

*Tiqqun*

# The Cybernetic Hypothesis

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“We can imagine a time when the machine of governance would replace — for better or worse, who knows? — the insufficiency of the minds and devices of politics that are customary today.”

— Father Dominique Dubarle, *Le Monde*, December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1948

“There is a striking contrast between the conceptual refinement and dedication characterizing scientific and technical reasoning and the summary and imprecise style that characterizes political reasoning. . . . One even asks oneself whether this is a kind of unsurpassable situation marking the definitive limits of rationality, or if one may hope that this impotence might be overcome someday and collective life be entirely rationalized.”

— An encyclopedist cybernetician writing in the 1970s.

# I

“There is probably no domain of man’s thinking or material activity that cybernetics will not come to have a role in someday.”

Georges Boulanger, *Dossier on Cybernetics: utopia or science of tomorrow in the world today*, 1968.

“The world circumscribing us [the “circumverse”] aims to have stable circuits, equal cycles, the expected repetitions, and trouble-free compatibility. It intends to eliminate all partial impulses and immobilize bodies. Parallel to this, Borges discussed the anxiety of the emperor who wanted to have such an exact map of the empire that he would have to go back over his territory at all its points and bring it up to scale, so much so that the monarch’s subjects spent as much time and energy detailing it and maintaining it that the empire ‘itself’ fell into ruins to the exact extent that its cartographical overview was perfected – such is the madness of the great central Zero, its desire to immobilize bodies that can only ever ‘be’ as representation.”

Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 1973.

“They wanted an adventure, and to live it out with you. In the end all that’s all that can be said. They believed resolutely that the future would be modern: different, impassioning, and definitely difficult. Peopled by cyborgs and bare handed entrepreneurs, frenzied stock-marketeers and turbine-men. *And for those that are willing to see it, the present is already like that.* They think the future will be human, feminine even – and plural; so that everyone can really *live* it, so that everyone participates in it. They are the Enlightenment men we’ve lost, infantrymen of progress, the inhabitants of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They fight against ignorance, injustice, poverty, and suffering of all kinds. They go where it’s happening, where things are going on. They don’t want to miss out on a thing. They’re humble and courageous, at the service of interests that are far beyond them, guided by a higher principle. They can pose problems, and they can find solutions. They’ll have us traversing the most perilous of frontiers, they’ll reach out a hand to pull us up onto the shore of the future. They’re History marching forth, at least what’s left of it, because the hardest part is over. They’re the saints and the prophets, true socialists. They’ve known for a long while that May 1968 wasn’t a revolution. The *true revolution* is the one they’re making. Now it’s just a matter of organization and transparency, intelligence and cooperation. A vast program! Then . . .”

Excuse me? What? What'd you say? What program? The worst nightmares, you know, are often the metamorphoses of a fable, fables PEOPLE tell their kids to put them to sleep and perfect their moral education. The new conquerors, who we'll call the cyberneticians, do not comprise an organized party — which would have made our work here a lot easier — but rather a diffuse constellation of agents, all driven, possessed, and blinded by the same fable. These are the murderers of Time, the crusaders of Sameness, the lovers of fatality. These are the sectarians of order, the reason-addicts, the *go-between people*. The Great Legends may indeed be dead, as the post-modern vulgate often claims, but domination is still comprised of master-fictions. Such was the case of the *Fable of the Bees* published by Bernard de Mandeville in the first years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which contributed so much to the founding of political economy and to justifying the advances made by capitalism. Prosperity, the social order, and politics no longer depended on the catholic virtues of sacrifice but on the pursuit by each individual of his own interests: it declared the “private vices” to be guarantees of the “common good.” Mandeville, the “Devil-Man” as PEOPLE called him at the time, thus founded the *liberal hypothesis*, as opposed to the religious spirit of his times, a hypothesis which would later have a great influence on Adam Smith. Though it is regularly re-invoked, in a renovated form given it by liberalism, this fable is obsolete today. For critical minds, it follows that *it's not worth it anymore to critique liberalism*. A new model has taken its place, the very one that hides behind the names “internet,” “new information and communications technology,” the “new economy,” or genetic engineering. Liberalism is now no longer anything but a residual justification, an alibi for the everyday crimes committed by cybernetics.

Rationalist critics of the “economic creed” or of the “neo-technological utopia,” anthropologist critics of utilitarianism in social sciences and the hegemony of commodity exchange, marxist critics of the “cognitive capitalism” that oppose to it the “communism of the masses,” political critics of a communications utopia that resuscitates the worst phantasms of exclusion, critics of the critiques of the “new spirit of capitalism,” or critics of the “prison State” and surveillance hiding behind neo-liberalism — critical minds hardly appear to be very inclined to take into account the emergence of *cybernetics as a new technology of government*, which federates and associates both discipline and bio-politics, police and advertising, its ancestors in the exercise of domination, all too ineffective today. That is to say, cybernetics is not, as we are supposed to believe, a separate sphere of the production of information and communication, a virtual space superimposed on the real world. No, it is, rather, an *autonomous world of apparatuses so blended with the capitalist project that it has become a political project*, a gigantic “abstract machine” made of binary machines run by the Empire, a new form of political sovereignty, which must be called *an abstract machine that has made itself into*

*a global war machine.* Deleuze and Guattari link this rupture to a new kind of appropriation of war machines by Nation-States: “Automation, and then the automation of the war machine, only came truly into effect after the Second World War. The war machine, considering the new antagonisms running through it, no longer had War as its exclusive object, but rather it began to take charge of and make Peace, policy, and world order into its object; in short: such is its goal. Thus we see the inversion of Clausewitz’s formula: politics becomes the continuation of war, *and peace will release, technologically, the unlimited material process of total war.* War ceases to be the materialization of the war machine, and rather *it is the war machine that itself becomes war itself materialized.*” That’s why it’s not worth it anymore to critique the cybernetic hypothesis either: it has to be fought and defeated. It’s just a matter of time.

The *Cybernetic Hypothesis* is thus a political hypothesis, a new fable that after the second world war has definitively supplanted the liberal hypothesis. Contrary to the latter, it proposes to conceive biological, physical, and social behaviors as something integrally programmed and re-programmable. More precisely, it conceives of each individual behavior as something “piloted,” in the last analysis, by the need for the survival of a “system” that makes it possible, and which it must contribute to. It is a way of thinking about balance, born in a crisis context. Whereas 1914 sanctioned the decomposition of the anthropological conditions for the verification of the liberal hypothesis — the emergence of Bloom and the bankruptcy, plain to see in flesh and bone in the trenches, of the idea of the individual and all metaphysics of the subject — and 1917 sanctioned its historical contestation by the Bolshevik “revolution,” 1940 on the other hand marked the extinction of the idea of “society,” so obviously brought about by totalitarian self-destruction. As the limit-experiences of political modernity, Bloom and totalitarianism thus have been the most solid refutations of the liberal hypothesis. What Foucault would later call (in a playful tone) “the death of Mankind,” is none other than the devastation brought about by these two kinds of skepticism, the one directed at individuals, and the other at society, and brought about by the Thirty Years’ War which had so effected the course of Europe and the world in the first half of the last century. The problem posed by the *Zeitgeist* of those years was once again how to “defend society” against the forces driving it towards decomposition, how to restore the social totality in spite of a general crisis of presence afflicting it in its every atom. The cybernetic hypothesis corresponds, consequently, to a desire for order and certitude, both in the natural and social sciences. The most effective arrangement of a constellation of reactions animated by an active desire for totality — and not just by a nostalgia for it, as it was with the various variants of romanticism — the cybernetic hypothesis is a relative of not only the totalitarian ideologies, but also of all the Holisms, mysticisms, and

solidarities, like those of Durkheim, the functionalists, or the Marxists; it merely takes over from them.

As an ethical position, the cybernetic hypothesis is the complement, however strictly opposed to it, of the humanist pathos that has been back in vogue since the 1940s and which is nothing more than an attempt to act as if “Man” could still think itself intact after Auschwitz, an attempt to restore the classical metaphysics on the subject in spite of totalitarianism. But whereas the cybernetic hypothesis includes the liberal hypothesis at the same time as it transcends it, humanism’s aim is to extend the liberal hypothesis to the ever more numerous situations that resist it: It’s the “bad faith” of someone like Sartre, to turn one of the author’s most inoperative categories against him. The ambiguity that constitutes modernity, seen superficially either as a disciplinary process or as a liberal process, or as the realization of totalitarianism or as the advent of liberalism, is contained and suppressed in, with and by the new governance mentality emerging now, inspired by the cybernetic hypothesis. This is but the life-sized *experimentation protocol* of the Empire in formation. Its realization and extension, with the devastating truth-effects it produces, is already corroding all the social institutions and social relations founded by liberalism, and transforming both the nature of capitalism and the possibilities of its contestation. The cybernetic gesture affirms itself in the negation of everything that escapes regulation, all the escape routes that existence might have in the interstices of the norms and apparatuses, all the behavioral fluctuations that do not follow, *in fine*, from natural laws. Insofar as it has come to produce its own truths, the cybernetic hypothesis is today the *most consequential anti-humanism*, which pushes to maintain the general order of things, all the while bragging that it has transcended the human.

Like any discourse, the cybernetic hypothesis could only check to verify itself by associating the beings or ideas that reinforce it, by testing itself through contact with them, and folding the world into its laws in a continuous self-validation process. It’s now an ensemble of devices aspiring to take control over all of existence and what exists. The Greek word *kubernèsis* means “the act of piloting a vessel,” and in the figurative sense, the “act of directing, governing.” In his 1981–1982 classes, Foucault insisted on working out the meaning of this category of “piloting” in the Greek and Roman world, suggesting that it could have a more contemporary scope to it: “the idea of piloting as an art, as a theoretical and practical technology necessary for existence, is an idea that I think is rather important and may eventually merit a closer analysis; one can see at least three types of technology regularly attached to this ‘piloting’ idea: first of all medicine; second of all, political government; third of all self-direction and self-government. These three activities (healing, directing others, and governing oneself) are quite

regularly attached to this image of piloting in Greek, Hellenic and Roman literature. And I think that this ‘piloting’ image also paints a good picture of a kind of knowledge and practice that the Greeks and Romans had a certain affinity for, for which they attempted to establish a *tekhnè* (an art, a planned system of practices connected to general principles, notions, and concepts): the Prince, insofar as he must govern others, govern himself, heal the ills of the city, the ills of the citizens, and his own ills; he who governs himself as if he were governing a city, by healing his own ills; the doctor who must give his advice not only about the ills of the body but about the ills of individuals’ souls. And so you see you have here a whole pack of ideas in the minds of the Greeks and Romans that have to do I think with one and the same kind of knowledge, the same type of activity, the same type of conjectural understanding. And I think that one could dig up the whole history of that metaphor practically all the way up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when a whole new art of governing, centered around Reasons of State, would split apart – in a radical way – self government/medicine/government of others – not without this image of ‘piloting,’ *as you well know*, remaining linked to this activity, that activity which we call the activity of government.”

What Foucault’s listeners are here supposed to *know well* and which he refrains from pointing out, is that at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the image of piloting, that is, management, became the cardinal metaphor for describing not only politics but also all human activity. Cybernetics had become the project of unlimited rationalization. In 1953, when he published *The Nerves of Government* in the middle of the development of the cybernetic hypothesis in the natural sciences, Karl Deutsch, an American university social sciences academic, took the political possibilities of cybernetics seriously. He recommended abandoning the old concept that power was sovereign, which had too long been the essence of politics. To govern would become a rational coordination of the flows of information and decisions that circulate through the social body. Three conditions would need to be met, he said: an ensemble of *capturers* would have to be installed so that no information originating from the “subjects” would be lost; *information handling* by correlation and association; and a *proximity* to every living community. The cybernetic modernization of power and the expired forms of social authority thus can be seen as the visible production of what Adam Smith called the “invisible hand,” which until then had served as the mystical keystone of liberal experimentation. The communications system would be the nerve system of societies, the source and destination of all power. *The cybernetic hypothesis thus expresses no more or less than the politics of the “end of politics.”* It represents at the same time both a paradigm and a technique of government. Its study shows that the police is not just an organ of power, but also a way of thinking.



Cybernetics is the police-like thinking of the Empire, entirely animated by an *offensive concept of politics*, both in an historical and metaphysical sense. It is now completing its integration of the techniques of individuation — or separation — and totalization that had been developing separately: normalization, “anatomopolitics,” and regulation, “bio-politics,” as Foucault calls it. I call his “techniques of separation” the *police of qualities*. And, following Lukács, I call his “techniques of totalization” the *social production of society*. With cybernetics, the production of singular subjectivities and the production of collective totalities work together like gears to replicate History in the form of a *feigned movement* of evolution. It acts out the fantasy of a Same that always manages to integrate the Other; as one cybernetician puts it, “all real integration is based on a prior differentiation.” In this regard, doubtless no one could put it better than the “automaton” Abraham Moles, cybernetics’ most zealous French ideologue, who here expresses this unparalleled murder impulse that drives cybernetics: “We envision that one global society, one State, could be managed in such a way that they could be protected against all the accidents of the future: such that eternity changes them into themselves. *This is the ideal of a stable society, expressed by objectively controllable social mechanisms.*” Cybernetics is war against all that lives and all that is lasting. By studying the formation of the cybernetic hypothesis, I hereby propose *a genealogy of imperial governance*. I then counterpose other wisdom for the fight, which it erases daily, and by which it will be defeated.

## II

“Synthetic life is certainly one of the possible products of the evolution of techno-bureaucratic control, in the same way as the return of the whole planet to the inorganic level, is -rather ironically – another of the results of that same revolution, which has to do with the technology of control.”

James R Beniger, *The Control Revolution*, 1986.

Even if the origins of the Internet device are today well known, it is not uncalled for to highlight once again their *political meaning*. The Internet is a *war machine* invented to be like the highway system, which was also designed by the American Army as a decentralized internal mobilization tool. The American military wanted a device which would preserve the command structure in case of a nuclear attack. The response would consist in an electronic network capable of automatically retaking control over information itself if nearly the whole of the communications links were destroyed, thus permitting the surviving authorities to remain in communication with one another and make decisions. With such a device, military authority could be maintained in the face of the worst catastrophes. The Internet is thus the result of a *nomadic transformation of military strategy*. With that kind of a plan at its roots, one might doubt the supposedly anti-authoritarian characteristics of this device. As is the Internet, which derives from it, cybernetics is an *art of war*, the objective of which is to save the head of the social body in case of catastrophe. What stands out historically and politically during the period between the great wars, and which the cybernetic hypothesis was a response to, was the metaphysical problem of creating order out of disorder. The whole of the great scientific edifice, in terms of what it had to do with the determinist concepts of Newton’s mechanical physics, fell apart in the first half of the century. The sciences, at that time, were like plots of territory torn between the neo-positivist restoration and the probabilist revolution, and slowly inching its way towards a historical compromise so that the law could be re-established after the chaos, the certain re-established after the probable. Cybernetics passed through this whole movement – which began in Vienna at the turn of the century, and was transported to England and the United States in the 1930s and 1940s, and constructed a *Second Empire of Reason* where the idea of the Subject, up to that time considered indispensable, was absent. As a kind of knowledge, it brought together an ensemble of heterogeneous discourses all dealing with the *practical problems of mastering uncertainty*. Discourses fundamentally expressing, in the various domains of their application, the desire for a restoration of one order, and furthermore the maintenance thereof.

