modernity. Modernity knows itself to be exposed (this is both a threat *and* a desire) to what is not itself and is not there, but is nonetheless very close or continually approaching.

Exposed: turned toward, yes, but without thereby having either a specific course or a guide, perhaps without even an awaiting, but in a situation that verges on exceeding both waiting and nostalgia. Finally, despite everything, an inclination to be and to practice this riven (gaping? open? offered?) present. Neither comic nor tragic, this inclination could better be thought as an active abandonment, an engagement fixed on the impossible, that is, on the infinite possibility (the impossibility of saturating a signifying order) that lies at the heart of what has been thought under the name "finitude," a thought that has followed various paths between the stitches or folds of the "sixties."

(Of course, the division between decades doesn't have the same analytic relevance as the division between single years or centuries. It "fixes ideas," as it were, at a point at which nothing is fixed. But this kind of periodization, abusive as it is and overused as it has become—doubtless having become so since the "sixties" themselves, a term that, we should note, is an American one—indicates a stake and a concern, that of getting some

hold on a passage or a rupture whose event, while sensible, gives a poor account of itself when marked as an evidential point: "1968," for example,)

So what, then, is at stake in this new and barely discernible present? It is a matter of the retreat of accomplishment, its model, its horizon, its normativity. It is a matter of thinking otherwise, elsewhere, from a different side; not in opposition to accomplishment, though, not in terms of a dissatisfaction and a lack, but in terms of a displacement as regards the opposition between what is lacking and what is accomplished.

Accomplishment has started to retreat from its values of completeness, of fulfillment and satisfied identification. The subject of accomplishment—although it would probably be more accurate to say the subject of practice, of carrying out or effectuation—is no longer the subject (of history, of knowledge, of humanity) that accomplishes itself in a return to itself. This subject has begun to shift, eroding its return-to-itself (its propriety, its authenticity, its purity) with a strangeness that is far closer to it than any being-self or any being-to-itself. The age-old saying "become what you are" has changed: "be what you are becoming," and be so to the very infinity of your possibilities, without any final consecration.

Hegemonic enterprises (the clash of powers) have turned into totalizing operations (absorption and exhaustion under a schema). One after another, these operations have killed off in their horror every destinal figure, every final representation: those of peoples, of a people, of the people, of humanity, even. The kingdom of ends has ended by been worn down. But it was only during the sixties that we could actually begin to discern the first traits of another space and the beginnings of another, unprecedented, sovereignty.

In fact, it was the so-called world wars—along with the as yet uninterrupted chain of postcolonial wars that followed in their wake—that opened up the possibility of the market becoming truly global; suddenly it seemed as though there was no more man, no more history, no more world spirit. True, capital, released from the old forms that had shackled it, has developed a terrifying autonomy and autotelism. At the same time, however, it reaches an extreme point where it is no longer opposed to or justified by anything; such is the double bind that slowly, quietly, gets tighter and tighter as we still profess our belief, here in socialism, there in humanism...

The market consumes itself. It becomes like the pure machine of the pure subject: the return to self of the most abstract identity, of a general equivalence that amounts to nothing but its own equivalence (to the averred nothingness of values). One way or another, the market will soon have no choice but to find a way out of this stranglehold or else go into convulsions.

The years of the "sixties" didn't see all this, but they did have some inkling of the progressive, insidious erosion of the checks on and justifications of capital. A fault in history opens up and widens, therefore: a suspension of sense.

Sense was assured by the distinction between different equivalencies (commercial, technological, democratic) and absolute value (humanity, dignity, community), itself articulated as the active relation between the progression of a history and its culmination in an end (knowledge, justice, nature). But this distinction has given way to a general circulation, a simple distinction between places or moments; this no longer seems to make sense, providing instead a combination or exchange of roles. Imperceptibly the category of "some day" has lost its appeal. The present appears devoid of either tradition or future; it has become an unheard-of enigma.

A general malaise, a paralysis, if you like, has taken hold of discourse. In a very short space of time, the same texts and the same theses that once inspired hope that the world might be made anew, discourses of resistance and renaissance always bound up, more or less openly, with the demand for revolution (itself understood as accomplishment), have shown their irrelevance. In this context, we would need to write the history of discourses on "alienation" and the difficulties into which they fell; more generally, though, what has been shown to be false is every thinking of propriety, the proper, the pure, the originary, or the authentic, whether these be individual or collective, whether they concern "sense," "nature," or "history." There are those who feel that these discourses did indeed make it through the war, but it was the war that cut into them, punctured them, put them beyond use.

It is not that the "war" (and everything that the word might denote in this context) was simply a ruinous crisis. The war, which was actually something very different from a war (this, at least, is one sense of the epithet "world" war), was already a kind of response to an upheaval from out

For the moment, though, none of this is available to us, except as a sort of profound discomfort. Somewhere, discourse shattered, but it's hard to say exactly where. And it's not as if we have another discourse to fall back on. For a long time yet we will have to extend ourselves in the search for discourses that might supplement the one we have, relay it, start it over. And while this is going on, the nature of the rift is only going to become more evident. We have no other discourse; all we know is that something has been interrupted, broken down at the heart of discourses that, once cherished, have now become untenable (philosophies of history, moral philosophies, and even philosophies, literatures, and poetries as a whole). We have no other discourse because it is undoubtedly—we're just beginning to sense this—the general function of discourse itself that's at stake here: sense's distinction is coming to an end. It is as if all possible sense had been produced and, ultimately, "sense" itself turned out to be a crazed machine and the demand for it a senseless one.

Speech has been severed from speech, and speech now cuts short what it says. Language has begun to speak through and about the interruption of discourse. It's not a matter of a silence, however, since silence, along with its potential for mysticism or wisdom, has remained upstream from the interruption. Rather, it is a matter of another regime of speech, another concern, another way of working speech. Speech becomes difficult and withheld; it can no longer trust in the accomplishment of sense. It learns another confidence, one that it sets within its trajectory, its tracing another way of being delivered over.

If language has become, in recent years, an object of an interest that is powerful and polymorphous (perverse, say those who refuse to understand), this is because it needs now to be received naked, the prestige of sense stripped away, and put back to work, to invention. There needs to be a meticulous decomposition of the effects and articulations of language; bit by bit, other voices need to be heard, addressed differently and with different rhythms. No longer a differential of sense but a differential of voice, therefore: something about song renders discourse asunder (breath, modulation, rhythmic transport of words, throat noise). At the same time, however, something strangles song.

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By the same token, things emerge in a new light, in a region of presence that signification can no longer reach. All questions regarding presence (or the world) are transformed and begin to slip outside the remit of questioning (what is it? who is it? whence? why?) and to attain a new kind of assertion (given, withheld, withdrawn, touched). Such questions slip outside the remit of intention and interpretation, entering into another truth, flagrant, evanescent, pointed, suspended. This truth is no longer the truth of objects of knowledge—these take up precise places, ever better planned and articulated, in constant circulation—but the fantastic effect of Science suppresses itself. Knowledge shows itself to be endless, since it's no longer itself an end, an exponential development of proliferating technologies.

There is an unprecedented load of the real: things, matters, supports, skins, grains, and fibers. Art is displaced, therefore; it stops seeking out new forms and instead transforms itself and, imperceptibly, transports itself outside its site. Its horizon is no longer that of transfiguration, therefore, but of a patient practice this side of figures, flush against surfaces, bodies, clays, pulps, beats, or rhythms, in the very place where objects become strange, where the world is emptied, decomposed, or recomposed through and through.

It is no longer a matter of the composition of forms but a matter of touching on grounds, ploughing them, scratching them, pinching them, piercing them, moving thus to the far side of accomplishment, into beginnings, nascent states, alongside unfettered energies and unleashed tensions, the breaks and tremors of origins.

What is happening is that the immense coexistence of things and People, of beings (in short, the world), has begun to pull away from the representation of a destiny (from an arrangement, an Idea, a kingdom of ends), has started to matter in and of itself, to refer to and to network with itself, in short, it has started to comprise a co-existence. The sense of the world no longer lies outside of it; in it, it is its proximity and its strangeness, each one infinite.

This is why, in 1968, the politics of destination—of the model, of Project or accomplishment, and might that not also be politics as a whole (or the politics of the "theologico-political"), if it's true that we have no

other conception of it—first came to an end. The generalized "democracy" that has gone hand in hand with the generalization of the market is not another political figure; it's the retreat of the political.

Whence the composite and contradictory character of a conjunction that mixes a crisis of democratic or market growth and a properly unprecedented retreat of schemas, discourses, ideals. "May '68" was neither a revolt, nor a reform, nor a revolution, although it borrowed fromor had something about—all three, yet in that respect was nothing new. The novelty came from the fact that each one of the three neutralized the others and that nothing really came of it. What actually took place (and went mostly unnoticed) was the retreat of various modes of political organization and signification. Whence, at the very moment of the events themselves, an entirely different notion of being-together. That is what was properly unprecedented and blinding. That was what made "1968" an event.

"Retreat" doesn't mean "abolition." On the contrary, it means to retrace, to pick up the traces by way of an effacement of signs and directions. The retreat retires behind forms, cuts into the grounds, the dark exterior and the palimpsest of rebeginnings.

The co-existence of the world (not "in" the world, since the world isn't a container but the extension of co-existence itself), devoid of any given composition, system, synthesis, or final assumption, is what has to be

The culture that's coming to an end is one that thought the coherence of the world, its congruence, or its conformity with an order, a plan, a principle, or an end (immanent, transcendent, both immanent and transcendent). The culture in the offing has the job of co-existence, a co-existence that's bound neither to conformity nor to accomplishing itself. It consists in co-presence alone. And co-presence doesn't just refer to itself; it refers to everyone and to no one, the circulation of a sense that nothing either retains or saturates, a circulation found in the movement between places and beings, between all places and all beings, the infinite circulation of a sense that will end up having its entire sense in this with.

Granted, sense has never before welled up here and now rather than further away and later on, at a remove. Humanity has never taken place so exactly, so properly, any more than, say, the world, "nature," and "history, given within their strict measure: without epic or apocalypse, without assumption, without transfiguration, without exhalation. Yet a sense (a truth)

as sober and as dense as the being-together of all the pieces of the world, whose proximity, whose community, it provides.

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Over thirty years later, it would be possible for us to believe that nothing actually took place except collapse and engorgement: a world slumped in upon itself, saturated with physical, economic, and spiritual devastations. A humanity that knows only that it has destroyed itself—that it has its own nonbeing and the end of the world on its hands; such is the whole of its knowledge. A century and a millennium that know that they have failed to reach their goal.

What is the "historical mission" of capital of which Marx spoke, a mission that we have ended up forgetting all about simply in order to think another mission entirely, that of another Subject of history? It seems to me that this mission can only be that of paving the way to a knowledge of a hallucinated self: the knowledge of a self that has to ruin itself in order to be itself, of a richness that can only produce its own equivalence and hence its own annihilation (and, ultimately, its strict absence of any value whatsoever).

Now this knowledge isn't false. All the same, it's merely the knowledge of what's coming to an end and so fails to measure up to what never stops coming, what is neither end nor inauguration but the peculiar simultaneity of all things, unsettling, brutal, tense, and, despite everything, distributing each one of our places, alongside one another, in its cracked, gaping, open, offered present.

