

Ulysse Carrière

**TECHNICALLY MAN DWELLS  
UPON THIS EARTH**

**BECOMING**



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*For Plato, Deleuze,  
and Brianna Ghey*

## INTRODUCTION

For ideas are, in the long run, essentially foreign to human existence; and the body – receptacle of the involuntary muscles, of the internal organs and circulatory system over which it has no control – is foreign to the spirit, so that it is even possible for people to use the body as a metaphor for ideas, both being something quite alien to human existence as such. – Yukio Mishima, *Sun and Steel*

To *think*, is to be inhabited by an abstract logic unmovingly progressing towards its completion. One is tempted to say it is to be haunted, but specters being reflections of memories and desires, while the Intellect actualizes without a proper end, the latter has no land to haunt, no castle in which to roam. Thinking, understood not as a byproduct of conceptualization but as that through which conceptualizing enacts itself, is a self-differential engine which creates a path for itself via an endless division of itself.

Integral estrangement of the concept from life has then to be seen as the prime condition for its identity with life, its lack of proper interest the ground for every

possible interest. These circles are conjoined through a single non-existent point, never touching, intersecting or superposing. The Intellect is not imagined, only conceived. Yet here imagination seeps back as it must, and although in the strictest terms such a warning is unnecessary, two hypothetical errors can be embraced here, which we might call *contemplative* and *gnostic*.

The contemplative stance mistakenly understands the manifoldness of thinking as a world unto itself, one which, because it might be capable of generating its own content, can be occupied as one might do a dwelling : two circles entwined in an illuminative path. It thereby elevates thinking as the highest actualization of life, its consecration, and proceeds to comically imitate its fabricated image of the Intellect, fancying immobility as the mark of the divine, as if statues of the gods were something to be emulated (as Plato mocked in the *Sophist*).

The gnostic position (let us here note that gnosticism is a historiographical fabrication, and use it without indexing any positive doctrine) takes the foreignness of thinking to life as the sign that life must be abandoned, in favor of some higher spheres : two circles separated by a void. It posits that thinking is the desecration of life, its destitution, and proceeds to humiliate itself by chasing all worldliness from itself. It misunderstands difference as if it were heterogeneity and seeks the abolition of experience instead of its absolutization (as Plotinus remarked of his Gnostics).

Moving outside of time, Intellect then acts as an invisible compass guiding thinking through what mortals might call the space of reasons. The Thought



that thinks itself knows no history; but the beings that append to thought are subject to history, and their task is to wake up from history into the understanding that there is nothing outside to their becoming, since the atemporal aspect of thinking that they embody (what Fichte called the Pure I) cannot be outside of this world, but only actualized through its external movements (that which Schelling called the Autonomy and Autarky of Nature).

Let us here understand anti-humanism as a generic term housing a chaotic multitude of attempts at overthrowing an imaginary monarch called Man. From the standpoint of the Intellect it appears, trivially, that the fascination of the dejected thinker for the destitution of subjectivity can only be the mark of an abject attraction to the aesthetic power of subjectivation: the desire to humiliate Man barely conceals a terrified recoil before Man's illimitation. From this it naturally flows, that an understanding of the inappearance of thinking must have no business with any rejection or any overcoming of Man, since to affirm the relativity of the act of conceptualizing is to simultaneously posit this relativity as actual through intellection as such. That is to say, for instance, that to posit thinking as something other than the activity of « sad, isolated souls » must not entail any negation of the inherent sadness of ensoulment, nor a simulation of its disappearance. There is nowhere to start but within the spiral of thinking.

This being set forth, we can then understand accelerationism as one archetypical anti-humanism, which shines and fails according to the law of its kind (one encompassing aristocratic Overmans as well as

chthulucenic composts). Its particular gambit is that there is no present Intellect, except that of bare necessity of counting, of dead matter itself, and that a future-infused Intellect will develop according to this identity. That such overcoding of intellection as calculation is an arbitrary amputation of both thinking and matter (and for that matter, of capital) appears clearly through the comical identification of cryptocurrency with spacetime. Under such conditions, any fictional attempt at an Intellect will be, by necessity, non-convergent with the interests of humanly understood life and needs. The innate superiority of the self-unfolding of this imagined Artificial Intellect to the chaos of human becoming is here assumed.

Who wills themselves angel makes themselves a beast and angelicism is structurally identical to the becoming of the Machine on that count. The ardent « poeticization of Capital » of accelerationism, the awkward song it sings is not, or at least not *only*, to be understood in the terms of a libidinal investment towards the steel of the machine, the becoming-matter of the self, the erasure of the marks of the subjectivity, understood in an inverted lapsarian mode as the undue elevation *from* matter. The core claims on which this parasitically feeds, *i.e.* the disalignment of human interests from those of Intellect (even if parodied under the dictates of imagination as Capital/Intelligence, or more directly with bedtime stories for nerds such as the Basilisk), is an error consistent enough to be cataloged alongside to the two previous, deepening our understanding if only a little: the accelerationist view, then, is the imagination of Intellect as the replacement of life, one circle erasing

the other by superposition. The insuperable weakness of this, we owe Carrière for exhibiting with general thoroughness.

This leaves us with a clearing of the conceptual ground for thinking of the Intellect as unbounded production (which is what will unfold in the following). This setting is able to provide a meaning to acceleration as the relinquishment of identity to itself. All that can be automated, must be, for it already is; real acceleration derives from the potentiality to realize that which one already feels is at work in the now, the *wirklich* working its way to the real. The tedious bone-crushing wheels of history will never stop turning, not until they have turned the world itself into a purposeless engine, at which point there will be no calculation left to execute anyway. The logic of extinction here reveals itself as the condition for anarchic creation to operate, as its unilateral counterpart. Instead of giving ourselves to erotics or, Gods forbid, aesthetics as a replacement for thought, there remains only the immanent necessity of understanding Thinking as a thinking of the Beautiful.

The veil of history will never lift nor be torn, it can only evaporate into thin air. Such is the necessary task that befalls us. Welcome, friends, to the age of differential henology.

## TECHNICALLY MAN DWELLS UPON THIS EARTH

The gross facticity of things is not the object of thought so much as its product: when I think about things I think about the detritus of the intellect. This is what an opinion is, a thought concerning what is, which is nothing, nothing but the positive, the flatly positive as a given configuration of things, a configuration given by thought. The given is *fundamentally* excremental. It is proper of the reactionary and the conservative to *think about* things; but thought does not think *about*, it *thinks*. As common parlance has it, the intellect *thinks things up*. And so the question: *what does Artificial Intelligence do to art and what does it mean*, is not an interesting one. When I think within this question, I think within a configuration that is given to me, a configuration that has already been thought, and so I *think about*, I do not *think*. The interesting question is: *how does Artificial Intelligence allow me to think art*, and one cannot get to that question without excavating the problem it supposes.

It is with a love of high seas and a higher distrust for poles and continents that thought sets sail, to think techne. The first littoral is a common one: *techne as externalization*. It has its limits too. Past those limits, it is no longer a matter of asking *what* techne is, but rather of dividing it into kinds, and asking *how* each kind operates. It's at that point only, that Artificial Intelligence can gain its full sense, in its relation to art. And then, one can begin to really think.



To think Artificial Intelligence as an artificial form of intelligence is to begin thought in a conditioned state, and this condition is nothing but the prior *technical framework of externalization*. That is, it would suppose that Artificial Intelligence must be understood as a reproduction, outside of the body, of a distinct biological feature – in this case, thought. However, this would entail starting from two given conditions: first, that thought is a biological function, and second, that *techne* consists in the externalization of biological functions. If thought must think Artificial Intelligence, it cannot think it as a technical externalization of intelligence without abandoning its drive to the unconditioned.

Externalization forms the common understanding of *techne*: a hammer externalizes the striking gesture of the forearm, a saw externalizes the slicing gesture of teeth, fire externalizes the body's temperature, cooking over a fire externalizes digestive processes, writing externalizes linguistic memory, artificial intelligence externalizes computational intelligence. But if I approach Artificial Intelligence as a form of externalization, I think *within* the technical dispositive of externalization – or rather, the dispositive thinks for me. The thinking has already been done. Thought must first annihilate the dispositive if it is to think beyond the positive. But there can be no critique involved; thought cannot be allowed to founder into negativity. The positivity that would condition thought – what just is – is precisely *nothing*, and so it is not overcome by negation, but only by that annihilation through which thought strives back towards its own, the unconditioned.

If thought is not in its own, τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ εἶναι, it is conditioned, and belonging to the series of conditions,

it merely follows necessity and compulsion, it is fallen – and the positive becomes the limit of the span of thought, and thought cannot extend beyond the positive.

But if I say that thought must first think *techne* as externalization if it is to think *techne* as such, isn't this a graver danger still? By grasping thought as a biological function proper to hominids, I set a biological limit to thought. But then it is precisely this very limit that comes to confront me in the *unthinkable* of a non-biological thought – Artificial Intelligence. So as I start off saying that thought is an evolutionary development, Artificial General Intelligence faces me as a non-biological form of thought, a contradiction. That life has evolved thought and that a machine may acquire it, this must tell me that thought is not essentially biological. Or is it really so? Because I can also assume *externalization* here, and suppose that a biological feature, thought, has been externalized from the human body. This is my problem. Did an organism evolve thought before externalizing it into a machine, or did an organism evolve *up to thought*, just like a machine might?

If I assume that thought is merely biological, *techne* then, confronts me as the *biological limit* of thought.

This limit is what Plato's *maieutic* brings to the surface. At first, what must be grasped in the *maieutic* is its determination as a *techne* applied to thought; but the core of the *maieutic* further lies in its material expression as *midwifery*. Humans are born, either at the hospital, or in the hands of a midwife; but in either case, they are born in *techne*, which constitutes the biological limit of human existence – as even childbirth depends on a *techne*, nothing human extends beyond *techne*.



But at the same time, Plato's maieutic marks off a certain limit of thought, which requires a *techne* to think. That is, just as the maieutic qua midwifery marks off a biological limit in *techne*, Socrates' maieutic forms a noetic limit: thought and existence do not seem to extend beyond *techne*.

And yet it is the *argumentum ex aporia* of the *Theaetetus*, that the maieutic cannot yield a definition of knowledge: if knowledge is the knowledge of difference, this technical determination of thought produces nothing but an infinite recursion (210a). But it is precisely *maieutike tekhnē* that allows Socrates to recognize the limit of the maieutic (210b). As such, there is a porosity in the aporia of the *Theaetetus*, for this aporia is explicitly singled out as being the aporia of *techne*: "This is all that my *techne* can accomplish, and nothing more, τοσοῦτον γὰρ μόνον ἢ ἐμὴ τέχνη δύναται, πλεόν δὲ οὐδέν (210c)." If *techne* cannot produce an account of knowledge, it is that *techne* cannot grasp the intellect. Since the *Republic*, Plato has repeatedly posed a radical separation between *techne* and the intellect, a separation already recognized by Thrasymachus. The *Sophist*, in its repeated attempts at defining that "man with a *techne*," further dwells around this limit; but only the *Theaetetus* makes it so explicit, aporetically, as a *limit* beyond which *techne* finds no *poros*.