Underlying the founding of Cybernetics was a context of total war. It would be in vain to look for some malicious purpose or the traces of a plot: one simply finds a handful of ordinary men mobilized by America during the Second world war. Norbert Wiener, an American savant of Russian origin, was charged with developing, with the aid of a few colleagues, *a machine for predicting and monitoring* the positions of enemy planes so as to more effectively destroy them. It was at the time only possible at the time to predict with certitude certain correlations between certain airplane positions and certain airplane behaviors/movements. The elaboration of the “Predictor,” the prediction machine ordered from Wiener, thus required a specific method of airplane position handling and a comprehension of how the weapon interacts with its target. *The whole history of cybernetics has aimed to do away with the impossibility of determining at the same time the position and behavior of bodies.* Wiener’s innovation was to *express the problem of uncertainty as an information problem*, within a temporal series where certain data is already known, and others not, and to *consider the object and the subject of knowledge as a whole*, as a “system.” The solution consisted in constantly introducing into the play of the initial data the *gap* seen between the desired behavior and the effective behavior, so that they coincide when the gap closes, like the mechanism of a thermostat. The discovery goes considerably beyond the frontiers of the experimental sciences: controlling a system would in the end require a circulation of information to be instituted, called feed-back, or retro-action. The wide implications of these results for the natural and social sciences was exposed in 1948 in Paris in a work presented under the foreboding name of *Cybernetics*, which for Wiener meant the doctrine of “control and communication between animal and machine.”

Cybernetics thus emerged as a simple, inoffensive theory of information, a theory for handling information with no precise origin, always potentially present in the environment around any situation. It claims that *the control of a system is obtained by establishing an optimum degree of communication between the parties to it.* This objective calls above all for the continuous extortion of information — a process of the *separation* of beings from their qualities, of the production of differences. In other words, as it were, mastery of a uncertainty would arise from the proper *representation and memorization* of the past. The spectacular image, binary mathematical encoding — invented by Claude Shannon in *Mathematical Theory of Communication* in the very same year that the cybernetic hypothesis was first expressed — on the one hand they’ve invented memory machines that do not alter information, and put incredible effort into miniaturizing them (this is the determinant strategy behind today’s nanotechnology) and on the other they conspire to create such conditions on the collective level. Thus put into form, information would then be directed towards the world of beings, connecting them

to one another in the same way as commodity circulation guarantees they will be put into equivalence. Retro-action, key to the system's regulation, now calls for *communication* in the strict sense. Cybernetics is the project of recreating the world within an infinite feedback loop involving these two moments: representation separating, communication connecting, the first bringing death, the second mimicking life.

The cybernetic discourse begins by dismissing as a false problem the controversies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that counterposed mechanist visions to vitalist or organicist visions of the world. It postulates a functional analogy between living organisms and machines, assimilated into the idea of "systems." Thus the cybernetic hypothesis justifies two kinds of scientific and social experiments. The first essentially aimed to *turn living beings into machines*, to master, program, and determine mankind and life, society and its "future." This gave fuel for a return of eugenics as bionic fantasy. It seeks, scientifically, the end of History; initially here we are dealing with the terrain of control. The second aims to *imitate the living with machines*, first of all as individuals, which has now led to the development of robots and artificial intelligence; then as collectives — and this has given rise to the new intense circulation of information and the setting up of "networks." Here we're dealing rather with the terrain of communication. However much they may be socially comprised of highly diversified populations — biologists, doctors, computer scientists, neurologists, engineers, consultants, police, ad-men, etc. — the two currents among the cyberneticians are perfectly in harmony concerning their common fantasy of a *Universal Automaton*, analogous to Hobbes' vision of the State in *Leviathan*, "the artificial man (or animal)."

The unity of cybernetic progress arises from a particular method; it has imposed itself as the world-wide *method of universal enrollment*, simultaneously a rage to experiment, and a *proliferating oversimplification*. It corresponds to the explosion of applied mathematics that arose subsequent to the despair caused by the Austrian Kurt Godel when he demonstrated that all attempts to give a logical foundation to mathematics and unify the sciences was doomed to "incompleteness." With the help of Heisenberg, more than a century of positivist justifications had just collapsed. It was Von Neumann that expressed to the greatest extreme this abrupt feeling that the foundations had been annihilated. He interpreted the logical crisis of mathematics as the mark of the unavoidable imperfection of all human creations. And consequently he laid out a logic that could only come from a robot! From being a pure mathematician, he made himself an agent of scientific crossbreeding, of a general mathematization that would allow a reconstruction from below, in practice, of the lost unity of the sciences of which cybernetics was to be the most stable theoretical expression. Not a demonstration, not a

speech, not a book, and no place has not since then been animated by the universal language of explanatory diagrams, the *visual form of reasoning*. Cybernetics transports the rationalization process common to bureaucracy and to capitalism up onto the plane of *total templating (modeling)*. Herbert Simon, the prophet of Artificial Intelligence, took up the Von Neumann program again in the 1960s, to build a *thinking automaton*. It was to be a machine equipped with a program, called *expert system*, which was to be capable of *handling information* so as to resolve the problems that every particular domain of technique had to deal with, and by association, to be able to solve all the practical problems encountered by humanity! The *General Problem Solver* (GPS), created in 1972, was the model that this universal technique that gathered together all the others, the model of all models, the most applied intellectualism, the practical realization of the preferred adage of the little masters without mastery, according to which “there are no problems, there are only solutions.”

The cybernetic hypothesis progresses indistinctly as theory and technology, the one always certifying the other. In 1943, Wiener met John Von Neumann, who was in charge of building machines fast and powerful enough to carry out the *Manhattan Project* that 15,000 scholars and engineers, and 300,000 technicians and workers were working on, under the direction of the physicist Robert Oppenheimer: the modern computer and the atomic bomb, were thus born together. From the perspective of contemporary imagining, the “communications utopia” is thus the complementary myth to the myth of the invention of nuclear power and weaponry: it is always a question of *doing away with being-together (the ensemble of beings)* either by an excess of life or an excess of death, either by terrestrial fusion or by cosmic suicide. Cybernetics presents itself as the response most suited to deal with the Great Fear of the destruction of the world and of the human species. And Von Neumann was its double agent, the “inside outsider” par excellence. The analogy between his descriptive categories for his machines, living organisms, and Wiener’s categories sealed the alliance between cybernetics and computer science. A few years would pass before molecular biology, when decoding DNA, would in turn use that theory of information to explain man as an individual and as a species, giving an unequalled technical power to the experimental genetic manipulation of human beings.

The way that the systems metaphor evolved towards the network metaphor in social discourse between the 1950s and 1980s points towards the other fundamental analogy constituting the cybernetic hypothesis. It also indicates a profound transformation of the latter. Because if PEOPLE talked about “systems,” among cyberneticians it would be by comparison with the *nervous system*, and if PEOPLE talk today about the cognitive “network” sciences, THEY are thinking about the *neuronal network*. Cybernetics is the assimilation of the totality of the phenomena

that exist into brain phenomena. By *posing the mind as the alpha and omega of the world*, cybernetics has guaranteed itself a place as the avant-garde of all avant-gardes, the one that they will now all forever be running after. It effectively implements, at the start, *the identity between life, thought, and language*. This radical Monism is based on an analogy between the notions of information and energy. Wiener introduced it by grafting onto his discourse the discourse of 19<sup>th</sup> century thermodynamics; the operation consisted in comparing the effect of time on an energy system with the effect of time on an information system. A system, to the extent that it is a system, is never pure and perfect: there is a degradation of its energy to the extent that it undergoes exchanges, in the same way as information degrades as it is circulated around. This is what Clausius called *entropy*. Entropy, considered as a natural law, is the cybernetician's Hell. It explains the decomposition of life, disequilibrium in economy, the dissolution of social bonds, decadence . . . Initially, speculatively, cybernetics claimed that it had thus opened up a common ground on which it would be possible to carry out the unification of the natural and human sciences.

What would end up being called the "second cybernetics" was the superior project of a vast experimentation on human societies: *anthropotechnology*. The cybernetician's mission is to fight the general entropy threatening living beings, machines, and societies; that is, to create the experimental conditions for a permanent revitalization, endlessly restoring the integrity of the whole. "The important thing isn't that mankind is present, but that it exists as a living support for technical ideas," says Raymond Ruyer, the humanist commentator. With the elaboration and development of cybernetics, the ideal of the experimental sciences, already at the origins of political economy via Newtonian physics, would once again lend a strong arm to capitalism. Since then, the laboratory the cybernetic hypothesis carries out its experiments in has been called "contemporary society." After the end of the 1960s, thanks to the techniques that it taught, *this 'second cybernetics' is no longer a mere laboratory hypothesis, but a social experiment*. It aims to construct what Giorgio Cesarano calls a stabilized animal society, in which "[concerning termites, ants, and bees] the natural presupposition is that they operate automatically, and that the individual is negated, so the animal society as a whole (termite colony, anthill, or beehive) is conceived of as a kind of plural individual, the unity of which determines and is determined by the distribution of roles and functions — all within the framework of an 'organic composite' where one would be hard pressed to not see a biological model for the teleology of Capital."

### III

“You don’t have to be a prophet to acknowledge that the modern sciences, in their installation within society, will not delay in being determined and piloted by the new basic science: cybernetics. This science corresponds to the determination of man as a being the essence of which is activity in the social sphere. It is, in effect the theory whose object is to take over all possible planning and organization of human labor.”

Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thought*, 1966

“But cybernetics on the other hand, sees itself as forced to recognize that a general regulation of human existence is still not achievable at the present time. This is why mankind still has a function, provisionally, within the universal domain of cybernetic science, as a “factor of disturbance.” The plans and acts of men, apparently free, act as a disturbance. But very recently, science has also taken over possession of this field of human existence. It has taken up the rigorously methodical exploration and planning of the possible future of man as an active player. In so doing, it figures in all available information about what there is about mankind that may be planned.

Martin Heidegger, *The Origin of Art and the Destination of Thought*, 1967

In 1946, a conference of scientists took place in New York, the objective of which was to extend the cybernetic hypothesis to the social sciences. The participants agreed to make a clear disqualification of all the philistine philosophies that based themselves on the individual or on society. *Socio-Cybernetics* was to concentrate on the intermediary phenomena of *social feedback*, like those that the American anthropological school believed it had found at the time between “culture” and “personality,” to put together a characterization of the various nations, intended for use by American soldiers. The operation consisted in reducing dialectical thought to an observation of processes of *circular causality* within what was considered *a priori* to be an invariable social totality, where contradiction and non-adaptation merged, as in the central category of cybernetic psychology: the *double bind*. As a science of society, cybernetics was intended to invent a kind of social regulation that would leave behind the macro-institutions of State and Market, preferring to work through micro-mechanisms of control – preferring *devices*. The fundamental law of socio-cybernetics is as follows: *growth and control develop in inverse proportion to each other*. It is thus easier to construct a cybernetic social order on the small scale: “the quick re-establishment of balance requires that inconsistencies be detected at the very location where they are produced, and that corrective action take place in a *decentralized manner*.” Under the

influence of Gregory Bateson, the Von Neumann of the social sciences, and of the American sociological tradition, obsessed by the question of deviance (the hobo, the immigrant, the criminal, the youth, me, you, him, etc.), socio-cybernetics was aimed, as a priority, towards studying *the individual as a feedback locus*, that is, as a “self-disciplined personality.” Bateson became the *social editor in chief* of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was involved in the origins of the “family therapy” movement, as well as those of the “sales techniques training” movement developed at Palo Alto. Since the cybernetic hypothesis as a whole calls for a radically new physical structuring of the subject, whether individual or collective, its aim is to *hollow it out*. It disqualifies as a myth individual inwardness/internal dialogue, and with it all 19<sup>th</sup> century psychology, including psychoanalysis. It’s no longer a question of removing the subject from the traditional exterior bonds, as the liberal hypothesis had intended, but of reconstructing the social bonds by depriving the subject of all substance. Each person was to become *a fleshless envelope*, the best possible conductor of social communication, the locus of an infinite feedback loop which is made *to have no nodes*. The cyberneticization process thus completes the “process of civilization,” to where bodies and their emotions are abstracted within the system of symbols. “In this sense,” writes Lyotard, “the system presents itself as an avant-garde machine that drags humanity along after it, by dehumanizing it so as to rehumanize it at another level of normative capacities. Such is the great pride of the deciders, such is their blindness. . . . Even any permissiveness relative to the various games is only granted on the condition that greater performance levels will be produced. The redefinition of the norms of life consists in an amelioration of the skills of the system in matters of power.”

Spurred on by the Cold War and its “witch hunts,” the socio-cyberneticians thus tirelessly hunted down the pathological couched behind the normal, the *communist sleeping in everybody*. In the 1950s, to this effect, they formed the *Mental Health Federation*, where an original and *quasi-final* solution was elaborated to the problems of the community and of the times: “It is the ultimate goal of mental health to help people to live with their peers in the same world. . . . The concept of mental health is co-extensive with international order and the global community, which must be developed so as to make men capable of living in peace with each other.” By rethinking mental problems and social pathologies in terms of informatics, cybernetics gave rise to a *new politics of subjects*, resting on communication and transparency to oneself and to others. Spurred on by Bateson, Wiener in turn began thinking about a socio-cybernetics with a scope broader than the mere project of mental hygiene. He had no trouble affirming the defeat of the liberal experimentation: on the market information is always impure and imperfect because of the lying implicit in advertising and the monopolistic concentration of the media, and because of the ignorance of the State,



which as a collective contains less information than civil society. The extension of commodity relations, by increasing the size of communities and feedback chains, renders distortions of communication and problems of social control ever more probable. The past processes of accumulation had not only destroyed the social bonds, but social order itself appeared cybernetically impossible within capitalism. The cybernetic hypothesis' stroke of luck can thus be understood in light of the crises encountered by 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism, which questioned once again the supposed "laws" of classical political economy — and that was where the cybernetic discourse stepped into the breach.

The contemporary history of economic discourse must be looked at from the angle of this *increasing problem of information*. From the crisis of 1929 to 1945, economists' attention was focused on questions of anticipation, uncertainty regarding demand, adjustments between production and consumption, and forecasts of economic activity. Smith's classical economics began to give out like the other scientific discourses directly inspired by Newton's physics. The preponderant role that cybernetics was to play in the economy after 1945 can be understood in light of Marx's intuitive observation that "in political economy the law is determined by its contrary, that is, the absence of laws. *The true law of political economy is chance.*" In order to prove that capitalism was not a factor in entropy and social chaos, the economic discourse gave primacy to a cybernetic redefinition psychology starting in the 1940s. It based itself on the "game theory" model, developed by Von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern in 1944. The first socio-cyberneticians showed that *homo economicus* could only exist on the condition that there would be a *total transparency* of his preferences, regarding himself and others. In the absence of an ability to understand the whole ensemble of the behaviors of other economic actors, the utilitarian idea of a rationality of micro-economic choices is but a fiction. On the impetus of Friedrich von Hayek, the utilitarian paradigm was thus abandoned in preference to a theory of spontaneous mechanisms coordinating individual choices, acknowledging that each agent only has a limited understanding of the behaviors of others and of his or her own behaviors. The response consisted in sacrificing the autonomy of economic theory by grafting it onto the cybernetic promise of a balancing of systems. The hybrid discourse that resulted from this, later called "neo-liberal," considered as a virtue the optimal market allocation of information — and no longer that of wealth — in society. In this sense, the market is but the instrument of a perfect coordination of players thanks to which the social totality can find a durable equilibrium. Capitalism thus becomes unquestionable, insofar as it is presented as a simple means — the best possible means — of *producing social self-regulation*.