Finally, though, there is a sense of joy at the fact that there's neither an accomplished destiny nor one that needs to be accomplished, no solar or nocturnal substance with which it would need to be incorporated; instead, there are numerous bodies alongside one another, numerous points between which sense is spaced, shared, and scattered. A brief, almost dry moment of joy, without ecstasy or glory but as hard and alive as a flash of existence. An uncertain joy, then: almost the laughter of the insane.

Translated by Steven Miller

Res ipsa et ultima

"Is there something?" is a question that answers itself or renders itself redundant, if you like, since someone raises the question and this someone is something. In fact, before being—if it manages to be—this enigmatic or problematic one of someone, someone is something. Quidam, res quaedam.

In any case, this "before" doesn't denote the anteriority of a bedrock or a foundation. It is the belated anteriority of a "one" turning back on itself in order to be the one that it is, to be, in fact, the one that it is supposed to be, since *one*, as such, could never be found if it did not find itself, if it did not unify and thus relate to itself.

The thing that is someone before being someone would be this self-relation. But this relation isn't given, isn't achieved or effected, since it's only in the exercise of this relation and in its being acted out that there can, by chance, be any *one*. The only thing there could be, therefore, is the acting out of a relation and not the presence of a thing: a "subject" that is not "substance" but still underlies the *itself* which, in turn, considers the things around it. The whole of philosophy from Descartes to Husserl, with the notable exceptions of Nietzsche and Spinoza (who are not philosophers of the thing, but of force), has concerned itself with these things, often tornenting itself over them, which form the backbone of the contemporary exhaustion of the modern age.

A thing that thinks—res cogitans—is nothing other than a thing that relates itself to itself. A thing whose character as a thing, whose thinghood

Res extensa, on the other hand, the extended thing, is what doesn't take place along the lines of this or, for that matter, any other relation, since all relation is ultimately a relation to and of the self: relation in general supposes that one relates, to the self or to the other. Extensa doesn't designate the quality of breadth, of surface magnitude: what is extended is what is precisely not "one" and what is "one" is precisely what is not extended, the point, say, which is what occurs at no point in space. Extension is not relation but exposure: the whole point about extension is that it is only ever exposed, put forth, turned outward without there being an inside, nowhere turned back in upon itself and hence devoid of "self."

Res cogitans, res extensa: everything hinges on the grammatical opposition of these two participle-epithets. The first is active, the second passive. One type of thing thinks (by itself, which is tautological), the other is extended by some other thing, or force, but not by itself. It has not extended itself. The thing that thinks can only think itself, no matter what it thinks, while the extended thing cannot extend itself: the extension is precisely what has exceeded the "self" in advance.

In relation or exposed are the two possible modalities of the thing in general. In relation supposes a subject that bears, that brings and that relates, because it can bear or present (to an apprehension, a perception, an intention) only if it has first related the thing to itself, only if it has appropriated it, only if it has grasped it and retained it, rendered it presentable. Exposed exclusively supposes being turned in all directions toward an exterior that is not, in turn, formed of other faces turned inward, without these faces relating in any way to the world, neither to each other or to themselves.

It remains to be seen what these two things have in common, at least in their denomination as res, as thing, which can itself be qualified thus: on the one side, as pure inside or as the infinite to-itself of relation

and, on the other, as pure exterior or as the infinite outside-itself of exposure [l'exposition].

(On the one side . . . on the other: but are there two sides to the thing? Granted, it's hard to imagine a thing without sides, but is the inside a side? It is latent, not lateral. And can the latent be lateral to the rest of laterality? Is my soul the other side of my body, but still a side, still an exposed face? Or is all this just an assembly of sides, each one opposed and exposed to the other from every direction [sens], lateral and patent as well as latent? Nothing more than folded, enfolded, and unfolded sides or nothing but one immense side spread out, turned back, over, around, away, lata rest ipsa lateus: it's this paradoxical physics and its accompanying geometry than needs to be addressed here.)

This double qualification of the *res*—whether it be the effect of a split, of a proliferation, of an outgrowth, or of a graft—gave birth to the problem of the *res*, the problem of *reality*, a problem that will undoubtedly have been the central problem of our own time (now, along with the problematic itself, moving toward exhaustion).

(Of course, and here as elsewhere, our own time has merely crystal-lized and sharpened the issues that have always bedeviled the West: sensi-ble/intelligible, matter/spirit, outside/inside, improper/proper, thing/sense, thing/event, other/self, impenetrable/impalpable, apparent/truthful, worldly/divine, image/real, and so forth. Western history is the entire history of the problematic of the real. There is nothing very surprising in its completing itself in the same way that it began, with the exacerbation of the feeling that things themselves are disappearing and simulacra taking over: this feeling, so typical of the old world, actually testifies to the ever greater hold of the real that renews itself from start to finish.)

Now, how is it that the thing can lend itself to each of these modalities? The problem can be resolved by resolving the name. Stop saying "thing" and say instead *cogitans/extensum*, relational/exposed. Stop speaking of the real, except in order to speak its loss: old nihilism. Or, and this is virtually the same thing, situate the authentic real in "spirit" and, on the side of things, see only "thingification" or "reification," ideas that reputedly mire the subject in its alienation.

Even the old nihilist himself, however, will soon have to realize that Passing in silence over the res—that is, the most general res, of which the two res would be modes, the most general of res that would also be the most real, the real itself, the real ground of the real as well as its capital [son]

In fact, it's not hard to see that there can be no "relation" without "exposure," nor, consequently, one thing without the other: how could a self not turn toward a particular face, an outside, of this same self so as to relate to itself and thus to take place? How could a self be its thing without also being its thing? How could it be its own thing [sa propre chose] without out also being properly a thing [proprement chose]? How, in short, does it realize itself?

Conversely: how could what is exposed not be exposed to this outside toward which it is directed but that is equally itself—endlessly the same outside, each one of its sides folded over and again? And how, then, could it not ultimately relate to itself? How could this "self" not end up resolving itself in this, its own reduction?

Still: how could the face that the self exposes in order to be a self not be its own outside, an outside that is nonetheless and necessarily improper to it, an other that is more fundamental to the self than the self itself, an other, then, that isn't the presupposition of the self but, more accurately, the presupposition of this very presupposition: the nonself, the surface putted with shadows devoid of all relation, the death's head pondered and handled by Hamlet or by the subject of the Vanities, the bony thing, hard and glistening, that disdainfully looks my way [qui me regarde de nul regard], a look with no regard for any presence that might face it but that dives into me as if into nothingness, relating to me in order to withdraw all relation and to expose me to my self-less self, which, in turn—a turn that is no longer my turn but the turn at which I have no more turns—is itself a glistening bone full of holes, dirt packed tight into the sockets.

Equally, however, the death's head runs the risk of distracting us from what it manifests (and it has done so throughout modern times). The way in which it is pondered and handled is equivocal, and this ambiguous fascination stems from the way in which the skull combines horror at our own disappearance (the end of all relation) with a maintaining of what disappears (the figure engaged in relation, its look and its rictus).

In this way it is still its own image that the self wants to bring before

itself from and as the outside. It finds itself starting out again; it still relates to what exposes it and to which it is exposed: the subject, then, does not end up dialectizing its death, making death its thing after all.

But death is devoid of either figure or subject. It doesn't await me at the end like another me who would still be me turning back toward myself from the abyss. Rather, death is "here" from the moment that I am "here," at once and immediately my flesh and bones, the extension of what exposes me, the res extensa that opposes the res cogitans only to the extent that it exposes it, exposes it to itself.

senseless). It, everything would remain wrapped up in itself, heaped, massed, sunken things and—thereby—the condition of possibility for all relation (without tragic, mystical, whatever. Death isn't something, but the exposure of all it does mean, though, is that we have no relation to it, whether dialectical. doesn't mean that the thought of death becomes any more bearable. What that crosses all relation and all relations (to the self, to the other). Yet this and/or redemption and resurrection. Death becomes the absolute exposure the "death of God": the end of death as punishment, as annihilation timacy that it was supposed to effect. Equally, though, it ought to denote and yet so improper, the paradox of having already liquidated the very inthis is its violent paradox, the paradox of being simultaneously so intimate uration). Neither from within nor from without does death concern a self outside of a disfigured Subject (disfigured by the very hope of its transfigand exposure of things, and so in the world, rather than in the hideous It's time to put death in its place: in things, in the general connection

There can only be relation (the return, the appropriation of a subject to itself or between subjects, it amounts to much the same thing) if we start with an absolute distancing, without which there would be no possibility of proximity, of identity or strangeness, of subjectivity or thinghood. First and foremost, however, this distancing distends relation to the point of exposition: scarcely am I born before I am outside myself at an infinite distance, outside simply turned out, exposed to the rest of the world, to all things. And the same goes for everything, each one exposing universal exposition differently.

Every thing outside all the others, every thing according to the stretching that spaces them and without which there would be just one indistinct thing gathered into the point at which it would annul itself, a thing unthinged, a de-realized *res*, a perfect, syncopated subject turned

back in on itself without its having ever reached itself, an extinct, noiseless trinket, a *one* annihilated without its being dead: every thing, then, touching every part of every other thing, touching me in the same way, piece by piece, here and there, always, from time to time, exposing the infinity of our relations.

Things: the first stone that's thrown, a sheet of paper, galaxies, the wind, my television screen, a quark, my big toe, a trapped nerve, prostheses, organs planted or grafted beneath my skin, placed or exposed inside, all things exposing themselves and exposing us, between them and between us, between them and us, together and singularly.

They do so in two ways:

2

I. On the one hand, they border me, touch me—from a distance or from any distance, it's still a touch and all senses are senses of touch, including common sense and the sense of understanding or reason—they set me up within the multiple spaces of their spacings and according to the modes of contact particular to their respective faces, their grains, their textures (rough, shiny, prickly, harsh, supple, tight, loose, vaporous, sticky...); equally, they lead me to touch in turn, in an infinite number of ways, in infinite directions, with infinite gestures, in infinite senses.

Everything that touches thus—brushing up against, penetrating, distancing, knocking into, absorbing, presenting, kicking itself, hiding away, simply leaning against—all that makes up the world. The world is nothing other than the touch of all things and wherever nothing is touching, wherever contact is severed, there is nothing; this is the absolute exposure of the world turned toward an outside that never takes place, an outside that immediately turns back to the point at which the world is exposed to the universal touch of itself alone, to the point at which its "self" is concealed, to the point that makes up its entire sense.

For that same reason the sense of the world is no different from its polymorphous spacing (attraction, repulsion, curvatures of space-time, expansion, retraction, the initial or final explosion), which itself has no other sense than the cosmic contact of all things, no other sense than this sense ing-of-itself that cannot be gathered as a whole.

There is no *self* of the world, no universal subject through which this touch could touch itself.

2. On the other hand, things expose the self, refuse to allow it to come to rest in itself and instead drag it and stretch it outside itself without ever leaving it to itself. "Self" is the universal relation of sense that runs through everything, from atom to man, from chlorophyll to plasma, from stone to iron and from grain to flesh, the relation that endlessly relates ingelfwithout ever relating anything more than what is exposed to what is exposed: the interiority of an infinite exterior.

The thing is what the res cogitans and the res extensa have in common: it is their mutual, inextricable intrication. The early Descartes was well aware of this when he attributed a quite different reality to the union of the two things, from an evidence as powerful as that of the ego (cogito), but from an evidence that is entirely ordinary and immanent to the course of things, from an evidence present on the very surface of the most everyday experience of existence; an evidence that is given without thinking. There's nothing to prove; there's nothing but the test of the real [il n'y a pas à prouver, il n'y a qu'à éprouver le réel].