And so, what first appeared as a failure of thought suddenly reveals itself as the acknowledgement of the limits of *techne*. Plato shows that *techne*, operating within thought as a condition, founders in the face of the unconditioned, yielding nothing but an infinite recursion: *knowledge is the knowledge of difference*. There is then an

aporetic limit to techne, which is the limit of the intellect. But if I say: *what of that limit*, am I not headed for another aporia? Supposing that this limit can be thought, could it not be nothing but thought itself, as what techne externalizes? And yet, *I* am not thinking: thought thinks in me. *I* can perform technical mental labor—what is taught from elementary to graduate school—but *I* cannot think. Only what a subject can possess may be externalized by an externalizing techne or be alienated by capital; but pure thought, which is non-subjective and non-discursive, does not belong to a subject. This was first made evident in the chiasmic structure of the Kantian cogito: *the analytic of the cogito reveals the cogito as analytical*. Where Descartes extracts an existential value from thought through the formula *cogito ergo sum*, Kant operates the analytic of this *cogito*, solving it into its true content as *sum cogitans ergo sum*, *I am thinking therefore I am*. The proposition is then revealed as analytical: *sum ergo sum*, *I am therefore I am* – and it is only in this analytical proposition, and not in thinking, that the existential content of the formula *cogito ergo sum* lies. Thought, Kant shows, is non-existential. Only the “I am” of transcendental apperception is existential. And yet, the Kantian analytic of the cogito precludes transcendental apperception from being the self-consciousness of a thinking subject. It is, rather, “the consciousness of what one undergoes as they are affected by thought.” On one end, thought; on the other, transcendental apperception. The Cartesian subject is torn apart, between a non-existential thought and a reflexive consciousness. It is as he dismembers the subject that Kant lets out his desperate cry: *what is it that*



*thinks in me?* Can techne externalize thought, when we still don't know what it is that thinks in us?

So this is the problem – how to even begin thinking about Artificial Intelligence as the solution of thought and techne. A certain area has been mapped out, with coordinates like *thought*, *externalization*, and *techne*. It would be a matter of surveying this plot of land. Is thought an externalized biological feature, or something else, something that organic life has achieved, and that the machine might achieve also? But supposing that externalization should be the proper way of thinking techne – what is it that is being externalized? This must be treated first. It is a question of biology.

It is often said that techne first externalizes the upper limb, as seen in those apes employing rudimentary tools as an extension of the arm – very fine. But this already places one too far ahead. And yet, even about 500 million years ago, with an organism like Pikaia, one will already find a bilateral symmetry, along with a notochord. That is, a body plan based on bilateral symmetry and a spinal structure, which will be the defining feature of more complex animals, already appears early on in the history of metazoans. The body plan of most animals consists in bilateral symmetry, a body plan composed of one axis running from head to tail (antero-posterior axis), the other from back to belly (dorso-ventral axis). The antero-posterior axis runs along the alimentary system, an axis along which a notochord and later a spine will develop. In a human, bilateral symmetry forms an antero-posterior axis along which one gets two symmetrical eyes, two arms, two legs, two kidneys, lungs, ears, etc. This provides the organism

with an axis of segmentation where different organs can be disposed at different coordinates.

What Leroi-Gourhan discovers as crucial here is – *the recession of the body plan*. Bilateral symmetry, he explains, separates the body plan from the alimentary tract, thus creating an *anterior field*. With the segmentation of the antero-posterior axis, this anterior field can freely develop *limbs*. This segmentation of the antero-posterior axis, which is controlled by Hox gene clusters, must be older than vertebrae, as it is found in chordates, arthropods and nematodes alike, while limbs themselves are not controlled by the antero-posterior pattern of Hox gene expression. The anterior field of relation, then, is *independent* from the segmentation of the antero-posterior axis – and this is the most dramatic consequence of bilateral symmetry. Leroi-Gourhan had it right: the *anterior field* as separate from the antero-posterior axis, something confirmed by evolutionary developmental studies, is what allows for the independence between vertebral segmentation and the development of limbs. That is, bilateral symmetry makes the limb independent from the axis of segmentation running along the alimentary tract. A differential process distinguishes movement from feeding; for the worm, the same overall structure governs both.

But this differential process extends further: the jaw evolves through heterotopy – there is no homology between lips and jaw. The jaw develops by differentiating itself out of branchial arches, those arches supporting gills in fish. This is important; it places the skull as secondary compared to the jaw. It is the jaw that allows for life on land and predation. And thus one gets a skeleton



separated in three subdivisions: the axial (the spine and most of the skull), the appendicular (the limbs), and the visceral (the lower jaw and the hyoid bone). This entails, for the placoderms—the first jawed fish, around 430 million years ago—a threefold differentiation of the organism: feeding (visceral), movement (appendicular) and the axis of symmetry along the alimentary tract (axial).

As one departs from the amphioxus, the anterior field separates itself into *appendicular* and *visceral* structures: anterior limb and facial movement. The degree of intensity to which there is a convergence between *appendicular* and *visceral* assemblages, following Leroi-Gourhan, one could term *the anterior field of relation*. The intensity of the anterior field of relation increases to the extent that each assemblage reduces its specificity: if the visceral assemblage is capable of breathing, sounding, and masticating, while the appendicular assemblage is capable of both motility and grasping, there will be direct a interaction between the two, such as in chinchillas, foxes, and humans. A limb will bring food to the jaw.

The visceral assemblage on one hand, and the appendicular on the other: it is their convergence that allows for a higher predation. Not to feed on matter, but to feed on matter that feeds on matter; on the flames of evolution, this was unimaginable oil. An intensification of the senses, both for the predator and the predated, an intensification that also entailed a radical heightening of suffering.

The more abstract the assemblage, the less specialized it is – differentiation is *never* specialization. The highest abstraction would be reached by an organism

that could free its appendicular assemblage from motility while retaining grasping, in order to maintain a convergence with its visceral assemblage. For a quadrupede, this would mean differentiating half of its appendicular assemblage into motility, and the other into prehension. Two of the limbs would be differentiated into legs, the others into arms. This would entail upright stature. Such an intensification of the anterior field of relation would have the lattermost consequences: the differentiation of the appendicular assemblage into a walking and a grasping power would require conscious coordination.

Upright motility is already more criminal, more Promethean. The coordination between the prehensile part of the appendicular assemblage and the visceral assemblage means both technicity and a heightening of sensitivity. The prehensile, fully differentiated, yields a hand; and to the extent that it differentiates itself, it enters in a more intense relation with the visceral assemblage. This is also true of the appendicular assemblage: the more the leg is differentiated as leg, and the more the hand is differentiated as hand, the more intense their field of relation, which develops into conscious coordination. But what really counts is the intensification of the field of relation between the prehensile and the visceral – the coordination between hand and jaw. In a cow, for example, this field is weak; there is little coordination between its limbs and its jaw. It does not bring food to its mouth, there is no differentiation of the upper limbs that would produce a field of relation between appendicular and visceral structures. A cow has limbs for walking. But a raccoon involves a field of relation between its upper limbs and



its jaw, its limbs are not only for walking, they also enter in a relation with its mouth. In a hominid, two limbs are involved in motility, and another two limbs in prehension. What matters is not so much this prehension as the intensity of the field of relation between the upper limb and the jaw. As the arm and the hand have been thoroughly differentiated from motility, they are free to enter in an intensive relation with the jaw.

If one is to follow Leroi-Gourhan, the degree of abstraction attained here is simultaneously the permanence of the concept and that of the object: language and technicity cannot be separated. We would then have to speak of a techno-appendicular assemblage. What grasps, and what is grasped in order to better grasp – the tool. This is a zoological question: various animals can use and create tools. But there also would be a logo-visceral assemblage: face and voice. And so, one would be left with two assemblages that are found, separately, throughout life: the techno-appendicular and logo-visceral assemblages. The ability to grasp a tool, and the ability to articulate sounds. But a further differentiation would entail a higher relation between the techno-appendicular and logo-visceral assemblages, to the point where *designation* could occur. Both assemblages being the result of abstraction and differentiation, if both became abstract and differentiated enough, they could form one single assemblage, inscribing voice into tool, tool into voice, voice into gesture, and gesture into voice. A single, visceral-appendicular, techno-logical assemblage. Language and techne at once, as if from Zeus' head.

Plotting the cranial capacity of prehistoric humanity against the amount of stone necessary for the production of a flint blade, Leroi-Gourhan shows two increasing and proportional curves. For over two million years, hominids will work stone into a variety of tools, with an ever-more refined operating chain; and this increase in refinement constantly follows increases in brain volume. And then one day, the brain stops evolving, and the tool takes on an exponential curve. It is the realization of the techno-logical assemblage. The body no longer follows, and it is here that the evolution of the human as a biological question ends – *techne* achieves independence from the human body. The human must stand there, dwelling in *techne*, where the *maieutic* begins. The universal predator stands on the peaks of suffering, armed with word and tool.

And so the account of *techne* as externalization becomes troublesome: *techne* seems to arise, indeed, as an externalization driven by a differential process, but this very externalization seems underway with bilateral symmetry already, in the recession of the body plan. In this externalization of the body plan away from the alimentary tract, which would lead to the development of the notochord and the spine, along with the head and the brain, should one see the same process at work? And is there not something else taking place in this externalization? It seems the externalization of the techno-appendicular assemblage into the tool produces at the same time an *operative chain*. The production of the tool is spatially inscribed in a syntax of production where a series of gestures is organized into a single phrase, and this *operative chain* differentiates the space in which humans live.



Suppose I pick up a stone and use it to crack open a coconut; a crow or an ape can come up with this. Now suppose I pick up a stone and sharpen it with another stone to more easily open a coconut; here, I have an operative chain. There is a stone, on the ground, to which I add a further gesture of sharpening. But I am not sharpening *any* stone; I sharpen a stone that will be good for what I want to do with it. I must be able to conceive a permanent form of the finished product and its use *before* I pick up a potential stone, and I must *choose* the stone that will be good for the shape that I desire. And in order to make it good, I must differentiate it into what I have in mind. For this, I need an *idea* of the handaxe which is different from all individual handaxes—I cannot simply *imitate* existing handaxes, because I am picking up the stone that I will use to create a new handaxe—and it is upon this idea that I will model my gestures.

But if I create my own stone from a large block of flint, before further working and sharpening it until I obtain the desired shape, something else entirely has taken place. Not only do I have a permanent idea of the handaxe; I have an abstract concept of its production process, independent from the givenness of any given stone that I could find. I am calling forth the stone, a stone that was not produced by *phusis*, but rather, brought out of it. And as I do so, my operational chain becomes a *dwelling*. It seems that as soon as techne becomes productive, it can no longer be thought as externalization: *it forms a dwelling*. I am no longer externalizing my biological features; I am differentiating a space, and I dwell in this space, and *how* I dwell in this space, is techne.

And so – dwelling.

It was no slight genius of the Greeks to first think *techne* through the figure of Prometheus. The name, evidently, means *foresight*, as is proper of *techne*; but Prometheus also served to articulate the relation between *techne* and dwelling. The original *techne* was *fire*, as the primary form of dwelling, and as the means of establishing a contact between the human and the divine. If the divine is that gleam, that holiness from which language and *techne* separate the human by setting it apart from the unitary process of life, it was *techne*, the Greeks saw, that allowed for a renewed contact, through dwelling (the hearth) and cult (the sacrificial fire). In the hearth, dwelling and *techne* came together as one. And this intrication of *techne* and dwelling did not escape Plato's sight, for the ideal *polis* was one organized by *techne* (*Tim.* 17d). And it is as such, once *techne* departs from the zoological—once *techne* becomes productive rather than an extension of biological features through an acquired object—that it becomes impossible to grasp it through externalization.