Like in 1929, the planetary movement of contestation of 1968, and, moreover, the post-1973 crisis present for political economy once more the problem of

uncertainty, this time on an existential and political terrain. High-flown theories abound, with the old chatterbox Edgar Morin and “complexity” theory, and Joel de Rosnay, that eccentric simpleton, and “society in real-time.” Ecologist philosophy as well was nourished by this new mystique of the Great Totality. Now totality was no longer an origin to be rediscovered, but a future to build. *For cybernetics it is no longer a question of predicting the future, but of reproducing the present.* It is no longer a question of static order, but of a dynamic self-organization. The individual is no longer credited with any power at all: his knowledge of the world is imperfect, he doesn’t know his own desires, he is opaque to himself, everything escapes him, as spontaneously cooperative, naturally empathetic, and fatally in interdependent as he his. He knows nothing of all this, but THEY know everything about him. Here, the most advanced form of contemporary individualism comes into being; Hayekian philosophy is grafted onto him, for which all uncertainty, all possibilities of any event taking place is but a temporary problem, a question of his ignorance. Converted into an ideology, liberalism serves as a cover for a whole group of new technical and scientific practices, a diffuse “second cybernetics,” which deliberately erases the name it was originally baptized with. Since the 1960s, the term cybernetics itself has faded away into hybrid terms. The science explosion no longer permits any theoretical unification, in effect: the unity of cybernetics now manifests itself practically through the world itself, which it configures every day. It is the tool by which capitalism has adjusted its capacity for disintegration and its quest after profit to one another. A society threatened by permanent decomposition can be all the more mastered when an information network, an autonomous “nervous system” is in place allowing it to be piloted, wrote the State lackeys Simon Nora and Alain Minc, discussing the case of France in their 1978 report. What PEOPLE call the “New Economy” today, which brings together under the same official nomenclature of cybernetic origin the ensemble of the transformations that the western nations have undergone in the last thirty years, is but an ensemble of new subjugations, a new solution to the practical problem of the social order and its future, that is: *a new politics.*

Under the influence of *informatization*, the supply and demand adjustment techniques originating between 1930–1970 have been purified, shortened, and decentralized. The image of the “invisible hand” is no longer a justificatory fiction but is now the effective principle behind the social production of society, as it materializes within computer procedures. The Internet simultaneously permits one to know consumer preferences and to condition them with advertising. On another level, all information regarding the behavior of economic agents circulates in the form of headings managed by financial markets. Each actor in capitalist valorization is a real-time back-up of quasi-permanent feedback loops. On the real markets, as on the virtual markets, each transaction now gives rise to a circulation

of information concerning the subjects and objects of the exchange that goes beyond simply fixing the price, which has become a secondary aspect. On the one hand, people have realized the importance of information as a factor in production distinct from labor and capital and playing a decisive role in “growth” in the form of knowledge, technical innovation, and distributed capacities. On the other, the sector specializing in the production of information has not ceased to increase in size. In light of its reciprocal reinforcement of these two tendencies, today’s capitalism should be called the *information economy*. Information has become wealth to be extracted and accumulated, transforming capitalism into a simply *auxiliary* of cybernetics. The relationship between capitalism and cybernetics has inverted over the course of the century: whereas after the 1929 crisis, PEOPLE built a system of information concerning economic activity in order to serve the needs of regulation — this was the objective of all planning — the economy after the 1973 crisis put the social self-regulation process came to be based on the valorization of information.

## IV

“If motorized machines constituted the second age of the technical machine, cybernetic and informational machines form a third age that reconstructs a generalized regime of subjection: recurrent and reversible ‘humans-machines systems’ replace the old nonrecurring and nonreversible relations of subjection between the two elements; the relation between human and machine is based on *internal, mutual communication*, and no longer on usage or action. In the organic composition of capital, variable capital defines a regime of subjection of the worker (human surplus value), the principal framework of which is the business or factory. But with automation comes a progressive increase in the proportion of constant capital; we then see a new kind of enslavement: at the same time the work regime changes, surplus value becomes machinic, *and the framework expands to all of society*. It could also be said that a small amount of subjectification took us away from machinic enslavement, but a large amount brings us back to it.”

Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980

“The only moment of permanence of a class as such is that which has a consciousness of its permanence for itself: *the class of managers of capital as social machine*. The consciousness that connotes is, with the greatest coherence, that of apocalypse, of self-destruction.”

Giorgio Cesarano, *Survival Manual*, 1975

Nothing expresses the contemporary victory of cybernetics better than the fact that value can now be extracted as *information about information*. The commodity-cybernetician, or “neo-liberal” logic, extends over all activity, including that which is still not commodified, with an unflagging support of modern States. More generally, the corollary to the precarization of capitalism’s objects and subjects is a growth of circulation in information on their subject: this is as true for unemployed workers as it is for cops. *Cybernetics consequently aims to disturb and control people in one and the same movement*. It is founded on *terror*, which is a factor in its evolution — the evolution of economic growth, moral progress — because it supplies an occasion for the production of information. The *state of emergency*, which is proper to all crises, is what allows self-regulation to be relaunched, and to maintain itself as a perpetual movement. Whereas the scheme of classical economy where a balance of supply and demand was to permit “growth” and thusly to permit collective well-being, it is now “growth” which is considered an endless road towards balance. It is thus just to critique western modernity as a “infinite

mobilization” the destination of which is “movement towards more movement.” But from a cybernetic point of view, the self-production that equally characterizes the State, the Market, robots, wage workers, or the jobless, is indiscernible from the self-control that moderates and slows it down.

It comes across clearly then that cybernetics is not just one of the various aspects of contemporary life, its neo-technological component, for instance, but rather it is the point of departure and arrival of the new capitalism. *Cybernetic Capitalism* – what does that mean? It means that since the 1970s we’ve been dealing with an emerging social formation that has taken over from Fordist capitalism which results from the application of the cybernetic hypothesis to political economy. Cybernetic capitalism develops so as to allow the social body, devastated by Capital, to reform itself and offer itself up for one more process of accumulation. On the one hand capitalism must grow, which implies destruction. On the other, it needs to reconstruct the “human community,” which implies circulation. “There is,” writes Lyotard, “two uses for wealth, that is importance-power: a reproductive use and a pillage use. The first is circular, global, organic; the second is partial, death-dealing, jealous. . . . The capitalist is a conqueror, and the conqueror is a monster, a *centaur*. His front side feeds off of reproducing the regulated system of controlled metamorphoses under the law of the commodity-talion, and its rear side off of pillaging overexcited energies. On the one hand, to appropriate, and thus preserve, that is, reproduce in equivalence, reinvest; on the other to take and destroy, steal and flee, hollowing out another space, another time.” The crises of capitalism, as Marx saw them, always came from a de-articulation between the time of conquest and the time of reproduction. The function of cybernetics is to avoid crises by ensuring the coordination between Capital’s “front side” and “rear side.” Its development is an endogenous response to the problem posed to capitalism – *how to develop without fatal disequilibrium arising*.

In the logic of Capital, the development of the piloting function, of “control,” corresponds to the subordination of the sphere of accumulation to the sphere of circulation. For the critique of political economy, circulation should be no less suspect than production, in effect. It is, as Marx knew, but a particular case of production as considered in general. The socialization of the economy – that is, the interdependence between capitalists and the other members of the social body, the “human community” – the enlargement of Capital’s human base, makes the extraction of surplus value which is at the source of profit no longer centered around the relations of exploitation instituted by the wage system. Valorization’s center of gravity has now moved over to the sphere of circulation. In spite of its inability to reinforce the conditions of exploitation, which would bring about a crisis of consumption, capitalist accumulation can still nevertheless survive on the condition that the production-consumption cycle is accelerated, that is,

on the condition that the production process accelerates as much as commodity circulation does. What has been lost to the economy on the static level can be compensated on the dynamic level. The logic of flows is to dominate the logic of the finished product. Speed is now taking primacy over quantity, as a factor in wealth. *The hidden face of the maintenance of accumulation is the acceleration of circulation.* The function of the control devices is thus to maximize the volume of commodity flows by minimizing the events, obstacles, and accidents that would slow them down. Cybernetic capitalism tends to abolish time itself, to maximize fluid circulation to the maximum: the speed of light. Such is already the case for certain financial transactions. The categories of “real time,” of “just in time,” show clearly this *hatred of duration*. For this very reason, time is our ally.

This propensity towards control by capitalism is not new. It is only post-modern in the sense that post-modernity has been confused with the latest manifestation of modernity. It is for this reason that bureaucracy developed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and computer technology developed after the Second World War. The cybernetization of capitalism started at the end of the 1870s with the growing control of production, distribution, and consumption. Information regarding these flows has since then had a central strategic importance as a condition for valorization. The historian James Beniger states that the first control-related problems came about when the first collisions took place between trains, putting commodities and human lives in peril. The signalization of the railways, travel time measurement and data transmission devices had to be invented so as to avoid such “catastrophes.” The telegraph, synchronized clocks, organizational charts in large enterprises, weighing systems, roadmaps, performance evaluation procedures, wholesalers, assembly lines, centralized decision-making, advertising in catalogues, and mass communications media were the devices invented during this period to respond, in all spheres of the economic circuit, to a generalized crisis of control connected to the acceleration of production set off by the industrial revolution in the United States. Information and control systems thus developed at the same time as the capitalist process of transformation of materials was growing and spreading. A class of middlemen, which Alfred Chandler called the “visible hand” of Capital, formed and grew. After the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was clear enough to PEOPLE that *expectability [had] become a source of profit as such and a source of confidence*. Fordism and Taylorism were part of this movement, as was the development of control over the mass of consumers and over public opinion via marketing and advertising, in charge of *extorting* from them by force, and then putting to work, their “preferences,” which according to the hypotheses of the marginalist economists, were the true source of value. Investment in organizational or purely technical planning and control technologies became more and more salable. After 1945, cybernetics supplied capitalism with a new

infrastructure of machines — computers — and above all with an intellectual technology that permitted the regulation of the circulation of flows within society, and making those flows *exclusively commodity flows*.

That the economic sectors of information, communication, and control have taken ever more of a part in the economy since the Industrial Revolution, and that “intangible labor” has grown relative to tangible labor, is nothing surprising or new. Today these account for the mobilization of more than 2/3 of the workforce. But this isn’t enough to fully define cybernetic capitalism. Because its equilibrium and the growth depend *continually* on its control capacities, *its nature has changed*. *Insecurity, much more than rarity, is the core of the present capitalist economy*. As Wittgenstein understood by looking at the 1929 crisis — and as did Keynes in his wake — there is a strong bond between the “state of trust” and the curbing of the marginal effectiveness of Capital, he wrote, in chapter XII of *General Theory*, in February 1934 — the economy rests definitively on the “play of language.” Markets, and with them commodities and merchants, the sphere of circulation in general, and, consequently, business, the sphere of production as a place of the anticipation of coming levels of yield, do not exist without conventions, social norms, technical norms, norms of the truth, on a meta-level which brings bodies and things into existence as commodities, even before they are subject to pricing. The control and communications sectors develop because commodity valorization needs to have a looping circulation of information parallel to the actual circulation of commodities, the production of a collective belief that objectivizes itself in values. In order to come about, all exchanges require “investments of form” — information *about* a formulation *of* what is to be exchanged — a *formatting* that makes it possible to put things into equivalence even before such a putting of things into equivalence has effectively taken place, a conditioning that is also a condition of agreement about the market. It’s true for goods, and it’s true for people. Perfecting the circulation of information will mean perfecting the market as a universal instrument of coordination. Contrary to what the liberal hypothesis had supposed, to sustain a fragile capitalism, contracts are not sufficient unto themselves within social relations. PEOPLE began to understand after 1929 that all contracts need to come with controls. Cybernetics entered into the operation of capitalism with the intention of minimizing uncertainties, incommensurability, the kinds of anticipation problems that can interfere in any commodity transaction. It contributes to consolidating the basis for the installation of capitalism’s mechanisms, to oiling Capital’s abstract machine.

With cybernetic capitalism, the *political moment* of political economy subsequently dominates its economic moment. Or, as Joan Robinson understands it looking from the perspective of economic theory, in her comments on Keynes:

“As soon as one admits the uncertainty of the forecasts that guide economic behavior, equilibrium has no more importance and History takes its place.” The political moment, here understood in the broader sense of that which subjugates, that which normalizes, that which determines what will happen by way of bodies and can record itself in socially recognized value, what extracts form from forms-of-life, is as essential to “growth” as it is to the reproduction of the system: on the one hand the capture of energies, their orientation, their crystallization, become the primary source of valorization; on the other hand, surplus value can be extracted from any point on the bio-political tissue on the condition that the latter reconstitutes itself incessantly. That the ensemble of expenditures has a tendency to morph into valorizable qualities also means that Capital permeates all living flows: the socialization of the economy and the anthropomorphosis of Capital are two symbiotic, indissoluble processes. In order for these processes to be carried out, it suffices and is necessary that all contingent action be dealt with by a combination of *surveillance and data capture devices*. The former are inspired by prison, insofar as they introduce a centralized system of panoptical visibility. These have for a long while been monopolized by the modern State. The latter, the data capture devices, are inspired by computer technology, insofar as they are part of the construction of a decentralized real-time gridding system. The common intent of these devices is *total transparency*, an absolute correspondence between the map and the territory, a will to knowledge accumulated to such degree that it becomes a will to power. One of the advancements made by cybernetics has consisted in enclosing its surveillance and monitoring systems upon themselves, guaranteeing that the surveillers and the monitors are themselves surveilled and/or monitored, with the development of a *socialization of control* which is the trademark of the so-called “information society.” The control sector becomes autonomous because of the *need to control control*, since commodity flows are overlaid by their double, flows of information the circulation and security of which must in turn be optimized. At the summit of this terracing of control, state control, the police, and the law, self-legitimizing violence, and judicial authority play the role of *controllers of last resort*. The surveillance one-upmanship that characterizes “control societies” is explained in simple terms by Deleuze, who says: “they have leaks everywhere.” This incessantly confirms the necessity for control. “In discipline societies, one never ceased to recommence (from school to barracks, etc. . . ) [the disciplinary process], whereas in control societies nothing is ever finished.”

Thus there is nothing surprising about the fact that the development of cybernetic capitalism has been accompanied by the development of all the forms of repression, by *hyper-securitarianism*. Traditional discipline, the generalization of a state of emergency — *emergenza* — are transplanted to grow inside a whole



system focused on *the fear of any threat*. The apparent contradiction between the reinforcement of the repressive functions of the State and the neo-liberal economic discourse that preaches “less State” — and permits Loïc Wacquant for instance to go into a critique of the liberal ideology hiding the increasing “penal State” — can only be understood in light of the cybernetic hypothesis. Lyotard explains it: “there is, in all cybernetic systems, a unity of reference that permits one to measure the disparity produced by the introduction of an event within the system, and then, thanks to such measurement, to translate that event into information to be fed into the system; then, in sum, if it is a regulated ensemble in homeostasis, to annul that disparity and return the system to the quantities of energy or information that it had before . . . Let’s stop here a moment. We see how the adoption of this perspective on society, that is, of the despotic fantasies of the masters, of placing themselves at the supposed location of the central zero, and thus of identifying themselves with the matrix of Nothingness . . . must force one to extend one’s idea of threat and thus of defense. *Since what event would NOT be a threat from this point of view?* All are; indeed, because they are disturbances of a circular nature, reproducing the same, and requiring a mobilization of energy for purposes of appropriation and elimination. Is this too ‘abstract’? Should I give an example? It is the very project that is being perpetrated in France on high levels, the institution of an operational Defense of the territory, already granted an operating Center of the army, the specific focus of which is to ward off the ‘internal’ threat, which is born within the dark recesses of the social body, of which the “national state” claims to be the clairvoyant head: this clairvoyance is called the national identification registry; . . . the translation of events into information for the system is called intelligence, . . . and the execution of regulatory orders and their inscription into the “social body,” above all when the latter is racked by some kind of intense emotion, for instance by the panicked fear which would seize hold of it if a nuclear war were to be triggered (or if some kind of a wave of protest, subversion, or civil desertion considered insane were to hit) — such execution requires an assiduous and fine-grained infiltration of the transmission channels in the social ‘flesh,’ or, as some superior officer or other put it quite marvelously, the ‘police of spontaneous movements.’” Prison is thus at the summit of a cascade of control devices, the guarantor of last resort that no disturbing event will take place within the social body that would hinder the circulation of goods and persons. The logic of cybernetics being to replace centralized institutions and sedentary forms of control by tracing devices and nomadic forms of control, prison, as a classical surveillance device, is obviously to be expanded and prolonged with monitoring devices such as the electronic bracelet, for instance. The development of *community policing* in the English speaking world, of “proximity policing” in France, also responds to a cybernetic

logic intended to ward off all events, and organize feedback. Within this logic, then, disturbances in a given zone can be all the better suppressed/choked off when they are absorbed/deadened by the closest system sub-zones.