The first and last real, the ground of the real and the ground of the res in all its modes, ultima res, is the identity and difference of relation and exposure: more accurately, it is this identity in its difference and this difference in its identity (and here, in obviously means outside). The two are the same, the same thing—insofar as they turn things toward one another; but they differ absolutely—have nothing in common—since relation refers to an inside and exposure to an outside. They never encounter one another; rather, they pass through one another. The fact that one moves in the other, and vice versa, doesn't change anything; they are oblivious to one another and exclude one another as they change roles.

All of which means, then, that the "inside" and the "outside" of the world, the self and the outside-the-self, subject and thing, are strangely, paradoxically even, the same: the same real that stems from nothing and no one, that comes from nowhere and goes nowhere, that rests on no ground and goes uninterpreted, that exists by the mere fact of existing, by a perfect necessity that equates to an equally perfect contingency or to the unprecedented freedom of a being that is merely the chance and the risk of an ontological surprise.

2

The thing itself, res ipsa et ultima, is not a particular thing. It is nothing.

More precisely, it is the sameness of nothing: the nothing relates to it.

More precisely, it is the sameness of nothing: the nothing relates to itself, yes, but, being precisely nothing, it is simply and immediately exposed as something, and therein lies the reason of the world—its ultima ratio—and its true creatio ex nihilo: the fact that there is something as an outcome of nothing.

By the same logic, however, the fact that there is something never appears as such: there is no such thing as "the" thing "in itself" or for itself. The thing doesn't stem from itself nor do things stem from the thing, from its essence, its origin or its substrate. Even if there is some thing, anything whatsoever, indeterminate and indifferent, then there is still nothing, since the indeterminate and the undifferentiated do not exist. (They do not exist, do not emerge from the pure nothingness that pure being in itself is,) "There is something" can only mean one thing: yes, there is something, no matter what it is, but every time that there is, this what is determined, singular, different, and hence there are already more than one of them.

If there is something, then there are some things, lots of them, whether they be shells or eyebrows, clouds or hammers: several, many, different in number as well as quality. The profusions of nature and the profusions of technology contribute to the same sort of abundance, an abundance that isn't an end.

Foam, erase, tooth, canvas, synapse, liquid crystal, tentacle, scale, plank, spume, fingernail, hail, neutron, lymph . . . and so ever indefinitely on. The time of modernity is followed by the time of things.

Translated by Steven Miller

Notes

CHAPTER I

NOTE: This essay appeared in French as "Une Pensée finie," in Jean-Luc Nancy, Une Pensée finie (Paris: Galilée, 1990), 9–53.

- 1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in *Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 3: §357. Henceforth cited as KSA, followed by volume and page number. Translated by Josefine Nauckhoff as *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 2. Martin Heidegger, "Davoser Disputation zwischen Ernst Cassirer und Martin Heidegger," in Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik, Gesamtausgabe 3 (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), 295–96; translated by Richard Taft as Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 185. Henceforth cited as KPM, followed by page numbers of the German and English versions.
- 3. I should like to reproduce here some lines previously published in *Lettre internationale 24* (spring 1990), in response to the events of that year in Europe. They were originally entitled "To be continued"—and I continue them here.

No one is taken in. This is not just a crisis, or even an end of "ideologies." It is a generalized debacle of sense. "Sense" must be understood in all its senses: the sense [direction] of history, the sense [feeling] of community, the sense [direction] of peoples and nations, the sense [meaning] of existence, the sense of any transcendence or immanence whatsoever. And that's not all: it is not just the contents of sense, the meanings—all our meanings—that are now invalidated. Rather, a strange black hole is growing at the very site of the formation, birth, or donation of sense. It is as if, in the dissolution of this originary power of making or receiving sense whose many figures make up, along the way to ourselves, the history of the modern Subject (the subject of philosophy, of politics, of history, of practice, of faith, of communication, of art), a world, or worlds, or pieces of worlds, were emerg-

The "West" can no longer receive the collapsing "East." ing, with no one there to receive, perceive, or conceive them as a "world,"

the formula bears the burden of an irreparable disaster. selves. "Every action aims toward the shared dwelling-place of a kingdom of appear things that proliferate without being the objects of any consciousfreedom": such were our maxims, in shorthand form. But now each word of ness, as there appear wandering "selves" with no conscious relation to them-"consciousness of self": that was our thinking in shorthand form, but now "Consciousness is always consciousness of something," being first of all

marched in the streets of Pretoria. But everyone also, without saying so out pickax at the Berlin Wall is understandable and broadly shared. And liketo them. To be sure, the enthusiasm of those who were able to swing a in a minor key, anxious not to lose the last pale vestiges of sense that cling alism," "humanism," "dialogue," "investing in people," "open socialism," grossly upon the situation to bring out their intellectual merchandise, which Discretion is advised, or else no one admits the right, or the power, of being loud, understands and shares the discretion that follows such moments. wise for those who threw out Marcos, and now Ceaucescu, and those who "democracy" are words that even their users pronounce only with prudence, really is nothing but merchandise, with an expiration date long past: "liber-No one is taken in. In the event, the best witnesses are those who seize

everyone is careful to avoid saying this: that all our finalities are intrinsically sense, or, if it is better to use a more classical, more sharply etched language, creetly, go unmentioned. related to patterns of transcendence or immanence of sense that now, disand obligatory diet of our thinking (and a sort of shorthand for it). But in terms of "goals" (of "horizons," of "futures"), since such is the ordinary aestheticism or neo-ethics are most discreet. To be sure, they speak endlessly topic on which the "beautiful souls" of neo-liberalism, neo-democracy, neothe problem of aims—of ends, of finality in general. Finality is the one Being indiscreet would mean only one thing: raising the problem of

rary intelligence is stubbornly dedicated to this deceptive maneuver. but as the question of the very idea of an "end." A fair share of contempoof ends is henceforth completely in play, exhibited unreservedly before us. and not only, nor even primarily, in the form of the question "Which ends?" Capitulation or avoidance are the responses to this fact: that the question

years of thinking has yet to be written. But the neo-liberal, neo-socialist consensus obstinately turns away from the task . . . (to be continued). Not that the question has failed to be raised. The exact history of thirty

Heidegger seems here to remain caught in a relativistic conception of "finite think" ing," which would remain simply one "possibility" among many, unable to claim 4. KPM 236 / 161. The immediate context of this phrase doesn't do it justice.

> concern ourselves, and not the rhetoric of the modesty of thinking within which tivism but because there is no finitude "in itself." It is with this that we need to least. We don't know finitude "in itself." However, this isn't the effect of perspecany knowledge of finitude's "truth in itself." This requires clarification, at the very Heidegger remains trapped.

ing, but it's best to say it anyway. Husserl, Heidegger, and Deleuze are all presupposed here. This goes without say-5. Nietzsche, Husserl, Derrida's reading of Husserl, Marion's reading of

6. Hegel, in the Aesthetics (of course), had already admired the double sense

7. See "Elliptical Sense," below.

a classical one at that, of the presentation of sense: on the one hand, as "underof sense, as the sense of being, Heidegger still remains within a double regime, and plicitly question this duality. that the two are indissociable, but the two remain two, and Heidegger doesn't exstanding"; on the other, as "sensing" or "state-of-mind" (Befindlichkeit). He repeats note in passing that, although this book defines the principle of a "deconstruction" 8. Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993), §31. l

is no being that is distinct from the sense of being." 9. See Max Loreau, La Genèse du phénomène (Paris: Minuit, 1989), 301: "There

M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), 268–69. 10. Martin Heidegger, Beiträge zur Philosophie, Gesamtausgabe 65 (Frankfurt a

ontological difference") differs, therefore, from itself: being does not occur as besense, the difference between being and beings could not even be assigned as "dif versity Press, 1973]). "This sentence, I fear, is meaningless," he once said. Perhaps lated by David Allison as Speech and Phenomena [Evanston: Northwestern Unineither-word-nor-concept "differance." As he writes: "Finite difference is infinite ing. This is what Jacques Derrida has sought to bring out with the ings. This last difference (which is most often taken to be the sense of the "onticothis very difference differs from a difference between "being" (intransitive) and beference." Being which is (transitively) beings only differs from the latter insofar as La Voix et le phénomène [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967], xxx; trans-11. Heidegger evokes the possibility of this in "What is Philosophy?" In this

struction of this motif in Heidegger himself. See "The Unsacrificeable," below ently of all sacrificial logic, a task that would also require a critique and a decon-10, has to be reinterpreted. In any case, death needs to be thought here independtoreign to the text. Alternatively, the "for," the zum, better translated as toward or 12. If we use the translation "for death," we introduce a finality that is wholly

Parture. [Each of the citations in what follows come from § 41.—Trans.] 13. KPM 225-6 / 154. What follows takes the whole of \$41 as its point of de 14. And if, as a consequence, existence ("ek-sistence") ought not to be extended

albeit in modal form, but understood more broadly as simply human. This is a dif-

as the question What is the sense of (human) existence? but also, if the world is inscholium). But in order to understand, or to touch, the minute, heavy, almost inunderstanding alone. (On the stone, see Spinoza, Ethics 2, proposition 13, must be said that it is difficult to reduce "the stone in the stone" to a "pure" inmen, animals, vegetables, minerals, galaxies, and meteorites? In this regard, it ing but what there is? And so, too, Why the proliferating difference among beings, thing? in general, but also Why is there what there is, all of what there is, and noth. site of it, Why is there the world, in its totality? Not simply Why is there some. separable from it, if it isn't the contingent context of an existentiality but the very didn't foresee. It is basically the question of the existence of the world. Not simply (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993)-and one that Heidegger himself Galilée, 1988); translated by Bridget McDonald as The Experience of Freedom ficult question-one I have already broached in L'Expérience de la liberté (Paris: side, which is the world, and which, though, it's true, only presents itself as gertips, that without which there would be nothing to write, which remains ourcisely the opposite: in writing, a subjectivity reaches out to touch, as if with its finto the churning of their matter) isn't their relation to a subjectivity; rather, it's preof aeons." Here, the existence of stones (reduced, I grant, to lying all around and mountains and their chronic erosion, not once but often in the vast receding cone sea's tumbling but by their very matter churned and remixed by the rising of lie all around us billions of years old, not only rounded smooth by centuries of the 199, we read this, for example: "How magnificent and abysmal pebbles are! They Updike's The Witches of Eastwick (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), existent modality of stone's existence, we must doubtless turn to literature. In John isn't an essence (otherwise how could its hardness feel hard?), an essence for the manence; "immanence," in other words, is also and in a way "to itself." The stone world? Where does the world-event, in the singular dissemination of its events Brian Holmes and Rodney Trumble as "The Heart of Things," in Jean-Luc either having or being, just as it's not exactly spatial or temporal. (See my "Le the "there" of being, the "there" of every "there is." "There" doesn't exactly take up is is being in a "there" that neither pre-exists it nor is external to it. All it "has" is Gilles Deleuze's Pli, Annuaire philosophique (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 170. The verb "to having. On being addressed in terms of having, see Alain Badiou's remarks on "existing" in this same gesture of writing. "There is" doesn't belong to the order of stone? From the eruption of being that comprises being, from the eruption of be-(which it doesn't have, but which it is, being only that), come from? From the Nancy, The Birth to Presence [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993], 167-88.] Cœur des choses," in Une Pensée finie [Paris: Galilée, 1990], 197-224; translated by have" slips from appropriation to being through the instantaneous diffraction, disfor the understanding), and every event has the structure of the world-event. Or ing that is being. In these conditions, there are only events (essences and facts are Let us say: it takes up the event. The question, though, is: Whence the event of the location, and dissemination of the "having" of "being": it has no essence, all there

substitutable, as singularities, as the absolute, each time, of a singular. And how could there be sense if an event did not communicate (with) all events? But how could sense not be finite if this communication itself did not take place as a transmission of having (of qualities, of properties), but only as this universal substitutability of the "world-event"? The latter comes therefore from this—which is to say, it comes from nowhere and no one; neither from atoms nor from God. Equally, though, neither atoms (with the clinamen) nor God (the creator, not the supreme being, if they can be distinguished) have doubtless ever truly been thought otherwise than as the eventuality of the world without an assignable or unifiable origin. "Atom" or "God" have been the infinitizing goals of the thought of finite sense. The provenance of the world lies neither in a thoughtfulness, nor in providence. The world comes from its event. It exists therefore right through—even though existence is not homogeneous in itself, of man, of the stone, or of the fish. There is only sense in touching that. But in touching that, there is only finite sense.