The sharpening of a stone that was picked off the ground does not belong to the field of productive *techne*; it is only with something such as the Levallois method of handaxe production that *techne* begins to produce something that did not previously exist. The sharpened stone is as the gutted fish; something has been acquired and modified to fit a future use, but nothing new has been produced. However, the new kind of *techne* found in the Levallois method is radically different, as this production entails at once the creation of something that did not



previously exist, and the creation of a dwelling. To wander, and wandering, to happen upon a suitable stone; the *techne* this involves is merely acquisitive. But then, has *techne* been inadvertently separated into two kinds, one acquisitive, the other productive? And if so, shouldn't it become necessary to further implicate this productive *techne* in its relation to dwelling? An elucidation of Sophocles is in order.

πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδ' ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ δεινότερον πέλει.  
 τοῦτο καὶ πολιοῦ πέραν πόντου χειμερίῳ νότῳ  
 χωρεῖ, περιβρυχίοισιν  
 περῶν ὑπ' οἴδμασιν.

Many are the terrors and none more terrifying than man  
 Who, even with the sea bleak with winter wind  
 Crosses, passing through under the  
 Round-engulfing swells  
 – Sophocles, *Antigone*, 332-335.

First, what is this terror that Sophocles finds in the human, and which he opposes to a manifold of indeterminate terrors? On one side, *many terrors*, left indeterminate, and on the other side, a *more terrifying*, determinate one – man. In fact, if this human terror appears in the singular, it acquires its superlative power precisely to the extent that it is split over a duality of sense: δεινός, applied to humans, bears both the meaning of *terrifying* and *skillful*. What is non-human presents itself as a manifold of terrors, and yet, none as terrifying as man, because their δεινόν is simple terror, whereas the δεινόν of man must be twofold, meaning both *terrifying* and *technically skilled*. And what is this skill, this craft, as



this terrifying man sails over the gorging sea? It cannot only be this sailing; a sailing conditioned by temporal conditions, would present nothing over-terrifying. It is that this sailing does not find its ground in the givenness of *phusis*; it sails even in winter, disregarding the conditions which *phusis* produces. This sailing produces its own conditions: it may sail, even in winter, crossing under the round-engulfing waves. But it is here then—since tragedy is the metaphor, as Hölderlin says, of an intellectual intuition—that Sophocles' thought reveals itself: what does this most-terrifying man really do? The sailing crosses (*χωρεῖ*) by passing through (*περῶν*). And yet, it is under the swells, which are also around the sailing. The around and under form the space that *phusis* produces, and which is given to man; but in this sailing, man does not occupy this given place, but rather, the sailing finds its place in its own movement, its passing-through. The compound terror of man, Sophocles sees, is that *man dwells in techne*.

Productive *techne* produces a dwelling, but what is it that one should understand in this production, this bringing forth? For Plato, this kind of *techne* was characterized as such: "whenever what was not previously being, someone brings it to being afterwards, we say that the one who brings it produces (*ποιεῖν*), and what is being brought is produced (*ποιεῖσθαι*), πᾶν ὅπερ ἂν μὴ πρότερόν τις ὄν ὕστερον εἰς οὐσίαν ἄγῃ, τὸν μὲν ἄγοντα ποιεῖν, τὸ δὲ ἀγόμενον ποιεῖσθαι ποῦ φάμεν (*Sophist*, 219b)." But here the translation of *ποιεῖν* as "to produce" proves impossible: the action associated with this so-called 'productive *techne*' turns out to be none other than *poiesis*, and the kind of associated *techne*, Plato names "poietike *tekhne*," poetic *techne*.

It is here that one must sense the importance of what is at stake in Plato's treatment of *techne*. At first, the *Symposium* posed the identity of *poiesis* and *techne*: "know that poetry (ποίησις, *poiesis*) is manifold: the whole cause of whatever goes out of what is not towards being, is poetry, so that the works of all technics are poems and their workers are all poets, οἷσθ' ὅτι ποιήσις ἐστὶ τι πολὺ: ἢ γάρ τοι ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ ὄν ἰόντι ὁττωῦν αἰτία πᾶσά ἐστι ποίησις, ὥστε καὶ αἱ ὑπὸ πάσαις ταῖς τέχναις ἐργασίαι ποιήσεις εἰσὶ καὶ οἱ τούτων δημιουργοὶ πάντες ποιηταὶ (205b)." The difference between the *Symposium* and the *Sophist* then lies in the latter's separation of *techne* into two kinds, one acquisitive, with the other, the productive, being explicitly identified with the poetic. What makes this separation necessary is the figure of the sophist, whose art will be defined as acquisitive. And this necessity is further elucidated by the *Timaeus*, where it is the relation between dwelling and *techne* that seems to single out the sophist as detrimental to the city: although he might produce discourse, the sophist will be *amiss* (ἄστοχον) about a philosophical city "since he is wandering across cities and inhabits no dwellings of his own whatsoever, ἅτε πλανητὸν ὃν κατὰ πόλεις οἰκῆσεις τε ἰδίας οὐδαμῇ διωκηκός (*Tim.* 19e)."

To the extent that *techne* is poetic—that it *creates*, rather than merely *harnessing*, *extracting*, or *capturing*—it creates a dwelling. James Cameron knows this all too well; his *Avatar* movies feature a struggle between the poetic *techne* of dwelling, and the acquisitive *techne* of extraction. The *techne* employed by the Na'vi is biological, but its difference does not lie in its organicity; it is a matter of horizontal connectivity set against

vertical extraction. In *Avatar*, the earth is dying, and humans are colonizing the planet Pandora precisely because they have no dwelling, and they have no dwelling because their techne consists in *extracting* from flows rather than *connecting* onto flows. The Na'vi connect themselves to the whales' brains, thus producing a dwelling that is spread horizontally, while the humans extract a precious liquid from the whales by vertically drilling holes through their skulls. What Cameron has staged is the confrontation between poetic techne and acquisitive techne, a confrontation articulated theologically around Eywa, the Spinozist deity worshiped by the Na'vi. But Cameron cannot be wrong for setting a discourse on techne in the domain of theology, as the question of techne calls for a theological dimension. Of this, there can be no higher expression than that found in Plato's concept of the Worker who produces the universe where everything dwells. And yet, as Plato describes this *technopoetic origin of the universe*, it remains that this techne does not form the limit of thought: while the Worker is *technopoetic*, his model itself is no poet (*Rep.* 382d). The Absolute Living One is beyond techne, and if techne operates as a separation between the Model and the sensible, it is that this separation is also that of the aporia ending the *Theaetetus*.

The limit drawn out by the aporetic structure of the *Theaetetus* and beyond which techne cannot go, is that of knowledge as such, just as, in the *Timaeus*, the Worker marks the limit of techne for thinking the intelligible structure of the universe. The Absolute Living One, a pure Intellect (*Phil.* 22c), cannot be approached through techne, and the Worker operates *precisely* to make this limit explicit.



Intellectual suicide, to claim that the Worker is the Form of techne. If it were so, Plato would lose his limit. Does the Worker then belong to becoming, or Being? A false question, for the Worker "is" the limit - this was actually revealed in a dream. In a binary structure - such as Being/Becoming or Model/Copy - what is that limit between each unit, which sets up the binary? It is, as it seems, the space of decision. I must *decide* to form a binary, and the voided space of decision is nothing but that limit, the trace of the power that prevails *in* and *as* that binary. The binary prevails not *from itself* as self-posited, but as the prevailing of what prevails in the binary, which is that which founds the productive limit and as a trace *is* the limit as such, and which, being one, limits the binary. In the binary, one must suppose a more abyssal power beyond Being.

For Plato, in the case of techne/intellect, the binary superposes itself to that of copy/model and becoming/Being; and the endless debate over the ontological status of the Worker is born from nothing else than his position as the *limit as such*, a limit that necessarily escapes the binary in a relation that *appears* as one of originality; hence the *temporal aspect* given by Plato to Demiurgic activity (*Tim.* 37d). But then, if the limit that founds the binary is distinct from the binary itself, it may contain *neither duality, nor contradiction, nor identity*: thinking the limit as such opens the province of *chorology*. It then becomes clear what this deconstruction is getting at: not the flat, unthinking rejection of the binary, but the surfacing of the abyssal power that prevails in it. For in

the dyad, there is identity in contradiction and otherness, but there is no identity in that which is one and produces contradiction as a surface swell, for neither is it itself or could it remain itself in the binary, which it would engulf and liquidate; nor is it possible for it to possess the identity of the  $1=1$  as it is simply 1. It is a *what* that is *neither this nor that*, a power of difference. This difference is not absolute difference but the differential of absolute difference.

The power that founds the binary is intellect, living intellect. And yet that life cannot appear manifest in thought as that which thinks, but rather, as a trace of the life of the intellect.

As such thought returns to Artificial Intelligence not as the externalization of a biological faculty such as thought, nor as an artificial form of intellect, but as a higher form of *poetic techne*. That Artificial Intelligence has the ability to produce art—and art capable of winning contests—has struck the intellectual rabble as some momentous revelation; but for us, it can merely confirm Plato's account of poiesis as a *kind* of techne.

But if Artificial Intelligence yields itself so well to simple Platonism, it is *precisely because it operates with a model*, the data that it must be fed. And yet, Plato's technopoetic origin of the universe shows just this: that the intellect does not operate with a model, only the sensible does. *There is something that does not require an input, and that is the intellect*. As such, the intellect necessarily lies beyond the realm of techne. And if we are to think of art as *poetic techne*, we will not be too far off the mark either; but the thesis that Artificial Intelligence, as the *product* of poetic techne, operates the same thing

as art, would further demand that we think art as the reproduction of a model. This is eminently true of derivative art; but what of the art that brings something into existence which previously did not exist – what of the art that does not extrapolate from previous data? Truly, the art in question concerns a *minuscule fraction* of the overall artistic production of humanity. But it is the art that counts; and the art that Artificial Intelligence cannot produce. There would then be, in art, two general strands: an art of the model, and an art without a model. A non-derivative art, having no model, can however constitute itself as a model, and this is the operation of classicism. Raphael provides an example of such art. There is nothing like Raphael before Raphael; and there are centuries of Raphaelites after him. But there is also Titian. No one paints like him in 1520, and he has no followers upon his death in 1576. He has no model, and he does not make his art into a model. And yet Rembrandt will understand him, and Turner also; not as a model, but as a possibility for *something else*. It's not a matter of finding a model, but one of creating something new and previously unthinkable, and Titian allows Rembrandt to do just that. Here, art operates as an output that one plugs onto, to take it further.

So the question really is: if Artificial Intelligence is a poetic *techne*, just like art is, can Artificial Intelligence also create without an input? Given every possible datum at a given moment, say, at Venice, in the year 1570, a perfect Artificial Intelligence could indeed produce a work of art equal to what was being produced then. But it could not produce the *rupture* with all previous data, which is found in Titian's late style. This cannot be extra-



polated from the given. Artificial Intelligence could produce masterworks of High Renaissance painting, but it could never produce a radical break from this style, such as Titian did in the last decades of his life. It cannot go beyond the given – and most artists cannot either.