Whereas repression has, within cybernetic capitalism, the role of warding off events, prediction is its corollary, insofar as it aims to eliminate all uncertainty connected to all possible futures. That's the gamble of statistics technologies. Whereas the technologies of the Providential State were focused on the forecasting of risks, whether probabilized or not, the technologies of cybernetic capitalism aim to multiply the domains of responsibility/authority. Risk-based discourse is the motor for the deployment of the cybernetic hypothesis; it is first distributed diffusely so as then to be internalized. Because risks are much more accepted when those that are exposed to them have the impression that they've chosen to take them on, when they feel responsible, and most of all when they have the feeling that they control them and are themselves the masters of such risks. But, as one expert admits, "zero risk" is a non-existent situation: "the idea of risk weakens causal bonds, but in so doing it does not make them disappear. On the contrary; it multiplies them. . . . To consider danger in terms of risk is necessarily to admit that one can never absolutely protect oneself against it: one may manage it, tame it, but never annihilate it." It is in its permanence in the system that risk is an ideal tool for affirming new forms of power, to the benefit of the growing stranglehold of devices on collectives and individuals. It eliminates everything that is at stake in conflicts by obligatorily bringing individuals together around the management of threats that are supposed to concern all of them in the same way. The argument that THEY would like to make us buy is as follows: the more security there is, the more concomitant production of insecurity there must be. And if you think that insecurity grows as prediction becomes more and more infallible, you yourself must be afraid of the risks. And if you're afraid of the risks, if you don't trust the system to completely control the whole of your life, your fear risks becoming contagious and presenting the system with a very real risk of defiance. In other words, to fear risks is already to represent a risk for society. The imperative of commodity circulation upon which cybernetic capitalism rests morphs into a general phobia, a fantasy of self-destruction. The control society is a paranoid society, which easily explains the proliferation of conspiracy theories within it. Each individual is thus subjectivized, within cybernetic capitalism, as a *Risk Dividual*, as *some enemy or another* [a "whatever enemy"] of the balanced society.

It should not be surprising then that the reasoning of France's François Ewald or Denis Kessler, those collaborators in chief of Capital, affirms that the Providential State, characteristic of the Fordist mode of social regulation, by reducing social risks, has ended up taking responsibility away from individuals. The dismantling

of social protection systems that we've been seeing since the start of the 1980s thus has been an attempt to give responsibility to each person by making *everyone* bear the "risks" borne by the capitalists alone towards the whole "social body." It is, in the final analysis, a matter of inculcating the perspective of social reproduction in each individual, who should expect nothing from society, but sacrifice everything to it. The social regulation of catastrophes and the unexpected can no longer be managed by simple social exclusion, as it was during the Middle Ages in the time of lepers, the logic of scapegoating, containment, and enclosure. If everybody now has to become responsible for the risks they make society run, it's only because they couldn't exclude so many anymore without the loss of a potential source of profit. Cybernetic capitalism thus forcibly couples the socialization of the economy and the increase of the "responsibility principle." It produces citizens as "Risk Dividuals" that self-neutralize, removing their own potential to destroy order. It is thus a matter of generalizing self-control, a disposition that favors the proliferation of devices, and ensures an effective relay. *All crises, within cybernetic capitalism, are preparations for a reinforcement of devices.* The anti-GMO protest movement, as well as the "mad cow crisis" of these last few years in France, have definitively permitted the institution of an unheard of tracking of Dividuals and Things. The accrued professionalization of control — which is, with insurance, one of the economic sectors whose growth is guaranteed by cybernetic logic — is but the other side of the rise of the citizen as a political subjectivity that has totally auto-repressed the risk that he or she objectively represents. This is how Citizen's Watch contributes to the improvement of piloting devices.

Whereas the rise of control at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century took place by way of a dissolution of personalized bonds — which gave rise to PEOPLE talking about "the disappearance of communities" — in cybernetic capitalism it takes place by way of a new soldering of social bonds entirely permeated by the imperative of self-piloting and of piloting others in the service of social unity: it is the *device-future* of mankind as citizens of the Empire. The present importance of these new *citizen-device systems*, which hollow out the old State institutions and drive the nebulous citizen-community, demonstrates that the great social machine which cybernetic capitalism has to comprise cannot do without human beings no matter how much time certain incredulous cyberneticians have put into believing it can, as is shown in this flustered epiphany from the middle of the 1980s:

"Systematic automation would in effect be a radical means of surpassing the physical or mental limitations that give rise to the most common of human errors: momentary losses of vigilance due to fatigue, stress, or routine; a provisional incapacity to simultaneously interpret a multitude of contradictory information, thus failing to master situations that are too complex; euphemization of risk under pressure from circumstances (emergencies, hierarchical pressures . . .); errors of

representation giving rise to an underestimation of the security of systems that are usually highly reliable (as might be the case of a pilot who categorically refuses to believe that one of his jet engines is on fire). One must however ask oneself whether removing the human beings – who are considered the weakest link in the man/machine interface – from the circuit would not definitely risk creating new vulnerabilities and necessarily imply the extension of those errors of representation and losses of vigilance that are, as we have seen, the frequent counterpart of an exaggerated feeling of security. Either way, the debate deserves to remain open.”

It certainly does.

## V

“The eco-society is *decentralized, communitarian, and participatory*. Individual *responsibility* and *initiative* really exist in it. The eco-society rests on the *plurality* of ideas about life, life styles and behaviors in life. The consequence of this is that equality and justice make progress. But also there is an upheaval in habits, ways of thinking, and morals. Mankind has invented a different kind of life, in a balanced society, having understood that maintaining a state of balance is more of a delicate process than maintaining a state of continual growth is. Thanks to a new vision, a new logic of complementarity, and new values, the people of eco-society have invented an economic doctrine, a political science, a sociology, a technology, and a psychology of the state of controlled equilibrium.”

Joel de Rosnay, *The Macroscope*, 1975

“Capitalism and socialism represent two kinds of organization of the economy, deriving from the same basic system, a system for quantifying value added. . . . Looking at it from this angle, the system called ‘socialism’ is but the corrective sub-system applied to ‘capitalism.’ One may therefore say that the most outdated capitalism is socialist in certain ways, and that all socialism is a ‘mutation’ of capitalism, destined to attempt to stabilize the system via redistribution — the redistribution considered necessary to ensure the survival of all, and to incite everyone to a broader consumption. In this sketch we call a kind of organization of the economy that would be designed so as to establish an acceptable balance between capitalism and socialism ‘social capitalism.’”

Yona Friedman, *Realizable Utopias*, 1974.

The events of May 68 gave rise to a political reaction in all western societies that PEOPLE hardly recall the scope of today. Capitalism was very quickly restructured, *as if an army were being put on the march to war*. The Rome Club — multinationals like Fiat, Volkswagen, and Ford — paid sociologists and ecologists to determine what products corporations should give up manufacturing so that the capitalist system could function better and be reinforced. In 1972, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology issued a report commissioned by said Rome Club, called *Limits to Growth*, which made a big splash because it recommended stopping the process of capitalist accumulation, including in the so-called developing countries. From the lofty heights of domination, THEY demanded “zero growth” so as to preserve social relations and the resources of the planet,

introducing qualitative components into their analysis of development, against the quantitative projections focusing on growth, and demanding – definitively – that it be entirely redefined; that pressure grew until it burst in the 1973 crisis. Capitalism seemed to have made its own self-critique. But I’m only bringing up the army and war again because the MIT report, put together by the economist Dennis H. Meadows, was inspired by the work of a certain Jay Forrester, who in 1952 had been assigned by the US Air Force to the task of putting together an alert and defense system – the SAGE system – which would for the first time coordinate radars and computers in order to detect and prevent a possible attack on American territory by enemy rockets. Forrester had assembled infrastructure for communications and control between men and machines, for the first time allowing them a “real time” interconnection. After that he had been named to the MIT school of management, to extend his skills in matters of systems analysis to the economic world. He applied the same principles of order and defense to business; he then went over cities and finally the whole of the planet with these principles, in his book *World Dynamics*, which ended up an inspiration to the MIT reporters. And so, the “second cybernetics” was a key factor in establishing the principles applied in this restructuring of capitalism. With it, political economy became a *life science*. It analyzed the world as an open system for the transformation and circulation of energy flows and monetary flows.

In France, an ensemble of pseudo-savants – the eccentric de Rosnay and the blathering Morin, but also the mystic Henri Atlan, Henri Laborit, René Passet and the careerist Attali – all came together to elaborate, in MIT’s wake, *Ten Commandments for a New Economy*, an “eco-socialism,” as they called it, following a systematic, that is, cybernetic, approach, obsessed by the “state of equilibrium” everything and everyone. It is useful, *a posteriori*, when listening to today’s “left” and the “left of the left,” to remember certain of the principles de Rosnay posited in 1975:

1. Preserve the variety of spaces and cultures, bio-diversity and multi-culturality.
2. Beware not to open or allow leakage of the information contained in the regulation loops.
3. Re-establish the equilibrium of the system as a whole through decentralization.
4. Differentiate so as to better integrate, since as Teilhard de Chardin, the visionary in chief of all cyberneticians said, “all real integration is based on prior differentiation. . . . Homogeneity, mixture, syncretism: this is entropy. Only *union within diversity* is creative. It increases complexity, and brings about higher levels of organization.”
5. To evolve: let yourself be attacked.
6. Prefer objectives and *projects* to detailed programming.

7. Know how to utilize information.
8. Be able to keep constraints on the system elements.

It is no longer a matter — as PEOPLE could still pretend to believe in 1972 — of questioning capitalism and its devastating effects; it is more a question of “*reorienting* the economy so as to better serve human needs, the maintenance and evolution of the social system, and the pursuit of a real cooperation with nature all at once. The balanced economy that characterizes eco-society is thus a ‘regulated’ economy in the cybernetic sense of the term.” The first ideologues of cybernetic capitalism talked about opening a community-based management of capitalism *from below*, about making everyone responsible thanks to a “collective intelligence” which would result from the progress made in telecommunications and informatics. Without questioning either private property or State property, THEY invite us to co-management, to a kind of control of business by communities of wage-workers and users. The cybernetic reformist euphoria was at such extremes in the beginning of the 1970s that THEY could even evoke the idea of a “social capitalism” (as if that hadn’t been what we’ve had since the 19<sup>th</sup> century) without even trembling anymore, and defend it as did the architect ecologist and graphomaniac Yona Friedman, for instance. Thus what PEOPLE have ended up calling “third way socialism” and its alliance with ecology — and PEOPLE can clearly see how powerful the latter has become politically in Europe today — was crystallized. But if one had to refer to just one event that in those years exposed the torturous progress towards this new alliance between socialism and liberalism in France, not without the hope that something different would come out of it, it would have to be the LIP affair. With those events all of socialism, even in its most radical currents, like “council communism,” failed to take down the liberal arrangement and, without properly suffering any real defeat to speak of, ended up simply absorbed by cybernetic capitalism. The recent adherence of the ecologist Cohn-Bendit — the mild-mannered ‘leader’ of the May 68 events — to the liberal-libertarian current is but a logical consequence of a deeper reversal of “socialist” ideas against themselves.

The present “anti-globalization” movement and citizen protest in general show no break with this training by pronouncements made thirty years ago. They simply demand that it be put into place faster. Behind the thundering counter-summits they hold, one can see the same cold vision of society as a totality threatened by break-up, one and the same *goal of social regulation*. For them it is a matter of *restoring* the social coherence pulverized by the dynamics of cybernetic capitalism, and *guaranteeing*, in the final analysis, everyone’s participation in the latter. Thus it is not surprising to see the driest economism impregnate the ranks of the citizens in such a tenacious and nauseating manner. The citizen,

dispossessed of everything, parades as an *amateur* expert in social management, and conceives of the nothingness of his life as an uninterrupted succession of “projects” to carry out: as the sociologist Luc Boltanski remarks, with a feigned naiveté, “everything can attain to the dignity of a *project*, including enterprises which may be hostile to capitalism.” In the same way as the “self-management” device was seminal in the reorganization of capitalism thirty years ago, citizen protest is none other than the present instrument of the modernization of politics. This new “process of civilization” rests on the critique of authority developed in the 1970s, at the moment when the second cybernetics crystallized. The critique of political representation as separate power, already co-opted by the new Management into the economic production sphere, is today reinvested into the political sphere. Everywhere there is only horizontality of relations, and participation in projects that are to replace the dusty old hierarchical and bureaucratic authority, counter-power and decentralization that is supposed to defeat monopolies and secrecy. Thus the chains of social interdependence can extend and tighten, chains which are sometimes made of surveillance, and sometimes of delegation. Integration of civil society by the State, and integration of the State by civil society more and more work together like gears. It is thus that the *division of the labor of population management* necessary for the dynamics of cybernetic capitalism is organized— and the affirmation of a “global citizenship” will, predictably, put the finishing touches on it.

After the 1970s socialism was just another democratism anymore, now completely necessary for the progress of the cybernetic hypothesis. The ideal of direct democracy and participatory democracy must be seen as the desire for a general expropriation by the cybernetic system of *all the information* contained in its parts. The demand for transparency and traceability is but a demand for the perfect circulation of information, a *progressivism in the logic of flux* that rules cybernetic capitalism. Between 1965 and 1970, a young German philosopher, presumed to be the inheritor of “critical theory,” laid the foundations for the democratic paradigm of today’s contestation by entering noisily into a number of controversies with his elders. Habermas countered the socio-cybernetician Niklas Luhmann, hyper-functionalist systems theoretician, by counterposing the unpredictability of dialogue, arguments irreducible to simple information exchanges. But it was above all against Marcuse that this project of a generalized “ethics of discussion” which was to become radicalized in the critique of the democratic project of the Renaissance. Marcuse explained, commenting on Max Weber’s observations, that “rationalization” meant that technical reasoning, based on the principles of industrialization and capitalism, was indissolubly *political* reasoning; Habermas retorted that an ensemble of immediate intersubjective relations escaped technology-mediated subject-object relations, and that in the end it was the former that



framed and guided the latter. In other words, in light of the development of the cybernetic hypothesis, politics should aim to become autonomous and to extend the sphere of discourse, to multiply democratic arenas, to build and research a consensus which in sum would be emancipatory by nature. Aside from the fact that he reduced the “lived world” and “everyday life” — the whole of what escaped the control machine, to social interactions and discourses, Habermas more profoundly ignored the fundamental heterogeneity of forms-of-life among themselves. In the same way as contracts, consensus is attached to the objective of unification and pacification via the management of differences. In the cybernetic framework, all faith in “communicational action,” all communication that does not assume the possibility of its impossibility, ends up serving control. This is why science and technology are not, as the idealist Habermas thought, simply ideologies which dress the concrete tissue of inter-subjective relations. They are “ideologies materialized,” a cascade of devices, a concrete government-mentality that passes through such relations. We do not want more transparency or more democracy. There’s already enough. On the contrary — we want more opacity and more intensity.