15. Here, we would need to go back to the whole argument of *The Experience of Freedom*, the displacement of the concept of freedom as the self-legislation of an infinite Subject into that of the exposition of a finite being.

16. See my "Posséder la vérite dans une âme et un corps," in *Une Pensée finie*, 325–51; translated by Rodney Trumble as "To Possess Truth in One Soul and One Body," in *The Birth to Presence*, 284–306. As for Marx, and for those who find themselves astonished to see a thinking of finitude attributed to him, let me say that for Marx this is connected with his constant and decisive appeal to the "real," in particular to its materiality, to the ineffectiveness of all generality, and even to the contingent character of nature and history. That man remains, for Marx, generic man doesn't stop the beginning of the decomposition of the essence of man, in history *and* in freedom.

17. Here, though, I'm not really thinking about Rimbaud, but about Nietzsche and Baraille.

18. In speaking of *access*, I am, of course, thinking about Bataille—and about a different reference from the preceding one. Whatever else may need to be said, it's with Bataille that this demand emerges in all its nakedness.

19. See my "L'Histoire finie," in Jean-Luc Nancy, La Communauté désoeuvrée (Paris: Bourgois, 1990), 237–78; first published in English as "Finite History," in The States of "Theory": History, Art, and Critical Discourse, ed. David Carroll (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 149–72; reprinted in The Birth to Presence, 143–66.

20. See "The Kategorein of Excess," below.—Ed.

21. See The Experience of Freedom, chap. 12.—Ed.

^{22.} And so, too, without going down the path of sacrifice. Misfortune and ^{sickness} can call, in different ways, on sacrifice: *we* no longer can. See "The Un-^{sacrificeable," below.}

norm. Rather, it is reason and the end of all things: the beginning of every though epekeina tes ousias, "beyond being or beyond essence," isn't the good of a moral 23. Rereading Spinoza, therefore. But also Plato. The "Good," situated

of André Gorz in his several publications on the reduction of the workday. For the capital "does not leave untouched" (in L'Inhuman: Causeries sur le temps [Paris: de l'égaliberté (Conférences du Perroquet, 1989). replacement of generic "man" by "singularities," see Etienne Balibar, La Proposition human: Reflections on Time [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991]) and those Galilée, 1989], translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby as The In-24. Here one might refer to Jean-François Lyotard's analyses of the time than

problem, see Pascal Dumontier, Les Situationnistes et mai 68 (Paris: Gérard Lebovici, 1990). He speaks advisedly of a "concerted silence around the topic of 25. Laziness and cowardice, once again. For a survey of the state of the

of representation. embodies, in a sense, the limits of a critique of "simulation," itself still a tributary 26. A critique carried on and then diverted or turned back by Baudrillard, who

ble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1991). dealt with this in "Portrait de l'art en jeune fille," in Le Poids d'une pensée (Grenobirth of something else, for which the name "art" is perhaps no longer suited. I've 27. This is the sole question raised by the "end of art"—and so, too, by the

of this thinking with Gilles Deleuze's thoughts about an "image" that owes noth would like, and it would be useful, to demonstrate the convergence, albeit distant, tempting to sum up the movement of his thinking of this concept. Moreover, I 28. I'm borrowing the word "mimesis" from Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, ar-

of Heidegger's theses about technology, see Avital Ronell, The Telephone Book wasn't confronted by the kinds of technology we know today). On the ambiguity is entirely of a piece with this (although it's perhaps worth adding that Heidegger kind of original immanence. The reactive part of his thinking about "technology full consequences and instead allowed phusis to assume once again the guise of a (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989). technē, a relation that renders the two indistinguishable, isn't "nature" in this sense. This is one of Heidegger's central theses, although he was unable to draw out its 29. From which it follows that the Greek phusis, with its complex relation to

camps with the "agricultural food industry" in a single, blanket condemnation of 30. Here we can most clearly see the error in Heidegger's conflation of the

a necessary relation with an "unworked community." Beyond this, there would also be a good deal to say about such an un-working in the sciences, that is, in what guish from technologies. ital "S," as the completion of sense, something that it's increasingly hard to distinshould less and less be confused with the metaphysical aim of Science, with a cap-31. "Un-worked" (dès-œuvrée) in Blanchot's sense, needless to say, and thus in

> Emily McVarish as "Laughter, Presence," in The Birth to Presence, 368-92. struggle. See my "Le Rire, la présence," in Une Pensée finie, 297-324; translated by 32. Contrary, of course, to what Hegel sought not to do, and not without a

CHAPTER 2

book form in French in Jean-Luc Nancy, La Pensée derobée (Paris: Galilée, 1999). by Jacqueline Risset, held in Rome in the autumn of 1996. It was published in NOTE: This text was written for the conference "Sartre and Bataille," organized

- Chicago Press, 1992), 483. translated by David Pellauer as Notebooks for an Ethics (Chicago: University of 1. Jean-Paul Sartre, Cahiers pour une morale (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 499;
- 2. Sartre, Vérité et existence (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 66-67.
- 6: 197. All references to Bataille are to this edition, henceforth cited as OC, followed by volume and page number. 3. Georges Bataille, Sur Nietzsche, in Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).
- 4. OC 12: 459
- 5. OC 6: 260.
- OC 6: 312.
- 7. OC 6: 318.
- (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989). 8. See Heidegger, Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis), in Gesamtausgabe 65
- flip side of thinking." 9. OC 12: 287; see also OC 12: 316, where Bataille speaks of "laying bare the
- 10. OC 12: 394.
- 11. OC 12: 316.
- 12. For Sartre, see, in particular, Vérité et existence.
- and Notebooks for an Ethics 174. The phrase "not-knowing" also crops up in the posthumous Vérité et existence lated by Hazel E. Barnes as The Problem of Method (London: Alfred Knopf, 1963). 13. Sattre, Critique de la raison dialectique (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 107; trans-

CHAPTER 3

Galilée, 1990), 65–106. NOTE: This essay appeared in French in Jean-Luc Nancy, Une Pensée finie (Paris:

- Hicks, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1942), 1: 24-25. 1. Diogenes Laertius, Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers, trans. R. D.
- as OC, followed by volume and page number mard, 1972), 7: 280. All references to Bataille are to this edition, henceforth cited 2. Georges Bataille, "La Limite de l'utile," in Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Galli-

3. G. W. F. Hegel, Hegel's Philosophy of Mind, trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) §392.

4. Marcel Détienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, La Cuisine du sacrifice en pays gree (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 34 (text by Détienne) and 134 (text by J.-L. Durand); translated by Paula Wissing as The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 20, 88. Furthermore, both authors insist upon the role of "globalized Christianity" (Détienne) in the "arbitrary" construction of the ethno-anthropo-logical notion of sacrifice. They're certainly not wrong to do so, providing that we don't forget that "Christianity" (if not the faith of Christians) is what it is only within the double philosophical dialectization from which it evolves and to which it submits. In addition, we shouldn't forget that it is philosophy that, by elaborating the idea of sacrifice, seals off access to what I shall call here, for want of a better term, "early sacrifice." When anthropological inquiry comes up against a diversity of sacrificial forms that is impossible to unify, it is perhaps subject, in turn, in inverted fashion, to this enclosure. And yet it is hard not to think that there is a real unity to this early sacrifice, albeit one to which we have no real means of access.

Georges Gusdorf, L'Expérience humaine du sacrifice (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), viii.

- 6. OC 11: 484.
- 7. OC 7: 264.
- 8. OC 7: 538.
- 9. Plato, Phaedo, 114c.
- 10. Ibid., 117c.
- 11. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, 2: 6-8.
- 12. Augustine, *The City of God*, cited in E. Mersch, *Le Corps mystique du Christ* (Paris: Desclée, 1951), 2: 114. The reference supplied at this point is imprecise.
- 13. Friedrich Nietzsche, Werke, ed. Karl Schlechta (Munich: Hanser, 1956), 3: 803. The citation in question is from the Nachlass, the unpublished writings.
- 14. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, 10: 11-14.
- 15. Cited in Mersch, Le Corps mystique du Christ, 2: 6ff.
- 16. Hegel, Hegel's Philosophy of Mind, \$546.
- 17. Plato, Laws, 909d et sec.
- 18. OC 7: 253.
- 19. Plato, Phaedo, 118.
- 20. Ibid., 91b-c.
- 21. Pascal, Pensées (Paris: Gallimard-Pléiade, 1978), §268, 569; translated by A. Krailsheimer as Pensées (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1966), §268, 109.
- 22. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, ed. P. C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Steward (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 1: 354 n. 178.
- 23. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §779. The context of the remark concerns Christ

- 24. 00 /: 43
- 25. Friedrich Nietzsche, Morgenröte, in Kritische Studienausgabe, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), vol. 3, bk. 2, § 146: translated by R. J. Hollingdale as Daybreak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 146..
- 26. Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, KSA 6; translated by R. J. Hollingdale as Ecce Homo (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1989), 129–30.
- 27. Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of Right," in Early Writings, trans. and ed. Lucio Colletti (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1974), 104.
- 28. See Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, IIIa, qu. 22 2 c, then IIa-IIae, qu. 85 3 ad 2.
- 29. Cited in Gusdorf, L'Expérience humaine du sacrifice, 45.
- communication or contagion that, outside the West, has perhaps never had the on mimesis, found it, for example, on an anthropology of mimetic violence and 1979). Should we look for a priority in this equivalence? Should we found sacrifice son as "Plato's Pharmacy," in Dissemination (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, ton," in La Dissémination (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 152-53; translated by Barbara Johntween sacrifice and mimesis, see also, e.g., Jacques Derrida, "La Pharmacie de Plasis," in Lacoue-Labarthe, Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics, ed. Christopher des modernes (Paris: Galilée, 1986), 35; translated as "Dideror: Paradox and Mime-Diderot's Paradox, "Diderot: Paradox et mimesis," in Typographies II: L'Imitation monde" ("to be no one-or everyone"), in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's analysis of structure equivalent to that of sacrifice? (See, e.g., "être personne—ou tout le of the other through the alteration or suppression of the proper, wouldn't it have a quires an examination that I cannot undertake here. If mimesis is an appropriation of methexis, an in-communication of every community. (See, e.g., Bataille on conwhat "Western sacrifice" at once misses and sublates, is an essential discontinuity meaning of a communion, which we have tended to give it? What escapes us, and tive characteristic of such an anthropological "knowledge" would admittedly be as lence? (In which case, and however subtle the analyses may be, the so-called position after the fact and that appeals to a "revelation" in order to suspend its viorivalry (along the lines proposed by Girard) that turns sacrifice into a symboliza-Fynsk (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 259. As regards the links be-France, 1949). Generally speaking, the relation between mimesis and sacrifice relation.") Conversely, why shouldn't we grasp mimesis on the basis of a methexis, a toreign to me as that other kind of "positivity" associated with the motif of "reve-30. See Les Carnets de Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (Paris: Presses Universitaires de
- 31. See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Tippographies*, 42: "Is mimesis sublatable?" The question is perhaps no different from the following: Is *methexis* communal? It is perhaps in the theologico-philosophical construction of the doctrine of Christian double hypostasis, insofar as this is also the very site of sacrifice and of