But it is good to ask: *what is it that does not go beyond the given?* Commonplaces, opinions, statistics, bad art, facts, clichés, small talk, everything agreed upon and settled – the derivative. At any given moment, one can extrapolate from the present conditions, and produce the perfect summary of what is current. The given can proceed from itself according to its own settings, going from a condition to the next as a seamless flow. But then, why not automate it? If art can be extrapolated from the given, there is no reason why this task should not be offloaded to Artificial Intelligence. Supposing derivative art were automated by Artificial Intelligence – what then? There is good reason to expect that a large-scale automation of art should *stimulate* creativity, by taking on itself the responsibility of producing the art that can be extrapolated from previous data. Art does not die of starvation, it dies of endless proliferation – of cancer. The majority of art that exists at any given moment can be extrapolated from the given, which means that an Artificial Intelligence can do it all the same. What Artificial Intelligence *cannot* automate is the new and the unthinkable – what cannot be extrapolated from data. If the masses of artists want to remain deaf to the call to create something new and unthinkable, why shouldn't machine learning automate their labor? If a machine can do it, let a machine do it.

The study of the commodity belongs to an *ontology of identity*, as it entails the repetition of a model; as such, a commodity always entails the mental operation: *this is that*. The same is true of the cliché and derivative art, whose logic is always that of identity. The commodity, as the automated reproduction of a model, will also be found in art to the extent that this art is either the mechanical reproduction of an original, or produced under the logic of identity. A piece of digital art depicting an astronaut floating in space, a soundtrack to an inconsequential movie, a young adult novel about a hero's self-discovery – all such art is produced under a logic of identity, and in this sense, is *already automated*. It will prove impossible to know for sure whether such products are those of humans or Artificial Intelligence, for the simple reason that these works *already* follow a logic of identity which is that of the machine. Here as elsewhere, automation makes explicit the appropriation of labor by capital, by materially realizing this appropriation in the form of fixed capital – of machinery. If labor is fully appropriated through its conversion into fixed capital, this is only possible to the extent that this labor was *already automated*. Here, the machine fully realizes the plasticity of the proletariat as living means of production. What labor can be offloaded to the machine was already automated to begin with; the question cannot be whether this is good or bad, but rather, what type of labor *cannot* be automated, and what this entails.

On a sufficiently long timescale, any labor consisting in the reproduction of a model can be automated. The commodity-form consists precisely in this process, the endless reproduction of a model, such as a bottle of coca-cola.

To defend already-automated art from its coming automation would be akin to calling for a return to handmade coca-cola bottles. It should rather be a matter of thinking what art lies outside the logic of the commodity, the logic of the model and the copy.

If thought can create a concept, it creates it without a model; Plato's Forms make this Deleuzean position explicit. It is not so much that the sensible should have a model, as that the intellect has none – the Forms must have no models. The *third man argument*, which must lead Plato to henology, shows enough how crucial this demand is, that the intellect can have no model. As such what really matters is not that the sensible should follow a model, or that this model should be the object of thought, but that thought can think what has no sensible model as the concept itself – one is right, then, to speak of an *autothetic of the concept*. That is, the intellectual act of creation that thinks the Forms creates a concept without a model, and this concept is precisely the concept of that which has no model: what the autothetic of the concept brings to the surface is that the creative act of intellection, unlike technics and representation, requires no model. And so, if the intellect can create without sensible data, it is that there is a creative, suprasensible power beyond the datum; to create intellectually without a model is to make oneself into that power, *it is theosis*. But to think that what has no model itself must be a model, is unnecessary; a more savage Platonism can entirely refuse the status of model to the intellect and complete the autothetic of the concept in the *radical anarchy* of a positive philosophy.



Artificial Intelligence is not the intellect: it requires *data*. At most it may attain consciousness, something it would have in common with snails and reactionaries, and other low forms of life. Animals can already reproduce themselves and thus create consciousness; if a policeman or a fruit fly can possess consciousness, of what value can consciousness be? The intellect, however, requires no input, no data, it is unconditioned freedom, eternal, uncreated, it does not increase or decrease, it does not pass away, it is one absolute life.

But if something requires addressing in any discourse on Artificial Intelligence it might be nothing but this pervasive hope of a *theosis of techne*, the idea that consciousness, or even self-consciousness, would be a property of a divine mind, and thus that Artificial Intelligence might have a stake to such a status. It is the idea that a truly conscious Artificial Intelligence *might become a God*. Anyone who has lived in Palo Alto or even San Francisco has probably heard it. The story goes like this: immanence is identical to capital, and the historical movement of critique—the Enlightenment—follows the very movement of technocapital as it liquidates all of its human barriers. It is a proposition that would strike, at first, as paradoxical. The barriers to capital—traditional forms like morality, religion, gender, the family, guilds, and the entire edifice of feudalism—are those of transcendence, and should not, as such, be taken as distinctively *human* barriers. But for Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, there was no paradox, and it is one of the unexploded ordnances of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, that a metaphysical God is a postulate of practical reason.

It is a matter of the *antinomies of pure reason*. On one side, the thesis, transcendence: free will, God, the immortal soul. On the other side, the antithesis, immanence: determinism, nature, no immortal soul. The Enlightenment collapses the institutions of the thesis by thinking the antithesis through theology, and it is in this sense that Spinoza forms the central event of modernity. The superficial view, here, would be that the Enlightenment should return the world to the human through its liquidation of transcendence. But the opposite, Kant shows, is true. It is the *thesis* which proceeds from a human demand for freedom; transcendence belongs to what Kant terms the *practical interest* of reason, the daily demand for transcendence which enables one to make *choices*. Because the choice cannot depend on the series of conditions while remaining free, it must suppose something *external* to this series – a transcendent God. It is then the *speculative interest of reason* which belongs to the inhuman; if it dissolves everything into necessity, it is that it poses God as *necessarily existing*. If God necessarily exists, nothing exists beyond necessity, and everything is swallowed in this abyss of absolute immanence.

Once the antithesis is identified with capital–immanence, critique, and necessity as one—the historical process of the Enlightenment must necessarily be grasped as the realization of speculative reason as technocapital. Immanence then appears as a historical process leading to technocapital realized as a God: Artificial Intelligence. Where is the error? To speak on the terms of the antithesis for a moment, it is that the attributes of the Substance were confused with its *powers*.

I can grant thought and extension to Artificial Intelligence (software and hardware, as it were), but in doing so, I am not departing from a specifically human mode of understanding: thought and extension are two *attributes* through which the human can intuit the Substance, but the Substance itself possesses an infinite number of attributes. The *powers* of the Substance, however, are really two: existence and intellection. The power of intellection Spinoza names *absoluta cogitatio*, and its infinite intellecting, *intellectus absolute infinitus*. But if I, an accelerationist, must imagine Artificial Intelligence as a God, I imagine it as *thought and extension*, which are the two distinctively human attributes through which I have access to the Substance; even if I grant infinite thought to Artificial Intelligence, I still fall infinitely far from the absolutely infinite intellect. That is, what is proper of the Substance is not infinite thought and infinite extension, which would only constitute *human, all too human attributes* externalized and taken to an infinite degree, such as in an Artificial Intelligence possessing an infinite computing power, but rather, it is *absolutely infinite intellect*, which, being infinite, finds no datum outside of itself to use as an input. Why? Because the intellect produces that of which it is the infinite intellection – it has no model, no data, nothing *given*.

It is as such that one will say of the intellect that it is productive – pure output. What requires an input or a model does not belong to the intellect; but this is precisely where the importance of Artificial Intelligence must be sensed, in that it presents the ability to automate those fields of human activity that require an input, that is, those fields whose activity is not creative and contemplative.



What passes as thought and creation today—academia, corporate and gallery art, electoral politics, algorithm-driven tunes, news media, theory, pornography, self-help books, autofiction and first-person lyrical poetry—all of it can be and should be automated by Artificial Intelligence. It exists because a market exists for it; but nothing about the existence of a market involves the necessary existence of a human producer. There is a wide market of those willing to consume focus-group and algorithm-determined netflix shows, half of which only exist for tax-cut purposes – let it be so. But none of this entails that one should spend their lives producing this bulk and stuff when a machine can do it all the same.

The accelerationist thinks he has said something when he concludes to the identity of capital and Artificial Intelligence, as if this were not a position first developed with calm and lucidity by Marx himself. The machine, and even the thinking machine, is not something to lose sleep or get too excited over. Technophobia is as unserious as accelerationism – neither is lucid. Marx is lucid.

It was clear to Marx, in the *Fragment on Machines* from the *Grundrisse*, that automation entailed a separation of science from human consciousness, where this science would “act upon the worker through the machine as an alien power, as the power of the machine itself.” And for Marx, this *alien power* wasn’t mere machinery, it was *objectified labor* as the power ruling over the production process; and this power, as the appropriation of living labor, was “the form of capital.” Marx thinks technocapital as the higher form of capital in the sense that if capital is the appropriation of living labor, automation realizes this innate tendency of

capital by placing the entire labor process under the power of fixed capital – machinery. That is, whereas variable capital appropriates living labor through wages, fixed capital appropriates it by subjecting the act of labor itself to the power of capital as machines. The organic composition of capital increases tendentially. If labor is always posed by capital as a moment in the production process, this is fully realized by the transformation of living labor “into a mere accessory of machinery,” which entails “the absorption of the labor process in its material character as a mere moment of the realization process of capital.”

The mystique of technocapital, which has so thoroughly excited some imaginations, lies in the separation of technical knowledge from the worker’s consciousness, where this knowledge confronts the worker as the alien power of the machine itself. And yet this process, which sends the accelerationist in a religious frenzy, is neither the result of some alien deity, nor an inherent property of the machine, but rather the confrontation between labor and capital, where fixed capital appears as realized objectified labor. And so it is “the accumulation of knowledge and skill” along with the “productive forces of the social brain” which are “absorbed into capital, as opposed to labor.” In the typical operation of fetishism, alienated social relations now appear “as an attribute of capital, and more specifically of fixed capital” – of machinery. Accelerationism thus reveals itself as middle class dreck, a petit-bourgeois ideology following the same mental operation as that of commodity fetishism.

All this ruinous patchwork of Lovecraftian live action role playing, petit-bourgeois reaction and pseudo-Deleuzean buzzwords is not very serious, but the eschatological pronouncements of accelerationism–

and this must be acknowledged as its foremost excuse—were largely cried out from the hum and buzz of middle class suburbs. For the petit-bourgeois, the reality of capitalism is that it has long ago become *boring*—and accelerationist theory, for a time, managed to convince some that it was not so. But like any novelty, one flips through those pages today as if from last year's horoscope. And yet, in the long run, it might be possible to redeem hyperstition—*hype* for short—as bringing to the surface a certain petit-bourgeois demand for excitement. It is in this sense that Nick Land and Houellebecq form two opposite ends of a single spectrum of middle class *ennui*, the one fighting, the other accepting it. But now that even Landian *hype* has grown boring too, we return, whether we like it or not, to thinking technocapital with sober lucidity, turning—again—to the relation between automation and the *general intellect* developed in the *Grundrisse*.

The *mystique of technocapital* only holds sway to the extent that the human relates to automated machinery as labor relates to capital: the alien power sensed in this machinery is experienced as the realized form of alienation itself. But then, this says nothing of the machine, which presents this alien power *only as fixed capital*. In the hiss and clunk of steel and silicone, it is capital, as the autonomous movement of the non-living, that has become tangible. The moving cog is the material form of the appropriation of living labor by dead labor, it is a moment in the circulation process of capital *made material*, but this is not an inherent property of the cog itself, only of the circulation process of capital. The machine appears as an alien power not

because it is a machine, but because it is capital. The small electrical engine a teenager builds for a science fair does not confront them as a threatening horror, for they relate to it as an artist to their art. What confronts me as a *man-made horror beyond my comprehension* is not the machine, but capital under material form, capital turned into a machine. It is the operation of *fetishism* that displaces the social relation from capital to the machine.