But we can’t be done dealing with socialism (expired now as a result of the cybernetic hypothesis) without mentioning another voice: I want to talk about the critique centered around man-machine relations that has attacked what it sees as the core of the cybernetics issue by posing the question of technology beyond technophobia — the technophobia of someone like Theodore Kaczynski, or of Oregon’s monkey-man of letters, John Zerzan — and technophilia, and which intended to found a new *radical ecology* which would not be stupidly romantic. In the economic crisis of the 1970s, Ivan Illich was among the first to express the hope for a re-establishment of social practices, no longer merely through a new relations between subjects, as Habermas had discussed, but also between subjects and objects, via a “reappropriation of tools” and institutions, which were to be won over to the side of general “conviviality,” a conviviality which would be able to undermine the law of value. Simondon, philosopher of technology, used this same reappropriation as his vaulting stick to transcend Marx and Marxism: “work possesses the intelligence of the elements; capital possesses the intelligence of groups; but it is not by uniting the intelligence of elements and of groups that one can come up with an intelligence of the intermediary and non-mixed being that is the technological individual. . . The dialogue of capital and labor is false, because it is in the past. The socialization of the means of production cannot alone give rise to a reduction in alienation; it can only do so if it is the prior condition for the acquisition, on the part of the human individual, of the intelligence of the individuated technological object. This relationship of the human individual to the technological individual is the most difficult to

form and the most delicate.” The solution to the problem of political economy, of capitalist alienation, and of cybernetics, was supposed to be found in the invention of a new kind of relationship with machines, a “technological culture” that up to now had been lacking in western modernity. Such a doctrine justified, thirty years later, the massive development of “citizen” teaching in science and technology. Because living beings, contrary to the cybernetic hypothesis’ idea, are essentially *different* from machines, mankind would thus have the responsibility to *represent* technological objects: “mankind, as the witness of the machines,” wrote Simondon, “is responsible for their relationship; the individual machine represents man, but man represents the ensemble of machines, since there is no one machine for all the machines, whereas there can be a kind of thinking that would cover them all.” In its present utopian form, seen in the writings of Guattari at the end of his life, or today in the writings of Bruno Latour, this school claimed to “make objects speak”, and to represent their norms in the public arena through a “parliament of Things.” Eventually the technocrats would make way for the “mechanologues,” and other “medialogues”; it’s hard to see how these would differ from today’s technocrats, except for that they would be even more familiar with technological life, citizens more ideally coupled with their devices. What the utopians pretended not to know was that the integration of technological thinking by everybody would in no way undermine the existing power relations. The acknowledgement of the man-machines hybridity in social arrangements would certainly do no more than extend the struggle for recognition and the tyranny of transparency to the inanimate world. In this renovated political ecology, socialism and cybernetics would attain to their point of optimal convergence: the project of a green republic, a *technological democracy* — “a renovation of democracy could have as its objective a pluralistic management of the whole of the machinic constituents,” wrote Guattari in the last text he ever published — the lethal vision of a definitive civil peace between humans and non-humans.

## VI

“Just like modernization did in a prior era, today’s post-modernization (or informatization) marks a new way of becoming human. Regarding the production of souls, as Musil put it, one would really have to replace the traditional technology of industrial machines with the cybernetic intelligence of information and communications technologies. We will need to invent what Pierre Levy has called an ‘anthropology of cyberspace.’”

Michael Hardt & Toni Negri, *Empire*, 1999.

“Communication is the fundamental ‘third way’ of imperial control. . . Contemporary communications systems are not subordinate to sovereignty; on the contrary, it is sovereignty that appears to be subordinate to communications. . . Communication is the form of capitalist production in which capital has succeeded in entirely and globally subjugating society to its regime, suppressing all the possible ways of replacing it.”

Michael Hardt & Toni Negri, *Empire*, 1999.

The cybernetic utopia has not only sucked all the blood out of socialism and its force as an opposition by making it into a “proximity democratism.” In the confusion-laden 1970s, it also contaminated the most advanced Marxism, making its perspective inoffensive and untenable. “Everywhere,” wrote Lyotard in 1979, “in every way, the Critique of political economy and the critique of the alienated society that was its corollary are used as elements in the *programming of the system*.” Faced with the unifying cybernetic hypothesis, the *abstract* axioms of potentially revolutionary antagonisms — class struggle, “human community” (*Gemeinwesen*) or “social living” versus Capital, *general intellect* versus the process of exploitation, “multitudes” versus “Empire,” “creativity” or “virtuosity” versus work, “social wealth” versus commodity value, etc. — definitively serve the political project of a broader social integration. The critique of political economy and ecology do not critique the economic style proper to capitalism, nor the totalizing and systemic vision proper to cybernetics; paradoxically, they even make them into the engines driving their emancipatory philosophies of history. Their teleology is no longer that of the proletariat or of nature, but that of Capital. Today their perspective is, deeply, one of social economy, of a “solidarity economy,” of a “transformation of the mode of production,” no longer via the socialization or nationalization of the means of production but via a *socialization of the decisions of production*. As writers like for example Yann Moulier Boutang put it, it is in the end a matter of making *recognized* the “collective social character of the creation

of wealth,” that the profession of living as a citizen be valorized. This pretend communism is reduced to no more than an economic democratism, to a project to reconstruct a “post-Fordist” State from below. Social cooperation is presented as if it were a pre-ordained given, with no ethical incommensurability and no interference in the circulation of emotions, no community problems.

Toni Negri’s career within the Autonomia group, and the nebula of his disciples in France and in the anglo world, show just how much Marxism could authorize such a slippery slide towards the will to will, towards “infinite mobilization,” sealing its unavoidable eventual defeat by the cybernetic hypothesis. The latter has had no problem plugging itself into the metaphysics of production that runs throughout Marxism and which Negri pushed to the extreme by considering all affects, all emotions, all communications – in the final analysis – as labor. From this point of view, autopoiesis, self-production, self-organization, and autonomy are categories which all play a homologous role in the distinct discursive formations they emerged from. The demands inspired by this critique of political economy, such as the demand for a guaranteed minimum income and the demand for “citizenship papers for all” merely attack, fundamentally, the sphere of production. If certain people among those who today demand a guaranteed income have been able to break with the perspective of putting everyone to work – that is, the belief in work as a fundamental value – which formerly still had predominance in the unemployed workers’ movements, it was only on condition – paradoxically – that they’d be able to keep the restrictive definition of value they had inherited, as “labor value.” Thus they were able to ignore just how much they contributed, in the end, to the circulation of goods and persons.

It is precisely because valorization is no longer assignable to what takes place solely in the production sphere that we must now displace political gestures – I’m thinking of normal union strikes, for example, not even to mention general strikes – into the spheres of product and information circulation. Who doesn’t understand by now that the demand for “citizenship papers for all” – if it is satisfied – will only contribute to a greater mobility of the labor force worldwide? Even American liberal thinkers have understood that. As for the guaranteed minimum income, if that were obtained, would it not simply put one more supplementary source of income into the circuit of value? It would just represent a formal equivalent of the system’s investment in its “human capital” – just another loan in anticipation of future production. Within the framework of the present restructuring of capitalism, the demand for a guaranteed minimum income could be compared to a neo-Keynesian proposal to relaunch “effective demand” which could serve as a safety net for the hoped-for development of the “New Economy.” Such reasoning is also behind the adherence of many economists to the idea of a “universal income” or a “citizenship income.” What would justify such a thing,

even from the perspective of Negri and his faithful flock, is a *social debt contracted* by capitalism towards the “multitudes.” When I said, above, that Negri’s Marxism had in the end operated, like all other Marxisms, on the basis of an *abstract* axiom concerning social antagonism, it’s only because it has a *concrete* need for the fiction of a united social body. In the days when he was most on the offense, such as the days he spent in France during the unemployed workers’ movement of winter 1997–1998, his perspectives were focused on laying the foundation for a *new social contract*, which he’d call communist. Within classical politics, then, Negriism was already playing the avant-garde role of the ecologist movements.

So as to rediscover the intellectual circumstances explaining this blind faith in the social body, seen as a possible subject and object of a contract, as an ensemble of equivalent elements, as a homogeneous class, as an organic body, one would need to go back to the end of the 1950s, when the progressive decomposition of the working class in western societies disturbed marxist theoreticians since it overturned the axiom of class struggle. Some of them thought that they could find in Marx’s *Grundrisse* a demonstration, a prefiguring of what capitalism and its proletariat were becoming. In his fragment on machines, Marx envisaged that when industrialization was in full swing, individual labor power would be able to cease being the primary source of surplus value, since “the general social understandings, knowledge” would become the most immediate of productive powers. This kind of capitalism, which PEOPLE call “cognitive” today, would no longer be contested by a proletariat borne of large-scale manufacturing. Marx supposed that such contestation would be carried out by the “social individual.” He clarified the reasoning behind this unavoidable process of reversal: “Capital sets in motion all the forces of science and nature; it stimulates cooperation and social commerce so as to *liberate (relatively speaking) the creation of wealth from labor time*. . . These are the material conditions that will break up the foundations of capital.” The contradiction of the system, its catastrophic antagonism, came from the fact that Capital measures all value by labor time, while simultaneously diminishing it because of the productivity gains granted it by automation. Capitalism is doomed, in sum, because it demands — at the same time — more labor and less labor. The responses to the economic crisis of the 1970s, the cycle of struggles which in Italy lasted more than ten years, gave an unexpected blow of the whip to this teleology. The utopia of a world where machines would work instead of us appeared to be within reach. Creativity, the social individual, the *general intellect* - student youth, cultivated dropouts, intangible laborers, etc. — detached from the relations of exploitation, would be the new subject of the coming communism. For some, such as Negri or Castoriadis, but also for the situationists, this meant that the new revolutionary subject would reappropriate its “creativity,” or its “imagination,” which had been confiscated by labor relations, and would make non-labor time

into a new source of self and collective emancipation. Autonomia was founded as a political movement on the basis of such analyses.

In 1973, Lyotard, who for a long while had associated with Castoriadis within the *Socialism or Barbarism* group, noted the lack of differentiation between this new marxist, or post-marxist, discourse and the discourse of the new political economy: “The body of machines which you call a social subject and the universal productive force of man is none other than the body of modern Capital. The knowledge in play within it is in no way proper to all individuals; it is separate knowledge, a moment in the metamorphosis of capital, obeying it as much as it governs it at the same time.” The ethical problem that is posed by putting one’s hopes in collective intelligence, which today is found in the utopias of the autonomous collective use of communications networks, is as follows: “we cannot decide that the primary role of knowledge is as an indispensable element in the functioning of society and to act, consequently, in place of it, if we have already decided that the latter is itself just a big machine. Inversely, we can’t count on its critical function and imagine that we could orient its development and spread in such a direction if we’ve already decided that it is not an integral whole and that it remains haunted by a principle of contestation.” By conjugating the two nevertheless irreconcilable terms of such an alternative, the ensemble of heterogeneous positions of which we have found the womb in the discourse of Toni Negri and his adepts (which represents the point of completion of the marxist tradition and its metaphysics) is doomed to restless political wandering, in the absence of any destination other than whatever destination domination may set for it. The essential issue here — an issue which seduces many an intellectual novice — is that such knowledge is never power, that this understanding is never self-understanding, and that such intelligence always remains separate from experience. The political trajectory of Negriism is towards a formalization of the informal, towards rendering the implicit explicit, making the tacit obvious, and in brief, towards valorizing everything that is *outside of value*. And in effect, Yann Moulier Boutang, Negri’s loyal dog, ended up dropping the following tidbit in 2000, in an idiotic cocaine-addict’s unreal rasp: “capitalism, in its new phase, or its final frontier, needs the communism of the multitudes.” Negri’s *neutral communism*, the mobilization that it stipulates, is not only compatible with cybernetic capitalism — it is now the condition for its effectuation.

Once the propositions in the *MIT Report* had been fully digested, the “growth” economists highlighted the primordial role to be played by creativity and technological innovation — next to the factors of Labor and Capital — in the production of surplus value. And other experts, equally well informed, learnedly affirmed that the propensity to innovate depended on the degree of education, training, health, of populations — after Gary Becker, the most radical of the economicists,

PEOPLE would call this “human capital” – and on the complementarity between economic agents (a complementarity that could be favored by putting in place a regular circulation of information through communications networks), as well as on the complementarity between activity and environment, the living human being and the non-human living thing. What explains the crisis of the 1970s is that there was a whole cognitive and natural social base for the maintenance of capitalism and its development which had up to that time been neglected. Deeper still, this meant that non-labor time, the ensemble of moments that fall outside the circuits of commodity valorization – that is, everyday life – are also a factor in growth, and contain a *potential value* insofar as they permit the maintenance of Capital’s human base. PEOPLE, since then, have seen armies of experts recommending to businesses that they apply cybernetic solutions to their organization of production: the development of telecommunications, organization in networks, “participatory” or project-based management, consumer panels, quality controls – all these were to contribute to upping rates of profit. For those who wanted to get out of the crisis of the 1970s without questioning capitalism, to “relaunch growth” and not stop it up anymore, would consequently need to work on a profound reorganization of it, towards democratizing economic choices and giving institutional support to non-work (life) time, like in the demand for “freeness” for example. It is only in this way that PEOPLE can affirm, *today*, that the “new spirit of capitalism” inherits the social critique of the years 1960–1970: to the exact extent that the cybernetic hypothesis inspired the mode of social regulation that was emerging then.

It is thus hardly surprising that communications, the realization of a common ownership of impotent knowledge that cybernetics carries out, today authorizes the most advanced ideologues to speak of “cybernetic communism,” as have Dan Sperber or Pierre Levy – the cybernetician-in-chief of the French speaking world, collaborator on the magazine *Multitudes*, and author of the aphorism, “cosmic and cultural evolution culminate today in the virtual world of cyberspace.” “Socialists and communists,” write Hardt and Negri, have for a long time been demanding free access and control for the proletariat over the machines and materials it uses to produce. However, in the context of intangible and biopolitical production, this traditional demand takes on a new aspect. Not only do the masses use machines to produce, the masses themselves become more and more mechanical, and the means of production more and more integrated into the bodies and minds of the masses. In this context, reappropriation means attaining free access to (and control over) knowledge, information, communication, and feelings/emotions, since those are some of the primary means of biopolitical production.” In this communism, they marvel, PEOPLE wouldn’t share wealth, they’d share information,

and everybody would be simultaneously a producer and consumer. Everyone will become their own “self-media”! Communism will be a communism of robots!

Whether it merely breaks with the individualist premises about economy or whether it considers the commodity economy as a regional component of a more general economy — which is what’s implied in all the discussions about the notion of value, such as those carried out by the German group *Krisis*, all the defenses of gift against exchange inspired by Mauss, and ‘the anti-cybernetic energetics of someone like Bataille, as well as all the considerations on the Symbolic, whether made by Bourdieu or Baudrillard — the critique of political economy, *in fine*, remains dependent on economicism. In a health-through-activity perspective, the absence of a workers’ movement corresponding to the revolutionary proletariat imagined by Marx was to be dealt with by the militant labor of organizing one. “The Party,” wrote Lyotard, “must furnish proof that the proletariat is real and it cannot do so any more than one can furnish proof of an ideal of thought. It can only supply its own existence as a proof, and carry out a *realistic politics*. The reference point of its discourse remains directly unrepresentable, non-ostensible. The repressed disagreement has to do with the interior of the workers’ movement, in particular with the form taken by recurring conflicts on the organization question.” The search for a fighting class of producers makes the Marxists the most consequential of the *producers of an integrated class*. It is not an irrelevant matter, in existential and strategic terms, to enter into political conflict rather than producing social antagonism, to be a contradictor within the system or to be a regulator within it, to create instead of wishing that creativity would be freed, to desire instead of desiring desire — in brief, to fight cybernetics, instead of being a *critical cybernetician*.