all possible communion, that such questions would find their most telling docu-

32. OC 11: 55.

- Arnold Hartmann and Alexander Garcia-Düttmann will one day provide it. times in Heidegger. A critical analysis of this theme would require a separate study Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1993), 187. The theme of sacrifice returns many mann, 1987), 50; "The Origin of the Work of Art," in Basic Writings, ed. David 33. Heidegger, Holzwege, Gesamtausgabe 5 (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Kloster-
- 1902–), 5: 271, 252. Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 34. Immanuel Kant, Kritik der Urteilskraft, in Gesammelte Schriften, ed.
- Samuel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhamner, 1960), 1: 337. 35. Novalis, Heinrich von Ofterdingen, in Schriften, ed. P. Kluckhohn and R
- that questions of sacrifice and of myth have to be closely linked. it is a tale, illustrated in a gory fashion," etc. There's no need to underline the fact "In actual fact, literature is situated in succession to religion . . . Sacrifice is a novel, 36. OC 5: 156. See also, e.g., the remarks of L'Erotisme (Paris: Minuit, 1957), 98:
- 37. OC 11: 485.
- 38. Ibid.
- 39. Ibid.
- Cotta, 1865-61) 453. 40. F. W. J. Schelling, Sämmtliche Werke, ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart:
- 41. OC 11: 485.
- 42. Ibid.
- 43. OC 11: 486
- 44. OC 11: 103.
- 45. OC 8: 300.
- and deny the sacrificial character of the camps, and Jacques Derrida, who, in the rifice sacrifice," appears to affirm such a character; see Derrida, Shibboleth (Paris midst of commenting on sacrifice as orality and on philosophies that "do not sacrificial immolation of "reason." For another example, see OC 7: 376-79. See also and the camps (OC 11: 226–28). The conclusions of these articles would converge: Turner as Heidegger, Art, Politics (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), who respectively affirm Labarthe, La Fiction du politique (Paris: Bourgous, 1989); translated by Chris Jacques Lacan, Séminaire XI (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 247, and Philippe Lacoue-Bataille, without saying so directly, tends to view the Jews as the victims of a sac-Trans.] For want of space, I am leaving to one side the "Sartre" article on the Jews 46. OC 11: 262-67. [Subsequent quotes in the text are from this article-
- Myriam Revault d'Allones, D'une mort à l'autre (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 59. There are taken place on the subject of the sacrificial character of revolutionary regicide; see obviously considerable differences between such discussions. I merely want to sug 47. OC 7: 376-79. It is worth pointing out that a comparable discussion has

 $_{
m gest}$ that, under the rule of Western sacrifice, sacrifice started to decay a long time

- 48. Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (Munich, 1936), 326
- 49. Ibid., 329.
- 50. Ibid., 330.
- tion of the European Jews (London: Holmes & Meier, 1985), 3: 1009-10. 51. Himmler's speech of October 4, 1943, cited in Raul Hilberg, The Destruc-
- 52. OC II: IOI.
- mondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 2000), 172. 53. Hermann Broch, The Death of Virgil, trans. J. Starr Untermeyer (Har-
- thinking, see Lacoue-Labarthe, Heidegger, Art, Politics. 54. On technology, technē, art, and the work in Nazism and/or in Heidegger's
- & Row, 1977), 36-49. Turning," in Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology (New York: Harper (Pfullingen: Gunter Neske, 1954), 37–47; translated by William Lovitt as "The 55. See, in particular, Martin Heidegger, "Die Kehre," in Vorträge und Aufsätze
- nis, to which Lyotard himself, paradoxically, becomes intensely attached. Heidegger's intended gesture here doesn't simply invalidate the thought of Ereig-1990). For me, though, his argument as a whole calls for this reservation at least: Roberts as Heidegger and "the jews" (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, les "juifs" (Paris: Galilée, 1988), 140; translated by Andreas Michael and Mark 56. I agree with Jean-François Lyotard on this point; see Lyotard, Heidegger et
- from the existence of the camps. 57. Lacan, Le Séminaire XI, 247. Here, Lacan explicitly derives this definition
- 58. Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1992), 42.
- gen: Max Niemeyer, 1969); translated by Joan Stambaugh as "Time and Being," in Heidegger, On Time and Being (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984). 59. See Martin Heidegger, "Zeit und Sein," in Zur Sache des Denkens (Tübin-
- upon in this book, just as it was invoked in my "Soleil cou coupé," in Le Démon des anges (Barcelona: Departament de Cultura, 1989). 60. See The Experience of Freedom. The theme of sacrifice was already touched
- sacrifice—yet less than a parody, more a slaughter unsupported by any sacrifice weight of this configuration of signs: in Africa, upon a Christian altar, a parody of cpisode. I'm insufficiently informed to do so. I simply want to note the crushing Onto the altar. I'm not passing judgment on this war, or even on this particular were taking refuge from the fighting and executions of the civil war that is tearing dred and six hundred people were massacred in a church in Monrovia, where they book (August 1, 1990), I want to add the following: yesterday, between four hunnewspaper explains that eviscerated bodies of two young children were thrown Liberia apart. Among them, there were many women, children, and infants. The 61. Rereading these pages while editing them for their French publication as a

CHAPTER 4

NOTE: This text appeared in French in *Cahiers Intersignes*, nos. 4–5 (Paris, autumn 1992): 237–49.

NOTE: While writing these pages, I'd forgotten that one of the texts included by Blanchot in *The Infinite Conversation* carries the same title: "L'Indestructible." This was no doubt both an unconscious memory and a dialogue.

- 1. In English in the text.—Trans.
- 2. Franco Marinetti, Selected Writings, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1972), 42.
- 3. Hallâj al-Husayn Ibn Mansur, *Dîwân*. I am citing here from the translation by L. Massignon printed in the *Cahiers du Sud* (1955), 104. I admit that I've altered the text somewhat, aggravating Hallâj's heresy still further by erasing the "Him" to whom the text is actually addressed.

CHAPTER 5

NOTE: This text merits a place in this collection on account of its themes, particularly the theme of sense. Nevertheless, it has a special status, for two reasons. First, it was written for inclusion in a festschrift for Jacques Derrida and so belongs to a genre that is not really appropriate here. In recognition of this, I have removed the preamble, which was devoted entirely to this "address." [The preamble is included in an earlier translation of this text by Peter Connor, in Derrida: A Critical Reader, ed. David Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 36–51.—Trans.] Second, the original circumstances in which the piece was composed—a symposium at the Collegium Phenomenologicum directed by Rodolphe Gasché in 1987—dictated that I speak about a particular text by Derrida. I chose "Ellipsis," the concluding essay of L'Ecriture et la différance (Paris: Seuil, 1967), 429–36; translated by Alan Bass as "Ellipsis," in Derrida, Writing and Difference (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 295–300. This implies a reading of that text throughout this essay. The essay in French can be found in Jean-Luc Nancy, Une Pensée finie (Paris: Galilée, 1990), 269–96.

- 1. See, too, the opening pages of Nancy's Le Poids d'une pensée (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1991)—Ed.
- 2. Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), 18; translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 23.
- See Jacques Derrida, Marges de la philosophie (Paris: Minuit, 1972); translated by Alan Bass as Margins of Philosophy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1300.

CHAPTER 6

NOTE: This essay originally appeared in Jean-Luc Nancy, *La Pensée derobée* (Paris: Galilée, 1999).

- 1. Everything that follows speaks, according to the rules of the game, of Derrida, from Derrida, or alongside him or his *œuvre*. I will keep textual references to a minimum; there would either have been too many or too few, and my concern here isn't a philological one. I'm searching for the extremity at which a thought begins or exhausts itself, at which its subject is stripped bare.
- 2. The expression appears in Jacques Derrida, L'Ecriture et la différence (Paris: Seuil, 1967), 364; translated by Alan Bass as Writing and Difference (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 247. On the intestine, the brain, and the tympanum, see Marges de la philosophie (Paris: Minuit, 1972), i–iv; translated by Alan Bass as Margins of Philosophy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), x–xv.
- 3. See "Circonfession," in Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, Jacques Derrida (Paris: Seuil, 1991), 275; translated by Geoffrey Bennington as "Circumfession," in Bennington and Derrida, Jacques Derrida (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 298: "the question of me, with respect to which all other questions appear derived."
- 4. It would be pointless to try to provide references. There are hundreds of them, unevenly distributed across texts and perhaps even across periods. Moreover, the two uses of "such," the "normal" and the "retro," often occur almost side by side. See, e.g., *Parages* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), 14.
- Derrida, Glas, 7—as for the rest, I must pass it by, I forget it. But everybody knows what it concerns.
- 6. It is worth noting that although here Nancy credits Derrida with having raised the specter of "haunting," the term was actually part of Nancy's vocabulary long before it was adopted by Derrida. See "The Kategorein of Excess," below.—Ed.
- long before it was adopted by Derrida. See "The Kategorein of Excess," below.—Ed. 7. These last two terms are employed and discussed by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe in Le Sujet de la philosophie (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1979), 221ff. His theme finds certain echoes here.
- 8. Glas (Paris: Galilée, 1974), 79–80; translated by John P. Leavey, Jr., as Glas (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 67–68.
- 9. See a bit further on in *Glas*: "everything is always attached *from behind* [de dos], written, described from behind [par derrière] . . . Absolutely behind, the *Derrière* that will never have been seen face on, the *Déjà* preceded by nothing" (97 / 84).
- 10. La Carte postale: De Socrate à Freud et au-delà (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), 86; translated by Alan Bass as The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 78: the da counting for nothing with regard to the do or the dos, "as if behind the curtains," still.
- 11. Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Tübingen: Max Neimeyer, 1993), 132. 12. See also "My signature... cut off before the da" (Jacques Derrida, La Vérité

en peinture [Paris: Flammarion, 1978], 181; translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod as *The Truth in Painting* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987], 158).

13. "And philosophy is perhaps the reassurance given against the anguish of being mad at the point of greatest proximity to madness" (Derrida, Writing and Difference, 92 / 59).

14. I can't attempt to locate all occurrences; I'll rest content with a hasty overview, ocular and erratic, which does, after all, constitute a test of pertinence. It might be informative to take the time to screen through the whole corpus, which would not leave less intact the game of a calculus that is proper or absentininded, unconscious, or surconscious, of Jacques Derrida around his texts and their behinds.

15. Derrida, *The Post Card*, 44, 171 / 38, 158. One might add a caption in small caps without punctuation: "PLATO BEHIND FREUD" (422).

16. Jacques Derrida, "En cet moment même dans cet ouvrage me voici," in Derrida, Psyché: Inventions de l'autre (Paris: Galilée, 1987), 161; translated by Ruben Berezdivin as "At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am," in Re-Reading Levinas, ed. Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 13.