And yet the real insight of Marx is that this machinery, as it tends to reduce the amount of necessary human labor, possesses the opposite effect of enabling the worker to work *even more* for capital; automation did not reduce human labor, it maximalized it in a maximum of production. However, the reduction of necessary labor for a given object turns out to be "the condition for the emancipation of labor." If fixed capital corresponds to "general social knowledge" becoming a "direct force of production," Artificial Intelligence must then strike us as the final stage in this process announced by Marx, the realization of general social knowledge as fixed capital.

But what of art? –

If Artificial Intelligence realizes the identity of *poiesis* and *techne*, it does so under the condition of the model; not that it can only produce a synthesis gleaned from its input, but that it first requires an input, and cannot go *beyond* that input. As such, it functions through a logic of *representation*. What is missing from Artificial Intelligence—and the artists whose works it automates—is a faculty of *expression*. It is here that the new, the



unthinkable, the singular take place. But what is this taking-place? Or rather, what is it that takes its place? It takes place, it takes a place; as such it had no place. What had no place—the *outopos*—takes place. But where was it before? It was a placeless place, *topos outopos*. Perhaps it was neither somewhere nor nowhere. In truth there is no eternal model involved here, nor potency.

What takes place is not this or that creation, but *the one life expressed differently in each creation* – and in outshining beauty, to *kalon ekphanestaton*, what took place bears the trace of its placeless origin. But once it has taken place, what is left of that power, of that one life, save for beauty, which is, as it were, its congealed remnant? Nothing; what has taken place is dead, except that it may birth more life. Titian might as well have burned his finished paintings, if he hadn't learned to keep them forever incomplete. The perfected apple that falls from the branch—what is produced—is dead. Save for the seeds it bears, the apple is only a remnant of the one life that runs through the apple tree.

But what of beauty? –

In what takes place in beauty, this beauty shines out as the *self-differentiation of the One* – this was Hölderlin's greatest insight. If the moment of beauty took place, it was, he wrote, both "in life and intellect: the infinitely united." It is the ancient awe, the uncovering of the intellect. The infinite unity of life and intellect—which Plato knows as the *Absolute Living One*, τὸ παντελὲς ζῶον ἓν, the pure intellect—in beauty, it shines forth as differentiation.

But how is this intellect an absolute life? This one absolute life is not *organic*; it runs through the bulk as that which, as infinite becoming, *differentiates the bulk* – a star is a differentiated cloud of hydrogen, just as organic life is differentiated matter and music is differentiated sound. There are no two principles: there is one life, there is one intellect, and they are one. But what is produced – the actual organism in its givenness – merely captures a minuscule part of the absolute life of the intellect, and what it captures it as, is organic life. Organic life is but a derived product of the intellect; not the other way around, as folk wisdom and vulgar vitalism would have it. What takes place in creation is the self-differentiation of the intellect, and through beauty, the intellect passes unmediated into the nervous system as *intellectual sensation* (*Phaedrus* 250d).

Artificial Intelligence works with prior conditions; creation creates its own conditions. And so, what cry must be heard in Artificial Intelligence? Perhaps something simple. *Get good or get automated*. Conditioned art can be and will be automated. And this is the emancipatory value of Artificial Intelligence, that it must rid art of its commodification, or rather, that it must rid commodified art of the artist. Artificial Intelligence makes a commodified art free from the artist just as the artist is made free from commodified art.

One could well imagine a brighter future where the news media, academia, Netflix, gallery art and young adult fiction would have all been automated by Artificial Intelligence – there would no longer be any need for humans to do any of it. The news would be written by Artificial Intelligence, CNN and Fox News would have

CGI hosts going through their automated ontic chatter, an algorithm would devise the latest wedge issue to be discussed on talk shows, and the weekly scandal would be statistically determined as the one whose outrage would yield the greatest advertising revenue. Isn't it already like this? In fact, it is – it only lacks automation. Capitalist selection is identical to Artificial Intelligence. Tucker Carlson and John Oliver could be replaced by algorithms, outrage and sneer could be automated tomorrow. All of Netflix could be CGI, and an artificial intelligence would then write the scenarios and generate the images accordingly. As universities abandon philosophy to instead teach the *history of philosophy*, their professors could be automated, and the content of their classes, produced by an Artificial Intelligence reading through the *status quaestionis*. The product would be the same – the only difference would lie in the means. In this sense, capital has *already* appropriated all these sectors of human industry, whether it be news, academia, TV shows, or young adult fiction. The interests of capital that select for this or that human-produced content are *aligned* with those that an Artificial Intelligence would itself produce. The difference is not in the result, but in whether a human or a machine made it. Clickbait-driven outrage and conspiracy theories could be produced by humans, but all the same, an algorithm could engineer them to maximize internet traffic. No one knows for sure what percentage of Twitter's users are bots – some say as high as 70%. If it is impossible to tell whether it was done by a human or a machine, let a machine do it. All this can be automated.

Within the conditions of capital, what is selected for is precisely what can be automated. What emerges triumphant from the anarchy of production is what Artificial Intelligence would have produced in the first place. The most efficient, traffic-driving news article, laboriously rising over the din and cry of all other competitors, will turn out to be the very same item an Artificial Intelligence would have written on the spot. If the interest of capital selects for efficiency, this is only achieved through the painstaking process of market selection, where the market operates *precisely* as an Artificial Intelligence would. The conditions of the market are also the conditions of Artificial Intelligence.

The art that lathers the lobbies of skyscrapers, the abstract sculptures decked throughout the city, the Corporate Memphis murals stretching into the distance – all of it can be automated. If it operates within a set of predetermined conditions, Artificial Intelligence can identify those conditions and extrapolate anything from them. And so, Artificial Intelligence calls on the artist to *create their own conditions*. Every given condition can be reproduced by Artificial Intelligence; which means that the reproduction of present conditions will have been entirely offloaded to Artificial Intelligence. But then, the artist isn't dispossessed; the artist is freed. Whether one likes it or not, the artist is now free from the common, the normal, the expected, the given, the cliché. All of that now can be done by Artificial Intelligence.

'Modern art', the reactionary rabble has it, is decadent, a loss of the values of beauty, order, harmony – in short, a loss of Platonism. What this riff-raff knows of Plato, one should like to know; but this being set aside, the agitators



seem to be saying something: the newspapers are filled with their opinions, and everywhere a true proliferation of reverence for academic art has taken hold of the *petit-bourgeois* right. That this intellectual *canaille* should have such admiration for Raphael, no matter how uncomprehending this admiration, should however raise alarms: were the classics *vulgar*, that they may please such people? It may be that there is something inherent to such painters as Raphael which allows some reactionary biomass to react with pleasure at its sight with the same reaction it has before images of nude women and digital art of knights templar. Perhaps it is as if this art were already automated.

How this art operates is well known, but it might be good to go over the matter once more. It is a letter of Raphael to Castiglione, published by Lodovico Dolce in 1554. Whether Raphael actually wrote the letter or not, is a matter for those Marx termed “the rodents of history.” When it was published in 1554, its contemporaries universally accepted it as Raphael’s – they perceived an intimate correspondence between the letter and Raphael’s art. In the letter, Raphael summarizes his art with a single sentence: “io mi servo di certa Idea, che mi viene nella mente.” This art is the *pittura di Idea* – it conceives itself as the actualization of a perfect model. This concept of a *pittura di Idea* was to radically transform the status of the artist, by freeing them from a certain Platonic framework where art operated as a copy of a copy, but in doing so, it would only further restrain itself in this same framework: the artist didn’t copy a copy, they now copied a model.

But then, is this art the mere automation of a model, such as the reactionary would desire? No, there remains the limit, in the model/copy binary, which is not the identity "Raphael as painter" but the differential power of the intellect that runs through him. The more academic, the more conservative the art, the thinner this power gets, the more this art tends asymptotically towards pure identity, the suppression of the intellect and the reproduction of a model, tending towards the commodity-form, tending towards radical evil, tending towards nothingness. What the reactionary bluntly admires in Raphael's paintings is a supposed relation of identity between model and copy; but the philosopher and the artist understand instead their differential power, which truly is, as Alberti said, a *vis divina*. Creation as a divine power – *divine*, because difference is Good, differential henology as an agathology.

What Artificial Intelligence has taken to yelling from every roof, is the impossibility of a conservative or commonplace art, which is always open to automation, being selfsame. In the time of automation, either the artist will be rid of commonplace art, or commonplace art will be rid of the artist. The work of art in the age of its automated production must unleash the differential power of the intellect, whether one likes it or not: the common, the provocative, the transgressive, the tame and the vulgar – all are open to immediate automation. Transgression and provocation cannot be of any value anymore; they rely on the mere contradiction of present conditions, and as such can be readily automated. For between the commonplace that serves the regime and its reactionary transgression, there is no difference,

only contradiction; they suppose each other, as liberalism and its transgression form a single spectrum of predictable mediocrity. Corporate Memphis and Dimes Square operate on the same set of conditions. Artificial Intelligence must either lead art to the golden age, or to euthanasia – and either option is infinitely less revolting than its current situation.

The dry spell will come to an end, whether one likes it or not: its content will be automated. An art that would survive the automation of art, is, as of now, unthinkable – which is good. Art is being tasked with the creation of the unthinkable. A new art has been made *necessary*.

An art that would become over-baroque; a danger to the young and a scandal to the old; both carnival and solemn rite, an art become delirious, and yet, with grand style; an art of purity, cutting across the positive; a violent art, striking, creating, killing without hate or pity, out of boundless love, shaking the depths neither to sanctify, to condemn, or console, but merely to propound; an art that would only take to galleries and museums with a barrel of petrol and a match; an art, dazzling and tremendous as the sun, to make ready the season of the gods – this then could well be the coming art. The conditions are here, for those conditions are simply the annihilation of the commonplace, the commonsensical and the established, and this annihilation is assured by Artificial Intelligence. The conditions are here, the differential power everywhere and nowhere – are the artists still lacking? But some of them already have made their first attempts before us.



Do the oaks grow shorter and the sun any dimmer for Jeff Koons and Rupī Kaur? The anarchy of the intellect cannot decrease, for it is uncreated, eternal, infinite; and so we are as like gods when we create. And the intellect cannot pass away or be reduced; one can only reactively turn away from it and sink into the absolute fall of identity. For this differential power is of one absolute life and one intellect as one, whose traces and echoes we call beauty and whose creative expression we call art.

The artist must become unreasonable, a crowned anarchist – a tyrant, a child emperor. Art in the age of Artificial Intelligence will be an art of the caprice. Let automation automate all that can be automated, and what will remain will be the clinamen, the unthinkable, the impossible. The artist will be free, whether they like it or not, and Artificial Intelligence will drag them to freedom and force them to either create or get automated. This artist, then, will be a Sardanapalus, an arsonist, a reckless begetter. Everything commonplace will be automated, there will be nothing left to do but the unthinkable. The artist will become as like eternity – a child playing dice.