Full of a sad passion for one’s roots, one might seek the premises for this alliance in historical socialism, whether in Saint-Simon’s philosophy of networks, in Fourier’s theory of equilibrium, or in Proudhon’s mutualism, etc. But what the socialists all have in common, and have for two centuries, which they share with those among them who have declared themselves to be communists, is that they fight against only one of the effects of capitalism alone: in all its forms, socialism fights against separation, by recreating the social bonds between subjects, between subjects and objects, without fighting against the totalization that makes it possible for the social to be assimilated into a body, and the individual into a closed totality, a subject-body. But there is also another common terrain, a mystical one, on the basis of which the transfer of the categories of thought within socialism and cybernetics have been able to form an alliance: that of a shameful humanism, an *uncontrolled* faith in the genius of humanity. Just as it is ridiculous to see a “collective soul” in the construction of a beehive by the erratic behavior of bees,



as the writer Maeterlinck did at the beginning of the century from a Catholic perspective, in the same way the maintenance of capitalism is in no way dependent upon the existence of a collective consciousness in the “masses” lodged within the heart of production. Under cover of the axiom of class struggle, the historical socialist utopia, the utopia of *the* community, was definitively a utopia of One promulgated by the Head on a body that couldn’t be one. All socialism today — whether it more or less explicitly categorizes itself as democracy-, production-, or social contract-focused — takes sides with cybernetics. Non-citizen politics must come to terms with itself as *anti-social* as much as anti-state; it must refuse to contribute to the resolution of the “social question,” refuse the formatting of the world as a series of problems, and reject the democratic perspective structured by the acceptance of all of *society’s* requests. *As for cybernetics, it is today no more than the last possible socialism.*

## VII

“Theory means getting off on immobilization . . . What gives you theoreticians a hard on and puts you on the level with our gang is the coldness of the clear and the distinct; of the distinct alone, in fact; *the opposable*, because the clear is but a dubious redundancy of the distinct, expressed via a philosophy of the subject. Stop raising the bar, you say! Escaping pathos — that’s *your* pathos.”

Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 1975

When you’re a writer, poet or philosopher it’s customary to talk about the power of the Word to hinder, foil, and pierce the informational flows of the Empire, the binary enunciation machines. You’ve heard the eulogists of poetry clamoring that they’re the last rampart against the barbarism of communication. Even when he identifies his position with that of the minor literatures, the eccentrics, the “literary lunatics,” when he hunts down the idiolects that belabor their tongues to demonstrate what escapes the code, so as to implode the idea of comprehension itself, to expose the fundamental misunderstanding that defeats the tyranny of information, the author who knows himself to be acted through, spoken through, and traveled through by burning intensities, is for all that no less animated, when seated before his blank page, by a prophetic concept of wording. For me, as a “receiver,” the shock effect that certain writings have deliberately dedicated themselves to the quest for starting in the 1960s are in this sense no less paralyzing than the old categorical and sententious critical theory was. Watching from my easy chair as Guyotat or Guattari get off on each line, contorting, burping, farting, and vomiting out their delirium-future makes me get it up, moan, and get off only very rarely; that is, only when some desire sweeps me away to the shores of voyeurism. Performances, surely, but performances of what? Performances of a boarding school alchemy where the philosopher’s stone is hunted down amid mixed sprays of ink and cum. Proclaiming *intensity* does not suffice to engender the *passage* of intensity. As for theory and critique, they remain cloistered in a typeface of clear and distinct pronouncements, as transparent as the passage ought to be from “false consciousness” to clarified consciousness.

Far from giving into some mythology of the Word or an essentialization of meaning, Burroughs, in his *Electronic Revolution* proposed forms of struggle against the controlled circulation of pronouncements, offensive strategies of enunciation that came to light in his “mental manipulation” operations that were inspired by his “cut-up” experiments, a combination of pronouncements

based on randomness. By proposing to make “interference/fog” into a revolutionary weapon, he undeniably introduced a new level of sophistication to all prior research into offensive language. But like the situationist practice of “detournement”/media-hijacking, which in its *modus operandi* is in no way distinguishable from “recuperation”/co-optation — which explains its spectacular fortune — “interference/fog” is merely a relative operation. This is also true for the contemporary forms of struggle on the Internet which are inspired by these instructions of Burroughs’: piracy, virus propagation, *spamming*. . . all these can *in fine* only serve to temporarily destabilize the operation of the communications network. But as regards the matter we are dealing with here and now, Burroughs was forced to agree, in terms inherited — certainly — from theories of communication that hypostatized the issuer-receiver relationship: “it would be more useful to try to discover how the models of exploration could be altered so as to permit the subject to liberate his own spontaneous models.” What’s at issue in any enunciation is not whether it’s received but whether it can become contagious. I call *insinuation* — the *illapsus*, according to medieval philosophy — a strategy consisting in following the twists and turns of thought, the wandering words that win me over while at the same time constituting the vague terrain where their reception will establish itself. By playing on the relationship of the sign to what it refers to, by using clichés against themselves, like in caricatures, by letting the reader come closer, insinuation makes possible an encounter, an intimate presence, between the subject of the pronouncement and those who relate to the pronouncement itself. “There are passwords hidden under slogans,” write Deleuze and Guattari, “words that are pronounced as if in passing, components of a passage; whereas slogans mark points of stoppage, stratified and organized compositions.” Insinuation is the haze of theory and suits a discourse whose objective is to permit struggles against the worship of transparency, attached at its very roots to the cybernetic hypothesis.

That the cybernetic vision of the world is an abstract machine, a mystical fable, a cold eloquence which continually escapes multiple bodies, gestures, words — all this isn’t enough to conclude its unavoidable defeat. What cybernetics needs in that regard is precisely the same thing that maintains it: the pleasure of extreme rationalization, the burn-scars of “tautism” [tautological autism], the passion for reduction, the orgasm of binary flattening. *Attacking the cybernetic hypothesis — it must be repeated — doesn’t mean just critiquing it, and counterposing a concurrent vision of the social world; it means experimenting alongside it, actuating other protocols, redesigning them from scratch and enjoying them.* Starting in the 1950s, the cybernetic hypothesis has been the secret fascination of a whole generation of “critical” thinkers, from the situationists to Castoriadis, from Lyotard to Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. One might map their responses in this way: these first

opposed it by developing their thought process outside it, overhanging it, and these second by thinking within the heart of it, on the one hand “a metaphysical type of disagreement with the world, which focuses on super-terrestrial, transcendent worlds or utopian counter-worlds” and on the other hand “a poietic type of disagreement with the world, which sees the path to freedom within the Real itself,” as Peter Sloterdijk summarizes. The success of all future revolutionary experimentation will essentially be measured by its capacity to make this conflict obsolete. This begins when bodies change scale, feel themselves deepen, are passed through by molecular phenomena escaping systemic points of view, escaping representations of their molarity, make each of their pores into a seeing machine clinging to the temporal evolutions of things instead of a camera, which frames, delimits, and assigns beings. In the lines that follow I will insinuate a protocol for experimentation, in an attempt to defeat the cybernetic hypothesis and undo the world it perseveringly persists in constructing. But like for other erotic or strategic arts, its use isn’t something that is decided on nor something that imposes itself. It can only originate in something totally involuntary, which implies, of course, a certain casual manner.

## VIII

“We also lack that generosity, that indifference to fate, which, if it doesn’t give any great joy, does give one a familiarity with the worst of degradations, and will be granted us by the world to come.”

Roger Caillois

“The Imaginary pays an ever higher price for its strength, while from beyond its screen the possible Real shines through. What we have today, doubtless, is but the domination of the Imaginary, having made itself totalitarian. But this is precisely its dialectical and ‘natural’ limit. Either, even desire itself and its subject, the process of attaining corporeality of the latent *Gemeinwesen*, will be burnt away at the final stake, or all simulacra will be dispelled: the extreme struggle of the species rages on against the managers of alienation and, in the bloody sunset of all these ‘suns of the future’ a truly possible future will at last begin to dawn. Mankind, in order to truly Be, now only needs to make a definitive break with all ‘concrete utopias.’

Giorgio Cesarano, *Survival Manual*, 1975

All individuals, groups, all lifestyles/forms-of-life, cannot fit into the feedback loop. There are some that are just too fragile. That threaten to snap. And there are some that are just too strong . . . that threaten to *break shit*.

These temporal evolutions,  
as an instance of breakage,  
suppose that at a given moment of lived experience, bodies go through the  
acute feeling that it can all abruptly come to an end,  
from one moment to the next,  
that the nothingness,  
that silence,  
that death are suddenly within reach of bodies and gestures.  
It can end.  
The threat.

Defeating the process of cybernetization, toppling the empire, will take place through opening up a breach for *panic*. Because the Empire is an ensemble of devices that aim to ward off all events, a process of control and rationalization, its fall will be perceived by its agents and its control apparatus as the most irrational of phenomena. The lines that follow here give a cursory view of what such a

cybernetic view of panic might be, and indicate *a contrario* its effective power: “panic is thus an *inefficient* collective behavior because it is not properly adapted for danger (real or supposed); it is characterized by the regression of mentalities to an archaic, gregarious level, and gives rise to primitive, desperate flight reactions, disordered agitation, physical violence, and general acts of self- or hetero-aggressivity: panic reactions show the characteristics of the collective soul in a altered state of perception and judgment; alignment on the basis of the most unsophisticated behaviors; suggestibility; participation in violence without any idea of individual responsibility.”

Panic makes the cyberneticians panic. It represents *absolute risk*, the permanent potential threat that the intensification of relations between lifestyles/forms-of-life presents. Because of this, it should be made as terrifying as the appointed cybernetician himself endeavors to show it being: “panic is dangerous for populations; it increases the number of victims resulting from an accident by causing inappropriate flight reactions, which may indeed be the only real reason for deaths and injuries; every time it’s the same scenario: acts of blind rage, trampling, crushing. . .” the lie in that description of course is that it imagines panic phenomena exclusively from a sealed environment: as a liberation of bodies, panic self-destructs because everyone tries to get out through an exit that’s too narrow.

But it is possible to envision that there could be, as happened in Genoa in July 2001, panic to a degree sufficient to fuck up the cybernetic programming and pass through various social groups/milieus, panic that would go beyond the annihilation stage, as Canetti suggests in *Mass and Power* : “If we weren’t in a theater we could all run away together like a flock of threatened animals, and increase the energy of our escape with our movement in the same direction. An active mass fear of this kind is the great collective event lived by all herd animals and who save themselves together because they are good runners.” In this sense I see as political fact of the greatest importance the panic involving more than a million persons that Orson Welles provoked in 1938 when he made his announcement over the airwaves in New Jersey, at a time when radiophonics were still in early enough a state that people gave its broadcasts a certain truth value. Because “the more we fight for our own lives the more it becomes obvious that we are fighting against the others hemming us in on all sides,” and alongside an unheard of and uncontrollable expenditure, panic also reveals the naked civil war going on: it is “a disintegration of the mass *within* the mass.”

In panic situations, communities break off from the social body, designed as a totality, and attempt to escape it. But since they are still physically and socially captive to it, they are obliged to attack it. Panic shows, more than any other phenomenon, the plural and non-organic body of the species. Sloterdijk, that

last man of philosophy, extends this positive concept of panic: “from a historical perspective, the fringe elements are probably the first to develop a *non hysterical* relationship with the possible apocalypse. . . . Today’s fringe consciousness is characterize by something that might be called a pragmatic relationship with catastrophe.” To the question: “doesn’t civilization have as a precondition the absence or even exclusion of the panic element, to the extent that it must be built on the basis of expectations, repetitions, security and institutions?” Sloterdijk counters that “it is only thanks to the proximity of panic experiences that living civilizations are possible.” They can thus ward off the potential catastrophes of the era by rediscovering a primordial familiarity with them. They offer the possibility of *converting these energies* into “a *rational ecstasy* through which the individual opens up to the intuitive idea: ‘I am the world’.” What really busts the levees and turns panic in into a positive potential charge, a confused intuition (in confusion) of its transcendence, is that *each person, when in a panic situation, is like the living foundation of his own crisis*, instead of undergoing it like some kind of exterior inevitability. The quest after active panic — the “panic experience of the world” — is thus a technique for assuming the risk of disintegration that each person represents for society, as a risk dividual. It is the end of hope and of all concrete utopias, forming like a bridge crossing over to a state of waiting for/expecting nothing anymore, of having nothing more to lose. And this is a way of reintroducing — through a particular sensibility to the possibilities of lived situations, to their possibilities of collapse, to the extreme fragility of their organization — a serene relationship with the flight forward movement of cybernetic capitalism. In the twilight of nihilism, fear must become as *extravagant* as hope.

Within the framework of the cybernetic hypothesis, panic is understood as a status change in the self-regulating system. For a cybernetician, any disorder can only come from there having been a discrepancy between the pre-set behaviors and the real behaviors of the system’s elements. A behavior that escapes control while remaining indifferent to the system is called “noise,” which consequently cannot be handled by a binary machine, reduced to a 0 or a 1. Such noises are the lines of flight, the wanderings of desires that have still not gone back into the valorization circuit, the non-enrolled. What we call “the Imaginary Party” is the *heterogeneous* ensemble of noises which proliferate *beneath* the Empire, without however reversing its unstable equilibrium, without modifying its state, solitude for instance being the most widespread form of these passages to the side of the Imaginary Party. Wiener, when he laid the foundation for the cybernetic hypothesis, imagined the existence of systems — called “closed reverberating circuits” — where the discrepancies between the behaviors desired by the whole and the real behaviors of those elements would proliferate. He envisaged that

these noises could then brutally increase in series, like when a driver/pilot's panicked reactions make him wreck his vehicle after he's driven onto an icy road or hit a slippery spot on the highway. The overproduction of bad feedbacks that distort what they're supposed to signal and amplify what they're supposed to contain — such situations point the way to a pure *reverberatory power*. The present practice of bombarding certain nodal points on the Internet network with information — *spamming* — aims to produce such situations. All revolt under and against Empire can only be conceived in starting to amplify such “noises,” capable of comprising what Prigogine and Stengers — who here call up an analogy between the physical world and the social world — have called “bifurcation points,” critical thresholds from which a new system status becomes possible.

The shared error of Marx and Bataille with all their categories of “labor power” or “expenditure” was to have situated the power to overturn the system *outside of the circulation of commodity flows*, in a pre-systemic exteriority set before and after capitalism, in nature for the one, and in a founding sacrifice for the other, which were the springboards from which one could think through the endless metamorphosis of the capitalist system. In issue number one of the *Great Game* [Le Grand Jeu], the problem of equilibrium-rupture is posed in more immanent, if still somewhat ambiguous, terms: “This force that exists, cannot remain unemployed in a cosmos which is full like an egg and within which everything acts on and reacts to everything. So then there must be some kind of trigger or lever that will suddenly turn the course of this current of violence in another direction. Or rather in a parallel direction, but on another plane thanks to a sudden shift. Its revolt must become the Invisible Revolt.” It is not simply a matter of the “invisible insurrection of a million minds” as the celestial Trocchi put it. The force that we call *ecstatic politics* does not come from any substantial outsideness, but from the discrepancy, the small variation, the whirling motion that, moving outward starting from the interior of the system, push it locally to its breaking point and thus pull up in it the intensities that still pass between the various lifestyles/forms-of-life, in spite of the attenuation of intensities that those lifestyles effectuate. To put it more precisely, ecstatic politics comes from desires that exceed the flux insofar as the flux nourishes them without their being trackable therein, where desires pass *beneath the tracking radar*, and occasionally establish themselves, instantiating themselves among lifestyles that in a given situation are playing the role of attractors. It is known that it is in the nature of desire to leave no trace wherever it goes. Let's go back to that moment when a system at equilibrium can topple: “in proximity to bifurcation points,” write Prigogine and Stengers, “where the system has a ‘choice’ between two operating regimes/modes, and is, in proper terms, neither in the one nor the other, deviation from the general law is total: the fluctuations can attain to the same heights of grandeur that the average



macroscopic values can . . . Regions separated by macroscopic distances correlate together: the speed of the reactions produced there regulate one another, and local events thus reverberate through the whole system. This is when we truly see a paradoxical state, which defies all our 'intuition' regarding the behavior of populations, a state where the smallest differences, far from canceling each other out, succeed one another and propagate incessantly. The indifferent chaos of equilibrium is thus replaced by a creative chaos, as was evoked by the ancients, a *fecund chaos* from which different structures can arise."