17. An allusion to Max Stirner, Der Einzige und sein Eigentum (Leipzig, O. Wigard, 1882); translated by Steven T. Byington as The Ego and His Own: The Case of the Individual against Authority (London: A. C. Fifield, 1913)—Trans.

18. Jacques Derrida, "Moi—la psychanalyse," *Psyche*, 154; translated by Richard Klein as "Me—Psychoanalysis: An Introduction to the Translation of 'The Shell and the Kernel,' by Nicolas Abraham," *diacritics* (March 1979), 10.

19. See Derrida, "Donner la mort," in *L'Ethique du don*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté and Michael Wetzel (Paris: Métailié, 1992), 59ff.

20. See Derrida, Psyché, 626-38.

21. The Post Card, 125 / 114.

CHAPTER 7

NOTE: This essay appeared in French in Jean-Luc Nancy, L'Impératif catégorique (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), 7–32.

- 1. Sylvia Plath, "Channel Crossing," in *The Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 27.
- 2. The essay form allows me to examine this topic only in broad terms here. I hope to develop it further in a forthcoming work, L'Expérience de la liberté (Paris: Galilée, 1988); translated by Bridget McDonald as The Experience of Freedom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). [This footnote was written by Nancy in 1983, some five years before to the publication of the book to which he refers.—Ed.]

- 3. Here I am developing one aspect of the program of Kant analysis begun tentatively in *Logodaedalus I: Le Discours de la syncope* (Paris: Galilée, 1976).
- 4. Immanuel Kant, Die Metaphysik der Sitten, in Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902–) 6: 316, \$49. [Except in the case of the Nachlass, cited by fragment number, and the Critique of Pure Reason, where we follow the standard A and B pagination, all references to Kant are to this edition, henceforth cited as Ak, followed by volume and page number.—Trans.]
- 5. Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason, Ak 6: 41-42.
- 6. Ibid., Ak 6: 35.
- 7. See my "L'Etre abandonné," in L'Impératif catégorique (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), 141–53; translated by Brian Holmes as "Abandoned Being," in Jean-Luc Nancy, The Birth to Presence (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 36–47.
- 8. Except in the case of right itself, in the case of the production of legality or of the "jurisprudence" without experience that inaugurates right; see "Lapsus judicii," below.
- 9. Elias Canetti, Masse und Macht (Frankfurt am Main, 1980), 335; translated by Carol Steward as Crowds and Power (London: Gollancz, 1962), 303.
- no. By this we want to understand the particular nature of the "utterance." I have addressed this in two texts: "La Vérité impérative," in L'Impératif catégorique, 89–112, and "La Voix libre de l'homme," in L'Impératif catégorique, 115–37; translated by Richard Stamp as "The Free Voice of Man," in Retreating the Political, ed. Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 1996), 32–51. If the order takes place in language, the imperative perhaps lies beyond it, even when it is uttered and even in its very utterance and discursiveness. "Imperativity" and the address as such don't happen without language, but they do arise from it. Or they arise from saying as what is not said—from a tone and a gesture.
- 11. Immanuel Kant, *Opus posthumum*, Ak 22: 118. Whether there is still love without duty or whether there is no law in love are questions that, for the moment, are entirely separate.
- 12. Kant, Nachlass, 8105, 1799.
- 13. Kant, Opus posthumum, Ak 22: 55.
- 14. Here I am borrowing a term used by Jean-François Lyotard in his analysis of the prescriptive in "Logique de Levinas," in *Textes pour Emmanuel Levinus* (Paris: Place, 1980), 113–69. I won't go into the convergences and divergences between my own path and the one taken by Lyotard. Doubtless we would both need to pursue them further.
- 15. Critique of Practical Reason, Ak 5: 31.
- 16. It goes without saying that, quite apart from this similarity of position, the imperative doesn't have the nature of either space or time. What it does do, however, is maintain a quite complex relationship with them. This will have to be examined later.
- 17. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A 19; B 33.

- 18. In the French text of this essay, Nancy refers to his essays collected under the title L'Impératif catégorique, but the comment might serve as a summation of the essays gathered here under the heading "Judging."—Ed.
- 19. Kant, Religion, Ak 6: 46.
- 20. Ibid., 45.
- 21. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 173; translated by Alphonso Lingis as *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 199.
- 22. At this point, Nietzsche, despite himself, confirms what Kant has to say, See my "Notre probité," in *L'Impératif catégorique*, 63–86; translated by Peter Conner as "'Our Probity!' On Truth in the Moral Sense in Nietzsche," in *Looking after Nietzsche*, ed. Laurence A. Rickels (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 67–88.
- 23. In a manner that is no doubt analogous, Lacan, in "Kant avec Sade," Ecrits (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 765–90, attempts to understand the law as the law that constitutes the subject, not as the subject of a will to pleasure, but as the instrument of the pleasure of the other. The problem is that this reversal still maintains the "other" in the position of a subject of pleasure. Now, pleasure is without a subject—the least that we can say—such being, perhaps, the law as well as what lays down the law as the incommensurable injunction.
- 24. "The voice is recognized as coming from the other to the extent that we cannot respond to it, not to the measure of what, of the other, comes from the other. The very structure of the law dictates or obliges its transgression" (Jacques Derrida, in the debate that followed the presentation of "La Voix libre de l'homme," reproduced in Les Fins de l'homme, ed. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy [Paris: Galilée, 1981], 183; Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, Retreating the Political, ed. Simon Sparks [London: Routledge, 1997], 53). To this, we would need to attach the motif of the "madness of the law," brought to light by Derrida in "La Loi du genre," in Parages (Paris: Galilée, 1986), 249–87; translated by Avital Ronell as "The Law of Genre," Critical Inquiry 7, no. 1 (1980):
- 25. Here, we are not so very far from the problematic of "sovereignty" in Bataille. I have begun to address this issue in "The Unsacrificeable," above.
- 26. Kant, Opus posthumum, Ak 22: 55.
- 27. Kant, "What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany . . .?" Ak
- 28. Kant, Religion, Ak 6: 49.
- 29. See Jean-Louis Bruch, La Philosophie religieuse de Kant (Paris: Aubier, 1968), 269.
- 30. At some point, we will need to examine the relation with the aesthetic that this motif involves (that is, with the articulation of the sublime over beauty), a relation in which the nonsubjective status of singularity is also at stake.
- 31. Kant, Opus posthumum, Ak 22: 122.

- 22. Apropos tragedy, let me draw attention to the connection with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's analysis of its Hölderlinian treatment in "La Césure du spéculatif," in *Typographies II: L'Imitation des modernes*: (Paris: Galilée, 1986); translated by Robert Eisenhauer as "The Caesura of the Spectacle," in *Typographies: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. Christopher Fynsk (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 208–35. This connection is essential. As is the one to my own analysis of Hölderlin and Kant in "La Joie d'Hypérion," *Les Etudes philosophiques* 2 (1983): 177–94; translated by Christine Laennec and Michael Syrotinski as "Hyperion's Joy," in Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 58–81.
- 33. The Kantian notion of end does not denote the completion of a program. It is inaugural and without end. "So far as the concept of end is concerned, it is always something that we have to bring about, and the concept of an ultimate end needs to be seen as produced a priori by reason" (Ak 20: 294; "What Real Progress?" 123).
- 34. Pierre Lachièze-Rey, L'Idéalisme kantien (Paris: Vrin, 1950), 197.
- where the relation between this address of the law and the "call" which, for Heidegger, constitutes conscience (*Gewissen*), insofar as this call "comes from me and yet from beyond me and over me"; Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993), 275; translated by John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson as Being and Time (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 320. Certain important consequences follow from this, as I indicate in "The Free Voice of Man," consequences that complicate the analysis of the "sublime voice."

CHAPTER 8

NOTE: This essay appeared in French in Jean-Luc Nancy, L'Impératif catégorique (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), 33–60.

- 1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in *Werke*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), 3: 356–57; translated by A. V. Miller as *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 291–93. [Although Nancy makes due reference to Hippolyte's celebrated translation of 1939, he elides two distinct clauses in Hegel's text, reading "the loss of its essence" for "the loss of its reality [*Realität*]" and "its complete inessentiality [*Unwesentlichkeit*]" (*Werke*, 3: 357).—Trans.]
- Chicanneau, a character from Racine, is a proverbial figure for litigiousness.—Trans.
- 3. This is where a long engagement with Heidegger—with the thinking that most rigorously determines the Hellenism of philosophy as such—would no doubt lead. Heidegger, in his climb toward the Greek language of philosophy, needs to point out a number of displacements introduced by Latin translation. Let

wasn't philosophy that was speaking, or Greece was already philosophically Latin.) of the empire, what was called "philosophy" usually spoke in Greek. Either it no way of countering this through the empirical fact that, right up until the end motif of the accidental constitution of the essence of modern metaphysics. (There's over which it also "passes." Were we to do so, we could dispense with the whole that redistributes entirely differently the whole semantic and conceptual apparatus which it transmits or relays the Greek, the character of an accident, of a collision and instead recognize within the Latin "translation," regardless of the way in ing them the simple form of a generalization or a deviation—a slippage, even me suggest, then, that any study of these displacements would need to avoid give

of "binding" and "mixing") with the jus of right. Something that might well supof jus, some philologues have lent an etymological synonymy (through the senses a question about "juice" (as in the juice of a fruit, etc.), to which, as a homonym hardly do better than cite Dumézil's indispensable analysis. Except perhaps to add 4. Georges Dumézil, Idées romaines (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 41. We could

port the Hegelian thesis of right as dissolution.

exception, any privilegium; see, e.g., Jacques Ellul, "Sur l'artificialité du droit et la of origin. For the moment, allow me simply to say that if the authority of the can be conferred, by right, on anyone whatsoever, a status whose investiture candroit d'exception," Archives de philosophie du droit 10 (1965). The status of judex this case isn't an exceptional one (precisely not, in fact). Right prevents any law of judge (his imperium) is itself a case, one whose right would need to be articulated, becomes philosophy. At this point something happens to the metaphysical question for example), but only at the point, with which we are concerned here, at which it to philosophy the question of its own origin (as at the start of a treatise on right, ally belong to right or, if it does, does not do so at the point at which right refers from the philosopher as well as from the poet, both of whom Plato terms natures. not be sheltered from the law. In this, the judge is already profoundly different 6. Spinoza, Tractatus de intellectus emendatione, §36: "De recta methodo 5. This is the problem of origin—which, it should probably be said, doesn't re-

cognoscendi" ("On the Improvement of the Understanding").

7. Right says; it doesn't execute. It never "produces" anything other than it-

self—or other than the fiction of its identity in the permanent mobility of its ju-

walls of its limes—to constitute the juridical unity of an internal network of limhaving transformed procedure into (organic, historical) process, absorbs them. say that right sanctions or signs for the differential divisions, whereas the State, its, of boundaries and differences. Ultimately [à la limite] . . . we would have to ing of limits (juridical, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, etc.). Rome tried-within the whose strictly Latin figure is (by right . . .) that of an incessant and multiple hxmajor shift of nature and not of degree; namely, the unlimiting of a procedure 8. The totalitarianism of the modern State comes from Rome only through a

See Duguip, Traité de droit constitutionnel (Paris, 1923), vol. 2, §28; and, for

étranger, 1946-47. tif et les systèmes juridiques romains," Revue d'histoire du droit françaises et a discussion of the notion of "subjective right," M. Villey, "L'Idée du droit subjec-

translation . . .) were we to give back to the subjectum the Latin values of beingstance of the Cartesian subject. This would be different (the problem here is one of termination through which it is constructed, from the hypokeimenon to the sub-10. Here, the subject needs to be understood according to the metaphysical de-

subordinate, being-subjected, being-substituted, or being-supposed. §168; translated by William Wallace as Hegel's Logic (Oxford: Oxford University 11. Hegel, Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, in Werke, vol. 7.