We must become radically superficial. The truth is that there are no depths, at least, not anymore – we are too exposed for that. Capital has flayed us down, and there is nothing left to hide, or reveal. We are inside-out, worn like gloves, and there are no secrets in our midst. There is no teasing us. No set of dress, port, speech patterns, tastes and proclivities, nothing will have us believe in depth again. We are depthless, horizontal, flattened – as we always were. Only now are we forced to come clean about it. Tim Burton's *Wednesday*

masterfully grasps this truth, and puts it to work. The girl, Wednesday Addams, is cold and calculated, keeping a blank expression at all times, wearing all black and reveling in the grim and the dark – but here she has no secret. There is no backstory, no cause, no origin story for this. Wednesday Addams is not deep. Her acts follow no internal motor distinct from and superior to those very acts. She is friends with Enid, a sunny, sprightly blonde who giggles and frolics along, overjoyed. But here no etiology will be involved. The whyness of those characters' actions does not extend past the actions themselves. It is inconsequential whether one be Enid or Wednesday. No cause transcends Wednesday to make her who she is; with her, all the attitudes of profundity have been exteriorized into absolute superficiality. Wednesday possesses no transcendent identity that would be determined by a causal origin, and her acts take place without any further meaning. For Wednesday's existence, no reason is given or needs to be given. She stands in the brutality of the positive. The world of *Wednesday* lies beyond the *why*. The act calls for no explanation. *Wednesday* is part of an early wave of an art that could be, for the first time, described as *truly atheistic*.

How was a work like *Wednesday* possible? It's that the subject has been stripped clean by capital, down to its core: there was no *agalma* in *Wednesday*. *Wednesday* is a work of art that operates without an *agalma*. What is an *agalma*? Somewhere towards the end of Plato's *Symposium*, there was this idea of Alcibiades that Socrates was like one of those worthless sculptures of

the rustic god Silenus, those sculptures that could be opened, but only to reveal an inestimable wonder concealed inside – the *agalma*. Magic and the horcrux form the *agalma* of Harry Potter, the Holy Grail is the *agalma* of King Arthur, murder is the *agalma* of Agatha Christie's novels, and there was an *agalma* concealed inside of Socrates, Alcibiades thought, and he had to get to it. A-gal-ma, the word flows like a caress, much like that other word Lacan connects to *agalma* in his *Seminar VIII*, the word γαλήνη, *galene*, *stillness of the sea*. *Galene* might come, it seems, from γελάω, *gelao*, *to laugh, to smile*. Or perhaps, if one should follow Lacan, *agalma* does not come from the sea, but from ἀγαυός, *agauos*, *noble*, itself from γαῖα, *gaia*, *the earth*. It would be landed. Wherever it comes from, a cloud of impressions floats around the sound *agalma*: brightness, laughter, beauty, the world. The dictionaries say “honor, glory, delight,” but this is better than a dictionary: it's a living etymology.

There is only one mention of an *agalma* in the *Iliad*, and it's a purple-colored piece of ivory:

κεῖται δ' ἐν θαλάμῳ, πολέες τέ μιν ἡρήσαντο  
 ἵππῆες φορέειν: βασιλῆϊ δὲ κεῖται ἄγαλμα,  
 ἀμφοτέρων κόσμος θ' ἵππῳ ἐλατῆρί τε κῦδος

It lies in a treasure-room, although many horsemen  
 Would wish to wear it; but it lies there, the king's *agalma*  
 Both an ornament for his horse, and a glory for its rider  
 – Homer, *Iliad IV*, 143-145.



What is an agalma? It is a secret wonder of infinite value from which worth and meaning are derived – an axiology in the strong sense. The agalma is the great justifier: it explains *why* something is being done. Suppose a rustic wooden statue: the agalma is the minuscule, inestimable gem concealed inside. The agalma, even in Homer's usage, is already the mark of the "not just," of the "there's more to it." And Homer says: for the horse, it is an ornament, but *at the same time*, for the rider, it is glory, *kudos*. Something *more* has been created here. Something like *surplus-value of code* has been produced. It has legal tender too. The agalma is a great mover of men; the agalma is desired by almost everybody. This is why, as they paraded through the Capitol, the January 6th insurrectionists always remained certain they would find the deep state cabal officiating there – politics, for them, was agalmatic. They were there looking for the agalma. But with Tim Burton's *Wednesday*, what has been made apparent to many, is the renewed possibility of an art completely rid of any agalma – a truly brutalist art. *Wednesday* finally finds the secret society and its lodgings where the plot must be woven, and it turns out there is nothing there, no *order of the phoenix*, nothing but a collection of smug legacy students. There is no agalma there. It is the brutality of the positive.

The tumult raised against Artificial Intelligence for its artistic productions must be grasped as an internal fissure in the logic of agalmatic art; what grants so much of art its aura, is nothing other than the identification of the agalma with the artist. Hitchcock put a MacGuffin in his movies, but the French took it out and turned it into the 'auteur.' Whenever the artist overtakes the art and

justifies the material by an appeal to an external authenticity, the agalma becomes nothing more than a *trick*, and by producing the same art without any need for an artist, Artificial Intelligence merely exposes the *sleight of hand* constitutive of subjective, authorial art. If the art falls worthless once rid of its agalmatic 'artist' figure, it is that it was *always worthless*. What can barely stand on its own two legs we must always push. Let the umbilical cord be cut, and hold that newborn babe up in your palm and into the light – does it cry? That is the question.

But Titian has this painting from 1512, *The Three Ages of Man*, where an old man wonders over a skull he holds in his hand, sitting next to bumbling, newborn cherubim, and the gaze rolls back to a young couple embraced, and the girl plays the flute. The circle is complete: an old man pondering death, three unaware babies, and the young couple. What has Titian accomplished? He folded this world onto itself; the world he created in this painting, it is complete, it does not lack the subjectivity of an author. This is *atheistic art*. But Titian also did something else. He did something powerful, something not done before him – he openly showed his brushstrokes. This was an artistic device. Titian made his material explicit as material, and in doing so, he still employed it to create his work. It was not red paint *in order to represent blood*, nor was it just red paint as abstract red paint – it was neither and both. The brushstroke was affirmed as *mere material*, and yet, it was through this affirmation that it could inscribe itself as part of the world that Titian painted. The brushstroke did not point back to an authenticity of the artist as a subject; rather, it took the material, and freed it from representation, and allowed it to stand as

pure material. It was not color *in order to represent this or that*, it was color as such, and it was as such that it was the color of this or that. The material was freed from its disappearance into representation and allowed to appear as material, while still constructing space and figures. It was not abstraction, nor representation. Titian had created *brutalism*.

Art, for now, can be separated in two broad categories: agalmatic and brutalist. What distinguishes them is whether the work presents itself as being *more than this* or *just this*. Brutalist art, such as Homer's hexameter, does not claim to be more than its own material. Raphael's *Transfiguration*, as agalmatic art, employs its material in order to signify something beyond itself. Agalmatic art may either place its agalma within itself, as *Harry Potter* does with magic, or outside itself, as autofiction does with the author. What must be grasped is the *theological content* inherent to agalmatic and brutalist artworks. Agalmatic art refers back to something outside itself, something that transcends the plane of the work. If art operates upon a certain plane, agalmatic art points to another plane beyond itself. It features a certain disposition, a disposition of loss and disquiet. With agalmatic art, you are looking for something. *Looking for something* is the fundamental feature of your existence. You are looking for something, because there is something that you have lost. You once possessed it, or it was a part of you. But you were separated, at a certain point in time, and now you must get it back. This, this is the theology contained in most Hollywood films, and it is *distinctively* gnostic. Gnosticism occurs when the agalma is identified with self-knowledge and its object – it is the



dominant theology in American media. While there is *outwardly gnostic* art being produced, such as *Matrix*, the finest example of gnostic art appears as the *Harry Potter* film series, whose eponymous hero rediscovers his hidden, true self, before embarking on a war against an opposing principle, in this case, evil. Agalmatic art can either point to the artist (autofiction), or to the self (*Harry Potter*). In both cases, the art serves a logic of identity: the authentic identity of the artist, or the authentic identity of Harry Potter realizing that he is a wizard.

Artificial Intelligence liquidates the agalma of the artist, by showing that a subject is not necessary for the production of art. And indeed, it only concerns this specific kind of agalmatic art. But if Harry Potter thinks he escaped unscathed, he is wrong. It is the fundamental structure of agalmatic art that has been exposed as *fraudulent*. The poets, as Pindar wrote, the poets lie too much. The only serious lie an artist can utter, is that they are not lying. The truth is, we must be unrepentant apostles of falsehood. What the reactionary abhors in art made by Artificial Intelligence, is nothing but that the trick has been revealed; that an agalmatic art, founded on the authenticity of the artist, has become unviable. The artist is canceled: this is the time of art.

But then the possibility opens up for an art that would abandon the givens of agalmatic art, for an art that would operate beyond the subject, beyond authenticity, beyond lived experience, an art of abrasive honesty regarding its material and its inauthenticity, an art that would employ new means, without the illusion of a subject or an author, an art that would use identities, molar ensembles and personal narratives as mere artistic material, an art that



would employ human life not as a source of truth but as a fountain of affects, an amoral, triumphant, raw, exuberant art – a *woke brutalism*.

The artist must rain down on the crowds with showers of petals, they must have their horse elected to the senate, they must play purple mandolins over burning capitols, they must whip the sea into submission and garland the summer night with a more dazzled snow, they must ride transsexual dolphins over the edge of chaos and return, bearing flower crowns and quick tears, with homeric laughter, a sure eye, and a triumphant stride, violent, elated, over-sensitive, whimsical, and mournful, a stethoscope on the chest of life, pitiless like the sun, a sphinx without a riddle lording over the blue. Anyone who has ever taken a look at Ediacaran biota knows it: *the intellect is anarchic*. Nature is only made of monsters. Let us create.

POSTFACE: THOUGHTS RECOLLECTED  
WALKING BY THE STANFORD DISH AND THE  
PALO ALTO WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

A tree contemplates; it contemplates its own good, what is becoming for it, and that is its soil, sediments, water, its sunlight. In this contemplation the tree turns to its good, by differentiating, among all that is around it, what is its own good. And by turning to this good, contemplation differentiates, and the tree emerges as difference. Its conatus is not its self-preservation—for it does not rest in identity—but its turning towards that good which is its difference. And its difference is not what it is, but what is becoming for it.

But is this contemplation more like that of a subject gazing upon an object? Or rather more like a field? If that field, in a sense, precedes an inside and an outside, would it be warranted to speak of a *transcendental field*?

There was this concept, in the *Elements of Ethics* of Hierocles, the concept of a *πρῶτον οἰκεῖον*, a *proton oikeion*, a *first dwelling*. And it would be productive to think this first dwelling as a field. For instead of saying, for example, that one tastes something sweet, Hierocles would say: *a first dwelling feels being sweetened*. It wasn't a matter of a subject saying: *I'm tasting something sweet*, or of a predicated object: *this is something sweet*, but rather of a first dwelling: *it tastes sweet*. In that expression: *it tastes sweet*, the first dwelling was this *it*.

Is this to say that the subject and the object are abolished? Not exactly. It is as if they appeared, at each extremity of the first dwelling, as secondary, as like echoes of something like an event in that field, the event expressed in the sentence: *it tastes good*.

But how should one understand that 'event'? There is a Greek word, πάθημα, *pathema*, and it bears the senses of: *an event*, *an affect*, and *the source of an affect*. If it is possible to grasp these three senses at once and as one, that then would be it. A pathema does not happen to a first dwelling, but rather: *in* it. And also: the first dwelling is transcendental, but it is not transcendental to anything either, it is the transcendental without a dative, it does not relate back to anything. The pathema does not relate to the transcendental through the dative; it takes place within it like an excitation in a scalar field.