It would be naive to directly deduce, in this scientific description of the potential for disorder, a new political art. The error of the philosophers and of all thought that deploys itself without recognizing in itself, in its very pronouncement, what it owes to desire, is that it situates itself artificially above the processes that it is aiming to discuss, even when it is based on experience; something Prigogine and Stengers are not themselves immune to, by the way. Experimentation, which does not consist in completed experiences but in the process of completing them, is located *within* fluctuation, *in the heart of the noise*, lying in wait for the bifurcation. The events that take place within the social, on a level significant enough to influence fates in general, are comprised of more than just a simple sum of individual behaviors. Inversely, individual behaviors can no longer have, alone, an influence on fates in general. There remain, however, three stages, which are really one, and which, even though they are not represented, are felt by bodies anyway as immediately political problems: I'm talking about the amplification of non-conforming acts, the intensification of desires and their rhythmic accord; the arrangement of territory, even if "fluctuations cannot invade the whole system all at once. They must first take place within a particular region. Depending on whether this initial region has smaller than critical dimensions or not . . . the fluctuation will either regress, or, contrarily, it will invade and overtake the whole system." So there are three questions, then, which require investigation in view of an offensive against the Empire: *a question of force, a question of rhythm, and a question of momentum.*

## IX

“That’s what generalized programs sharpen their teeth on; on little bits of people, on little bits of men who don’t want any program.”

Philippe Carles, Jean-Louis Comolli, “Free Jazz: Out of Program, Out of Subject, in Out Field”, 2000

“The few active rebels should have the qualities of speed and endurance, be ubiquitous, and have independent sources of provisions.”

T.E. Lawrence, “Guerrilla” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Volume X, 1926

These questions, seen from the neutralized and neutralizing perspective of the laboratory observer or of the chat-room/salon, must be reexamined in themselves, and tested out. Amplifying the fluctuations: what’s that mean to me? How can deviance, mine for example, give rise to disorder? How do we go from sparse, singular fluctuations, the discrepancies between each individual and the norm, each person and the devices, to futures and to destinies? How can what capitalism routs, what escapes valorization, become a force and turn against it? Classical politics resolved this problem with mobilization. To Mobilize meant to add, to aggregate, to assemble, to synthesize. It meant to unify little differences and fluctuations by subjecting them to a great crime, an un-rectifiable injustice, that nevertheless must be rectified. Singularities were already there. They only had to be subsumed into a unique predicate. Energy was also already there. It just needed to be organized. I’ll be the head, they’ll be the body. And so the theoretician, the avant-garde, the party, have made that force operate in the same way as capitalism did, by putting it into circulation and control in order to seize the enemy’s heart and take power by taking off its head, like in classical war.

The invisible revolt, the “coup-du-monde” [world coup] that Trocchi talked about, on the contrary, plays on potential. It is invisible because it is unpredictable in the eyes of the imperial system. Amplified, the fluctuations relative to the imperial devices never aggregate together. They are as *heterogeneous* as desires are, and can never form a closed totality; they can’t even form into a “masses,” which name itself is just an illusion if it doesn’t mean an *irreconcilable multiplicity* of lifestyles/forms-of-life. Desires flee; they either reach a clinamen or not, they either produce intensity or not, and even beyond flight they continue to flee. They get restive under any kind of representation, as bodies, class, or party. It must thus be deduced from this that all propagation of fluctuations will also be a propagation of civil war. Diffuse guerrilla action is the form of struggle that will produce such invisibility in the eyes of the enemy. The recourse to diffuse guerrilla action taken

by a fraction of the Autonomia group in 1970s Italy can be explained precisely in light of the advanced cybernetic character of the Italian govern-mentality of the time. These years were when “consociativism,” which prefigured today’s citizenism, was developing; the association of parties, unions, and associations for the distribution and co-management of Power. This sharing is not the most important thing here; the important thing is management and control. This mode of government goes far beyond the Providential State by creating longer chains of interdependence between citizens and devices, thus extending the principles of control and management from administrative bureaucracy.

It was T.E. Lawrence that worked out the principles of guerrilla war from his experience of fighting alongside the Arabs against the Turks in 1916. What does Lawrence tell us? That the battle itself is no longer the only process involved in war, in the same way as the destruction of the heart of the enemy is no longer its central objective; a fortiori if this enemy is faceless, as is the case when dealing with the impersonal power materialized in the Empire’s cybernetic devices: “The majority of wars are contact based; two forces struggling to remain close to one another in order to avoid any tactical surprises. The war of the Arabs had to be a rupture based war: containing the enemy with the silent threat of a vast desert unknown to it and only revealing themselves at the moment of attack.” Deleuze, though he too rigidly opposed guerrilla war, posed the problem of individuality and war, and that of collective organization, clarified that it was a question of opening up space as much as possible, and making prophecies, or rather of “fabricating the real instead of responding to it.” The invisible revolt and diffuse guerrilla war do not sanction injustices, they create a possible world. In the language of the cybernetic hypothesis, I can create invisible revolt and diffuse guerrilla war on the molecular level in two ways. First gesture: I fabricate the real, I break things down, and break myself down by breaking it all down. This is the source of all acts of sabotage What my act represents at this moment doesn’t exist for the device breaking down with me. Neither 0 nor 1, I am the absolute outsider/third party. My orgasm surpasses devices/my joy infuriates them. Second gesture: I do not respond to the human or mechanical feedback loops that attempt to encircle me/figure me out; like Bartleby, I’d “prefer not to.” I keep my distance, I don’t enter into the space of the flows, I don’t plug in, I stick around. I wield my passivity as a force against the devices. Neither 0 nor 1, I am absolute nothingness. Firstly: I cum perversely. Secondly: I hold back. Beyond. Before. *Short Circuiting and Unplugging*. In the two cases the feedback does not take place and a line of flight begins to be drawn. An external line of flight on the one hand that seems to spread outwards from me; an internal line of flight that brings me back to myself. All forms of interference/fog come from these two gestures, external and internal lines of flight, sabotage and retreat, the search for forms of struggle and for the

assumption of different forms-of-life. Revolution is now about figuring out how to conjugate those two moments.

Lawrence also tells how it was also a question that it took the Arabs a long time to resolve when fighting the Turks. Their tactics consisted basically in “always advancing by making small hits and withdrawing, neither making big drives, nor striking big blows. The Arab army never sought to keep or improve their advantage, but to withdraw and go strike elsewhere. It used the least possible force in the least possible time and hit the most withdrawn positions.” Primacy was given to attacks against war supplies, and primarily against communications channels, rather than against the institutions themselves, like depriving a section of railway of rail. Revolt only becomes invisible to the extent that it achieves its objective, which is to “deny all the enemy’s goals,” to never provide the enemy with easy targets. In this case it imposes “passive defense” on the enemy, which can be very costly in materials and men, *in energies*, and extends into the same movement its own front, making connections between the foci of attack. Guerrilla action thus since its invention tends to be diffuse. This kind of fighting immediately gives rise to new relationships which are very different than those that exist within traditional armies: “we sought to attain maximum irregularity and flexibility. Our diversity disoriented the enemy’s reconnaissance services . . . If anyone comes to lack conviction they can stay home. The only contract bonding them together was honor. Consequently the Arab army did not have discipline in the sense where discipline restrains and smothers individuality and where it comprises the smallest common denominator of men.” However, Lawrence did not idealize the anarchist spirit of his troops, as spontaneists in general have tended to do. The most important thing is to be able to count on a sympathetic population which then can become a space for potential recruitment and for the spread of the struggle. “A rebellion can be carried out by two percent active elements and 98 percent passive sympathizers,” but this requires time and propaganda operations. Reciprocally, all offensives involving an interference with the opposing lines imply a perfect reconnaissance/intelligence service that “must allow plans to be worked out in absolute certainty” so as to never give the enemy any goals. This is precisely the role that an organization now might take on, in the sense that this term once had in classical politics; serving a function of reconnaissance/intelligence and the transmission of accumulated knowledge-powers. Thus the spontaneity of guerrilleros is not necessarily opposed to organizations as strategic information collection tanks.

But the important thing is that the practice of interference, as Burroughs conceived it, and after him as hackers have, is in vain if it is not accompanied by an organized practice of reconnaissance into domination. This need is reinforced by the fact that the space where the invisible revolt can take place is not the desert

spoken of by Lawrence. And the electronic space of the Internet is not the smooth neutral space that the ideologues of the information age speak of it as either. The most recent studies confirm, moreover, that the Internet is vulnerable to targeted and coordinated attacks. The web matrix was designed in such a way that the network would still function if there were a loss of 99% of the 10 million routers — the cores of the communications network where the information is concentrated — destroyed in a random manner, as the American military had initially imagined. On the other hand, a selective attack, designed on the basis of precise research into traffic and aiming at 5% of the most strategic core nodes — the nodes on the big operators' high-speed networks, the input points to the transatlantic lines — would suffice to cause a collapse of the system. Whether virtual or real, the Empire's spaces are structured by territories, striated by the cascades of devices tracing out the frontiers and then erasing them when they become useless, in a constant scanning sweep comprising the very motor of the circulation flows. And in such a structured, territorialized and deterritorialized space, the front lines with the enemy cannot be as clear as they were in Lawrence's desert. The floating character of power and the nomadic dimensions of domination thus require an increased reconnaissance activity, which means an organization for the circulation of knowledge-powers. Such was to be the role of the Society for the Advancement of Criminal Science (SASC).

In *Cybernetics and Society*, when he foresaw, only too late, that the political use of cybernetics tends to reinforce the exercise of domination, Wiener asked himself a similar question, as a prelude to the mystic crisis that he was in at the end of his life: "All the techniques of secrecy, interference in messages, and bluffing consist in trying to make sure that one's camp can make a more effective use than the other camp of the forces and operations of communication. In this combative use of information, *it is just as important to leave one's own information channels open as it is to obstruct the channels that the opposing side has at its disposal*. An overall confidentiality/secrecy policy almost always implies the involvement of much more than the secrets themselves." The problem of force reformulated as a problem of invisibility thus becomes a *problem of modulation of opening and closing*. It simultaneously requires both organization and spontaneity. Or, to put it another way, diffuse guerrilla war today requires that *two distinct planes of consistency* be established, however meshed they may be — one to organize opening, transforming the interplay of lifestyles/forms-of-life into information, and the other to organize closing, the resistance of lifestyles/forms-of-life to being made into information. Curcio: "The guerrilla party is the maximum agent of invisibility and of the exteriorization of the proletariat's knowledge-power; invisibility towards the enemy cohabiting with it, on the highest level of synthesis." One may here object that this is after all nothing but one more binary machine,

neither better nor worse than any of those that are at work in cybernetics. But that would be incorrect, since it means not seeing that at the root of these gestures is a fundamental distance from the regulated flows, a distance that is precisely the condition for any experience within the world of devices, a distance which is a power that I can layer and make a future from. It would above all be incorrect because it would mean not understanding that the alternation between sovereignty and unpower cannot be programmed, that the course that these postures take is a wandering course, that what places will end up chosen — whether on the body, in the factory, in urban or peri-urban non-places — is unpredictable.

# X

“The revolution is the movement, but the movement is not the revolution”  
Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 1977

“In a world of regulated scenarios,  
minutely pre-calculated programs,  
impeccable music scores,  
well-placed choices and acts,  
what puts up any obstacles, what  
hangs back, what wobbles?  
Wobbliness indicates the body.  
Of the body.

This limping/wobbling indicates a weak-heeled man.

A God held onto him there. He was God by the heel. The Gods limp whenever they aren't hunchbacked.

The dysfunction is the body. What wobbles, hurts, holds up poorly, the exhaustion of breath, the miracle of balance. And music holds up no more than man.

Bodies have still not been properly regulated by the law of commodities.

They don't work. They suffer. They get worn out. They get it wrong. They escape.

Too hot, too cold, too near, too far, too fast, too slow.”

Philippe Carles, Jean-Louis Comolli, “Free Jazz: Out of Program, Out of Subject, in Out Field”, 2000

People have often insisted — T.E. Lawrence is no exception — on the kinetic dimensions of politics and war as a strategic counterpoint to a quantitative concept of relations of force. That's the typical guerrilla perspective as opposed to the traditional perspective. It's been said that if it can't be massive, a movement should be fast, faster than domination. That was how the Situationist International formulated their program in 1957: “it should be understood that we are going to be seeing and participating in *a race between free artists and the police to experiment with and develop the new techniques of conditioning*. The police already have a considerable head start. The outcome depends on the appearance of passionate and liberating environments, or the reinforcement — scientifically controllable and smooth — of the environment of the old world of oppression and horror . . . If control over these new means is not totally revolutionary, we could be led

towards the police-state ideal of a society organized like a beehive.” In light of this lattermost image, an explicit but *static* vision of cybernetics perfected as the Empire is fleshing it out, the revolution should consist in a reappropriation of the most modern technological tools, a reappropriation that should permit contestation of the police on their own turf, by creating a counter-world with the same means that it uses. Speed here is understood as one of the important qualities of the revolutionary political arts. But this strategy implies attacking sedentary forces. In the Empire, such forces tend to fade as the impersonal power of devices becomes nomadic and moves around, gradually imploding all institutions.

Conversely, slowness has been at the core of another section/level of struggles against Capital. Luddite sabotage should not be interpreted from a traditional marxist perspective as a simple, primitive rebellion by the organized proletariat, a protest action by the reactionary artisans against the progressive expropriation of the means of production given rise to by industrialization. It is a deliberate *slow down* of the flux of commodities and persons, anticipating the central characteristic of cybernetic capitalism insofar as it is movement towards movement, a will to potential, generalized acceleration. Taylor conceived the Scientific Organization of Labor as a technique for fighting “soldiering/go-slow” phenomena among laborers which represented an effective obstacle to production. On the physical level, mutations of the system also depend on a certain slowness, as Prigogine and Stengers point out: “The faster communications within the system are, the bigger is the proportion of insignificant fluctuations incapable of transforming the state of the system: therefore, that state will be all the more stable.” Slowdown tactics thus have a supplementary potential in struggles against cybernetic capitalism because they don’t just attack it in its being but in its process itself. But there’s more: slowness is also necessary to putting lifestyles/forms-of-life that are irreducible to simple information exchanges into relation with each other. It expresses resistance of relations to interaction.

Above and beyond speed and slowness in communications, there is the space of *encounters* which allow one to trace out an absolute limit to the analogy between the social world and the physical world. This is basically because two particles never *encounter* one another except where their rupture phenomena can be deduced from laboratory observations. The encounter is that durable instant where intensities manifest between the forms-of-life *present* in each individual. It is, even above the social and communications, the territory that actualizes the potentials of bodies and actualizes itself in the differences of intensity that they give off and comprise. Encounters are above language, outside of words, in the virgin lands of the unspoken, in suspended animation, a potential of the world which is also its negation, its “power to not be.” What is other people? “Another possible world,” responds Deleuze. The Other incarnates the possibility that the world has of not



being, of being otherwise. This is why in the so-called “primitive” societies war takes on the primordial importance of annihilating any other *possible* world. It is pointless, however, to think about conflict without also thinking about enjoyment, to think about war without thinking about love. In each tumultuous birth of love, the fundamental desire to transform oneself by transforming the world is reborn. The hate and suspicion that lovers excite around them is an automatic defensive response to the war they wage, merely by loving each other, against a world where all passion must misunderstand itself and die off.

Violence is the first rule of the game of encounters. And it polarizes the various wanderings of desire that Lyotard invokes the sovereign freedom of in his book *Libidinal Economy*. But because he refuses to admit that enjoyments agree together on a particular territory to precede them and where forms-of-life can mix and move together; because he refuses to understand that the neutralization of all intensities is itself a kind of intensification — that of the Empire, no less — because he can’t deduce from this that while they are inseparable, life impulses and death impulses are not neutral relative to a singular Other, Lyotard in the end cannot go beyond the most cybernetization-compatible hedonism: relax, let yourself go, let out your desires! Enjoy, enjoy; there’ll always be something left! There’s no doubt that conduction, abandon, and mobility in general can heighten the amplification of deviations from the norm as long as they acknowledge what interrupts flows within the very heart of circulation itself. In light of the acceleration that cybernetics gives rise to, speed and nomadism can only be secondary developments beside the primary *slow-down policies*.