12. This is how the Peri psychēs characterizes nous theorētikos (vol. 3, 5, 430 a 15)

cally "French" sense of the word, a sense captured in English "wit," Spanish gusto. and nasus, between what will later be called "judgment" and esprit in the specifimediately into the very unity of judgment: in Kant, the division between judicium and, later on, German Witz, is already at work. Esprit constantly eats away at the 13. It is from here that we would need to date yet another division that cuts im-

eighteenth century, this leads inexorably toward the question of the "aesthetic" in rationality—itself already merely analogical—of judgment. Over the course of the to Presence, trans. Brian Holmes and others (Stanford: Stanford University Press struum universale," Sub-Stance 21 (1978); reprinted in Jean-Luc Nancy, The Birth see "Menstruum universale," Alea 1 (1981); translated by Paula Moddel as "Men-Kant's way of giving this critique a philosophical status. On the history of Witz, solute criteria and always dependent on some "personal" judgment. This is also art) of texts, of their establishment and evaluation: a discipline without any abcritica, which appeared long before its dialectical understanding as the science (or the judgment of taste, a motif that would have to be linked up with that of the of what is by right without right. This is what Kant calls the claim to universality of form, aesthetics formulates what is perhaps the ultimate question of right: the right ferior) and as the "science of the fine arts" (the science of taste). Under its double the double sense of the term: aesthetics as the "science of sensibility" (cognitio in-1993), 248-65.

forth cited as KrV with standard A and B pagination. Felix Meiner, 1999), A ix-x. All references to the Critique are to this text, hence-14. Immanuel Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, ed. Jens Timmermann (Berlin:

15. KrV A xi.

16. KrV A xi.

problematic—trait of Kant's thinking (including, or even first and foremost, its stamost constant and most remarkable—doubtless most audacious and hence most tus as a thinking of the political). Hadrian, in this story, is played by Hegel, of 17. Without ever turning it back into the despotism of the State: this is the

18. What tribunal could be established without reference to a pre-existing law.

apart from a tribunal of exception? Here, I have not been able to dwell on the law itself. Yet if it is possible to suggest that the lex is never the strict equivalent of a logos, then we can't avoid saying that, in one way or another, every judicial institution operates in the last instance according to a rule of exception and thus according to the form that right excludes. The troubling ambiguity of right would stem from its having, in principle, withdrawn from the State and, at the same time, opened the very possibility of the tribunal of exception. In many ways, Kant's enterprise also represents, by virtue of its audacity, metaphysics' own tribunal of exception. Similar ambiguities will doubtless begin to unravel only once it has become possible for us to think how logos constitutes our own law of exception.

19. Do we need to point out that Kant's discourse, like every metaphysical discourse, stems from the primitive appropriation of its reason alone—and by the primitive warding off of any accident that might affect it? What we need to hold onto here is that, despite all this, an accident does happen—and happens in that primitive operation itself.

20. Heidegger, whose reading of Kant is clearly decisive here, stands in marked contrast. See, in particular, the debate with Cassirer; Martin Heidegger, "Davoser Disputation zwischen Ernst Cassirer und Martin Heidegger," in Heidegger, Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik, Gesamtausgabe 3 (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1991), 274–96; translated by Richard Taft as "Davos Disputation between Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger," in Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 171–85.

21. Scientific "law" presents itself, so to speak, as the opposite of or as opposed to juridical law. Whereas the latter articulates an "area of action or claim," the former—which doesn't simply disobey the structure of articulation but also excludes it to the point where its utterances are held to be valid only insofar as they are independent of the one who utters them—establishes what is (regardless of the status of this "being") within a given area, the area engendered by the subject (of) science. As a philosophical, ethical, or political question, the question of the "right of science" is always badly put insofar as it ignores the profound heterogeneity that exists between the two orders. Science either has all rights, or it has none.

- 22. KrV B xiii.
- 23. KrV A 712; B 740.
- 24. KrV B xii.
- 25. As well as "on paper . . . but . . . completely a priori" (KrV A 713; B 741). Another essay would need to be devoted to a general analysis of schematization.
- 26. KrV A 33; B 50.
- 27. KrV A 132; B 171.
- 28. KrV A 134; B 173.
- 29. KrV A 134; B 173.
- 30. KrV A 135; B 174.
- 31. KrV A 135; B 174.
- 32. Despite certain variations in the Kantian vocabulary (see A. de Coninck,

L'Analytique transcendantale de Kant [Louvain, 1955], 1: 128 ff.), one notes that the a priori forms of sensibility are supplied, not by deduction, but by exposition.

- 33. KrV A 126.
- 34. See Luc Ferry et al., eds., Rejouer le politique (Paris: Gallilée, 1981), 95.
- 35. Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Free Voice of Man," in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, eds., Retreating the Political, ed. Simon Sparks.

CHAPTER 9

NOTE: This translation, first published in *Studies in Practical Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (1999), is based on an article first published in heavily abridged form in *Diction-naire des Philosophes*, ed. Noella Baraquin and Jacqueline Laffitte (Paris: Armand Colin, 1997), 645–51. I would like to thank Keith Ansell Pearson and the Centre for Research in Philosophy and Literature at the University of Warwick for originally commissioning this translation, and Simon Sparks for his invaluable help in discussing aspects of the translation itself.—Trans.

- I. Besides, the editors of the dictionary for which this article was first written have already settled the matter by commissioning it.
- See Martin Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus," Wegmarken, Gesamtausgabe 9 (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), 313; translated by Frank A. Capuzzi in collaboration with J. Glenn Gray, in Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1993), 213; henceforth cited as
- 3. BW 217
- 4. Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993). Henceforth cited as SZ.
- 5. Except for two instances of authenticité, Nancy uses propre ("proper, own, authentic") and its derivations for Heidegger's use of terms based on the root eigen (especially eigentlich and Eigentlichkeit). The special case of Ereignis is addressed in the text.—Trans.
- 6. BW 220.
- 7. SZ 152.
- 8. BW 220.
- 9. BW 218.
- 10. BW 217.
- 11. BW 220.
- 12. BW 218.
- 13. BW 225.
- 14. See BW 225ff.
- 15. See Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik, Gesamtausgabe 3 (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1991), 207 and \$\sqrt{8}\sqrt{8}-41. Henceforth cited as KPM.
- 16. BW 26.

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existence and for it."
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    39. Ibid.
                                                                           51. Ibid.
              55. See BW 252: "the world' is, in a certain sense, precisely 'the beyond' within
                            54. BW 236.
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                                                                                           50. BW 240.
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                                                                                                                                                          46.
                                                                                                                                                                         45. Ibid.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     40. BW 238.
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           24. KPM §30.
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                                             53. BW 246.
                                                             52. BW 236 ff
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       Ibid.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     BW 234.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     Ibid.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        KPM $41.
                                                                                                                                                          Ibid
                                                                                                                                                                                        Ibid.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            See the celebrated remarks on Heraclitus (BW 256-57).
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         See BW 229.
                                                                                                          BW 246.
                                                                                                                           Ibid.
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the way to indebtedness. This needs to be borne in mind in the following lines.—
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                                                                                                                                                        77. BW 260.
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84. BW 265.
                                              82. BW 260.
                                                                   81. BW 265.
                                                                                          80. Ibid.
                                                                                                                                    78. Ibid.
                                                                                                                                                                                 76. BW 261.
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      70. SZ 281. [As Heidegger points out (SZ 281-83), the words schuldig and
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                        SZ 288.
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CHAPTER IO

86. Spinoza, Ethics, 5 prop. 42.

85. BW 263, 262.

NOTE: This essay originally appeared in Jean-Luc Nancy, La Pensée derobée (Paris: Galilée, 1999).

1. Immanuel Kant, Erste Fassung der Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft, in Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902–), 20: 195–251. [Except for the Critique of Pure Reason, where I follow the standard A and B pagination, all references to Kant are to this edition, henceforth cited as Ak, followed by volume and page number. Quotes from the third Critique are taken from Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judg-

56. BW 258.

57. BW 255. 58. KPM § 30.

ment, trans. and introd. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987). Quotes from the first Critique are taken from Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's, 1965); those of the second Critique are from Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). The page number of the English translation follows that of the Akademie edition; the translation has occasionally been modified in order to correspond more closely to the French translation that Nancy quotes.—Trans.]

- 2. Ak 20: 195 / 385.
- 3. Ak 20: 203 / 392.
- 4. Ak 20: 201 / 390.
- 5. Ak 20: 205-6 / 394.
- 6. Ak 20: 206 / 395.
- 7. Ibid.
- 8. Ibid.
- 9. Ibid.
- 10. Ibid.
- 11. Ak 20: 206-7 / 395.
- 12. On the question of the "case" in general in Kant (even though the word "case [Fall]" does not figure explicitly in the German text), see the work in progress of Simon Zavadil, a fragment of which appears as "L'Evénement de la contingence, ou les limites du principe de raison," Les Cahiers Philosophiques de Strasbourg 5 (1997), 211–32. [See also "Lapsus judicii," above.—Ed.]
- 13. See the preface to the Critique of Practical Reason, Ak 5: 4-14 / 3-11.
- 14. On matters of fact (*scibilia*), see §91 of the *Critique of Judgment*. This section calls for a detailed commentary, which I cannot provide here.
- 15. Critique of Practical Reason, Ak 5: 71-89 / 62-75.
- 16. Ak 5: 73 / 64.
- 17. Ak 5: 77 / 66-67.
- 18. Ak 5: 80 / 68.
- 19. Critique of Judgment, Ak 5: 289 / 154.
- 20. Ak 5: 222 / 67.
- 21. Ibid.
- 22. We would need to move from the passages on pleasure in the Introduction and certain other sections of the Critique of Judgment to the Metaphysics of Morals and the Anthropology (\$64f).
- 23. Critique of Judgment, Ak 5: 187 / 26-27.
- 24. Ibid.
- 25. See, in particular, the "General Comment on Teleology."
- 26. Ak 5: 482n. / 377n. This is the only footnote in the "General Comment."
- 27. Ak 5: 187 / 27.
- 28. Critique of Pure Reason, A216, B263 / 237.
- 29. See the first-edition Transcendental Deduction, second section.

- 30. Critique of Practical Reason, Ak 5: 3 / 3.
- 31. See, in particular, §§60 and 83 of the Critique of Judgment, where we read: "the fine arts and the sciences... involve a universally communicable pleasure as well as elegance and refinement, and through these they make man, not indeed morally better for society, but still civilized for it" (Ak 5: 433 / 321; my emphasis).
- 32. Ak 20: 230 / 419-20.
- 33. See, of course, the Architectonic.
- 34. Critique of Practical Reason, Ak V: 162 / 133-34

CHAPTER II

NOTE: This essay has been reprinted from "The Sublime Offering," by Jean-Luc Nancy, in *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*, ed. Jeffrey S. Librett, by permission of the State University of New York Press. © 1993 State University of New York. All rights reserved. This book originally appeared in French as Jean-François Courtine et al, *Du sublime* (Paris: Belin, 1988); the essay was reprinted in *Jean-Luc Nancy, Une Pensée finie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), 147–96.