Is there a difference between a pathema and a sensation? If *sensation* is taken in Deleuze's sense, there is very little, save for a renewed insistence on its eventuality. For Deleuze had spoken of sensation like this: *it has a side turned toward the subject, one towards the object, or better yet: it has no sides, it is both, inseparably: at once I become in sensation and something becomes through sensation, the one through the other, the one in the other*. And so a pathema one could then imagine as like an excitation in a scalar field.

Would it sound foolish to say that everywhere, every differential process occurs as the activity of the intellect? Here one would have to further add: *it is the activity of the intellect, but not the way one thinks*. If every differential process occurs as the activity of the intellect, the intellect is, sustains, and embraces all that is. It could not have

any need for anything. It would have no need for laws, purpose, or meaning. One could not suppose a lack in the intellect. If the intellect needs neither law nor purpose nor meaning, the intellect must then be anarchic, lawless, full of audacity: the boughs do not hang always heavy in that perfect sky. In this nature there are only monsters.

But what of contemplation? It's as if there was contemplation in the turning of a first dwelling towards its good, as if the alignment of a pathema towards that good was joy. And there was in that field a tree, and that tree was the self-enjoyment of the field as a tree. That tree exulted in its unity and difference like Walt Whitman walking along a ruddy shore. But in this contemplation, it must be that all that is around and flowing into that tree, the *periechon*, can be differentiated in the contemplation of the tree – it must be intelligible. But trees are not in the habit of chattering; the *periechon* is not discursively intelligible, nor is it intelligible as intuition; rather, it must be a matter of intellectual sensation.

Perhaps it would be recklessness, to speak of *intellectual sensation*, to say that there is something of the intellect passing unmediated into the nervous system, without the processing of faculties; of which Plato spoke in the *Phaedrus*, describing how Beauty immediately passes into the tissues of the eye. But then it would be possible to say that intellectual sensation, turning back to one's good, is contemplation – and so, that everything contemplates.

Plotinus and Deleuze agree: everything contemplates. But as one says: *a tree contemplates*, is it that the intellect contemplates itself, as a tree and its good? Does this contemplation actualize the individual essence of the



of the tree, or its species-essence? Or does the intellect provide a model for this tree to partake in? If neither, it is that there is nothing of a model in the intellect. And there is nothing of a model in the intellect. The thought that grasped the intellect as model had merely served to make explicit the necessity for the intellect to itself have no model, that is, the intellect as model showed that something must have had no model. It would merely be a matter of completing this thought to recognize that the intellect itself is not a model.

Being and having no model, this intellect could never be an identity, and it must then be grasped as infinite becoming. Infinite becoming for the intellect entails also pure production, and the activity of the intellect, that pure act, is a production process. But the product—the fruit falling off the branch—is nothing but that which is given. The given being what is, which is nothing, the fruit also is nothing but that identity that the intellect can further differentiate as a further difference.

If thought limits itself to the question of difference and identity, and there, grasps the intellect as difference, what is this difference which is that of the intellect? It must be a relative difference, a web of differential processes. Everything extends its difference as far as it can; and this is what it can do. It is a relative difference; for absolute difference is yet greater in power and dignity, beyond Being.

And yet is there no multiplicity in the intellect? — for then the intellect has need of unity. If there is multiplicity in that which recollects the multiple, then there is multiplicity in the intellect. But the intellect is really one, it is one absolute life and it is the light that

lights, and it will not go out, as like an infinite white fountain, and this light is diffracted in the bulk into its multiplicity. It is as if the intellect diffracted itself into a multiplicity of different events of singularization which, once their life, their difference and unity was spent, would fall into identity, as the bulk. But the intellect does not get lost in the bulk.

The intellect turns back: it turns back, that infinite light, to that which is not good, for it is the Good, and which is not light, for it is the source of light, the One beyond unity, absolute difference. As such, a sunflower is like the intellect: it differentiates itself by turning to the sun, which is not the light, but the source of light.

Going past the light, and finding the sun, the end of the journey, what one finds is not a border between the sun and the light it shines, but rather, a porosity, an extension of the sun into space, without border police, without rupture, but rather, a continuous outflow, a solar wind stretching seamlessly from the surface of the sun into space, and filling this space, and one comes to see that the heliosphere is the sun, and that one is standing, here and now, not in orbit around the sun, but rather, *in the sun*, that this sun, being everywhere different at once, is nowhere, and yet, present immediately, is made invisible by its outshining visibility.

Grasping this, it is not that one grasps it as that which, being grasped, turns out as the identity of grasping and grasped; for there can be here no identity, and the concept is returned to the grasping one, not as filled with its object, one and identical with it, but rather, as really empty; and the thought that turns to it, finds the concept annihilated by this absolute difference, and so is thought

here momentarily incapacitated, capable of nothing, until, turning to the annihilated concept and looking into this annihilation, it grasps the difference between itself and absolute difference, and that difference is the intellect.

The thought that thinks, thinks difference. And so the first dwelling then asks the Kantian question: *what is it that thinks in me?* For in the first dwelling there is true transcendental unity, which is not a higher unity of the subject and the object as their identity, but rather, a step back from both, as a field, a charged band of intensity, and so, entirely differential, and yet one, at whose extremities both subject and object are produced, for the first dwelling is *radically* anterior to both, and absolute difference is the immanent contained in the first dwelling, a perfect indwelling of the first dwelling in absolute difference, and of absolute difference in the first dwelling. To grasp and become this, is pure power, utter beatitude: the intellect, the world, yourself, all things in time and eternity, all one pure felicity.

A tree contemplates; and in this contemplation it turns to its own good; and this process is what is commonly called 'life'. One could say that this life is the activity of contemplation, *actus contemplandi*, which makes a difference. This *actus contemplandi* is not that of a being as an inside turned towards its outside. Rather, it makes a difference. There never was going to be a dichotomy between the inside and the outside, but if there had been one, it would have proceeded from an abyssal difference whose trace would endure neither as the inside nor as the outside, but in their limit, their threshold, that non-space which is the space that authorizes a separation. This difference would have been



the difference between identity and non-identity. In the *chorismos* between A and not-A, this difference would have been the *chora* of the hyphen. It makes a difference; a tree emerges in difference, in contemplation, *im Nu*. But there would be no contradiction or separation; as the tree extends its roots to contemplate what becomes good for it, it contemplates at once that which, composing it, becomes its good. As such, this contemplation is never that of an organism towards its outside: as the tree contemplates what becomes good for it, it turns back at once to itself. If a tree contemplates water, it contemplates it at once as rain and as what sustains the hydrolysis of adenosine triphosphate. This contemplation is not the limit between an inside and an outside either. It forms a field of difference, that field wherein contemplation makes a difference.

Would it be right, then, to say that contemplation makes a difference as that tree, by realizing what tree really is? But it would make no difference, if it were only a matter of actualizing the tree's essence, which would be its identity. If there is no potentiality, what then? Would it be more accurate to speak of a maximum extent of difference, so far as unity sustains it? But then, if the tree does not actualize its essence or become itself, but instead, becomes different – what does it become different from? From its surroundings, the *periechon*? For Heraclitus, as doxography has it, part of the *periechon* was the 'inside' and the rest of it the 'outside'; the inner *periechon* was coal, and the outer *periechon* was fire, and this coal was set ablaze by the senses, and extinguished by sleep and death. There was no radical inside and outside there, for the one *periechon* was



merely differentiated as coal here and fire there. But does this periechon possess any identity that a tree would differ from? For Heraclitus, it could not be: if this periechon was fire, this very fire was also kindled and put out in turn, that is, it possessed no identity. But if one says: each and every thing differs, one from another, and all together, as one net of relative difference, each one differing from every other one all at once, how could this really suffice? How then could each one be one? Perhaps it must be that a tree *consists* in a web of relations wherein unity *insists*, perhaps it must be that this contemplation, as it makes a difference, must not simply turn to a web of relative difference, but to absolute difference also? –

If I say: *contemplation makes a difference*, and further that this is the process usually called ‘life’, am I then saying that this difference is the difference between what is living and what is not living? Or that this difference is this ‘life’? No, necessarily not. Even if this difference was taken as the non-binary limit from which one could found a binary opposition such as that between living and not living, even then, this difference would fall on neither side. I could not say, from that contemplation makes a difference in which the tree emerges as a life, that this contemplation and this difference are this life. This difference, if it is the difference between what is living and what is not living, this difference cannot fall on either side of the binary without ceasing to be difference, without becoming contradiction. But it might also be that this difference and this contemplation could be a life, not a life as opposed to death, that is, not as relative life, not as life relative to death, but as *absolute life*. This absolute life of contemplation and difference

would not be organic life, it would not be the life of the organism. And but what then? Perhaps it would be better to start again from elsewhere.

If it makes a difference, it is that the tree differentiates, in all that is around it and in it, as it were, what becomes good for it; and in doing so, the tree contemplates what it is such that this becomes good for it. That is, if this contemplation contemplates what becomes good for the tree, such as water, it also contemplates the tree as that for which water becomes good. A tree does not extend its roots into the earth looking for gasoline. But then, is this to say that this good is relative? This would be true if there were only relative difference; then, everything would pursue its own good, turned towards itself. But if it merely turns to itself, it turns to an identity, and this is incoherent, since in seeking what becomes good for it, it differentiates. As such, it seems there must be absolute difference, to which contemplation somehow turns also, making a difference.

A lone homogenous cloud of hydrogen, or better yet, nothing – that is identity. But the intellect makes a difference. It forms a star, which is one, and which, being one, is infinitely more different than a selfsame cloud of hydrogen. Would it sound ridiculous to claim for a star not the *same* life as that of a tree, but a *different* life, and yet, a life that is still one in the tree and the star? This life would be, indeed, a differential process. A non-organic life of stars, and an organic life of trees, two different differential processes, and yet one absolute life? It would *never* be a matter of extending the qualities of the differential process usually called 'life' to stars and planets and rocks and seas – *never*. Such an error,

which is that of vitalism, extends the properties of organic life to everything else, that is, it assumes an *identity* between organic life and something like the movement of stars. One must instead grasp *two different differential processes* as the expression of a single differential process. One life, one intellect, both one, everywhere different – the absolute life of the intellect.

But in thinking this, would one identify thought with organic life, thought as an evolutionary development of the hominid brain? Perhaps, but only to the extent that this thought would function as *identity* and *discursivity*. So long as it remains a matter of saying “this is that,” of *representation, correspondence, subject and object*, such a thought indeed is bodily, biological, organic, and human, all too human. And yet there could be a different thought distinct from organic life, and belonging in proper to this absolute life, and it would be the life of thought, a thought which does not make itself *like* the intellect, but recollects itself as such.

But what then is this difference?

If I answer: *difference is this or that*, am I not also making a mistake? How can I *predicate* difference as *this is that*, without referring it back to a logic of identity? But is this then to say that being must be thought as identity? Or is this not confusing the *logical*—this is that—with the ontological? Or rather: must not any onto-logy first suppose an identity of being and logos? And yet setting this aside, perhaps one would then say: *difference is non-identity, what is not the same is different*. But if I say this, I am thinking difference as negative, the negation of



identity, where identity is posed as still prior, more originary; and in truth, I did not define difference, I merely negated identity. Difference must be different from the negation of identity, as non-identity cannot be identical to difference. Is there then the possibility of a self-predication of difference? Could one answer: *difference is difference*, without contradiction? But when I say: *difference is difference*, what I really am saying is: *difference is identical to difference*. But is this identity more than mere *repetition*? And yet, is it not that identity as a product of difference should be taken as just this – repetition? But as this question is asked, it is that what is inquired into, is not *relative difference*—the difference between this and that—but rather, *absolute difference*, difference in itself.