Speed upholds institutions. Slowness cuts off flows. The kinetic problem, properly speaking, in politics, thus isn’t about choosing between two kinds of revolt but about abandoning oneself to a *pulsation*, of exploring other intensifications besides those that are commanded by the temporality of urgency. The cyberneticians’ power has been their ability to give rhythm to the social body, which tends to prevent all respiration. Canetti proposes that rhythm’s anthropological genesis is associated with racing: “Rhythm is at its origin a rhythm of feet; it produces, intentionally or not, a rhythmic noise.” But this racing is not predictable as a robot’s would be; “the two feet never land with the same force. The difference between them might be more or less vast, depending on personal dispositions and moods. But you can also go faster or more slowly, run, suddenly stop, jump. . .” This means that rhythm is the opposite of a program, that it depends on forms-of-life, and that speed problems can be dealt with by looking at rhythm issues. All bodies, insofar as they are *wobbly*, have a certain rhythm that shows that it is in their nature to hold untenable/unholdable positions. This rhythm, which comes from the limping/wobble of bodies, the movement of feet, Canetti adds, is — furthermore — at the origins of writing, in the sense that it started with the tracks left by animals

in motion, that is, of History in motion. Events are the appearance of such traces and making History means improvising in search of a rhythm. Whatever credit we give to Canetti's demonstrations, they do indicate — as true fictions do — that political kinetics can be better understood as the *politics of rhythm*. This means, *a minima*, that the binary techno-rhythm imposed by cybernetics must be opposed by *other rhythms*.

But it also means that these other rhythms, as manifestations of ontological wobbliness, have always had a creative political function. Canetti himself also discusses how on the one hand “the rapid repetition by which steps are added onto steps gives the illusion that there's a larger number of beings present. They do not move from place to place, they carry on their dance always in the same location. The noise made by their steps does not die, it is repeated and echoes out for a long time, always with the same resonance and the same vivacity. *They make up for their small size in number by their intensity.*” On the other hand, “when their trampling is reinforced, it is as if they had called for backup. They exercise a force of attraction on everybody in the area, a force that doesn't stop as long as they continue their dance.” Searching for good rhythm, then, opens things up for an intensification of experience as well as for numerical increase. It is an instrument of aggregation as well as an exemplary action to be imitated. On the individual scale as well as on the social scale, bodies themselves lose their sense of unity in order to grow as potential weapons: “the equivalence of the participants ramifies out into the equivalency of their members. Everything mobile about a human body takes on a life of its own, each leg, each arm lives as if for itself alone.” The politics of rhythm is thus the search for a reverberation, *another state*, comparable to trance on the part of the social body, through the ramification of each body. Because there are indeed two possible regimes of rhythm in the cybernetized Empire. The first, which Simondon refers to, is that of the technician-man, who “ensure the integrative function and prolong self-regulation outside of each monad of automatism,” technicians whose “lives are made up of the rhythm of the machines surrounding them, and that connect them to each other.” The second rhythm aims to undermine this interconnective function: it is profoundly dis-integrating, rather than merely noisy. It is a *rhythm of disconnection*. The collective conquest of this *accurate dissonant tempo* must come from a prior abandon to *improvisation*.

“Lifting the curtain of words, improvisation becomes gesture,  
an act still unspoken,  
a form still unnamed, un-normed, un-honored.  
To abandon oneself to improvisation  
to liberate oneself already — however beautiful they may be -

from the world's already-present musical narratives.  
Already present, already beautiful, already narratives, already a world.  
To undo, o Penelope, the musical bandaging that forms  
our cocoon of sound,  
which is not the world, but is the ritual habit of the world.

Abandoned, it offers itself up to what floats outside and around meaning,  
around words,  
around the codes;  
it offers itself up to the intensities,  
to reserve, to enthusiasm, to energy,  
in sum, to the nearly-unnamable.  
. . . Improvisation welcomes threats and transcends them,  
it dispossesses them of themselves and records their potential and risk.”

## XI

“It’s the haze, the solar haze, filling space. Rebellion itself is a gas, a vapor. Haze is the first state of nascent perception and produces the mirage in which things climb and drop, like the movement of a piston, and men rise and hover, suspended by a cord. Hazy vision, blurred vision; a sketch of a kind of hallucinatory perception, a cosmic gray. The gray splits in two, and gives out black when shadow wins out or light disappears, but also gives out white when *the luminous itself becomes opaque*.”

Gilles Deleuze, “Shame and Glory: T.E. Lawrence,” *Critic and Clinic*, 1993.

“No one and nothing gives an alternative adventure as a present: there’s no possible adventure besides that of conquering a fate. You can’t wage this conquest without starting from that spatio-temporal place where ‘your’ things stamp you as one of theirs.”

Giorgio Cesarano, *Survival Manual*, 1975

From the cybernetic perspective, threats cannot be welcomed and transcended *a fortiori*. They must be absorbed, eliminated. I’ve already said that the infinitely renewed impossibility of this annihilation of events is the final certainty that practices of opposition to the device-governed world can be founded on. Threat, and its generalization in the form of panic, poses an unsolvable energetic problem for the holders of the cybernetic hypothesis. Simondon thus explains that machines with a high information outflow and control their environment with precision have a weak energetic output. Conversely, machines that require little energy to carry out their cybernetic mission produce a poor rendering of reality. The transformation of forms into information basically contains two opposing imperatives: “information is in one sense that which brings a series of unpredictable, new states, following no predefined course at all; it is thus that which requires *absolute availability* from an information channel with respect to all the aspects of modulation that it routes along; *the information channel should in itself have no predetermined form and should not be selective*. . . . On the opposite hand, information is distinct from noise because information can be assigned a certain code and given a relative uniformization; in all cases where noise cannot be immediately/directly brought down to below a certain level, a *reduction of the margin of indetermination and unpredictability* in information signals is made.” In other words, for a physical, biological, or social system to have enough energy to ensure its reproduction, its control devices must carve into the mass of the unknown, and slice into the ensemble of possibilities between what is characterized by *pure*

*chance*, and has nothing to do with control, and what can enter into control as *hazard risks*, immediately susceptible to a probability calculation. It follows that for any device, as in the specific case of sound recording devices, “a compromise should be made that preserves a sufficient information output to meet practical needs, and an energy output high enough to keep the background noise at a level that does not disturb the signal levels.” Or take the case of the police as another example; for it, this would just be a matter of finding the balance point between repression — the function of which is to decrease social background noise — and reconnaissance/intelligence — which inform them about the state of and movements in society by looking at the signals it gives off.

To provoke panic first of all means *extending the background interference* that imposes itself when the feedback loops are triggered, and which makes the recording of behavioral discrepancies by the ensemble of cybernetic apparatuses costly. Strategic thinking grasped the offensive scope of such interference early on. When Clausewitz was so bold as to say, for example, that “popular resistance is obviously not fit to strike large-scale blows” but that “like *something vaporous and fluid*, it should not condense anywhere.” Or when Lawrence counterposed traditional armies, which “resemble immobile plants,” and guerrilla groups, comparable to “an influence, an idea, a kind of intangible, invulnerable entity, with no front or back, which spreads everywhere like a *gas*.” *Interference is the prime vector of revolt*. Transplanted into the cybernetic world, the metaphor also makes reference to the resistance to the tyranny of transparency which control imposes. Haze disrupts all the typical coordinates of perception. It makes it indiscernible what is visible and what is invisible, what is information and what is an event. This is why it represents one of the conditions for the possibility of events taking place. *Fog makes revolt possible*. In a novel called “Love is Blind,” Boris Vian imagined what the effects of a real fog in existing relations. The inhabitants of a metropolis wake up one morning filled by a “tidal wave of opacity” that progressively modifies all their behaviors. The needs imposed by appearances quickly become useless and the city is taken over by collective experimentation. Love becomes free, facilitated by a permanent nudity of all bodies. Orgies spread everywhere. Skin, hands, flesh; all regain their prerogative, since “the domain of the possible is extended when one is no longer afraid that the light might be turned on.” Incapable of prolonging a fog that they did not contribute to the formation of, they are relieved when “the radio says that experts have noted that the phenomenon will be returning regularly.” In light of this everyone decides to put out their own eyes so that life can go on happily. The passage into destiny: the fog Vian speaks of can be conquered. It can be conquered by reappropriating violence, a reappropriation that can even go as far as mutilation. This violence consists entirely in the clearing away of defenses, in the opening of throughways, meanings, minds. “Is it never

pure?” asks Lyotard. “Is a *dance* something true? One could still say yes. But that’s not its power.” To say that revolt must become foglike means that it should be dissemination and dissimulation at the same time. In the same way as the offensive needs to make itself opaque in order to succeed, opacity must make itself offensive in order to last: that’s the cipher of the invisible revolt.

But that also means that its first objective must be to resist all attempts to reduce it away with demands for representation. Fog is a vital response to the imperative of clarity, transparency, which is the first imprint of imperial power on bodies. To become foglike means that I finally take up the part of the shadows that command me and prevent me from believing all the fictions of direct democracy insofar as they intend to ritualize the transparency of each person in their own interests, and of all persons in the interests of all. To become opaque like fog means recognizing that we don’t represent anything, that we aren’t identifiable; it means taking on the untotalizable character of the physical body as a political body; it means opening yourself up to still-unknown possibilities. It means resisting with all your power any struggle for recognition. Lyotard: “What you ask of us, theoreticians, is that we constitute ourselves as identities, as managers. But if there’s one thing we’re sure of, it’s that this operation (of exclusion) is just a cheap show, that incandescences are made by no one, and belong to no one.” Nevertheless, it won’t be a matter of reorganizing a few secret societies or conquering conspiracies like free-masonry, carbonarism, as the avant-gardes of the last century envisioned — I’m thinking mostly of the College of Sociology. *Establishing a zone of opacity* where people can circulate and experiment freely without bringing in the Empire’s information flows, means producing “anonymous singularities,” recreating the conditions for a possible experience, an experience which will not be immediately flattened out by a binary machine assigning a meaning/direction to it, a dense experience that can transform desires and the moments where they manifest themselves into something beyond desire, into a narrative, into a filled-out body. So, when Toni Negri asked Deleuze about communism, the latter was careful not to assimilate it into a realized and transparent communication: “you ask whether societies of control or communication would give rise to forms of resistance capable of giving a new chance for a communism conceived as a ‘transverse organization of free individuals.’ I don’t know; perhaps. But this would be impossible if minorities got back hold of the megaphone. Maybe words, communication, are rotten. They’re entirely penetrated by money: not by accident, but by their nature. We have to detourn/misuse words. Creating has always been something different from communicating. *The important thing is maybe to create vacuoles of non-communication, interrupters who escape control.*” Yes, the important thing for us is to have opacity zones, opening cavities, empty intervals, *black blocs* within the cybernetic matrix of power. The irregular

war waged against the Empire, on the level of a given place, a fight, a riot, from now on will start with the construction of opaque and offensive zones. Each of these zones shall be simultaneously a *small group/nucleus* starting from which one might experiment without being perceptible, and a panic-propagating *cloud* within the ensemble of the imperial system, the coordinated war machine, and spontaneous subversion at all levels. The proliferation of these zones of offensive opacity (ZOO), and the intensification of their interrelations, will give rise to an *irreversible* disequilibrium.

As a way of showing the kinds of conditions needed to “create opacity,” as a weapon and as an interrupter of flows, it is useful to look one more time to the internal criticisms of the cybernetic paradigm. Provoking a change of status/state in a physical or social system requires that disorder, deviations from the norm, be concentrated into a space, whether real or virtual. In order that behavioral fluctuations become contagious, it is necessary that they first attain a “critical mass,” the nature of which is clarified by Prigogine and Stengers: “It results from the fact that the ‘outside world,’ the environment around the fluctuating region, always tends to deaden the fluctuation. Critical mass measures the relationship between the volume, where the reactions take place, and the contact surface, the place of linkage. Critical mass is thus determined by a competition between the system’s ‘power of integration’ and the chemical mechanisms that amplify the fluctuation within the fluctuating subregion.” This means that all deployment of fluctuations within a system is doomed to fail if it does not have at its disposition a local anchor, a place from which the deviations that arise can move outwards, contaminating the whole system. Lawrence confirms it, one more time: “The rebellion must have an *unassailable base*, a place sheltered not only from attack but from the fear of attack.” In order for such a place to exist, it has to have “independent supply lines,” without which no war is conceivable. If the question of the base is central to all revolt, it is also because of the very principles on the basis of which systems can attain equilibrium. For cybernetics, the possibility of a contagion that could topple the system has to be absorbed/deadened by the most immediate environment around the autonomous zone where the fluctuations take place. This means that the effects of control are more powerful in the periphery closest to the offensive opacity zone that creates itself around the fluctuating region. The size of the base must consequently grow ever greater as proximity monitoring is upheld.

These bases must also be as inscribed in the space itself as in people’s minds: “The Arab revolt,” Lawrence explains, “was to be found in the ports of the red sea, in the desert, or in the minds of the men who supported it.” These are territories as much as they are mentalities. We’ll call them *planes of consistency*. In order that offensive opacity zones can form and be reinforced, there need to be planes like

that, which connect deviations together, which work like a lever and fulcrum to overturn fear. Autonomy, historically — the Italian *Autonomia* group of the 1970s for example, and the Autonomy that is possible is none other than the continual movement of perseverance of planes of consistency that establish themselves as *unrepresentable spaces*, as bases for secession from society. The reappropriation by the critical cyberneticians of the category of autonomy/self-rule — along with the ideas deriving from it, self-organization, auto-poïesis, self-reference, self-production, self-valorization, etc. — is from this point of view the central ideological maneuver of the last twenty years. Through the cybernetic prism, giving oneself one's own laws, producing subjectivities, in no way contradict the production of the system and its regulation. By calling for the multiplication of Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZ) in the real world and in the virtual world ten years ago, Hakim Bey became the victim of the idealism of those who wanted to abolish politics without having thought about it first. He found himself forced to separate out a place for hedonistic practice within the TAZ, to separate out a place for the “anarchist” expression of forms-of-life from the place of political resistance, from the form of the struggle. If autonomy is here thought of as something temporary, it is because thinking about its *duration* would require conceiving of a struggle that merges with all of life; envisioning for example the *transmission of warrior knowledge*. Bey-type Liberal-anarchists are unaware of the field of intensities in which their sovereignty cries out to be deployed and their project of a social contract with no State at root postulates the identity of all beings since in the end it is about maximizing pleasures in peace until the end of time. On the one hand. On the one hand the TAZ are defined as “free enclaves,” places whose law is freedom, good things, the Marvelous. On the other, the secession from the world that they issue from, the “folds” that they lodge themselves in between the real and its encoding, would not come into being until after a succession of “refusals.” This “Californian Ideology,” by posing autonomy as an attribute of individual or collective subjects, deliberately confuses two incommensurable planes: the “self-realization” of persons and the “self-organization” of society. This is because autonomy, in the history of philosophy, is an ambiguous notion that simultaneously expresses liberation from all constraints *and* submission to higher natural laws, and can serve to feed the hybrid and restructuring discourses of the “anarcho-capitalist” cyborgs.

The autonomy I'm talking about isn't temporary nor simply defensive. It is not a substantial quality of beings, but the very condition of their becoming/future. It doesn't leave the supposed unity of the Subject, but engenders multiplicities. It does not attack merely the sedentary forms of power, like the State, and then skim over the circulating, “mobile,” “flexible” forms. It gives itself the means of lasting and of moving from place to place, means of withdrawing as well as



attacking, opening itself up as well as closing itself off, connecting mute bodies as bodiless voices. It sees this alternation as the result of an endless experimentation. "Autonomy" means that we make *the worlds that we are* grow. The Empire, armed with cybernetics, insists on autonomy for it alone, as the unitary system of the totality: it is thus forced to annihilate all autonomy whenever it is heterogeneous. We say that autonomy is for everyone and that the fight for autonomy has to be amplified. The present form taken on by the civil war is above all a *fight against the monopoly on autonomy*. That experimentation will become the "fecund chaos," communism, the end of the cybernetic hypothesis.

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