- refer to it in recent years (Marin, Derrida, Lyotard, Deleuze, Deguy), as well as in Los Angeles and among the artists: for example, one of the them entitled a recent exposition and performance "The Sublime" (Michael Kelley, April 1984). One finds further evidence of this fashion in Berlin (Hamacher), Rome, and Tokyo. (Not to speak of the use of the word "sublime" in the most current everyday speech.) As for the texts, they are numerous and dispersed. Let it suffice to indicate their authors here, my indebtedness to whose works it would be impossible to convey adequately. But I do not intend to add to theirs one more interpretation of the sublime. I attempt rather to come to terms with what it is that they share and that the epoch shares in this fashion: that offers us all up to a thought of the sublime.
- 2. This perhaps excessively concise formula adopts the general perspective of Samuel Monk's classic study *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), which has been reconsidered with respect to France by Théodore A. Litman in *Le Sublime en France* (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1971) from both a historical and an aesthetic-conceptual perspective. My contribution is neither historical nor aesthetic.
- I must not omit to mention at least once the name of Nietzsche, who
 thought, in one sense or several, something of the sublime, even if he hardly thematized it as such.
- Walter Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1980).
- 5. Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," Holzwege (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980), 42; translated by Albert Hofstadter as "The

Origin of the Work of Art," in Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 56.

- 6. Theodor W. Adorno, Asthetische Theorie (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1973), 292; translated by C. Lenhart as Aesthetic Theory, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 280.
- 7. Georges Bataille, Oeuvres, vol. 7 (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).
- 8. Maurice Blanchot, "La Littérature et le droit à la mort," in *La Part du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), 294; translated by Lydia Davis as "Literature and the Right to Death," in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, ed. P. Adams Sitney, with a preface by Geoffrey Hartman (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill, 1981), 22.
- 9. This means at once that these two modes of thought are opposed to each other and that the thought of the sublime doubtless infiltrates and secretly disquiets the thought of the end of art. But I will not attempt to show this here. In turn, where Hegel explicitly speaks of the sublime, he does not bring anything of the thought of the sublime to bear (see Paul de Man, "Hegel on the Sublime," in *Displacement: Derrida and After*, ed. Mark Krupnick [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983], 139–53).
- 10. See *Critique de la faculté de juger*, trans. A. Philonenko (Paris: Vrin, 1986, §§ 23–29, 84, 114; *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951), 82–120, for most of the allusions to Kant's text which follow. The reference here is to §23, 84 / 82.
- 11. The word can be found, e.g., in the Critique of Judgment, §22, 80 / 78.
- 12. CJ, §6, 34 / 24.
- 13. CJ, §2, 50 / 39.
- 14. CJ, §23, 86 / 85.
- 15. CJ, §27, 98 / 98. "In the aesthetic evaluation of grandeur, the concept of number ought to be kept at a distance or transformed."
- 16. In this sense, all that in Kant still derives from a classic theory of analogy and the symbol does not belong to the deep logic of which I am speaking here.
- 17. The latter formula is Lyotard's; see Le Differend (Paris: Minuit, 1983), 118–19; translated by Georges Van Den Abbeele as The Differend: Phrases in Dispute (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 77–78. The former formula is Derrida's, from "Le Parergon," in La Vérité en peinture (Paris: Flammarion, 1978); translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod as The Truth in Painting (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 131–32. They are certainly not wrong, and they comment rigorously, together or the one against the other, upon the text of Kant. I do not attempt to discuss them here, preferring to take a different course—along the edge of presentation, but at a distance, and because presentation itself distances itself from itself. The political function of the sublime in Lyotard would call for a different discussion, which I shall undertake elsewhere.
- 18. Kant does not fail to indicate an aesthetic direction combining the two motifs: a sublime genre distinct from all others, and the determination of this genre as a kind of total work of art. He in fact evokes the possibility of a "presentation of

the sublime" in the fine arts in terms of the "combination of the fine arts in one single product," and he then indicates three forms: verse tragedy, the didactic poem, and the oratorio. There would, of course, be much to say about this. I shall content myself here with noting that it is not quite the same thing as Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk. More particularly, Kant's three forms seem to turn around poetry as the mode of presentation of destiny, thought, and prayer, respectively, and it does not seem to be a matter of a "total" presentation.

- 19. CJ §26, 174; 91.
- 20. One ought to analyze the relations between Kant's Bestrebung and Freud's Vorlust, that is, this "preliminary pleasure," whose paradox consists in its tension and which occupies an important place in Freud's theory of the beautiful and of art.
- 21. CJ, §29, 105 / 128. I prefer, on this point, the first edition.
- 22. Hegel provides a kind of figure of this feeling by way of the other in his discussion of the infant in the womb of its mother. See Jean-Luc Nancy, "Identité et tremblement," in *Hypnoses* (Paris: Galilée, 1984), 13–47; translated by Brian Holmes as "Identity and Trembling," in Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes and others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, 9–35).
- 23. I am choosing to ignore here the *economy* of sacrifice, which is quite visible in Kant's text, where the imagination acquires "an extension and power greater than that which it has lost." I do not pretend that the offering is simply "pure loss." But at the heart of the economy (of presence, art, thought), it [ca] offers irself also, there is also offering, neither lost nor gained.
- 24. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma*, vol. 1, *L'Image-mouvement* (Paris: Minuit, 1983), 69; translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam as *Cinema*, vol. I, *The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 46.
- 25. I suspend here an analysis I pursue in L'Expérience de la liberté (Paris: Galilée, 1988); translated by Bridget McDonald as The Experience of Freedom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).
- 26. CJ, §29, 106 / 109-10.
- 27. Darbieten or Darbietung ("offering") would be the word to substitute on the register of the sublime for Darstellung ("presentation"). But it is in each case a matter of the dar, of a sensible "here" or "here it is."
- 28. See note 18, above.
- 29. It is remarkable that another Biblical commandment—the *Fiat lux* of Genesis—had been already a privileged example of the sublime for Longinus and for his classical commentators. From the one example to the other as from the one commandment to the other, one can appreciate the continuity and the rupture.
- 30. See Jean-Luc Nancy, Le Discours de la syncope: I. Logodaedalus (Paris: Flammarion, 1976).

CHAPTER 12

NOTE: The title of the original French text is "L'Amour éclats." The word éclat

should be read in all its outbursts. The word can mean, and appears here as: shatter, piece, splinter, glimmer, flash, spark, burst, outburst, explosion, brilliance, dazzle, and splendor.—Trans.

The English translation of this essay originally appeared as "Shattered Love," in Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 83–109. The French text can be found in Jean-Luc Nancy, *Une Pensée finie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), 225–68.

- I. The distinction that Nancy makes here is very easy to render in French, where abstract nouns may or may not be preceded by the definite article, depending upon the context. Hence, Nancy is able to distinguish between "la pensée est amour" and "la pensée est l'amour." In the first instance, love qualifies or describes thinking; in the second, it is offered more as a definition of thinking: thinking is love; it is identical with love.—Trans.
- 2. The French text reads, "l'être dans l'amour," but it is important to remember that the English expression "being in love" does not translate literally into idiomatic French. That might, then, be one of the meanings invoked here, but it is not necessarily the sole or dominant one.—Trans.
- 3. René Char, Hypnos Waking, trans. Jackson Mathews (New York: Random House, 1956), 59.
- 4. Roland Barthes, A Lover's Discourse: Fragments, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1978), 148.
- 5. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 50ff.
- 6. There is no adequate translation for the French verb *jouir*. Translated as "to enjoy," *jouir* loses its sexual connotation; translated as "to come," it loses its relation to "joy." Following a suggestion by Nancy, I have created a new verb to translate *jouir*: "to joy."—Trans.
- 7. The citation is in English in the original.—Trans.

CHAPTER 13

NOTE: This essay originally appeared in *Transeuropéennes*, no. 1 (autumn 1993): 8–18.

- 1. Schematically, and rather arbitrarily, I want to indicate three points of reference or three possible directions within the immense space, crossed today from every possible angle, of this question:
- (1) The program marked out by the title of Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities (London: Verso, 1992).
- (2) The terms and the motifs of "intermixing," "relation," and "creolization" as deployed by Edouard Glissant in *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990); translated by Betsy Wing as *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan

Press, 1993), and, along with Glissant, all the other "creoles" of art and literature, for whom Salman Rushdie could also be considered an emblem.

- (3) The vision of a "universal" hybridization or mixed race presented in Michel Serres's *Le Tiers-Instruit* (Paris: Bourin, 1991), a vision that poses many of the problems elicited by Bruno Tackels in "Où est le métis?" *Correspondances 4*, "Le(s) Métissage(s)," UFR des Arts (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1993).
- 2. Bernardo Bertolucci, The Last Tango in Paris
- 3. Fernand Braudel, La Méditerranée (Paris: Flammarion, 1985), 134.
- 4. See, but with a different value placed on the "ipse," Gérard Granel, "Ipse Dasein?" in La Phénoménologie aux confins (Mauvezin: T. E. R., 1992).

CHAPTER 14

NOTE: This essay originally appeared in Jean-Luc Nancy, La Pensée derobée (Paris: Galilée, 1999).

- 1. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Qu'est-ce que la philosophie? (Paris: Minuit, 1991), 103; translated by Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson as What Is Philosophy? (London: Verso, 1994), 108.
- 2. See Friedrich Nietzsche, Zur Genealogie der Moral, in Kritische Studienausgabe, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988) 5: 293–94. Henceforth cited as KSA, followed by volume and page number, then the page number of the English translation. Translated by Walter Kaufman as On the Genealogy of Morals (New York: Vintage, 1967), 59–60. See also KSA 5: 79–81; translated by Walter Kaufman as Beyond Good and Evil (New York: Vintage, 1992),
- 3. KSA 5: 292 / Genealogy, 58.
- 4. KSA 5: 79 / Beyond Good and Evil, 72.
- 5. KSA 5: 81 / Beyond Good and Evil, 74.
- Immanuel Kant, Die Metaphysik der Sitten, in Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902–) 6: 439–40.
- 7. See Edmund Husserl, Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–1931), trans. and ed. Thomas Sheehan and Richard E. Palmer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), 492.
- 8. Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1992), §58.
- 9. Jean-Paul Sartre, Vérité et existence (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 63: translated by Adrian van den Hoven as Truth and Existence (Chicago: University of Chicago
- ress, 1992), 30.

 10. Emile Benveniste, Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes (Paris: Minuit, 1969), 2: 165.
- 11. Jacques Derrida, Du droit à la philosophie (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 108;

losophy I (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 66. translated by Jan Plug as Jacques Derrida, Who's Afraid of Philosophy? Right to Phi-

Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 39. 289, 326. See, too, Theodor W. Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, trans. Robert Hullot-Elizabeth Rottenberg as Friendship (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 12. See Maurice Blanchot, L'Amitié (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 326; translated by

(Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1986), 297-98. 13. Ernst Tugendhat, Self-consciousness and Self-determination, trans. Paul Stern

CHAPTER 15

(Paris: Galilée, 1999). NOTE: This essay originally appeared in Jean-Luc Nancy, La Pensée derobée

by Simon Sparks as Retreating the Political (London: Routledge, 1996).—Ed. Galilée, 1983) and Rejouer le politique (Paris: Galilée, 1981); translated and edited 1. On this phrase, see the introductory remarks to two collections edited by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy: Le Retrait du politique (Paris:

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