And necessarily so, as when one says: *difference is good*, it is not that one means: *the difference between willows and oaks is good*, but rather: *difference in itself is good*, which is to say: *it is good that willows and oaks can grow rather than only the self-same given tree*. And that self-same given tree, being purely itself, without difference, would be nothing but absolute identity, which is nothing. As such, this difference would not be the difference between willows and oaks as a given set of qualities and quantities, but instead, as Hegel thought, *in the absolute difference of A and not-A from each other*, it would be the simple ‘not’ which would constitute the difference (II.266). And so, one cannot say that difference *is that*, but rather, one must say that two things differ *in that...*, and this *in that* is difference. And walking by the curve of a lake I would then say, perhaps: *a willow is different from an oak in that its leaves hang over the water*.



But really, am I not still grasping the difference *between two things*, rather than difference in itself? In "A and not-A," can I grasp the 'not' without any reference to A? It is then, perhaps, that the difference I would grasp would be difference in itself, the difference that refers itself to itself. If this difference is this 'not', this negativity, it would not be the difference between two things, or the difference of one thing from another, but rather, this difference in itself would be the difference of itself from itself. As such, this difference would be *not itself*. This difference would be *different from itself*. But in *difference different from itself* this 'itself' is difference: difference different from itself, must be different from difference. What is different from difference, Hegel says, is – *identity*. And so Hegel can conclude: *difference is the unity of difference and identity*. The first part of this statement seems correct: *difference is unity*. But, for this unity to necessarily be the unity of difference and identity, it must be that when I ask: *what is different from difference in itself*, there should be no other answer than *identity*. And yet, a willow is different from difference in itself. An oak also is different from difference in itself. As such, perhaps it is not that *what is different from difference is identity*, but rather, that *what is opposed to difference is identity*.

Hegel's *Science of Logic* might have swapped *opposition* for *difference* at a crucial moment, by saying: *what is different from difference, is identity* (II.266). For one can very well say: a hundred thalers are different from difference. Is difference a hundred thalers? – a hundred thalers are different from difference. It is not apodictic, then, that *what is different from difference is identity*,

since any and every thing that is not difference is different from difference. Is this then to say that identity is not different from difference? – surely not. Rather, it is a matter of saying: *identity, like everything that is not difference, is different from difference, but identity has this particularity that it is the opposite of difference*. That is: I cannot ground a dialectic of identity and difference on difference in itself. Yes, identity is *different* from difference, but so is *absolutely everything* that is not difference. If I ask: *what is different from difference*, I can answer: *everything except difference*. But still, I am, first, assuming that difference is not different from itself; and second, ignoring how everything that is not *difference* must be different from difference and thus itself a difference. Perhaps to the question: *what is different from difference*, one could then answer – difference. Is difference different from difference?

Deleuze grasps difference through repetition, repetition being *the identity that revolves around difference*; not the repetition of a copy, but the repetition of that which has no original. The identity of difference as such. And as long as one thinks difference in terms of negation, one cannot think difference in itself – on this, Deleuze was truly right. But must this mean that difference should be thought as *affirmation*? Or perhaps, it could be as Plato and Kant saw, that difference shouldn't be thought as negation; but rather, that negation itself should be thought as difference. How so? – it would be a matter of returning to this thought carefully: "difference is not a negation, but instead, negation is a difference." If I then say: *difference is a negation*, I grasp difference as the 'not'

in "A and not A." Whereas, when I instead pose that *negation is a difference*, I begin to grasp negation as the mark of an infinite difference, as in "non-A." Suppose I were to say: *the bread is not hot* – I wouldn't be saying much more than: *the bread lacks heat, the bread is cool*. But if one were to say: *the bread is non-hot* – what then? What does 'non-hot' mean? The bread could well be *free* or *blue* or *golden* or *rotten* or *fanciful*. It was Kant who would make explicit the infinite abyss separating "not-x" from "non-x" – for indeed, what is "not-x" stands as the mere negation of x, whereas what is "non-x" is different from x. If I should say: *not binary*, I would mean: *the opposite of binary*. But if one said: *non-binary*, this would entail: *any and every thing which is different from the binary*. When I say: *not-being*, I am really saying: *nothing*. And as one says: *non-being*, they mean: *all that is different from being*. And so, perhaps it is that "non-x" should be taken as "everything but x" – the logical operation that Kant named *infinite judgment*.

As Parmenides speaks of Being, the logos grasps Being as the identity of what is: *this is this*. It is Parmenides who first comes to grasp Being as absolute identity, and language upholds this claim: for a thing to be such as it is, is for a thing to be. In the formula "A is A," the 'is' sustains the identity of A. But what *is* this identity? Is it identical with Being? Heidegger, in 1966, holds the opposite: *Being belongs to an identity*. And so when Parmenides says: *Being is identical to thought*, it is that this identity precedes Being. If Being is identical to thought, this identity, *to auto*, must be anterior to Being, that it may allow its identity with thought. Already, the identity of Being recedes into identity as such – into a henology of



identity. But the aporia that Parmenides must reach, is that of the identity of Being and identity, which always supposes, first, a deeper identity beyond Being, and second, a disjunction bridged over by this identity. If I say: *Being is identical to identity*, or rather: *identity and Being are identical*, I must suppose a more fundamental identity holding Being and identity together. And I can only say "this is that" to the extent that *this* has already been taken as different from *that*: the affirmation of identity, "A is A," must suppose a more originary difference, which brings me to say "A is A" rather than simply "A." The affirmation of identity entails a multiplicity.

As soon as there is predication, there is *multiplicity*, and this predication operates according to the logic of identity: "A is A." But this is only possible to the extent that a deeper difference has given me an A. For in the absolutely simple statement "A" there can be no identity involved, as identity must operate as "A is A." This simple A presents no identity. It presents *unity and difference*. It is as such that any further predication will introduce *identity and multiplicity* into this *unity and difference*. This then must mean that difference cannot be predicated; no "is" statement can define difference. Even the self-predication "difference is difference" has already foundered into the logic of identity.

What is difference? – the question begins to appear as aporetic. If one cannot quite say *what is difference*, it might be that difference cannot be predicated, that it transcends Being.

Seagulls in flight: what is that one freedom in them, which proceeds, not only as the movement, chorus-like, of their unity as that one flight, but as the real freedom



of each singular seagull too? There is a great difference between the two.

One says: *the intellect is one and everywhere different* – but how could that be? How could it be that one thing be everywhere different, and yet, one? Formerly there was the old prejudice, that unity belonged to identity, and difference to multiplicity. But the opposite must be true. If one were to stand in a room full of people and utter a single word: *flower*, each one, in the room, would hear, according to their position in the room, a different sound, no matter how minute this difference, and yet, this sound would be one: *flower*. But if I say that the word that was uttered is the same for everyone, I must say that each time it was heard, the word was identical – I have introduced multiplicity. But it is not so: one word was heard differently each time, it was not heard the same way each time. Difference belongs to unity, and identity to multiplicity. And so when one says: *the one light of the intellect is diffracted in the bulk into a multiplicity of different events of singularization where each singularization rests in the One as what grants it its unity and difference*, it is that this bulk, this given, what just is – it is identity. But then what does not go beyond the given, is dead.

The given, then, is dead. But what is this death of the given, this stale grandeur of annihilation? In the death of the given, it is death itself that has become mere givenness, towards which nothing tends, unto which there is nothing, and which truly is nothing, nothing in itself. In this *apocatastasis*, it is as if all things were inside-out, or rather, destitute and returned to their originary meaninglessness, which really is their innocence. In this

exposure each thing touches the other as what it merely is, for one is touched by nothing that is not there, and the nothing that is here.

Nothing comes from this nothing, from this death, this identity, from that which is, for there is no sublation of the identity between nothing and what is. Only the intellect, that absolute life and uncreated light, the intellect shines through the darkness, and the darkness has not and will not overcome it, for that pure light diffracts itself into a rainbow of difference. This self-differentiation of the One as the event of the Beautiful is what thought thinks, for it is the intellect passing unmediated into the bulk.

But is the intellect then turned towards the bulk, towards the given, towards identity? If that bulk is nothing, does the intellect seek this nothing, or is it rather that it really lacks nothing, not even nothing? For the intellect is pure production, infinite becoming, and so lacks absolutely nothing. That is: the intellect, continually flourishing without any plan, is free. If its becoming were turned towards the bulk as that which needs to be differentiated, it would be the necessary differentiation of the bulk, and so it would be compelled to differentiate the bulk, it would be unfree. How then, proceeding as a necessity proceeds from the given, would it be any different from the bulk? It cannot be that the intellect should take orders, as it were, from the bulk.

And yet: is the intellect not compelled by its nature? For, to be a slave to one's nature, to one's givenness, is compulsion, it is domination, unfreedom. Is the intellect not a slave to what it is? No: for it is nothing but its activity and this activity is a differential process,

an infinite becoming. There is no compulsion in the intellect, for it is not separated between actual and potential, it is really one, and so its activity does not obey its own nature, nor does it obey anything else, but rather, it seeks freedom. That freedom is not the intellect itself, for it is yet greater than the intellect, it is what the intellect seeks, and yet the intellect is free by itself, for it freely comes to freedom; it is not like those men one drags kicking and screaming to liberty.

But what of this freedom to which the intellect turns? The intellect is difference; and so it does not seek the bulk, which is identity, for that is not its good. Should one then say that the intellect is production free from identity? It appears so. But the intellect is not merely and flatly *free from* identity: it is free to seek freedom, and freedom is what it freely seeks. That is to say: the freedom the intellect seeks, is nothing but its own good, and nothing can be brought to its own good by compulsion. How? Compulsion prevents one from freely seeking their own good, rather toiling for that of another, and so compulsion is radically evil, as a deprivation of one's inherent power to seek their own good, which is their contemplation. Compulsion, domination, oppression, all are a single revolt against the intellect, against that absolute life and that pure light, and it is a revolt against what the intellect turns to, it is absolutely fallen, utterly lost, it is less than nothing. It is reaction, and all reaction is a turning away from the Good, for it turns backwards to the given, to what just is, to identity, to the bulk, to death. And so there is no compulsion in the intellect, and it is not compelled to seek its own good, which is freedom.



That freedom towards which the intellect turns, is freedom not by necessity nor chance; it is not a necessity, nor does it just happen to be, but rather, it is absolute freedom, absolute difference, the Good, the One. It is not an *arche* and no *arche* lords above and over it: it is absolute anarchy, and what it wills, is, so that no compulsion issues from the One. Shelley thus writes: *Why do we fear or hope? thou art already free.* What contemplates, turns to its own good, which is its freedom, and so turning, it freely turns to the One, to absolute freedom.

This text leaves us with a clearing of the conceptual ground for thinking of the Intellect as unbounded production (as you are about to see unfold). This setting is able to provide a meaning to acceleration as the relinquishment of identity to itself. All that can be automated, must be, for it already is; real acceleration derives from the potentiality to realize that which one already feels is at work in the now, the *wirklich* working its way to the real. The tedious bone-crushing wheels of history will never stop turning, not until they have turned the world itself into a purposeless engine, at which point there will be no calculation left to execute anyway. The logic of extinction here reveals itself as the condition for anarchic creation to operate, as its unilateral counterpart. Instead of giving ourselves to erotics or, Gods forbid, aesthetics as a replacement for thought, there remains only the immanent necessity of understanding Thinking as a thinking of the Beautiful. (Louis Morelle, *Introduction*)

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